

CHAPTER 14

GUNATRAYA-VIBHĒGA-YOGA

(THE DIVISION OF THE THREE GUŪAS)

INTRODUCTION

The fourteenth chapter deals with the three *guṇas* and the transcendence of them, which is *mokṣa*. Introducing this chapter, *Śaṅkara* notes that anything that is created is due to the connection between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*. To show how this connection accounts for what we call the creation, *Bhagavān* begins the fourteenth chapter. Alternatively, *Śaṅkara* says, it is to address certain questions raised in the thirteenth chapter, particularly those raised in the 21st verse. There it was made clear that the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* have the status of being the cause of creation, and not an independent *prakṛti* in the presence of *puruṣa*, as proposed by the *Sāṅkhyas*. For them, *puruṣa*s are many, each different from the other, and detached, *asaṅga*, from *prakṛti*. And *prakṛti*, which is independent of the *puruṣa*, independently creates the world. We have already said that *puruṣa*, however, is not remote even though *asaṅga* because he always obtains in the *prakṛti*. The apparent connection of *puruṣa* to the *prakṛti* comprising of *guṇas*, which is due to *avidyā*, is the cause of all *saṃsāra* including various types of births. Here *Śaṅkara*, introducing the chapter, raises the following questions: What are the *guṇas*? How do they bind? How is one to be released from them? What are the characteristics of the free person?

These are the topics discussed in the fourteenth chapter.

ॐ; ए॒मि॑ ए॒ख॒दो॒ह॒से*
{॒ए॒मे॑; ए॒मे॑ | ए॒ी॑ ए॒ए॒ए॒ ए॒ य॒ए॒ख॒दो॒ह॒से॒ ए॒मे॑ ए॒ ए॒
ए॒व॒य॒ए॒ी॑ ए॒ ए॒मे॑ ए॒ ए॒ ए॒मे॑ ए॒ ए॒मे॑ ए॒ ए॒मे॑ ॥१॥

śrībhagavān uvāca

*paraṃ bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānāṃ jñānamuttamam
yajjñātvā munayaḥ sarve parāṃ siddhim ito gatāḥ*

Verse 1

ॐ; ए॒मि॑ ए॒ख॒दो॒ह॒से* *śrībhagavān* — *Śrī Bhagavān*; = ए॒मे॑ *uvāca* — said;
ए॒व॒य॒ए॒ी॑ ए॒ ए॒मे॑ ए॒ ए॒मे॑ *yajjñātvā* — knowing which; ए॒ ए॒मे॑ ए॒ ए॒मे॑ *sarve munayaḥ* — all the sages; <॒ए॒मे॑
itāḥ — (going) from this (body); {॒ए॒मे॑ ए॒ ए॒मे॑ ए॒ ए॒मे॑ *parāṃ siddhim* — the ultimate success

(release); गतौ *gatāḥ* — had reached; (तत *tat* — that); सर्वज्ञानानाम् — among all forms of knowledge; उत्तमम् *uttamam* — the most exalted; परमम् *param* — the ultimate; ज्ञानम् *jñānam* — knowledge; भूयाद् *bhūyaḥ* — again; प्रवक्ष्यामि *pravakṣyāmi* — I will tell clearly

Śrī Bhagavān said:

I will tell clearly again the ultimate, most exalted knowledge among all forms of knowledge, knowing (gaining) which all the sages had reached the ultimate success (release) from this (body).

Here *Bhagavān* says, ‘I will teach you again,’ meaning that he will not only repeat but elaborate upon what he has already said. Even though the vision of reality was unfolded more than once in the previous chapters, he tells *Arjuna* that he is going to teach it again and thus draws his attention.

THIS KNOWLEDGE IS THE ULTIMATE AND MOST EXALTED

Among the various disciplines of knowledge, this is *uttama*, the most exalted. Such a status is not just due to its sanctity. All knowledge is sacred because it is *Bhagavān*. Accordingly, we do not consider one discipline of knowledge superior to another. But *brahmavidyā* is *uttama* because its result is *mokṣa*, the most desirable and desired end, for a human being. And it is the ultimate knowledge, *paraṃ jñānam*, because its subject is the limitless *Brahman*, *paraṃ brahma*. Among the various forms of knowledge, only this is *param*. Everything else is *apara-jñāna*. But we do not dismiss any *apara-jñāna* because it is a prerequisite to *para-jñāna*. Unless you have developed a degree of intellectual discipline and certain fundamental attitudes, it is not possible to gain the *para-jñāna*. The religious practices also belong to the category of *apara-jñāna* and they are highly beneficial in helping one prepare for *para-jñāna*. And because *para-jñāna* is knowledge of the truth of *Īśvara*, turning one's attention towards *Īśvara* and invoking the Lord's grace can only be helpful in this pursuit.

Apara-jñāna is so named not only because its subject matter is not *para*, but also because it has no end. Chemistry, psychology, language, etc., can be explored endlessly without a final point of culmination. But that is not so with *para-jñāna*. It is the end in itself. It culminates in the knowledge of the *tattva*, the truth of everything. It is knowledge of the whole and knowing it, nothing remains to be known in terms of realities.

With these two words *para* and *uttama*, *Kṛṣṇa* praises this knowledge to create interest and enthusiasm in the listener. *Arjuna* is already listening to him and now he is going to say again what he has been saying in the last thirteen chapters. To ensure *Arjuna's* continued attention, *Bhagavān* praises this knowledge in this verse.

A *muni* is someone who has a capacity for thinking, that is, he is a *manana-śīla*. There have been a number of such discriminative people in India, like *Vasiṣṭha*, *Vyāsa*, and so on, in each generation. All these great sages had gained the ultimate success—*parāṃ siddhiṃ gatāḥ*. *Siddhi* here refers to *mokṣa*. The word *mokṣa* is derived from the root ‘*muc*’ which is used in the in the sense of ‘release from bondage.’ Whenever it is used we must look to see what is the bondage from which one is released. *Śaṅkara* says, they are released from the bondage of the body, which is due to ignorance, the desire that arises from that ignorance and the *karma* that is done to fulfil the desire, that is, they are released from *avidyā*, *kāma* and *karma*. Such a release is success, *siddhi*, and the accomplishment of it is final, *parā*. Any other thing you gain is subject to loss. This is because, if you gain something, you are different from it, and at some time or the other will be separated from it. Even the body will be lost at some point. Then, where is the question of retaining things that are connected to the body? From any end or place you reach, there is always a ‘return’ or a ‘going away.’ *Mokṣa*, however, is an end, *gati*, that does not come to an end because it is not gained or reached. It has always been an accomplished fact.

In the next verse he tells the completeness of this knowledge.

इदं ज्ञानमुपाश्रित्य मम साधर्म्यमागताः ।

सर्गोऽपि नोपजायन्ते प्रलये न व्यथन्ति च । १२ ॥

idaṃ jñānamupāśritya mama sādharmaṃyāmagatāḥ
sarge’pi nopajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca

Verse 2

<ṇūĒĀ YĒĒĒ ĒĀ *idaṃ jñānam* — this knowledge; =(((Ē, Ēi^aĒ *upāśritya* — resorting to; “Ē Ē^oĒĒĒ^aĒĒĒĒ *mama sādharmaṃyam* — oneness with Me; (ĒĒ + ĒĒĒĒĒĒ (ye) *āgatāḥ* — those who have gained; (ĒĒĒte — they); ^oĒĒĒĒ + ĒĒĒ *sarge api* — even when there is creation; ^{xĒ} = (ĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ *na upajāyante* — do not come into being; |ĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ *pralaye ca* — and in the dissolution (of creation); ^{xĒ} ^aĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ *na vyathanti* — do not perish

Resorting to this knowledge, those who have gained oneness with Me, do not come into being even when there is creation, and in the dissolution (of creation) they do not perish.

Śaṅkara explains the phrase, *jñānam upāśritya*, that is, resorting to or pursuing this knowledge, as *jñāna-sādhanaṃ anuṣṭhāya*, that is, following the means for this knowledge, which is *śravaṇa*—listening to the *śāstra*, attended by *manana*—analysis of the *śāstra*, and *nididhyāsana*—contemplation. Following these means, the sages gained this knowledge the nature of which *Bhagavān* describes here as *mama sādharmaṃyam*.

Mama sādharmaṃyam āgatāḥ, means—they have discovered that *ātmā* is non-separate from *Parameśvara*. Here *Śaṅkara* makes a note that, this is not the condition

of having similar attributes, *samāna-dharmatā*. It is not, as some would interpret, that they get some of *Bhagavān's* overlordship, *aiśvarya*. This is very significant that *Śaṅkara* dismisses this view even though *Rāmānuja*, the major adherent to this view, came later. That means it must also have been a contention at the time of *Śaṅkara*. Throughout the *Gītā*, the identity of the *kṣetrajña* and *Īśvara* is being unfolded; difference is not accepted at all. Therefore *sādharmya* cannot mean just similarity of virtues or attributes. It is the very nature, *svarūpa*, of *Bhagavān*, which is *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. These *munis* understand that their own *svarūpa* is also *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. Thus they recognize their essential identity with *Īśvara*. The mention of the result here is for the sake of praising this knowledge.

Further, he says that even at the time of creation they do not come into being, *sarge api na upajāyante*. Even though a countless number of people have departed from this world, they remain in other places and after dissolution are born again in different forms. When the creation manifests, some *jīvas* occupy the positions of even the presiding deities. For those who recognize their identity with *Īśvara*, however, even at the time of creation they do not come into being. They remain as *Brahman*; there is no individual at all to assume any form. Naturally then, at the time of dissolution, they are not destroyed, *pralaye na vyathanti*. When the *mahāpralaya* takes place, even *Brahmajī* loses his position as the entire creation resolves into an unmanifest condition. These sages, however, do not get destroyed even in that *mahā-pralaya* because they do not exist as individuals. They are *Brahman*.

Why, one may ask, do we use the plural here? Are there many *ātmās*? From the standpoint of *ātmā*, there is no plurality. All that is here is only one *ātmā*. But when we talk about sages we are referring to the *upādhi* in which this recognition of being *Brahman* took place for them—the forms for which there were the names *Vasiṣṭha*, *Janaka*, *Vāmadeva*, etc. Because they do not come again in other forms, we continue to call them by these names and can even worship them as *Parameśvara* because that is what they are.

When the unmanifest comes to manifest, everything that existed before *pralaya* comes into being except these sages who gained *mokṣa*. They remain as the cause of the whole thing. When the creation is destroyed they are not destroyed because the whole creation resolves into them. Therefore once ‘gained,’ there is no possibility of returning from or losing *mokṣa* because it does not ‘take place,’ that is, it is not an event in time. If it is an experience, you can recover from it. Since it is *jñāna*, it cannot be lost and its gain is only figurative.

After praising the knowledge in the first two verses, he now begins the topic of this chapter, which is, how the *prakṛti-guṇas* bind a person. First he points out the cause for all these creations.

ममैतद्ब्रह्मैतन्महात्मा तस्मिन्निवृत्तौ भवति ॥
 ततो जगत्सर्वम् ॥

*mama yonirmahadbrahma tasmin garbham dadhāmyaham
 sambhavaḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ tato bhavati bhārata*

Verse 3

ममैतद्ब्रह्म *mama yoniḥ* — My cause¹; एतद्ब्रह्म *mahat* — primordial cause; तस्मिन्निवृत्तौ *brahma* — out of which (everything) grows and which sustains (everything); ततो जगत्सर्वम् *aham garbham dadhāmi* — I impregnate; ततो भवति *tataḥ* — from that; ततो जगत्सर्वम् *sarvabhūtānām* — of all beings; ततो जगत्सर्वम् *sambhavaḥ* — the coming into being; ततो भवति *bhavati* — occurs; ततो भवति *bhārata* — O! Arjuna

My cause (is the) primordial cause out of which (everything) grows and which sustains (everything). That I impregnate. From that occurs the coming into being of all beings, *Arjuna*.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSE FROM PRAKṚTI AND PURUĀ

Here Lord *Kṛṣṇa* uses our language to reveal the coming into being of creation. For a child to be born a mother and a father are required. Similarly, in the cause of this entire world there is an intelligent cause and a material cause. We call the material cause, *prakṛti* or *māyā*. As the child is born of the mother, similarly, *prakṛti* is the material out of which this creation is born. But the mother herself cannot produce a child without a father and so too, the *prakṛti* requires an efficient cause. As for a child, for this entire creation, two causes are necessary.

Yoni is that out of which everything is born. Here it is *prakṛti*. When *Bhagavān* says *mama yoni*, he means my ‘material cause’ not in the sense of the cause of him but as the cause belonging to him. That cause, *māyā*, is non-separate from *Paramēśvara* because *māyā* itself has no independent being. *Prakṛti* is the cause of both the subtle and gross bodies of all the beings. And it is *mahad brahma*. *Mahat* is the primordial cause out of which everything has come. *Brahma* can have different meanings and here it is not *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. Etymologically it can mean both that which is big and that which sustains. Therefore here it refers to the *prakṛti*, the material cause, which grows into the entire creation. The word *yonī* is qualified by the two words, *mahat* and *brahma*. The cause out of which everything has come is *mahat*, and because of which everything grows and is sustained is *brahma*.

¹ *The word yoni is used to mean the prakṛti, the material cause. It is itself mahat, more pervasive than all its kārmas, because it is the primordial cause out of which come all the karmas and it is brahma, which sustains all the karmas. Here the words ‘mahat brahma’ qualify the word yoni.*

This cause ‘I impregnate—*ahaṃ garbhaṃ dadhāmi*,’ Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says. This impregnation, he does, by lending existence and consciousness to this *prakṛti*, so that it has the capacity to create. Thereby, *māyā* becomes the cause of creation, *jagat-kāraṇa*.

It is important to understand how different this is from *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, which proposes that *pradhāna* or *prakṛti* creates everything by itself. Here we say that *pradhāna* based in or blessed by consciousness creates. Being *mithyā*, it depends entirely upon consciousness, *Brahman*, in the sense of *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. With reference to *māyā*, *Brahman* becomes *Īśvara* the creator and therefore he says, ‘In this *māyā*, I impregnate.’ Initially, something is necessary for the creation to begin and this is expressed in other *śrutis* also. *Taittirīyopaniṣad* says, ‘He desired, *so’kāmaya*ta.’¹ Elsewhere² it says, ‘It saw—*tad aikṣata*.’ That desiring or seeing is the impregnation. Once that occurs, *māyā* is capable of undergoing all the necessary changes to become this world.

From that source is the ‘creation’ or ‘coming into being’ of all the beings and indeed the entire world, *tataḥ sambhavaḥ sarvabhūtānām*. All the various physical bodies, all the worlds arise from that alone. Therefore the whole world is now in the form of nothing but the *prakṛti*, *Parameśvara’s prakṛti*. Is it separate from *Parameśvara*? No, *Parameśvara’s* power is the *māyā-śakti* and therefore the entire creation becomes *Parameśvara*—it is *Parameśvara* from the standpoint of the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa*. When you worship a given form, the worship always goes to the intelligent cause, *nimitta-kāraṇa*. But in order to invoke that Lord, you use the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa* in a particular form, which has its own name. In this, the father is *Parameśvara* and the mother is *māyā*.

In the next verse he tells more of the father aspect of the creator.

ॐ ईदृशं सर्वं तेषां कौन्तेय
 तेषां तस्यैवाहं ब्रह्म महद्योनिः
 सार्वभौमो जगद्विप्रासृज्यते ॥४॥

sarvayoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ
tāsāṃ brahma mahadyoniraḥaṃ bījapradāḥ pitā

Verse 4

ॐ ईदृशं सर्वं तेषां कौन्तेय — O! Arjuna; ॐ ईदृशं सर्वं तेषां — in all wombs; तेषां कौन्तेय — *yāḥ mūrtayaḥ* — forms which; ॐ ईदृशं तेषां — *sambhavanti* — are born; तेषां तस्यैवाहं — for them; ब्रह्म महद्योनिः — *brahma mahadyonih* — *brahma, prakṛti*, is the original (material) cause; सार्वभौमो जगद्विप्रासृज्यते — I am; सार्वभौमो जगद्विप्रासृज्यते — *bīja-pradaḥ pitā* — the father who gives the seed

¹ *Taittirīyopaniṣad* –2-6-1

² *Chāndogyopaniṣad* –6-2-3

O! *Arjuna*, for those forms, which are born in all wombs, *brahma*, *prakṛti*, is the original (material) cause. I am the one who gives the seed, the father.

The various wombs in which these forms are born include, Śaṅkara says, the gods, the manes, human beings, domestic animals and wild animals. The forms are the entire assembly of the bodies and are called *mūrtayah* because they have limbs, which are subject to growth, *mūrchita-aṅga-avayavāḥ*. For all these forms born in various wombs, the original cause, *mahadyoni*, is *Brahman*, that which sustains everything and is the material cause for everything and therefore is called *mahat*, the biggest. If one were to ask, ‘Then, who are you?’ He says, ‘I am the father, the one who gives the seed—*ahaṁ bijapradah pitā*.’ He is the one who impregnates this *māyā* and makes it create everything. *Māyā* itself has no real existence apart from the *ātmā*, which lends existence and consciousness to it and the *ātmā* with *māyā*, that is, *Īśvara*, has omniscience, *sarvajñatva*, and omnipotence, *sarvaśaktimatva*. Whatever takes place to initiate the creation is called giving the seed and the giver of the seed is *bijapradā*. Extrapolating our knowledge of what is needed for someone to be born, in the language that we know from our experience, the cause of creation is described here in the following manner—the father, the one who gives the seed being *Parameśvara* and the mother, the material cause, being *prakṛti*.

The following verse is about the qualities of this material cause, and how they bind.

०६क ए॒षा॒ं व॒शो॒ यो॒सि॒ ई॒शे॒ मो॒क्षे॒ऽपि॒ । ए॒तानि॑ ।।
 ए॒तानि॑ च॒ न॒ भ॒वन्ति॑ ।।
sattvam rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ
nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinamavyayam

Verse 5

०६क ए॒षा॒ं व॒शो॒ यो॒सि॒ ई॒शे॒ मो॒क्षे॒ऽपि॒ । ए॒तानि॑ ।।
mahābāho — O! Long armed one, (*Arjuna*); ०६क ए॒षा॒ं व॒शो॒ यो॒सि॒ ई॒शे॒ मो॒क्षे॒ऽपि॒ । ए॒तानि॑ ।।
sattvam rajas tamas iti guṇāḥ — the qualities, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*; ।।
prakṛti-sambhavāḥ — the qualities existing in *prakṛti*; न॒ भ॒वन्ति॑
dehe — in the body; + ए॒तानि॑ ।।
avyayam — the changeless; न॒ भ॒वन्ति॑ ।।
dehinam — indweller of the body; ए॒तानि॑ ।।
nibadhnanti — bind

O! *Arjuna*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, the qualities existing in *prakṛti*, bind the changeless in dweller of the body, to the body.

THE THREE GUṂAS OF PRAKṚTI

Sattva, *rajas* and *tamas* are the three component qualities, *guṇas*, of the material cause of creation, *prakṛti*. *Guṇa* is purely a technical name given by the *śāstra* for

certain phenomena; they are not attributes as we know, like big, small, circular, green, etc., which can be perceived and are dependent upon and qualify a substance. Here the *guṇa* is not something different from *māyā*, the one who has the *guṇas*. That means *māyā* is in the form of these three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. They are its very nature, *svarūpa*. By these three *guṇas* mentioned in the *śāstra*, we are able to explain certain conditions we experience. They belong to or exist in the *prakṛti*, *prakṛti-sambhavāḥ*. Because they exist in the cause of creation, we find that their expressions manifest in the creation. An experience of *sukha*, or the gaining of knowledge is an expression of *sāttvika-prakṛti*, while desire and anger are *rājasa-prakṛti*. Dullness or delusion are *tāmasa-prakṛti*. When *prakṛti* manifests as this creation, we find that these three are also manifest in the creation.

Bhagavān says, they bind, *nibadhnanti*, and *Śaṅkara* is careful to note that they seemingly bind, *nibadhnanti iva*. If they really bind, how is it possible to get released? Later in this chapter, *Bhagavān* is going to show that you are released from all these *guṇas* simply by knowing that you are free from *guṇas*, *nirguṇa*.

We have to be very careful whenever we introduce new words of categorization or we will create new problems for ourselves. Someone who was complaining that, he was dull, will now say that he is *tāmasika* and develop a complex. If you say, you are dull, at least we can understand that, and do something about it. If you take a cup of coffee you may become more alert. But if you say, you are *tāmasika*, the problem is compounded and much more difficult to solve. We already have a tendency to categorize and label people and now we are armed with three more words either to dub ourselves or another person. All we are meant to understand here is that, everybody is a mixture of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which account for the various changes we see in our minds.

THESE GUṆAS BIND THE DEHÌ

Where do they bind? In the body, *dehe*. Whom? The one who indwells the body—*dehinam*, who does not undergo any change—*avyayam*. These *guṇas* seemingly bind the one that does not die, who is always in the same form. Why seemingly? Because the bondage is only due to ignorance. The entire *prakṛti* is *mithyā* and therefore, from the standpoint of *ātmā*, there is no *prakṛti* at all and its *guṇas* only seemingly bind, *nibadhnanti iva*.

Further, when the existence of these three *guṇas* depends upon *ātmā*, how can they, at the same time, bind *ātmā*? Only when the person does not know that these are the *guṇas*, the expressions of *prakṛti*, do they bind him. They do not belong to him. Without the discriminative knowledge of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*, these *guṇas* do bind and with that knowledge, they do not.

Śaṅkara explains the word *mahābāho* that *Kṛṣṇa* uses to address *Arjuna* here. He gives two meanings, the one who has long hands or the one who has capable hands. *Arjuna* was an archer of very great skill and thus a *mahābāhu*. Also, When he let his arms hang by his sides, his hands extended up to the knees. This is an indication that he is a person of special abilities in warfare, etc.

When this *ātmā* does not undergo any change, because, as was shown in the thirteenth chapter, it is beginningless and without attributes, *anāditvāt*, *nirguṇatvāt*, how can anything bind it? In fact, nothing can; but because of *avidyā*, what is not possible becomes possible. The infinite, eternal *ātmā* apparently becomes finite and time-bound. The *ātmā* that is free from *guṇas* seems to be bound by them all; this is because of *avidyā*. *Avidyā*, *māyā*, can accomplish what is impossible. In the work called *Māyā-pañcakam*, the refrain is, *ūghaṭita-ghaṭanā paṭiyasī māyā—māyā* is capable of making what cannot be made.’ Therefore, all these *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, seem to bind the person who indwells this body—*dehinaṃ nibadhnanti*.

One by one he now defines each of the *guṇas*. Though these are all *guṇas*, among them there is difference as there is among gems. Every gem is a precious stone but there is a difference between a sapphire and an emerald. As we proceed, there is going to be a lot of discussion on these *guṇas* here and in subsequent chapters. *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are words introduced by the *śāstra* and therefore have to be defined by that same *śāstra*. In the next verse, *sattva* is defined.

īējē oēk ēāēēē ēōmō ēēīēā | ēēōēēēō ēēēē ēāē ēā
oēōēōēōēē ēēēēēēēē ēēēēēēēē ēēēēēēēē | ēēēēēēēē | ११ |

tatra sattvaṃ nirmalatvāt prakāśakamanāmayam
sukhasaṅgena badhnāti jñānasaṅgena cānagha

Verse 6

+xēpē *anagha* — O! Sinless one (*Arjuna*); īējē *tatra* — there (among these); oēk ēē ēā *sattvam* — *sattva*; ēēē ēōmō ēēīēā *nirmalatvāt* — because it is pure; | ēēōēēēō ēā *prakāśakam* — (is) illuminating; +xēē ēāē ēā *anāmayam* — (is) without affliction; oēōēōēōēē *sukhasaṅgena* — by connection to pleasure; ēēēēēēēē ēēēē *jñāna-saṅgena ca* — and connection to knowledge; ēēēēēēēē *badhnāti* — binds

O! Sinless one (*Arjuna*), there (among these), *sattva*, which is illuminating and without affliction because it is pure, binds by connection to pleasure and connection to knowledge.

SATTVA EXPRESSES AS AND BINDS THROUGH PLEASURE AND KNOWLEDGE

Tatra means ‘among these three qualities.’ Now firstly let us take *sattva*. It is defined here as *anāmaya*, without affliction, because it is free from any kind of impurity—*nirmalatvāt*. *Sattva* is able to reflect consciousness very clearly, it is *prakāśaka*, and therefore endows one with the capacity for clear knowledge. Being *anāmaya*, without any affliction, it allows one to see without any confusion. Whenever you are able to see things clearly, you must know it is an expression of *sattva*. Besides clear knowledge, *sukha* is also an expression of *sattva*. Whenever you are cheerful or experience a pleasurable moment, *sattva* is predominant. Though these are desirable experiences, *Bhagavān* does not fail to point out here that they too are binding. *Sattva* binds by giving the person the experience of *sukha*, a quality belonging to *sattva*, whereby he takes himself to be a *sukhī*, and says ‘I am happy.’ Because the experience of *sukha*, like any experience, cannot remain, he is priming himself for the conclusion, ‘I am unhappy.’ Whenever you are happy or peaceful, it is due to a *vṛtti* in the *antaḥ-karaṇa* accounted for by the predominance of *sattva*, but like any *vṛtti*, it is time bound. *Sukha* is an object of an experience in the mind. When it is superimposed upon the *ātmā* it gives rise to the conclusion, ‘I am happy.’ Being happy is not inherently a problem; but it becomes a bondage because it is not totally true. The *sukha* in the *vṛtti* is a property of *sattva* in as much as, it is dependent upon the predominance of *sattva* in the mind. The nature of *sattva* is such that it reflects, or does not obstruct the *ānanda*, the fullness that is the real nature of individual, and makes a certain *sukha* manifest in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. And later the manifestation of *sukha* diminishes, as it inevitably must. This is *saṃsāra*.

This kind of *sukha* is always connected to an object. If there is a reason for a person becoming happy—because he got this or got rid of that—he has ignorance, *avidyā*. When somebody is happy without any reason, he is either a madman or a wise man. Even the madman has some object in his mind, so only the wise man is truly happy without a reason. As long as there is an answer for the question, ‘Why,’ there is superimposition of *sukha* on the self.

Similarly, if there is ignorance, the self which is *akartā*, free from any action, is mistaken for an agent, *kartā*. And when *sattva* is predominant, being a knower, *pramātā*, is superimposed upon the *ātmā*. In this way *sattva* also binds through a connection with knowledge, *jñāna-saṅgena*. *Śaṅkara* says further, that, in order to gain *sukha*, there must first be some knowledge. Either you perceive something and therefore are happy or infer and become happy. Either way, some knowledge is necessary for you to gain happiness and that *vṛtti-jñāna* is also a bondage. And no matter what you know, you also know that you are not omniscient, all-knowing; so, the sense of being a knower is always going to be attended by a sense of limitation. That limitation is bondage. Thus,

knowledge takes place because *sattva* is predominant but same *sattva* binds through this connection with knowledge.

Even in a mind which has primarily *sattva* predominant, there are times when *rajas* and *tamas* become predominant. Every *antaḥ-karaṇa* has all three *guṇas* and every *guṇa* binds you, as it were. If one knows that knowledge is a property of the mind and not *ātmā* but that the nature of *ātmā* is pure consciousness and therefore has no ignorance of anything, then *sattva*, by association with *jñāna* is not binding. In terms of *sukha*, *ātmā* is *sukha-svarūpa* and does not become *sukhī* at any time. If, with reference to an object, a mind does not deny the nature of *ātmā*, which is *ānanda*, that mind, we understand, has a predominance of *sattva*.

Then who has become the *sukhī*? If you say ‘I am happy,’ with the understanding that it is your essential nature, then there is no problem. But if you say, ‘I have become happy,’ that is definitely a bondage. It implies the superimposition of the attributes of the mind upon the self. *Ātmā* does not become *sukhī*; so, the notion that, one is now happy, is due to ignorance and is a bondage. Even though *ātmā* is in the form of *sukha*, it is mistaken as one who is now *sukhī*. Similarly, even though *ātmā* is in the form of pure knowledge, it is mistaken for a particular knowledge that is opposed to ignorance and attributed to a knower. *Ātmā* is no more opposed to ignorance than it is to knowledge. If it were opposed to ignorance, it would not be possible to have ignorance. This fact is contrary to our experience. Surely we all know that we are ignorant of many things.

Now he defines *rajas*.

ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां
 ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां ॐ ईशां

rajo rāgātmaṇṇam viddhi tṛṣṇāsaṅgasamudbhavam
tannibadhnāti kaunteya karmasaṅgena dehinam

Verse 7

kaunteya — O! Son of *Kuntī*; *rajas viddhi* — may you know *rajas*; *rāgātmaṇṇam* — to be in the form of a colouring (of the mind); *tṛṣṇā-āsaṅga-samudbhavam* — to be cause of longing and well entrenched attachment; *tat* — that; *dehinam* — the indweller of the body; *karma-saṅgena* — by connection with action; *nibadhnāti* — completely binds

O! Son of *Kuntī*, *rajas*, may you know, is in the form of a colouring (of the mind), causing longing and well entrenched attachment. By connection with action, that completely binds the indweller of the body.

RAJAS EXPRESSES AS AND BINDS THROUGH LONGING AND ATTACHMENT

Rajas which, literally means dust, is defined technically here as that, whose nature is in the form of *rāga*, *rāgātmaka*. *Rāga* is a disposition towards something that pleases and entices you such that it colours the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. Śaṅkara says, it is like red chalk used for dyeing cloth. When the original cloth is white, why should you dye it? Only to make it attractive. Similarly, *rāga* completely colours the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, and sticks to it also like how the dye sticks to the cloth. Once you have a *rāga*, it will not easily leave you.

This *rāga* expresses as two things. One is longing, *trṣṇā*, the other is excessive attachment, *āsaṅga*. Śaṅkara explains *trṣṇā* as longing for an object that you do not have and want very badly. There are many objects in the world most of which we do not care for. But certain things loom large in the mind as desirable and this disposition towards them is what we call *rāga* born of *trṣṇā*. It can be with reference to things that are visible, *drṣṭa* and those that are not, *adrṣṭa*, such as heaven. Then again, if we hold on to something we have with an apprehension that we may lose it, that is also *rāga* born of *āsaṅgi*. There are many things, which we cannot happily part with, even when the time comes. If losing something leaves a void, that is *āsaṅgi*. It is not mere attachment, *sakti*, but a desperate holding on to the objects, that is *āsaṅgi*.

This expression of *rajas* also binds, *nibadhnāti*. Note that the Lord has said *nibadhnāti* here, whereas for *sattva* he said, *badhnāti*. With *sattva* there is culture, sophistication, learning and a certain maturity in which there is bondage, a refined bondage. *Rajas*, however gives rise to a more deeply entrenched bondage and therefore he has said *nibadhnāti*. This bondage is further confused because it leads to *karma*. Once there is *trṣṇā* and *āsaṅgi*, you have to do actions, whether what you want is seen, *drṣṭa*, or unseen, *adrṣṭa*. In the process of doing these *karmas*, not only proper actions will be done but also the improper ones too, which will attract *pāpa*. The pressure of *rāga* makes it impossible to avoid actions. The expression of *rajas* is therefore in the form of *karma* and through this it totally binds the person. Because of *karma* there is *punya* and *pāpa*, and because of that, there is further birth. Because of the birth there is further *karma* and the cycle goes on. Therefore one is completely bound by this *rajas*.

The *rāga* itself, which includes both likes and dislikes, is also binding. Even though *ātma* is free from doership and enjoyership, if one identifies with the *rāga*, which is purely a mental disposition, both get superimposed upon the self and one suffers a sense of bondage.

Then lastly,

īē'ēōi'ēvēēēvēēē ēē'ū'ēēēēēē'ēēōō'ēē'ēā
 |ē'ēēnām'ō'ēēēpēē;ēō'ēēēēēēēēēēēē |ēē'ēē | | | |
tamastvajñānajaṃ viddhi mohanaṃ sarvadehinām
pramādālasyanidrābhistannibadhnāti bhārata Verse 8

|ēē'ēē *bhārata* — O! Descendent of *Bharata* (*Arjuna*); īē'ēōēā īēōē ēē'ū *tamas tu viddhi* — and *tamas*, may you know; + Yēēēēēē ēā *ajñānajaṃ* — to be born of ignorance; ēēēēēē ēā *mohanam* — to be that, which causes delusion; ēē'ēōō'ēē ēā *sarva-dehinām* — for all those who have bodies; īēīēā *tat* — that; |ē'ēēnū + ēē'ō'ēē'ēēpēē; ēā *pramāda-ālasya-nidrābhiḥ* — by indifference, slothfulness and sleep; ēēēēēēēēēēēē *nibadhnāti* — completely binds

O! Descendent of *Bharata* (*Arjuna*), *tamas*, may you know, is born of ignorance and causes delusion for all those who have bodies. It binds (the person) completely by indifference, slothfulness and sleep.

TAMAS EXPRESSES AS AND BINDS THROUGH INDIFFERENCE, SLOTHFULNESS AND SLEEP

Here he says that *tamas* is born of ignorance, *ajñānaja*. When everything, including *sattva* and *rajas*, is born of *ajñāna*, why specifically mention *tamas* here? This *ajñāna* is called *tūla-avidyā*, not the *mūla-avidyā* with reference to *ātmā*, which is common to all. Whether a person has predominantly *sattva* or *rajas*, he is ignorant until he knows the nature of the self. What is discussed here is not this self-ignorance, *mūla-avidyā*, but ignorance regarding what is to be done and what is not to be done. It is the simple discrimination between right and wrong, *dharma-adharma-viveka*, that is lacking. The person who has *rajas* has a better idea of what is right and wrong because he is interested in pursuing success and *sukha*. When *tamas* predominates, the person is not able to use his intellect, *buddhi*, at all. Because of that, there is delusion, *moha*. Things appear different from what they are. There is no sense of what is right and wrong; everything seems to be all right even when it is not. This is true for all those who have a body, *sarva-dehinām*. For all *jīvas*, *tamas* creates delusion and therefore, it is called *mohanaṃ sarvadehinām*. Value structures and priorities become confused and distorted.

Tamas binds with its manifestations. One of these is *pramāda*, incapacity to do what one knows is to be done. In a situation that clearly calls for an action on one's part, one is not able to act. If his shirt has a small tear he will not mend it but when it falls apart, he will lament loudly. This is *ālasya*, apathy or slothfulness, which obstructs the

fulfilment of a *rāga*. The *rāga* is pressuring him to act but *ālasya* prevents him from doing anything. Nothing is so urgent that he has to do it now. Everything can be done tomorrow. Even cooking is a problem for him. He will cook for one week and keep eating the same thing. This is a problem stemming from *tamas*. Another manifestation of *tamas* is sleep. If it is predominant, a person will sleep too much. Also, if you are overcome by inertia, you are going to look for short-cuts and all sorts of wrong actions are inevitable. By these manifestations, *tamas* seems to bind *ātmā*. It only ‘seems’ to bind, however, because *ātmā* does not sleep or become apathetic or procrastinate. It is free from *guṇas*.

The expressions of the *guṇas* are now briefly restated in the next verse.

ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता
 य॒ज्ञे॒ना॒व॒र॒त्या॒ तु॒ त॒मा॒ह॑ प्र॒म॒ा॒दे॒ सा॒ण्ण॑य॒त्या॒ य॒ता॑ ॥

sattvaṃ sukhe sañjayati rajas karmāṇi bhārata
jñānamāvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayatyuta

Verse 9

ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — O! *Bhārata*; ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — *sattvaṃ* — *sattva*; ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — in the form of pleasure; ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — *sañjayati* — binds; ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — *rajas* — *rajas*; ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — in the form of action; ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — *tamas tu* — but *tamas*; ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — *jñānam āvṛtya* — covering knowledge; ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — *pramāde* — in the form of apathy; ॐ॒क॑ ई॒ष्ट॒वै॒रा॒स॒त्त्व॑सु॒खे॒ व॒र॒ज॑सु॒क॒र्मा॑नि॒ भ॒र॑ता — *uta sañjayati* — indeed binds

O! *Bhārata*, *sattva* binds in the form of pleasure, *rajas* in the form of action. But *tamas*, covering knowledge, binds indeed in the form of apathy.

Sattva-guṇa binds by impelling one in the pursuit of *sukha* and by giving *sukha* also. *Rajas* binds a person in the form of action. But *tamas*, it is emphasized here, binds having covered one's capacity to discriminate. The discriminative knowledge born of *sattva* regarding what is to be done or not to be done is completely covered by *tamas*, the nature of which is to cover or envelop in darkness. It commits a person to a life of indifference, not doing things that are to be done. Every day there are situations in which one is called upon to act whether one likes it or not. A person who is overwhelmed by *tamas* will more often than not, be unable to do what is required of him. That is how *tamas* binds him.

When everyone is a mixture of these three *guṇas*, why is there the manifestation of a given *guṇa*? That is because one becomes predominant over the other two. This predominance can be occasional or more or less established. One person may be more or less *tāmasika*, another predominantly *rājasika* or *sāttvika*. No one is endowed with only one *guṇa* as we see that even the *tāmasika* person has knowledge and therefore

enjoys the predominance of *sattva* occasionally. When do the *guṇas* execute their stated effect? The rule for that is told in the next verse.

ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥

ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥

rajastamaścābhibhūya sattvaṃ bhavati bhārata

rajaḥ sattvaṃ tamaścaiva tamaḥ sattvaṃ rajastathā

Verse 10

ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ — O! *Bhārata* ; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *sattvam* — *sattva*; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *rajas* *tamas ca abhibhūya* — overwhelming *rajas* and *tamas*; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *bhavati* — arises; B ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *eva* — and indeed; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *rajas* — *rajas*; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *sattvam tamas ca* (*abhibhūya*) — (overwhelming) *sattva* and *tamas*; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *bhavati* — arises; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *tathā tamas* — so too *tamas*; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *sattvam rajas* (*abhibhūya*) — (overwhelming) *sattva* and *rajas*; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒१०॒ ॥ *bhavati* — arises)

O! *Bhārata*, *sattva* arises overwhelming *rajas* and *tamas*. And indeed *rajas* (arises overwhelming) *tamas* and *sattva*. So too, *tamas* (arises overwhelming) *rajas* and *sattva*.

Śaṅkara says, *bhavati*, means *udbhavati*—it arises, or it means, *vardhate*—it increases. One *guṇa* becomes predominant, overwhelming the other two. When a given *guṇa* becomes predominant, its own product begins to manifest. When *sattva* predominates, its effects like cheerfulness, knowledge, *śama*, *dama*, adherence to values, etc., appear. Similarly *rajas* produces desires because of which, one undertakes action. And when *rajas* and *sattva* are overpowered, *tamas* arises and produces its results like dullness, apathy, sleep and so on. From these effects, we infer, which *guṇa* is predominant.

From a different standpoint he points out the same thing in the next verses.

ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥

ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥

sarvadvāreṣu dehe'sminprakāśa upajāyate

jñānaṃ yadā tadā vidyādvivṛddhaṃ sattvamityuta

Verse 11

ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *yadā* — when; + ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *asmin dehe* — in this body; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *sarvadvāreṣu* — in all the sense organs; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *prakāśaḥ* — illumination; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *jñānam* — (which is) knowledge; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *upajāyate* — is born; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *tadā* — then; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *sattvam vivṛddham* — *sattva* has increased; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *ityuta* — thus indeed; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒न्नि॒रा॒ज॒स॒स॒त्त्व॒मि॒ति॒ श॒भ॒व॒ति॒ ।॒११॒ ॥ *vidyāt* — may one know

When illumination, which is knowledge, is born in all the sense organs, in this body, then may one know indeed that *sattva* has increased.

KNOWING THE PREDOMINANCE OF SATTVA

Sarvadvāreṣu literally means, ‘with reference to all the gates.’ Śaṅkara clarifies the meaning by saying, that, these are all the gates of knowledge like the ears and so on; in other words, all the sense organs. A light, *prakāśa*, which Śaṅkara defines as a particular *vr̥tti* in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, arises in all the sense organs in this physical body. This is the light of awareness, otherwise called knowledge, that arises through these sense organs. Because there is alertness and concentration, this knowledge is born. This becomes the basis to infer that *sattva* is predominant. This happens for everybody, even the person in whom *tamas* is primary.

Then the indication of *rajas* being predominant is told in the next verse.

ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः कर्माणामासामाह स्पृहा
 ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः कर्माणामासामाह स्पृहा ॥१२॥

*lobhaḥ pravṛttirārambhaḥ karmaṇāmaśamaḥ sprhā
 rajasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha*

Verse 12

ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः कर्माणामासामाह स्पृहा — O! Foremost in the line of *Bharata* (*Arjuna*); ॐ लोभाः *lobhaḥ* — greed; ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः *pravṛttiḥ* — physical restlessness; ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः कर्माणामासामाह *karmaṇām ārambhaḥ* — undertaking of activities; ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः कर्माणामासामाह *asamaḥ* — mental restlessness; ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः कर्माणामासामाह *sprhā* — longing; ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः कर्माणामासामाह *etāni* — these; ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः कर्माणामासामाह *rajasi vivṛddhe* — when *rajas* has increased; ॐ लोभाः प्रवृत्तिर्ऋणः कर्माणामासामाह *jāyante* — are born

O! Foremost in the line of *Bharata*, greed, physical restlessness, undertaking of activities, mental restlessness, longing—these are born when *rajas* has increased.

KNOWING THE PREDOMINANCE OF RAJAS

When *rajas* is predominant these effects of *rajas* become manifest. *Lobha* is a desire to have the things that belong to others and it can also be miserliness with reference to one's own wealth. The very desire to appropriate somebody's wealth, the very thought of encroachment is called *lobha*. Once you develop greed, *lobha*, your thinking changes to justify it. This is *rajas*. Another manifestation of *rajas* is meaningless activity, *pravṛtti*, like fidgeting, making knots and undoing them for no reason, nail-biting and so on. A deliberate calculated undertaking to accomplish a given end, *ārambha*, is also a product of *rajas*. Even in a *sāttvika* person *rajas* can become predominant at a given time because of which varieties of activities take place. In this

to make you responsible for what you did before and what you are doing now, not to justify your incapacity to do what you are supposed to do.

THE SUBSEQUENT GATI IS BASED ON THE GUŪA PREDOMINANT AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Gītā goes on to say that a person suffers from the effects of the *guṇas* not only in this life but in subsequent lives. If *sattva* is predominant, he is going to be better off in this life and also in the next one. Similarly, if *rajas* or *tamas* are predominant their effects will not only be felt in this life but will be influential in determining the nature of the next life. The result that the departed soul will gain is also born of *guṇas*.

Therefore, *Bhagavān* says:

ॐ एतुं इति यदा तु प्रलयं यति देहभ्रत
तदुत्तमविदामं लोकानमलान् प्रतिपद्यते ॥१४॥

*yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu pralayaṃ yāti dehabhṛt
tadottamavidāṃ lokānamalān pratipadyate*

Verse 14

ॐ एतुं इति *yadā tu* — when; ॐ एतुं इति *sattve pravṛddhe* — when *sattva* has increased; नृशरीरं *dehabhṛt* — the one who obtains in the body (the embodied one); इति *pralayaṃ yāti* — goes to dissolution, that is, dies; इति *tadā* — then; =के ॐ एतुं इति *uttamavidāṃ* — of those who know the highest; + इति *lokānamalān lokān* — worlds that are free from impurity; इति *pratiipadyate* — he gains

When the embodied one dies, when *sattva* has increased, then he gains the worlds that are free from impurity, of those who know the highest.

Dehabhṛt, the one who obtains in this body, is the *jīva*. *Tu* in the verse is to distinguish *sattva* among the three *guṇas*. If his life had been predominantly *sāttvika*, then *sattva* will predominate at the time of death. Even if people are reciting ‘*Nārāyaṇa*,’ into his ear at the hour of his death, if he has been *rājasika* all his life, he will only think of Narayana Iyer who owes him some money. The type of thinking that has dominated your life all along will prevail at the end too. This verse is referring to a person who has lived a *sāttvika* life. Therefore, *yadā pralayaṃ yāti*, when he dies, *sattve pravṛddhe*, with *sattva* being predominant, then he goes to *amalān lokān*, worlds which are not fraught with pain, like heaven. As everyone must, he has matured to become *sāttvika* and naturally when he dies, he goes to the worlds of those who know the highest—*uttama-vidāṃ lokān pratipadyate*.

These are the gods like *Indra* who, *Śaṅkara* says, know the truth of this whole creation.

What is the lot of a person who dies when *rajas* or *tamas* is predominant?

वृष्टो राजसिद्धो एतन्मृतो कर्माङ्गिषु जयते

इति तथैव तमसिद्धो प्रलिनो मुद्घयनिषु जयते ॥१५॥

rajasi pralayam gatvā karmasaṅgiṣu jāyate
tathā pralinastamasi mūḍhayoniṣu jāyate

Verse 15

वृष्टो (इन्द्रो *rajasi (pravṛddhe)* — when *rajas* is predominant; सिद्धो *pralayam gatvā* — having died; एतन्मृतो *karmasaṅgiṣu* — among those committed to *karma*; जयते — he is born; इति *tathā* — so too; तथैव (इन्द्रो *tamasi (pravṛddhe)* — when *tamas* was predominant; प्रलिनो *pralīnaḥ* — the one who has died; मुद्घयनिषु *mūḍhayoniṣu* — in the wombs of those who have no discriminative faculty; जयते — is born

Having died, when *rajas* is predominant, he is born among those committed to *karma*; so too the one who died when *tamas* was predominant is born in the wombs of those who have no discriminative faculty.

When, *rajas* was predominant in one's life, *rajas* alone will predominate at the time of death. Such a person for whom *rajas* is predominant at the time of death, is born among those who are committed to *karma*—*karma-saṅgiṣu jāyate*. These are the human beings committed to various means for achieving various ends, either here or in other worlds.

So too, the one who died when *tamas* was predominant is born in the wombs of creatures who are steeped in delusion, like the animals. In the animal forms, *tamas* is always predominant and because of that they lack self-consciousness and all its accompanying problems. A dog, for example, even though it is given an abundance of dog food, will not hoard it because it has only a rudimentary sense of future and therefore no greed. Human beings alone have this concern for the future. They go on accumulating wealth not only for their own future but also for that of their children. This is all due to the predominance of *rajas*. Every human being has enough *sattva* to make him self-conscious, and enough *rajas* and *tamas* to cause confusion.

From this we understand that we can make one *guṇa* predominant over the other two. Cultivating values and discipline, called *yoga*, helps to make *sattva* predominant. The whole process of growth is nothing but making *sattva* predominant over the other two *guṇas*. Then it is easy to become one who is, *guṇātīta*, beyond the *guṇas*, which is to know very clearly that one is not bound by *guṇas*.

Now he briefly summarizes what has been said in the last few verses.

ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं ; ॐ ईदं ईदं
ॐ ईदं ईदं ; ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं ; ॐ ईदं ईदं । १६ ।।

*karmanah sukrtasyāhuh sāttvikam nirmalam phalam
rajasastu phalam duḥkhamajñānam tamasaḥ phalam*

Verse 16

ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं *sukrtasya karmanah* — for the good actions done; ; ॐ ईदं ईदं *phalam* — the result (is); ॐ ईदं ईदं *sāttvikam* — *sāttvika* (connected to *sattva*); ईदं ईदं *nirmalam* — (and) pure (free from any distress); ॐ ईदं ईदं *rajasah tu* — but of *rajas*; ; ॐ ईदं ईदं *phalam* — the result; नदं ईदं *duḥkham* (is) pain; ईदं ईदं ; ॐ ईदं ईदं *tamasaḥ phalam* — the result of *tamas*; + ईदं ईदं *ajñānam* — (is) ignorance

They say, that the result for the good action done is *sāttvika* (connected to *sattva*) and *nirmala* (pure, a result that is free from any distress). But pain is the result of *rajas* and ignorance is the result of *tamas*.

Those who are learned say, *āhuh*, the following. When the action done is good, the result is *sāttvika*, that is, born of *sattva* and *nirmala*, pure, devoid of distress. All his life he has done all the *vihita-karmas* that are enjoined by the Vedas and has done the *kāmya-karmas* for collecting *puṇya*, again as prescribed in the Vedas. All these are good actions born of *sattva*. Therefore the result is also *sāttvika*. As a result of this, he enjoys a relative freedom from pain in this life. And after he dies, he enjoys a world free from pain called heaven. He remains in those *lokas* for a length of time.

The result of a *karma* born of *rajas*, on the other hand, is *duḥkha*. A person who is impelled by *rajas* is under great pressure and because of that, he cannot always follow the right means. Naturally he will incur *pāpa*. When *rajas* is predominant, *pāpa* is unavoidable. Therefore due to the pressure and also the *pāpa-karma*, he will have *duḥkha* in the form of varieties of discomforts.

The result of the actions born of *tamas* is ignorance, *ajñāna*. One is born in forms which have only rudimentary knowledge. Even to experience oneself as a *saṃsārī* is better than being a *saṃsārī* and not knowing it. A cow is also a *saṃsārī*; but because she does not know it, she cannot get out of *saṃsāra*. Such births are the result of a life of *karmas* governed predominantly by *tamas*. That is the *ajñāna* here.

What else comes from these *guṇas*?

ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं ॐ ईदं ईदं B ईदं ईदं
ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं ईदं । १७ ।।

*sattvāt sañjāyate jñānam rajaso lobha eva ca
pramādamohau tamaso bhavato'jñānameva ca*

Verse 17

Those staying in *sattva* go higher up, those belonging to *rajas* remain in the middle and those belonging to *tamas*, having the nature of the lowest *guṇa*, go down.

Those who live a life influenced primarily by *sattva-guṇa*, doing what is to be done, avoiding what is not to be done, are those who are *sattvastha*, situated in *sattva*. Such people, after death, are born in *lokas* which are superior in the sense that there is more happiness. There they are endowed with a body-mind-sense-complex that can tap greater degrees of happiness than this human body. In this life too they enjoy a greater degree of happiness but what is referred to here is an after-life in which they are definitely better off.

In the middle, *madhye*, is the world of human beings or their equivalent, where those whose lives have been dictated by *rajas*, are born.

And the *guṇa* at the bottom, *jaghanya*, is *tamas*. Those whose lives have been controlled by *tamas* go to the lowest, the undesirable. *Rajas* is in-between because the person who is *rājasika* can become *sāttvika* or *tāmasika*. The person who is *tāmasika*, however, cannot become *sāttvika* straightaway, but have to become *rājasika* at first. The *vr̥tta*, the expressed condition of *tamogūṇa*, is sleepiness, procrastination, laziness, apathy and so on, as we have seen. Those who live that kind of life go to births that are lower in nature, like those of the animals.

This is said to praise the *sattvagūṇa*, so that, we will make effort to cultivate it for our growth. But then it must be borne in mind that *sattva* also is a bondage, as are *rajas* and *tamas*. How is one to get rid of the bondage of the *guṇas*?

ASSOCIATION WITH GUṂAS IS BONDAGE, TO BE FREE OF GUṂAS IS MOKᄂA

In the previous chapter, while discussing *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, it had been said that the cause of a given birth is the association with the *guṇas*. The association between the individual person and the *guṇas* is due to false knowledge, *mithyā-jñāna* and because of this, the *puruṣa* appears to be connected to the *prakṛti*. As a result, he experiences himself as sorrowful, deluded, etc., not knowing that *ānanda* is the truth of himself. These various experiences are the expressions of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Being lost in them, a person says, ‘I am happy, sad, deluded, etc.,’ instead of, ‘I am *Brahman*.’ Even though *ātmā* is *asaṅga*, because of erroneous understanding, it appears to be associated with all these modifications of the *guṇas*. That is the cause of the various desirable and undesirable births. This was briefly stated in the previous chapter and has been elaborated here in this chapter.

Having explained in detail how, due to erroneous knowledge, these *guṇas* seem to bind, *Kṛṣṇa* now turns his attention on how to free oneself from this bondage. This is the

purpose of the chapter. Though the understanding of different types of behaviour as expressions of the *guṇas* and the striving to enhance *sattvagūṇa* is useful, *śāstra* is not interested in leaving the person bound with *sattvagūṇa*. He has to know how to be free of that too. This is said in the next verse.

खेँखँएँअमोँएँ& एोँएँएँएँ एँोँ प्यँोँखँ(एँ)एँएँ*
 मेँोँएँएँ (एँ)एँ एँकेँ "É' ङ' एँएँएँएँएँएँएँसुँोँÉ' | १९ | |

nānyam guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṃ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati
guṇebhyaśca param vetti madbhāvaṃ so'dhigacchati

Verse 19

एँोँ *yadā* — when; प्यँोँ *draṣṭā* — the seer; मेँोँएँएँ *guṇebhyaḥ* — apart from the *guṇas*;
 +खँएँ एँएँएँएँ *anyam kartāram* — another agent; खँ +खँ(एँ)एँएँ *na anupaśyati* — does
 not see; सँ *ca* — and; मेँोँएँएँ (एँ)एँ एँकेँ *guṇebhyaḥ param vetti* — knows (himself as)
 beyond the *guṇas*; एँ *sah* — he; "É' ङ' एँ *madbhāvam* — My nature; +É'É'É'É'É'É'
adhigacchati — gains

When the seer does not see an agent other than the *guṇas*; and when he
 knows (himself as) beyond the *guṇas*; he gains (understands) My nature.

THERE IS NO AGENT OTHER THAN THE GUṂAS

Paśyati means ‘he sees’ and with the prefix *anu* it means he sees clearly in
 keeping with the *śāstra*, as taught by the teacher. As it is unfolded the person is able to
 see because *śāstra* is a *pramāṇa* in the hands of one who knows its meaning as the truth
 of himself. Being a means of knowledge in the form of words, when the meaning of the
 words is understood as it is meant to be understood, that is all that is required. With this
 understanding he sees that there is no agent other than the *guṇas*. Therefore, he does not
 see the *ātmā* as the agent, *kartā*.

Action is done by the body-mind-sense-complex which is born of *māyā* consisting
 of the three *guṇas*. It requires not only the agent but all the accessories for the
 completion of the action which are again objects that consist of modifications of the
 three *guṇas*. And all the three states, waking, dream, and deep sleep, and their
 expressions, are nothing but the *guṇas*.

Here, the word *yadā*, ‘when,’ does not indicate that this is an event. *Śaṅkara*
 makes this clear by saying, ‘The seer, being wise.’ Being awake to the nature of the
ātmā, the self, which performs no action, he sees that there is no agent other than the
guṇas. Previously *Bhagavān* said that the one who knows the truth, *tattvavit*, knows
 that even while seeing, hearing, etc., he performs no action and the actions are nothing
 but movement of the *guṇas* among the *guṇas*—*guṇāḥ guṇeṣu vartante*.

The important thing here is that, he is very clear about the nature of the self. Otherwise, even though the *guṇas* do everything, if he considers himself associated with them, he is going to be affected by their actions. A father whose son is a criminal is very much affected even though he knows that his son, not he, committed the crimes. In order to avoid this misconception about the self and the activities of the *guṇas*, *Bhagavān* says that when one knows himself as above all the *guṇas—yadā guṇebhyaḥ ca paraṃ vetti—*he is not affected by what the *guṇas* do. While being that because of which *guṇas* can function, he himself is not affected by their activities. This is similar to space which accommodates everything but does not get sullied by what happens in space. *Śaṅkara* says, he knows himself as the witness of the activities of the *guṇas*. The one who performs no action always remains in the form of witness.

Bhagavān says, the result for such a person is that, he gains the nature of ‘Being Myself,’ that is *Īśvara-bhāva*. That nature of being ‘Myself’ is the cause for everything and yet transcends everything. He is no longer separate from *Īśvara*. The statement, ‘*tat tvam asi*—you are that,’ is a reality for him. He assimilates that statement completely and is able to say, ‘I am that,’ knowing that the agent, *kartā*, exists because of him, but he is not the *kartā*. A person to whom this is clear is one with the Lord.

How does the individual, *jīva*, become one with the Lord?

नेहोह्यात्तत्रैतानि ते जेहानां नारुणैर्णो उह्यात्

वेहैर्णोह्यात्तत्रैतानि ते जेहानां नारुणैर्णो उह्यात् ॥२०॥

guṇānetānatīya trīndehī dehasamudbhavān

janmamṛtyujarāduḥkhaiṛvimukto mṛtamaśnute

Verse 20

naḍā *dehī* — the embodied one; *Bihyā* *etān* — these; *jeheā* *nehyā* *trīn* *guṇān* — three *guṇas*; *naḍā* *dehī* *deha-samudbhavān* — that are the cause of the body; + *te* *atīya* — crossing over; *veḥ* *jarā* *duḥkhaiḥ* — from birth, death, old age, and sorrow; *ē* *vimuktaḥ* — released; + *amṛtam aśnute* — gains immortality

Crossing these three *guṇas*, that are the cause of the body, the embodied one, released from birth, death, old age and sorrow, gains immortality.

ONE WHO CROSSES THE GUṆAS IS FREE FROM BIRTH, DEATH, OLD AGE AND SORROW

These three *guṇas* are the causes for the creation of this body-mind-sense-complex. That being so how is it possible to get rid of them while in this body? The beauty is, *ātmā* is already free from all of them. So in crossing or going beyond these *guṇas*, there is no movement involved. It is just knowing the self to be free from all

O! Lord, by what characteristics does he become (recognizable as) one who has crossed these three *guṇas*? What (is his) conduct, and how does he transcend these three *guṇas*?

Arjuna wants to know by what indications he can recognize the person who has transcended these three *guṇas*. And further, what is his conduct, *ācāra*? This is a more general way of asking what he had already asked before. He had asked in the second chapter while asking about the *sthitaprajña*, ‘How would he sit? Would he sit? How would he walk? Would he walk? How would he speak? Would he speak?’ Here he asks an important question in addition. And that is, ‘How does he transcend these three *guṇas*?’ Is there a way out? Even though there are three questions, *Śāṅkara* reduces them to two. The first two are with reference to a description or a way of recognizing a wise man. The third refers to the means of transcending these *guṇas*.

In reply to the first part of this question the Lord says,

ॐ; ए॒मे॒ ए॒वे॒दो॒षे॒स॒*
 ज॒ए॒दो॒षे॒स॒ ज॒ए॒के॒ स॒ ए॒वे॒दो॒षे॒स॒ ज॒ए॒दो॒षे॒स॒*
 ख॒ ए॒वो॒०॑ ज॒ए॒दो॒षे॒स॒ ख॒ ए॒वे॒दो॒षे॒स॒ ए॒दो॒षा॒नि॒ ई॒ति॒ ॥२२॥

śrībhagavān uvāca

prakāśaṃ ca pravṛttiṃ ca mohameva ca pāṇḍava

na dveṣṭi sampravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati

Verse 22

ॐ; ए॒मे॒ ए॒वे॒दो॒षे॒स॒ *śrībhagavān* — *Śrī Bhagavān*; = ए॒वे॒दो॒षे॒स॒ *uvāca* — said;
 ज॒ए॒दो॒षे॒स॒ *pāṇḍava* — O! *Pāṇḍava*, (*Arjuna*); ज॒ए॒दो॒षे॒स॒ *prakāśaṃ ca* — brightness;
 ज॒ए॒के॒ स॒ *pravṛttiṃ ca* — and activity; ए॒वे॒दो॒षे॒स॒ *mohameva ca* — and even
 delusion; ए॒वे॒दो॒षे॒स॒ *sampravṛttāni* — that have come to occur; ख॒ ए॒वो॒०॑ *na dveṣṭi* — he
 does not despise; ख॒ ए॒वे॒दो॒षे॒स॒ *nivṛttāni* — those that have gone away; ख॒ ए॒दो॒षा॒नि॒ ई॒ति॒ *na*
kāṅkṣati — he does not long for

Śrī Bhagavān said:

O! *Arjuna*, brightness and activity and even delusion, that have come to occur, he does not despise. Nor does he long for those that have gone away.

THE GUŪTĪTA NEITHER DESPISES NOR LONGS FOR THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE GUŪAS

Prakāśa is the product of *sattva* such as alertness, a cheerful disposition, etc. *Pravṛtti* is activity prompted by desire and is the product of *rajas*. *Moha*, delusion is a product of *tamas* and here we can include dullness, apathy, etc. When these come into

being, he does not bathe them, *na dveṣṭi*. When they go away, he does not long for them, *na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati*.

They are clearly recognized as products of the three *guṇas*. When he experiences confusion or dullness, he knows that *tamas* has become predominant and makes no conclusion about himself on the basis of the effect of *tamas* that he sees manifesting in his mind. Similarly, when he finds restlessness and an inclination to pursue activity, he knows this only as the effect of *rajas*. When he experiences *sukha*, he knows *sattva* is responsible and does not get bound by it. He is neither repulsed nor attracted by these experiences because of his very clear understanding that they are all products of the *guṇas*. As they occur, *sampravṛttāni*, he does not judge himself because he does not include himself in them. The mind is subject to *guṇas* and therefore it will sometimes be dull also. When a *jñānī* is yawning, he does not think he has fallen away from his *svarūpa* as *sat-cit-ānanda*. When he yawns he recognizes that there is yawning. Nothing more than that. When there is dullness, the mind is dull; when the mind is bright, he recognizes that it is bright and when it is rather restless, he sees that the mind is restless. Being beyond the *guṇas*, he has no problem at all.

The attachment or involvement of the *ātmā* with the *guṇas* is like the involvement of the space with a pot. Whether the pot is small or large, space is not in any way affected. Similarly, *ātmā*, though very much present in the mind, remains unaffected. The sense of 'I' for one, who knows this, is in *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, not in the thought modifications. Therefore, he has no anxiety about a particular mode of the mind. If it goes, it goes; if it comes, it comes. He does not bother about it because he is beyond the *guṇas*, *guṇātīta*. Whatever the *guṇas* present is fine with him. In this, there is nothing good or bad.

KNOWING THE DEFINITION OF THE GUṆĀTĪTA IS NOT FOR JUDGING OTHERS

It is important to understand that this is not meant for judging but for understanding yourself. Nor can you determine whether someone else is *guṇātīta* or not, because, *Śaṅkara* says, it is not perceivable by another. Unless you can see someone else's *ātmā*, you cannot know whether he is *guṇātīta* or not. The condition of *guṇātītatva* is identical with the *svarūpa* of *ātmā* and the knowledge of the *ātmā* is that it is *guṇātīta*. *Śaṅkara* says, it cannot be known by another because it is known only to oneself. Only you can know whether you have *guṇātītatva* or not. If you judge yourself on the basis of your mind, you have to understand the reason for such a judgement. Being *guṇātīta* is nothing but absence of judging yourself on the basis of your mind or any other thing. With reference to money, one is rich or poor. From the standpoint of the body, one is old or young. All these judgements are within the *guṇas*. To be a *guṇātīta* is to recognize the self as it is.

For a *mumukṣu*, not judging oneself on the basis of the *guṇas* is very useful as a means to becoming prepared to know the self. One has to learn to look at the disposition of the mind as simply the mind. It keeps changing and that is the nature of the mind. When you see that, you have space to look at yourself as *guṇātīta*. We are not interested in changing the mind; we are interested in seeing it for what it is. This is for a *mumukṣu*.

Before that, there can be a stage in which the intensity of the mental dispositions is very great due to unresolved childhood pain. That must be dealt with differently. First, we reduce the subjective to the objective. The responses to current situations are rooted in childhood problems and have nothing to do with realities. The subjectivity has to be removed and things should be looked at objectively. Then the mind can be seen as subject to three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Once that is clear, you can appreciate *ātmā* being *guṇātīta*.

These are the characteristics of a wise person but how does he express himself in the world? That is pointed out by a few verses here.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A WISE PERSON

ॐ ननु एवमेवैतन्मोक्षं विदुः ।
 मोक्षं विदुः किं वा तेषां विदुः ।
udāsīnavadāsīno guṇairyo na vicālyate
guṇā vartanta ityeva yo'vatiṣṭhati neṅgate

Verse 23

ॐ एतन्मोक्षं विदुः ।
 मोक्षं विदुः किं वा तेषां विदुः ।
samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāsmakāñcanaḥ
tulyapriyāpriyo dhīrastulyanindātmasaṃstutiḥ

Verse 24

ॐ एतन्मोक्षं विदुः ।
 मोक्षं विदुः किं वा तेषां विदुः ।
mānāpamānayostulyastulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ
sarvārambhaparitṛyāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate

Verse 25

ॐ *yaḥ* — he who; ॐ ननु एवमेवैतन्मोक्षं विदुः + एवमेवैतन्मोक्षं *udāsīnavat āsīnaḥ* — remaining seemingly indifferent; मोक्षं *gunaiḥ* — by the *guṇas*; ॐ ननु एवमेवैतन्मोक्षं विदुः + एवमेवैतन्मोक्षं *na vicālyate* — is not shaken; ॐ *yaḥ* — he who; मोक्षं विदुः किं वा तेषां विदुः *guṇāḥ vartante iti eva* — ‘The *guṇas* alone are acting,’ thus (thinking); + एवमेवैतन्मोक्षं विदुः *avatiṣṭhati* — abides; ॐ *na ingate* — the one who does not move (from the vision of himself)...

√धृ० dhīrah — a wise man; ०ए०न०दु०ख०सु०ख० sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ — who is the same with reference to pleasure and pain; ०ए०स्व०स्थ० svasthaḥ — who abides in oneself; ०ए०स०म०-+०श०स०-लो०ष्ट०-अ०श्म०-क०ा०न्०क०ान०ह० sama-loṣṭa-aśma-kāñcanaḥ — who is the same with reference to a clod of earth, a stone, or gold; ०ए०तु०ल्य०-प०रि०या०-अ०प्रि०या० tulya-priya-apriyaḥ — who is same in pleasant and unpleasant (situations); ०ए०तु०ल्य०-नि०न्द०-आ०त्मा०-स०अ०स्तु०ति०ḥ tulya-nindā-ātma-saḥ-stutiḥ — who is the same with reference to censure or praise of himself...

०ए०म०ना०-अ०प०म०ान०यो०ḥ tulyaḥ — who is the same towards respect and insult; ०ए०मि०त्र०-अ०रि०प०क्०स०यो०ḥ tulyaḥ — the same towards the views of a friend or an enemy; ०ए०स०र्व०-अ०र०म्भ०-प०रि०त्य०गि० sarva-ārambha-parityāgi — the one who has given up all undertakings; ०ए०गु०ण०-अ०ति०त०ḥ guṇa-atītaḥ — one who is beyond the guṇas; ०ए०उ०च्य०ते ucyate — he is called

He who, remaining seemingly indifferent, is not shaken by the *guṇas*, and he who abides (in himself), (thinking), that the *guṇas* alone are acting, and the one who does not move (from the vision of the self)...

The wise man, who is the same with reference to pleasure and pain, abiding in himself, the same with reference to a clod of earth, a stone or gold, the same in pleasant and unpleasant (situations); the same with reference to censure or praise of himself...

Who is the same towards respect and insult, the same towards the views of a friend or an enemy, who has given up all undertakings — he is called the one who is beyond the *guṇas*.

REMAINING SEEMINGLY INDIFFERENT HE IS NOT SHAKEN BY THE GUṂAS

A person who is *udāsīna* remains uncommitted to any particular stand. When two people are arguing, a third person who is just watching without joining either side is *udāsīna*. He is merely a witness, indifferent to both views without any opinion to offer. We all have this disposition towards many things. To a bush growing on the wayside, you are likely to be absolutely indifferent. Even regarding certain topics, you are *udāsīna* because you do not have an opinion to which you are committed.

Āsīna literally means sitting or seated but in the context here, it means being committed to the means of accomplishing *guṇātītatva*, transcendence of the *guṇas*. Whether *sattva*guṇa, *rajo*guṇa or *tamo*guṇa is predominant, he does not want to change it. He accepts the mind as it is, allowing the *guṇas* to manifest without any

interference or identification on his part. Having no preference for any one of them over the other, he is like one who is indifferent, *udāsīnavat*.

That *sannyāsī*, who knows the *ātmā* and is therefore a wise man, is not taken away from his knowledge by the expressions of the *guṇas*. If anybody complains that *rajoguṇa* or *tamoguṇa* robs him of his knowledge, that is not the knowledge we are talking of here. The *guṇas* affect only the body-mind-sense-complex, never the *ātmā* and therefore never the vision of *ātmā*, once it is clearly known.

KNOWING THAT GUŪAS ALONE ACT HE DOES NOT LOSE VISION OF HIS SELF

As he says in the next line of the verse, the *guṇas* are active—*guṇāḥ vartante*. Here this means that the *guṇas* have modified themselves to become both the world and the body-mind-sense-complex. *Rajoguṇa* accounts for the *prāṇa* and the organs of action, *sattvaguṇa* for the organs of knowing and the *antah-karaṇa*; and the *tamoguṇa* has converted itself into the five elements which have undergone bifurcation and fivefold combination to become this whole physical creation. So everything here that we know is nothing but the three *guṇas*. Whatever you perceive or infer or even imagine is a manifestation of *guṇa*. And these *guṇas* transact business among themselves. You are not involved at all, in reality. Though you are very much with all of them, you remain unaffected by all of them. That is the truth that the *śāstra* reveals. The one who abides in that—*avatiṣṭhati*, does not move—*na iṅgate*, from the nature of himself, he is free from all these *guṇas* remaining as himself alone undisturbed by the changes that the *guṇas* undergo.

THE CONDUCT OF A GUŪĒTĪTA

Here is a person for whom pleasant and unpleasant are the same, *sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ*. Certain situations are conducive for happiness, *sukha*, and certain others for pain, *duḥkha*. These two types of situations, born out of one's present *karma* or previous *karma* keep presenting themselves to any person. How is one going to face them? For one who knows the self, they are the same. This is not purely an attitude which we cultivate as a *sādhana*. We learn to appreciate the *sukha* and *duḥkha* as factual and take them not just objectively but as *prasāda*. Because of the appreciation of *Īśvara*, there is a glad acceptance and an appropriate response in terms of action. This is *karma-yoga*. Here, however, *Kṛṣṇa* is talking about a *guṇātīta*. If there is a *sukha* seen in the mind created by *sattvaguṇa* or *duḥkha* created by *rajas*, all of which are possible for him because of the various situations that present themselves, he takes them as the same. He is not affected by either.

Svastha has two meanings. The one who abides in oneself, *sve ātmani tiṣṭhati*. His appreciation of 'I' is in *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* which is beyond the *guṇas*. The other meaning is the one who is happy, where *svastha* means to be contented or happy. It means *svasmin tiṣṭhati*—that is, no matter what happens in the mind or in the external world he is happy with himself.

Sama-loṣṭāśma-kāñcana is an expression we saw in the sixth chapter. *Loṣṭa*, a clod of earth, *aśma*, a stone, or *kāñcana*, gold are all the same for him. All belong to the earth and in his vision, there is no difference between them. It is very clear to him that any value that one has over the other is superimposed and subjective. He recognizes that gold is a rare, malleable, shining metal. But it does not offer him any more security than a rock. It is not going to improve his *guṇātītatva*.

Further, he is the same in desirable and undesirable situations, *tulya-priya-apriya*. The pleasant and unpleasant situations, *priya* and *apriya*, do not disturb this wise man, not because of his attitude but because of his wisdom. And whether he is subject to censure, *nindā*, or praise of himself, *ātma-saṁstuti*, he does not feel diminished or flattered. He is the same. *Ātmā* cannot be flattered by any concept of greatness nor can it be damaged by any misperception of it.

He does not undergo any change, remaining equal in *māna*, respect, and *apamāna*, insult or rejection. Every individual will experience these two things without exception because people praise or criticize others according to their own understanding and value structure. Whether a person is wise or not he is going to be exposed to censure and praise. In the same way, people may physically pay him respect or insult and reject him. But one who is above the *guṇas* does not subject himself to their influence and is therefore the same whatever comes, *nindā*, or *stuti*, *māna* or *apamāna*.

Further, he is equal to the view of a *mitra*—friend, or an *ari*—enemy—*tulya mitra-ari-pakṣayoḥ*. The question here is, how does he create an enemy. Flattery and censure are possible because of differing value structures; but how can a wise man become an enemy to somebody? *Śaṅkara*, anticipating this, makes a note here. Even though the wise man is impartial due to his own disposition and therefore has no enmity towards anyone, still, others who relate to him can look upon him as a friend or enemy according to their own disposition. However they view him, he does not internalise the emotions and actions of others, because he knows these are all products of their own *guṇas*; neither he has anything to do with them, nor have they, in essence. Therefore, there is no enemy or even friend for him in the sense that both are the same in his vision.

Then a very interesting thing is said of this wise man. He is one who renounces all undertaking—*sarva-ārambha-parityāgī*. *Ārambha* is something that is begun, a particular course of action for the purpose of some achievement, which will make the person different. Being dissatisfied with himself or herself, a person seeks satisfaction through some form of success. Varieties of desires stem from this sense of dissatisfaction

and there is a demand for them to be fulfilled. Because of this pressure there is an *ārambha*; something is begun by one's will in order to accomplish an end. The wise man is one who has given all these up. Giving up, as we normally understand it, implies a sense of loss.

On a pilgrimage, it is customary to give up something you like. That is why, when people visit temples like Tirupati, they remove their hair completely as an offering to the Lord. Because there is so much ego involved in one's hair, it is a very appropriate and also a difficult offering to make. Even though a devotee has given up his hair and is therefore a *tyāgī*, you will find him wearing a cap for some time. Why? Because there is a sense of loss. Now a *parityāgī* is a person who does not have any such feeling. When you put out the garbage for collection what sense of loss do you have? That kind of giving up is possible only when the self is not seen as wanting but as a complete being. Without that, there is no possibility of remaining free from a sense of want. The one who is above all three *guṇas* finds that one is complete and therefore without a need to begin any undertaking.

But we do find *Śaṅkara* writing a commentary here. So here is an *ārambha* for him. Verse after verse he comments upon for seventeen chapters. And before that, he wrote an introduction. Besides this commentary, he wrote a monumental work on the *Brahma-sūtras* arguing consistently for every *sūtra*, and commented at length on the ten *Upaniṣads* in addition to composing other *prakaraṇa-granthas*. How could he do all this without beginning, *ārambha*? No one, not even *Kṛṣṇa* teaching *Gītā*, can do anything without *ārambha*.

Whether one is a *guṇātīta* or bound by the *guṇas*, he has to undertake to do things. No one can therefore be without an *ārambha*. Therefore, *ārambha*, an undertaking, is here restricted to mean an undertaking, which has its roots in a sense of dissatisfaction and is meant to make the person better than what he or she is now. The undertakings of one who is a *guṇātīta*, apart from those to maintain his body, are purely for the welfare of the people, *lokasaṅgrahārtham*. That is why in India the authors of so many great works are not known. They did not care for history because they were concerned with eternity. It was all regarded as *Bhagavān's* history, in the sense that it is all an expression of his glory. Many works were out without signature.

Any wise person undertakes a work not for personal glory, etc., but purely for the benefit of others. There is another way of looking at it. You may say that it is his *prārabdha*. From the standpoint of the benefit derived by people you can say *Śaṅkara* wrote all his works for their benefit or, from his own standpoint, it is his *prārabdhakarma* to serve in this particular form. He was endowed with certain faculties, which express themselves either because of his *prārabdha* or our good *prārabdha*. The point is, he does not gain anything from it.

Lord *Kṛṣṇa* has said this very well in the third chapter, ‘For Me, there is nothing at all to be done in the three worlds, *Arjuna*. There is nothing, not yet gained that is to be gained with reference to *karma* and yet I am engaged in activity—*na me pārtha asti kartavyaṃ triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana na anavāptam avāptavyaṃ varta eva ca karmaṇi.*’¹ Some people, though they have nothing to accomplish in this world, are busy here preparing to go to the next world. But *Kṛṣṇa* has nothing to gain anywhere at any time and yet he is always engaged in activities. It is the same for a wise man. That is freedom more in action than from it.

These four verses point out the spontaneous expressions of a *guṇātīta*. They can also serve as guidelines for a *mumukṣu*. Anything that is lacking in terms of such expressions has to be accomplished by the appropriate effort combined with inquiry, *vicāra*. That is the means for gaining *guṇātītatva*. When all these various qualities mentioned here are very clear to him, there is no difficulty in gaining the knowledge that he is beyond the *guṇas*.

Wherever the characteristic expressions of a wise man are pointed out, they are to be followed by a *mumukṣu* along with his *vicāra* and prayers as part of his *sādhana* to become prepared for the knowledge that will fulfil his desire for freedom, *mumukṣā*.

One particular means by which he becomes a *guṇātīta* is pointed out in the next verse.

“ॐ साहसं यो योऽभ्यस्यति ।
 तेनैवैतन्ममैवमेवाह ॥२६॥

*māṃ ca yo’vyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate
 sa guṇānsamatītyaitānbrahmabhūyāya kalpate*

Verse 26

सं साहसं — and the one who; “ॐ” *mām* — Me; + “साहसं” *avyabhicāreṇa bhakti-yogena* — with unswerving devotion; “तेनैवैतन्ममैवमेवाह” *sevate* — worships/seeks; “साहसं” *saḥ* — he; “ॐ साहसं तेनैवैतन्ममैवमेवाह” *etān guṇān* — these *guṇas*; “तेनैवैतन्ममैवमेवाह” *samatītya* — having properly crossed; “साहसं” *brahmabhūyāya* — for being *Brahman*; “तेनैवैतन्ममैवमेवाह” *kalpate* — is fit for

And the one who with unswerving devotion worships/seeks Me, he, having properly crossed these *guṇas*, is fit for being *Brahman*.

¹ *Gītā* – 3-22

ONE WITH UNSWERVING DEVOTION IS FIT FOR BEING BRAHMAN

As we have seen, with a single exception, wherever, *Kṛṣṇa* uses the first person singular, as he does here with *mām*, he is referring to himself as *Īśvara*. And that could be as *saguṇa-brahma*, *nirguṇa-brahma*, or *pratyagātmā*. *Śaṅkara* says here that the *karma-yogī* or *sannyāsī* who worships, seeks, *Īśvara*, who obtains in the *buddhi* of all beings as consciousness, with unswerving commitment, *avyabhicareṇa bhakti-yogena*, gains *Brahman*. Even in an insect there is the presence of consciousness and in the human being it is in the form of ‘I.’ The one who serves *Bhagavān* with a commitment, in the form of devotion, *bhakti*, can be either a *sannyāsī* or a *karma-yogī*. These are the only two types of lifestyles whereby a *mumukṣu* can pursue knowledge of *Bhagavān*. *Śaṅkara* adds that it is a *bhakti* in the form of clear knowledge and inquiry. When you inquire into what is true you are a *bhakta* because the subject matter is *Īśvara*. Pursuing the Lord can only be in the form of inquiry because he is always existent and never away from you. We are not searching for *Bhagavān* here; we are just trying to see what is. *Bhagavān* is not someone who is going to arrive later either in terms of time or space.

In Hindi, there is a beautiful song¹, which calls to the Lord to reveal himself by lighting a lamp in the temple of the mind. In the temple of the mind as in any other sanctum of a temple, it is dark, and therefore, a lamp must be lighted to see the Lord's glory. The song implies that she knows that the Lord is not away from her but already present in the temple of her mind, which is plunged into darkness. The light required to illumine the Lord's presence is knowledge. She begs the Lord to stop the game of hide and seek and quench the thirst of her eyes for the vision of the Lord. It is hide-and-seek because now and then the Lord does appear whenever one is happy and appreciative. Where there is love, understanding, or some moment of joy, *Bhagavān's* glory manifests. She implores *Bhagavān* to open the gates of his grace, which can make the blind see. Blindness here is purely ignorance of *ātmā* and *anātmā*. If there is grace, *jijñāsā*, the desire to know the truth, will be born and his blindness will be removed.

A real *bhakta* is one who wants to know what is. He is not pursuing *Bhagavān* as something separate from himself but as the content of his own thoughts. Whatever you see here is *Bhagavān*. So, it is not a question of pursuing but of seeing. Being all-pervasive, *Bhagavān* is not elsewhere. Being eternal, he is not away in terms of time. Then, where is the question of searching or waiting?

A person who knows this has transcended the *guṇas* properly—without any motion but purely by knowledge. In fact, it is not even transcending because *ātmā*, ‘I,’

¹‘*Darśan doghanaśyāmanātha...*’ a bhajan by Mira Bai.

Mira Bai (1500-1550), was a princess of Rajasthan, in northwest India, and is celebrated for her lyrical poetry and compositions of songs of worship devoted to Lord *Kṛṣṇa*

remains always transcendent and always immanent, like space. Such a person who knows himself as this *ātmā*, becomes one who is fit to be *Brahman* because *Brahman* is not separate from *ātmā*. Thus, ‘*brahmabhūyāya kalpate*—is fit to become *Brahman*’ means he is *Brahman*.

ॐ अहं हि ब्रह्मणोऽसि मृतस्यैव च
 सशतस्यैव च सशतस्यैव च ॥२७॥

*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāhamamṛtasyāvayasya ca
 śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca*

Verse 27

ॐ *hi* — indeed; + ॐ *aham* — I am; + ॐ *amṛtasya* — immortal; + ॐ *śāśvatasya* — which is not subject to change; ॐ *dharmasya ca* — of the eternal *dharma*, the basis of everything; ॐ *sukhasya* — which is of the nature of happiness that is not subject to negation; ॐ *brahmaṇaḥ* — of *Brahman*; ॐ *pratiṣṭhā* — the basis

I am the basis indeed of *Brahman* which is immortal, not subject to change, the eternal *dharma*, the basis of everything, and which is of the nature of happiness that is not subject to negation.

It was said in the last verse, that the one who seeks Me with unswerving commitment, *avyabhicareṇa bhakti-yogena*, is fit to become *Brahman*, *brahmabhūyāya kalpate*. *Bhakti* here is a commitment to the pursuit of knowledge. And the root *sev* typically refers to service or treatment that is undergone. Both involve a commitment. But here it means to seek with commitment. Here in this verse *Bhagavān* gives the reason why such a *bhakta* becomes *Brahman*. Here the one who pursues *pratyagātmā* is *Parameśvara*. He has the discriminative knowledge that *ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda*, which is *Brahman*, the cause of creation. Therefore everything here is *ātmā*.

To account for all activities when *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* is unable to perform any action, we say that it is the very nature of the *prakṛti*, that is composed of the *guṇas*, to engage in action. So, we say, *svabhāvaḥ tu pravartate*, that is, it is the *svabhāva*, nature, of the *guṇas* to change constantly, engage in actions. The *guṇas* are transformed into the body-mind-sense-complex through which all actions take place. Knowing this, the one who has transcended the *guṇas* does not get involved in their activities. Knowing that *ātmā* is *guṇātīta* he ‘becomes’ *Brahman* because *ātmā* is *Brahman*. *Ātmā* is the very basis, *pratiṣṭhā*, of *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. Elsewhere it is clearly stated that *Brahman* is the *pratiṣṭhā* of everything and here *Bhagavān* says, ‘I am the basis of *Brahman*.’

Śaṅkara elaborates for us here. It was said that the one who recognizes that *ātmā* is free from the *guṇas* is fit to become *Brahman*. That is because the meaning of the word ‘I’ is the basis of *Brahman*. Later also the Lord is going to say, ‘I have entered into the heart of all the beings—*sarvasya ca ahaṃ hṛdi sanniviṣṭaḥ*.’ And he has said in the thirteenth chapter, ‘And know Me also, *Arjuna*, as the knower of the field in all the fields—*kṣetrajñāṃ ca api māṃ viddhi sarva-kṣetreṣu bhārata*.’¹ The *kṣetrajñā* is *pratyagātmā*, who is not an ‘I’ that is different from the ‘I’ of *Kṛṣṇa*. Nor is it really inner in the sense that it is not away from anything. The body and all that is known by the body-mind-sense-complex is also *ātmā*, the meaning of ‘I.’

‘I’ is the basis, *pratiṣṭhā* of *Brahman* because in ‘I’ alone is *Brahman*. That means ‘I’ is *Brahman* without any basis-based relationship. *Brahman*, as it is revealed by the *śruti*, has no *pratiṣṭhā*, as it is not one of the objects in the world. Heaven is also revealed by *śruti* but it has its basis in the world in the sense that it is part of the world, existing as it does in time and space. Similarly a tree has its *pratiṣṭhā* in the earth as the pot has its *pratiṣṭhā* in the clay of which it is made. If *Brahman* is one of the objects revealed by the *śruti*, like heaven, its *pratiṣṭhā* will be in the creation. But *Brahman*, though it is revealed by the words of *śruti*, has its *pratiṣṭhā* not in the creation but in *ātmā*.

In the *śruti*, *Brahman* is not presented as other than *ātmā*. Anything other than *ātmā* is *anātmā*. Being not one of the objects, you can find *Brahman* only in the *ātmā*. If it is not *ātmā*, it can only be *anātmā* and will necessarily always be remote, *nitya-parokṣa*. You can never reach such a *Brahman* for it is not a given place like heaven, nor is it a given object that you can gain possession of.

In the beginning of the chapter, *Brahman* was used in the sense of *māyā*—*tāsāṃ brahma mahad yoniḥ ahaṃ bijapradah pitā*. Why not take it that way here? ‘I am the *pratiṣṭhā*, the basis, of *Brahman*, that is, I am *māyā*.’ That is not possible here because *Brahman* has a number of adjectives in this verse that are applicable only to *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, and not to *māyā*. Also this verse is connected to the previous verse in which it was said that the one who has transcended the *guṇas* becomes fit to become *Brahman*. Due to that reason also this cannot be *māyā* because *māyā* consists of the *guṇas* and without any knowledge at all one already identifies himself as a product of *mithyā*.

This will be clear when we look at the adjectives that qualify *Brahman* in this verse. This *Brahman* is *amṛta*, never dead. *Śaṅkara* says it is not subject to destruction. Though it does not get destroyed, perhaps it is changing all the time. As you recognize the same person though he continues to change over the years, perhaps it is the same with *Brahman*. No, *Brahman* is *avyaya*, it never undergoes any change.

¹ *Gītā* – 13-2

Śāśvata means it is always there tomorrow, that is, in the future and *nitya* indicates that there was not a time in the past when *Brahman* was not. And that timeless *Brahman* is the one who has all knowledge of *dharma*. *Dharma* also has another meaning—*dhriyate iti dharmah*, that which sustains everything. *Śaṅkara* says that it is that which can be obtained through *jñāna-yoga*.

Further, it is *sukha*. There is no object in the world called *sukha* and therefore *sukha* is an excellent word to use here. Its very nature, *svarūpa*, is *sukha*, that which is free from any sense of want or imperfection. Otherwise called *pūrṇa*, fullness, and therefore glossed by *Śaṅkara* as that whose nature is fullness, *ānanda-rūpa*.

Aikāntika means that which is never negated because it is *satya* and therefore not subject to contradiction. Everything else is mere name and form, *nāma-rūpa*, and being *mithyā*, will change. *Satya* will not. That *Brahman*, as described here, is to be understood as the nature of *pratyagātmā*. This is the *pratiṣṭhā* here.

By being *guṇātīta* how can one be *Brahman*? *Īśvara* is *Brahman* with the power of *māyā*. I am that *Brahman* which enjoys this power, *śakti*, that is also non-separate from *Brahman*, myself. If *Kṛṣṇa* is taken as *Īśvara*, who is nothing but *paramātmā* and *śakti* together, between the power, *śakti*, and the one who has the power, *śaktimān*, there is no difference. Therefore, this *Īśvara* who has the power has his basis, *pratiṣṭhā*, only in the *ātmā*. If *Brahman* is looked upon as the cause of the entire world, that *Brahman* has its *pratiṣṭhā* in *ātmā* alone.

Thus, this is called *brahma-bhavana*, the condition of being *Brahman* without the implication of any process of becoming. You cannot become *Brahman* because you are the very basis, *pratiṣṭhā*, of *Brahman*.

ॐ तत्सत् इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायाम्
 योगसूत्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे गुणत्रयविभक्त्यायाम्
 चतुर्दशोऽध्यायः ॥१४॥

om tatsat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyām
 yogasūstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde guṇatrayavibhāgayogo nāma
 caturdaśo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus ends the fourteenth chapter that is called *guṇa-traya-vibhāga-yoga* in the *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*, which is likened to the *Upaniṣads*, whose subject matter is *brahma-vidyā*, which is also a *yoga-sāstra*,¹ which is in the form of a dialogue between *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*. *Om tat sat*.

¹ Here the word *yoga* refers to anything a person needs in terms of preparation of the mind, *antaḥkaraṇa-suddhi*, etc., that is needed for the assimilation of this knowledge. Since the *Gītā* discusses all these along with the *brahma-vidyā*, it is also referred to as a *yoga-sāstra*.

ABABABAB

CHAPTER 15

PURUĀOTTAMAYOGA

(YOGA OF THE WHOLE PERSON)

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the previous chapter, it was said that those who worship or pursue *Bhagavān* with devotion transcended the *guṇas*. They were said to be *guṇātītas*.

Śaṅkara introduces this chapter by pointing out that not only is the result of action dependent upon *Īśvara*, but also the result of the pursuit of knowledge, *mokṣa*. Even though the acquisition of knowledge requires only an adequate means of knowledge and the availability of the thing to be known, many other factors are required to create conducive conditions both for the pursuit of knowledge and for it to take place. The mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa*, where the knowledge has to be gained, must be prepared, and that preparation, depends on *Īśvara's* grace. Because of that, *Bhagavān* says that those who worship him with devotion first gain mental purity, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, and then knowledge, both by his grace. Being free from the *guṇas*, they gain *mokṣa*. Even people who are not ready gain knowledge by *Īśvara's* grace. What have we to say about those who know clearly the truth of the self, *ātma-tattva*! This truth of the self is presented in this chapter.

Here, firstly *Kṛṣṇa* talks about the nature of *saṃsāra* in order to help *Arjuna* develop dispassion, *vairāgya*, towards it. It is very important to see that there is no *mokṣa* within *saṃsāra*. Wanting to go to heaven or gain security—which is only prompted by self-dissatisfaction—is trying to gain *mokṣa* within *saṃsāra*. When *mokṣa*, however, is freedom from *saṃsāra*, how can we possibly achieve it within *saṃsāra*? Here there is a catch. We must have dispassion to appreciate that there is no *mokṣa* in *saṃsāra* and conversely, we must understand that there is no *mokṣa* in *saṃsāra* in order to have dispassion. To resolve this dilemma and help us develop the necessary dispassion, the essentials of *saṃsāra* are first presented, using the imagery of a tree. Then, since *saṃsāra* implies erroneous knowledge about realities, which is caused by ignorance of oneself, *Kṛṣṇa* teaches the truth of the self, the *ātma-tattva*.

This chapter shows that everything is the self, *sarvātmā*, and is therefore, a very important chapter. It deals with the world, *jagat*, the individual, *jīva*, the root cause, the *jīva's* lot of birth and death, the *sūkṣma-śarīra*, the subtle body, and the daily activities

like eating, etc., in terms of what is eaten, the one who eats, etc., revealing that all these are nothing but *paramātmā*. In addition, it talks about the qualifications, which enable a person to cross *saṃsāra*. It is, thus, a complete chapter.

Although *Arjuna* did not ask a question to prompt this teaching, wishing to speak about the truth of *ātmā*, *Bhagavān* says,

ॐ ऋषिर्भगवन्ववाच
 >ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा षाकमाश्वत्थमप्रहुरव्ययम्
 चान्दमंसि यस्या पर्णानि यस्तम वेदा सा वेदावि

śrībhagavān uvāca

ūrdhvamūlamadhaḥ śākhamaśvattham prāhuravyayam

chandāṃsi yasya parṇāni yastam veda sa vedavit

Verse 1

ॐ ऋषिर्भगवन्ववाच *śrībhagavān* — *Śrī Bhagavān*; = ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *uvāca* — said;
 + ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *śvattham* — the *śvatthā* tree; >ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *ūrdhva-mūlam* — whose roots
 are above; + ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *adhaḥśākhā* — whose branches are below; + ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *avyayam*
 — imperishable; ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *prāhuḥ* — they say; ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *yasya* — whose; ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *parṇāni*
chandāṃsi — leaves are the Vedas; ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *tam* — that; ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *yah veda* — the one who
 knows; ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *sah* — he; ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा *vedavit* — is a knower of the Vedas

Śrī Bhagavān said:

They say the imperishable *śvatthā* tree has its roots above, its branches below and the Vedas are its leaves. The one who knows that is a knower of the Vedas.

THE TREE OF SAḤSĀRA

The vision is presented through the imagery of a sacred ficus tree, *śvatthā*, that is likened to *saṃsāra*. *Śvatthā* literally means that which will not be there tomorrow.¹ It is changing all the time and yet perpetuates itself through its own *bīja*, seed, and adventitious roots. Called *ficus religiosa*, it belongs to the same group as the banyan tree.

Like the *Śvatthā* tree, the *saṃsāra* is also such that, it will not be in the same form tomorrow. It is constantly changing relative to the root, the basis, *adhiṣṭhāna*, which is *Brahman*, which never undergoes any change. Though *saṃsāra* is *śvatthā*, that is, it will not be there tomorrow, it is also *avyaya*; it keeps changing but does not die away. That is, the names and forms go on changing; but even when everything is dissolved, it remains in an unmanifest form, returning and again resolving with every

¹ ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा + ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा < ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा + ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा* ॐ उर्ध्वमूलमदहा ॐ ॥

That which will not stay tomorrow is called śvatthā.

cycle. Thus, it has no beginning, only manifestation and unmanifestation. This manifestation and unmanifestation is like our daily dissolution into sleep and waking up. But this *saṃsāra* can end with reference to an individual once the ignorance of the root is removed. Otherwise it is *avyaya*, imperishable.

Saṃsāra is likened to a tree for a number of reasons. Even though we do not generally see the roots of a tree, we appreciate that it is standing because of its roots. We have the cognition, ‘it exists,’ that is, *asti iti buddhiḥ asti*. Similarly, the root of *saṃsāra* is beyond our comprehension, in that, we do not see it. But we infer its existence because of the observation of *saṃsāra*. That is, we see only the effect, *kārya*, not the cause, *kāraṇa*, and infer the existence of the cause from the presence of the effect. This is true for the *kāraṇa-kārya-sambandha*, cause-effect relationship, of everything within the *saṃsāra*. If the cause is other than myself, it is possible to see the cause in the effect. But if it is myself, how am I to see it? I must be able to see myself in order to appreciate the cause since it is nothing but me. Not knowing this, I will see only the creation which is within the time-space framework. Its cause, not being known to me, is lost within myself, beyond time and space. As the tree has roots which are not seen, so does the world, whose roots are hidden in the seer.

ITS ROOTS ARE ABOVE AND BRANCHES ARE BELOW

Śaṅkara says¹ that the root is above because it is subtler than even time. Time is not perceptible as an object but is appreciated purely by the mind. But here, we are dealing with something that is even subtler than the mind, the very basis or cause, *kāraṇa*, of the mind and everything within time and space. In the sense that, it precedes the creation as its cause, it is above, *ūrdhva*. Further, it is eternal, *nitya*. As long as the root survives, the tree, even though felled, will regenerate. In Calcutta, there is a tree of this sort, which spreads for thousands of square feet. In one spot there is a sign denoting the place where the original trunk once was. Even though it is gone, the tree remains because of the thousands of adventitious roots. The tree is a mere *kārya*, effect, that continues to exist as long as its cause, *kāraṇa*, root remains. Similarly, the tree of *saṃsāra* is a non-eternal effect rising out of its cause, which relative to it, is eternal, *nitya*. From the root, it can come again. While the entire creation is *anitya*, its root is *nitya*. It is also *ūrdhva* because it is limitless, *mahattvāt ūrdhva*. *Brahman* with *māyā-śakti*, the cause of this entire world, is the root of the tree of *saṃsāra*.

¹ >ॐ ईश्वरं ब्रह्म—एतन्मोक्षं ००० ईति ब्रह्मैवाद्यात् ब्रह्मैवमित्येव ब्रह्मैवम् >ॐ ईश्वरं=सर्वैश्वर्यं + सर्वेषु-ब्रह्मैव-ब्रह्मैव-इति
ब्रह्मैव-ब्रह्मैव+००० ईति* ब्रह्मैव ॥

Brahman which has the *māyā-śakti* is the *mūla*, the root which is said to be above because it is subtler than time, the final cause of everything, eternal and limitless.

While its root is above, its branches are below, *adhaḥ*. All the physical and subtle elements are the branches, *śākhās*, and they are below, *adhaḥ*, because they are within time and space.

THE VEDAS ARE ITS FOLIAGE

The foliage of a tree is an important protective covering and source of vitality. If you keep on clipping the leaves, the tree will die. Similarly, the tree of *saṃsāra* has the Vedas, *chandāṃsi*, as leaves to protect and sustain the *jīvas* and perpetuate *saṃsāra*. The Vedas spoken of here are *R̥k*, *Yajus* and *Sāma*. Like the leaves, they protect and sustain the *jīvas* and perpetuate *saṃsāra* because they provide knowledge of the means and ends connected with rituals. *Vedānta* is omitted here because to sustain *saṃsāra*, you need only *karmas*. *Vedānta* will destroy it. Even those who have no knowledge of the Vedas perform actions, and thus, perpetuate *saṃsāra*. That being so, why are the Vedas considered the leaves? They contain knowledge of the most auspicious *karmas* and therefore, they protect *saṃsāra*. When even the sacred Vedas only protect *saṃsāra*, what can we say about worldly *karmas*? The Vedas represent all means and ends. They do not release you from *saṃsāra*, but rather, protect and perpetuate *saṃsāra* like the leaves of the tree. How? Through the knowledge of means and ends. The *jīva* uses, or fails to use, the various means prescribed to achieve his ends and thus gathers *puṇya* and *pāpa*. Because of these *puṇya* and *pāpa*, he takes another birth and *saṃsāra* continues for him. In a larger sense, the *puṇya* and the *pāpa* of the *jīva* cause his world to manifest and thus, *puṇya* and *pāpa*, rooted in the Vedas, form the basis of creation. As the leaves keep the tree alive, *karmas* keep the tree of *saṃsāra* going.

A tree, however, can be felled and so can *saṃsāra*. The tree of *saṃsāra* is born of ignorance, *ajñāna*. In order to remove it, I must know that the root is myself and the tree, the effect, is also myself. Then there will no longer be identification with a single physical body, etc. First, the tree must be felled. To do this, I give up the I-sense, *ātma-buddhi*, in what is 'not-I,' *anātmā*. Then the root must be removed exactly as in cutting a tree. First you fell it with a saw, then dig up the root.

Śruti also uses this illustration. In *Kāthopaniṣad*,¹ *saṃsāra* is described as a tree with its roots above in *Brahman* and branches below within the time-space framework. It has no beginning; it is *anādi*, because it is cyclical. Even if it becomes unmanifest at the time of dissolution, like a tree in a seed, it manifests once again.

In his commentary on this verse, *Śaṅkara* cites the use of this imagery in the *Mahābhārata*.² There it says that it is produced from the unmanifest (abiding in *Brahman*), because of whose grace alone it has risen up. Like a tree is born from its root

¹*Kāthopaniṣad* – 2-3-1

²*Mahābhārata aśvamedha-parva* – 14-35-20 to 22

and is sustained by it, this tree of *saṃsāra* not only arises but is also sustained by *Īśvara*, without whom it has no existence. Its trunk is the intellect, *buddhi*, and its apertures are the physical aspects of the sense organs. The branches are the five elements and the various sense objects are the leaves. *Dharma* and *adharmā*, meaning *puṇya* and *pāpa* are its flowers which give rise to fruits in the form of pleasure and suffering, *sukha* and *duḥkha*. As the birds live in the tree, the *jīva* depends entirely upon this tree of *saṃsāra*.

Its original root is *Brahman* and so is its expression. It is non-separate from *Brahman*. Not only is one tree *Brahman*, there is a whole forest of trees, which is *Brahman* and the one who roams in the forest of *Brahman* is also *Brahman*. But he does not know it. Therefore, the tree of *saṃsāra* is to be destroyed by the sword of knowledge. Then one gains the state of revelling in oneself and from that he does not return.

All three principal sources of *brahma-jñāna* use this illustration. In the *śruti* we see it in *Kāthopaniṣad*; in the *smṛti*, here in the *Gītā*. And *Śaṅkara* has quoted the *itihāsa-purāṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, where it appears. *Mahābhārata* is an epic, *itihāsa*, but it can also be called a *purāṇa*. A *purāṇa*, however, is never called an *itihāsa*.

‘The one who knows this tree is a knower of the Veda—*yaḥ taṃ veda saḥ vedavit*,’ says the Lord. The main thing the Veda wants to convey is that *Brahman*, the substratum of *saṃsāra*, is you. The one who knows this tree along with its root, *Brahman*, knows that, everything, the entire *saṃsāra*, is *mithyā* and the root is *satya*. He is the *vedavit*, the one who knows the ultimate truth that the Vedas convey.

This is the opening statement, *pratijñā*, of the chapter. By knowing this tree of *saṃsāra*, along with its root, everything is known. The remainder of the chapter is to establish this and is, therefore, an elaboration of the original statement.

Other limbs of the tree of *saṃsāra* are explained now in order that we may understand what it is and how, by knowing it, one becomes the knower of the Veda.

+VÉ•ÉÉ ĪÉ |ÉÖÉÉÉ°iÉ°aÉ ĩÉÉJÉÉ MÉÉÉ|É ÉÉ-É É ÉÉÉaÉ|É ÉÉÉÉÉ*
 +VÉ•É ÉÉÉÉÉ°ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÖÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ |ÉÉÉÉÉ
adhaścordhvaṃ prasṛtāstasya śākhā
guṇappravṛddhā viśayappravālāḥ
adhaśca mūlānyanusantatāni
karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke

Verse 2

|É°aÉ *tasya* — its; ĩÉÉJÉÉ *śākhāḥ* — the branches; MÉÉÉ-|É ÉÉ-É *guṇa-pravṛddhāḥ* — that are augmented by the *guṇas*; É ÉÉÉaÉ|É ÉÉÉÉÉ *viśaya-pravālāḥ* — with the sense objects as shoots; +VÉ& >ÖV ÉÇÉĀ SÉ *adhaḥ ūrdhvaṃ ca* — below and above; |É°ÉÉÉÉ *prasṛtāḥ* — are spread out; +VÉ& SÉ *adhaḥ ca* — and below; ÉÉÉÉÉ°ÉÉÉÉÉ *manuṣya-loke* — in the world of

mortals; मूलानि *mūlāni* — the roots; कर्मबन्धिनः *karma-anubandhīni* — as *karmas* that bind; + अनुसन्ततानि *anusantatāni* — are diffused and spread out everywhere

Its branches that are augmented by the *guṇas*, with sense objects as their shoots are spread out below and above. And below, the diffused roots are the *karmas* that bind in the world of mortals.

THE BRANCHES OF THIS TREE OF SAṂSĀRA

What are the branches of this tree of *saṁsāra*? Some are extended, *prasṛtāḥ*, downward, *adhah*, while some of them go up, *ūrdhvam*. Above are all the celestial beings. This means that even *Indra*, *Bṛhaspati*, *Prajāpati*, and all other *devas* up to *Brahmā*, (Brahmaḥ), are within *saṁsāra*. In *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, they are contrasted with the wise person who is not destroyed by desire and is therefore, free from *saṁsāra*.¹ Some of the branches, on the other hand, grow down. These are the human beings, animals, and even stationary living beings like trees. All of them, those that extend up and down, are nourished by the three *guṇas*—*guṇa-pravṛddhāḥ*. The constituents of *māyā* with *Brahman* is their material cause.² Because of the *guṇas*, there are *karmas* and because of the *karmas*, one acquires bodies. Whether they are above or below, they are all sustained by the *guṇas*.

On a branch, there are nodular buds from which new branches can begin. These are the *pravālas*. In the tree of *saṁsāra*, the sense objects, *viśayas* are the *pravālas*. Desiring these sense objects, one will undertake new *karmas* because of which one will gain a new body. All the sense objects become nodular buds, *viśaya-pravālas*, which are potential branches leading to the acquisition of new bodies.

The taproot of this tree of *saṁsāra*, as we have seen, is *Brahman* with the power of *māyā*. The secondary roots coming down from the branches, *adhah ca mūlani*, are the binding *karmas*, *karma-anubandhīni*, in the world of mortals, *manuṣya-loke*. All the accumulated favourable and unfavourable *karmas* waiting to manifest, and the new *karmas* being done now form the secondary roots. These are the *karmas* born of *rāgas* and *dveṣas*, yielding unseen results, *adṛṣṭa-phalas*, which must fructify. They are extended everywhere, *anusantatāni*, and keep this tree of *saṁsāra* alive.

¹ *Taittirīyopaniṣad* – 2-8-1 to 4

² *Māyā* is the material cause that has undergone change to become this entire jagat —*pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. But *māyā* has no independent existence apart from *Brahman*. Therefore, *Brahman* is the material cause that lends existence to *māyā* itself and the entire jagat without itself undergoing any change. Therefore, *Brahman* is called the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*.

THE REAL NATURE OF THIS TREE OF SAṂSĀRA

The form of this tree is not known. Even though we describe it in detail with its roots, branches and leaves, if we begin to analyse it, there is no tree at all, only name and form, *nāma-rūpa*. This is true of any object. Take space, as an example. Without a reference like a ceiling or floor, there is no space. At least one object is required as a reference point to establish the concept of space. In no sense does it have any existence of its own. If you analyse it, you will only find one consciousness, *caitanya*. Then take up the analysis of air—is it hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, or carbon-dioxide? On inquiry, it too has no real existence. But we cannot dismiss the tree of *saṁsāra* as non-existent; otherwise, there would not be a description of it. At the same time, we cannot say it has an independent existence.

Śruti's intent is not to describe the tree of *saṁsāra* but to point out that it is *mithyā* and unfold the one *satya* upon which it is based. If you know this, the *kāraṇa*, you know everything. *Śaṅkara* says, *saṁsāra* is like a dream, mirage water, magic or a city seen in the clouds. In its own time, it appears to be real, but when you analyse it in terms of reality, it has no being. At the same time, you cannot say it is rootless for its root alone is the truth. Everything else is a superimposition upon that and therefore, *mithyā*.

Thus, *Bhagavān* says that in the form in which it has been described, this *saṁsāra* is not available, *na rūpam asya iha tathāupalabhyate*. This can be viewed in two ways. If we look at it from the standpoint of *paraṁ brahma*, there is only one *vastu*. Any name and form, *nāma* and *rūpa*, on inquiry, resolves into this *vastu*, and is, therefore, from the standpoint of the *vastu*, purely a projection. Name and form, the sense of agency and so on are superimposed upon *ātmā* due to ignorance and considered different from *ātmā*. Seeing the known world as different from the knower and the knowledge, the differences, which constitute *saṁsāra*, is but a projection.

Now, from the empirical, *vyāvahārika*, standpoint, viewing the world, along with its elements, laws, *puṇya-pāpa*, *karma*, the results of *karma*, the body, hunger, knowledge and delusion, etc., as though it is *satya* and meant to bind you is not true. Then there is *Īśvara*, a material cause, an order, *karma*, *karma-phala*, knowledge, ignorance, waking, dream, sleep, etc. All these are possible when you look at the tree of *saṁsāra*, as described, from the empirical standpoint. From the standpoint of the absolute reality, none of these exists. *Brahman* alone is.

Further, this *saṁsāra* has neither beginning nor end nor continuance in between—*nānto na cādir na ca sampratiṣṭhā*. *Gauḍapāda* has said, ‘That which did not exist before and that which will not exist later, does not exist now—*ādāvante ca yat nāsti*

varitamāne api tat tathā.¹ For example, before the pot was born it was not there; after it is destroyed, it is not there. In between, it cannot really exist. It only seems to exist.

The projected *saṃsāra*, in which the differences of knower-known-instrument of knowledge, *jñātr-jñeya-jñāna*, are superimposed upon *ātmā*, the one *vastu*, certainly has no beginning or end. Between *ātmā* and the creation which is *mithyā*, the connection is a superimposition which has no beginning because it is rooted in ignorance. Nor does it have an end (since it is not there to begin with). With no beginning or end, naturally, it is not there in between. A pot, for example, on inquiry reduces to pure consciousness, *caitanya*. It disappears on analysis, because it has been erroneously projected on *Brahman*. From the standpoint of *Brahman*, everything other than *Brahman* is superimposed and therefore, has no beginning, no end, nor any being now.

Empirically, it is true and not true from an absolute standpoint. In mistaking a rope for a snake, the rope is true whereas the snake is not. But you cannot arrive at the unreality of the snake unless the rope is more real. Thus, we have what we know as an empirical reality, which behaves according to a certain order. From the standpoint of the empirical world, *Brahman* becomes *satya*, while the world is *mithyā*. When looking at the world as something entirely different from *Brahman*, duality is real, the *jīvas* are many, each one different from the other, and therefore, the world becomes the cause for fear. Death and disease and everything else become real, not *mithyā*. If the world is seen as *mithyā*, it is true empirically, but it is not *satya*. Without that vision, there is *saṃsāra*.

How can *saṃsāra* be negated? By seeing its true form. *Śaṅkara* says, its nature is such that it perishes as it is seen—*drṣṭa-naṣṭa-svabhāva*. Even as we are seeing it, it is gone. We have no way of keeping an object in the same form as it is at this moment. In the next moment, it will inexorably change. Because of this also, it has no beginning, no end, no being of its own. From the standpoint of *Brahman* it has no reality whatsoever. Once you analyse an object, it disappears, into the *vastu*.

Although we may say that this body was born at a given time, we cannot say *saṃsāra* was born. Even empirically, since the creation passes from unmanifest to manifest and again to unmanifest and so on, it has no beginning, much less a being of its own. When you go to sleep, the whole thing disappears and even while awake, it is never the same. It keeps changing and disappearing.

Even though he has said it has no continuance, in the next line *Kṛṣṇa* says it is very well rooted, it is *svvirūḍhamūla*. Until inquiry starts and finishes, it has very good roots, since there is no better rooting than in ignorance. Everything else will be uprooted in time but ignorance can only be uprooted by knowledge, *jñāna*. Time can merely

¹*Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* – 2-6

provide sufficient experiences of pain to perhaps develop *jijñāsā*, a desire to know, which can spark an inquiry leading to the knowledge that uproots the ignorance. Being rooted in ignorance, *saṃsāra* has no real form, but, being rooted in ignorance, it is very well rooted—it is *svirūḍhamūla*.

DETACHMENT IS THE AXE TO FELL THIS TREE

To fell it, a particular axe is required, the axe of detachment, *asaṅga-śāstra*. By distinguishing between the subject and object, the erroneous identification of oneself with the physical body, senses and mind is withdrawn. The axe of detachment is the inquiry into the nature of the self and not-self. With this, the tree of *saṃsāra* is felled.

This detachment, *asaṅga*, must be firm, *dr̥ḍha*. *Asaṅgatva* begins with the external world and Śaṅkara mentions one's son as the first towards whom one should develop *asaṅgatva*. The very expression, 'my son' means there is an attachment. Friends are another source of attachment. One may want to renounce, but may find it difficult to leave one's circle of friends. It is true that this is not easy and takes some time. But later, you find that when you are with them, there is no common topic of conversation. They talk about clothes, movies, and other things that no longer hold your interest. And you cannot open your mouth about what interests you!

So you just stay with them, have a cup of coffee and walk out. Money, or any type of material wealth, is something else that is often difficult to give up. Last thing to be given up is the desire to go to heaven. Not by running away, but by proper inquiry, looking into oneself, one can gain a detachment from all these. After all, they are not physical; they are purely in the form of thoughts. Statements of the *śruti*, such as, 'Everything becomes beloved for the sake of oneself alone—*ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati*,'¹ help us in this type of inquiry. Binding love, like infatuation or even obsession for a person can be converted into a simple love for yourself expressed through love for that person. In this way, through inquiry, attachment is lessened with reference to a sense of ownership, *mamakāra*. Closely following this sense of ownership, *mamakāra*, is an erroneous sense of 'I,' the *ahaṅkāra*. These are the adventitious roots of the tree of *saṃsāra*.

The principal root remains, however; and to remove it, the self has to be known. For this we need a proper inquiry, *parimārgaṇa*. The prefix *pari* indicates how this inquiry has to be done—that is, with the help of the *śāstra* and the teacher. In this manner, with the help of the teacher, the *śāstra-vākya*, *mahāvākya*, equating *Brahman*, the cause of creation, with the self, has to be properly inquired into and understood. This is what is meant by the advice—*tat padaṃ parimārgitavyam*.

¹*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* – 2-4-5

THE AXE HAS TO BE SHARPENED WITH VIVEKA AND STRENGTHENED BY PURUĀERTHANIĀCĀYĀ

Mere detachment is not enough. Without something positive, there is repression and you will find yourself detaching from one thing only to get attached to something else. Given the nature of the pursuit, this is likely to be something unhealthy like an ideal. So Śaṅkara says firmness is required with reference to *puruṣārtha*, the human pursuit. Living in *saṃsāra*, you cannot release yourself from *saṃsāra*. Husband, wife, children, etc., are not going to solve the problem. They can give you some maturity if you are intelligent and ready to learn. Otherwise, they can intensify your problems and entrench you further in *saṃsāra*. If you are lucky, in the process of growth you may realize that *mokṣa* is what you want. This still is not enough. That desire to be free must be converted to a desire to know, *jijñāsā*. This, Śaṅkara says, has to be the commitment, *niścaya*. The understanding that *mokṣa* is in the form of the knowledge is not an ordinary thing and is arrived at only with a lot of *viveka*. A desire to be free is converted into a desire to know.

That is why the analysis of the *vedānta-śāstra*, that is, the *uttara-mīmāṃsā*,¹ begins with ‘*Athāto brahma-jijñāsā*,’ as the first *sūtra*. It means, ‘Thereafter, therefore, an inquiry into *Brahman* (has to be done).’² It is significant that this *sūtra* does not begin with *mumukṣā*. This means *mumukṣā* is included in the first word *atha*, meaning, ‘thereafter.’ After gaining all the necessary qualifications, for the sake of *mokṣa* you should inquire into *Brahman*. That alone is moving away from *saṃsāra* and about this, one must be very definite, *drḍha*.

Then one will be definite about the necessity for discrimination between the self and the not-self. As a single stroke with an axe is not enough to fell a tree, a single attempt at discrimination between *ātmā* and *anātmā* is not enough to free one from *saṃsāra*. Repetition, *abhyāsa*, is required. How much? Until *saṃsāra* is gone. This is not an ordinary tree. It is *avyaya*, relatively imperishable, and without end or beginning. Repeatedly we look at the fact that *ātmā* is not the body, the sense organs or any function of the mind. Once this is understood, having felled this tree of *saṃsāra* by dismissing all that is *anātmā*, we have to see what is *ātmā*.

¹ *Brahmasūtra*

² *Athāto brahmajijñāsā (Brahmasūtra 1-1-1)*

atha—thereafter = after gaining *sādhana-catuṣṭaya-sampatti*; *ataḥ*—therefore = because one seeks *nityatva*, limitlessness, and that is not gained through action; *brahma-jijñāsā* = inquiry into *Brahman*; [*kartavya*—is to be done]

THE END, GAINING WHICH THERE IS NO RETURN, SHOULD BE INQUIRED INTO

Now we are looking at the meaning of the word *tvam*, you. Only here will the teaching work. *Satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma* has to find its mark only in the innermost self, *pratyagātmā*. Then, the end that is achieved, is one from which one will not depart. Otherwise, the *jīva*, no matter where he goes, is always a nomad. Even if he sets up a residence in heaven, he will eventually leave and go somewhere else. Here, however, there is no further travel. Therefore, the Lord says, ‘*yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ*—those who have reached this end do not return again to this *saṁsāra*.’

That *Brahman*, which is the end to be achieved, from which there is no return, is *ādya*, the one who is in the beginning, before all creation. Just as before the pot there was clay, all this was existence alone in the beginning. That existence is the person, *puruṣa*, out of whom everything has come. By using the word person, *puruṣa*, *Bhagavān* establishes that it is a conscious being and at the same time, complete, *puruṣa*. The person who obtains in this body is the unborn person that was there before the creation. To him, the *jīva* says, ‘I surrender, *prapadye*.’ If that surrender is complete, only the *puruṣa* is there.

That false person alone can be surrendered, not the real one. Once the negation of *anātmā* is done, only the innermost self, *pratyagātmā*, remains who is nothing but *paraṁ brahma*, called here, *puruṣa*. This is the person from whom the creation is sent forth, *pravṛtīḥ prasṛtā*. This ancient, *purāṇī*, beginningless creation has come out of this *puruṣa*. By surrendering to him, one may successfully inquire into the nature of oneself. First dismissing all that is not the self, the very inquirer surrenders to the *puruṣa* from whom everything has come.

Who are the people who surrender to or seek this *puruṣa*? The end they gain is one from which they do not return, *na nivartanti bhūyaḥ*. What are the qualifications of those who can gain such an end?

निर्मणामोहा जितसाङ्गदोषा
 अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामा
 द्वन्द्ववैविमक्तसुखदुःखसाङ्गज्ज्ञैर्
 गच्छन्त्यमुद्धा पदामव्ययां तत

Verse 5

निर्मणामोहा *nirmāna-mohāḥ* — those who are free from the demand for respect; विनिवृत्तकामा *vinivṛttakāmāḥ* — those who have conquered the fault of attachment;

+*adhyātma-nityāḥ* — those who are always focused on the self; *vinivṛtta-kāmāḥ* — those from whom desires have completely gone; *sukha-duḥkha-sañjñaiḥ dvandvaiḥ* — from the opposites known as pleasure and suffering; *vimuktāḥ* — those who are totally free; +*amūḍhāḥ* — those who are not deluded; *tat* — that; +*avyayam padam* — imperishable end; *gacchanti* — they go to (gain)

Those who are free from the demand for respect and from delusion, who have conquered the fault of attachment, who are always focused on the self and from whom desires have completely gone, who are totally free from the opposites known as pleasure and suffering and are not deluded, go to (gain) that imperishable end.

WHO ARE THE ADHIKĀRĪS WHO GAIN THIS END?

In this single verse, *Bhagavān* captures all that was told in the thirteenth chapter, and elsewhere, with regard to qualifications.

Nirmānamohas are those who are free from *māna* and *moha*. *Māna*, as we have seen, is demanding respect from others. To be free from this, we have to analyse why we demand respect. There are reasons for it. We may be so critical of ourselves that we cannot bear even the suggestion of criticism from others. Even though we may have qualifications that are worthy of respect, if we do not have an adequate sense of self-worth, we will seek it externally. This can express itself in a number of ways and one of them is a demand for respect. To overcome this, a relative level of self-worth must be arrived at through healing one's damaged self-image.

Finally, we have to ask, 'What is self respect?' When I am the only self that is available, who is to respect whom for what? There is nothing to compare oneself with and nothing to prove, nor anyone to prove it to. This is a fact to be recognized. I am *sat-cit-ānandaṁ brahma* and everything here shines after me, has its being in me.

Moha is attributing false values to things. We superimpose upon objects and situations values, which they do not have and thus, eventually feel disappointed. Due to a delusory set of values, we look at the world without being dispassionate. By *vicāra*, proper inquiry, we can gain a capacity to see things as they are. Thus, those, who have freed themselves from a demand for respect and from non-objectivity, are called *nirmānamohas*.

Jita-saṅga-doṣas are those who have conquered the fault of association. Any object, without which you feel incomplete, is one to which you have *saṅga*, attachment. It can be conquered only by inquiry and growth. The use of the word *jita*, conquered,

indicates that there is a battle to be fought. This is true. But it is purely a cognitive battle. We do not really know all the things that we are attached to. Only when we lose them do we realize how integral they were to our sense of well being. As they keep surfacing, we try to understand each one as an attachment, which is purely a thought. There is no real attachment if you analyse it. A particular way of looking at things and yourself created an attachment, infatuation, or even an obsession, all of which are binding in nature. Those who master these by proper *vicāra*, inquiry, are called *jīta-saṅga-doṣas*.

Naturally they are *vinivṛtta-kāmas*, those from whom all binding desires have gone. The prefix *vi* here indicates that the desires have gone in a particular way. Generally, desires wane leaving something behind. *Vinivṛtta* means nothing remains. When you eat onion or garlic, even though you wash your hands and rinse your mouth, something remains in the form of odour. Similarly, even though desires may go away they leave some residue. There is a feeling that one has given up something, a subtle longing remains. Though he may have behaviourally given it up, he has not grown out of it completely.

Whether I have given up something or grown out of it, I am without the object. But outgrowing is the only real giving up. That is *sannyāsa*. For that I have to be *adhyātmanitya*, one who is always committed to seeing the real nature of oneself. Otherwise, giving up things that I have not outgrown will leave a vacuum into which all sorts of new desires will rush. In reality, it is not so much a giving up as a dropping off, as something more compelling occupies more and more of one's time and attention. This is a commitment to always seeing the real nature of myself, *adhyātma-nityatva*.

With this kind of a positive pursuit there is direction, discovery, and growth. All these take place naturally. The commitment is total. Commitment is not even the word. What commitment does the lovelorn person have to dwelling on his beloved? It is natural. He cannot do anything else. No matter what activities, conversations, etc., he may be called upon to participate in, his attention is always on the one he loves. This is the life of a seeker. It is not mere dwelling on oneself. Any depressed person does that. This is a consistent proper inquiry into the nature of *paramātmā* through *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*.

The people under discussion here are those who are totally free from the pairs of opposites, which can be reduced to what we call the pleasant and the unpleasant, *sukha* and *duḥkha*. In all situations, they enjoy a mind, which is composed and capable of facing facts as they are. As a result, they are free from error, they are not deluded anymore—they are *amūḍhas*. They go to that end which is imperishable—*tat avyayaṃ padaṃ gacchanti*.

More about this end is told in the next verse.

xÉ iÉ' 6ofaEiÉa 0ÉÉÉaxÉ 9É9ÉÉ! ÉaxÉ {ÉÉ'ÉÉ0x*
 aÉ3ùí'ÉÉ xÉ ÉxÉ'ÉiÉ9iÉa iÉrú'É {É9ÉÉ'É'É 11É 11
na tadbhāsayate sūrya na śasāṅko na pāvakaḥ
yadgatvā na nivartante taddhāma paramaṃ mama

Verse 6

aÉiÉa Méi'ÉÉ *yat gatvā* — having gone to which; xÉ ÉxÉ'ÉiÉ9iÉa *na nivartante* — they do not return; iÉiÉa *tat* — that¹; 0ÉÉÉ9 sūryaḥ — the sun; xÉ {ÉÉ'ÉaÉiÉa *na bhāsayate* — does not illumine; xÉ 9É9ÉÉ! na śasāṅkaḥ — nor does the moon; xÉ {ÉÉ'ÉÉ0x *na pāvakaḥ* — nor fire; iÉiÉa *tat* — that is; É'É'É *mama* — My; {É9É'Éa *paramam* — ultimate; vÉÉ'É *dhāma* — abode

Neither the sun, nor moon, nor fire, illumines that which, having gone to, they do not return. That is My limitless abode.

THE LIMITLESS ABODE OF ĪĀVARA FROM WHICH THERE IS NO RETURN

Dhāman is a place, an abode. The use of the words *pada* and *dhāman* in these verses reflects the vedic background. The scriptures of any religion, including the Vedas, promise a place or places to which you can go after leaving this world. Heaven, for most religions is the ultimate destination and in the Veda, words like *padam* and *dhāman* are used for the end that is being promised. Since these words are common expressions for the desired end, the same words are used for *mokṣa*. But while heaven is a place to which people go and then return, *mokṣa* is not.

Thus, whenever we see one of these words used with reference to *mokṣa*, it is often qualified by ‘They do not return—*na nivartante*.’ He could simply say that knowing this, they become *Brahman*. But the use of the familiar words for heaven invoke a metaphor and also imply going to heaven is not an end in itself. Coming back is involved in every going except for this one. That means the going here is figurative, *upacāra*. You do not go at all. You are that *Brahman*.

What you are, is *Brahman*. That *Brahman* is this ‘abode—*dhāma*,’ a place which neither the sun, nor moon, nor fire can illumine—*na tad bhāsayate sūryaḥ na śasāṅko na pāvakaḥ*.’ Is it then so dark that nothing can illumine it? No. All other light is eclipsed there because it is of the nature of light. And it is limitless, *parama*. That limitless consciousness, which is *Bhagavān*, illumines the sun, moon, fire, and everything else. What can possibly illumine it? Even though the sun has the capacity to

¹ The word *tat* connects to the word *dhāma* in the second line.

light up the whole earth, it does not light up the Lord's abode. When the sun cannot illumine it, how can the moon, or the fire, which includes all other sources of light, illumine it?

Consciousness does not require any light to illumine it. In fact, it illumines all other lights even though one light cannot normally illumine another. Every other form of light comes to light because of this consciousness. Even the mind and senses are not required, for this is a light from which they have a borrowed existence. Consciousness lends its existence to the mind, the senses, and to the whole world. When everything is myself, how is there any possibility of returning, or even going to that place? Thus, those who 'go' there do not return—*na nivartante*.

The content of this verse is expressed in another verse that is present in *Kaṭhōpaniṣad*, *Śvetāśvatarōpaniṣad* and *Muṇḍakōpaniṣad*.¹ It says, 'There the sun, moon, and stars do not shine. This lightning does not shine (there), what can we say about this fire—*na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra-tārakaṃ nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yam agniḥ?*'

The sun illumines everything, thereby making it possible for the eyes to see. They cannot see an object unless it reflects light. In this sense, *Śaṅkara* says, it is the one which illumines everything—*sarva-avabhāsaka*. When we perceive any object, it is true that the sun or any other source of light illumines it for us. But that light is useful only in illumining it for the eyes. But that is not enough for the purpose of the perception of the object by the mind. There, the contact of the eyes with the object brings about a thought form, *vṛtti*, which when perceived by the mind, destroys the ignorance of the object. In the mind that thought form, *vṛtti* also has to be illumined; only then, the object will be seen by the mind; and there, the sun, moon, etc., have no access. Only *ātmā* can illumine the *vṛtti*, and is, therefore, the real source of illumination.

By what can this *ātmā* be illumined? When the sun does not illumine even the *vṛtti*, how is it going to illumine *ātmā*, the one who illumines the *vṛtti*? *Ātmā* is self-effulgent; it is the light because of which even the sun is known. This limitless light is 'I, the *ātmā*,' which *Bhagavān* says, is 'My *dhāman*, abode.' Going there, meaning recognizing that as themselves, people do not return, *na nivartante*. They have no more ignorance about *ātmā*.

As long as self-ignorance persists there is an agent, *kartā*, and an experiencer, *bhoktā*, and therefore, there will be coming and going.

Introducing the next verse, *Śaṅkara* raises an objection. It is well known that every condition has an arrival and an end. The *śāstra* itself says that things that are

¹ *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* – 2-2-15, *Muṇḍakōpaniṣad* – 2-2-10, *Śvetāśvatarōpaniṣad* – 6-14

But if the Lord is whole, *pūrṇa*, how can he have parts? And if he does consist of parts, he would be subject to disintegration. In that case, either this is a mistake or it is an expression that requires understanding.

Jīva-loka is what is experienced by a given *jīva*. It is not the world of *jīvas* but the world of a *jīva*. He thinks of himself as an agent and even though he may have studied the Veda and may be doing *vaidika-karmas*, he is nevertheless, ignorant of the nature of himself. In this world he understands himself as an agent, *kartā*, and an experiencer, *bhoktā*, with reference to a given body. Because it is the *ātmā*, that assumes the status of *kartā* and *bhoktā*, this *jīva* is *sanātana*, eternal. *Jīvatva* goes only in the wake of knowledge of the *ātmā*, that is eternal.

THE AÊSA IS LIKE A REFLECTION

Here as well as in the other worlds, we have an infinite number of doers and enjoyers. Are they separate from *niravayava-brahma*? No. Then how do we account for this number? They are only a fraction, *aṃśa* of *Brahman*. *Śaṅkara* says, it is like the reflection of the sun in water. No matter how many reflections there may be, there is only one sun, because of which, there can be the appearance of many suns in the water. The reflection is totally dependent on the sun while the sun is independent of the reflections. And further, in a reflection, the totality of what is reflected is seen. You do not see merely a part of it. Nor are there two things in reality. One is *satya*, and other is *mithyā*. So, now we have to account for that *mithyā*.

There are an infinite number of *jīvas* and all are *paramātmā*. All the subtle bodies, the loci of the agents and experiencers, are nothing but *paramātmā*, and the reflection of the consciousness there, is also *paramātmā*. An agent is not an entity; it is nothing but a notion, a thought, which exists only as long as the mind is present and ignorant. If you go to sleep, the agent is gone; the moment you wake up it returns. Where did the notion of being an agent go? It does not go anywhere; it merely resolves into consciousness. That is why we say that the agent is *mithyā* and not *satya*. And the consciousness, into which it resolves, is *satya*. When the pot is destroyed, it does not walk away from the clay. Where can it go? Similarly, the agent, whether in sleep or on the removal of ignorance, does not go anywhere. It just resolves into the *ātmā*. *Ātmā* is never opposed to the agent, but is the very substratum of the agent. Therefore, the *jīva* exists for eternity, given *sattā*, existence, and *sphūrṭi*, manifestation, by *ātmā*. Because there are so many agents and only one *paramātmā*, they are each looked upon as a part, as it were.

When even the notion of being an agent is illumined by *ātmā*, how can *ātmā* possibly be the agent? Further, the sense of agency comes and goes. If it is the nature of the self, it cannot be given up. There is no agency at all in the *ātmā*. In the wake of this

knowledge, *karṭṛtva*, the sense of agency, and all the experiences of the *saṃsārī*, become one with the *ātmā*; there is no return.

ĀTMA IS LIKE THE SPACE LIMITED BY AN UPĀDHI

Śaṅkara further illustrates how the *jīva* is said to be a ‘part’ of *paramātmā* with another example. Space enclosed by a pot or a room, etc., is looked upon as a part of total space from the standpoint of the object by which it is circumscribed, its *upādhi*. In reality, the space is never divided. When the space is seen in its own right, and when from that standpoint, the *upādhi* is ‘gone,’ the total all pervasive space is reached, in terms of understanding. Having reached that vision of space, one does not return to seeing it as circumscribed.

Similarly, having reached the limitless self, in terms of understanding, it is proper to say that one does not return from there, in the sense that one does not go back to seeing it as limited. Even though such a person has gained knowledge, since the *upādhi* remains, we still call him a *jīva*, but a liberated one, the *jīvanmukta*. He knows that the *jīva*, in fact, all *jīvas*, are in him; but he is not in the *jīva*. He knows that he is the self of all, and at the same time, free from everything. Thus, he is liberated while living, a *jīvanmukta*. When his *prārabdha-karma* is exhausted, and the body falls, and there is no further assumption of a body, with which he might return.

Only an entity that is limited can form an association with another object. Being within the same order of reality, they can come together. That association has a certain longevity, upon the expiry of which, dissociation occurs. But here, it is different. By ignorance, a set-up is established wherein there are two different orders of reality; one is *satya*, the other, *mithyā*. The *jīva* is a notion entirely centred on the *paramātmā*. It has no independent existence.

If the pot realizes it is clay, even if it is destroyed, it will not reappear in another form. If, however, it passes away with the notion that it is a pot, it will come back again in some other form—as a saucer, a cup, a jar, and so on. In between, it may have some pleasant experiences in some other *loka*, but eventually, it will come back. Because the *loka* and the notion of being a pot are all within the same order of reality, the principle of association and dissociation applies. But here, two orders of reality are involved. The *jīva*, who is false, *mithyā*, recognizes the fact that he is, essentially, the reality of everything. From this recognition, he cannot return, because ignorance can only go; it cannot come back. Therefore, it is proper to say that those who know the reality of the self do not come back, *na nivartante*.

**HOW CAN THE LIMITLESS PARAMĒTMĒ HAVE PARTS?
IF SO, IT WOULD ALSO BE SUBJECT TO DISINTEGRATION**

Here *Śaṅkara* raises another question. How can the partless *ātmā* have a given part, like an agent or an experience? If it does, then it will disintegrate because anything, which has parts, is subject to destruction. Therefore, we cannot say that *paramātmā* has parts. Nor can we say that the partless *ātmā* can become a given *jīva*, an agent, *kartā*, an experiencer, *bhoktā*. How, then, are we to understand the use of the word *aṃśa*, part, here?

This is not a problem because, created by *avidyā*, a part is apparently seen. This was shown also in the thirteenth chapter in detail. It is only through ignorance that you can say that *ātmā* is limited. Because of the *upādhi*, every *kartā* is part of *Bhagavān*. Once you recognize *Bhagavān* as the *ātmā*, the sense of the agency and sense of enjoyership go, and thus, having ‘reached’ the abode of *Bhagavān*, you do not return.

How do they not come back after having gone to *Bhagavān*? They are not separate from him at any time and were only seemingly a part of him until they realized this. The timeless ‘part’ seems to be time-bound for the time being. Once you realize, ‘I am *Brahman*,’ there is no *aṃśa*; there is only one *vastu*. When the ignorance is gone, the product is also gone.

For the one who is liberated there is no real *aṃśatva*, because he knows he is the whole. As long as the *prārabdha-karma* is being exhausted, the physical body, mind, sense complex, etc., seemingly enclose *Brahman*. When that falls away, there is only *Brahman*. Even before it falls away, once you understand that it is only an *upādhi*, there is only *Brahman*. And that can be understood only by knowing the *vastu*. It is like understanding that a crystal appears to be blue because of something blue in its vicinity. Once you know it is a crystal, even if you happen to see it appearing as blue, your knowledge of the clarity of the crystal does not get affected in any manner. Because you know it is due to *upādhi*. Knowing that *ātmā* is not an agent or an experiencer, but *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, you are not in any way affected by the limitations of the body-mind-sense-complex.

The concept of *upādhi* explains *Brahman* appearing differently—as though, an agent, *kartā*, as though an experiencer, *bhoktā*, as though a *saṃsārī*. *Upādhi* establishes that the nature of *Brahman* is unsullied. If you are *ānanda*, you are always *ānanda*. Knowing that changes are due to *upādhis*, you do not accept a real change in yourself at any time.

The first line of this verse connects with the previous verse as an explanation of the statement, *yadgatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṃ mama*. The second line is to be read with the next verse.

ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥

manaḥ śaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati

Verse 7

ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥

ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥

śarīraṁ yadavāpnoti yaccāpyutkrāmatīśvaraḥ

grhītvaitāni saṁyāti vāyurgandhānivāsayāt

Verse 8

<ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *īśvaraḥ* — the one who rules (the body); ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *yat ca api* — and when; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *utkrāmati* — departs (from this body); ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *prakṛtisthāni* — those that abide in *prakṛti*, (the material cause); ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *manaḥśaṣṭhāni indriyāṇi* — the sense organs with the mind as the sixth element; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *karṣati* — draws to itself; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *yat* — when; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *śarīraṁ avāpnoti* — (he) obtains a new body; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *vāyuh iva* — like the wind; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *gandhān āsayāt* — (would carry) fragrances from (their) source, (the flowers); ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *etāni* — these (sense objects and mind); ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *grhītvā* — taking; ॐ॒ ए॒त॒श्च॒ ऋ॒श॒म॒स्य॒ अ॒न्दि॒र्या॒नि॒ प्र॒क॒र्त॒ि॒स्थ॒ानि॒ क॒र्श॒ति॒ ॥७॥ *saṁyāti* — (he) goes

And when the one who rules (the body) departs, he draws to himself the five senses and the mind, the sixth, obtaining in the body, and when he obtains a new body, he goes, taking these (the sense organs and the mind) with him just as the wind (would carry) the fragrances from their sources (the flowers).

The *jīva* has to be recognized as only seemingly an agent and experiencer, *kartā* and *bhoktā*, and not subject to birth and death because the *jīva* is essentially *paramātmā*. The death of the *jīva* is spoken of only with reference to a particular physical body. Even as a *jīva* with ignorance, he does not die until knowledge takes place. He is born again and again in different bodies. Since the status of being a *jīva* is a superimposition, there is no *jīva* to die. Only the condition of being a *jīva*, *jīvatva*, which is superimposed upon the *ātmā* goes away.

When the *jīva* leaves the body, what departs is the subtle body, consisting of the five senses and the mind, without which the senses cannot function. All these exist in the *prakṛti*, which here refers to the physical body. Each sense organ abides in its own place in the body, which is made up of *prakṛti*. It exists and operates when the *jīva* is alive and identified with the body. Then, at the time of death, each one leaves and the place where it once functioned, no longer functions as it did. This *jīva*, who is a *kartā* and *bhoktā* due to ignorance, though he is really of the nature of *Parameśvara*, now leaves this body behind and travels assuming a certain subtle form, as we do in a dream.

Here the word, *karṣati*, means, ‘he draws to himself.’ And the word, *īśvara*, means ‘the one who rules,’ the word coming from the root, ‘*īś*’ to rule. Here, he is the

one who is the ruler of this body. This ‘part’ of *Īśvara*, in the form of *kartā* and *bhoktā*, moves away from this body at the time of death. When he does, he takes with himself all the subtle components of the five sense organs and the mind.

When he moves to a new body he takes them all with him. Just because we do not see it, does not mean it does not happen. As we do not see air gathering molecules of scent from a flower, we do not see the *jīva* gathering the mind and senses and moving away. Both are subtle and therefore, not perceptible to our senses. We can only make an inference based on what we can perceive. In the case of the *jīva*, we can infer that he is no longer there in the body because the mind and senses of the person who is dead are no longer functioning.

When the *jīva* assumes another body, he enjoys the sense objects again with all the sense organs, he has brought with him, because he must have the means to enjoy the sense objects. How does he enjoy them?

ॐ ईश्वरोऽस्य श्रोत्रं चक्षुः शरीरं च स्पर्शं च
 + ईश्वरोऽस्य मनोऽपि च विषयानुपसेवते ॥

*śrotram ca kṣuḥ sparśanam ca rasanam ghrāṇameva ca
 adhiṣṭhāya manaścāyaṃ viṣayānupasevate*

Verse 9

ॐ ईश्वरोऽस्य श्रोत्रं — the ear; शरीरं चक्षुः — the eye; शरीरं च स्पर्शं च — and the touch; शरीरं च रसानं — the sense of taste; शरीरं च गन्धं च — and the sense of smell; शरीरं च मनोऽपि च — and the mind; + ईश्वरोऽस्य — presiding over; + ईश्वरोऽस्य — this person; ईश्वरोऽस्य विषयानुपसेवते — the sense objects; = ईश्वरोऽस्य विषयानुपसेवते — experiences

Presiding over the ear, the eye, the senses of touch, taste, and smell, and the mind, this person (*jīva*) experiences the sense objects.

The subject, the conscious being, pervades the sense organs. In the situation where a snake is erroneously perceived on a rope, the snake is pervaded by the rope. There is no snake without the rope. The rope is the *adhiṣṭhāna* and there is no reality for the snake, which is *adhyasta* on the rope. Similarly here the sense organs are pervaded by and presided over by the subject. As the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, and so on, the *adhiṣṭhātṛ* is the one who is behind all the senses. And he is also the subject presiding over the mind. Who is he? A ‘part’ of *Nārāyaṇa* who is *jīva* due to ignorance, *avidyā*. Now, in the new form, he enjoys the sense objects exactly as he did before. The truth is, the form is nothing but *Paramēśvara*. He is the agent and the experiencer. But this may or may not be known.

=iGóÉ'ÉxiÉÁÍ°ÍÉiÉÁÉ ÉÉÉÉÉ |ÉÓÉÉxÉÁÉ ÉÉ MÉÓÉÉÍx'ÉiÉ'ÉÁ
É'É'ÉÓÉÁ xÉÉxÉÉÉ°ÉÍxíÉ (É°ÉÍxíÉ YÉÉxÉSÉiÉÓÉ& |120 |1 |

*utkrāmantam sthitam vāpi bhujñānam vā guṇānvitam
vimūdhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñānacakṣuṣaḥ*

Verse 10

=iGóÉ'ÉxiÉ'ÉÁ *utkrāmantam* — the one who is departing from (the body); Í°ÍÉiÉ'ÉÁ'ÉÉ +ÉÉÉ
sthitam vā api — or even remaining (in this body); MÉÓÉ-+Íx'ÉiÉ'ÉÁ *guṇa-anvitam* —
endowed with *guṇas*; |ÉÓÉÉxÉÁÉ ÉÉ *bhujñānam vā* — or experiencing; É'É'ÉÓÉÁ&
— the deluded; xÉ +xÉÉÉ°ÉÍxíÉ *na anupaśyanti* — do not see; YÉÉxÉ- SÉiÉÓÉ&
— those who have the eye of wisdom; (É°ÉÍxíÉ *paśyanti* — see

The deluded do not see the one who is departing (from the body) or even remaining (in this body), experiencing or endowed with the *guṇas*. Those who have the eye of wisdom see.

THE DELUDED DO NOT SEE PARAMĒTMĒ

‘*Na paśyanti*,’ means ‘they do not see,’ and with the prefix *anu*, ‘*na anupaśyanti*’ means, ‘they do not see in keeping with the *śāstra*, as taught by a teacher.’ Lacking discrimination, they are thus deluded, *vimūdhā*, not knowing this *jīva* is only an *aṃśa*, ‘part,’ of *paramātmā*. But the word ‘part’ is used for ease of explanation only, because in reality, *paramātmā* cannot be divided. The assumption of *kartr̥tva*, agency, by the *paramātmā* in the form of the *jīva*, is only *mithyā*. In reality, the *jīva* has no real existence apart from *paramātmā*.

The point here is that death does not solve the problem of being a *jīva*. There is a common misconception that *mokṣa* follows the release from the physical body. The *Gītā* denies this. If, while living in this body, he does not see that he is *paramātmā*, he will give up this body only to assume another. Though it is *paramātmā* that is seemingly enjoying all the sense objects and endowed with *sukha-duḥkha*, *rāga-dveṣa*, etc., they do not see him. *Śaṅkara* says that this *ātmā* who is available for easy comprehension, being self-evident behind every sense organ and the mind, is not seen only due to delusion in the form of lack of discrimination. The lack of capacity to discriminate is due to the sheer strength of the love for seen and unseen enjoyments. We say such a person is deluded because he does not recognize what is self-evident and so easily available.

While every human being has pain and the desire for a solution for it, not everyone finds the solution. The human form is adequate for *mokṣa* because it has pain and the capacity to discriminate. Everybody knows the problem, but sufficient discrimination does not arise to solve it because they are completely possessed by the things they want to accomplish now and later. Among them are included those who want to go to heaven. We say, they are completely deluded because all these things are decoys. Even though

they took a human form and came here for a purpose, which only a human form can accomplish, they are waylaid by the dacoits of binding likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣa*. What a lot for this *jīva*! He is *paramātmā* and can enjoy the freedom that is his nature, but he waits for the benevolent hands of chance to shape a few moments of happiness for him.

THOSE WHO HAVE THE EYE OF WISDOM SEE

On the other hand, there are those who do see the nature of themselves clearly. How? Through the eye of wisdom, *jñāna-cakṣus*. Those who have knowledge born of *vedānta-pramāṇa* have a clear vision of *ātmā* and *anātmā*. They know the agent, *kartā*, is nothing but *paramātmā*. They alone see.

First, by discriminating between the seer and the seen, everything that can be objectified is determined as ‘not-I.’ In the thought forms of agent, *kartā*, and enjoyer, *bhoktā*, the sense of ‘I’ is superimposed. In reality, they are all observable, and so I have to discern that I am distinct from all of them. It is not merely logic but seeing this fact. The I-sense is dependent upon consciousness, the real meaning of the ‘I.’ With the immediate recognition of ‘I’ being self evident consciousness whenever I use the word ‘I,’ I mean that consciousness, which apparently assumes various incidental forms. As a driver of a car says ‘I did sixty miles per hour,’ knowing that he did not, in the same way, recognizing the self as *akartā*, I may still say that, I said or did this or that; but I know that I am not the agent, *kartā*. There is a clarity about the ‘I’ here.

Śaṅkara introduces the next verse with, ‘Some, however,’ to make it clear that these people are unlike those of the last *pāda* of the previous verse whose eye of understanding of *ātmā* has been opened by the *śāstra-pramāṇa*. The people under discussion here have been taught the *mahāvākya* by a qualified teacher, but they still need to put forth a certain effort.

Yājñavalkya tells *Maitreyī* ‘Everything becomes dear to you because of the love of yourself alone—*ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati*,¹ and immediately follows with, ‘The self is to be seen, heard of, reflected upon, and contemplated upon.’²

Ātmā has to be seen, *draṣṭavya*, by you. How? Through the eye of wisdom which has to be opened by a *pramāṇa*. For that, we require *śruti* and therefore, *Yājñavalkya* says, *ātmā* has to be listened to—*śrotavya*. Once a person is adequately qualified, this is enough. If that is not the case, listening has to be followed by *manana*, reflection, and *nididhyāsana*, contemplation.

¹ *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* – 2-4-5 and 4-5-6

² *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* – 2-4-5 and 4-5-6

अ॒ति॒खि॒त॒ः॒ अ॒र्ह॒न्म॒ख॒ः॒ स॒ः॒ य॒ता॒न्त॒ह॒॒ य॒ो॒गि॒ना॒ह॒॒ च॒॒॒
 अ॒ति॒खि॒त॒ः॒ अ॒र्ह॒न्म॒ख॒ः॒ स॒ः॒ य॒ता॒न्त॒ह॒॒ य॒ो॒गि॒ना॒ह॒॒ च॒॒॒

yatanto yoginaścainam paśyantyātmanyavasthitam
yatanto'pyakṛtātmāno nainam paśyantyacetasah

Verse 11

अ॒ति॒खि॒त॒ः॒ अ॒र्ह॒न्म॒ख॒ः॒ स॒ः॒ य॒ता॒न्त॒ह॒॒ य॒ो॒गि॒ना॒ह॒॒ च॒॒॒ — and the *yogīs* who are making an effort; + अ॒र्ह॒न्म॒ख॒ः॒
ātmani — in the *buddhi*; + अ॒ति॒खि॒त॒ः॒ स॒ः॒ य॒ता॒न्त॒ह॒॒ य॒ो॒गि॒ना॒ह॒॒ च॒॒॒ *avasthitam* — obtaining; अ॒र्ह॒न्म॒ख॒ः॒ स॒ः॒
(ātmā); अ॒र्ह॒न्म॒ख॒ः॒ स॒ः॒ य॒ता॒न्त॒ह॒॒ य॒ो॒गि॒ना॒ह॒॒ च॒॒॒ *paśyanti* — see; + अ॒र्ह॒न्म॒ख॒ः॒ स॒ः॒ य॒ता॒न्त॒ह॒॒ य॒ो॒गि॒ना॒ह॒॒ च॒॒॒
akṛtātmānah — those whose minds are not mature; + अ॒र्ह॒न्म॒ख॒ः॒ स॒ः॒ य॒ता॒न्त॒ह॒॒ य॒ो॒गि॒ना॒ह॒॒ च॒॒॒ *acetasah* — those who do not have discrimination; अ॒ति॒खि॒त॒ः॒
yatantaḥ api — even though making effort; अ॒र्ह॒न्म॒ख॒ः॒ स॒ः॒ य॒ता॒न्त॒ह॒॒ य॒ो॒गि॒ना॒ह॒॒ च॒॒॒ *enam na paśyanti* — do not see this (*ātmā*)

And the *yogīs*, who are making effort, see this self-obtaining in the *buddhi*. And those whose minds are not mature and who do not have *viveka*, do not see this (*ātmā*) even if they are making effort.

The word *yoginah* used here implies that their minds have been made tranquil and receptive by proper efforts. Thus, they are people of effort, *yatantaḥ*. By a life of contemplation, *nididhyāsana*, they see.

What is the meaning of the locative case of *ātmā* in the word, *ātmani*, here? It cannot mean, ‘in *ātmā*’ because everything is located in the *ātmā*. Here it means ‘in the *buddhi*.’ These *yogīs* recognize the *ātmā* obtaining in the intellect. It is not that they see *ātmā* in the intellect, but rather, they recognize directly, ‘I am the consciousness obtaining in the intellect.’ Further, this consciousness is recognized as identical with *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, not something endowed with the attributes of the body, mind, sense complex, all of which are superimposed upon *ātmā*.

An indirect knowledge of *Brahman*, the cause of the universe, can be conceived of, but there is no possibility of having indirect knowledge of *ātmā*, because it is always directly experienced. We cannot even really have indirect knowledge of what is said about *ātmā* in the *śāstra*. We can only say that we do not recognize the truth of what it says. One thing that we can all appreciate is that it is always self-evident, and everything else becomes evident to the self.

Both direct and indirect knowledge of anything, are illumined by *ātmā*. You are the one who lights up both a cognition arising from perception and one born of inference, etc. Whether the object is directly or indirectly known by you, you light up the relevant thought form. This self-evident *ātmā* that illumines everything has to be recognized as *paraṃ brahma*.

Most seekers must make effort for *niṣṭhā* in this knowledge. That is why *Yājñavalkya* mentions all the three—*śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*—as the

means to seeing the *ātmā*. Only a very few require just *śravaṇa*, that is, only the exposure to the *pramāṇa*. This was the case for *Śvetaketu* in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*. Though he was shown the truth through the statement, 'tat tvam asi—that thou art,' nine times by his father, that alone was adequate for him to gain the knowledge. Even the six students of *Praśnopaniṣad* understood immediately, what their teacher *Pippalāda* told them. Similarly, when *Nārada* went to *Sanatkumāra*, he understood the *bhūmavidyā*, the knowledge that I am *Brahman*, immediately on being taught. All these students recognized this immediately. But then, we also see people being described in the *śāstra* as doing meditation, *upāsana*, and practising austerities, *tapas*. Those of the first group are the most highly qualified, *uttama-adhikārīs* and the others are simply qualified, *adhikārīs*. They must make effort.

THOSE WHO LACK MATURITY DO NOT SEE IN SPITE OF EFFORT

Mere effort is not enough however. A certain type of mind is required for those efforts to be meaningful. Though one may make all the prescribed efforts, one has to gather the capacity to inquire properly. That itself is a discipline. Further, one must have withdrawn from a life of improper activities. By a life of discipline, gaining a mastery over the senses, the other organs, and the mind, one's pursuit is not hindered by these. *Bhagavān* says, 'Even though they make effort, they do not see.' Why? Because they are *akṛtātmānaḥ*, not gained proper *antaḥkaraṇaśuddhi*, through a life of *karmayoga*, and are *acētasah*, lacking in *vivēka*. The word *acētasah*, literally means those who do not have a *cētas*, mind. But there cannot be any one who does not have a mind. Therefore *Śaṅkara* glosses this word as *avivēkinaḥ*, those lacking in *vivēka*, discrimination.

Since *Vedānta* works in some cases and not in others, we have to understand that something more than *pramāṇa* is required, a prerequisite. As in seeing, mere eyes are not enough but eyes that are free from defects are required. Then the eyes are a *pramāṇa*. Since there is only one *ātmā*, there is no possibility of *ātmā* being different in the vision of *Vedānta*. If *Vedānta* is a means of knowledge, whoever listens should see the same *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. But it does not happen that way. Therefore, if one person sees this and another does not, and if *Vedānta* is looked upon as a *pramāṇa*, then the problem lies with the one who wants to understand. If *Vedānta* is not looked upon as a *pramāṇa*, it becomes a mystical experience. Once it is a *pramāṇa*, *Vedānta* should reveal the nature of the immediately available *ātmā*, because the *saṃsāra*, that this knowledge is supposed to resolve, is also immediately available, *aparokṣa*. If I have committed a mistake that is *aparokṣa*, the correction of that mistake must also be *aparokṣa*.

Ātmā cannot be known by perception or inference because, being yourself, it cannot be objectified. The only *pramāṇa* that will work is *śabda*. Here the statements like ‘*tat tvam asi*,’ are *lakṣaṇa-vākyas* and they produce immediate knowledge. They are similar to the statements such as, ‘This is that *Devadatta*’ or ‘you are the tenth man,’ which produce immediate knowledge, *aparokṣa-jñāna*. If that recognition is not immediate, and if you do not understand that *Vedānta* is a *pramāṇa*, you will conclude that *ātmā* has to be experienced. Those who know the *śāstra* say that *Vedānta* is a *pramāṇa*, but very few know how to handle it. As a result, there is a tendency to conclude that one has to experience something and that *Vedānta* is the theory, which is the basis for that experience.

Then *Vedānta* ceases to be a *pramāṇa* as far as *ātmā* is concerned. If *Vedānta* does not give you immediate knowledge of the self evident *ātmā*, which is always available and which is the basis for every experience, then *Vedānta* is not a *pramāṇa* for *ātmā*.

Since some people gain the knowledge and others do not, in spite of being exposed to the *pramāṇa* that is *Vedānta*, it is clear that some other factor is necessary. Instead of taking into consideration the qualifications of the student, the idea of experience was conceived of by some people. This problem is compounded by the use of the word *anubhava* in the *śāstra*, typically translated as ‘experience.’ This word, however, is used by the *śāstra* in the sense of ‘seeing–*darśana*,’ indicating immediate knowledge.

The problem of *anubhava* arose long ago when it was suggested that the study of *śāstra* had to be followed by a special ‘other-worldly’ cognition, *laukika-pratyakṣa*. But this was much more well thought out than the modern contention that first you must get the theory of *ātmā* from the *śāstra* and then, through practice, experience it.

This problem of not seeing the nature of *ātmā* can either lead you to the conclusion that *ātmā* is yet to be experienced or that you should look into your qualifications. Since *mokṣa* is in the form of knowledge, there are definitely requirements for it. Fulfilling those requirements is the nature of the effort that is made here.

The emphasis is on purity of mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, which is accomplished by a life of *karma-yoga* and the cultivation of values. The most important thing here is inquiry. All false values and improper attitudes are due to a lack of understanding of certain relative truths. It is, therefore, important to continue to listen to the *śāstra* while living a life of *karma-yoga*.

Yogīs, who are referred to here then, can be either those who are contemplating or those who are living a life of *karma-yoga*. Whatever is required, *karma-yoga* or a simple life of contemplation, they do that. They will certainly see.

SARVĒTMATVA OF ĪĀVARA

The next four verses show that *ātmā* is the self of all, *sarvātmā*, and the basis of all transactions. With these four verses, the *vibhūti*s, glories, of *Bhagavān* are briefly told.

āṅīā īēv&ā yātejah — that brilliance which; + āṅīā ādityagataṁ — obtains in the sun; + āṅīā v&ā akhilam jagat — the entire world; āṅīā bhāsayate — illumines; āṅīā śāpūā yāte candramasi — that which is in the moon; āṅīā śā + āṅīā yāte ca agnau — and that which is in fire; āṅīā tātejah — that brilliance; āṅīā māmakam — belongs to Me; āṅīā viddhi — may you know

yadādityagataṁ tejo jagadbhāsayate'khilam

yaccandramasi yaccāgnau tattejo viddhi māmakam

Verse 12

āṅīā īēv&ā yātejah — that brilliance which; + āṅīā ādityagataṁ — obtains in the sun; + āṅīā v&ā akhilam jagat — the entire world; āṅīā bhāsayate — illumines; āṅīā śāpūā yāte candramasi — that which is in the moon; āṅīā śā + āṅīā yāte ca agnau — and that which is in fire; āṅīā tātejah — that brilliance; āṅīā māmakam — belongs to Me; āṅīā viddhi — may you know

May you know that the brilliance that obtains in the sun and illumines the entire world, that which is in the moon, and which is in the fire, belongs to Me.

AS THE ALL-ILLUMINING LIGHT

The word *yāte*, stands for ‘that end,’ *padam*, to be reached, which is *ātmā*. Though it illumines everything, it cannot be illumined by *āditya*—the sun, *agni*—fire, etc. All these various sources of light do not illumine the one who illumines everything.

Māmakam means ‘that which belongs to Me.’ Any glory anywhere is *Bhagavān*’s glory. A few of them, the basics of our creation, are quickly and beautifully presented here.

The brilliance, *tejas*, that is in the sun, which lights up the entire creation, *Bhagavān* says, is ‘Mine.’ And also the brilliance in the moon—*yāte candramasi*, and in fire—*agnau*, the brilliance of all these luminaries, because of which we see all things, belongs to *Bhagavān*. This can be taken in a twofold way. The light that you see in the sun is the light of *Parameśvara*, because the sun itself is *Parameśvara*, as are the moon and fire. Each one, according to its *upādhi*, manifests the glory of *Parameśvara*. That because of which the sun and fire emit heat and light and the moon is cool and reflects light, is *Bhagavān*.

These words, *āditya*, *candramasi*, and *agni*, can also be taken to refer to the presiding deities of the sun, moon and fire. The consciousness manifest in the deities called *Aditya*, *Candramasi*, and *Agni*, because of which each one is capable of its own

unique function, is not separate from *Bhagavān*. Here a question could be raised. If consciousness is all pervasive then it expresses equally in every *upādhi*, then why the special mention of *Āditya*, etc.? That is because they are luminous, endowed with brilliance, and are capable of illumining other objects with that brilliance. This is because they have *sattva-ādhikya*, predominance of the *sattva-guṇa*. They have more knowledge and happiness than human beings because of their high degree of *sattva-guṇa*. In the deities of the sun, moon and fire, the glory that we see is *Bhagavān*.

Or you can go one step further and see *Īśvara* from the standpoint of these phenomena. His form is the sun, moon, fire, etc., and their brilliance.

ॐ ईशः पृथिवीं सं । धृष्ट्वैव भूतानि धारयाम्याहामोऽसौ
 {ॐ ईशः सं धृष्ट्वैव भूतानि धारयाम्याहामोऽसौ ।।१३।।

gāmāviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmyahamojasā

puṣṇāmi cauśadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ

Verse 13

śe ca — and; *ॐ ईशः* *gām* — the earth; + *ॐ ईशः* *aviśya* — having entered; + *ॐ ईशः* *ojasā* — with strength; *ॐ ईशः* *bhūtāni* — the beings; + *ॐ ईशः* *aham dhārayāmi* — I sustain; *ॐ ईशः* *rasātmakaḥ* — that which is in the form of the essence; *ॐ ईशः* *somaḥ* — the *soma*; *ॐ ईशः* *bhūtvā* — having become; *ॐ ईशः* *sarvāḥ* — all; + *ॐ ईशः* *ośadhīḥ* — the vegetation; *ॐ ईशः* *śe puṣṇāmi ca* — and I nourish

And having entered the earth, I sustain the beings with strength, and I nourish all the vegetation, having become *soma* in the form of (their) essence.

AS THE SUSTAINING ENERGY

Having entered the earth, *Bhagavān* sustains all the beings with his strength. As we saw before, this strength is free from binding desires. And with this strength, he does not overburden the earth but nourishes it. The Veda says this is the one because of whom the heaven, the earth, and all the planets remain where they are. They remain firm because of the one who is the sustainer of the earth.

How does he sustain the beings? We see them gathering their own food and taking care of themselves. That they are able to obtain food is because of his power and the nutrition in the food is him. Therefore, he says, ‘I nourish—*aham puṣyāmi*.’

How does he nourish? The Lord says, ‘*somo bhūtvā*—having become *soma*.’ The word *soma* has different meanings. It refers to the juice or sap of anything; the value or essence; a particular plant or the moon. All these are called the *soma*. Here the meaning is clear because of the word, ‘*rasātmaka*—in the form of essence,’ that goes with it.

fire. I sustain the earth by My power and I am the one who fills up the entire plant kingdom with the nourishing nutrients. Therefore, I become the food. Again, I am the digestive fire endowed with *prāṇa* and *apāna*, etc. Since food is *Bhagavān*, the food-born body and the external world are also *Bhagavān*. What is left out? Nothing; everything is *Bhagavān*.

In this verse, he says, ‘In the hearts of all, I have entered—*sarvasya ca ahaṃ hr̥di sanniviṣṭaḥ*.’ He has already said that he is the *kṣetrajñā*, the *ātmā*, in the mind of every living being. He is the one who obtains, having entered, *sanniviṣṭa*, as the *ātmā*. In *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, it is said, ‘*tat sṛṣṭvā tadeva anuprāviśat*—having created that he entered into it.’ He enters into his very creation in the *buddhi*, as the *ātmā*. That is what is meant here by, ‘*ahaṃ sanniviṣṭaḥ*.’ ‘And having entered, I remain there as the *ātmā*,’ says the Lord. Therefore, *ātmā* is *Īśvara*. There is no separation at all between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*. When *Bhagavān* says, ‘*ahaṃ sanniviṣṭaḥ*—I have entered,’ the meaning of ‘I’ is nothing but consciousness, *caitanya*. There is only one *caitanya* the *ātmā*, and as the *ātmā* he has entered. A second *ātmā* cannot be established. There is no *pramāṇa* for it. From the *śruti* and also from reasoning, *yukti*, we understand that no second consciousness is possible. As one space is conditioned by various *upādhis*, consciousness, seemingly conditioned by the knower-known-means of knowledge is one. It is nothing but *paramātmā*. Conditioned by the mind, it becomes the knower, *pramātā*, due to a superimposed attribute, *viśeṣa*, upon *ātmā*. But from its own standpoint, that consciousness is *śuddha*—pure, *ekah*—one, limitless consciousness. With reference to a given mind it is a knower, with reference to itself, it is limitless. When I say, ‘I,’ *ahaṃ*, it generally means the knower, *pramātā*. The teaching, *upadeśa*, that I am *Brahman* is for that knower alone. The consciousness that obtains in the knower is indeed the only consciousness, *caitanya*, which is *Īśvara*.

FROM ME ALONE ARE MEMORY, KNOWLEDGE, AND FORGETFULNESS

Without this consciousness, there is no knower at all, and therefore, no knowledge. Thus he says, ‘From Me is knowledge—*mattaḥ jñānam*’ From Me, the *ātmā* alone, knowledge is possible. Without *caitanya*, there is no knowledge. Further, the particular possibility of knowing a given object is all an expression of *māyā*, and therefore, from *Īśvara* alone is the faculty of knowing. We can look at it in two ways. The first is, from Me, *caitanya-ātmā*, who is *Īśvara* with *māyā* as *upādhi*, is this knowledge. Or it could be taken to mean, from Me, the *caitanya-ātmā* alone, is knowledge possible.

Similarly, memory is also possible only from *caitanya* or from *Īśvara*. From the standpoint of the faculty of remembering, it is *Īśvara*. From the standpoint of memory, *smṛti*, it is pure consciousness, *caitanya*. *Apohana* means forgetfulness. Even this forgetting of memory, *smṛti*, and knowledge, *jñāna*, *Bhagavān* says, ‘is due to Me—*mattaḥ*.’ *Śaṅkara* says here that it is because of *puṇya* and *pāpa* that one has this capacity to remember and forgetfulness. If there is *puṇya* you have *smṛti* and *jñāna*; but

if there is *pāpa*, they are denied. This is one way of looking at it, by putting *karma* in a very high position. In one way it is true. At the time of writing an examination, you may not remember all that you studied, but you remember it afterwards. Why? May be due to some *pāpa*.

We can also look at it another way. 'From Me alone—*mattaḥ*,' not as the giver of the results of actions, that is, as *Īśvara*, *karma-phala-dātā*, but from the standpoint of consciousness, *caitanya*, is this remembering, knowing and forgetting. Where is the possibility of forgetting without *caitanya-ātmā*, if remembrance is also due to *caitanya-ātmā*? When you say, 'I forget,' it is knowledge. You know that you forgot! You know that something has gone into your head, and is there in your list of known things, and you also know that it is not retrievable right now.

APOHANA, FORGETFULNESS, IS A BLESSING INDEED

Not only this; I¹ would also say *apohana*, forgetfulness, should be taken as the capacity to bracket all one's ideas and prejudices and keep them under suspension, so that, new knowledge can take place. In this sense, *apohana* is one of the greatest blessings. If all that one knows is always remembered, how can one learn anything new? So *apohana* is not only forgetting, but the capacity to suspend all ideas and relegate them to the background and keep the mind free. Any new discovery takes place only when one's conclusions can be suspended. How can one otherwise learn something which entirely contradicts what one has been holding all this time? This is particularly important in the study of *Vedānta*, which has to negate every notion one has about oneself, the world, and God. How can they be negated completely if the old notions occupy one's mind? For new ideas to come one has to suspend the current ideas. They need not go away, but they should not disturb one's capacity to listen. Various ideas or opinions one has about God, oneself, one's pursuits, *puruṣārtha*, all have to undergo a total transformation, and in their place, a new vision has to take place. That is not possible if *apohana* is not there.

In the same way, one's capacity to pick up a moment of joy is also not possible without *apohana*. If one remembers all one's problems, how can one laugh even for a moment? That, one is capable of laughing, even for a moment, proves the point that one has *apohana*. This is the greatest grace of *Bhagavān*. Otherwise, we would always be under the spell of *duḥkha*. There would be no way of picking up the small joys, which make living worthwhile. So, *apohana* need not be translated only as forgetfulness; it can

¹Swamiji

Please see: Here in the *Gītā*, *Bhagavān* is talking in the first person many a times. And when Swamiji uses the first person too, there could be a possibility of a confusion. Therefore, wherever the first person usage denotes Swamiji, we have given a footnote to the effect. — Editor's note.

also mean the capacity to suspend, at a given time, all one's ideas. In this sense, it is the basis for memory, *smṛti*, and knowledge, *jñāna*; because without this *apohana*, they cannot occur. Because of consciousness alone, one is capable of forgetting and the 'forgetting mind' is illumined by consciousness. Therefore, *Bhagavān* says, '*mattaḥ smṛtiḥ jñānam apohanaṃ ca*—from Me, the consciousness, are memory, knowledge, and forgetting..' All these, *smṛtiḥ jñānam* and *apohanaṃ* are not possible for an individual without consciousness, the *caitanya-ātmā*. And there is no *Īśvara* without *caitanya-ātmā*; so, from me, consciousness, which is not separate from *Īśvara*, knowledge is possible, memory is possible, forgetfulness is possible.

I AM THE ONE TO BE KNOWN THROUGH ALL VEDAS

By all the Vedas, the one that is to be known is *Īśvara*. How can we say that? Many things are told in the Vedas—various rituals and deities and so on. By saying 'I alone am the one to be known by all the Vedas—*vedaiḥ sarvaiḥ aham eva vedyah*,' we understand that everything that is said in the Vedas is nothing but *Īśvara*. *Agni*, *Indra*, *Varuṇa* and other *devatās* are all *Parameśvara*, as the one who gives the results of action, *karma-phala-dātā*, and the one who presides over the law of *karma*, *karma-adhyakṣa*. The *karma-kāṇḍa* of the Veda reveals *Īśvara* as *saguṇa-brahma* in all these forms as well as the form of the agent, *kartā*, all worlds and all objects. When you refer to a pot, *ghaṭa*, it is nothing but consciousness conditioned by the name and form, *nāma-rūpa*, called *ghaṭa*. For a wise man, every single object is non-separate from *Īśvara* and that *Īśvara* is recognized by the Vedas.

I AM THE AUTHOR AND KNOWER OF VEDAS

The next question is who is the author of the Vedas. He must be even greater than the one who is known through the Vedas. No, that is not so. That is why the Lord says, 'I am the author of *Vedānta*—*ahaṃ vedāntakṛt*.' The one who is the initiator of the *sampradāya* or the tradition of teaching of *Vedānta*, is *Īśvara*. In this tradition, the original *guru* is called *Nārāyaṇa*. Naturally, he is the one, who knows the meaning of the Veda, *vedavit*. *Bhagavān* says, 'The one to be known is Me, the one who initiated the Vedas is Me and the one who knows the Vedas is Me.' The one who knows the Vedas is the one who knows what is to be known by the Vedas. That is *paramātmā*.

It is complete. The food that is there in the vegetation is Me, the *prāṇa* and the body, which is nothing but modified food is Me. The earth that produces the food is Me and the sun, and planets are all Me. Because of Me alone all activities are possible. Without Me, there is no memory, no knowledge, and no forgetfulness. A brief description of the glories of *Īśvara* is given here with reference to some important *upādhis*. There are many *upādhis*, but only the special ones like the sun, moon, fire, etc., are mentioned in these four *ślokas*.

In the first verse he says, there are two *puruṣas*, one that is destroyed, *kṣara*, and the other that is indestructible, *akṣara*. In the next verse he tells us that there is still another one who is *uttama* or above these. He is the one who enters, pervades, and sustains all the three worlds, *lokatraya*. This is *Īśvara*. Both *kṣara* and *akṣara* are sustained by that *puruṣa* who is *paramātmā*. The *akṣara-puruṣa* here, is nothing but *māyā*, the unmanifest, while *kṣara* is the manifest form of the *jagat*. Thus, everything is *puruṣa*. Nothing is separate from that. But who is the real *puruṣa*? The second *śloka* tells us that he is other than both *kṣara* and *akṣara*, and is therefore called *uttama-puruṣa*. He is very well known in the world and in the Vedas as *puruṣottama*, that which is the truth of everything. He is *nirguṇa*, without the qualities of *kṣara* or *akṣara*. *Kṣara* is continuously subject to destruction, and finally resolves into the unmanifest *avyakta*, *akṣara*. Then *avyakta* undergoes a change to become the manifest, which keeps on changing and finally resolves again into the manifest. This goes on. One is called *kṣara* and the other is called *akṣara*, whereas *ātmā* sustains both. The basis of both is not subject to the attributes of *kṣara* and *akṣara*. Both are superimpositions on *ātmā*, and therefore he is called *uttama-puruṣa*.

Why is *ātmā* called *puruṣa*? Because there is nothing separate from *ātmā*. Whether insentient matter or sentient, *caitanya-ātmā* is present in everything. That is why the word *puruṣa* is used. The entire world consisting of the five elements and elementals, all these physical bodies are only *nāma-rūpa* and the entire *nāma-rūpa* is nothing but the *puruṣa*.

That *puruṣa* is absolutely free from all attributes, is *nirguṇa*, but when we talk of the same *puruṣa* with attributes, it can be divided into two. One is called *kṣara-puruṣa*, and the other, *akṣara-puruṣa*. The one, which is, *kṣara* is constantly subject to change and also to getting dissolved into its own cause. From the standpoint of the manifest world, your own physical body, or the entire *jagat* with the five elements, like space, etc., it is called *kṣara-puruṣa*. Generally, we deal with this *jagat* as inert, *jaḍa*. But here we are not separating it as something existent, independent of the *vastu*, the *puruṣa*. There is no object that exists apart from *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, the *adhiṣṭhāna* or the cause for everything. That is why the word *puruṣa* is used. The *kṣara-upādhi*, the manifest world, becomes unmanifest resolving into the cause, the *akṣara*, and again comes into manifestation. One is subject to dissolution and the other is the cause into which it dissolves.

THE KĀARA AND AKĀARA PURUĀAS

The *māyā-śakti* of *Bhagavān* is here called *akṣara-puruṣa*, because there is no *māyā-śakti* without *puruṣa*. With reference to the causal *upādhi*, *kāraṇa-upādhi*, it is called *akṣara-puruṣa* and with reference to the effect, the *kārya-upādhi*, it is called *kṣara-puruṣa*. When the *jagat* is manifest, it is the *kārya-upādhi* of *Bhagavān*. Thus,

in *saṃsāra* there are these two *puruṣas*. When the *kṣara* is not there, that is, the world is not manifest, then it is in the form of *akṣara-puruṣa*, or *māyā*, which is the seed for this creation. It is the basis for all *saṃsāra*, the one in which the entire creation has its basis, *āśraya*.

The *kṣara-puruṣa*, *Bhagavān* says, is all the elements, *sarvāṇi bhūtāni*. *Śaṅkara* says, *kṣara* is all the modifications in creation. From the subtle and gross elements your body-mind-sense-complex is born. The subtle elements, *sūkṣma-bhūtāni*, account for the entire subtle body, *sūkṣma-śarīra*, consisting of mind—*antaḥ-karaṇa*, senses—*jñānendriyas*, physiological functions—*prāṇa*, organs of action, *karmendriyas*, and the gross elements, *sthūlabhūtāni*, account for the physical body, *sthūla-śarīra*. Not only for you, but they account for all, *samasta-vikāra-jātam*—every existent thing, which is but a modification.

The *akṣara-puruṣa*, on the other hand, is *kūṭastha*; it remains like a changeless mass, *rāśī*, says *Śaṅkara*. The word, *kūṭastha*, is a technical word usually used for the *ātmā*. Here it is used to indicate something that does not die. The effect, *kārya*, dies, while the cause, *kāraṇa*, does not. It is like how the pot dies, but the clay does not. So, the word *kūṭastha* is used here to refer to that *kāraṇa* that does not die. Therefore, here, it has a relative, not an absolute meaning.

Generally in the *śāstra*, it is used in the absolute sense only for the *ātmā*, which is free from attributes, and therefore, does not change. In that sense, the meaning of this word, *kūṭastha* is as follows. The word, *kūṭa*, means an anvil, which itself does not undergo any change, but allows all changes to take place on the piece of iron that is kept on it and beaten. *Ātmā* is *kūṭastha* because it is immutable like an anvil—*kūṭavat tiṣṭhati iti kūṭasthaḥ*. That is the *adhiṣṭhāna-ātmā*, the basis or truth for everything that is *mithyā*. Another meaning for the word *kūṭastha* is, that which obtains in *māyā*, as the truth of that *māyā*. Here the *vyutpatti* of the word would be, *kūṭe tiṣṭhati iti kūṭastha*. That is nothing but *ātmā*, *Brahman*. Just as in the snake is the rope, in the *māyā* is *ātmā*.

Śaṅkara first gives the meaning of *kūṭa*, as that which does not die. Then, because we are talking of a *puruṣa* conditioned by *māyā*, and then optionally gives another meaning is given here, saying, *māyā*, *vañcanā*, *jihmatā*, or *kuṭilatā* all the four words meaning the same, that is, deceit. *Māyā* deceives you because it just reverses your vision. Being capable of being various forms, it can confuse you. *Śaṅkara* then makes a note that this seed of *saṃsāra* can go into a state of unmanifestation, but it does not come to an end. It can again manifest and again resolve into the unmanifest. Just as in deep sleep your awareness of the body-mind-sense-complex, your individuality, and the world are dissolved. Then you create the dream world; you are in the form of the dream world. This is called *kṣara-puruṣa*. Then again, you go to sleep, and become *akṣara-puruṣa*. That does not mean the dreamer is gone. He is only unmanifest. This

entire created world, *kārya-prapañca*, is called the *kṣara-puruṣa* and the same *puruṣa*, along with the *kāraṇa-upādhi* is called *akṣara-puruṣa*. Both *kārya-upādhi* and *kāraṇa-upādhi* are nothing but an *adhyāropa*, superimposition, upon the *puruṣa*, seemingly qualifying the *puruṣa* with their attributes. If this is the set up, then who is the *puruṣa*? When we negate anything that is superimposed, what is left is *puruṣa*. From the standpoint of the two *upādhi*, *puruṣa* is two, but then if you negate both the *upādhis*, there is only one *puruṣa*.

Here the methodology of *adhyāropa-apavāda* is directly used. This method of teaching is to prove that the same *puruṣa* continues to be *puruṣa*, while there is nothing in the whole *nāma-rūpa*, which is independent of it. It is the cause, *kāraṇa*, of everything, and at the same time, has not undergone any change whatsoever. The *upadeśa* is always given by using this method of *adhyāropa-apavāda*. Those who know what it is all about use it consciously, creating a set up and then negating it. Here the *kṣara-akṣara-upādhi* was pointed out and in the next verse the *puruṣa*, free of *upādhi* is shown.

THE UTTAMA PURUṢA

Other, *anya*, than these two, *kṣara* and *akṣara-puruṣa*, is one who is independent of them both. This one is entirely distinct from these two, untouched by all the attributes belonging to the *upādhi*, the one, who, according to Śaṅkara's favourite expression, *nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāvaḥ*, is always enlightened, that is, free from ignorance, always free from any impurity like *puṇya* and *pāpa*, cause and effect—*kāraṇa-kārya*, agency—*karṭṛtva*, and enjoyership—*bhokṛtva*. Who is that? *Uttama*, the most exalted. What does that mean? Śaṅkara says it is entirely distinct from the *kṣara* and *akṣara-puruṣa*, beyond whom there is no one, and knowing which alone you are free. That *uttama* is the basis of the entire *saṃsāra*, but beyond cause and effect, the *kārya-upādhi* and the *kāraṇa-upādhi*. The whole thing is *ātmā*. Being complete, *pūrṇa*, it is called *puruṣa*. Or, residing in the body, *purau uṣati iti*, it is called *puruṣa*. Having created the entire world, *Bhagavān* entered this body in the form of *pratyagātmā*, because of which alone things have their being.

It is called the limitless self—*paramātmā iti udāhṛtaḥ*. *Para* is that which is the basis, *adhiṣṭhāna*, of the *kṣara* and *akṣara-upādhi*. From different standpoints, we have various selves, like the body-self, *deha-ātmā*; the physiological self, *prāṇa-ātmā*, the mental self, *mano-ātmā*, etc. They are all *ātmā*, but this *ātmā* alone is *paramātmā*. It is the one, which is available for you to know the other *ātmās*. The one who is above this *kṣara-akṣara-upādhi*, is the one *ātmā*, which is the inner conscious being of all beings. So it is *para* and it is *ātmā*, *paramātmā*. It is this *ātmā*, which provides existence to everything, and is the being of anything. After the superimposition,

adhyāropa, is negated, you get *ātmā* free from all that was gathered unto it. It is that *ātmā* we call *paramātmā*.

That *paramātmā*, with its *māyā-śakti* enters into the three worlds, *bhūḥ*, *bhuvah*, and *suvaḥ*. The mention of *bhū* includes all seven worlds below—that is, *atala*, *vitāla*, *sutāla*, *talātāla*, *rasātāla*, *mahātāla* and *pātāla*. *Bhuvah* includes all that is in between and *suvaḥ* includes all the worlds above—that is, *mahaḥ*, *janaḥ*, *tapah*, *satyam*. Thus when we say *lokatraya* all the fourteen worlds are included. How does *paramātmā* enter into the world? Only as the cause, *kāraṇa*. How does *sat-cit-ānanda-paramātmā*, become the cause? With his *māyā-śakti* alone, he enters into and becomes the whole world. Just as the clay enters into the pot, this cause, *kāraṇa*, *paramātmā*, entering into the effect, *kārya*, the entire *jagat*, thereby sustains, *bibharti*, the whole creation. How? Merely by its nature, which is existence, *svarūpa-sadbhāva-mātreṇa*. Having entered the creation, it sustains it by its own nature, *sat-cit*. The creation is, because *māyā* is, because *sat-ātmā* is. That ‘is-ness’ sustains the entire creation.

When we think of time, we say any given unit of time, like a second, ‘is.’ The ‘is-ness’ is the real content of time. If you go on dividing time, the minute ‘is,’ the second ‘is,’ the microsecond ‘is,’ finally your concept of time itself disappears. ‘Is-ness’ alone remains. That ‘is-ness’ that remains is the real nature, *svarūpa* of time. That is always there in anything present and anything experienced. That *paramātmā* who provides that ‘is-ness’ ‘is.’ It is present always as the existence of everything and is therefore, *avyaya*, not subject to change, not subject to time. This *paramātmā* is the *uttama-puruṣa*, the cause of all creation. Therefore, *ātmā* becomes *Īśvara*, the cause of all creation, *jagat-kāraṇaṃ brahma*. There is no other factor. *Paramātmā*, is the *ātmā* who is called *Īśvara*.

This *uttama-puruṣa* is complete. As *paramātmā*, he transcends everything; as *kāraṇa-puruṣa*, he is immanent.

ॐ ईति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन्
 + इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन्
yasmātkṣaramatīto’hamakṣarādapi cottamaḥ
ato’smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ

Verse 18

ॐ ईति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन् — because; + इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् — I am; इति वेदेऽस्मिन् + इति वेदेऽस्मिन् *kṣaram atītaḥ* — beyond the destructible; + इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन् *akṣarāt api ca* — and as compared to even the indestructible; = इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन् *uttamaḥ* — above; + इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन् *ataḥ* — therefore; इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन् *loke* — in the world; इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन् *vede ca* — and in the Veda; इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन् *puruṣottamaḥ* — *puruṣottama*; इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन् *prathitaḥ* — renowned; + इति वेदेऽस्मिन् प्रथितोऽस्मिन् वेदेऽस्मिन् *asmi* — I am

Because I am beyond the destructible and also above the indestructible too; therefore, in the world and in the Veda, I am renowned as *puruṣottama*.

I AM KNOWN AS THE PURUṢOTTAMA WHO TRANSCENDS EVERYTHING

Yasmāt, because *puruṣa* remains transcending or untouched by the *kṣara* or the *akṣara-upādhi*, he is *uttama*, the most exalted or the highest, even above the *akṣara*, the cause of *saṃsāra*, *māyā*. From the standpoint of the causal *upādhi*, *kāraṇa-upādhi*, *Bhagavān* says, 'I am *uttama*, that is, I transcend it. I am too far away for it to touch Me.' How far away? As far away as the rope is from the slimy snake projected on it! The snake is not able to leave its sliminess on the rope! That is how far away the *caitanya-ātmā* is from your thought. What does the thought leave on consciousness? Whether it is a pleasant or unpleasant thought, it leaves no trace upon consciousness. You are a conscious person who sees these words on the printed page. When the words go, what happens to the consciousness? Nothing. What footprints are left behind on consciousness? Suppose you experience something hot. Your consciousness does not get heated. Nor does it become cold when you are aware of snow. Heat-consciousness does not increase the temperature of consciousness; cold-consciousness does not decrease the temperature of consciousness. Nothing leaves an imprint on consciousness. This is what is meant by being above everything, *uttama*. Between the thought and consciousness, there is no distance. But being the untouched, it is the basis of everything.

Ataḥ, therefore, I am the truth or basis of *kṣara* and *akṣara*, untouched by all, and therefore, *puruṣottama*. This is the *puruṣa* that is renowned, *prathita*, in the Vedas, *vede*, and in the world, *loke*, by poets, and by devotees as *Nārāyaṇa*.

Summing up the chapter we have the next two verses.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।
 यो मामेवामसम्मूढो ज्ञानति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।।१९।।

*yo māmevamasammūḍho jñānati puruṣottamam
 sa sarvavidbhajati māṃ sarvabhāvena bhārata*

Verse 19

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — O! Descendent of *Bharata*; ॐ नमो — the one who; + ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *asammūḍhaḥ* — not deluded; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *me*, the *puruṣottama*; यो मामेवामसम्मूढो ज्ञानति — knows in this manner; ॐ नमो — he; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *sarvavit* — the knower of (that which is) all; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *me*; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *sarvabhāvena* — as the self of all; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *bhajati* — gains

The one who is not deluded, who knows Me in this way, he, (becoming) the knower of (that which is) all, gains Me as the self of all, *Arjuna*.

THE GLORY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE

The one who is no longer deluded does not take *ātmā* to be other than *puruṣottama*. ‘Being one who is free from delusion, he knows Me,’ *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘in this way, *evam*—meaning as it was told earlier, as the *kṣara-puruṣa*, the one who perishes and the *akṣara-puruṣa*, the one who is changeless, and the *puruṣa* who is free from both *kṣara* and *akṣara*—gains Me as the self of all.’ This is *puruṣottama*. The *kṣara-puruṣa* is *puruṣa* with reference to the effect, *kārya-upādhi*, and *akṣara-puruṣa* is the same *puruṣa* with reference to the cause, *kāraṇa-upādhi*. *Puruṣa* himself is *uttama*, transcending both. Only because of *upādhi* is *puruṣa* called *kṣara-puruṣa* and *akṣara-puruṣa*.

The one who knows Me, *yaḥ māṃ jānāti*, in this way, *evam*, as *puruṣottama*, the one who is the root, the cause, the truth of the tree of *saṃsāra*, is not deluded, *asammūḍha*. Because of the knowledge of *puruṣottama*, he becomes *sarvavit*, omniscient, the one who knows everything. How does he become all-knowing by knowing the *puruṣottama*? Will he know electronics and French, and all other disciplines of knowledge? There are two types of omniscience. One is with reference to knowing every detail, *sarvavittva*, the other is with reference to realities in general, *sarvajñatva*. In general, all that is here is one thing, *satya-vastu*, *puruṣottama*, who alone is this entire *jagat*, as *kṣara-puruṣa* and *akṣara-puruṣa*. Therefore, by knowing the *satya-vastu* you also appreciate what is *mithyā*, and this appreciation of *satya* and *mithyā* makes you a knower of everything. You don’t need to know any detail because every detail, every *nāma-rūpa* is *mithyā*. There is only one *satya-vastu* that counts and that is yourself. When a person knows, ‘I am the self of everything, *ahaṃ sarvātmā*,’ he becomes the knower of everything, in general. Here, the word used to express the one that has this knowledge is *sarvavit*.

In *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, *Īśvara* is called, ‘*sarvajñah sarvavit*.’ He is *sarvajña* because he knows everything in general, *sarvaṃ jānāti sāmānyena*, and *sarvavit* because he knows everything in detail, *sarvaṃ jānāti viśeṣeṇa*, because of his *māyā-upādhi*. The *sarvajñatva* is purely in terms of being the witness of everything, knowing the truth of everything, knowing the *satya* and *mithyā*. That is why the *Upaniṣad* says, ‘When one thing is known, everything is as well known—*ekasmin vijñāte sarvaṃ vijñātaṃ bhavati*.’ I¹ always add ‘as well’ because if you just say, ‘when one thing is known everything is known,’ it amounts to knowing all the details, which is not possible. We cannot even know any one thing thoroughly. If you examine a leaf, for example, not everything about it is known. So we have to understand here that when one thing is

¹*Swamiiji*

known, everything is as well known, in the sense, all that is here is one *satya-vastu* and if you want to add something to it, that is *nāma-rūpa*, which is *mithyā*, and therefore, not other than *satya*. Therefore, for a wise person, there is not going to be any surprise at any time. If you show him a new object, he will see only *satya* plus the *nāma-rūpa*. There is only an added appreciation of *Īśvara's* glory. It is not going to add to his fullness. The knowledge because of which there is fullness, we call omniscience. The one who has this knowledge is *sarvavit*. If both *sarvajña* and *sarvavit* are mentioned, *sarvavit* means the one who knows in detail. But because only *sarvavit* is used here, and because of the context, we understand that he is the one who knows in general, that is, knows *satya* and *mithyā*. The, one who knows, *yaḥ veda*, is free from *saṃsāra* because he has no delusion, he is *asammūḍha*. He knows that only *Īśvara* is here, who is non-separate from himself, *ātmā*.

What is the result of this knowledge? *Bhagavān* says, 'He gains Me—*saḥ māṃ bhajati*.' The knowledge and the gain are identical because I am already the *puruṣottama*, which is everything. How does he gain identity with Me? By being the self of everything, *sarva-bhāvena*, with a vision of himself in which nothing is separate from him. Because he is the *kṣara-puruṣa* and the *akṣara-puruṣa*, everything is accounted for. This is *mokṣa*, this is *jīvanmukti*. Suppose he dies away? 'He' is meaningless. What dies away? Whatever dies away dies away; whatever 'is,' is. That 'is' is the *ātmā*. The particular *upādhi* dies away and all that is there is the *vastu*, which is *Īśvara* who is worshipped by everybody. Even living, the person who knows this is sought after because he is not different from *Īśvara*.

The result of knowledge was told in this verse. Now the whole teaching is summed up as *Bhagavān* praises this knowledge.

Śaṅkara introduces this verse saying, 'In this chapter, the knowledge, which is the truth of *Bhagavān* and which has *mokṣa* as its result has been told.' Now, he praises that teaching.

◁ÉÉ MÉĀĪÉ ÉĀĪÉÉÉÉÉ ÉnūÉÉĀÉ ÉĀÉÉÉÉÉ*

BiÉnĀ ÉÉĀÉ ÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ २० ॥

iti guhyatamaṃ śāstramidamuktaṃ mayānagha

etad buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛtakṛtyaśca bhārata

Verse 20

+xÉÉÉ *anagha* — O! Sinless one; ◁ÉÉÉ *iti* — thus; MÉĀĪÉ ÉĀ *guhyatamam* — most profound; ◁ÉÉÉ *idam* — this; ÉÉÉÉÉ ÉĀ *śāstram* — teaching; ÉĀÉÉÉ *mayā* — by Me; =HÉÉÉ *uktam* — has been said; ÉÉÉÉÉ *bhārata* — O! Descendent of *Bharata*; BiÉnĀ ÉÉĀÉ ÉÉ *etad buddhvā* — knowing this; ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *buddhimān* — endowed with wisdom; ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉ *kṛtakṛtyaḥ ca* — one who has accomplished all that has to be accomplished; ÉÉÉÉÉ *syāt* — would become

O! Descendant of *Bharata*, O! Sinless one, thus, this most profound teaching has been said by Me. Knowing this, a person becomes one who has *buddhi*; and who has accomplished all that has to be accomplished.

‘This teaching told by Me—*idaṃ śāstram uktaṃ mayā*,’ *Bhagavān* says, ‘is the most secret—*guhyaṭamam*.’ There are a few types of secrets. Something can be a secret because you do not yet know it. This is the kind of secret that you pick up from the gossip columns. There is another type of secret, which remains concealed because you have no way of knowing it. Unless it is properly taught, you cannot know it, and because of the absence of an appropriate and adequate means of knowledge, it remains a secret. The third is that, even if you have a way of knowing something, it can still remain a secret because you do not understand it when it is revealed to you. If a mathematician reels out all his mathematical theorems to someone who is still struggling with five plus four, those theorems remain a secret to that person. A fourth type of secret is so, not because it is not known, but because it is too sacred, and therefore, kept hidden, like a precious gem.

You do not carry a one million dollar gem in your handkerchief or keep it on a table. There is a huge diamond known as the Koh-i-noor diamond, which is now in the British crown. A stone like this cannot be used as a paperweight. If it is, its owner must either have a mountain of diamonds, or be a fool. Only Kubera, the presiding deity of wealth, can afford to use the Koh-i-noor diamond as a paperweight. Because it is so precious, it is hidden away. Anything that is precious, either because of its sanctity, its monetary value, or its sentimental value, is kept secret. Your great grandfather's copper ring that has been coming down through generations is of great sentimental value to you and therefore precious. Even though you cannot even get ten cents for it in the flea market, you keep it in a safe place. It is kept hidden away purely because of sentimental value. Other things have value because of their sanctity, like a *sālagrāma* stone. It is a simple fossil rock, which is picked up from a riverbed, but because one has been worshipping it, it becomes sacred. The worshipper of that *sālagrāma* will not allow anyone to touch it unless he is satisfied that he is qualified for that. Thus, because of its sanctity, it is hidden away. These are all value-based secrets.

Now what is *puruṣottama*? It is everything. There is nothing more sacred because knowledge of *puruṣottama* liberates me and there is nothing more valuable, because knowing *puruṣottama* makes me the whole creation. This knowledge releases me from insecurity, tears, sorrow, and limitations. And, while all that is valuable is meant to keep me in good humour, here in *puruṣottama* is the source of all humour, all wonder, all *ānanda*, and security. There is nothing more valuable. In fact, there is no other value. Everybody's *ānanda* is a fraction of this *ānanda* alone, and therefore, this value is absolute. In terms of sanctity also it is absolute. Anything sacred purifies, and in *saṃsāra* there are many purifying agents. But this purifies me from *saṃsāra*, by removing my ignorance, *ajñāna*. Therefore, there is nothing here more purifying than

this knowledge—*na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate*. In terms of holiness, this is the abode of all that is holy. All holiness is from ‘I,’ alone and this ‘I’ is *puruṣottama*.

This knowledge of the nature of ‘I’ cannot be known by any means of knowledge except the *śāstra*, the *Upaniṣads*. Because the subject matter of the *Gītā* is the same, it is also looked upon as *Upaniṣads*. Further, the *Upaniṣads* are from *Bhagavān*, and so is the *Gītā*. If one has that *śraddhā*, this has the same sanctity as the *śruti*. The *Upaniṣads* are from *Īśvara* in that, it is not authored by anybody. The *Gītā* is authored by *Kṛṣṇa* and for one who has *śraddhā*, that *Kṛṣṇa* is *Īśvara*, this is also *Upaniṣad*. If *Kṛṣṇa* is only a creation of *Vyāsa*, the *Gītā* becomes a *smṛti*, not *śruti*. But even then, because the subject matter of the *Upaniṣads* is presented very gently through the mouth of *Kṛṣṇa*, it is like an *Upaniṣad*. That is why at the end of every chapter it says, *bhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu*—in the *Bhagavadgītā*, which is *Upaniṣad*.

This *śāstra*, meaning *śruti*, is the only means for this knowledge and therefore, being not available for any other means of knowledge, it is a secret. How am I going to figure out that I am *puruṣottama*? Since it is only revealed by the *śāstra*, it is secret, *guhya*, because of its sanctity it is *guhya*, and because of its value it is *guhya*. And again, even if it is taught, it remains *guhya*, like calculus for someone who has a doubt about whether five plus four is seven or eleven. Even if you teach him calculus for three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening, calculus will still remain a secret. It is not that he is not capable, he is just not ready, and therefore, it remains a secret.

Though there are many secrets in the world, there is nothing like this secret in terms of its sanctity, nature, and value. Therefore, it is the most profound secret, *guhyaṭama*. The greatest secret is one that you cannot figure out by any means because it is so well hidden. Now, which is the best hiding place in the world for the most precious object? The seeker himself. Here also, by a process of negation and discovery, we find out, at one time or another, what the secret is. The best hiding place for *Bhagavān*, the one who is sought after in life, is in the very seeker. The seeker who goes about searching is the very sought. This is why the *śruti* has to stop us and say, ‘You are the sought.’ Otherwise, we will be forever seeking. Whether we search within or outside, it remains hidden because in the very seeker is the sought. There is no *puruṣottama* beyond the seeker. The searcher, the knower, *pramātā*, is the sought. The one who wants to be free, the *mumukṣu* is indeed the freedom he seeks, *mokṣa*. Look at the situation. He cannot give up the search unless he discovers the sought and as long as he is searching, he cannot discover it. The helplessness becomes evident. That is why we require something from outside to tell us to stop the whole search and make us see that we are the sought. It cannot come from the knower, *pramātā*, himself; but only from an outside source, a *pramāṇa*, which, being a means of knowledge, is capable of producing a *jñāna-vṛtti* that gives rise to the destruction of the ignorance of your being the sought.

It does all that without depending upon your will. Whether you like it or not, it just operates. Therefore, this knowledge is *guhyatama*, the most secret.

Śaṅkara glosses *guhyatama* as *gopyatama*, which also means most sacred. This *śāstra*, which is the most sacred and secret is praised here. Even though the entire *Gītā* is called *śāstra*, here Lord *Kṛṣṇa* refers to this chapter as the *guhyatamaṃ śāstram* in order to praise it. Why is this chapter so important? *Śaṅkara* says it is because in this particular chapter, the meaning of not only the entire *Gītā*, but of all that is to be known by the Veda is presented briefly and completely. *Īśvara* is discussed here, as is *yoga* and the qualifications for this knowledge in the statement—*nirmāna-mohāḥ jitasāṅga-doṣāḥ adhyātma-nityāḥ vinivṛttakāmāḥ*. Further, it describes *saṃsāra* and its basis, as well as how it functions and perpetuates itself. How the subtle body moves about from place to place and how the deluded do not see—*mūḍhāḥ na anupaśyanti*, while those with the eye of wisdom see—*paśyanti jñāna-caḥṣuṣaḥ*, and how to fell this tree of *saṃsāra* by cutting it with the weapon of detachment—*asaṅga-śastreṇa dṛḍhena chittvā*, are all pointed out.

Then again, *ātmā* being everything, *sarvātmatva* is shown. The Lord says, ‘I am the brilliance in the sun and in the moon and fire; I am the one who blesses the plants with the nutrients—*puṣṇāmi ca auśadhīḥ sarvāḥ*, and the essence of food. The eater of the food is also Me; I am present as the digestive fire in the living beings and being endowed with the *prāṇa* and *apāna* I digest the four types of food—*ahaṃ vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇināṃ deham āśritaḥ prāṇa-apāna-samāyuktaḥ pacāmi annaṃ caturvidham*. Then, the body born of food is also Me, including the subtle body and all the sense organs, and therefore, memory, knowledge, and forgetting, also are from Me alone—*mattaḥ smr̥tiḥ jñānam apohanaṃ ca*. In other words, I am the one who perishes and also the one who is changeless—*kṣaraḥ ca akṣaraḥ eva aḥ*. I am the *uttama-puruṣa*, the one who is everything, and the one who knows everything. I am the one to be known by all the Vedas—*vedaiḥ ca sarvaiḥ aham eva vedyah*.’

There is nothing more. This is the *gītā-śāstra* and the entire *vedānta-śāstra*, all of which has been summed up in this chapter. In the first verse, we saw that the one, who knows this, is the one who knows the Veda—*yaḥ taṃ veda sa vedavit*. He knows this entire *saṃsāra-vṛkṣa* along with the root, *Brahman*. This very chapter is called *śāstra* because the entire meaning of the *śāstra* is presented here.

Thus, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* tells *Arjuna*, ‘This *śāstra* is told by Me to you—*śāstram idam uktaṃ mayā*.’ Here Lord *Kṛṣṇa* calls *Arjuna*, ‘*anagha*, O! The sinless one.’ *Agha* means *pāpa* or wrong action. The one for whom there is no wrong action is called *anagha*. Knowing this *śāstra*, *etat buddhvā*, understanding the meaning as it was shown, he becomes *buddhimān*. The affix *mat* is used to indicate possession, so *buddhimat* is one who has *buddhi*. This applies to every human being. Why then, is the person who has gained this knowledge called a *buddhimān*? A person is called

dhanavān, a rich man, only when he has money to spend on others and himself. If he has a lot of money but cannot spend it, he is not rich, only moneyed. Whether or not one is moneyed is determined merely by bank balance or real estate. Being rich is a matter of heart. If one has two rupees and gives one to someone who needs it and spends the remaining one rupee on himself and survives, he is richer by one rupee in his thinking. Similarly, though one may have a *buddhi*, we do not call that person a *buddhimān* unless he uses it. *Buddhi* is not mere intellect but the capacity to discriminate, *viveka*. A cow, because it is programmed, does not require *viveka*. It does exactly what it is supposed to do without any deliberation. A human being, however, because he has a greater element of choice regarding his actions, has to exercise discrimination to make the proper choice. A person who has discriminative knowledge, *viveka*, of what is to be done and what is not to be done is a *buddhimān*. This *viveka* leads him to a clarity about what is really desired by one in life, *puruṣārtha-viveka*, which in turn leads him to the knowledge of what is real and what is unreal, *nitya-anitya-viveka*, or *ātma-anātma-viveka*. A person who has all these is a *buddhimān*. Once you have *ātma-anātma-viveka*, the *buddhi* has served its purpose. Even if one suffers a memory loss because of an accident, for example, and cannot remember *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, he is still free from self-ignorance and will not take another birth. In the wake of the knowledge, all his *karmas* are destroyed because he no longer has the notion that he is an agent. If he is alert, he will continue to teach. But if all his faculties fail, he will remain in a vegetative state till the *prārabdha-karma* is exhausted and the body falls. Either way he is a *buddhimān*. The *buddhi* has done its job, and afterwards, it is all grace. The mind and body still continue, with their own special features. They express themselves and the person is free. This person is called a *buddhimān*.

Then this person becomes *kṛta-kṛtya*, one for whom all that is to be done is done. Śaṅkara says even all that is to be done by the best *brāhmaṇa* is accomplished by him. Whatever his station in life, all the enjoined *karmas* that are to be done by one who is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family are as though done by him. When *ātmā* is not born, to ask in which family he is born is meaningless. It is like asking the height of the son of a woman who never gave birth to a child. Knowing that *ātmā*, all *karmas* are done by this person, the *buddhimān*, who has made use of his will and his capacity to discriminate. Having done their job, they become cancelled, *bādhita*. It is something like the stick used to push the body into the cremation fire until it is completely consumed. After the body is burnt, the stick is also thrown into the fire. So too, the *jīva* uses its will, in a final fling, to go to the teacher and learn, doing *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. By the end of the process, the will has used itself up and has no purpose to serve. Then *prārabdha* takes over and things happen as they should happen, *bhavitavyaṃ bhavati eva*. Only for a wise man is there pure *prārabdha*. Anyone else, has to go by *puruṣārtha*, because *prārabdha* is mixed with *puruṣārtha* and we do not know which is which. To think of things in terms of *prārabdha* is helpful as a shock absorber to assimilate difficult situations, or to appreciate conducive situations. Besides this, those who are in pursuit of

this knowledge have no use for *prārabdha*. Therefore, the will alone is the last stick with which the *jīva* is cremated in the fire of knowledge, and with this, the will also goes. The person for whom this is accomplished is called *kṛta-kṛtya*.

Śaṅkara says that without this there is no way of accomplishing all that is to be accomplished, and he himself quotes what was told in the fourth chapter, '*sarvaṃ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate*—all *karmas*, O! *Pārtha*, *Arjuna*, are resolved only in knowledge.'

¹

He then quotes *Manu*, who says, 'For a *brāhmaṇa*, a *mumukṣu*, this knowledge indeed is the main purpose, the fulfilment of his birth. He may have accomplished many things, but that twice born seeker finds fulfilment of all that is to be done by knowledge alone, not by any other means.'

²

Lord *Kṛṣṇa* further says, 'Because you have listened to this *paramārtha-tattva*, the ultimate truth, from Me, O! *Bhārata*, you are a man of fulfilment.' *Bhārata* can mean the one born in the family of *Bharata*, or the one who revels in *brahma-vidyā*. He is *anagha* and also *Bhārata*, and thus, the Lord praises *Arjuna* by using these very appropriate epithets.

+Éâ iÉiÉÂ °ÉiÉÂ* <ÊiÉ
 ÉÒ"É'ùMÉ'É3ÒiÉÉ°ÉÖ = {ÉÊxÉ'Éi°ÉÖ
 ¥ÉÀÊ'ÉtÉ°ÉÉÆ °ÉÉäMÉ¶ÉÉÛÉä
 ÉÒEÞ°hÉÉVÉÖÇxÉ°ÉÆ'ÉÉnâù
 {ÉÖ- û'ÉÉäkÉ"É°ÉÉäMÉÉä xÉÉ"É
 {É^Énù¶ÉÉä%v°ÉÉ°É : || १५ ||

*om tat sat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ
 yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde puruṣottamayogo nāma
 pañcadaśo'dhyāyaḥ*

This is the fifteenth chapter entitled *puruṣottama-yoga*. The word *yoga* here, as at the end of every chapter, is used in the sense of topic. Here *puruṣottama*, the *parama-puruṣa*, who is the perishable, *kṣara*, and the changeless, *akṣara*, and who transcends the *kṣara* and *akṣara*, is the subject matter. He is the Lord who, having entered all three

¹ *Gītā* – 4-33

² BīÉr-ùVÉx'É°ÉÉ'É°ÉÉÉÉÂhÉ°ÉÉ'É°ÉÉÉÉ&
 ¶ÉÉ°ÉÉiÉBiÉÉBi°ÉÉÉÉÉÉWÉÉÉ'É'ÉÉiÉ xÉÉx°ÉiÉÉ** "ÉÖÖ"ÉBiÉ& – 12-93
*etadahi janmasāmagryaṃ brāhmaṇasya viśeṣataḥ
 prāpyaitakṛtakṛtyo hi dviyo bhavati nānyathā*

worlds, sustains them without undergoing any change—*yo lokatrayam āviśya bibharti avyayaḥ īśvaraḥ*. This is the *yoga* or topic for this chapter.

ABABABABAB

CHAPTER 16

DAIVĒSURA-SAMPAT-VIBHĒGA-YOGA

(DESCRIPTION OF BECOMING AND UNBECOMING DISPOSITIONS)

INTRODUCTION

In the ninth chapter, we have a verse¹ about those who are entrenched in a disposition, which deludes. These are people of false hopes–*moghāsāh*, of actions that are not proper–*mogha-karmāṇaḥ*, of knowledge that is nothing but error–*mogha-jñānāḥ*, and those who have a total lack of discrimination–*vicetasāḥ*. Their disposition is that of an *asura* or a *rākṣasa*. The next verse on the other hand, describes those who are committed to a divine or spiritual disposition. Being mature, they seek *Bhagavān*, the truth of everything. These dispositions, the *daivī* and the *āsurī* are explained further now. *Śaṅkara* introduces this chapter reminding us of the *daivī*, *rākṣasī* and *āsurī* dispositions briefly mentioned in the ninth chapter. We will not translate these words for the time being except to say that *rākṣasī* and *āsurī* are opposed to *daivī*. In order to show these in detail, this chapter is begun.

This disposition, which is called divine, *daivī*, is meant to help you gain freedom from *saṃsāra*; whereas the *āsurī* and *rākṣasī* dispositions bind you to *saṃsāra*. In order to cultivate the values that constitute the mind of a person with a spiritual disposition, certain virtues are presented. The qualities and consequences of the *āsurī* and *rākṣasī* dispositions are also told in order that we may avoid them.

Both these types of qualities, *daivī* and *āsurī*, appear to be very natural in one individual. Even a rank criminal has sympathy, friendliness, and affection under certain circumstances. Although in this way, the opposite qualities seem to be very natural, they are really not, because they are not in keeping with the nature of *ātmā*. How unnatural they are has to be seen by first understanding the values and then being very alert about cultivating them. In keeping with the understanding, one has to nurture the new values and break the habits that are rooted in the old understanding. The purpose of the sixteenth chapter is to help us do this.

¹ *Gītā* – 9-12

A *rākṣasa* is someone from whom you have to protect yourself. This is a person whose value structure makes his behaviour damaging to the well-being of others. Naturally, you have to protect yourself from such a person.

An *asura* is one who finds enjoyment only in the sense-objects. He has no real aesthetic appreciation or interest in anything profound, and consequently, only dissipates his time and energy. Also, for him, the end is the important thing, so he will compromise the means, if necessary. Small ends, like power, name, pleasure, etc., are so important that in the process of gaining them, he does not mind harming people. This is an *asura*. It is their modes of thinking and value structure that constitute the disposition of an *asura* or a *rākṣasa*.

The purpose of this chapter is to help one cultivate *daivī-sampat*, spiritual wealth. The values are shown, not for self-judgement, nor for judgement of others, but to understand each one of them so well that the understanding and yourself are one and the same. Then, if there is any particular tendency that is against that understanding, it is made to conform to your understanding of the value structure. Values are not to be kept as an ideal, but understood thoroughly. Then, an attempt to conform to them is a necessity only to the extent that an old tendency persists. This does not mean that we never make choices that are convenient. As long as the choice is not against our understanding, we must certainly adopt it. But convenience is not the main criterion for choice. If it goes against certain values, we do not do what is convenient, but do exactly what is to be done. This is the discipline.

DAIVĪSAMPAT

Those values that we are to cultivate, the Lord tells us in the next three verses. The three verses are to be read together because *bhavanti*, the verb for all three, is in the third verse.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
 + ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
 नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय + ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca

abhayaṃ sattvaśuddhirjñānāvasthithiḥ

dānaṃ damaśca yajñaśca svādhyāyastapa ājñam

Verse 1

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *Śrī Bhagavān*; = ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — said;
 + ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *abhayaṃ* — freedom from fear; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *sattva-śuddhiḥ* — purity of mind; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *jñāna-yoga-vyavasthithiḥ* — steadiness in contemplation; नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *dānam* — charity; नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *damaśca* — and judicious restraint; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *yajñaśca* —

and the rituals; svādhyāyaḥ — recitation of one's own branch of Veda; tapas — austerity; +āṛjavam — alignment of thought word, and deed

+ahimsā +satyam +akrodhaḥ +tyāgaḥ +śāntiḥ +apaisūnam +bhūteṣu +dayā +aloluptvam +mārdavam +hrīḥ +acāpalam ॥२॥

ahimsā satyamakrodhastyāgaḥ śāntirapaiśunam
dayā bhūteṣvaloluptvaṃ mārdavaṃ hrīracāpalam

Verse 2

+ahimsā — absence of hurting; +satyam — truthfulness; +akrodhaḥ — resolution of anger; +tyāgaḥ — renunciation; +śāntiḥ — resolution of the mind; +apaisūnam — absence of calumny/slandering; +bhūteṣu — with regard to living beings; +dayā — compassion; +aloluptvam — absence of ardent longing; +mārdavam — softness; +hrīḥ — modesty; +acāpalam — absence of physical agitation...

+tejas +kṣamā +dhṛtiḥ +śaucam +adrohaḥ +na +atimānitā +daivīm +sampadam +abhijātasya +bhārata ॥३॥

tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śaucamadroho nātimānitā
bhavanti sampadaṃ daivīmabhijātasya bhārata

Verse 3

+tejas — brilliance; +kṣamā — composure; +dhṛtiḥ — fortitude; +śaucam — cleanliness; +adrohaḥ — no thought of hurting; +na +atimānitā — no exaggerated self-opinion; +daivīm +sampadam — (to) the wealth of *devas*; +abhijātasya — for the one who is born; +bhavanti — are there; +bhārata — O! *Bhārata* (*Arjuna*)

Śrī Bhagavān said:

Freedom from fear, purity of mind, steadiness in contemplation, charity, judicious restraint, performing rituals, recitation of one's own branch of the Veda, religious discipline (austerity), alignment of thought, word, and deed, absence of hurting, truthfulness, resolution of anger, renunciation, resolution of the mind, absence of calumny, compassion for living beings, absence of ardent longing, softness, modesty, absence of physical agitation, brilliance, composure, fortitude, cleanliness, no thought of hurting, and no exaggerated self-opinion, are there for the one who is born to the wealth of *devas*, *Arjuna*.

Each word here is a quality for the one who has cultivated or is born into, the spiritual wealth—*daivīm sampadam abhijātasya*. Each one of these has to be understood thoroughly.

FEARLESSNESS

Abhaya is fearlessness. This is not the absolute *abhaya* of the wise man, which is freedom from the sense of duality. That is born of knowledge and is not what is discussed here. Here we are looking into an attribute of the mind of a seeker. And this fearlessness is with reference to a number of things and it depends on the sources of fear.

What are the sources of fear? The primary one is death. This is not an ordinary thing and can only be eliminated by knowing, cognitively, that *ātmā* is not subject to time. Fear is an emotion, and like any emotion, it is always preceded by a thought that we normally fail to recognize. That thought is the missing link, which has to be discovered. The fear of death is a particular thought that is always backed by a certain relevant emotion, because the love for survival is instinctive. This very natural love 'to be' is inbuilt in the creation. No living organism wants to die. An animal always runs from a predator, because instinctively it knows it will die otherwise. The fear here is instinctive, born of a love for survival.

Cognitive appreciation here of the fact that 'I,' *ātmā*, am not subject to death, can neutralize the thought, which precedes the emotion of fear. The thought 'I will die' is not seen by you, only the emotion of fear is seen. If you can detect the thought, 'I will die,' you can begin to inquire into it. What is it that is going to die? The body? It is definitely going to die; nothing can stop it. That which dies always dies, and what cannot die, does not. This is *anityatva-vicāra*. It is not that suddenly one day the body dies. It keeps ageing, because, like anything in the creation, it has an inherent disintegrative factor, entropy, which drives order to disorder. Being put together, it has a natural tendency to fall apart and is, therefore, meant to die like your car. The more you understand this, the better you can appreciate being alive today. You can celebrate life. All you have to plan for is one day, today. And since you only need to concern yourself with today, you need not spoil it by quarrelling with anybody. It is something like travelling. There are always some people who create problems. You just put up with them. After all, it is just for a few hours. Similarly, for one day only, every day, I celebrate living and I am not afraid of death.

This technique of neutralizing a thought or a pattern of thinking by its opposite, is called *pratipakṣa-bhāvanā*. Thereby, we bring about a cognitive change so that the thought of death either does not come, or, if it does, the neutralizing thoughts arise along with it. We have to create such 'anti-bodies' in our minds in order to deal with these fears as they arise. As the thought, 'I will die' arises, it is met with the thought, 'The body will die; that is inevitable. But that I am alive today is a matter for celebration.' When this body will die is anybody's guess. Ask anyone in the emergency ward if he planned to come there. Then you will understand. Some grace has to operate to keep us alive, and therefore, that we are alive today is a matter for celebration. One good thing about death is that it has to be dealt with only once. When it comes, we will see what we

have to do; till then, it is not a real problem. By the time it comes, we may be ready to go. We may welcome it!

A story is told of an old Swami who had lived for more than thirty years in Uttarakashi and Rishikesh. When he fell ill, his devotees wanted him to come down to Delhi or Dehradun so that he could receive proper treatment. One day, the Swami said to one of his disciples, 'Suppose you are a busy man, talking to a group of people. An old man walks into the gathering, and finding you very busy, he sits in one corner evidently waiting to talk to you. He is sitting far away and not interested in the *satsaṅga*, but is just waiting to talk to you. Gradually all the people leave, one by one. Now will you get up and go to your room, or will you call the old man and ask him, what he wants?' The disciple responded, 'I would definitely talk to him and perhaps finish with all the other people in order to do that.' Then Swami continued, 'Similar is the case here! Ever since I came into this world, I have been busy doing one thing or the other. And this old man, Mr. Death, who came along with me, has been waiting very patiently all this time. Now he thinks that, this is the time to come to talk to me. Should I give him an interview, or should I escape from him? Since he has been patiently waiting for so long, it is only right that I give him an interview now. It is time now!'

Death is always around the corner, mobile in the form of every vehicle, and stationary in the form of microbes and so on. There is no escape from him; for it is the nature of this body to die. It is put together, and is therefore, subject to disintegration. The more intimately you understand this, the less of a problem death becomes, and the more disposed you are to celebrate life. You are fearless with reference to death only when you celebrate today. Each morning that you wake up is like a new birth. After all, what guarantee is there that you will wake up in the same body? That you do is a matter for celebration. Perhaps, for one more day, you can do something useful. You plan well for only, one day at a time. Even a plan for the future is only today's plan; to-morrow you may change it if the changing circumstances require that, but for today, you have a plan. If you live like this, you can laugh at death, or at least face it squarely.

Besides death, there are many other things we fear, particularly the future. But if we look back, we have been surviving all these years, in spite of our fear. The fear has not only been useless, it is something we definitely would have been better off without. To neutralize this fear too all we have to do is, to understand that we need only to deal with one day at a time.

One very rich person I know was always afraid of his future. To help him get out of this fear, I gave him an exercise. Though he had three cooks at home, I told him that he should cook for himself for a few days. For each meal, he was to cook only what he required for that meal. Nothing was to be saved. The first time he cooked too much, the next time he had to reduce the quantity. As he did this, he discovered that the amount of

food he needed for one day could be gathered even by begging, and his anxiety for the future was gone.

What is really required to overcome fear of the future is the inner strength, the ‘spiritual strength’ of knowing just how little you require to survive. Then you have no fear. Just to live is not a major accomplishment. Even a mosquito lives. Go to a jungle, and see how many creatures there are. It is teeming with millions of life forms. What retirement plan do they have? They all live day to day, and in doing so, keep teaching us how to live. You may be worried, but the millions of bugs living in your own stomach are not concerned at all. They keep multiplying geometrically, living a good family life, with their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, as long as you are alive! This fear of ‘what will happen in the future’ is meaningless.

Another way of approaching this is to look at what happens if you lose something. So much of our fear is centred on loss—loss of life, loss of name, loss of power, loss of hair, loss of teeth, loss of health, loss of possessions, loss of relationships, etc. Suppose you lose some power that you have. Just look at yourself without power. If you strip yourself of whatever power you have, you are still there very much as a person. Essentially, nothing is lost. And look at the person who has power. See what problems he has, centred on his power and his fear of losing it. Cognitively, by inquiring into this in this way, we locate the thinking that triggers the emotion of fear and then neutralize it by further inquiry. One has to do that. It is a kind of a job to be done, so that, the antibodies arise even as these thoughts arise. It is just intelligent living.

SATTVA-SAMĀUDDHI

Sattva-samśuddhi means purity of mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. If all the values are properly understood, there will certainly be *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. But here it is mentioned separately as a value. It means clean thinking, which is expressed very beautifully by Śaṅkara as giving up of deceit, cheating, and falsehood in your interactions with people. If you are free from these in your thinking, there is naturally a certain cleanliness in your interactions. You have *sattva-samśuddhi*.

JÑĀNA-YOGA-VYAVASTHITI

Jñāna-yoga-vyavasthiti means steadiness in contemplation. *Jñāna*, knowledge, here is self-knowledge as received from the *śāstra* and the teacher. The meaning of the word *ātmā* and of the word *Brahman* has to be properly understood. Every word has a relevant reality, *vastu*; so, the reality of these words has to first be cognitively appreciated from the *śāstra* and the teacher. Then, that understanding has to be released from any obstruction it may have, due to a certain lack of preparedness. This is taken care of by *nididhyāsana*, contemplation on what you have understood, and this is called

jñāna-yoga here, where *yoga* is meditation. That meditation releases the knowledge from obstructions, which deny you its fruits.

To assimilate your own knowledge as something that is very much with yourself, you have to contemplate upon yourself, with a certain mastery over the senses, etc. That is why one-pointedness, *ekāgratā*, etc., is implied in meditation. You make that same knowledge gathered from the teacher and the *śāstra* very immediate, very well-known, with no doubt at all. In other words, free from all obstructions. You stay with the knowledge until a time comes when you do not need to stay with it because it is yourself. There is no need to stay in yourself. Till then, there is a seeming attempt to stay. This tendency to spend time in contemplation is very natural to a person who has spiritual wealth, *daivī-sampat*. Even the choice to gain spiritual knowledge is due to *daivī-sampat*.

Before he proceeds, Śaṅkara makes a note here He says, this *jñāna-yoga-vyavasthiti* is the most important one among all the others that constitute *daivī sampat*. And says, *daivī sampat* is a wealth, which consists of *sattva-guṇa*, and is therefore, *sāttvikī sampat*. And for the word *sāttvikī*, he gives a general definition in a brief but important statement—*yatra yeṣām adhikṛtānām yā prakṛti sambhavati, sāttvikī sā ucyate*. When the pursuit is only of things that are to be done and nothing else it is said to be *sāttvikī*.

In the Vedic society we had *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*, a code of conduct that is defined according to what particular group a person belongs to. All activities required to maintain the society were divided into four groups, and the people were also divided accordingly. The duties a person was qualified to perform were determined by the group he belonged to and were all well-defined. The concept behind this is that a human being is here to accomplish the particular end of *mokṣa*. Whether one discerns it or not, this is what everybody wants. Nothing less will satisfy the human heart. Since the basic problem is one of self-non-acceptance, acceptance is possible only when a person discovers the self to be free from any lack, in other words, complete. And the self happens to be complete. Discovering this fact releases the individual from his erroneous sense of imperfection. When this is the ultimate end, all activities are reduced to duties. Then, by conforming to these well-defined duties, one can neutralize the likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*, that disturb the basic pursuit of *mokṣa*. Certainly there is sacrifice and yielding, when the *rāga* or *dveṣa* is not in keeping with *dharma*, but every time you give up, you grow because what you give up is less than what you are. As this inner growth takes place, one gains a certain amount of dispassion or objectivity, which becomes natural in time. Therefore, to make a person emotionally, spiritually, and ethically an adult, you require a suitable infrastructure. This was provided in the Vedic society by what we call, *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*.

In this system, each person has a given occupation determined by the family into which he was born, *varṇa-dharma*, and certain behavioural norms dictated by his stage of life, *āśrama-dharma*—as a student, householder, one who is preparing for renunciation, and a renunciate. One who conforms to this is called an *adhikṛta-puruṣa*. He is enjoined to perform certain duties. What is to be done in a given situation is usually very obvious. That is duty. When one's pursuit is only towards that, even though there may be the tendency to do something else, what is done is duty.

As a result, the person becomes a master of his own *rāga-dveṣas* and enjoys what we call *daivi-sampat*. Whether he is defined as a *brāhmaṇa*, a *kṣatriya*, a *vaiśya* or a *sūdra* in terms of his vocation, he is a *brāhmaṇa* by quality. This is reflected in his disposition and attitude. The qualities of such a person are described in these three verses. They are either natural to him or he is mindful of his activities in terms of these values.

To develop a disposition in which *sattva* is predominant, a duty-based structure is helpful. By doing your duties, whatever they are, you become a *brāhmaṇa*. In a society in which everybody is trying to become a *brāhmaṇa* by doing what is to be done, there is no competition. Until recently, the concept of duty was very much a part of Indian culture. Today, of course, the society is changing and the *varṇa-āśrama* system is breaking down. But the spirit is still valid. Any given situation presents itself in a form, which necessitates an appropriate action. That action becomes duty.

In every society, the duties and responsibilities are very clearly spelled out. Without that, collective function is not possible, whether at home or in society at large. What one should do must be clear, even if there are only two people involved. The one who does just what is prescribed, not only in terms of actions but also in terms of attitudes that reflect proper values, is able to do so because he has a disposition that is predominantly *sattva*. One of the actions that characterize a person of such a disposition is *dāna*, giving.

DĒNA

Śaṅkara qualifies *dāna* by saying that it is giving according to one's capacity, a proper distribution. In giving, it is important not to place yourself in a position of having to receive later. Your giving must be responsible; it should not exceed your capacity. There is a limit, which you stretch as much as you can, but you never exceed it. If, because of excessive giving, somebody has to give to you later on, that charity is meaningless.

Charity must also be given to a worthy recipient, and the one who gives must have a proper attitude. In the *śāstra* it is said that if something is to be given it is to be given with *śraddhā*—*śraddhayā deyam*; it is not to be given, without *śraddhā*—*aśraddhayā adevam*. You must know to whom to give, and in the giving, both the giver

and the given should feel blessed. That is called *dāna*. If you give and make the other person, feel obliged to you that is not giving. You give in such a way that the person who receives is happy and does not in any way feel small. That is real giving.

Certain attitudes are important with reference to giving. If somebody gives you something, however small, you remember it always. Your gratitude never diminishes. But if you give, you forget about it. You may remember and feel fortunate that you had an opportunity to give, but that pride 'I gave' is gone. You consider it an opportunity because you know very well that the situation could be reversed. Thus, if you can give without making the recipient feel small or obliged, it is giving.

Everything is like that. Suppose it is your job to manage people. If you make them feel that they are not managed, that they work along with you, you are a good manager. If you can manage them without giving them a complex, you are a great manager. This cannot be contrived. It must be a genuine attitude towards your fellow human beings and certain facts. Jobs differ. Somebody is in a position to say, 'Do this.' Somebody is in a position to do it. But one is not superior to another. Duties differ. This is all there is to it.

Why should you give? What do you get out of this *dāna*? In giving, you part with something; therefore, naturally, there is a loss. But there need not be a sense of loss. When you give away, something, you may be diminished materially, but you do not become less than you were. In fact, you gain. In giving a gift, there is surely an element of joy. And further, even though there is a giving away, there is always a gain, in that you are bigger than what you gave. Then again, to the extent that you can happily part with the things you love, you are free. Someone who does not have anything that he cannot happily part with is totally free. Your attachment to things is not such that you cannot happily give them away when there is a deserving person. Thereby you grow richer.

In India, *dāna* is very common even today. There are hundreds of *āśramas* in Rishikesh, and all of them are run by public charity. Similarly, there is always abundant distribution of food, because *dāna* is a deep-rooted cultural value. In the village where I grew up, except for the rice paddy, food was never to be sold. It could only be distributed. I remember it being a small scandal when one woman sold ghee. It was considered a great sin. Once, there was a proposal of marriage to one of the girls in our village from a rich family in the nearby village of Mayavaram. But neither the father nor the mother of the girl would accept the alliance because the father of the boy was running a restaurant. That meant he sold food and the money earned from that was considered *pāpa* because food should only be distributed. Even today, in villages in Andhra, they will not sell any milk or milk products. Food is to be distributed. Never sold. Also, the *kṣatriyas* in the West Godavari district are not supposed to sell milk products. They consider it below their dignity, even improper to sell them. In Punjab, you will never see a beggar because food is distributed every day in the Gurudwaras.

And it is rich substantial food. The value for giving is very great in India. Even a poor person gives whatever he can, for a value for *dāna* is ingrained in all people. It is so important because giving is part of growing up.

DAMA

Dama means control at the level of the sense organs and organs of action. You act deliberately and are not led away by your fancies. It is alertness with reference to your mind. It is purely a will-based value. *Dama* should be there in everything—talking, walking, eating, moving around. Every expression must be appropriate. This is *dama*.

YAJŪA

Yajña is performing daily rituals, which are of two types. One is called *śrauta-karma*, and consists of Vedic fire rituals, like the *agnihotra*, which are performed daily. The other is called *smārtakarma*, which consists of prayers, daily *pūja*, chanting, *japa*, and so on.

SVĒDHYĒYA

Svādhyāya is the daily recitation of the Veda and is considered a prayer that produces *puṇya*. According to the *śāstra*, *puṇya* can take you to heaven, etc., but it can also remove old *pāpas* which can hinder your spiritual pursuit. This is the type of *puṇya* that is sought here. Recitation of Veda, *veda-pārāyaṇa*, is considered to be a spiritual *karma*, meant to produce a special *puṇya*, which is converted into an atmosphere or situation wherein you can spiritually grow.

TAPAS

Tapas here refers to any religious discipline. In the 10th chapter,¹ *Śaṅkara* defined it as *indriya-saṅyama-pūrvakaṃ śarīra-piḍanam*, practising various disciplines at the body level backed by a control of the sense organs. Many kinds of such *tapas*, disciplines, become a part of the *sādhana* that a *jijñāsu* undertakes. Now here in the 16th chapter, after almost completing the entire teaching of *Vedānta*, *Bhagavān* again picks up the values that a *jijñāsu* has to cultivate for the assimilation of the knowledge. And in this context, he talks of *tapas* and is going to elaborate on the threefold *tapas* later in the 17th chapter. So here, *Śaṅkara* just says that this *tapas* will be elaborated later and proceeds.

¹ *Gītā* – 10-5

ĀRJAVA

Ārjava, as we saw in the 13th chapter,¹ is an alignment between the mind, the word, and the action. It is speaking what one thinks and doing what one speaks. And this becomes complete when combined with *satya* and *ṛta*, where one has the value in constantly ensuring what one thinks is right in addition to speaking what one believes is right. There in the 13th chapter, Śaṅkara defines *ārjava* as *ṛju-bhāvo avakratvam*, straightforwardness and absence of crookedness. This is an important value for a *jījñāsu*, because any compromise in *ārjava* one does only due to *rāga-dveṣas*. And as long as *rāga-dveṣas* determine one's actions, the assimilation of the knowledge cannot take place. That is why *Bhagavān* mentions *ārjava* in the 13th chapter, where he is enumerating the *jñāna-sādhanas*. And he considers it so important that he reiterates it here and again in the 17th chapter.

AHIṂSĀ

Ahiṃsā is the absence of hurting any living being. Here, not hurting is not only limited to human beings but extends to all living things, including trees, and so on. A hurtful act, like any action, can be threefold, according to the means used—physical, oral or mental. We deliberately avoid hurting any living being by a physical action. Although speech is also one of the organs of action, it is treated separately here. Mentally also, one can perform an action, like meditation or prayer. Although one may have stray unkind thoughts about a person, if they are entertained volitionally, it becomes a mental *karma*. A mere thought does not become a *karma* unless it is backed by an agent who is deliberately using his will.

SATYA

Satyam here refers to speaking truth. Because words can be so hurtful, one is advised to say not only what is truthful, but what is also pleasing and beneficial. We have a mandate² to speak only what is truthful, *satya*. But while doing so, we may say something hurtful. So, we are enjoined to say what is pleasant, *priya*. And while it is important to say what is pleasant, it should not be at the cost of what is true. It should not be false, *anṛta*. Why does anyone tell lies? It is only due to fear of facing certain facts about oneself. But not being truthful only makes a person weaker and weaker. Therefore honestly facing situations and the facts as they are, and then being honest in conversation

¹ *Gītā* – 13-7

² एतन्मया प्रोक्तं सत्यं प्रियं ब्रूयात् सत्यमप्रियं
प्रियं च नानृतां ब्रूयाद्देशा धर्माद्युक्तानि ॥ ४-१३८

*satyaṃ brūyāt priyaṃ brūyānna brūyāt satyamapriyam
priyaṃ ca nānṛtaṃ brūyādeṣa dharmādyuktāni*

is the way to overcome some of these fears. In speaking about something, our words should convey the sense of it exactly as it is, that is, it has to be *yathārtha*, with no omissions or embellished merits. What is *satya* and even *priya* may also sometimes be useless. We, therefore, try not to use words which do not serve any purpose. This implies care in using adjectives and in choosing words that most accurately convey what the thing or situation is. If you restrict your speech to what is useful, naturally, you become conscious about what you say.

AKRODHA

Akrodha means absence of anger, but *Śaṅkara* defines it very beautifully here as the resolution of anger. This implies an acknowledgement of the existence of anger. We are already angry, and a given situation evokes it. Anger comes from anguish arising from unfulfilled expectations. Every human being has it because from childhood there have been numerous disappointments. Based on some conclusions drawn from these experiences, one gathers anger towards oneself and the world. We have to resolve this anger born of anguish, or we will continue to be vulnerable to it. New situations do not remove the anger but only serve to make us angrier because we are already angry. And an angry person does not accomplish anything worthwhile; he only damages himself and others. But a person who acts has a chance of salvaging even a potentially damaging solution. Once, while travelling, I saw someone who was so angry when the airhostess brought him the wrong drink, that his shouting could be heard all over the aircraft. He is a guest for just two or three hours. If he wants something else, she is going to oblige him surely. Then why such intense anger? He is already angry! The angry man becomes angry. Do not think that you cause anger in anyone else either. It was all caused long ago, and is just sitting there waiting for some occasion to make it manifest. That is the truth about anger. How can you resolve it? By various types of proper *vicāra* and by resolution.

Cognitively we can change, because anger, like every other emotion, is preceded by a thought more often than not, a conclusive thought, like, ‘This is never going to happen to me,’ or, ‘I can never make him understand.’ Thoughts like these are the missing link between old anger and the current situation. The thought usually goes undetected, and is what I call ‘mechanical thinking.’ Without permission, it takes place. Any situation, which reminds you of the cause of your original anger can trigger the thought, and once the thought has come, the anger is there. There is no feeling without these conclusive thoughts. They hold the anger, and therefore, by proper inquiry we can neutralize it.

First, you must isolate the conclusion. This recognition of the conclusive thought makes it no longer automatic. Then, the more you recognize the thought, the less mechanical it is, because you are conscious of it. A time comes when, between you, the knowing person, the *pramātā*, and this automatic thinking, there is some space. As the

thought comes, we should be able to recognize it. In the beginning, we recognize it only after it has come. Then we recognize it as it comes, and eventually, we recognize the occasion in which it can come and find that it does not come. At every stage, it is a question of recognizing the thought, and thereby, resolving the anger.

If there is excessive pressure from old anger, there are harmless methods of releasing it, like beating the floor with a wet towel, or writing out all that you feel. Śaṅkara only says *krodhasya upaśamana*, resolving the anger should be done. How one resolves it, can vary from person to person.

TYĒGA

Tyāga, Śaṅkara says, is either a lifestyle of *sannyāsa*, or *karma-phala-tyāga*, which is giving up all results of actions, in order to know yourself. Once you have *tyāga*, all results that come under *artha* and *kāma* do not interest you. You perform action as a thing to be done only for the purpose of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Whether you physically renounce the world or not, you have the spirit of *tyāga*, absence of ownership and attachment. This *vairāgya*, dispassion, born of maturity, is *sāttvikī*.

ĀĒNTI

Śānti is resolution of the mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa*. This is possible only if there is no self-judgement. The mind has various phases, and if there is self-judgement, it can create problems in a vicious circle. If, for instance, the mind is restless, and you judge yourself as restless, the mind will only become more restless. To then resolve that restlessness is very difficult. So, you avoid creating the vicious circle by refusing to judge yourself on the basis of the mind. This is a very important thing to know. The mind has its own logic. Suddenly it will think of something that seems to have no connection to anything. We can inquire into the logic of it, but it is enough to know that the mind has a logic of its own. I do not know why it thinks the way it does nor do I need to know. The important thing is, I do not judge it but enjoy it as it is. As long as it is available for me, whenever I need to use it, why should I bother about what it does on its own time? It is important, also, to give the mind enough time off. If I do not, then it will take the time anyway, without my permission, and not be available when I need it. Even if this is the case, as long as I do not make a judgement about it, there is no problem. Everything, including psychological issues, ceases to be a problem if I refuse to make a judgement about myself on the basis of my mind.

Such a judgement can undermine the understanding of *Vedānta*. The problem is often expressed by the statement of a *mumukṣu*, ‘*Vedānta* says I am *sat-cit-ānanda*, but I do not experience it.’ *Sat-cit-ānanda* is not something to be experienced, it is to be understood. The vision is that you are *sat-cit-ānanda*, the reality of everything and independent of everything. If you say that, you do not understand this, that is a legitimate

problem. That is why we have so many texts. *Śaṅkara* would not have written such elaborate *bhāṣyas* if people could easily understand. For someone who is studying, not understanding should not be a problem. It just means I have to understand, and so I keep trying to understand till I understand.

Śāstra says, you are *sat-cit-ānanda* in spite of your mind, in spite of all the desirable and undesirable characteristics of your *upādhi*. Even if you consider a brilliant, pure mind to adumbrate *sat-cit-ānanda*, when we are talking about *sarvajñatva*, and so on, it is insignificant. It is something like decorating a broomstick with precious ornaments. No matter how wonderful the *upādhi* may be, it is not limitless *sat-cit-ānanda*. Comparison, therefore, has no meaning here. There is no comparison with *sat-cit-ānanda*, because in the final analysis, there is only *sat-cit-ānanda*. And differences in *upādhis* are a matter for resolution, not comparison. When I have to negate even the difference in the manifest form of the Lord and the individual, *jīva-īśvara-buddhi-bheda*, how does it help me to turn my attention to the differences between individual and individual? The *śruti* talks so much about negating any difference what so ever! When the *śāstra* is urging me to drop various things in my vision of myself, why should I want to have additional features? It is something like wishing that a dead body should be slim or fat for burial or cremation. When I have to give up my sense of being the body, mind, and senses, how many embellishments should they have? The properties of the *upādhi* are irrelevant here because the whole teaching is, that you should not judge yourself on the basis of your *upādhi*.

If that is clearly seen, even relatively, it gives you some space. Suppose you find yourself frequently judging yourself, you can see that the very judging is a thought, one particular type of thinking. Then you try to find out how the judging takes place, with a readiness to accept what is there. When you no longer refuse to accept a fact, resolution, *śānti*, is natural. A factual problem may remain, which you can always attempt to solve, but there is no problem due to non-acceptance of a fact. By rejecting a fact, we are never going to solve any problem. If not today, tomorrow we have to accept it. And the more we learn how to accept facts, the more we find there is *śānti*. Various disciplines like *prāṇāyāma* can also help us gain a relative measure of *śānti*.

APAIŚUNA

Looking for omissions and commissions in the thinking or behaviour of others, and making sure everyone else knows of these limitations is called *paiśuna*. And absence of *paiśuna* is *apaiśuna*. It is all right to talk about the good qualities of one person to another; in fact, it is good, because it confirms what is good in you and in others. But talking about the defects of others, looking for problems and then exaggerating them and presenting them out of context, in other words, gossiping, is *paiśuna*. This is not helpful to us. We gossip because we are not happy with ourselves. And it is often a way of trying to handle jealousy. By talking about the limitations of

someone I am jealous of, I may keep my jealousy under control. But I am not dealing with it. I am only creating additional problems for myself. Through gossip, I try to escape from myself. There are many means of escape, like excessive eating or working, but, gossiping, more than the others, spoils both my mind and the mind of the person who listens to me. It is destructive. It is better to stay with myself and look at the problem that is creating the pressure for me to talk about someone else. That will lead to *apaiśuna*.

DAYĒ

Dayā is compassion towards another being who is suffering or in pain of any kind. This includes not only a human being but any other kind of living being. Whether it is a tree, a creeper, or a frog struggling to survive, or a person suffering from an emotional or a physical pain, one feels sympathy towards that living being. This is *dayā*. This is another form of love that expresses because of empathy, because of identifying with the pain of another. The capacity to empathize is innate to a human being and it is important not to repress this very natural response. If, without subjecting yourself to pain, you act upon this empathy, that is *dayā*. It must always be active in expressing one's *dayā*, because, passive *dayā* is useless to the person who is suffering and only creates problems for you. Once you respond to your empathy with a helpful action, it is over. Otherwise, you develop guilt for not acting on that empathy, and as result of that guilt, you try to justify your refusal to act. This justification requires a distortion in your thinking and a denial of what is spontaneous and very natural.

Dayā is an expression of love. When the object of love is a living being in pain, the love expresses in the form of *dayā*. Everyone has *dayā*. When your finger is hurt, you are full of *dayā* for that finger. And you expect it from others too. It is an emotion that everyone knows. But most often, it goes unexpressed. Therefore, we have to cultivate it by refusing to suppress it. And surely, sometimes its expression has to be properly edited. Even if it is a situation where you are helpless to act, at least you can make a prayer for the person. But it has to be acted upon. *Dayā* cannot be kept inside; it has to be expressed. That is why everyday we pray, '*lokāḥ samastāḥ sukhino bhavantu*—may everyone be happy.' Because I do not want to be unhappy, I understand that nobody else wants to be unhappy either. The more we pay attention to our empathy, the more sympathy we will have in our expression of thought word and deed.

ALOLUPTVĀ

Aloluptva is an absence of longing in the presence of desirable sense objects. It is one thing to be unmoved in the absence of objects, but quite another to remain so in their presence. That is why, when we go to a big departmental store, we come out with more than what we intended to buy. Buying just what you wanted takes a lot of self-control. In

cultivating this value of *aloluptva*, practice is important. Without removing the sense objects, though perhaps that may be helpful in the beginning, you appreciate all of them without a longing arising in you. Even if a fancy occurs, you do not respond to it. In shopping for instance, you allow all your fancies and impulses to arise, but purchase only what you really need. This is considered *sāttvika* because it requires a discriminative mind. If that is not operative, you become subject to longing, and, in this instance, impulsive buying. This is what we call *loluptva*, an expression of *rajas*.

MĒRDAVA

Mārdava is absence of cruelty. It comes from the word *mṛdu*, which means soft. The petal of a flower is *mṛdu*. A softness, a kindness in attitude is what we call *mārdava*. People should be able to talk to you freely, happily, without fear of harsh words. This is *mārdava*. There are some people who are kind but very harsh in their expression. There is a story that illustrates the different types of people. An old *brāhmaṇa* arrived in a village just at lunchtime. One person spoke to him very nicely for about five minutes, and then asked if he had eaten. When he replied that he had not, the villager lamented that his household had just finished their meal and directed him to another house. His words were all spoken softly—like a knife going into butter! When the *brāhmaṇa* went to the other house, he was greeted curtly but fed abundantly and was invited to rest also. These are the two types; one non-giving and soft, the other, very giving but very harsh. The second is definitely better, but we need to be both—giving and soft. The softness is very important because it implies accommodation, accepting the limitations of others, and understanding from where they come.

HRĪ

Hri is a particular kind of shyness. This is not a general shyness but a shying away from praise about yourself, and from extolling your own glories. Sometimes you have to tell your qualifications, but then you remain objective, not flattering yourself. It is a very natural modesty, or humility.

ACĒPĀLA

Acāpala is another important thing. It is the absence of activity of speech, hands, legs, etc., without a purpose, says *Śaṅkara*. This means living a purposeful, and very alert life in which your actions become deliberate. That brings about a change in the mind because *cāpala* is an expression of agitation. With practice, *acāpala* can be accomplished easily, but it takes some attention. It is very important that it be done without tension, so that the mind is relaxed enough for proper *śravaṇa*. With knowledge of *ātmā*, *acāpala* becomes very natural, but without inner freedom, alertness needed to maintain *acāpala* can create tension. It is advised as a practice here only as a discipline

leading to the discovery of inner freedom, not as an end in itself. This *acāpala* is very natural to a *sāttvika* mind. One may be *sāttvika* but still have agitations. If that is so, some external discipline will reduce the disturbance.

TEJAS

Tejas means brilliance, not the shine of your skin, but inner brilliance, says Śaṅkara. He defines it as the capacity to face difficult challenges with self-confidence.

KĀMĒ

Kṣamā means composure. Even when you are addressed by someone who is angry or assaulted in some way, there is no change within you. This is possible because you do not internalise the other person's behaviour, but just allow him to be what he is and wait for the disturbance to pass. No angry response arises in you. If anger arises and you resolve it, that is called *akrodha*. If anger does not arise, it is *kṣamā*. This is an accommodation, which permits you to understand the other person. Unless you have the readiness to allow a person to be as he or she is, there is no way of understanding him or her. Making another person feel understood is not an easy thing. It takes a lot of *kṣamā*.

DHĪTI

Dhṛti is generally translated as fortitude. But here Śaṅkara is more explicit. He says that when the body and sense organs are tired or in pain, due to illness, or age, or some defect, the attitude that makes you not mind the pain, is what we call *dhṛti*. Even though there is pain, there is a capacity to happily put up with it, not yielding to expressions of complaint.

ŚAUCĀ

Śauca, cleanliness, is of two kinds, inner and outer. External cleanliness means keeping the body, clothing, and the environment clean. This is an important discipline because it helps create a healthy frame of mind. Inner cleanliness is a mental disposition that is the opposite of one assailed by emotions like hatred. Whenever these disturbing emotions are detected, they are replaced by their opposite. If there is enmity, we replace it with understanding, and, if possible, friendliness. If there is hatred, we analyse what it is that is hated and try to understand it. If the understanding is complete, love or compassion will naturally arise. If it is not, we deliberately introduce these emotions, shifting our attention to what is lovable about the person, or why he or she is deserving of compassion. One has to look into one's own mind, and as these emotions arise, create the opposite attitude, *pratipakṣa-bhāvanā*, and thereby develop a mind, which is predominantly *sattva*. Other important ways of bringing about inner cleanliness are daily prayers, *japa*, and meditation. These are all cleansing acts because there is surrender

{ÉÉÉÉ} *pārtha* — O! *Pārtha*; +ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ {ÉÉÉÉÉ} *āsuriṁ sampadam* — to the wealth of an *asura*; +ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *abhijātasya* — for the one who is born; nü|ÉÉ *dambhaḥ* — hypocrisy with reference to *dharma*; nüÉÉ *darpaḥ* — pride; +ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *atimānaḥ ca* — tendency to demand respect; GÉÉÉÉ *krodhaḥ* — anger; {ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ} *pāruṣyam eva ca* — and indeed harshness; +YÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *ajñānam ca* — and a lack of discrimination; (ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *santi* — there are)

Arjuna, the one who is born to the wealth of an *asura*, has hypocrisy with reference to *dharma*, pride, a tendency to demand respect, anger, harshness, and indeed, a lack of discrimination.

Āsuri means that which belongs to an *asura*. All our literature is replete with the altercations between the *devas* and the *asuras*, who, as you can see now, represent our internal conflicts. Everybody enjoys the qualities of a deva to an extent. Absence of hurting, compassion, love, and so on, are all very natural, at least towards oneself under certain circumstances. And the qualities of an asura are also there. These two are always at loggerheads, and are portrayed in our stories as battles between the *devas* and the *asuras*. Even if there is a person who seems to embody the qualities of an *asura*, it is not because he is bad but because his thinking is wrong. All conflicts first happen within, and then express themselves in the external world. Every war is first waged in the mind. If it cannot be resolved there, it expresses itself externally. With proper inquiry, these conflicts get resolved as they arise. We are not trying to avoid their occurrence; that is natural. But we resolve them within so that they do not find an external expression. If that resolving capacity is not there, or the people around do not help the resolution, but inflame the conflict, a war erupts.

The *Mahābhārata* war could not be avoided only because of this *āsuri-sampat*. It is very pertinent for Lord *Kṛṣṇa* to talk about *āsuri-sampat* here because it has brought the war that *Arjuna* is facing. All the problems are because of *Duryodhana's* thinking, which is here called *āsuri-sampat*. Here we must understand that there is no person who has only these qualities. Everyone has some measure of *daivi-sampat* too. The *āsuri-sampat* is being detailed here only to understand what it is.

DAMBHA

Dambha, *Śaṅkara* says, is hypocrisy with reference to *dharma*, *dharma-dhvajitva*. Someone who has *dambha* proclaims himself as one who follows *dharma*, doing noble actions, not for the benefit of others, but for his own recognition. In giving charity, for instance, his motive is not charity, but to build up his own image. He is not giving charity, in fact, but investing money for self-promotion. Whether he has them or not, he proclaims his own glories. This quality in him, which makes him do that is, called *dambha*.

DARPA

Darpa is pride. Because of some knowledge or skill, or some wealth, either inherited or earned, or perhaps because of being born in a good family, or any of a number of things, not understanding all the factors responsible for what he has, he has *garva*, pride.

ATIMĒNA

Atimāna, we have seen, is an exaggerated opinion about oneself, or demanding respect from others.

KRODHA

Krodha is anger. Because you are not able to accomplish something, there is an anguish born of disappointment. This anguish can develop into *krodha*, anger. Once a person is overcome by anger, he forgets all that he knows about what is to be done and what is not to be done and will repeat the same actions that brought him such dire consequences before. His behaviour is destructive, not only to himself, but to others. We have seen this in detail earlier.

PĒRUĀYA

Pāruṣya is the opposite of *mārdava*, softness, in speaking, etc. It is harshness in speech, talking in a manner that is hurtful to others, especially with sarcasm or a derisive laughter. *Śaṅkara* says, it is calling someone who has one eye, or any other defect, beautiful. This criticism in the form of sarcasm hurts people. Using words without any sensitivity for the damage they can do is *pāruṣya*. That is why we pray everyday, ‘*jihvā me madhumattamā*—may my tongue (speech) be most sweet.’

AJŌĒNA

Ajñāna means an understanding that is without proper discrimination. Ignorance is not a problem, but the conclusions that are distorted with reference to right and wrong wreak havoc. Unethical behaviour is justified as, for example, pragmatic business practice. This is what we call moral decay. It is all due to the pressure to have money, based on the wrong conclusion that money will provide security. It is one thing to find yourself doing things that you wish you could avoid, but it is another to make a philosophy out of it. This is what is meant by *ajñāna* here. It is not simple ignorance but a false perception attributing to something, a value which it does not possess, like seeing security where there is no security at all. First there is a confusion of value, and then, naturally, a *dharma-adharma-aviveka*, a confusion of priorities. The *ātma-anātma-aviveka*, a confusion with reference to *ātmā* and *anātmā* can also be called *ajñāna*. But

The *āsuri sampat*, on the other hand, is meant for bondage. It does not create bondage, because the notion of bondage already exists, but with these characteristics, of *āsuri sampat*, the bondage is perpetuated. To get released from *saṃsāra*, we require *daivi sampat*, to remain in it, we require *āsuri sampat*.

Though it is not mentioned, Śāṅkara includes *rākṣasī sampat* in his commentary. A *rākṣasa* is someone from whom you have to protect things—your belongings, self-respect, children, your very life, even your *punya*. Someone who does not even allow you to perform good actions is called a *rākṣasa*.

Rākṣasī sampat is not really much different from *āsuri sampat*, so only *āsuri sampat* is discussed here.

Whenever we make divisions like this, people wonder to which category they belong. This self judgement is our natural tendency. *Arjuna* may have been the same. To reassure him, *Kṛṣṇa* says here, ‘*mā śucaḥ*—do not grieve, worry.’ If we analyse ourselves, we all find that we have some *daivi sampat* and some *āsuri sampat*. *Arjuna* is no exception. *Kṛṣṇa* does not want him to entertain any doubt about his qualifications and so he tells him, ‘You are born to *daivi sampat*.’ And in addressing him as *Pāṇḍava*, he reminds him that he is the son of *Pāṇḍu*, a great man, and hence has all the virtues of a *deva* which equip him for *mokṣa*.

Now *Kṛṣṇa* is going to continue to talk about *āsuri sampat*. The portions that are coming are very relevant to modern thinking, especially the whole corporate mentality and market psychology. The corporate mentality is expressed as, ‘Today I got this, tomorrow I will get that.’ And the psychology of the market is how to convince someone to part with his money. All that is being discussed.

द्वौ भूतसर्गौ लोकेऽस्मिन् दैवाः पृथक् ।
 आसुरा एव च । दैवेषु देवाः ।
 आसुरेषु प्रोक्ताः ॥ ६ ॥

dvau bhūtasargau loka'smin daiva āsura eva ca
daivo vistaraśaḥ prokta āsuram pārtha me ś ṛṇu

Verse 6

+द्वौ भूतसर्गौ लोकेऽस्मिन् दैवाः पृथक् — *asmin loka* — in this world; द्वौ भूतसर्गौ *dvau bhūtasargau* — (there are) two types of created beings; दैवाः *daivaḥ* — those that belong to the *devas*; +आसुरेषु देवाः *āsuraḥ eva ca* — and those that belong to the *asuras*; पृथक् *pārtha* — O! *Pārtha*; दैवेषु देवाः *daivaḥ* — that belonging to the *devas*; आसुरेषु प्रोक्ताः *vistaraśaḥ* — extensively; दैवेषु देवाः *proktaḥ* — was told; +आसुरेषु देवाः *āsuram* — the characteristics belonging to the *asuras*; दैवेषु देवाः *me ś ṛṇu* — listen to Me

In this world, there are two (types of) created beings, the *daiva*, divine, and *āsura*. The divine have been extensively spoken of. Listen to Me, *Arjuna*, about the characteristics belonging to the *asuras*.

TWO TYPES OF BEINGS—DEVAS AND ASURAS

In this world, the created beings referred to here, *Śaṅkara* says, are human beings, those who are subject to *karma* and look upon themselves as doers and enjoyers; in other words, the *jīvas*. Of these, there are two types, those endowed with divine virtues and those with the attributes belonging to the *asuras*. As *Śaṅkara* presents it, some of them are born with these qualities because, according to the *śruti*, those who are born of *Prajāpati* are twofold, the *devas* and the *asuras*.¹ Since the beginning, these two types have been here. And we do see that from birth, some people show certain tendencies. Of these two, the qualities of a *deva* have been explained. Now *Kṛṣṇa* is going to give a detailed description of the characteristics of an *asura*, and he says to *Arjuna*, ‘Listen to Me—*me śṛṇu*.’ Generally, when we draw someone’s attention like this, it is to say something positive. Why should *Kṛṣṇa* invite *Arjuna* to listen to this description of all the *āsuri* qualities? *Śaṅkara* says it is for the purpose of avoiding those very things. It is as important to know the ‘don’ts’ as the ‘do’s’ here. Till the end of this chapter the *āsuri sampat* is going to be detailed, nothing else, because it is possible to give up these attributes, only when they are very clearly known. Therefore, there is an elaborate description of them starting in the next verse.

।É'ÉKÉ SÉ ÉVÉ'ÉK É SÉ VÉXÉÉ XÉ É'ÉnŌŌ'ÉŌŌ*
 XÉ'ÉÉSÉAXÉÉÉ SÉÉSÉÉ'É XÉ'ÉÉ'ÉÉÉÉÉ'ÉÉ'ÉÉ ॥ ७ ॥

*pravṛttiṃ ca nivṛttiṃ ca janā na vidurāsurāḥ
 na śaucam nāpi cācāro na satyaṃ teṣu vidyate*

Verse 7

+É'ÉŌŌ VÉXÉÉ āsurāḥ janāḥ — those who have the qualities of an *asura*; ।É'ÉKÉ'É SÉ *pravṛttiṃ ca* — what is to be done; ÉVÉ'ÉK É SÉ *nivṛttiṃ ca* — and what is to be withdrawn from; XÉ É'ÉnŌŌ *na viduḥ* — do not know; ÉÉÉÉÉ'ÉÉ'ÉÉ *teṣu* — in them; ÉÉSÉ'É Śaucam — inner cleanliness; XÉ É'ÉÉÉÉ'ÉÉ *na vidyate* — is not there; XÉ +ÉÉ SÉ +ÉSÉ'É *na api ca ācārah* — nor proper conduct; XÉ'ÉÉ'ÉÉ'ÉÉ *na satyam* — nor truthfulness

People who have qualities belonging to the *asuras* do not know what is to be done and what is to be withdrawn from. There is neither inner cleanliness nor proper conduct, nor truthfulness in them.

THE DISPOSITION OF ASURAS

The person that we know as an *asura*, who is not able to see anything beyond the enjoyments that one can command through sensory perceptions, does not know *pravṛtti* or *nivṛtti*. These are technical terms for the two types of *karmas*, those that are to be

¹ uŌÉÉ ½ ।ÉVÉÉÉÉÉ'ÉÉÉÉÉ nŌÉÉ'ÉÉ'ÉŌŌ'ÉÉ* *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* -1-3-1

Not only do they live such a life, they also hold certain opinions and are very vociferous in making these opinions known to others. People, *jagat*, they say, are untruthful, *asatya*. The word *jagat* here does not mean the ‘world,’ but ‘people.’ Because they themselves tell lies, they expect that others also lie. Their own behaviour colours their perception of the world. For them, the only question is, ‘Who lies better?’ This is because, they believe that, lying is necessary for survival. Further, they consider that people have no ethical basis for their behaviour. Actually our interactions are based on *dharma* and *adhharma*, on the understanding that there is proper and improper behaviour leading to desirable and undesirable results, *puṇya* and *pāpa*. These people do not think so. They subscribe to the philosophy of materialism expressed in the statement, ‘As long as one lives, one should live happily, incurring debt and drinking ghee. From where is the return for the body that is reduced to ashes?’¹

In their thinking, the end of securing happiness justifies any means and there is no retribution for the means employed. These are called the *lokāyatikas*, the naturalists or mechanical materialists. You can incur debts, load your credit cards, and not worry about paying them back. Since *puṇya* and *pāpa* are not visible, *adr̥ṣṭa*, they do not believe in their existence. You can get away with anything because once this physical body is destroyed, from where does the person return to account for his behaviour? Life, they believe, is meant for enjoyment. If *puṇya* and *pāpa* are accepted, we are accountable for our actions, and will have to pay later in another life. But for them, there is nothing beyond this life; so, there is no basis for *dharma-adharma*. Happiness is dependent only on what you get and what you can get here in this world. So, any method is valid; the end justifies the means.

If, on the other hand, you accept *puṇya* and *pāpa*, you have to accept a law, and necessarily, an ordainer of that law. In other words, an order under which this universe functions and a God who gives the results of action, according to *dharma* and *adharma*, have to be accepted. Such a God does not exist for these people who have *āsuri-sampat*. It is inimical to their philosophy, and therefore, they claim that there is no law or an ordainer of that law. They say the world is *anīśvara*.

If there is no *dharma-adharma*, and *puṇya-pāpa*, how are people born? The only cause for them to be born is the coming together of male and female, driven by lust, *kāmahaituka*. In their opinion, a person is, the way he or she is, only because of genetics. There is no consideration of a selection of parentage based on *puṇya-pāpa*. It is all natural selection. Because *puṇya-pāpa*, or the order of *Īśvara* are not seen in the act of creation, they are presumed not to exist. Since all that is seen is the coming together of male and female driven by their passions, that is the only cause they

¹ अथैतान् लोक्यायतिकांशुः । एतान् लोक्यायतिकांशुः । एतान् लोक्यायतिकांशुः । एतान् लोक्यायतिकांशुः ।
 एतान् लोक्यायतिकांशुः । एतान् लोक्यायतिकांशुः । एतान् लोक्यायतिकांशुः । एतान् लोक्यायतिकांशुः ।

acknowledge, nothing else, and then say, *kim anyat*, what else?’ In their opinion, *Śaṅkara* says here, ‘Passion alone is the cause of living beings.’

In this philosophy, where there is no *puṇya-pāpa*, there is nothing to account for. Therefore, the pursuit will be to grab as much as you can, as quickly as you can. There is no time to waste because if your life is cut short you will be deprived of enjoyment and if you grow old, you cannot enjoy either. The entire philosophy is, in the few years you have, paint the town red. The prevailing law is survival of the fittest, and the one who is the most fit is the one who is most deceptive and manipulative. This is their philosophy of life.

BIĒĒAONŸYŌÉ ĒYQ ĀÉ XĒYŌI ĒĒĒĒ%±{É-ĒŌ-ŌĒ*
|É|É ĒXiĒŌĒĒŌ ĒĒĒĒ& |ÉĒĒĒĒĒ VĒMĒIĒĒ%Ē/ĒĒĒ& || 9 ||

etāṃ dr̥ṣṭimavaśṭabhya naṣṭātmāno'lpabuddhayaḥ
prabhavantyuḡrakarmāṇaḥ kṣayāya jagato'hitāḥ

Verse 9

BIĒĒĒĒŌŸYĒĒĒ *etāṃ dr̥ṣṭim* — this view; + ĒYQ ĀÉ *avaśṭabhya* — having recourse to; XĒY-
+ ŌI ĒĒĒĒ& *naṣṭa-ātmānaḥ* — those whose minds are destroyed; + ±{É-ĒŌ-ŌĒ& *alpa-*
buddhayaḥ — those who are of meagre thinking; =ŌÉ-ĒŌ ĒĒĒĒ& *uḡra-karmāṇaḥ* — those
whose actions are cruel; (VĒMĒIĒĒ&) + Ē/ĒĒĒĒ& (*jagataḥ*) *ahitāḥ* — the enemies (of the world);
VĒMĒIĒĒ& |ÉĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ *jagataḥ kṣayāya* — for the destruction of the world; |É|É ĒXiĒĒ *prabhavanti*
— are born

Having recourse to this view, (these) enemies of the world whose minds are destroyed, who are of meagre thinking and cruel actions, are there very much for the destruction of the world.

THEY ARE NAṢṬĀTMĒS

For people who have this view, *Śaṅkara* says, there is no means to attain another world, no thought that there could be another birth. This is because their minds are destroyed, they are *naṣṭātmās*, meaning they have no discrimination, either about what is real, or about what action is to be chosen in a given situation. Even in simple matters, there is great confusion. Because they have fallen from *dharma* and *adharmā*, and therefore, are going to suffer later, they are considered *naṣṭātmās*.

And they are *alpa-buddhayaḥ*, of meagre thinking. *Śaṅkara* says their mind is committed to nothing beyond sense perception. What they see alone is the truth, and anything more than what the senses can enjoy has no reality. *Alpa* means little. We cannot say they are completely lacking in intellect because they do make choices, but the discrimination behind their choices is very limited. If they have no capacity to choose—

like the cows who know exactly what they should eat and what they have to do to survive—the *śāstra* need not address them.

Further, they are people whose actions are cruel, *ugra-karmāṇaḥ*. When the end justifies the means we become cruel. This is because our end is so important to us that we do not worry about our impact on others, or about their needs and wants. My end alone becomes so important that when there is a choice of means, my only consideration is how beneficial it is to achieving my end. By fair means or foul, I will achieve it. This makes me a person of cruel actions because I do not mind hurting others as long as I can get something for myself.

The word *jagataḥ* in this verse can be connected to the word, *ahitāḥ*, and to the word, *kṣayāya*. When a word is placed between two words and can be connected by both, it is analogous to a lamp on a threshold that illumines both the outside and the inside.¹ *Ahita* means those who are inimical to the world. This behaviour is destructive to the well-being of others. They are born and are there very much around, *prabhavanti*, to create problems for the world, and thus, for the destruction of the world, *jagataḥ kṣayāya*. Their thinking is very calculating, always reckoning what they have and planning what they will get, not minding that it is at the cost of the happiness of others.

ए० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
 न० क० ए० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
 ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
 ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०

*kāmamāsritya duṣpūraṃ dambhamānamadānvitāḥ
 mohād gṛhītvaśadgrāhānpravartante śucivratāḥ*

Verse 10

न० क० ए० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
duṣpūram — difficult to fulfil; ए० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
kāmam — desire; + ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
āsritya — having committed to; न० क० ए० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
dambha-māna-mada-anvitāḥ — riddled with pretension, demand for respect, and pride; + ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
mohāt — due to delusion; + ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
asadgrāhān gṛhītva — having adopted false purposes; + ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
aśuci-vratāḥ — whose pursuits are unbecoming; + ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई० ई०
pravartante — they engage themselves

Resorting to desire that is difficult to fulfil, those who are riddled with pretension, demand for respect, and pride, whose pursuits are unbecoming, having adopted false purposes due to delusion, engage themselves (in various actions).

¹ This is called the *dehali-dīpa-nyāya*. Thus by this *nyāya*, the word ‘*jagataḥ*’ connects with the word ‘*ahitāḥ*’ and the word ‘*kṣayāya*.’

THEY ENGAGE IN ACTIONS FOR FALSE PURPOSES

The three words *dambha*, *māna*, and *mada* have very little difference in meaning, but when they are used together, we have to discern the distinct sense of each. *Dambha*, as we have seen, is making one's own glories known to others, whether one has them or not, by self-glorification through speech, dress, etc. *Māna* is the attitude, 'I am praiseworthy and demand your respect,' that is very evident in the behaviour of the person whether it is verbalized or not. *Mada* is a particular kind of pride. Because of some form of wealth, knowledge, or skill, which you find lacking in others with whom you compare yourself, you have a certain inappropriate pride, instead of gratitude and humility. The people under discussion here are riddled, *anvita*, with all of these. As a result, they are committed to pursuits and ends, which are not becoming, *aśuci*, not clean.

They are committed to desires which cannot be fulfilled at all, *kāmaṃ duṣpūram āśritya*, in the sense that their desire has no limit. This is why we liken desire to fire, called, *anala*, the one who never says 'enough.' Fire will never say 'enough,' no matter how much fuel you pour upon it. It is always ready with its tongues out for more. There is a statement, 'Desire is never quelled by enjoyment of objects of desire—*na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānām upabhogena śamyati*.' If you throw fuel in the fire, it will not die, but burn more brightly. Similarly, by gaining desired objects, desire never gets quenched. Like the fire, desire is not satisfied by any oblation you offer. It only grows and demands either a repetition of the experience or a better experience.

Following this insatiable desire, these people engage themselves, *pravartante*, in various activities. Why? Because of *moha*, false values and priorities based on a lack of discrimination. They attribute to something a value that it does not have. Seeing security where there is no security, joy where there is no joy, help where there is no help, they pursue these ends with commitment. First they arrive at improper evaluations of things, and then they pursue them, *asadgrāhān gṛhītvā pravartante*. Due to lack of discrimination they take what is devoid of value to have value, and then they are occupied. Unbecoming pursuits are not barred, because everything is all right as long as it works. Convenience is the rule.

ÉSxīÉE É(ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ
ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ

*cintāmaparimeyāṃ ca pralayāntāmupāśritāḥ
kāmapabhogaparamā etāvaditi niścītāḥ*

Verse 11

+ (ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉ) *aparimeyām* — immeasurable; (ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉ) *pralaya-antām ca* — until their end (death); ÉSxīÉE ÉÁ *cintām* — concern; =(ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ) *upāśritāḥ* — those who are committed to; ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *kāma-upabhoga-paramāḥ* — who are intent upon

enjoyment of objects of desire; *etāvat* — it is this much alone; *iti niścītāḥ* — who have concluded thus

+ *āśā-pāśa-sataiḥ* — by hundreds of fetters of hope; *baddhāḥ* —

āśā-pāśa-sataiḥ — by hundreds of fetters of hope; *baddhāḥ* —

āśā-pāśa-sataiḥ — by hundreds of fetters of hope; *baddhāḥ* —

āśā-pāśa-sataiḥ — by hundreds of fetters of hope; *baddhāḥ* —

Verse 12

+ *āśā-pāśa-sataiḥ* — by hundreds of fetters of hope; *baddhāḥ* — bound; *kāma-krodha-parāyaṇāḥ* — who are committed to desire and anger; *kāma-bhogārtham* — for the enjoyment of objects of desire; + *anyāyena* — illegitimately; + *arthasañcayān* — accumulation of wealth; *ihante* — they engage themselves in

Those committed to immeasurable concern until death, intent upon enjoyment of objects of desire, having concluded, ‘It (life) is this much alone,’ committed to desire and anger, and bound by hundreds of fetters of hope, engage themselves in the accumulation of wealth illegitimately for the enjoyment of objects of desire.

THEY DO NOT THINK BEYOND THE FULFILMENT OF THEIR DESIRES

These are people whose concerns have no limits, *aparimeya*. They are full of anxieties. At least, one would think, they could give up their concerns in old age, leaving their affairs to their children, and live a contemplative life. But their worries continue right up until the time of their death, *pralayānta*. Until then, they are worried about their possessions, who owes them money, their children, and so on. Given to these concerns, they are intent upon enjoyment of sense objects. That alone is foremost, nothing else. No *dharma*, no *mokṣa*, no *viveka*, only enjoyment. To the extent that objects are available to their satisfaction, they can be happy. And their pursuits are backed by the philosophy that there is nothing more in life. Life is this much alone, this much alone is the human end, there is nothing beyond it—this is their conclusion, *etāvat iti niścītāḥ*.

They are bound, *baddhāḥ*, and the binding material is hope and greed. If it is a single binding hope, one can perhaps free oneself from it, but they are bound by hundreds of aspirations, *āśā-pāśa-sataiḥ baddhāḥ*. Once one is fulfilled, another arises, and thus, there is no hope of fulfilling these hopes. And they are committed to desire and anger, *kāma-krodha-parāyaṇāḥ*. Everybody has *kāma* and *krodha*, but they are paramount for these people. We try to find means to be free from our anger, but anger is a value for them. It is a means of controlling people and getting what they want. The basis of their thinking and the activity born of that thinking is only in *kāma* and *krodha*;

not in *dharma* and *adharmā* or *nitya* and *anitya*. These things do not come into the picture at all for them. Then what do they do?

They engage themselves, *īhante*, for the purpose of enjoying desired objects, *kāma-bhogārtham*, first of all, in the accumulation of wealth, *artha-sañcayān*. How? Not by following legitimate means, but those that are *anyāya*, illegitimate, not sanctioned either by *śāstra* or society. The means they employ are both unlawful and unethical. Śāṅkara explains that it is robbing other's wealth, occupying other's property, etc. Encroaching upon land occupied by someone else, you may call yourself a pioneer, and anyone who comes later is an immigrant. But it is acquiring property illegitimately, *anyāyena*. Wealth is gathered by these people, not for distribution, but only for their own enjoyment. After a point, it can be purely egoistic also. Once you have whatever is necessary to live comfortably, further accumulation of wealth is different. You cannot travel in more than one car at a time. Even in one car, you can only occupy one seat. Similarly, even if you have many houses, some having even twenty-five rooms, you can only sit in one room in one house at a time. Then again, you can feed only one stomach. And generally, people who have this kind of wealth, have digestive problems because of all their anxiety, *cintā*. They cannot enjoy their food at all. Once you have achieved a certain buying power, further amassing of wealth is purely ego inflation. You want to have more and more so that you can compare yourself favourably with others.

Further, they have a characteristic way of thinking.

<nūēt ēāē mōvē ēnē|ēē(oāē ēā exēānē ēā
<nūēōīēōnūēēē ēā |ēē ēāēēē ēēōvēē ēā | १३ ॥

idamadya mayā labdhamidaṃ prāpsyē manoratham
idamastīdamapī me bhaviṣyati punardhanam Verse 13

+ t adya — today; ēāē mayā — by me; <nūēā mōvē ēā idam labdham — this is gained; <nūēā exēānē ēā idam manoratham — this that is pleasing to the mind; |ēē(oāē) prāpsyē — I will gain; <nūēā vēxē ēā idam dhanam — this wealth; (ēā + īōīē) (me) asti — I have; {ēāēā} punaḥ — later; <nūēā + ēē idam apī — this (wealth) also; ēā |ēē ēāēēē me bhaviṣyati — I will have

Today, this is gained by me. I will gain this that is pleasing to the mind.

This wealth I have; this wealth also I will have later. (So they think)

The pattern of thinking is very calculating. Such a person is conscious of what wealth he has today in the form of money and property, both movable and immovable. Every day he counts what he has gathered. And he measures it against his plan for all the things he has to accomplish to please his mind, *manoratha*. He has a day-to-day plan, a weekly plan, a monthly plan, an annual plan to gather what he thinks he needs to please

himself. He adds up the wealth he has, ‘*idaṃ dhanam asti me*—I have this wealth,’ and calculates how much he will have later according to his plans, and says, ‘*idaṃ dhanam api me bhaviṣyati punaḥ*—this wealth also I will have later.’

In this verse, our corporate philosophy is articulated very well. The whole aim is to accumulate wealth. With an eye on their current assets, corporate magnates plan for further profit and aspire to build huge corporations with astronomical holdings.

But to get this wealth is not easy, because there are other *asuras* out there in the market that they have to contend with. Naturally, they have to destroy some people but that is not a problem for them.

+ ॐ॒ ए॒ते॒ ॑ ॒शत्रु॑ः ॒मया॑ ॒हता॑ः ॒अप॑रान॒पि॒ ह॑नि॒ष्ये॒ च॒ ॒अ॒हं॑ ॒इ॒श्वर॑ः ॒अ॒हं॑ ॒भ॒गो॒ऽ॒हं॑ ॒सि॒द्धा॑ह॒ अ॒हं॑ ॒शु॒खी॑ ॥१४॥
asau mayā hataḥ śatruhanīṣye cāparānapi
īśvaro’hamahaṃ bhogī siddho’haṃ balavān sukhī Verse 14

+ ॐ॒ ए॒ते॒ ॑ ॒शत्रु॑ः *asau śatruḥ* — this enemy; ॒मया॑ *mayā* — by me; ॒हता॑ः *hataḥ* — destroyed; ॒अप॑रान॒पि॒ ह॑नि॒ष्ये॒ च॒ *hanīṣye ca* — and I will destroy; + ॒अ॒हं॑ ॒इ॒श्वर॑ः *aparān api* — others also; + ॒अ॒हं॑ ॒भ॒गो॒ऽ॒हं॑ *aham īśvaraḥ* — I am the ruler; + ॒अ॒हं॑ ॒भ॒गो॒ऽ॒हं॑ *aham bhogī* — I am the enjoyer; ॒सि॒द्धा॑ह॒ अ॒हं॑ *siddhaḥ aham* — I am accomplished; ॒शु॒खी॑ *śukhī* — powerful; ॒शु॒खी॑ *śukhī* — happy

This enemy is destroyed by me and I will destroy others also; I am the ruler; I am the enjoyer; I am successful, powerful, and happy.

‘I AM THE LORD OF ALL THAT I SURVEY’—THIS IS THEIR THINKING

Boasting, ‘This enemy, who was my competitor and who was standing in my way, I have eliminated,’ he celebrates that destruction with a few others like himself. Then, there are others also, and he declares ‘I will destroy them too—*hanīṣye ca aparān api*,’ *Śaṅkara* calls these others whom this person plans to destroy *as varākas*, pitiable people. Such a person is like the current-day loan sharks, who take advantage of people’s vulnerability. They do not mind ruining even poor people to get money from them, because the only goal is to amass wealth. When this type of mentality rules the economy, the poor become poorer and the rich become richer. People of this *āsuri* disposition are willing to destroy not only their competitors, who are their equals, but also those who are poor, who do not compete with them.

Their opinion of themselves is that there is no one equal to them. Such a person was personified in *Hiraṇyakaśipu*, *Prahlāda*’s father, who told his son, ‘I am *Īśvara*, there is no Lord other than me!’ And he reprimanded *Prahlāda* for chanting the name of Lord *Nārāyaṇa*. The thinking of such a person is that he is the ‘Lord’ of all the people and everybody should look up to him. He will dole out their wages according to the work

'THERE IS NO ONE EQUAL TO ME'—THIS IS THEIR ATTITUDE

Ādhya here is the one who has wealth, though in a different context it could also mean one who is praiseworthy. The only merit of the person under discussion here, however, is that he has made some money. He may think he is praiseworthy, and even write a book on, 'How to be successful in life,' out of which he will, of course, make more money, but whether he writes a book or not, he proclaims, 'I am wealthy.'

And, whether it is true or not, he also boasts, 'I am born in a very good family—*abhijanavān asmi*.' What kind of a family? *Śaṅkara* says it is a family that has had very well informed scholars for seven generations, *sapta-puruṣaṃ śrotṛiyatvādisampannaḥ*. Even if it is true, what good has it done him? This person is an *asura*. Everybody in India will claim to be born in the lineage of a sage, *gotra*. But if he is an *asura* in terms of his behaviour, his family background is meaningless. Such claims are made by these people just to establish their superiority. The idea is, 'No one can claim to have more than me, even in terms of family background.' And it is not only a mute idea, it is openly expressed as, 'Who else is there equal to me—*kaḥ anyaḥ asti mayā sadṛśaḥ*,' meaning, of course, that there is nobody.

Further, he brags, 'I will perform rituals.' The purpose is not for anything noble, but to destroy some enemy, or at least gain some fame. Like all his other actions, this also is only for his own glorification. He wants to stand out and overpower people, and he does not mind using rituals for that purpose. *Rāvaṇa* did great *tapas* only for the destruction of others. He was a *brāhmaṇa* who used to chant *Sāmaveda*, a very religious person in some respects, but because he did everything only to gain power to destroy, he was a *rākṣasa*.

He also promises, 'I will give money—*dāsyāmi*,' not for charitable causes, but for dancing girls and other enjoyments, or to establish his own superiority, because he says, 'I will enjoy—*modiṣye*.' He seeks his pleasure in hundreds of different ways—with grand parties, a swimming pool and all the comforts he can command. Such people are totally deluded, *vimohitāḥ*, all due to lack of discrimination, *ajñāna*.¹ The manner in which they look upon themselves and their life achievements indicates one delusion after another stemming from confused values and attitudes.

+ख॑ए॒ऽसेके॑ँ॒ ए॒ऽसि॑ति॒ ए॒ऽऽन॑वे॒म॒ऽऽते॑ति॒ ए॒ऽऽत॑

॥ए॒ऽह॑ँ॒ ए॒ऽऽने॑ऽऽने॒ऽऽने॑ति॒ ए॒ऽऽने॑ऽऽने॒ऽऽने॑ ॥१६॥

anekacittavibhrāntā mohajālasamāvṛtāḥ
prasaktāḥ karmabhogeṣu patanti narake'sucau

Verse 16

¹ *ajñānena vimohitāḥ*—*ajñāna-vimohitāḥ*

+खेदोऽसकृदङ्गुलं अनेक-चित्त-विव्रन्तान् — those who are completely deluded by many types of thoughts; मोहाजाल-समवृताम् — who are covered by the net of delusion (lack of discrimination); काम-भोगेषु — in the enjoyment of desirable objects; प्रसक्तान् — who are totally engaged; +पतन्ति असूयारु नराके — into unclean *naraka* (places of pain); पतन्ति *patanti* — they fall

Those who are completely deluded by many types of thoughts, covered by the net of delusion (lack of discrimination), and totally committed to the enjoyment of desirable objects, fall into the unclean *naraka* (places of pain).

THESE WHO ARE THUS DELUDED GO TO NARAKA

From the manner in which these *asuras* are described here, we understand the nature of their thinking. They are completely deluded, by varieties of thoughts, *aneka - citta-vibhrāntāḥ*, in the form of concerns, anxieties, desires, anger, and so on. They are caught and covered by the net of delusion caused by lack of discrimination, *moha-jāla-samāvṛtāḥ*. A net both covers and catches an object. As an animal gets caught in a net, people get caught in the spell of ignorance, *ajñāna*, which means, here, failure to discriminate. That being the case, they are totally committed, *prasaktāḥ*, to the enjoyment of objects of their desires, *kāma-bhogeṣu*. They are deeply entrenched in the experiences of these desirable objects. Since the commitment is to fulfilling desires, they will certainly compromise the means, and thus, accumulate a lot of *pāpa*. As a result, they fall into *naraka*, which is best understood as a place of pain. The word ‘fall,’ *patanti*, is used here because nobody wants to go there. They slip helplessly into pain. There are different types of *narakas*, but like heaven, they are only temporary. Any field of experience is temporary, whether it is painful or pleasant. So we have to understand that there is no eternal hell or heaven.

+ईदं-भूय-पुण्यं-सोऽहम्-वै-व्यथ-सकृदङ्गुलं-तस्मिन्-सकृदङ्गुलम्
 अविद्यायाज्यजन्ते तदभिधा दधानामानामदान्वितान् ॥ १७ ॥

ātmasambhāvitāḥ stabdhā dhanamānamadānvitāḥ
yajante nāmayajñaiḥ dambhenāvidhi-pūrvakam

Verse 17

+ईदं-भूय-पुण्यं-सोऽहम्-वै-व्यथ-सकृदङ्गुलं-तस्मिन्-सकृदङ्गुलम् *ātma-sambhāvitāḥ* — those who are self-glorifying; सोऽहम्-वै-व्यथ-सकृदङ्गुलं-तस्मिन्-सकृदङ्गुलम् *stabdhāḥ* — who are vain (conceited); दधानामानामदान्वितान् +इ-ध-ना-म-ना-मा-दान्वितान् *dhana-māna-mada-anvitāḥ* — who are filled with pride and arrogance because of their wealth; ते ते — they; नु-तस्मिन्-सकृदङ्गुलम् *dambhena* — out of pretension; अविद्यायाज्यजन्ते *nāma-yajñaiḥ* — with rituals that are rituals in name only; +अविद्यायाज्यजन्ते *avidhi-pūrvakam* — and not according to stipulation; अविद्यायाज्यजन्ते — they perform the rituals

Those who are self-glorifying, vain (conceited), filled with pride and arrogance because of their wealth, perform rituals that are rituals in name only, not according to stipulations (but) out of pretension.

They look upon themselves as endowed with all the noble attributes, *ātma-sambhavitāḥ*, and speak of themselves in this way. Even though they do not have the virtues, they praise themselves, as people possessed of divine virtues. They proclaim themselves as wonderful, do not have any respect for the people who are qualified to evaluate their merits. Naturally, they are very vain, *stand*, demanding praise from others, and, at the same time, themselves not able to bend down to any one, either physically or mentally. Their own lack of humility and lack of respect for others prevents them from bending down to anyone else. As a result, they have no reverence for anything. Even if God were to appear to such people, they would not surrender unto him nor offer their devotion, because they consider themselves as *Īśvara*.

Though they do not respect anyone else, they think everyone should respect them. They are filled with pride because of their wealth, *dhana-māna-madānvitāḥ*. *Māna*, as we have seen, is the attitude, ‘I am to be worshipped,’ and *mada* is arrogance born of one’s wealth, conceitedness. And they also perform rituals, which are rituals in name only, *yajante nāma-yajñaiḥ*. When you perform a ritual, you must have *śraddhā*, and follow the procedures prescribed by the Vedas.¹ But the rituals done by them are not done according to the stipulations, they are *avidhipūrvakam*. Why do they do them? Because of pretension, *dambhena*. Their aim is only self-glorification, self promotion, showing off oneself as someone who does all the rituals. Since there is some fire involved, something offered, and some giving away of food, etc., it is called a ritual, but it is not really a ritual unless all the rules specified by the Veda are followed. Even if all the rules are not followed, but there is adequate *śraddhā*, it is acceptable, but here, there is no *śraddhā* either.

+ ॥ ॐ ॥ अहंकारं बलं दारपणं कामं क्रोधं च ॥ अज्ञानं ॥

॥ अहंकारं बलं दारपणं कामं क्रोधं च ॥ अज्ञानं ॥ ॥ १२ ॥

ahaṅkāraṃ balaṃ darpaṇaṃ kāmaṃ krodhāṃ ca saṁśritāḥ
māmātmaparadeheṣu pradviṣanto’bhyasūyakāḥ

Verse 18

+ ॥ ॐ ॥ *ahaṅkāraṃ* — egoism; ॐ ॥ *balam* — (brute) strength; ॐ ॥ *darpaṇam* — insolence; ॐ ॥ *kāmam* — enjoyment; ॐ ॥ *krodham ca* — and anger; ॐ ॥ *saṁśritāḥ* — those who are completely given to; + ॐ ॥ *ātma-para-deheṣu* —

¹ The technical term used in the *śāstra* for the prescribed rules of any ritual is ‘*itikartavyatā*.’ This ‘*itikartavyatā*’ is given in great detail in the Veda itself along with each ritual and all the rules have to be followed meticulously.

in their own and others' bodies; मम प्राद्विषन्तः māṁ pradviṣantaḥ — those who despise Me; + अभ्यास्यकाः abhyasūyakāḥ — those who are great cavillers

Those who are completely given to egoism, (brute) strength, insolence, enjoyment, and anger, who despise Me in their own and others' bodies, who are great cavillers...

इत्येवमुदीरं गुणैर्गुणैश्चैवैतान्
 ईदृशैरेवैतान् क्रूरान् सन्सारेषु नराधमान्
 एतान् सन्सारेषु एतान् सन्सारेषु एतान् १२९ ॥

tānaḥ dviṣataḥ krūrān saṁsāreṣu narādhamān
 kṣipāmyajasramaśubhānāsuriṣu eva yoniṣu

Verse 19

इत्येवमुदीरं tān dviṣataḥ — those who despise; गुणैर्गुणैश्चैवैतान् aśubhān — who are wrongdoers; खलु + वैतान् nara-adhamān — the lowest of men; एतान् सन्सारेषु — into a life of transmigration; + एतान् सन्सारेषु एतान् — only in āsurī wombs; + वैतान् ajasram — perpetually; + एतान् सन्सारेषु एतान् — I despatch

Those men, who are hateful and cruel, who are the lowest of men, who are wrongdoers, I despatch repeatedly into a life of transmigration only in āsurī wombs.

I DESPATCH THEM INTO ĒSURÌ YONIS AGAIN AND AGAIN

All these people are completely given to these things, saṁśritāḥ. Ahaṅkāra is what accounts for the sense of individuality. In general, it is in the form of a superimposition of kartṛtva, the sense of agency, and bhokṛtva, the sense of enjoyership, upon ātmā that is responsible for this individuality. So, based on this superimposition one concludes that he is a sukḥī, a happy person, or duḥkḥī; an unhappy person. The notions which are superimposed upon the ātmā, and which have their root in ahaṅkāra, are the basis of all our problems and drive all our pursuits, both legitimate and questionable. But in the sense in which it is used here, there is a lot of subjectivity involved, and it is therefore, very well entrenched. Because it is well entrenched, and given a lot of validity, there is egoism which make these men, cruel people. And these people have bala, strength of the body, mind, etc., a brute strength, that serves only to trouble others. Śaṅkara says, it is a strength which is backed by their rāga-dveṣas, that is used to overpower others—parābhava-nimittaṁ kāma-rāga-anvitam.¹ And they have darpa, insolence, which makes them cross the bounds of what

¹ This bala is unlike the one that Bhagavān said was himself, when he said, 'balaṁ balavatam cāhaṁ kāmarāgavivarjitam,' Gītā – 7-11

is proper or improper. Being committed to objects of enjoyment, *kāma*, naturally, there will be anger, *krodha*, when they are not fulfilled. Once this type of *ahaṅkāra* is there, these few things—*darpa*, *kāma*, and *krodha*—will automatically come along with it. It is like a kingpin of the underworld, wherever he goes, you will find his henchmen. Here, *darpa*, *kāma*, and *krodha* are the henchmen of the well entrenched, *rajas* predominant, *ahaṅkāra* of this type.

Even if such people come to know that all the things they are pursuing will not help them gain what they really want, and that there is only *Parameśvara*, indwelling their own and other bodies, knowing whom their problem will be solved, they oppose and despise, that very one who obtains in their own body, as well as in all other bodies, as *sat-cit-ānanda*. That being so, that is, despising *Parameśvara*, *pradviṣantaḥ*, they transgress the universal mandates of *Īśvara*. What is to be done and what is not to be done is very easily appreciated just through common sense. Since it is not created by any human being, but innately known by all, we call it the order of *Īśvara*. The people being discussed here transgress these universal ethics, and, of course, those that are mentioned in the *śāstra*. The transgression is considered the hatred of *Īśvara*, and conversely, following *dharma* becomes a kind of worship of *Īśvara*. All ethical people, though they may not recognize *Īśvara*, are worshippers of *Īśvara*.

Further, those people of *āsuri* disposition, are great cavillers, *abhyasūyakāḥ*. If someone has some virtues, they will try to find, and point out, some defect. Seeing the merits of others makes them feel small, and to counteract that, they will look for what is lacking in the person. They particularly cannot tolerate the qualities, lifestyle, disciplines, and values of people who are spiritual seekers and who follow *dharma*. What does *Īśvara* do with such people? All these people, who live a life opposed to *dharma* and are inimical to the people who are following a life of *dharma*, *Īśvara* despatches them to a life of *saṁsāra*. It is not that he despises them, as they do him, but they have earned these results, which are given to them in full measure. These people who transgress *Īśvara's* mandate, are cruel, *krūra*, and are the lowest of men, *narādhamas*, because they do not make use of their *viveka*, capacity to discern what is right and what is wrong. The plural, *saṁsāreṣu*, indicates the many different births they will take, one after the other, *ajasram*, perpetually. Because they have gathered so many *karmas*, they cannot fulfil all of them in just one birth, *janma*. Even if you are born as a human being it is also *saṁsāra*, but for some time, these people will be born only in *āsuri* wombs, *āsuriṅsu eva yoniṣu*.

Because, in their human birth, they pounced like tigers and kicked like donkeys, stung like scorpions and gobbled voraciously like varieties of animals, they get a chance to live in a form where they can exhaust that very cruelty. They will become objects of

There Bhagavān refers to the strength that is without kāma and rāga.

fear. Anything which frightens you legitimately, like a snake which is poisonous and merciless, is an *āsuri yoni*. As a human being with a capacity to think and to choose, I am supposed to heed my conscience and follow *dharma*. If, instead, I become a terror for everybody, the law of *karma*, which is perfect in its justice, will place me in an *āsuri yoni* next time. Therefore, the Lord says, ‘I despatch them in to *āsuri yonis* again and again—*kṣipāmi ajasram āsuriṣu eva yoniṣu*.’

+ [ॐ] अहंकेतुं कुरुते अहंकेतुं कुरुते
 “ॐ ईश्वरं कुरुते अहंकेतुं कुरुते ॥२०॥

āsuriṃ yonimāpannā mūdhā janmani janmani

māmaprāpyaiva kaunteya tato yāntyadhamāṃ gatim

Verse 20

ईश्वरं कुरुते — O! Son of *Kuntī*, *Arjuna*; + [ॐ] अहंकेतुं कुरुते *āsuriṃ yonim* — the womb of an *asura*; + [अहंकेतुं] *āpannāḥ* — those who have obtained; *वेदं वेदं वेदं वेदं* *janmani janmani* — in every birth; *मूढा* *mūdhāḥ* — those who lack discrimination; “ॐ ईश्वरं + [अहंकेतुं] *mām aprāpya eva* — certainly not reaching Me; *ततो* + *वेदं कुरुते* *tataḥ adhamām* — lower than that; *यान्ति* *yānti* — go

Arjuna, these, who lack discrimination, obtaining the womb of an *asura* in every birth, certainly not reaching Me, go to an end that is even lower than that.

These are people who lack discrimination even with reference to what is to be done and what is not to be done. Such people obtain births in the wombs of *asuras*, not once, but repeatedly, because they have gathered so much *pāpa*, that one birth is not enough to exhaust it. Thus, they are born as carnivorous animals, or some other form in which *tamas* is predominant, in order to experience cruelty. In such forms, there is no *viveka*. The tiger does not think it is cruel, nor does it want to change. This type of discrimination is the privilege of a human being, which they did not exercise in their human births, and therefore, they keep going to lower and lower wombs, where there is no *viveka*. This goes on for some time until all the consequences of their wrongdoings are exhausted. Because of their behaviour in their human birth, there is no question of gaining *Īśvara*.

Śaṅkara says there is no suspicion or a doubt that they do not gain *Īśvara*. He is far out of reach for these people. First, they have to begin to follow *dharma*, which is enjoined by *Īśvara* and found in the *Veda*. At this point, they are lost in other ways. And in order to create a dispassion towards such tendencies, *Kṛṣṇa* says they go to a still worse end, *tataḥ adhamāṃ gatim yānti*.

These are the general features of an *asura*’s nature, though among them, there are many differences in their manifest behaviour. One might be predominantly cruel, another

more disruptive, but all of them have three basic things. All of the manifold manifestations of an *āsuri* disposition can be avoided if these three things are taken care of. They are the root cause of all that is undesirable, *anartha*. *Kṛṣṇa* enumerates them in the next verse and asks one to avoid them.

ॐ त्रिविधं नारकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः
 कामं क्रोधं तथैतन्महात्तत्रायं त्यजेत् ॥२१॥

*trividhaṃ narakasyedaṃ dvāraṃ nāśanamātmanaḥ
 kāmaḥ krodhastathā lobhastasmādetatrayaṃ tyajet*

Verse 21

ॐ त्रिविधं *trividham* — threefold; नारकस्येदं *narakasya* — of *naraka* (painful experience);
 $idam dvāram$ — this doorway; कामं क्रोधं तथैतन्महात्तत्रायं *ātmanaḥ nāśanam* — which
 is the destroyer of oneself; कामं *kāmaḥ* — desire; क्रोधं *krodhaḥ* — anger; तथैतन्महात्तत्रायं
tathā lobhaḥ — so too, greed; इदं तस्मात् *tasmāt* — therefore; त्यजेत् *tyajet* — one should give up

This doorway to *naraka* (painful experiences), which destroys a person, is threefold—desire, anger, and also greed. Therefore, one should give up this triad.

THE THREEFOLD DOORWAY TO NARAKA

Naraka is any experience of pain. One can enter it through any one of these three doors, *dvāra*; all of which are the destroyer of a person, *ātmanaḥ nāśanam*. *Śaṅkara* says that just entering into this gate you will find you are destroyed. It is like stepping into a trap. It swallows you up immediately. As an animal is caught in a trap by baiting it with what it likes, a human being is caught and destroyed by these three things. He is destroyed in the sense that his mind is so disturbed that he is no longer fit for any *puruṣārtha*, leave alone *mokṣa*. Even the simple *sukha* that he had hoped to get is lost because of these three.

Kāma, a binding desire or longing for something, is what makes one enter into the trap. Once this is there, anger, *krodha*, and greed, *lobha* necessarily follow. Conversely, if you can manage *kāma*, passion, then anger and greed are automatically taken care of. If you are able to take care of your anger, you will find that *kāma* can be contained. You can deal with it effectively. Greed is mentioned lastly, because when there is greed, anger is unavoidable, but if the greed is taken care of, anger can be taken care of, and later the *kāma* too. It is important to discern where greed begins and a simple binding desire ends. A desire is binding if its non-fulfilment makes you angry. We have to discover where the greed begins. If there is something that you do not need, that you can

manage easily without, and you want it anyway, that is greed. In fulfilling a desire, if one crosses the ways of *dharma*, that desire itself becomes greed.

All three of these, desire, anger, and greed, are portals to painful experiences, and therefore, the cause for self-destruction, *ātmanaḥ nāśanam*. No intelligent person wants to get destroyed, so naturally, one should give up, these three—*etat trayam tyajet*. If you can manage these, the rest of the *āsuri sampat* will be taken care of. The description of the *āsuri sampat* is given in such detail here that it may seem overwhelming, and therefore *Kṛṣṇa* reduces the whole thing to *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha*. Even these three can be reduced to *kāma*. Because in the final analysis, that is the root cause of all *anarthas*.

One has to give them up, but how? They are not something I can give up; they are me. Therefore I require prayer, certain disciplines, and also inquiry, *vicāra*, in order to give these up. Cognitively, I can change my priorities; so that, what seems big assumes an appropriate proportion. This is how we grow. When, as a child, my balloon burst or deflated, it was a big problem for me, but now it does not bother me at all; because I have become mature with reference to balloons. When my stock crashes, however, it is a huge problem. We even find people committing suicide or having heart attacks because of stock fluctuations. From this it is very clear that our problem is *kāma*. By *vicāra* we can surely help ourselves to grow out of it, since we have grown out of so many things. By *prasāda-buddhi*, as we have seen, our *rāga-dveṣas*, otherwise called *kāma*, can be neutralized. If that is effective, *krodha* and *lobha* are automatically taken care of because they do not arise when there is no *kāma*.

The giving up of these three is praised in the next verse.

Bīḥā ē' ēdīā ēdīā ē ē' ēāū' ēēē' ēēē' ēēē'
 + ēēē' ēēē' ēēē' ēēē' ēēē' ēēē' ēēē' ēēē' ēēē'
etaivimuktaḥ kaunteya tamodvāraistribhīnaraḥ
ācaratyātmanaḥ śreyastato yāti parāṇ gatim

Verse 22

ēdīā ēdīā kaunteya — O! Son of *Kuntī*, *Arjuna*; *Bīḥā ēēē' ēēē'* *etaiḥ tribhiḥ* — by these three; *ēēē' ēēē' ēēē'* *tamo-dvāraiḥ* — gates of darkness; *ēēē' ēēē' ēēē'* *vimuktaḥ naraḥ* — the man who has been freed; *+ ēēē' ēēē' ēēē'* *ātmanaḥ śreyas* — what is good for oneself; *+ ēēē' ēēē'* *ācarati* — follows; *ēēē' ēēē'* *tataḥ* — because of that; *ēēē' ēēē' ēēē'* *parāṇ gatim* — higher end; *ēēē' ēēē'* — reaches

A man who is free from these three gates to darkness, *Arjuna*, follows what is good for himself. Because of that, he reaches the higher end.

ONE FREE FROM KĀMA, KRODHA, LOBHA GOES TOWARDS ĀREYAS

Naraka is called darkness, *tamas*, here because it is a place where *viveka* is obscured; so, there is delusion, and therefore, pain. In *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad* it is said, ‘Those people who are self destructive go to the worlds called *asuryā*, that are covered with the darkness of a blind man.’¹ It means there is a predominance of delusion and therefore, no *sukha*. If the individual becomes a rat, what *viveka* will he have? The capacity to think and understand is all very rudimentary and this is what is figuratively called the darkness of a blind man. Where there is no *viveka*, the mind is altogether different. It has the advantage of not having the problems that we have, but then, it also cannot read a line. If you throw a book, even the *Gītā*, before a donkey, it will eat the whole thing. It has only food value for it. Similarly, if you load a donkey with sandalwood, it carries only the load, not the sandalwood, *bhārasya vāhī na tu candanasya*, because it has no appreciation of its value. This is *aviveka*. In such births, where there is such limited *viveka*, there is also no *sukha*. And *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha* are the gates to enter into such situations.

The person, *nara*, discussed in this verse, is totally free with reference to these three gates to pain. *Nara* means a human being, by definition; he is the one who does not get destroyed, *na riṅyate iti naraḥ*. This very definition tells you that he is the imperishable *ātmā*. This *nara* if he is not assailed by *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha*, he is able to use his *viveka*, and therefore, lives a life of proper conduct, that is, lives a life that will lead him to his ultimate good, *śreyo-mārgam ācarati*. In contrast to the path of self-destruction, *ātmanaḥ nāśanam*, of the previous verse, this person follows a course of action which is good for oneself—*ātmanaḥ śreyas ācarati*.² This is possible because he is free from the inhibiting factors of *kāma*, *krodha*, and *lobha* that previously impelled him to do wrong actions. When one is dissipating all one's energies through these three, what *viveka* can he have? He has no time to think properly. Even to begin to free oneself from *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha*, one must have some *viveka*. Then, once the process has begun, he does not have to be taught that it is good for him, because he now enjoys an inner leisure that was previously denied to him. All because of *viveka*. To have *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha*, is very natural. Every child is in touch with all of them. To be free of them, however, requires a lot of *viveka*.

With sufficient *viveka*, a person can pursue what is good, *śreyas*, for him, whether it be *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* or *mokṣa*. All are good for him, no doubt, but the real *śreyas* is *mokṣa*. Security, *artha*, for example, is not going to be found in gaining and

¹ *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad* — 3

² Here the word *śreyas* means, the path of *śreyas*, *śreyomārga*; only then will it connect with the verb *ācarati*.

protecting things that must inevitably be lost. The real security is not being afraid of anything, and that is only *mokṣa*. Similarly, if we analyse the pursuits of *kāma* and *dharma*, we see that they are only really fulfilled in *mokṣa*. It is the real *puruṣārtha* that is behind every pursuit. Previously, *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha* were shackling him so much that he could not pursue any *puruṣārtha* successfully. When your hands are shackled, how can you even scratch yourself properly? But now he is free, *vimukta* and is able to follow proper conduct. Because of that, *tataḥ*, he gains the most desirable end, *yāti parāṃ gatim*, which, *Śaṅkara* says, can even be *mokṣa*. Once he is not bound by *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha*, if he is able to discern that what he is seeking is *mokṣa*, he can certainly accomplish that. If, however, one is not able to gain mastery over these three, they bring undesirable ends.

What is the cause for his giving up these three, and all the *āsuri sampat*, and following what is good for himself, the path of *dharma* and *mokṣa*? The next verse tells us that *śāstra* indicates what is to be done and what is not to be done, what is for one's own good, *śreyas*, and what will bring suffering, *duḥkha*. And it is also the means for *mokṣa*. The next verse also talks about what happens if one does not look to the *śāstra* for these matters.

यः शस्त्रविधिमत्सृज्या वर्तते कामकारताह
 सः सः सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न पराम् गतिम् ॥२३॥

*yaḥ śāstravidhimutsṛjya vartate kāmakārataḥ
 na sa siddhimavāpnoti na sukhaṃ na parāṃ gatim*

Verse 23

yaḥ — the one who; *śāstravidhim* — the injunctions of *śāstra*; *utsṛjya* — casting away; *kāmakārataḥ* — being impelled by binding desire; *vartate* — engages; *sah* — he; *siddhim* — the accomplishment (of maturity); *na + avāpnoti* — does not gain; *na sukham* — nor happiness; *na parāṃ gatim* — nor a higher end

The one who, being impelled by binding desire, engages himself casting away the injunctions of *śāstra*, gains neither maturity, nor happiness (here), nor a higher end.

ONE WHO CASTS AWAY THE INJUNCTIONS OF THE ŚĀSTRĀ GAINS NO PURUĀRTHA

This is a person who is completely given to binding desires; and because of that, *kāmakārataḥ*, he lives his life, *vartate*, totally committed to their fulfilment, but without regard for the injunction, *vidhi*, of *śāstra*. *Śāstra* here means the Veda, our source of knowledge of what is to be done and what is not to be done. It contains both

positive statements of what to do and negative ones of what to avoid. These are its *vidhis*. Even though we have innate common sense knowledge of universal ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts,’ we do not know all the consequences involved in heeding or ignoring our common sense norms of behaviour. *Śāstra* becomes very important here in letting us know the consequences of our actions. Even if a wrong action is not detected or punished here, the perpetrator does not escape the law of *karma*—so says the *śāstra*. Here we have a person who has cast away the dictates of *śāstra* and is driven purely by his *kāma*.

He does not gain *siddhi*, *saḥ na siddhim avāpnoti*. *Siddhi*, here, *Śaṅkara* says, is fitness for the pursuit of what is good for a person, *puruṣārtha-yogyatā*. This is maturity. The first accomplishment for a human being is the capacity to take proper care of himself; the second is education in which he acquires an intellectual discipline and a certain emotional discipline. This is not an ordinary thing. If you have survived teenage without damage, that is one of the greatest things you can ever accomplish in life. It is such a difficult age. If you make proper use of it, you can gain the capacity to pursue any of the ends considered good for a person—*artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* or *mokṣa*. For pursuing any *puruṣārtha*, maturity is necessary. If one disregards the injunctions of *śāstra*, it is just not possible to gain this maturity. And when there is no maturity, it is not possible to have any worthwhile pursuit or accomplishment in life. When this is so, there is not going to be any happiness, *na sukham*, in this life. To have *sukha* you have to be mature, otherwise, any small thing will upset you. Not only will there be no *sukha* in this world, you will not gain a better end, *parā gati*, whether it is heaven or *mokṣa*.

In youth, all your faculties are at their peak. It is the time when you can learn and remember so well. Once it is gone, you do not get it back; so, it is important to make proper use of it. Later, you will be busy earning and doing a hundred different things. If you dissipate your energies in sense pursuits at this time, later, all you will remember is your hurts and disappointments, and feel that you have accomplished nothing. By the time you reach your forties, you will feel that you are finished. Without gaining intellectual and emotional maturity, the very *sukha* that you are so assiduously pursuing is denied. What a bad bargain! Therefore, the *Gītācārya* wants us to gain mastery over these three *āsuri* tendencies, *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha*, which are in everybody’s heart, in different degrees, not only in those of the *asuras*.

īēō' ēēSUōŪēā|ē' ēēhēā|ēā Edē'ēēē'ēēē'ēē' ēēō |ēēēēē'

Ÿēēī' ēē' ēēēōēē' ēēēēēēē' ēō'ēē' ēōēēēē' ēē'ēē'ēē' ēē' ēē'ēē'ēē' || 128 ||

*tasmācchāstraṃ pramāṇaṃ te kāryākāryavyavasthitau
jñātvā śāstravidhānoktaṃ karma kartumihārhasi*

Verse 24

īēō' ēēīēā *tasmāt* — therefore; Edē'ēē' + Edē'ēē' 'ēē' ēēō |ēēēēē' *kārya-akārya -vyavasthitau* — in the determination of what is to be and not to be done; ēēā *te* — for you (*Arjuna*); ēēēōēē' ēēā

śāstram pramāṇam — śāstra is the means of knowledge; śāstra-vidhāna-uktam what is said by the mandates of the śāstra; karma — action; iha — here (in this world); jñātvā — knowing; kartum arhasi — you are obliged to do

Therefore, śāstra is the means of knowledge for you (Arjuna), in the determination of what is to be and not to be done. Knowing what is said by the mandates of the śāstra, you are obliged to perform action here (in this world).

ŚĀSTRĀ IS THE PRAMĀṆA FOR PROPER CONDUCT

Śāstra, meaning the Veda, is a pramāṇa, not only for Arjuna, but for everybody. pramāṇa is a means of knowledge, not, as it is often translated, a guide or authority. The word itself reveals the meaning; pramā-karaṇam pramāṇam, that which is instrumental in giving rise to, pramā, knowledge, is pramāṇa. What kind of knowledge? The knowledge required in determining what is to be done and what is not to be done in a given situation. Whenever I want to know whether it is proper for me to do something or not, what kind of prayers I have to do when, and the method of doing them, how much wealth I can have, and how much I should distribute, and so on, I will find it told in the injunctions of the śāstra, śāstra-vidhāna-uktam. A vidhāna is what is mandated, or enjoined. For example, it is said by the śāstra, ‘Do not hurt—*hiṃsāṇa kuryāt,*’ and, ‘Do not speak falsehood—*anṛtaṇ na brūyāt.*’ And the karma for each varṇa and āśrama is very clearly mentioned in the śāstra. But today, because of the breakdown of those systems, we have to convert these injunctions with reference to varṇa and āśrama into what is to be done and not to be done, in general. Śāstra tells us one's actions attract puṇya and pāpa, which are the adṛṣṭa-phalas; and therefore, one has to be mindful of one's actions.

Here, iha, in this world, you stand to do karma—*karma kartum arhasi*. The mention of iha here is to draw attention to the fact that on this earth, as a human being, you have the freedom to act or not to act. In other worlds, like heaven, svarga, on the other hand, you do not have this freedom, you can only exhaust karma you cannot do more karma and gather puṇya or pāpa. Even on this planet, there are shades of difference in that India is considered a better place to gather karma-phala, a karma-bhūmi, while the United States of America is looked upon as a place where one predominantly experiences the result of karma, a bhoga-bhūmi. But everywhere on this planet, as human beings, we do enjoy the freedom to choose our action and learn. In gandharva-loka, on the other hand, all the time is passed in enjoyment of music. What can one learn there? This human birth, in which we have that freedom is very rare, and precious. And that freedom to learn and do karma and earn karma-phala here in this

world is to be used, not abused. If you analyse the *śāstra*, this is the essence of what it says about actions. Knowing the *karma* that the *śāstra* has enjoined, you stand to do it, *kartum arhasi*.

Thus *Bhagavān* concludes this chapter in which he talks about *daivī-sampat* and *āsurī sampat*, and concludes by telling *Arjuna* that he should always go by the *śāstra* in deciding what is to be done and what is not to be done.

ॐ तत् सत् । इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायाम्
 योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे दैवदाम्पत्यविभाग-
 योगनामा षोडशोऽध्यायः ॥१६॥

*om tat sat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyām
 yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde daivāsurasampadvibhāga-
 yogonāma ṣoḍaśo'dhyāyaḥ*

The subject matter of which is knowledge of *Brahman*, and also *yoga*, is this sixteenth chapter known as *daivāsura-sampad-vibhāga-yoga* in which the becoming and the unbecoming dispositions are described.

CHAPTER 17

ĀRADDHĒ-TRAYA-VIBHĒGA-YOGA

(YOGA OF THE THREE-FOLD ĀRADDHĒ)

INTRODUCTION

In the last verse of the last chapter, it was said, ‘Therefore, with reference to knowing what is to be done and what is not to be done, *śāstra* is the means of knowledge for you—*tasmāt śāstraṃ pramāṇaṃ te kāryākārya-vyavasthitau.*’ Even though common sense gives rise to the knowledge of what is right and wrong, still, we do not find people doing what is right and refraining from what is wrong. It is not out of ignorance. Everybody knows stealing, for example, is wrong; but there are thieves. And the thief also knows that stealing is wrong because he does not want his own goods to be stolen. Furthermore, when he steals, he uses stealth, because he knows it is not proper. Therefore, I would say, his knowledge of the impropriety of stealing is not completely assimilated. He knows that his property should not be stolen and that another person does not want his property to be stolen. He knows what he gains and he knows the risks involved. At the same time, he does not know what he loses if he steals. Only by *śāstra* can we understand this properly.

We cannot escape the consequences of an action, because the faculty of choice and the law of *karma* go together. Choice presupposes a set of norms that determine which option we choose. We must understand this well. I can steal, or I need not. I can hurt, or I can refrain from hurting. I can tell a lie or I can tell the truth. I can give, or I need not. Once this choice is there, on what basis do I make it? Choice means the possibility of right and wrong and this also should be known to me. I must be able to gather an understanding of what is right and wrong, and I am able to, through a common sense that has been given to all of us. This universal sense of right and wrong is what is called *dharma*. It is known to everyone without being taught. It is sensed by all of us commonly, like any other natural law. Without knowing the law of gravity, even a baby monkey knows that it will fall to the ground if it lets go of its mother while she is swinging through the trees. Like the law of gravitation, this law of *dharma*, right and wrong, which is commonly sensed, is also not created by us. This is a very important thing to understand. If it is man-made, it can always be different. In America, we drive on the right side of the road, and in India on the left. Taxation, what constitutes a crime,

arjuna uvāca

ye śāstravidhimutsrjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ
teṣāṃ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvamāho rajastamaḥ

Verse 1

+VĒĀ arjunaḥ — Arjuna; =ĒĒĒ uvāca — said;
EĀĤE kṛṣṇa — O! Kṛṣṇa; ĀĒ ye — those; ĀĒĒĒĒ-ĒĒĒĒĒ śāstra-vidhim — what is stipulated by the śāstra; =ĪĒĒĒĒ utsrjya — giving up; ĪĒĒ tu — but; ĪĒĒĒĒ śraddhayā — with śraddhā; +ĪĒĒĒĒ anvitāḥ — endowed; ĀĒĒĒĒĒĒ yajante — perform rituals; ĪĒĒĒĒĒĒ teṣāṃ — their; ĒĒĒĒĒ niṣṭhā — basis; EĒĒ kā — what; ĪĒĒĒĒĒĒ sattvam — (is it) sattva; +ĒĒĒĒĒ āho — or; ĀĒĒĒĒĒ rajas — (or) rajas; ĪĒĒĒĒĒĒ tamas — (or) tamas

Arjuna said:

O! Kṛṣṇa, those who perform a ritual giving up what is stipulated by the śāstra, but endowed with śraddhā, what is their basis? Is it sattva or rajas or tamas?

ARJUNA'S QUESTION

This is a very interesting question. Arjuna Addresses this question to Kṛṣṇa, and asks, 'What about a certain group of people who offer worship or prayer to the deities, without following the various stipulations laid down in the śāstra about how they are to be done? What is the basis of such rituals? Is it sattva, rajas, or, tamas?' In the śruti, the Vedas, and the supporting smṛtis, we have varieties of forms of worship, with rules about how they are to be done. Suppose there are some people who do a Vedic ritual like agnihotra, or a smārta-karma like pūja, prayer, or any action where a deity is invoked, but do not follow the stipulations of the śāstra. Śāstra-vidhim utsrjya yajante—giving up the stipulations of the śāstra they perform these rituals. Here the word utsrjya, means not only, 'giving up' but also, 'not following exactly, or completely.' We cannot say they don't follow śāstra; otherwise, we wouldn't call it worship. They follow a number of rules, but they do not follow meticulously all of them that are stipulated by the śāstra.

In a ritual to worship a particular deity, there is no immediate result. Generally, we take short cuts only when there is an immediate result, and we are under some pressure to complete the action. But here, nobody pressures me to offer a prayer or perform a ritual. I can do it, or I need not do it. I know this is an act of worship because the śāstra tells me, and it also tells me the manner in which it has to be done. Why should I do it without following the prescribed method? After all, I need not do it at all. When I have chosen to do it, why would I not follow all the rules? Why should anybody perform a ritual without following the rules?

There are two possibilities. One is that they do not know. This is often the case with pūjā or other rituals. People know it is to be done, but have learned how to do it

from seeing it done—either by people in the family or elsewhere. They just follow the convention, *ācāra*, without studying further. Why? Because of *śraddhā*. They perform the worship, following convention, because they have *śraddhā*, but they do not know all the stipulations, and therefore, do not follow them. The other possibility is that a person knows the stipulations but does not follow them. In that case, there is no *śraddhā*. Why do they do the ritual then? Only for some name or fame. The people under discussion here, however, do have *śraddhā*.

Arjuna wonders what is their *niṣṭhā*, their basis for operation, their commitment? What is the disposition of their *antaḥ-karaṇa* in terms of the three *guṇas*? Is *sattva* the basis of their operation, or *rajas* or *tamas*? *Śaṅkara* says, the question is whether the worship they offer is *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, or *tāmasika*. There are different types of worship depending on who is worshipped, and the attitude and intent of the worshipper. *Rāvaṇa*'s prayer, and black magic, which is also prayer, are *tāmasika*. Of which type is an act of worship, not done in the specified way, but with *śraddhā*? *Kṛṣṇa* can answer this in one sentence, and say, 'It is *sāttvika*.' But *Arjuna*'s question arises from his incomplete understanding of the nature of *śraddhā*. *Śaṅkara* introduces the answer of *Bhagavān* by saying that one should not answer a general question on a subject without dividing it into the component parts, in order to make it more specific. This is a very important thing in understanding any topic. If someone goes to a doctor complaining that he is in pain, the doctor will ask specific questions to find the location and the nature of the pain. This is called *pravibhāga*. You keep on negating until you localize the problem.

Śraddhā is of three types when looked at on the basis of the *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The topic of this whole chapter is the division of the threefold *śraddhā*, *śraddhā-traya-vibhāga-yoga*. The type of *śraddhā* a person has is going to decide even his eating habits and a number of other things. Thus, the various manifestations of different types of *śraddhā* are also going to be told in this chapter.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।
 त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनाम् सा स्वभावव्याजं
 सात्त्विकी राजसी काैवा तामसी चेति ताम् श्रुणु ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca

trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehinām sā svabhāvavajā

sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tām śṛṇu

Verse 2

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — *Śrī Bhagavān*; = ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — said;
 त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनाम् — for the embodied beings; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — that which is born
 of the nature of the mind; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — that *śraddhā*; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय —
sāttvika; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — and *rājasī ca eva* — and *rājasika*; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय — and

tāmasika; तामसिका इति — thus; त्रिविधा भवति *trividhā bhavati* — is three fold; तामसिकं श्रद्धां शृणु — listen to that (three fold *śraddhā*)

Śrī Bhagavān said:

The *śraddhā* of the embodied beings is born of the nature of the mind.

As *sattvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika*, it is threefold. Listen to that (threefold *śraddhā*).

Śraddhā is one, but the shades of differences in its nature can be viewed as threefold, *trividhā*. Like bread is one, but then, there are different types of bread—French, sourdough, etc. Unlike bread, however, *śraddhā* is not an external object; it is in your mind alone. Though you may call it faith, *śraddhā* is more than that. It is the whole person. *Śraddhā* is not your belief system, but your whole attitude towards life. Your attitude towards your body, towards wealth, towards people, towards acts of worship, food, altruistic acts like charity, etc. All these have implications for your *śraddhā* towards *Īśvara*. Even how a person dresses, reveals so much about his or her value structure and attitudes. It can be ostentatious, sloppy and tasteless, or neat and refined. From the very dress we can understand whether he is *sāttvika*, a thinking person, who has some values and really wants to know something more, whether there is some depth to the person. The whole demeanour of the person, his actions, the way in which he keeps the house, all indicate the type of *śraddhā* he has towards everything in life. It overflows from inside into everything you do. *Śraddhā* is not outside; it is in your thinking, your understanding, your value structure, your priorities. All these are implied, and thus, it is, not an ordinary word. Therefore, we have a whole chapter dedicated to understanding *śraddhā*.

For whom is the *śraddhā*? *Dehinām*, for those who have a body, a human body. The individual human being is the one who has this threefold, *trividhā*, *śraddhā*. What determines the type of *śraddhā* a person will have? It is born out of the nature of *antaḥ-karaṇa*, therefore it is *svabhāvajā*. The type of mind you have determines the type of *śraddhā* you have. That is more appropriate than considering that one is born with certain propensities that determine his *śraddhā*. Then you may consider that you are *rājasika* or *tāmasika* by nature and have to resign yourself to that. It is not like that, because one can become *sāttvika*. The whole teaching is meant to make you *sāttvika*, not to categorize people. Therefore, the meaning of *svabhāva* here is the nature of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. There are three types of *śraddhā* depending on the nature of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the mind one has, in which one can bring about a change.

Before going into detail about the three types of *śraddhā*, *Kṛṣṇa* makes a general statement about *śraddhā* and the person.

°Ék ÉÉxÉÖü{ÉÉ °É´ÉÇ°É É¸É¸É ÉÉÉÉÉ ÉÉÉÉÉ*
 É¸É¸É´ÉÉÉ°°ÉÉÉÉÖÜÉÉ°ÉÉ°ÉÉSU¸¸° °É B´É °É ॥ ३ ॥

sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata

śraddhāmāyo'yaṃ puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ

Verse 3

ÉÉÉÉÉ *bhārata* — O! Descendant of *Bharata*, *Arjuna*; °É´ÉÇ°É *sarvasya* — of everyone; É¸É¸É *śraddhā* — *śraddhā*; °Ék É- +xÉÖü{ÉÉ *sattva-anurūpā* — in keeping with the mind; ÉÉÉÉÉ *bhavati* — is; +°É´ÉÇ°ÉÉÉÉ *ayam puruṣaḥ* — this person; É¸É¸É´ÉÉÉ *śraddhāmāyaḥ* — who is permeated by *śraddhā*; °ÉÉ°ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *yaḥ yat-śraddhaḥ* — he who, whatever *śraddhā* he has; °ÉÉ B´É °ÉÉ *saḥ eva saḥ* — he is that (*śraddhā*) alone

O! Descendant of *Bharata*, *Arjuna*, *śraddhā* of everyone is in keeping with his mind. This person who is permeated by *śraddhā*, whatever is his *śraddhā*, he conforms to that *śraddhā*.

THE PERSON IS PERMEATED BY HIS ŚRADDHĒ

Though *śraddhā* is commonly translated as faith, since it is so much more than that, as we have seen, let us leave it untranslated. *Sattva* here is not the *guṇa* but the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the mind. A person's *śraddhā* is *sattva-anurūpā*, that is, according to the disposition of his mind, its tendencies and value structure. It assumes a form in keeping with the type of mind you have. And it can be changed, for the mind means thinking and once your thinking is changed, everything is changed. The cognitive change will bring about a change in your attitude, and that will have an impact on your *śraddhā*. The tendencies and understanding you have, all determine the type of *śraddhā* you have.

A person is permeated by his *śraddhā*—*puruṣaḥ śraddhā-mayaḥ*. Whatever type of *śraddhā* he has, that is exactly what he is. Here, the suffix *mayat* in the word, *śraddhā-maya* is in the sense of *prācurya*, saturation. The person is nothing but an expression of his *śraddhā*. *Śaṅkara* makes it clear that *puruṣa* here is the individual, the *saṃsārī*, *jīva*, and not *ātmā*. Whatever a person's *śraddhā* is, that is what he is. If his *śraddhā* is *sāttvika* he will be *sāttvika*, and so on. All his activities, his whole life, will be a manifestation of his *śraddhā*.

Forget the term *śraddhā* for the time being and just think about what determines the expression of one's life. It is going to be in terms of one's value structure and priorities. Suppose you ask someone to go to a movie and he says he has no time because he has to play bridge. The priorities are clear. One is more important for him than the other. Another person may go with you, and another may not because he is going to the

time before he proceeds. These are the ones worshipped by people who do black magic, and such worship reflects a *śraddhā* that is *tāmasika*.

In prescribing what is to be done, *vidhi*, and what is not to be done, *niṣedha*, the Veda follows a method of stating a general rule, *utsarga*, and negating or qualifying it, *apavāda*. For example, it is a general rule that no one should hurt another living thing; it says. '*hiṃsāṃ na kuryāt.*' But where there is justice involved, *hiṃsā* is allowed. Somebody is hanged because he committed a homicide. Thus, there is no rule which does not have an exception, not even the rules of *Bhagavān*.

There are general rules in the *śāstra* about how the various *devas* like *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu*, *Śiva* or *Indra*, *Varuṇa*, *Agni*, etc., are to be worshipped. From this standpoint a form of worship may or may not be said to be *sāttvika*. But even among who worship the *devas* only a rare one is committed to *sattva* and does a *sāttvika* form of worship, says *Śaṅkara*. Now *Kṛṣṇa* uses the criterion of the motive of the worship to classify it as *sāttvika* or *rājasika* or *tāmasika*. Among the many who are committed to the worship of the gods and so on, only some are based in *sattva*. Of these, some are *jijñāsus* who want only *antaḥ-karṇa-śuddhi*, in order to gain knowledge of their identity with *Īśvara*, as a result of the worship of the *devas* according to the prescribed *vidhi*. This kind of worship is surely *sāttvika*. But generally, most people who are committed to the specific results of prayers that are offered to these *devatās* are generally given to *rājasika* or *tāmasika* worship. Why? Because they seek power and other ignoble ends within *saṃsāra*, through the worship.

How?

+ नृभिराहंकाराः कुर्यात्तान् । एते यानि भवन्ति तानि च
नृभिराहंकाराः कुर्यात्तान् । एते यानि भवन्ति तानि च

asāstravihitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ
dambhāhaṅkārasaṃyuktāḥ kāmarāgabalanvitāḥ

Verse 5

एतान् संशयान्तं संशयान्तं संशयान्तं संशयान्तं
एतान् संशयान्तं संशयान्तं संशयान्तं संशयान्तं

karśayantaḥ śarīrastham bhūtagrāmamacetasah
mām caivāntaḥ śarīrastham tānviddhyāsuraṇiścayān

Verse 6

एते यानि भवन्ति तानि च — those people who; नृभिराहंकाराः कुर्यात्तान् — dambha-ahaṅkāra-saṃyuktāḥ — riddled with pretension and egoity; एते यानि भवन्ति तानि च काम-राग-बला-अन्वितं — endowed with strong passion and longing; + संशयान्तं acetasaḥ — lacking in discrimination; एतान् संशयान्तं संशयान्तं संशयान्तं संशयान्तं śarīrastham bhūta-grāmam — the sense organs obtaining in the body; + खिद्यन्तं एतान् संशयान्तं एतान् संशयान्तं एतान् संशयान्तं antaḥ śarīrastham mām ca — and Me, obtaining within the body; B'É eva — also; एतान् संशयान्तं karśayantaḥ — emaciating;

+ असांश्रुतविहितं *asāstra-vihitam* — not enjoined by the *sāstra*; भयंकरं *ghoram* — terrible; तपसः *tapas* — religious disciplines; तपयन्ते *tapyante* — perform; तान विद्धि *tān viddhi* — know them to be; + आसुरनिश्चयान् *āsura-niścayān* — of *āsura* conviction

Those people who riddled with pretension and egoity, endowed with strong passion and longing and lacking in discrimination, perform terrible religious disciplines not enjoined by the *sāstra*, emaciating the sense organs obtaining in the body, and Me too, who obtains within the body — may you know them (to be) of *āsura* conviction.

These two verses have to be read together to form a complete sentence. *Tapas* here is religious worship that may consist of prayers, rituals, etc. The *tapas* that these people do is not enjoined by the *sāstra*, *asāstra-vihitam*. And it is *ghora*, afflicting one's own body-mind-sense-complex. Not only that, when such people worship, others are also afflicted. Many animals may die, as on Thanksgiving. Just because you want to give thanks to the Lord, so many turkeys have to die. First, you call them dull, then you kill them and eat them. If they are so dull and foolish, why do you eat them? How intelligent does that make you? They have as much reason to live as you do. When some wrong-thinking people become religious, a lot of others suffer. They afflict themselves and bring affliction to others.

These people who do *tapas* that is not enjoined by the *sāstra*, are riddled with pretension and egoity, *dambha-ahaṅkāra-saṃyuktāḥ*. Their religious activities are meant to declare to the world that they are religious. This is *dambha*. And it is also for the sake of *ahaṅkāra*, pride, egoity. And they are endowed with a very strong longing, *kāma-rāga-bala-anvitāḥ*. A general want is called *kāma*; if *rāga*, attachment, is there, it becomes longing. Or, *kāma* can be taken as passion and *rāga* as longing. Out of the sheer force of *kāma* and *rāga*, passion as well as longing, they perform these various rituals, etc. Any *tapas* implies a certain self-affliction, a certain self-discipline. But the motive determines the nature of the *tapas*. When *Rāvaṇa* did *tapas* there was certainly a lot of self-affliction, but it was not for mental purity, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, or mental steadiness, *antaḥ-karaṇa-naiścalya*, for the sake of *mokṣa*. He wanted power to destroy. Similarly, *Hiraṇyakaśipu* gained a boon by his great *tapas* that nobody would be able to destroy him during the day or in the night, either inside the house or outside, either on the earth or in the space. Nor would he die by an animal, or a human being, or any weapon. He thought he had covered everything. But because no one can escape death, the Lord came with a lion's head and a human body—neither animal nor human; at twilight—neither day nor night; and placed him on his lap—neither on the earth nor in space; on the threshold of the house—neither inside nor outside, and killed him with his claws—not a weapon. In every rule, there is a loophole—always. People like *Rāvaṇa* and *Hiraṇyakaśipu* do formidable *tapas* out of the drive of ambition and lust, *kāma-rāga-bala-anvitāḥ*.

When the *tapas* is so difficult and the results are ultimately so disastrous, why do they do it? They are *acetasaḥ*. They do not think properly. Lacking discrimination, they emaciate themselves by not feeding the sense organs their sense objects out of sheer will. Where do they get the will? They are driven by *kāma*; and by *rāga*. I always admire the will of a person who contests the nomination for the presidency of the United States and keeps that will going. That is not an ordinary thing. To do the amount of work required even to be nominated, he must be driven by a great ambition. Otherwise, it is impossible.

Denying the group of sense organs all experiences, they do great *tapas*. A *sāttvika* person also denies feeding the sense organs, lives a disciplined life, and does his meditation or prayers. The difference is, the *sāttvika* person wants nothing but *mokṣa*, while the other one is driven. One has *viveka*, the other does not. Even among those who are not seeking *mokṣa*, there are two types of *saṃsārīs*, those who have simple ambitions and those who are driven by *kāma*, *rāga*, *ahaṅkāra*, highly ambitious people. They are not just ordinary *saṃsārīs*; they are driven. And among them, there are shades of differences. Some are legitimately making efforts, and others, the *asuras*, do not follow any rules. Anything convenient will do, because they lack *viveka*. All of them undergo severe privations to achieve their ends.

Not only do they afflict the body and sense organs, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘They are afflicting Me, who obtains in the body—*māṇ ca antaḥ-śarīrastham karśayantaḥ*.’ In the form of the witness obtaining in the body, Lord *Nārāyaṇa* as the *ātmā* is observing all that is going on. How can they afflict *ātmā*, which is not an object, *karma*, of anybody's action? We have seen that *ātmā* is not destroyed even when the body is destroyed, *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. How can anyone do anything to the *ātmā*? It is purely a figure of speech. So how do they afflict *Bhagavān*? *Śaṅkara* says it is nothing but not following what is to be done according to the mandate, *anuśāsana*, of *Bhagavān*. Not conforming to *dharma* and *adharmā* is afflicting *Bhagavān*, and in this sense, *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘They are afflicting Me.’ These people are to be understood as those whose conclusions and convictions are *āśura*. Therefore, they are called *āśura-niścayas*.¹ I² do not want to translate *āśura* as demonic because you have your own concept of demons, which does not exactly fit the description of an *asura*, and I won't use the word evil because there is no such thing as evil. An *asura* is driven by wrong thinking or lack of right thinking. There are a lot of people who lack the capacity to think and are harmless. But an *asura* has wrong thinking, and is driven also. Why should *Bhagavān* say ‘May you understand—*viddhi*,’ here? Why should we know this? *Śaṅkara* says, it is because any trace of that type of thinking and behaviour, if it is present in us, has to be negated. For that purpose it is said here that one should know the *āśura-niścaya*.

¹ *āśuraḥ niścayaḥ yeṣāṃ te āśura-niścayāḥ*.

² *Swamiḥi*

Not only is the expression of *śraddhā* threefold, even the food you like, the rituals you perform, religious disciplines that you practise, and charity, can be threefold in nature—*sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika*. The latter two are told in order to avoid them and cultivate the *sāttvika* quality. Some of them can be practised, and like a quality, some of them have to be understood and lived up to.

There are three types of food—*sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika*. And your preference for them is determined by the predominance of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* in your disposition. Some people love things like blue cheese, and others will not go near them. People like different types of food, but here we are not simply categorizing three different types of food. Two of them are to be avoided. The hope is that if your food is more *sāttvika*, that will perhaps help you to think properly. There is no absolute correlation here because you may be an eater of *sāttvika* food, and also be very cruel. Godse was a *vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇa*, a great vegetarian. And he shot Gandhiji! It is silly to think that if you are a vegetarian, your thinking will be wonderful.

It is not true. But, on the other hand, the food that is eaten does affect the mind. We have to understand this relatively, not absolutely. Otherwise, you will simply condemn some people based on what they eat, and this has no validity. I have seen people who are non-vegetarian, and at the same time, contemplative. But generally, one has a degree of insensitivity when one eats things that want to live—things that have legs in order to run away from you. The day an eggplant develops legs and horns and a pumpkin develops feet, we have to consider whether we should eat a pumpkin or a goat. This is mentioned here because for a seeker, a person who is serious about his *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, it is necessary to have a sensitivity about all his actions, including his choice of food. Similarly, performing rituals, religious disciplines, and charity can be purely *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, or *tāmasika*. The *Gītā* spends so much time on this kind of division just so that we can follow the *sattva* and avoid the other two.

+ एवमपि तेरे ओ तेषां त्रिविधा प्रियह
 अथैव तेषां तत्रैव तेषां तेषां तेषां ॥७॥

*āhārastvapi sarvasya trividho bhavati priyah
 yajñastapastathā dānaṃ teṣāṃ bhedamimamśṛṇu*

Verse 7

ieo+ete tu api — and also; o' tēpā' sarvasya — for everyone; ē|ēā' priyah — that is liked;
 + ēvama āhārah — food; t'ivē' trividhaḥ — threefold; |ē' bhavati — is; iē' tathā
 — so too; a' yajñah — ritual; i' tapas — religious discipline; nō' dānam —
 charity; i' teṣāṃ — of them; < 'ē' imam bhedaṃ — this difference; |ē' śṛṇu
 — listen

And also, for everyone, the food that is liked is threefold, so too, are ritual, religious discipline, and charity. Listen to this difference of theirs.

The word *tu* is used to distinguish this topic from the previous topic of *śraddhā*. Like *śraddhā*, other things are also threefold. A few of them are mentioned here. *Āhāra* means what is taken in, eaten, *āhriyate iti āhārah*. It can even refer to the sense objects because they are all taken by the senses. But here *āhāra* means food, what is eaten or drunk by you. For everyone, *sarvasya*, food is threefold, *āhārah trividhaḥ*. How? Is it in terms of nutritional value? Should everyone take threefold food, like protein, carbohydrate and fat in a certain proportion? Or should we take a little bit of *sāttvika* food, a little bit of *rājasika* food and some *tāmasika* food? It is not threefold in these senses but in terms of *guṇa*, and it is so according to what is liked, *priya*, by people.

‘Listen to this difference among them, *teṣāṃ bhedaḥ imaṃ ṣṇu*,’ saying so *Bhagavān* enumerates them.

+āyuhāḥ +sattvāḥ +balaḥ +ārogyāḥ +sukhāḥ +pṛitīḥ +vivardhanāḥ
 rasyāḥ snigdḥāḥ sthirāḥ hr̥dyā āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ

Verse 8

+āyuhāḥ +sattvāḥ +balaḥ +ārogyāḥ +sukhāḥ +pṛitīḥ +vivardhanāḥ — those which increase longevity, mental clarity, strength, health, pleasure in taste, aesthetic pleasure; rasyāḥ — succulent; snigdḥāḥ — oily; sthirāḥ — fortifying; hr̥dyāḥ — pleasing (to the heart); āhārāḥ — (are) the foods; sāttvikapriyāḥ — that are loved by the *sāttvika* people

Succulent, oily, fortifying and pleasing foods, which increase longevity, mental clarity, strength, health, pleasure in taste and aesthetic pleasure are loved by *sāttvika* people.

Āyuh is the duration of life, longevity. *Sattva* is the development of your mind. If you take too much coffee or sugar, you find that it is difficult to have steadiness of mind, *citta-ekāgratā*, so it is clear that food does affect the mind. Whatever you ingest that contributes to your steadiness of mind, tranquillity, and capacity to think, is what is meant here by food that is *sattva*. Food can also give you strength, *bala*. And there are things that you eat which are purely healthy, *ārogya*. Then it should also be tasty; it should give you some pleasure, *sukha*, and it should be aesthetically pleasing, *pṛiti-vivardhana*. Even if you look at some food, it spoils your appetite, though it may be very good for you. Thus, the food that enhances all these is liked by those whose disposition is predominantly *sattva*, that is, it is *sāttvika-priya*. Again, the food that is eaten is divided according to its nature. Some food is *rasya*, succulent, juicy; some are *snigdha*, creamy, oily, and some are *sthira*, that is, they remain for a long time in the body; like that meant for building bone, etc. All these varieties of food should be pleasing to your mind, *hr̥dyā*. The presentation of the food, how it looks, is very

यथा-यामा यथा-यामा — that which is three hours old or inadequately cooked; गता-रसम् गता-रसम् — that from which the essence has gone; पुति पुति — putrid; पारुषिता पारुषिता — day-old; + अपि च अपि च — and also; उच्छिष्टम् उच्छिष्टम् — leavings; सेवा यथा यथा — and which; + अमध्यम् अमध्यम् — unfit as an offering; भोजनम् भोजनम् — (is) the food; तामसा-प्रियम् तामसा-प्रियम् — that is beloved to a *tāmasika* person

Food which is old or inadequately cooked, from which the essence has gone, which is putrid, day-old, leavings, and also unfit as an offering, is beloved to a *tāmasika* person.

The word *yāta-yāma* qualifies the food; and it means the food for which one *yāma* has passed. One *yāma* consists of about four *muhūrtas*, forty-eight minute periods, totally amounting to about three hours. When there was no refrigeration, cooked food that had been standing for three hours in a tropical climate would be teeming with bacteria and is therefore, unfit for consumption. Śaṅkara says the word can also mean, ‘*manda-ṣakva*—inadequately cooked’ because the next word, *gata-rasam*, covers stale food. Here the word *yāma* will mean the prescribed length of time for which the food has to be cooked and that is not observed therefore the food is called *yāta-yāma*. Food that is *gata-rasa* has lost the taste, essence, it once had, and therefore, its nutritive value. And usually the stale food has lost all its nutritive value. But even though not stale, white rice is useless; it is *gata-rasa*, because its capacity to nourish is gone in the process of polishing it has undergone.

Pūti is foul-smelling, and *paryuṣita*, Śaṅkara says, is cooked food that has been kept over night—yesterday’s leftovers. It includes all fermented things, which are sometimes used as medicine, as *kaśāya*, but are not good for you as food. *Ucchiṣṭam* means what is left over after somebody else has eaten. If the food you eat is such leavings, it is *ucchiṣṭa*. Then *amedhya* means food that has not been or cannot be offered to the Lord. Food, *bhojana*, of this sort is beloved to a *tāmasika* person, *tāmasa-ṣriyam*. From this, do not conclude that because somebody is eating food of this sort, he must be *tāmasika*. It is not like that. It can be just a habit. These *tāmasika* foods are mentioned here so that you can avoid them.

After mentioning the three types of food, the three types of worship are going to be told now.

+ ऽपि च अपि च उच्छिष्टम् उच्छिष्टम्
सेवा यथा यथा अमध्यम् अमध्यम्

aphalākāṅkṣibhīryajño vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate

yaṣṭavyameveti manaḥ samādhāya sa sāttvikah

Verse 11

अपि च अपि च + ऽपि च — the ritual which; + ऽपि च — *aphala-ākāṅkṣibhīh* — by those who do not expect a result (other than *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*); उच्छिष्टम् उच्छिष्टम् *vidhi-*

dr̥ṣṭaḥ — that which is known through the *śāstra*; *yaṣṭavam eva* — ‘This ritual is just to be performed’; *iti* — thus; *manaḥ samādhāya* — making up the mind; *ijyate* — is performed; *sah sātत्वikaḥ* — that (ritual) is *sātत्वika*

That ritual, which is known through the *śāstra* and is performed by those who do not expect a result (other than *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*), by making up the mind, ‘This ritual is just to be performed,’ is *sātत्वika*.

The root *yaj*, from which the word, *yajña* is derived, is used in the sense of worship of a god. But generally, the word *yajña* refers to a Vedic ritual. Here the adjective qualifying *yajña* is *vidhi-dr̥ṣṭa*, what is known through the *śāstra*. In the *śāstra*, there are statements enjoining one to perform rituals. Some are to be done daily; they are *nitya-karmas*. And some on specific occasions; they are *naimittika-karmas*.

By whom are they performed? These rituals that are *sātत्वika* are performed by people who have no result in view, *aphala-ākāṅkṣibhiḥ*. How can anybody perform a *karma* without expecting a result? We have to understand this word to mean that they are doing it only for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, to neutralize *pāpa* and as an offering to *Īśvara*.

The attitude with which it is done is given here in the statement, ‘*yaṣṭavyam eva iti*—the ritual has to be performed.’ That is the person has this attitude that this ritual has to be performed by him. *Śāṅkara* says, that the ritual is brought to manifestation. Why? Because it is enjoined by the *śāstra*. Even though each ritual has its result, here it is not done for the specified result, but just for the sake of doing it. And doing with this attitude gives *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* to the doer. So it is done for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* alone. And it is done with the resolve, ‘No end, *puruṣārtha*, is going to be accomplished by this.’ This *karma* is not for one of the human ends such as *artha*—security, *kāma*—pleasure, or *dharma-puṇya*.

He is not interested in any of these, but on the contrary, is seeking the knowledge that will free him from all of them, *mokṣa*. When that is the aim, the most that any *karma* can give is a mind that is prepared to gain this knowledge. So he undertakes the ritual resolving the mind, *manaḥ samādhāya*, that is, with reference to the *puruṣārtha* he is very resolved that he has nothing to really gain from this ritual. Or, *manaḥ samādhāya*, can mean making the mind tranquil. This means there is a certain cheerfulness. Otherwise, if you are not interested in *artha*, *kāma*, or *dharma*, and are asked to do a ritual, there can be a reluctance or lack of enthusiasm. With such an attitude, that *karma* is not going to be *sātत्वika*. Therefore, what is meant here is that it is done with a composed, cheerful mind. The mind will naturally be tranquil when he is clear that the *puruṣārtha* is *mokṣa*. He performs the ritual not being swayed by other desires. Such a ritual is considered *sātत्वika*.

A ritual is *sāttvika* when it fulfils all these requirements. It should be done by a person who is interested only in *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, for *mokṣa*, not anything else. The mind is therefore resolved on that, that is, there is *manaḥ-samādhana*, and the attitude is, ‘It is to be done by me.’ And he also understands that, further, it should be done in keeping with what is laid down in the *śāstra* .

In this one verse, *Kṛṣṇa* points out the essence of all that he has been saying about *karma-yoga* . Generally, *karma* means a Vedic ritual, which is normally performed for the sake of getting *punya* . If it is done only for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, it becomes *karma-yoga* . When we talk about *karma-yoga*, the meaning of *karma* is extended to include duties. Otherwise, this cannot apply to *Arjuna* . He is not being asked to perform a ritual, but to fight a battle. Therefore, *karma* here covers not only Vedic rituals, but also all duties and interactions with people.

Now *Bhagavān* describes the *rājasa* ritual in the next verse.

+É|É°ÉxVÉÉ°É iÉÖ ; ÖMÆnÜ !ÉÉ|ÉÇÉÉÉ SÉÉÉ °ÉiÉÆ

<V°ÉiÉÆ |ÉÇÉÉ ÉÖ iÉÆ°ÉVÉÆÉ ÉÉrÜ °VÉ°É ÉÄ |ÉÉ |

*abhisandhāya tu phalam dambhārthamapi caiva yat
ijyate bhārataśreṣṭha taṃ yajñam viddhi rājasam*

Verse 12

iÉÖ *tu* — on the other hand; |ÉÇÉÉ ÉÖ *bhārata-śreṣṭha* — most exalted of the *Bharatas*, *Arjuna*; ; ÖMÆnÜ +É|É°ÉxVÉÉ°É *phalam abhisandhāya* — keeping in view, a result; nÜ !ÉÉ|ÉÇÉÉ +ÉÉ SÉ *dambhārtham api ca* — and also to proclaim one's own religiosity; B É *eva* — alone; °ÉiÉÆ <V°ÉiÉÆ *yat ijyate* — the ritual which is performed; iÉ ÉÄ °ÉVÉ ÉÄ *taṃ yajñam* — that ritual; °VÉ°É ÉÄ ÉÉrÜ *rājasam viddhi* — may you know as *rājasa*

On the other hand, may you know that ritual which is offered keeping in view, a result, and also just to proclaim one's own religiosity, is *rājasika*, *Arjuna*.

The word, *tu* distinguishes this kind of *yajña* from the *sāttvika* ritual of the previous verse. This is also performed as it is enjoined by the *śāstra* , but the attitudes are different. The attitude, with reference to result, of the one who does this ritual is just the opposite to that of the *sāttvika* ritual. It is done expecting a definite result, *phalam abhisandhāya*. Whether it is wealth, some pleasure, or accumulation of *punya*, to be enjoined in either this world or in some other world, the ritual we are talking about here is performed keeping a certain result in view. When it is performed with that intention, the ritual, understand, *viddhi*, is born of *rajoguṇa*.

And again, it is done for the purpose of proclaiming one's own religiosity, *dambhārtham*. Unlike the *sāttvika* ritual, which is done just because it is to be done,

yaṣṭavyam eva iti, this is done for one's own glory. These are just the opposite of one another. A ritual done to gain recognition as a religious person is *rājasika*.

Then what is the third one? *Bhagavān* describes in the next verse.

É ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ
 ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ १३ ॥
vidhihīnamasṛṣṭānnaṃ mantrahīnamadakṣiṇam
śraddhāvirahitaṃ yajñam tāmasaṃ paricakṣate Verse 13

É ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ *vidhi-hīnam* — that which is bereft of the stipulations of *śāstra*; + ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ *asṛṣṭa-annaṃ* — that which is without distribution of food; + ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ *mantra-hīnam* — that which is without proper recitation of *mantras*; + ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ *adakṣiṇam* — that which is without distribution of wealth; ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ *śraddhā-virahitam* — that which is without *śraddhā*; ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ *yajñam* — the ritual; ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ *tāmasam* — (is) *tāmasika*; ÉÉÉÉ-VAÉ ÉÁ *paricakṣate* — they say

They say that a ritual, which is bereft of the stipulations of *śāstra*, without distribution of food, without proper recitation of *mantras*, without distribution of wealth and without *śraddhā*, is *tāmasika*.

Those who know the *śāstra* say, *paricakṣate*, the ritual described by this verse, is born of *tamogūṇa*. All the words in the verse are adjectival to *yajña*. A ritual is supposed to be performed according to *vidhi*, the injunctions of *śāstra*. That means the *vidhi* is fulfilled without exceeding or failing short of what is prescribed by it. Exactly as it is enjoined, it is performed. Here, however, it is the opposite. He performs the ritual all right, but does not follow all the rules. He wants to do it, but does not have enough *śraddhā* to do to it properly.

The other words here refer to some of the stipulations for a ritual. When you are performing a ritual, you are supposed to feed the people. The *brāhmaṇas*, and the priests who come, are to be given food. It is part of the ritual. A ritual, which does not have this mandatory distribution of food, is *asṛṣṭa-anna*. Then again, either he does not recite all the *mantras*, or he recites them improperly, by omitting some letters or pronouncing them with incorrect *svara*, accents. And a *mantra* without proper *svara* is not a *mantra*. When the *mantras* of a ritual are chanted like this, the ritual is considered *mantra-hīnam*. Then, as a part of every *yajña*, a certain *dakṣiṇā* is to be given. There are different types of *dakṣiṇās*, like money, land, or some cattle, but wealth in some form has to be distributed to officiating priests and deserving others. Without it, the ritual is *adakṣiṇa*, and is considered incomplete.

The central problem with this type of ritual, and the reason for all the others, is that there is no *śraddhā*—it is *śraddhā-virahita*. If something is missed in the performance

of a ritual, *śraddhā* will make up for it. But here there is no *śraddhā*. Or, he has the *tāmasika-śraddhā* that we have seen before. He only invokes *pretas*, spirits, etc., or performs black magic. Thus *Bhagavān* has finished what he has to say about the three types of rituals.

Now we have three very interesting verses describing three types of religious discipline meant for *brahma-vidyā*. Even if a person is not seeking *brahma-vidyā*, this is the greatest *tapas* one can do, because it makes one mature.

नमोऽस्तुते देवेभ्यो देवेभ्योऽस्तुते
देवेभ्योऽस्तुते देवेभ्योऽस्तुते

ॐ नमोऽस्तुते देवेभ्यो देवेभ्योऽस्तुते ॥१४॥

*devadvijaguruprājñapūjanam śaucamārjavam
brahmacaryamahimsā ca śārīraṃ tapa ucyate*

Verse 14

नमो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते — worshipping gods, *brāhmaṇas*, teachers and wise people; ॐ-नमो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते — external cleanliness; +देवेभ्यो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते — straightforwardness; ॐ-नमो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते — self-discipline; +देवेभ्यो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते — and not physically hurting (any living being); ॐ-नमो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते — the discipline of the physical body; =स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते-देवेभ्यो-स्तुते — is called

Worshipping gods, *brāhmaṇas*, teachers and wise people, external cleanliness, straightforwardness, self-discipline, and not physically hurting (are all collectively) called discipline of the physical body.

Tapas, religious discipline, is viewed as threefold from the standpoint of the primary means used to perform it. It can be predominantly physical-*śārīraṃ* or *kāyikaṃ tapas*, oral-*vācikaṃ tapas*, or mental-*mānasaṃ tapas*. They are all meant for purification, *śuddhi*. As we clean any instrument, *karaṇa*, before using it, like cleaning eyeglasses before using them to see, we prepare all our *karaṇas* by these disciplines so that we can know. Only when all the *karaṇas* are clean, are things clear.

The disciplines told in this verse are centred mainly on the body. Therefore they are called the *śārīraṃ tapas*. The first to be listed among them is *pūjana*, devotion, worship, respect, etc. This is a very important thing. Daily offering of worship to *Īśvara* in some form or the other is *deva-pūjana*. This is a must. When you never fail to do this, on a daily basis, it is *tapas*. Otherwise, it is not. *Tapas* means that you take a vow, and then fulfil it. No matter what happens, you do it.

Then, due respect is also to be given to *brāhmaṇas* and teachers. Anyone who teaches is a *guru*, and we find that in life, there are three types of teachers. The parents, father and mother, are our first teachers. Then, there are all the teachers who have taught us various disciplines of knowledge and those from whom we have learned important lessons of life. Finally, there is the spiritual teacher who may initiate one into *mantra*-

japa or give *brahmopadeśa*. Because they are teachers, they all deserve reverence. There are certain things we can do to show our respect, and, as a *tapas*, these are done without fail.

Prājñā, a person who is wise, or a scholar, is also to be respected. Because *śārīra-tapas* is being discussed, acts of respect like offering flowers or some service are implied here. As the occasions arise, we can offer an act of worship in the form of service.

Cleanliness, *śauca*, is another important discipline. Here external cleanliness is meant because this *tapas* is centred on the body. Later he will discuss internal cleanliness, *āntara-śauca* under mental discipline, *mānasaṃ tapas*. Keeping the external environment and the physical body clean implies regular care and is important in providing a conducive atmosphere for any pursuit, especially that of a spiritual seeker.

Then he mentions *ārjava*, which is straightforwardness in dealing with people. When the pursuit is of truth, honesty in the seeker is crucial. A commitment to being straightforward in all his interactions is the *tapas* here. It necessarily means a perfect alignment of thought, word and deed. While this certainly involves the mind and speech, it is considered *śārīra-tapas* when it primarily involves actions.

Brahmacarya the next to be mentioned is definitely restraint at the level of the external organs, *bāhya-indriya-nigraha*. It is a form of *dama*. *Ahiṃsā* is non-hurting. How can non-hurting be *śārīra-tapas*, when it is not an action? Even though it is not an action, hurting is, and the *tapas* here is curbing the tendency to hurt physically. When this tendency to hurt is there, I can hurt anything, even though it has nothing to do with me. If I do not like to have an insect in my room, I quietly pick it up and put it outside, without harming it. This is *ahiṃsā*. It is *śārīra-tapas* because the physical limbs are involved in the restraint from causing hurt to any living being. No doubt, the senses and mind are also involved, but the role of the physical body is predominant, in the sense that it is the place from where actions emanate. Conventionally, therefore, it is called *śārīra-tapas*.

Then we have discipline at the level of speech, *vāktapas*. Here it is presented very clearly in one sentence.

+xēōmēōē ēēcāfāofēiāē|ēēē/āēēē ēēiā
 °ēēvāēēēē|ēēēēēēēē ēērāēēēēēē =Sāēiēā 1१५ 11

*anudvegakaraṃ vākyaṃ satyaṃ priyahitaṃ ca yat
 svādhyāyābhyasanaṃ caiva vānmayam tapa ucyate*

Verse 15

ēēiā ēēcāē ēāyat vākyaṃ — the speech which (is); +xēōmēōēēā *anudvegakaram* — which does not cause agitation; °ēiāē ēā *satyaṃ* — which is true; ē|ēēē/āēēē ēā sē *priyahitam ca* — and which is pleasing and beneficial; (ēēiā *tat* — that); °ēēvāēēēē+|ēēēēēē ēā sē B ē

svādhyāya-abhyasanam ca eva — and also daily repetition of one's own Veda; वृत्तं वाचस्पत्ये वा वान्मयां तपस — the discipline of speech; = *Safitā* *aucyate* — is said

Speech, which does not cause agitation, which is true, pleasing and beneficial, and daily repetition of one's own Veda, are (collectively) called discipline of speech.

When you talk to another person, what is the reason for talking? Whether you want to convey something, or share something, like your knowledge or your experience; there is definitely an intention, *vivakṣā*. Śaṅkara says a sentence is used for creating a cognition, an understanding in another person. If that speech is to be *tapas*, it must have certain characteristics.

In speaking, using words that do not cause any kind of pain to another person, that is, those that are *anudvegakara*,¹ is very important. When I speak, what I say or how I say should not invoke irritation in the person I am addressing. Then again, what I say has to be also *satyam*, true. And it should bring happiness to the person immediately, as it is being said. That is called *priya*. Not only that, it should bring happiness in the long run also. That is, it should be beneficial to that person, *hita*. Here Śaṅkara spends a lot of time analysing these words. Śaṅkara says, the word, 'ca-and,' here means that all four things that are mentioned here have equal status. Only if the speech includes all of them is it *vāṅmayaṅ tapas*. If it is lacking in any one or two or three of these, it is not *vāṅmayaṅ tapas*. What I say may be very pleasant, *priya*, and not at all irritating, *anudvegakara*, but it may not be true, *satya*, at all, and therefore, certainly not beneficial, *hita*. Or, it may be pleasing, *priya*, and even true, *satya*, but not good for the person, *hita*. It may be pleasing to hear, for example, that the admission is free at the local race track today. And it is true too. But it is not *hita* if it is said to a compulsive gambler. He will be very happy to hear it, but it is not good for him at all. Then there is a statement which is absolutely truthful, but is very painful to hear. My friend may not be very intelligent, but if I tell him so, it will definitely cause him pain and it will not do him any good either. Such a statement may be *satya*, but is not *anudvegakara*, *priya* or *hita*. This type of speech is not *vāṅmayaṅ tapas*

A sentence that will fall under the definition of *vāṅmayaṅ tapas* has all four. Śaṅkara gives an example: 'śānto bhava vatsa! svādhyāyaṅ yogaṅ ca anutiṣṭha, tathā ca śreyo bhaviṣyati—My dear boy, may you be at peace. Follow the daily study of your Veda and *karma-yoga*; then you will have *mokṣa*, freedom.' See how beautiful this sentence is. Even as he is told to calm himself in this way, 'śānto bhava vatsa,' his mind quietens. It is *anudvegakara*. Generally we get angry and say, 'Keep quiet,' or 'Enough.' That does not work. The person may become quiet, but definitely not calm.

¹ *udvega* means agitation; *udvegakara* is that which causes *udvega*; and *anudvegakara* is that which is not *udvegakara*.

That statement is *udvegakara*. Then he tells him to study the *śāstra* and follow a life of *karma-yoga*. This is something that is good for him right now, *priya*, and also good for him later, *hita*. And he tells him that if he does all this, he will get *mokṣa*. It is true, *satya*, and also good for him, *hita*. Even if he fails to get *mokṣa* here, it will produce a better life for him next time, where he will pick up the thread and continue. There is no problem here; it is good for him now, and in the future. In this life itself, he will get relative freedom from the hold of his likes and dislikes. A sentence like this, which has all the four characteristics is *vāñmayam tapas*.

Discipline at the level of speech also includes the repetition of one's own Veda, *svādhyāya-abhyasana*. Daily one has to repeat one's own Veda, or at least a portion of it. If he cannot repeat even a portion, he repeats the *gāyatrī mantra* because it is considered to be the essence of all Vedas. If he cannot repeat that too, it is enough to say, 'om tat sat.' About this, he is going to talk about later. Wherever there is *karma* involved, there are options, but at the same time, it has to be done in one form or the other. This *svādhyāya-abhyasana* can be converted into the daily study of the scripture. The daily study or repetition of some verses of praise, or a *mantra* is also *svādhyāya-abhyasana*. But to do it, without fail, every day, is very important.

All these together form *vāñmayam tapas*. Then, what is mental *tapas*?

ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिपतये नमः ।
॥ वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ १३ ॥

manahprasādaḥ saumyatvaṃ maunam ātmavinigrahaḥ
bhāva-saṃsuddhiḥ tapas mānasamucyate

Verse 16

ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिपतये नमः ।
॥ वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ १३ ॥
manahprasādaḥ — mental cheerfulness; ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिपतये नमः ।
॥ वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ १३ ॥ *saumyatvam* — cheerfulness in expression; ॥ वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ १३ ॥ *maunam* — absence of pressure to talk; + ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिपतये नमः ।
॥ वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ १३ ॥ *ātma-vinigrahaḥ* — mastery over the mind; ॥ वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ १३ ॥ *bhāva-saṃsuddhiḥ* — clean intent; ॥ वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ १३ ॥ — (all) this; ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिपतये नमः ।
॥ वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ १३ ॥ *mānasam tapas* — mental discipline; = ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिपतये नमः ।
॥ वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ १३ ॥ *ucyate* — is called

Mental cheerfulness, cheerfulness in expression, absence of pressure to talk, mastery over the mind, clean intent—this (these together) is called mental discipline.

Manahprasāda is mental cheerfulness. The word, 'mental' is used deliberately here because, sometimes you can put on an appearance of cheerfulness, but not be mentally cheerful at all. A discipline, which helps you acquire and maintain mental cheerfulness, is called *tapas*. It involves a prayerful attitude, and an acceptance of yourself and of the situation in which you find yourself. This includes acceptance of the past, and of the world as we find it. Futuristic conjectures are also resolved in an attitude

of surrender and simple appreciation. If an ant can live its life. I can also live my life cheerfully. I do not need to prove myself to anybody.

These are all simple things. But then, these things count a lot, because, it is the simple things that bring about cheerfulness. It involves living one day at a time. And that is a life in keeping with reality. Today is real; tomorrow I may not be here at all. It is not that I worry about what will happen tomorrow. Today I am alive, and what is to be done this day, I just do. The future can take care of itself. If I can manage today, tomorrow I have only one day to manage. This is the truth about life. Your whole life, all you have to manage is one day. You have to find food and cook for one day. In fact, it can be reduced to one meal. One day is too long, really, but that is good enough to understand this. Even if you are worried, your worry is only for one day. Yesterday's worry is gone. What happened yesterday was yesterday. It is not today. If yesterday, you made a mistake, that is fine. You are wiser for it. If you are worried about it today, not only yesterday was spoiled, today also is wasted in worrying about what happened yesterday. With reference to the result of action, and what is to be done, a certain surrender allows you to live happily.

The life of an ant is a good example. It is very busy, and it has its own time off also. You can see it just sitting there in one place for some time, and then getting busy. Then, it seems to communicate something to another ant who is approaching, and that one turns around and they go off together for some exploit. Both of them, or a gang of them, go and attack some sugar crystal. It is too big for one of them to manage, but together, they can pull the sugar crystal to where they want it, and finish off the whole thing. In between, the ant stops; it takes its own time. It does not seem to worry much, even though people are walking nearby. It can die any time, but it does not seem concerned. It just keeps busy. If that ant can survive—not only one but teeming millions—right on the sidewalk, living as I am in this vast world, I can easily find my livelihood. The future will take care of itself. I may plan for the future, but I do what I can do today. That is all. Today's plan is like this, and tomorrow's plan may be the same, or I may revise it. This 'one day at a time' never goes away. These are the attitudes that bring about surrender.

Then there is a law that 'What will be, will be—*bhavitavyam bhavatyeva!*' This is an important shock absorber. What is to happen will happen; I do what I can. That is the truth about living. Did you ever think you would be where you are today? It all happens, thanks to one thing or the other. You find yourself in a given situation because there is a certain plan going on underneath. Let it unfold itself. You take things day by day and shape whatever comes your way. You do not allow yourself to be like driftwood; you hold the gear alright, but at the same time, you recognize that there is a certain unfoldment taking place in your life which has its own meaning. That meaning you can discover, and face, as it unfolds. Let life be full of surprises. If you know that everything will happen according to your plan, you need not even live. Just imagine if

you know everything that is going to happen! All the menus for your whole lifetime, what you are going to eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner, everything is completely mapped out and made known to you. There is no fun in this! There are no surprises, no turns of events. If you want to have some surprises, make your plans, do what you have to, and leave the outcome to the factors that shape the unfolding of events. What is to happen to you, your own *prārabdha* and that of others, are all intertwined. This is how things happen. If you have understood and assimilated even what has happened so far, you have an attitude that is ready for surprises. That is mental cheerfulness, *manahprasāda*.

A number of things are involved in this. Whenever concern or anxiety arises, we resolve it by bringing back the proper attitude. Just remind yourself that it is nice being yourself. Say to yourself, 'It is nice being myself.' In whichever area you have to change, make efforts to change. If necessary, take help, even the help of *Bhagavān*, in the form of prayer. I do not have to prove myself to anybody. If another person thinks ill of me, it is his problem. I just accept myself as I am. 'It is nice being myself.' Have a sentence like this and repeat it now and then like a *mantra*. You will find that you are together as a person. That is, at least psychologically, the result of the teaching.

Of course, essentially there is nothing but yourself. You are the only one here, and therefore, there is no problem. But even psychologically, it is just nice being myself. I accept myself, as I am, totally; I do not need to prove anything to anybody on this earth. Not even to God. If I have to prove myself to God, then, his acceptance of me would become conditional. Then he is not God. He is like any other person. If the person who does not accept you, as you are, is someone who cares for you, and therefore you care for his opinion, what kind of care is that? When someone cannot accept you as you are, what is that care? Suppose a nurse taking care of a patient, does not accept him as he is. She complains that he goes on scratching. But that is his problem! That is why she is taking care of him! She can tell him not to scratch too much, or put some gloves on him, or cut his nails so that he does not create new problems for himself. But she has to accept him as he is. That is what care is! If someone cares for me, he must necessarily take me as I am. That is what counts. Those who really care for you, do not have any opinion about you; they just take you as you are. If someone mistakes you, it is his problem. Just remember, 'It is nice being myself.' When you get up in the morning, acknowledge that it is nice being alive. You do not take life for granted. It is one more day for celebration. Plan how you will celebrate today. Even under the shower, you can start celebrating. Like this, celebrate the day with what you are doing. It does not mean that you must bake a cake everyday. Anything that you do is a celebration. 'I am alive today. It is nice being alive. It is nice doing what I do.' That is what the attitude is. This is *manahprasāda*.

When the mind has this attitude, there is *saumyatva*. This is an expression of the frame of mind, the *antaḥ-karaṇa-vṛtti*. *Śaṅkara* says it is clarity, *svacchatā*, which is also cheerfulness. *Śaṅkara* says something very interesting here. Suppose a father's

eyebrows are raised when he looks at his son. From this external indication, the boy understands his father's mental state—that he is angry. Then, as a son, he tries to please him. Once the father is pleased, what happens? He has a smile. From this smile, the child is able to understand that his father is okay now. The facial expression reveals what is in the mind. That pleased frame of mind, *vṛtti*, reflected in the face is what is called *saumyatva*. Thus, *Śaṅkara* says, 'From the cheerfulness of the face, etc., the frame of mind is inferred.' When *manahprasāda* is there, there is an external expression evident on the face, and that is what they call *saumyatva*. It reveals a cheerfulness in the mind. From the mouth, eyes, eyebrows, words, the whole demeanour of the person, you infer that he is pleased. The *tapas* here is, when you are displeased, you bring back a pleased condition of mind, which will bring about a smile. This is not a behavioural modification, but a change that comes about by a process of thinking.

Mauna is restraint in speaking. Even though it is a discipline of the organ of speech, and might be included in the discussion of *vāktapās*, here it is considered as a mental discipline. Why? Speaking properly, and sometimes not speaking, is possible only when you have *mauna* inside. When there are certain words that you want to say, and you refrain from saying them, that is *mauna*. If the thoughts themselves do not arise, that also is *mauna*. Even if they do, by proper thinking you eliminate the necessity to express them. In this way, the pressure to talk is not built up inside. The effect of the absence of a necessity to talk is externally expressed as *mauna*. Generally there is always a pressure to talk. We build it up. The absence of such a pressure to talk to another person is what is called *mauna*. This silence at the level of speech is because of the mind being silent. It is a *tapās* because it can be accomplished only by discipline. There is an attempt involved, by proper thinking, to bring about *mauna*.

Ātmavinigraha is mastery over the ways of the mind, in general. There is no ambiguity about the meaning of the word *ātmā* here. Since the topic is mental *tapās*, it can only mean mind. *Mauna* is a particular aspect of this *tapās* with reference to speech. But *ātmavinigraha* is mastery with reference to everything. By proper discipline, one gains a certain mastery over the ways of thinking and is not carried away by a thought process. Whatever is necessary in following this discipline is called *tapās*. Any writing that you do to give expression to a feeling that you do not want to verbalize to someone, or any kind of therapy you undergo, is also *ātmavinigraha*. It includes anything you do, which is useful in getting rid of some pressure. All your emotions have to be put in order, and whatever you do to accomplish that comes under *ātmavinigraha*. Anything you do for the sake of mental health is a *sādhana*. It is not outside *yoga*.

Bhāva-saṃśuddhi is a particular technical expression. Clean intentions when you are dealing with people is *bhāvasaṃśuddhi*. Whether your motives are understood by others or not, they are clean. The motive is at the level of the mind, not action. If the motive is not clean, we analyse why this is so, and thereby, get rid of the particular type of thinking that allowed such a motive to come. *Śaṅkara* explains this

bhāvasaṃśuddhi as *amāyāvitva*, absence of deception. *Māyāvi* means, in this context, a cheat. He does or says one thing, and thinks something entirely different. This nature of a *māyāvi* is called *māyāvitva*. The one who is free from this *māyāvitva*, one who is totally free from any deceit in his interactions with people has *bhāvasaṃśuddhi*. All these together constitute *mānasaṃ tapas*.

Now this threefold *tapas*—*kāyika*—physical, *vācika*—oral, and *mānasa*—mental, is going to be further categorized as threefold, depending on the disposition of the one who is doing it. The same thing can be done, but the way in which it is done, and the purpose for which it is done determine whether it is *sāttvika-tapas*, *rājasika-tapas*, or *tāmasika-tapas*.

ॐ ऋषेः प्रोक्तं त्रिविधं तपः
+ ज्ञानपूर्वकं युक्तं सत्त्विकं तपः ॥ १७ ॥

*śraddhayā parayā taptam tapastat trividham naraiḥ
aphalākāṅkṣibhīr yuktaiḥ sāttvikam paricakṣate*

Verse 17

īśānāḥ tat trividham tapas — that threefold *tapas*; + *jñānapūrvakaṃ* *naraiḥ* — by the people who have no expectation of results (other than mental purity); *yuktaiḥ* — who are composed; *ṛṣeḥ* — with total *śraddhā*; *īśānā* *taptam* — observed; *śūnyaḥ* *sāttvikam* — *sāttvika*; *apṛakṣāṇaḥ* *paricakṣate* — they call

That three-fold *tapas*, observed with total *śraddhā* by people who have no expectation of results (other than mental purity) and who are composed, is called *sāttvika*.

Śraddhayā parayā means, ‘with a *śraddhā*, which is complete.’ It lacks nothing. With full *śraddhā*, the *tapas*, discipline, is observed, *taptam*. In what is this *śraddhā*? It is the *śraddhā* that, what the *śāstra* says is true, *āstikya buddhi*. Because of this, all the stipulations that are mentioned in the *śāstra* are followed, without compromise. Not only that, he has the same *āstikya buddhi* in what the *guru* says. The words of the teacher are looked upon as true by him. If he does not understand them, he tries to understand them with the assumption that they are true.

This *tapas* is observed by human beings, *naraiḥ*, in a threefold way, *trividham*, that is, *kāyika*, *vācika*, or *mānasa*.

Who are the people by whom the *tapas*, being discussed here, is done? They are not doing it for the sake of a result like security, pleasure, or *punya* to be enjoyed later. They are free of all such expectations with reference to results, they are the *aphalākāṅkṣīs*, and are doing it only for mental purity, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. They

have a mind, which is composed and committed, *yukta*. Those who have been well-taught say, *paricakṣate*, that *tapas* of this sort done by people like this, is *sāttvika*.

Next, *Bhagavān* talks about *rājasika-tapas*.

ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं
 ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं

*satkāramānapūjārtham tapo dambhena caiva yat
 kriyate tadiha proktaṃ rājasam calamadhruvam*

Verse 18

ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं
 ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं ॐ ईदं
satkāra-māna-pūjārtham — for the sake of (receiving) honour, respect and worship; *Sē B Ē ca eva* — and indeed; *nū | Ēā dambhena* — with ostentation; *ā Ēā | Ēā yat tapas* — the *tapas* which; *ĒGō Ēā kriyate* — is done; *ī Ēā tat* — that; *Sē Ēā calam* — (which is) unsteady; + *WĒō Ēā adhruvam* — not lasting; < Ē iha — here; ॐ Ēā rājasam proktaṃ — is called *rājasika*

That *tapas*, which is done for the sake of (receiving) honour, respect, and worship and with ostentation, which is unsteady and not lasting, is called here *rājasika*.

This type of worship is done by people, not for *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*, but purely for *satkāra*, that is, for the purpose of being considered a good person by others. *Śaṅkara* says, it is done so that people will say, ‘He is a good person, an ascetic, a *brāhmaṇa*—*ayam sādhuḥ tapasvī brāhmaṇaḥ*.’ He wants to pass as all of these. He practises austerities so that people will say, ‘Look how disciplined he is, how nicely he talks, how he eats so sparingly, etc.’ This is exactly what he wants. He is doing *tapas* for no other purpose. It is just another form of proving oneself. This is called *satkāra-māna-pūjārtham*.

He will also appear in a particular form that will reveal that he is a great *tapasvī*. And he will not do his *tapas* quietly sitting at home, but in a public place, where he can be noticed. He will have the accessories of a *sādhu*, like a *kamaṇḍalu* in his hand and will demand that, when he walks in, everybody should get up. This is *māna*. He makes sure that everybody recognizes him as a *tapasvī* and that they all prostrate to him and receive him with respect. And he will insist that the highest seat is offered to him. If he sits lower than anyone, he will think he is disrespected. This is called *māna*.

He is a *tapasvī* so that everybody will worship him; and he keeps his feet ready for that. *Pādapūjā*, that is, washing, anointing, and offering flowers, etc., to the feet is something people generally do to *sādhus*. But this person poses as a *sādhu* in order to get that done. It is exactly the reverse of what it is supposed to be. Some people really want that kind of result for their efforts. I knew one person like that. In one particular month, *Mārgaśīrṣa*, we used to go round the town every day, early in the morning and

sing bhajans. There is one chief, the organizer who walks in front of the group. Sometimes, as we went round, people would come and offer *namaskāras*. The leader seemed to enjoy it and look forward to the *namaskāras*. Some people love it. This is not something that is only for discussion. It is all true. There are people like that. They want respect to be shown to them. This is all because they have no self-respect.¹ This type of *tapas* is done by this person, out of *dambha*, just so that he can get recognition. Just to make people know that one is a *tapasvī* so that he can get all these honours. When he does *tapas*, he makes sure he has an audience.

That *tapas* is called *rājasika* here in the *śāstra*—*tat tapaḥ rājasaṃ proktam iha*. This is a *tapas* that is born of *raḅguṇa*.

It is *calam*, unsteady, and not lasting, *adhruvam*. People may give him some respect for some time, but later they will find out that he is not a real *tapasvī*, not a highly disciplined, evolved religious person. Whatever opinion they had, will change. This is because, when one is not a *tapasvī*, and poses as one, the responsibility is too enormous to maintain. One day or the other he will burst out. Somebody will fail to respect him the way he wants, and he will get angry. Then people will understand what *tapas* he has. Therefore, that *tapas* is not going to last—neither in terms of its practice, nor its result.

Understand all the problems that people can have! If one is concerned about all this, and wants this *satkāra*, *māna*, and *pūjā*, what about the real thing that is there to be studied, to be understood? To assimilate it, there is so much to know. Those things all go down the drain, when one is worried about these small things.

Next *Bhagavān* talks about the *tāmasika-tapas*.

“मूढग्रहेणैवैवमुत्सदानार्थं यत्पिदायां क्रियते तपः
परास्योत्सदानार्थं वा तत्तमसामुदाहृतम् ॥१९॥”

*mūḁhagrāheṇātmano yatpīḁayā kriyate tapaḥ
parasyotsādanārthaṃ vā tattāmasamudāhṛtam*

Verse 19

“मूढग्रहेणैवैवमुत्सदानार्थं यत्पिदायां क्रियते तपः
mūḁha-grāheṇa — due to deluded understanding; +*ैवैवमुत्सदानार्थं* *ātmanaḥ
pīḁayā* — by afflicting one's body; *ैवैवमुत्सदानार्थं* *vā* — or; *परास्योत्सदानार्थं* *parasya* — of another; =*ैवैवमुत्सदानार्थं* *utsādanārtham* — for the sake of destruction; *यत्पिदायां क्रियते तपः* *yat tapas* — the *tapas* which;
मूढग्रहेणैवैवमुत्सदानार्थं *kriyate* — is done; *तत्तमसामुदाहृतम्* *tat* — that; *ैवैवमुत्सदानार्थं* *tāmasam* — *tāmasika*; =*मूढग्रहेणैवैवमुत्सदानार्थं* *udāhṛtam* — is called

¹ *If you don't respect yourself, you want others to respect you, so that you can see yourself as respectable. And there is always someone to show that respect to you! But there is no growth and no possibility of antaḁkaraṇa-śuddhi here.*

That *tapas*, which is done, due to deluded understanding, by afflicting one's body or for the sake of destroying another, is called *tāmasika*.

Mūḍhagrāheṇa means, 'with a perception that is deluded.' This is because of a lack of discrimination about oneself, about what is to be done, and about what is proper and what is improper. None of this is very clear. With this lack of discrimination, one afflicts oneself, *ātmanaḥ*, one's own body, with *tapas*. It afflicts not only the body, but also the mind, and does not produce very much of a result. Standing on one leg for a length of time, or lying on a bed of nails is the type of *tapas* referred to here. Of course, there should be a lot of people to watch him! Only then will he do that! You can see all these types of *tapasvīs* at a Kumbhamela.

Further, such *tapas* is sometimes done for the purpose of destruction of another person—*parasya utsādanārtham*. People, who have the disposition of an *asura*, or a *rākṣasa*, like *Rāvaṇa*, do a lot of *tapas* just for the destruction of their enemies. Such a person wants to gain some power or get hold of some spirit so that he can send it to destroy people. This is what is commonly called black magic. There is a *mantra-śāstra* for all this; but I do not think it works these days. Some extraordinary *asura-tapas* is required for that, and I do not think anyone is doing it now. *Tapas* like this is called *tāmasa*.

Now the three types of *tapas*, *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*, in terms of the *guṇa* that is predominant in their performance, have been told. Two types of *tapas*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa* are mentioned, so that, we can avoid them, and only one, *sāttvika-tapas*, is really *tapas*.

In the same way, giving charity, *dāna*, is also threefold in terms of *guṇa*. That is being enumerated from the next verse onwards.

नृपि एतन्मया दत्तं यत्तदा दत्तं नृपि

नृपि एतन्मया दत्तं यत्तदा दत्तं नृपि

dātavyamiti yaddānaṃ dīyate'nupakāriṇe

deśe kāle ca pātre ca taddānaṃ sāttvikam smṛtam

Verse 20

एतन्मया दत्तं यत्तदा दत्तं नृपि — the charity which; नृपि एतन्मया दत्तं — (with the attitude that) 'It is to be given'; + एतन्मया दत्तं — to one from whom one does not expect a return; नृपि एतन्मया दत्तं — in the proper place; एतन्मया दत्तं — and at the proper time; एतन्मया दत्तं — and to a worthy recipient; नृपि एतन्मया दत्तं — is given; एतन्मया दत्तं — that charity; एतन्मया दत्तं — is considered *sāttvika*

That charity, which is given thinking, 'It is to be given,' to one from whom one does not expect a return, in the proper place, at the proper time, and to a worthy recipient, is considered *sāttvika* charity.

Charity that is given with the attitude, 'It is to be given—*dātavyam iti*,' is *sāttvika-dāna*. A particular situation calls for giving and that gives rise to the response, 'This is to be given by me.' Like the appreciation of *karma-yoga*, 'This is to be done by me.' The same attitude extended to giving when it is to be done is charity. This is also, therefore, *karma-yoga*. What is given may be some article, or it may be some help extended in the form of effort. It is the attitude with which it is done that makes giving *sāttvika*.

Whether it is *sāttvika* or not is also determined by the kind of person to whom it is given. Charity that is *sāttvika* is that given to a person, whom you do not expect to help you in return—*anupakāriṇe yat dīyate*. Śaṅkara says this can be a person who is incapable of returning your help. Like someone very old, or feeble, or impoverished, whose circumstances are not likely to improve much. It is clearly a one-way giving. But, he says that this type of charity is also given to someone who is capable of returning the aid, with no expectation of return. Even though he is capable of giving, you don't expect him to return your help. That is called *dāna*. Otherwise, it becomes an investment. Only *dāna*, that is given without any expectation of return, even thanks, is real giving. People often complain, 'I gave him a gift, and he didn't even thank me.' Or they say, 'He never remembers me. He never writes.' This attitude is a problem. Here, however, even though the person to whom you give is capable of giving back, that is not the expectation. It is said that when you give with the right hand, the left hand need not know. What is given is totally forgotten. That is real giving, and is called here *sāttvika-dāna*.

It is also important that the person should be a suitable recipient, *pātra*. *Pātra* literally means a vessel, and the one who receives is like a receptacle; therefore, he is also called a *pātra*. The person should deserve the help that you extend or the gift that you give. You cannot simply give just because somebody asks you. You have to see whether the person deserves it or not. Śaṅkara also says that it should be given to *śaḍaṅga-veda-pāraṅga*, a person who has the knowledge of the six disciplines auxiliary to the study of the Veda.

Not only that, giving is to be done at the right place and right time, *deśe kāle ca*. This is part of the religious culture. Śaṅkara says, it is to be given at a place like *Kurukṣetra*, which is considered a place where one can accumulate *puṇya*, that is, it is a *puṇya-kṣetra*. In such places, people come to take a bath on certain days. *Kurukṣetra* is a place near Delhi where there is a large pond that is considered sacred, in which people take a religious bath, especially on the day of a solar eclipse.

And every twelve years, when Jupiter moves into Aries, there is a Kumbhamela. Thousands of people come there for a bath at that time. And wherever there is a temple or a place of sacred bathing like a river, it becomes a place of pilgrimage and is considered a *puṇya-kṣetra*. Rishikesh is a *puṇya-kṣetra* because it is at the foothills of the Himalayas where the river Ganga comes down to the plains. Similarly, Hardwar and

Varanasi are *puṇya-kṣetras*. And a place of confluence, *prayāga*, like Allahabad where the Ganga meets the Yamuna is a *puṇya-kṣetra*. Sometimes, by association a place becomes a *puṇya-kṣetra*, like Ayodhya by association with *Śrī Rāma*, Vrindavan by association with *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. Or, because of association with a saint or some event recorded in the *purāṇas*, a place is considered sacred in the minds of people. There is a whole literature on the various *kṣetras* in the Indian culture. A holy place has its own *sthala-purāṇa* relating the events that make the place sacred. Any sacred place is the appropriate place for charity. In fact, it is mandatory that one give *dāna* at such sacred places. So, the *dāna*, given at such places to the right person at the right time is considered *sāttvika*.

It is also important to give at the right time. Help must come on time. It is of no use giving first-aid treatment after seven hours. The person has to be attended to immediately. Charity also has to be done when it is needed. There is also a religiously appropriate time to give. *Śaṅkara* mentions the *puṇya-kāla* for giving *dāna*, as *saṅkrānti*, the time of the winter solstice, when the sun begins to travel north, etc. This *makara-saṅkrānti* is considered a good day for distribution of food. *Grahaṇa*, the time of an eclipse, is also a very sacred time for distribution of money. This is done even today. *Dāna* is a very important thing in the Vedic tradition. Even today food, cattle, land, house, and clothing, are given as part of a ritual, and lastly, a daughter is given away in marriage. That is the highest *dāna* of this type. But *vidyā-dāna*, giving knowledge, is higher than that too.

Now *Bhagavān* describes the *rājasa-dāna* in the next verse.

ॐ ईति दानं यत् प्रत्युपाकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः
 नृपेति दियते तत्तद्विषयं राजसंस्मृतम् ॥२१॥
yattu pratyupakārārthaṃ phalamuddiśya vā punaḥ
dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṃ taddānaṃ rājasam smṛtam

Verse 21

ॐ *tu* — on the other hand; ॐ ईति दानं यत् *dānam* — the charity which; ॐ ईति दानं यत् प्रत्युपाकारार्थं *pratyupakārārtham* — for the sake of being helped in return; ॐ ईति दानं यत् प्रत्युपाकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य *vā punaḥ* — or again; ॐ ईति दानं यत् प्रत्युपाकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य *phalam uddiśya* — keeping in view, a result, (*puṇya*); ॐ ईति दानं यत् प्रत्युपाकारार्थं *parikliṣṭam ca* — and that which is fraught with pain; ॐ ईति दानं यत् प्रत्युपाकारार्थं *dīyate* — is given; ॐ ईति दानं यत् प्रत्युपाकारार्थं *tat* — that; ॐ ईति दानं यत् प्रत्युपाकारार्थं *rājasam smṛtam* — is considered *rājasa*

On the other hand, that charity, which is given for the sake of being helped in return, or keeping in view, a result, (*puṇya*), to be gained later, and that which is fraught with pain, is considered *rājasika*.

Dāna that is given with the expectation that one will be helped in return, *pratyupakārārtha*, is *rājasa*. He gives at the right time, when it is needed. But he thinks

that when the time comes, the person to whom he gives will help him. That is why he gives. He does it to make the person feel obliged and with the expectation that he will get something in return. It is also giving, but because there is an expectation of receiving something in return, it becomes more of an investment than *dāna*.

He gives keeping a result in view—*phalam uddiśya*. Earlier it was said that he gives expecting something in return, that is a phala, a result. Then, why is this mentioned separately? This is to indicate that he has a long-range plan. The result that he is keeping in view here, is an unseen result, *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*, in the form of *puṇya*. He wants to reap the benefit of this *puṇya* later—either in this life, or in the next.

Then again, it is given with some pain, *parikliṣṭaṃ dīyate*. Whenever you give something, there is a sense of loss. Perhaps you do not really want to give, but you do not want to be called a miser, and therefore, you give. You do it to preserve your name. Money that is given this way is sticky money because it does not leave your hand easily. When there is pain in giving, it is very clear that the giving is born of *rajoguṇa*.

The third type of *dāna* is:

+ नान्येऽकाले अप्रेक्ष्येऽपि नृपेतिहा
 + अप्रेक्ष्येऽपि एवेतिहाऽपि एवैतन्मया
adeśakāle yaddānamapātrebhyaśca dīyate
asatkṛtamavajñātaṃ tattāmasamudāhṛtam

Verse 22

अप्रेक्ष्येऽपि एवैतन्मया *āyat dānam* — the charity, which; + नान्ये-अकाले *adeśa-kāle* — at the wrong place and wrong time; + अप्रेक्ष्येऽपि *apātrebhyaḥ ca* — and to unworthy recipients; + अप्रेक्ष्येऽपि *asatkṛtam* — without respect, (improperly); + एवेतिहा *avajñātam* — contemptuously; नृपेतिहा *dīyate* — is given; इतिहा *at* — that (charity); एवैतन्मया *tattāmasam udāhṛtam* — is called *tāmasa*

That charity, which is given without respect, (improperly), and contemptuously at the wrong place and wrong time, and to unworthy recipients, is called *tāmasika*.

Dāna given in the wrong place at the wrong time, *adeśa-kāle*, is *tāmasa-dāna*. *Śaṅkara* says, it is a place, which is not clean. There is no wrong time to give charity except when it is too late to be of any help. It should be given in time. And it should not be given to the undeserving, *apātrebhyaḥ*. Who are they? *Śaṅkara* says, they are people who cannot handle money, thieves, etc. The problem with giving to a person who cannot handle money is that he will squander what you give and come back to you again and again for more. Once you begin giving to such a person, you have to keep giving all the time. If you do not give, he will malign and abuse you. He does not quarrel with those who do not give. But if you give to him twice, thrice, and refuse the fourth time, you

become a bad person. Similarly, one should not give to a thief, or a drunkard, or a gambler, or anyone else who will not use the gift properly. A gambler always thinks he will win tomorrow, but is never able to repay his debts. Giving to such people is not proper. It is not *dāna* at all.

Even though the person to whom you give is deserving, it is not real *dāna*, if it is not given properly, *asatkṛtam*. In India, there is a religious protocol that must be followed which includes pleasing words, and on certain occasions, washing the feet of and offering *dāna* to the recipient. If you give some money to the right person at the right time and place, but give it improperly by just throwing it at him, that is without honour, it is a *tāmasaṃ dānam*.

Avajñāta means making the person feel ashamed that he came to you and asked for help. It is absolute discourtesy. Though you give, it is only after criticizing the person for half an hour. Giving with such disrespect, and even contempt, is *avajñātaṃ dānam*.

This chapter began with *Arjuna* asking a question about a person who performs rituals without following the *śāstra-vidhi*, but with *śraddhā*. How do we view those *karmas*, in terms of *guṇas*? Are they *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, or *tāmasika*? Now *Kṛṣṇa* answers that question.

He says that, if a person has *śraddhā*, and performs the *karma* saying, ‘*Oṃ tat sat,*’ at the beginning and at the end, that is enough to make the *karma sāttvika*, even if he does not follow the *śāstra-vidhi* completely. If there is an omission, either due to ignorance, or haste, or some distraction, or unavailability of certain materials, that can be made up by simply saying ‘*Oṃ tat sat.*’ These words, said at the beginning and at the end make the *karma* complete. How do we know this? It is purely from *śāstra*. Saying ‘*Oṃ tat sat,*’ makes the *karma* efficacious. Even in a *pūjā*, one offers *akṣatā*¹ as a substitute for clothes, ornaments, and so on. This will never work in human transaction. But in a ritual, we have options, and one of them is saying, ‘*Oṃ tat sat,*’ to make up for any omissions or commissions. The complete sentence, though just indicated in the verse, is ‘*Oṃ tat sat īśvarārpaṇam astu—*Let this be an offering unto the Lord who is *Oṃ tat sat.*’ At the beginning of any ritual, and then again at the end, it is a common practice to say, ‘*Oṃ tat sat.*’ In this way when the *karma* is dedicated unto *Īśvara*, it makes the *karma sāttvika*, and therefore, more efficacious.

ॐ तत् सत् । इति श्रद्धां कृत्वा ।
 यज्ञं कृत्वा । अथ यज्ञं कृत्वा ।
 यज्ञं कृत्वा । अथ यज्ञं कृत्वा ।
 यज्ञं कृत्वा । अथ यज्ञं कृत्वा ।

*oṃ tatsaditi nirdeśo brahmaṇastrividhaḥ smṛtaḥ
 brāhmaṇāstena vedāśca yajñāśca vihitaḥ purā*

Verse 23

¹ Rice grains made auspicious

+॑त॒सा॒ इति॑ ॑सा॒ इति॑ ॑सा॒ इति॑ ॑सा॒ इति॑ *om tat sat iti* — saying, ‘Om tat sat’; ब्र॒ह्म॒णो॑ ब्र॒ह्म॒णो॑ ब्र॒ह्म॒णो॑ *brahmaṇaḥ* — of *Brahman*; त्रि॒वि॒धा॒ इति॑ त्रि॒वि॒धा॒ इति॑ त्रि॒वि॒धा॒ इति॑ *trividhaḥ nirdeśaḥ* — the three-fold mention; स्मृ॒ता॒ इति॑ स्मृ॒ता॒ इति॑ स्मृ॒ता॒ इति॑ *smṛtaḥ* — is thought about; ते॒ना॒ इति॑ ते॒ना॒ इति॑ ते॒ना॒ इति॑ *tena* — by that; ब्र॒ह्म॒णो॑ ब्र॒ह्म॒णो॑ ब्र॒ह्म॒णो॑ *brāhmaṇāḥ* — the *brāhmaṇas*; वे॒दा॒ इति॑ वे॒दा॒ इति॑ वे॒दा॒ इति॑ *vedāḥ ca* — and the Vedas; य॒ज्ञो॒ इति॑ य॒ज्ञो॒ इति॑ य॒ज्ञो॒ इति॑ *yajñāḥ ca* — and rituals; प॒र॒ा॒ इति॑ प॒र॒ा॒ इति॑ प॒र॒ा॒ इति॑ *purā* — in the beginning; वि॒हि॒ता॒ इति॑ वि॒हि॒ता॒ इति॑ वि॒हि॒ता॒ इति॑ *vihitāḥ* — were created

‘Om tat sat,’ is the three-fold expression of *Brahman*. By that, the *brāhmaṇas*, the (four) Vedas, and rituals were created in the beginning.

A meaningful word, any thing that reveals something is called *nirdeśa*. It is an expression that reveals something. In that sense a name is also called a *nirdeśa*, because it stands for the object and reveals that object. The three-word expression, *trividhaḥ nirdeśaḥ*, ‘Om tat sat,’ is mentioned, *smṛtaḥ*, in the *vedānta-śāstra*, and by those who know the *vedānta-śāstra*. Like any *nirdeśa*, these words reveal an object, the *nirdeśya*. What is that? The three words, ‘Om tat sat,’ reveal *Brahman*. The word *tat* indicates *Brahman*, as it does in the sentence, ‘*tat tvam asi*.’¹ *Om* also is *Brahman*, as stated in the *upaniṣad-vākya*, *om iti brahma*,² and *om iti etad akṣaram idam sarvam*.³

Then the word *sat* is used for *Brahman* as the cause of creation, *sad eva somya idam agre āsīt ekam eva advitīyam*.⁴ All three words, independently and together, reveal *Brahman*. In this expression, *brāhmaṇāḥ vedāḥ yajñāḥ ca vihitāḥ purā—brāhmaṇas, vedas, and yajñas* were created, the word *brāhmaṇa* can be taken as denoting the *varṇa*, that is, *brāhmaṇa*, and thus standing for all four categories of people mentioned in the Veda. Or it can be adjective to the word, *vedāḥ*, meaning the Vedas that are called *brāhmaṇas*. This includes all four Vedas. They all begin with *Om*. *Yajñas* are the rituals mentioned in the Veda, like *agnihotra*, as well as any form of worship to the Lord, like *pūjā*. All these *brāhmaṇas, vedas, and yajñās* were created by saying ‘Om tat sat.’ Because by saying this, Brahmaji created everything. These words came out from Brahmaji in the beginning, *purā*; then everything was created, and therefore, they have become very important words. Just by saying them, you create a certain force that neutralizes any wrong action committed, and makes up for any omission of a prescribed step. One must also have *śraddhā* in the efficacy of saying, ‘Om tat sat.’ If you simply say it without *śraddhā*, it is meaningless.

¹ *Chāndogyopaniṣad* – 6-8-16

² *Taittirīyopaniṣad* – 1-8-1

³ *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad* – 1

⁴ *Chāndogyopaniṣad* – 6-2-1

tadityanabhisandhāya phalaṃ yajñatapaḥkriyāḥ
dānakriyāśca vividhāḥ kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ

Verse 25

īGÉĀ <ÉiÉ *tat iti* — saying *tat*; ÉÉĀ É-É ĀĪRĀ ÉÉÉ& *mokṣa-kāṅkṣibhiḥ* — by those who want *mokṣa*; jĀMĀÉĀ + xÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *phalam anabhisandhāya* — without expecting a result (other than *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*); ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *vividhāḥ* — various; ᵃÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *yajña-tapaḥ-kriyāḥ* — activities (such as) rituals and religious disciplines; nĀĀÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *dāna-kriyāḥ ca* — and charitable activities; ÉGĀÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *kriyante* — are performed

Saying *tat*, various activities (such as) rituals and religious disciplines and charitable activities are performed by those who want *mokṣa*, without expecting a result (other than *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*).

Here, we have to bring in the word ‘*udāhṛtya*,’ which means ‘pronouncing,’ from the previous verse. Even though *tat*, that, is a pronoun, which can refer to anything, when there is no reference mentioned, it indicates only ‘*tat*,’ which is *paraṃ brahma*, the cause of everything, the *tat* in the *vākya*, *tat tvam asi*. Like *Om*, *tat* is the word symbol for *paraṃ brahma*, and has the same effect if it is used in that sense with *śraddhā*. Both *Om* and *tat* are meant for *mumukṣus*. It is used by those who want *mokṣa*, that is, those who want to be free, *mokṣa-kāṅkṣibhiḥ*. When they perform various activities, *vividhāḥ kriyāḥ*, whether they be rituals, *yajña*, religious disciplines, *tapas*, or charitable activities, *dāna-kriyāḥ*. All of them are performed without expecting a result such as *punya*, *anabhisandhāya phalam*. No one can perform an action without expecting a result, but they only want *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, which is not considered a *phala*. A result like *punya*, etc., is not the end in view. These *karmas* are performed purely for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* with the attitude that it is an offering to *Īśvara*, *īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhyā*. And they are also performed in order to please *Īśvara*, *īśvara-prītyartham*. They are done by people who want to be free and are begun by pronouncing these auspicious words. Generally *tat* is not used alone, but in the expression, ‘*Om tat sat*,’ *Om* is used, without the other words following, at the beginning of any undertaking. But what is said here is that each one of them is efficacious. Using these words, any of these activities becomes *sāttvika*.

The application of *Om* and the word *tat* have been told. Now he tells how the word *sat* is used in the same way.

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sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca sadityetat prayujyate
praśaste karmaṇi tathā sacchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate

Verse 26

⁂᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚ ᳚᳚ ᳚᳚ *sadbhāve* — with reference to bringing into existence; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚ ᳚᳚ ᳚᳚ *sādhu-bhāve ca* — and with reference to a righteous life; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ *sat iti etat* — this ‘sat’; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ *prayujyate* — is used; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ *pārtha* — O! Son of *Prthā*; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚ *tathā* — so too; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ *sat-śabdaḥ* — the word *sat*; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ *praśaste karmaṇi* — with reference to a sanctifying *karma*; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ *yuujyate* — is used

This ‘*sat*’ is used with reference to bringing into existence and (with reference to) a righteous life; so too, *Arjuna*, the word *sat* is used for a sanctifying *karma*.

The word *sat* is used in different senses, all of which are good. *Sadbhāva* means bringing into existence something that was not there before. *Śaṅkara* gives, as an example, the birth of a son. The previously non-existent son is born to a given person. For that son, the word *sat* is used; now the son ‘is.’ The word *sat* is used for any object that exists—a pot exists—*ghaṭaḥ san*, the cloth exists—*paṭaḥ san*, etc. Since it is used in the sense of existence, and the only existence is *Parameśvara*, the word *sat* is purifying, it is *pavitra*. When you say the pot ‘is,’ or the cloth ‘is,’ that ‘is’ is *sat, paraṃ brahma*.

Sādhu-bhāva means a righteous life, a life lived in keeping with *dharma*. One who follows *dharma* is called *sadācāra*, or *satpuruṣa*. And association with such a person is *satsaṅga*. Anyone who lives a life of *dharma*, or knows the *sadvastu*, is called *satpuruṣa*. In that sense also, the word *sat* is used, *prayujyate*. And it is also used with reference to a sacred *karma*, *praśaste karmaṇi*. *Śaṅkara* cites marriage, *vivāha* as an example. This is considered a good *karma*, *satkarma*, as is *upanayana*. Any important *karma* which sanctifies a particular event in your life is called *satkarma*.

Further,

⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚

᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚

yajñe tapasi dāne ca sthitiḥ saditi cocyate

karma caiva tadarthīyaṃ sadityevābhidhīyate

Verse 27

⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚ *yajñe* — with reference to a ritual; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ *tapasi* — with reference to a religious discipline; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ *dāne ca* — and with reference to giving; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ — commitment; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ = ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚ *sat iti ca ucyate* — is called ‘*sat*’; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ *karma ca eva* — and indeed a *karma*; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ *tadarthīyam* — for their sake; ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚ + ⁂᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚᳚ *sat iti eva abhidhīyate* — is also called ‘*sat*’

A commitment with reference to a ritual, a religious discipline, and giving is called ‘*sat*,’ and a *karma* for their sake (or for the sake of *Īśvara*) is also called ‘*sat*.’

Sthitih means a state of remaining committed to some pursuit. A pursuit of, or commitment to the performance of a ritual-*yajña*, a religious discipline-*tapas*, or giving charity-*dāna*, is considered to be *sat*. It is a proper pursuit, provided of course, that it is done with *śraddhā* and the appropriate attitude. Similarly, any *karma* that is *tadarthīya*, done for the sake of these, that is, *yajña*, *dāna*, *tapas*, etc., is also called *sat*. Or the word, *tadarthīya* can mean, ‘for the sake of *Īśvara*.’ Any action performed as a dedication to *Īśvara* is considered *satkarma*. This can even be a non-religious activity, *laukika-karma*, that is done in conformity with *dharma*. Since the *dharma* itself is *Parameśvara*, naturally, an activity in keeping with *dharma* becomes a *karma* offered to *Īśvara*. It is *satkarma*.

Śaṅkara says that even if the *karma* is not *sāttvika*, or is incomplete, by using these three words, ‘*Oṃ tat sat*,’ it becomes *sāttvika* and complete, of course, when it is done with *śraddhā*. All the omissions and commissions are made up for. If there is a lack of proper attitude, making it *asāttvika*, or if certain steps are omitted or mistakes are made, ‘*Oṃ tat sat*,’ is an expression which will make up for everything. Finally, he says that even saying, ‘*Oṃ tat sat*,’ without any *śraddhā* is useless. *Śraddhā* is the most important factor. If it is proper, it makes the *karma sāttvika*. This answers *Arjuna*’s question. The efficacy of all these *karmas* is entirely dependent upon what kind of *śraddhā* you have. *Śraddhā* makes it work. Then everything is accomplished.

Therefore,

+ ॐ त्र दैव्यं श्रद्धाया हुतात्म दत्तात्म तपस्तप्तात्म कर्तात्म च यत्
+ ॐ त्र नु असति उच्यते इति पार्था न च तत्प्रेत्या नो इहा ॥२८॥

*aśraddhayā hutam dattam tapastaptam kṛtam ca yat
asadityucyate pārtha na ca tatpretya no iha*

Verse 28

^ॐ त्र दैव्यं *śraddhayā* — that which is; + ॐ त्र दैव्यं *aśraddhayā* — without *śraddhā*; श्रद्धाया हुतात्म *hutam* — is offered (in a religious ritual); हुतात्म दत्तात्म *dattam* — is given; तपस्तप्तात्म *taptam tapas* — religious discipline performed; कर्तात्म च यत् *kṛtam ca* — and that which is done; + ॐ त्र दैव्यं असति उच्यते *asaditi ucyate* — is called *asat*, that which does not serve its purpose; इति पार्था *pārtha* — O! Son of *Prthā*, *Arjuna*; तत्प्रेत्या नो इहा *tat pretya no iha* — (is) not (fruitful) after death; नो इहा *no iha* — and indeed not; इहा *iha* — here

That which is, without *śraddhā*, offered (in a religious ritual), given (as charity), performed as a religious discipline, and that (*karma*), which is done is called *asat*, that which does not serve its purpose, *Arjuna*. And that is not (fruitful) after death and indeed not here.

There is an *upaniṣad-vākya* that says that what is given is to be given with *śraddhā*; without *śraddhā*, it is not to be given, *śraddhayā deyam aśraddhayā*

adeyam.¹ Any charity given or a religious discipline performed without *śraddhā* is considered *asat*. This is what is said later in the same *Upaniṣad*, ‘*asanneva sa bhavati asat brahmeti veda cet*—he becomes (as good as) non-existent, if he considers that *Brahman* is non-existent.’² Any of these actions done without *śraddhā* in the existence of *Parameśvara*, and in the truth of the words of the *śāstra*, are as good as not done, *asat*. *Hutam* means what is offered, usually, an oblation that is offered into the fire. If, even as he is offering ghee into the fire he is thinking, ‘I am wasting this ghee by offering it here; there are poor people who could be using it,’ then that offering is useless. Some people do argue that instead of offering kilos of ghee into the fire, we should give it to the poor. But generally, tins of ghee are not offered unless the ritual is meant for the good of the people—poor and rich. If this is not understood, such arguments can undermine one’s *śraddhā* as one is making the offering.

Then there are others who just make an offering because of religiosity, or because they are compelled to do it. Because his father or mother asks him to do it, he does the ritual to oblige them. Or the opinion of society may be motivating him. ‘What will they think if I don’t do it?’ To get a good name, or out of fear of condemnation, he makes his ritual offering. He is a non-believer, *nāstika*, who wants to pass as a believer, *āstika*, and therefore, he may offer. Similarly, a person may give money, but without *śraddhā*. Or he may do some *tapas*, perhaps to gain some name, but not out of *śraddhā*. Similarly, any other *karma*, like singing in praise of *Īśvara*, or doing *namaskāra*, may be done entirely without *śraddhā*, merely as a convention. All these actions are *asat*; they are incapable of producing any merit. They are as good as not done.

Śaṅkara says, such *karmas* are entirely outside the means of gaining *Īśvara*. *Karma* done properly helps you gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, and with a prepared mind, you can understand your identity with *Īśvara*. The gain of *Īśvara* is by this knowledge, and being knowledge, it depends upon *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, which is accomplished by doing *karma* with a proper attitude. When there is no *śraddhā*, even though, it is done, it is of no use. Therefore, what is important is *śraddhā*. In gaining knowledge, *śraddhā* is very important. As we have seen, ‘*śraddhāvān labhate jñānam*—the one who has *śraddhā* gains knowledge.’ Even though all these *karmas* imply a lot of effort, they do not become means for gaining a result after death, *pretya*—going away from this life, because they do not produce *puṇya*. Even now, in this life they do not produce a result. You only lose whatever you offer. How do we know such a *karma* is not useful in producing any result here or hereafter? Because it is censured by the *sādhus*—*sādhubhiḥ ninditatvāt*. *Sādhus* are those people who know the *śāstra*. These that are done without *śraddhā* are not considered to be proper rituals; and it is not considered efficacious by them.

¹ *Taittirīyopaniṣad* –1-11-3

² *Taittirīyopaniṣad* –2-6

What is the *karma* that *Arjuna* is being urged to do here? To fight. Now we can look back to the second chapter where *Kṛṣṇa* said, ‘Therefore, prepare yourself for battle—*tato yuddhāya yujyasva*.’¹ Because, to fight such a battle is his own *dharma*, done with a proper attitude, it will bring *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*, and with that, knowledge of his essential identity with *Īśvara* is possible.

ॐ तत् सत् । इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायाम्
योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनासम्वादे श्रद्धात्रयविविधयोगो नाम
सप्तदशोऽध्यायः ॥१७॥

*om tat sat. iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyām
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde śraddhātrayavibhāgayogonāma
saptadaśo’dhyāyah*

Om tat sat. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, which is nothing but the *Upaniṣads*, the subject matter of which is knowledge of *Brahman* and *yoga* (*karma-yoga*), in the dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, is the seventeenth chapter called, *śraddhā-traya-vibhāga-yoga*, topic of the division into threefold *śraddhā*.

From this it is clear that the *Gītā* is not a pep talk to get *Arjuna* to get up and fight. It is a *śāstra*, which reveals the knowledge of *Brahman*. And it also deals with *karma-yoga*, which includes all that is necessary for gaining the knowledge. In this regard, it talks about values, attitudes, and what is to be done and not to be done. In the seventeenth chapter of this dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, the topic is predominantly the threefold *śraddhā*.

ABABABABAB

¹ *Gītā* – 2-38

CHAPTER 18

MOKĀA-SANNYĒSA-YOGA

(YOGA OF MOKĀA AND SANNYĒSA)

INTRODUCTION

This last chapter is a long chapter. Though nothing new is said, there is some additional elaboration of the various topics already unfolded in the *gītā-sāstra*. Therefore, introducing the eighteenth chapter, *Śaṅkara* says, ‘Summing up the meaning of the whole *gītā-sāstra* in this chapter, the meaning of the Vedas has to be told. Only for this purpose, this chapter is begun.’ The subject matter of the Vedas is the subject matter of the *gītā-sāstra*, which is two-fold—*brahmavidyā* and *yoga-sāstra*. *Brahmavidyā* is the understanding of the *mahāvākya*, ‘*tat tvam asi*,’ which reveals the identity of the *jīva*, the individual and *Īśvara*, the Lord. And *yoga-sāstra* is the means of preparing the individual for *brahmavidyā*. Thus *yoga* includes any *karma* that is in keeping with *dharma*, and done with a proper attitude, with devotion, *bhakti*. It also includes a life of renunciation, *sannyāsa*.

We have seen that there are two lifestyles mentioned for the pursuit of *mokṣa*, one is *sannyāsa*, a life of renunciation, the other is a life of *karma*, activity. This life of activity, however, cannot be a means for *mokṣa* if it is not attended by a proper attitude. While everybody does *karma*, if it is to pave the way for *mokṣa*, it has to be done with the attitude of a *karma-yoga*. This attitude, *bhakti*, an appreciation of *Īśvara* with a commitment to *mokṣa*, has to be there not only for the *karma-yogī*, but also for the *sannyāsī*.

Even a person who is doing *karma* purely for a result would offer a prayer to the Lord asking for that result. He also has *bhakti*. Devotion is common to anyone who recognizes *Īśvara*, but then, if *mokṣa* is not the end in view, *Īśvara* is made into an accomplice for your ordinary exploits. If you want to gain some money or power, you ask God also to chip in a little bit. Though the prayer is directed towards *Īśvara*, *Īśvara* is not the aim of that prayer. In this situation, we understand that there is a confusion with reference to *puruṣārtha*. *Artha*, security and *kāma*, pleasure, become so important that, naturally, you require *Īśvara*’s help to accomplish them. About this type of devotion, *Kṛṣṇa* had said, ‘*mama vartmā anuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ, kāṅkṣantaḥ karmaṇāṃ siddhiṃ yajanta iha devatāḥ, kṣipraṃ hi mānuṣe loke*

siddhir bhavati karmajā,’ which we can paraphrase as, ‘People are all following Me alone, but they don’t know it, and therefore, they invoke other *devatās* to get some small results in this world.’¹ Thus we have a devotee in distress, *ārta*, who, whenever he is in trouble, raises his hands and says, ‘O! *Bhagavan*, please help me; where are you?’ Then there is a devotee who uses *Īśvara*’s grace as a means for accomplishing what he wants, the *arthārthī*. Between the cup and the lip, there are many slips, and he wants to make sure he has the Lord’s grace so that there are no slips. There is nothing wrong with either of these. But then, we have a third *bhakta* who does not want something from *Īśvara*; he wants *Īśvara*. He is a *mumukṣu*, and therefore, a *karma-yogi*. He is not simply someone who wants to accomplish; he wants to be free and for that, he wants to know. What he wants to know is his identity with *Īśvara*, and therefore, he is also a *bhakta*. For the same reason, the *sannyāsī* also is a *bhakta*. There is no separate *bhakti-yoga*.

The *sannyāsī* is absolved from the obligatory duties which the Vedas enjoin a person to perform when he takes the vow of *sannyāsa*. He completely frees himself from all obligatory duties in order to pursue knowledge to the exclusion of everything else. The *karma-yogī* retains his obligatory duties but gives up all actions that are meant to produce some *puṇya*, or something because of which he will be more secure. He has seen through all that, and therefore, does only the things that are to be done with proper attitude, while pursuing knowledge. The *sannyāsī* has no duties to perform; the *karma-yogī* has only duties to perform. There is no third person called a *bhakti-yogī*. If there is, does he do *karma* or not? If not, he becomes a *sannyāsī*. If he does, he is a *karma-yogī*. Whether it is a ritual, a *pūjā*, or even meditation, it is still an action and the one who is doing it is a devotee, *bhakta*. The same actions that are done for the gain of security or pleasure, can be done for *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*. If they are done for the sake of getting small results, that is also *karma*, but it cannot be called *yoga* because the *puruṣārtha* is very limited. In any case, whether he is a *karmī* or a *karma-yogī*, he is a *bhakta*.

Only two types of commitment, *niṣṭhās*, *karma-yoga* and *sannyāsa*, are pointed out in the *gītā-śāstra*. *Karma-yoga* includes the exact *karma* that one must do and the attitude with which one has to do it. Other disciplines like meditation, *upāsana*, gaining a value structure, including *amānitvādi* qualities, *pūjā*, etc., are all included in *karma-yoga*. If you analyse all the eighteen chapters, you will find that neither *karma-yoga* nor *sannyāsa* is predominantly emphasized over the other. Both occupy sufficient space in the *Gītā* format to indicate that the *Gītācāryā* recognizes the importance of both as the means for *mokṣa*. *Karma* is also mentioned in the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the Vedas in the form of injunctions to perform specific rituals like the *agniṣṭoma*. ‘A *brāhmaṇa* should perform the *agniṣṭoma* ritual—*brāhmaṇena agniṣṭomena yajeta,*’ it is said. For what purpose? It can be for heaven, *svarga*, or, for *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*. Therefore, the *karma-kāṇḍa* is not just for a person who wants limited ends, a *kāmī*. It can be meant

¹ *Gītā* – 4-11, 12

even for a *mumukṣu*; and therefore, it is not completely dismissed as useless. But the *karma* done should be used as a *yoga*. That is the emphasis.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF ARJUNA'S QUESTIONS

From what Śāṅkara says in his introduction to the beginning of the eighteenth chapter, we understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa seems to have decided to sum up the whole *gītā-śāstra* and the meaning of the Vedas in this chapter. At this point, *Arjuna* asks a question. He wants to know the difference between *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*. His asking tells us that he does not see the difference' between the two. Look at *Arjuna's* questions. Originally, in the third chapter, he wanted to know which of the two, *sannyāsa* and *karma*, is better. 'If you consider knowledge is better than action, Kṛṣṇa, why do you enjoin me to do this terrible action, Keśava? By these contradictory statements, you seem to confuse my mind. Tell me for certain the one thing by which I will gain liberation.'¹ In the fourth chapter, his question was entirely different. At the beginning of the fourth chapter, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells *Arjuna* that the knowledge he has just revealed is not anything new. He says that he had himself told it long ago to *Vivasvān*.² This is confusing to *Arjuna* and he wants to know how he should understand that Kṛṣṇa had told *Vivasvān* at the beginning, since Kṛṣṇa's birth was after that of *Vivasvān*.³ Then Kṛṣṇa explained that he was not born in the ordinary sense. He created a body for himself out of his own *māyā*, *sambhavāmi ātma-māyayā*. Although, like *Arjuna*, he has had many births, he knows them all very well, while *Arjuna* does not.⁴ After that, he talked further about *jñāna* and praised both *jñāna* and *sannyāsa*. Then, in the last verse, he exhorted *Arjuna* to get up and take to a life of *karma-yoga*—*yogam ātiṣṭha*, *uttiṣṭha*. *Arjuna* had a problem with this and said to Kṛṣṇa at the beginning of the fifth chapter, 'You are praising both renunciation of action and *karmayoga*. Please tell me definitely which is better.'⁵

Arjuna does not want both because they are two opposite things. *Karma* is to be followed, *anuṣṭheya*, and *jñāna* is something that has to be gained by *pramāṇa*. Since they are two different pursuits altogether, how can *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga* be identical? If they are not identical, why are you praising one and asking me to do the other? Then Lord Kṛṣṇa again talked about *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga*, saying that, what is gained by a *sannyāsī* is gained by a *karma-yogī*—*yat sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṃ tad yogairapigamyate*.⁶ Therefore, both of them are one and the same—*ekaṃ sāṅkhyam ca yogam ca*. But still, *sannyāsa* is difficult to accomplish for the one who

¹ *Gītā* – 3-1, 2

² *Gītā* – 4-1

³ *Gītā* – 4-4

⁴ *Gītā* – 4-5

⁵ *Gītā* – 5-1

⁶ *Gītā* – 5-5

has no *yoga*—*sannyāsastu mahābāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ*, while if you have *karma-yoga*, it is easy—*yogayukto munir brahma na cireṇādhigacchati*.¹ Then, *Kṛṣṇa* again talks about *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga* defining real *sannyāsa* as not mere renunciation of *karma* but renunciation of all actions through knowledge, *jñānena sarva-karma-sannyāsa*. *Arjuna* was silent, but *Kṛṣṇa*, knowing that he did not understand, did not leave the topic, pointing out that the one who does the *karmas* that one has to do (under the given circumstances) without depending upon the results of those actions is truly a *sannyāsī*, he is a *yogī* too. The one who merely gives up the ritualistic *karma* or the secular activities (without the proper attitude) is not really a *sannyāsī*—*anāśritaḥ karma-phalaṃ kāryaṃ karma karoti yaḥ, sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca na niragniḥ na ca akriyaḥ*.²

After this, he talks about meditation saying that one should not think of anything else except *ātmā*—*ātmasaṃsthaṃ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcid api cintayet*,³ and likens the mind in meditation to an unflickering lamp in a windless place, *yathā dīpo nivātastho neṅgate sopamā smṛtā*.⁴ *Arjuna* complains that his mind is nothing but agitation, ‘*cañcalam hi manaḥ Kṛṣṇa*,’ he says and considers it to be as difficult to control as the wind, ‘*tasyāhaṃ nigrahaṃ manye vayoriva suduḥkaram*.’⁵ Lord *Kṛṣṇa* validates his problem saying that there is no doubt that the agitated mind is difficult to manage, *asaṃśayaṃ mahābāho mano durnigrahaṃ calam*, and then assures him that it can be handled by practice and by dispassion, *abhyāsenā tu kaunteya vairāgyena ca gṛhyate*.⁶ Dispassion is nothing but objectivity, appreciating what is what. It is all cognitive. And practice, *abhyāsa*, is nothing but a discipline in the light of an awareness about the mind and its ways of thinking.

Then *Arjuna* had another problem. Suppose a person, endowed with trust in *Īśvara*, starts this pursuit, but makes inadequate effort, and his mind wanders away from this *yoga* not gaining success in *yoga*, what would be his lot?⁷ Would he not die away without accomplishing anything? He had denied himself a lot of small, worldly pleasures thinking he was going to get some *paramānanda*. But suppose he did not gain it, then being denied of both, becomes *ubhayavibhraṣṭa*, and then died away, what would happen? Would he not be like one of those cloudlets that moves away from the larger cloud mass and perishes?⁸ The large cloud mass is moving slowly, and this cloudlet separates from the mass in order to arrive at the destination quickly. But it dissipates and

¹ *Gītā* – 5-6

² *Gītā* – 6-1

³ *Gītā* – 6-25

⁴ *Gītā* – 6-19

⁵ *Gītā* – 6-34

⁶ *Gītā* – 6-35

⁷ *Gītā* – 6-37

⁸ *Gītā* – 6-38

fizzles out. Is it not the same with this person? He is neither here nor there, so what will happen to him? Lord *Kṛṣṇa* answers him with a wonderful assurance. Once you have started on this track, there is no way of going back. Anyone who makes an effort for *mokṣa* does not go to a bad end—*na hi kalyāṇakṛt kaścit durgatiṃ tāta gacchati*.¹ If at all there is any lapse, it will only be to enjoy, for a length of time, some pleasant experiences created by one's *puṇya*. Then one will pick up the thread, born in a place where there is wealth and culture, or in the family of well-informed *karma-yogīs*—*prāpya puṇyakṛtān lokān usitvā śāsvatīḥ samāḥ, śucināṃ śrīmatāṃ gehe yoga-bhraṣṭobhijāyate*,² *athavā yoginām eva kule bhavati dhīmatām*.³

There, one's mind will get connected to what one had gathered in one's previous body, *tatra paurva-dehikaṃ buddhi-saṃyogaṃ labhate*.⁴ Something happens which triggers one to get connected to whatever was achieved in the previous body. One picks up the whole thing with the sense that, it is exactly what one is meant for. One loves what one does, and thus, pursues further and gains *jñāna*. One will pick up the thread and continue one's journey, and therefore, nothing is lost.

Most of *Arjuna's* questions are simple contextual questions. Only three or four are real. When he asked what the characteristics of a wise man are, *sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā*,⁵ that is a real question. Similarly, *Arjuna*, asks this question at the beginning of the third chapter, 'If you think knowledge is better than *karma* why do you impel me to engage in this terrible action?'⁶ This is another real issue. And in the fifth chapter, he asks the same thing in a different form. 'You praise both renunciation of action and *yoga*, *Kṛṣṇa*. Please tell me which one of the two is better?'⁷ Now, after all these chapters, he asks the same question in different words.

+ वीर्यं = ईश*
 ॐ ईशो वा ईशो वा ईशो वा ईशो वा ईशो वा ईशो वा
 ईशो वा ईशो वा ईशो वा ईशो वा ईशो वा ईशो वा

arjuna uvāca

sannyāsasya ma hābāho tattvamicchāmi veditum

tyāgasya ca hr̥ṣīkeśa pṛthakkeśiniṣūdana

Verse 1

+ वीर्यं *arjunaḥ* — *Arjuna*; = ईश* *uvāca* — said;

ईशो वा *mahābāho* — O! Mighty-armed (*Kṛṣṇa*); ह्र̥ṣīके॒शे *hr̥ṣīkeśa* — O! Lord of the

¹ *Gītā* – 6-40

² *Gītā* – 6-41

³ *Gītā* – 6-42

⁴ *Gītā* – 6-43

⁵ *Gītā* – 2-54

⁶ *Gītā* – 3-1

⁷ *Gītā* – 5-1

senses; केशि-निशुदना *keśi-niśūdana* — O! Slayer of *Keśī*; सन्न्यासस्य *sannyāsasya* — of *sannyāsa*; तत्त्वम् *tattvam* — the truth; त्यागस्य च *tyāgasya ca* — and (that) of *tyāga*; प्रथक् *prthak* — distinctly; वेदितुमिच्छामि *veditum icchāmi* — I want to know

Arjuna said:

O! Mighty-armed (*Kṛṣṇa*), I want to know distinctly the truth of *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*, O! Lord of the senses, slayer of *Keśī*.

THE BASIS FOR ARJUNA'S QUESTION

Both the words *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* mean renunciation, and *Kṛṣṇa* has used both throughout the *Gītā*. Now *Arjuna* wants to know what, if any, is the distinction that *Kṛṣṇa* is making between *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*. There is a basis for this question. When Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, 'tyaktvā karma-phala-āsaṅgaṃ nitya-ṭṛptaḥ nirāśrayaḥ...' ¹ he speaks of the one who, giving up his attachment to *karma-phala*, and thus being not dependent upon anything else, is happy with himself. Here, *tyāga* is the renunciation of *karma-phala*. But when he says, 'nirāśīr yata-cittātmā tyakta-sarva-parigrahaḥ...' ² he talks about the one who has given up all ownership towards the objects in the world, the word *tyāga* is used in the sense of *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*.

In another place, when he says, 'yoga-sannyasta-karmāṇam' ³—the one who has given up all *karmas* by *yoga*, the word *sannyāsa* is used in the sense of the renunciation of *karma*. In, 'jñeyaḥ sa nitya-sannyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati,' ⁴ he defines the *sannyāsī* as the one who neither despises anything, nor yearns for anything. Here a *karma-yogī* is referred to as a *sannyāsī*. In the instance where he says, 'yuktaḥ karma-phalaṃ tyaktvā śāntim āpnoti naiṣṭhikīm,' ⁵ the word *tyaktvā* is used to indicate the renunciation of the *karma-yogī*, who, giving up the results gains lasting peace.

Then again, when he says, 'sarva-karmāṇi manasā sannyasya āste sukhaṃ vaśī'—giving up all *karmas* by knowledge, the one who has self-mastery rests happily, ⁶ he uses the word *sannyāsa* in the sense of *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, born of knowledge. But the verse, 'anāśritaḥ karma-phalaṃ kāryaṃ karma karoti yaḥ, sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca na niragniḥ na ca akriyaḥ,' ⁷ tells us that the one who performs action because it is to be done, not motivated by the result of action, is a *sannyāsī* and not one who has

¹ *Gītā* – 4-20

² *Gītā* – 4-21

³ *Gītā* – 4-41

⁴ *Gītā* – 5-3

⁵ *Gītā* – 5-12

⁶ *Gītā* – 5-13

⁷ *Gītā* – 6-1

merely given up the fire rituals or other secular actions; he is the real *sannyāsi* and he is the *karma-yogī*. Here the *karma-yogī* is equated to the *sannyāsi*.

And again the same idea is conveyed in the following verse, '*yaṁ sannyāsam iti prāhuḥ yogaṁ taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava—O! Arjuna, what is called sannyāsa is also called yoga.*'¹

The following instances refer to a *karma-yogī*:

No one who has not given up all his *saṅkalpas* becomes a *yogī*—*na hi asannyasta-saṅkalpaḥ yogī bhavati kaścana.*²

The one who has given up all *saṅkalpas* is called an accomplished *yogī*—*sarva-saṅkalpa-sannyāsi yogārūḍhaḥ tadā ucyate.*³

Completely giving up all *karmas* born of *saṅkalpa* ..., *saṅkalpa-prabhavān kāmān tyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ...*⁴

With a mind endowed with *sannyāsa-yoga*, being free, you will come to Me—*sannyāsa-yoga-yuktāmā vimuktaḥ māṇ upaiṣyasi.*⁵

Those who are committed to Me, giving up all action..., *ye sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparāḥ.*⁶

Gaining self-mastery, then give up the results of all actions—*sarva-karma-phala-tyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmaṁ.*⁷

The following instances refer to *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*:

Renouncing all *karmas* unto Me, by knowledge..., *mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasya adhyātma-cetasā ...*⁸

My devotee who has renounced all undertaking is beloved to Me—*sarva-ārambha-parityāgī yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ.*⁹

The one who has renounced all undertaking is known as 'the one who has gone beyond the *guṇas*—*sarva-ārambha-parityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate.*'¹⁰

All this looks confusing. The words *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* are sometimes used identically, sometimes differently. Further, if *tyāga* means giving up of action, that is, *karma-tyāga*, there can be no connection to *yoga*, because *karma* cannot be given up in *karma-yoga*. Doing the *anuṣṭheya-karma*, the action that is to be done, is part of *yoga*.

¹ *Gītā* – 6-2

² *Gītā* – 6-2

³ *Gītā* – 6-4

⁴ *Gītā* – 6-24

⁵ *Gītā* – 9-28

⁶ *Gītā* – 12-6

⁷ *Gītā* – 12-11

⁸ *Gītā* – 3-30

⁹ *Gītā* – 12-16

¹⁰ *Gītā* – 14-25

If *tyāga* is giving up of *karma*, between *tyāga* and *yoga* there is opposition. *Yoga* is something that one has to do and *tyāga* is giving up. How can I give up *karma* and make it *yoga*? If I give up *karma*, it becomes *sannyāsa*. Naturally, *Arjuna* has a basis for a doubt!

Both *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* mean renunciation. However, we find that Lord *Kṛṣṇa* uses the word *tyāga*, more often than not, in association with *yoga*. For example, in this instance when he says, 'yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṃ tyaktvā ātma-śuddhaye—the *karma-yogīs*, giving up attachment, perform action for purification of the mind.'¹ This is a very clear statement. *Karma* cannot create *ātma-śuddhi*, but if it is backed by renunciation of attachment to the results of action, *saṅgaṃ tyaktvā*, it can. Otherwise, *karma* can only bind you; it cannot release you. And he says, *Brahmaṇi ādhāya karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā karoti yaḥ, lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatram ivāmbhasā*—like the lotus leaf is not affected by water, the one who performs actions giving up attachment offering them to *Brahman*, is not affected by any action.'² In instances such as these, the word *tyāga* is often used in the context of *karma-yoga*. At times the word *sannyāsa* is also used in the same sense. We will see that the word *sannyāsa* generally means renunciation of action, *karma-sannyāsa*, and *tyāga*, renunciation of the results of action, *karma-phala-tyāga*. Later *Kṛṣṇa* is going to say, 'Giving up all *dharma*, *sarvadharmān parityajya*,³ take refuge in Me.' Here the word *tyāga* means renunciation of all actions, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, which is based on pure *ātma-jñāna*, knowledge of the self.

In order to gain that knowledge we have two lifestyles, *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga*. Here *sannyāsa* is *karma-sannyāsa*, the giving up of all obligatory *karma* also called *vividiṣā sannyāsa*. And *karma-yoga* is *tyāga*, renunciation of the result of action. This renunciation of results of action is called *yoga* because it is an indirect means for gaining the knowledge through *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Therefore, *tyāga* and *yoga* go together here.

Because *Arjuna* does not see the difference between *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*, he has a lingering doubt which is expressed in his question here. His doubt always is, which of the two lifestyles, that is *vividiṣā sannyāsa* or *karma-yoga*, he should opt for. This time he does not ask which of the two, is better; but that is not because his confusion on this issue is resolved. He puts the same question differently, presenting it as a desire to know the difference that exists between *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*.

Kṛṣṇa understands the spirit of the question very well, and therefore, gives an elaborate, all inclusive answer. Certain questions do not have snap answers, and this is one of them. When *Arjuna* asks, 'Which is better? *Sannyāsa* or *karma-yoga*?' it is very

¹ *Gītā* – 5-11

² *Gītā* – 5-10

³ *Gītā* – 18-66

clear that he does not understand either. The question itself shows the vagueness in his understanding. If you ask me what is the capital city of a given state, I can give a snap answer. But this is an entirely different question. It stems from a vast vagueness of the whole subject matter and therefore, it has to be answered with care. *Arjuna's* question here comes from the same vagueness that made him ask similar questions in the previous chapters. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* has spent a lot of time on this issue and *Arjuna* definitely must have understood it better each time, but still, it is not clear. This time, instead of asking about *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga*, he asks about *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* and hopes to hear about his real issue, *karma-yoga* and *sannyāsa*. And his hope was fulfilled by *Kṛṣṇa*.

Here *Arjuna* addresses *Kṛṣṇa* as, 'O! Mighty-armed, *mahābāho*,' because *Kṛṣṇa* was a man of valour. 'I want to know, *veditum icchāmi*,' he says, 'the nature of *sannyāsa*, *sannyāsasya tattvam*.' Not only that, he wants to know the truth of *tyāga* separately, *tyāgasya ca pṛthak*. He addresses *Kṛṣṇa* here with two more words; as *hṛśīkeśa*, the Lord of all the senses, the one who is the self of all and because of whom the senses exist and function, and again as, *keśi-niṣūdana*, the destroyer of *Keśi*, an *asura* who was in the form of a horse. He makes it clear that he wants to know, *pṛthak*, separately, what is *sannyāsa* and what is *tyāga*. Because he finds that *Kṛṣṇa* uses these two words entirely differently, and yet, they seem to have the same meaning. *Sannyāsa* means renunciation but it also has a separate popular meaning. Since he is using these words differently, *Arjuna* wants to know more about the truth, *tattva*, of *tyāga* and *sannyāsa* in the vision of *Kṛṣṇa*. Although he only says, '*veditum icchāmi*—I want to know,' we understand, because of the context, that what is implied here is a request, 'Please teach me.' Lord *Kṛṣṇa* teaches him; and thus, we have the eighteenth chapter which elaborates extensively on *sannyāsa*.

Apart from *sannyāsa*, *Kṛṣṇa* also talks about the *lakṣaṇa* of a *brāhmaṇa*, a *kṣatriya*, a *vaiśya*, and a *śūdra*. Then again, he talks about the three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. All these we will find in this chapter.

Śaṅkara introduces the next verse saying that here, in the *gītā-śāstra*, the words *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*, have both been used, but not directly commented upon and therefore, their meaning is not clear. In order to establish the meaning of the words *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* for *Arjuna*, the questioner, *Bhagavān* continues:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
 एतच्छ्रुत्वात्मानं कथयन्निश्चयः
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥२॥

śrībhagavān uvāca

*kāmyānāṃ karmaṇāṃ nyāsaṃ sannyāsaṃ kavayo viduḥ
 sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṃ prāhustyāgaṃ vicakṣaṇāḥ*

Verse 2

श्रीभगवानुवाच — *Śrī Bhagavān*; = उवाच — said;
 एतान् कवयान् — the wise; एते काम्यानां कर्मानाम् — of actions for
 desired objects; त्यासाम् — renunciation; सन्यासाम् — as *sannyāsa* ;
 एतान् विदुः — know; एते विक्रान् विदुः — the learned people; सर्वकर्मफलत्यागम् —
sarva-karma-phala-tyāgam — the renunciation of actions; त्यागम् — is *tyāga* ;
 प्राहुः — they say

Śrī Bhagavān said:

The wise know, *sannyāsa* as renunciation of actions for desired objects;
 the learned people say renunciation of the results of action is *tyāga* .

THE KARMAS TOLD BY THE VEDA

There are different types of *karmas*, those enjoined in the Vedas as mandatory, *nitya* and *naimittika-karmas*, and those that are optional, *kāmya-karmas*. *Puṇya* is accrued by all of them, but even *nitya* or *naimittika-karma* done for the sake of security or pleasure, *artha* or *kāma*, is considered to be a *kāmya-karma*. Among the *karmas* that are mentioned, in the Vedas, some very simple like *agnihotra*, and some very elaborate like *aśvamedha*, can be considered as *kāmya-karmas* because they all produce results in the form of desired things. A *nitya-karma* is to be performed daily. The *sandhyā-vandana*, for example, is done everyday at sunrise, noon, and sunset by a person who has been initiated into the *Gāyatrī mantra*. Once he gets married, the *agnihotra* and other *karmas* come into the picture. These are all *nitya-karmas*.

Then we have the *naimittika-karmas*, those that are done on a given special occasion. On the day of an eclipse, for example, a certain *karma* is enjoined. Similarly, when there is a particular configuration of planets in the zodiac, or on the death anniversary of the departed soul, there are prescribed rituals. These are called *naimittika-karmas*. These are mandatory. They have to be done.

A *kāmya-karma* on the other hand, may or may not be done. If you have a desire for a son, there is a ritual prescribed for that, the *putrakāmeṣṭi*. But if you do not want a son, or if you are not wealthy enough to perform the *putrakāmeṣṭi*, you need not do it, and the injunction is not violated. Similarly, there are any number of rituals, which you can perform if you are interested in a given end. All of them are *kāmya-karmas* and are purely optional. There is no mention made in the Vedas of the results of the *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, but they also produce results, because they are *karmas*. Whenever the result is not mentioned in the *śāstra*, there is a general rule that the result is heaven. These *nitya-naimittika-karmas* also can be performed keeping that result in view, and will therefore, be *kāmya-karmas*. Or, they can be done for *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*. Though this is also a result, a *karma* done with this intention is not

considered a *kāmya-karma*. Even a so-called *kāmya-karma* can be performed for *antaḥ-karaṇa-sūddhi*, in which case, it is no longer considered a *kāmya-karma*.

There are two more types of *karma* we should know about. One is *niṣiddha-karma*, an action that we are not supposed to do, and which is therefore, prohibited. We are not supposed to harm any being and therefore, it is said, *hiṃsāṃ na kuryāt*—do not hurt.’ These actions are prohibited because they produce *pāpa*, and *śāstra* being our well-wisher, *hitaiṣī*, it has to tell us this. The *kāmya-karmas* are not prohibited. They can produce desirable results for you, but those results will be limited in nature. Then we have a fourth type of *karma*, a *prāyaścitta-karma*, which you do as an antidote for wrong actions done in the past. This completely absolves you from the result, *karma-phala*, of those actions. That is also *vihita*, enjoined in the Vedas. If what you want, your *puruṣārtha*, is very clear, then you will naturally drop *kāmya-karmas* and perform only *nitya-naimittika-karmas*. This is renunciation, *nyāsa*.

WHAT IS SANNYĀSA?

Sannyāsa, however, is the giving up of even the *nitya-naimittika-karmas*. Now *karma* is not something that can be given up, like, chocolate. You can only stop doing it. And when you do, that can be laziness, or *adharmā* because if what is to be done is not done, it creates problems, especially in a society which is based on duties. It is something like a piston saying, ‘I am not going to work today.’ If the piston were to stop working, the whole engine will malfunction. Similarly, if the duty enjoined in a society in which everybody is supposed to perform, is not done, the whole society comes to a standstill or becomes a mess. Therefore, we have to say here that *sannyāsa* is the giving up of *nitya-naimittika-karmas* in accordance with a *vidhi*. First, he has to go to a teacher with a clarity about what he wants, with *puruṣārtha-niścaya*. He must know exactly what is time-bound, *anitya*, and have a dispassion towards that, *vairāgya*. Then he must have a love for what is not time-bound, *nitya*, and want only knowledge of that, nothing else. If he goes to a teacher and lives with him for some time until he understands what is going on, the teacher gives him *sannyāsa*. Until then, he is performing *karmas*, but when he takes *sannyāsa*, he releases himself from all obligatory duties by a ritual enjoined in the *śāstra*. That is *sannyāsa*. In a duty-based society, this is not an ordinary thing. A ritual is performed whereby you absolve yourself from playing all roles and performing all duties. Society accepts that; the Vedas also accept it.

How do we know this is *sannyāsa*? The *kavis* say so. A *kavi* is a person who knows the *śāstra*, *śāstrajña*, a wise person who sees things clearly, *dīrghadarśī*. Some of them understand the non-performance of *kāmya-karma* and *nitya-naimittika-karma* to be *sannyāsa*, known as *vividiṣā-sannyāsa*, renunciation of action backed by a desire to know. Real *sannyāsa* is *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, which is purely knowledge. It has

nothing to do with giving up *karma* but is purely in the form of the knowledge, 'I perform no action.' This is what we call *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*. Here, however, *sannyāsa* as a lifestyle is pointed out.

WHAT IS TYĀGA?

Now, what is *tyāga*? Other learned people, *vicakṣaṇas* say, it is renunciation of the results of all actions, *sarva-karma-phala-tyāga*. This rules out *kāmya-karma*. No one is going to perform a *kāmya-karma* for the sake of renouncing the *karma-phala*. If he does, it is not a *kāmya-karma*. I may perform the same *karma*, like *agnihotra* or *jyotiṣṭoma*, but without expecting a result other than *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. This is not looked upon as a result because it is not something other than myself. In any other result, some obtaining, *prāpti*, is involved; *puṇya* is acquired and encashed as *artha* or *kāma*. Rituals do not produce *artha* and *kāma* directly. Even though I may perform a given ritual in order to get some money, the performance of the ritual itself does not immediately produce the result. In fact, money in the form of materials is made into ashes in the ritual. But the idea is that, out of the ashes will come something unseen, *adrṣṭa*, which will produce situations that will perhaps help me gain what I want. That is *puṇya*, grace. Prayer has this capacity to produce what is *adrṣṭa*, not visible, but which will accrue to the one who performs the *karma* and to the one who has the *karma* performed on his behalf, the *yajamāna*. That will transform itself into situations conducive for his achieving what he wants.

Here, however all the *karmas* are performed for the sake of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, which is not something other than myself, that has to be accomplished by an action. When the *jīva*, retaining his individuality, wants to accomplish something connected to himself, then he gains what we call *karma-phala*. This *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, however, is not a *karma-phala*, because the very prayer itself is able to give *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. In our *śāstra*, doing a prayer or ritual for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, because it is not considered a *karma-phala*, is called *karma-phala-tyāga*. There is no *phala* kept in view, neither heaven nor *artha*, security, nor any form of *kāma*, pleasure. What is kept in view is *mokṣa*, and *mokṣa* is yourself.

KARMAYOGI'S PUŪYAPHALA IS CONDUCTIVE TO HIS SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

Although the one who works purely for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* has already given up all the *karma-phala*, still, *karma-phala* will be there. Suppose he performs all his *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, only for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and then dies without gaining knowledge, then what will happen to the results of his *karmas*? Even though he did not want them, the result will be there in the form of spiritual *puṇya*. This can give him a situation from where he can get a better start in his pursuit. For everybody except

the *jñānī*, *karma-phala* is always there. Even though the *karma-yogī* has *karma-phala*, there is no question of his obtaining a lower birth, *adhogati*, in spite of the fact that in his *sañcita-karma* there are infinite possibilities. Theoretically, even the *karma-yogī* can take any kind of birth, so what is to prevent him from taking a birth as a cockroach or a reptile? The *karma* done by him as a *karma-yogī* is predominant. In your own store of *karmas* certain ones come to the forefront because they have waited for a long time and now have to express themselves in the form of the birth of a given body. But if you have started this kind of a spiritual pursuit following a life of *karmayoga* and then die without gaining knowledge, these *karmas* cause all previous *karmas* to be overlooked completely and come to the forefront. The *karmas* done as a *karma-yogī* are predominant because they are spiritual. That is why it was said, ‘Gaining the worlds created by *punya*, living there for innumerable years, the one who is not accomplished in *yoga* is born in the home of the pure and wealthy or in the family of wise *yogīs*—*prāpya puṇyakṛtān lokān usitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ, śucināṃ śrīmatāṃ gehe yoga-bhraṣṭo abhijāyate athavā yoginām eva kule bhavati dhīmatām.*’¹ His mind gets a connection to what he had started before in a previous body, *buddhi-saṃyogaṃ labhate paurvadehikam*, and he continues the journey.

This type of *punya* is different from that which fructifies as *artha* or *kāma*. That is why astrologers will say you are in a bad period if you are in a situation conducive for a spiritual pursuit. From the material standpoint, it is true. You may be displaced from your home or have no job. But I would say it is a *punya-kāla*, a good period for you to learn, to grow. In all other periods, you are just drudging, breathing. If you do not accomplish something worthwhile, I would say the whole period is just a period of survival. But this is the period where a person has the luxury to look at himself. That is a great luxury. Any other thing, like a big house, etc., is not a luxury at all. If you have time to look at yourself, that leisure is the greatest luxury that one can have.

One is given to this pursuit due to some *punya* created by certain special *karmas*. They can be the results of *nitya-naimittika-karma* done by a seeker who has not accomplished what he has to accomplish. His prayers have a spiritual content. If what he wants to accomplish is free from *artha* and *kāma*, it is definitely a spiritual desire. If he wants to change, that is also a spiritual desire. This is not an ordinary desire, because people do not want to change. They want the whole world to change so that they can be comfortable. But if I want to change myself so that I can be comfortable with myself, that is an urge for a spiritual change. And this urge has to come from somewhere. Why doesn't everybody have it? It is not driven merely due to mental pain, because not everybody who has mental pain turns spiritual. He can turn to drugs and alcohol or crime, or end up in the hospital. Or he can be a vagabond. There are hundreds of options. The process of change implies a certain pain. Perhaps the painful situations themselves

¹ *Gītā* – 6-41, 42

Śaṅkara gives another meaning for *doṣavat karma*. Here the suffix *vat* has the meaning of 'like,' *tulyārtha*, rather than possession. A *doṣa* is any defect. Just as you would give up anything that is defective, like a piece of fruit, which is rotten, for example, similarly, you should give up *karma*. Like how a *doṣa* is to be given up, all *karmas* must be given up because they are causes for bondage. They say that every *karma* produces *pāpa* and *puṇya* and thereby, just keeps the wheel of *saṃsāra* going. You can never get out of this cycle by doing *karma*, and therefore, all types of *karma* should be given up if you want *mokṣa*.

Some people are very vehement about this; while others, *apare*, contend that some *karmas* are not to be given up, *na tyājyam*. What are they? Rituals-*yajña*, charity-*dāna*, and religious discipline-*tapas*. *Dāna*, sharing what you have with others, seems to be an especially important *karma*, a thing to be done. Only when these three things are not given up, can you gain *antaḥ-karāṇa-śuddhi* and thereby, *jñāna*, according to some learned people, *vicakṣaṇāḥ*. This is in keeping with the position of *Bhagavān* also. If you are not ready, *karma* should not be given up. If, out of delusion, *moha*, you give up these *karmas*, you will be neither a *sannyāsī* nor a *karmī*, but one who has fallen from both, *ubhayabhraṣṭaḥ*. If you are ready, you can give up *karma*, but this *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, is an entirely different thing.

The *Gītācārya* presents two stands here. One is that you must give up all *karmas* if you want *mokṣa* and the other, that you must give up *kāmyakarma* but do *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapas*. Here the choice is between *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga*, but it is only a choice for those who, being ignorant, think that they are supposed to perform these *karmas*. They alone are kept in view here. Real *sannyāsa*, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* is not the subject for discussion because the contention here is not whether one should become a *sarva-karma-sannyāsī* for *mokṣa* or should one be a *karma-yogī*? This problem does not arise at all because *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* is knowledge, *jñāna*. That is *mokṣa* and therefore, that *sannyāsa* is not under discussion. We are only considering here *sannyāsa* as a lifestyle for the purpose of knowing, *vividiṣā-sannyāsa*. This and *karma-yoga* are open to choice. That is why, in the very beginning, *Bhagavān* said there are two committed lifestyles for *mokṣa*—either you can give up all the obligatory *karmas*, or you can perform *karmas* with a proper attitude. Both are means for *mokṣa*. This is *Bhagavān's* and the *śāstra's* contention. Though *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* is not open for discussion in this context, both the *karma-yoga* and the *sannyāsa* have to culminate in *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, which is nothing but knowing *ātmā* to be *akartā* and *abhoktā*—not an agent or an enjoyer. Those who have come out of *saṃsāra* through knowledge, are free from the three major desires *putraīṣaṇā*, *vittaiṣaṇā* and *lokaiṣaṇā*—the desire for progeny, the desire for wealth and the desire for heaven. That is called *vidvat-sannyāsa*, and is not the *sannyāsa* under discussion here.

This discussion is with reference to *vividiṣā-sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga*. Between these two, there is definitely a choice possible.

done, no *karma* like *agnihotra*, which has to be done at a specified time, so you can get up any time in the morning. You can get up at eleven-thirty and convert breakfast into a brunch. Or, you can go to somebody's place and get some *bhikṣā*. And it will not take you time to get ready because you need not shave and all your clothes are the same, so you need not match anything. So, *sannyāsa* is the easiest life. This is *moha*, delusion. If, out of fear of doing *karma*, a person gives up *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, he has not accomplished anything. We have to understand that *karma* is not to be given up out of delusion, *mohāt na tyājyam*.

Bhagavān's vision is going to be told here, for which he courts *Arjuna's* attention. He wants him to understand definitely, *niścayam*, what he has to say with reference to this renunciation, *tatra tyāge*. He addresses *Arjuna* as *bharata-sattama*, the most mature among the members of the *Bharata* family. By asking for this knowledge, *Arjuna* shows his maturity. *Duryodhana* did not ask. Even though he also faced all the people on the battlefield, he did not have the problem that *Arjuna* had because he did not have *Arjuna's* compassion. *Arjuna* was mature, and thus, *Kṛṣṇa* calls him *bharata-sattama*. He also calls him *puruṣa-vyāghra*, a tiger among men, meaning the one who is fearless.

Kṛṣṇa tells *Arjuna* here that *tyāga* is threefold, *trividha*. How do we know? It is well said, *samparikīrtita* in the *Gītā*. *Śaṅkara* reminds us here that this threefold *tyāga* is only for the one who does not know the self and is supposed to do *karma*. Only for him is this threefold renunciation possible, not for the one who has the vision of *ātmā*. The person who is qualified to do *karma* has to know the nature of the renunciation of *karma*.

यज्जिज्ञानात्प्राप्तं कर्म न दद्यात्
यज्जिज्ञानात्प्राप्तं कर्म न दद्यात्

yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṃ kāryameva tat
yajño dānaṃ tapaścaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām

Verse 5

यज्जिज्ञानात्प्राप्तं कर्म न दद्यात् — an action that is ritual, charity, or religious discipline; कर्म न दद्यात् — is not to be given up; तत्रात् — that; एव कर्म कृतं — *kāryam eva* — is indeed to be done; यज्जिज्ञानात्प्राप्तं कर्म — ritual; न दद्यात् — charity; यज्जिज्ञानात्प्राप्तं कर्म — *tapas ca* — and religious discipline; यज्जिज्ञानात्प्राप्तं कर्म — *manīṣiṇām* — for those who are capable of discriminative thinking; यज्जिज्ञानात्प्राप्तं कर्म — *pāvanāni eva* — are purifying indeed

An action that is a ritual, charity, or religious discipline is not to be given up; that is indeed to be done. Ritual, charity, and religious discipline are indeed purifying for those who are discriminative.

The *karmas* in the form of ritual, charity, and religious discipline, *yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-karma*, are not to be given up, *na tyājyam*. This is *Bhagavān's* contention. *Yajña* is the daily ritual worship to the gods, and any similar form of prayer. *Dāna* is giving appropriately at the right time and place. *Tapas* is any form of religious discipline. None of them should be given up. On the other hand, this kind of *karma* is to be done, *kārya*. Why? Because it is capable of purifying the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the mind, of those who are discriminative, *manīṣinām*. This qualification has to be made because *yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-karma* need not bring about *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* if you are interested in any other result. They can produce some kind of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, because they are religious *karmas*, but definitely not the kind of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* which is the basis for *mokṣa* if the person is interested in something else. For people who are not interested in any other *karma-phala* except *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, these *karmas* become a means for self-purification.

In the next verse he clarifies this.

Biīēx^aēēē iēōEō ēēēē oēfā iāēCi ēē jō^mēēē Sē*
Eōiēē^aēēēēē ēā ēēēēēēēēēē ēēēēēēēēēē ēēēēēēēēēē ēā 1२ 1 1

*etānyapi tu karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā phalāni ca
kartavyānīti me pārtha niścitaṃ matamuttamam*

Verse 6

{ēēēē}pārtha — O! Son of *Pṛthā*; iēōtu — but; Biīēx^aēēē Eō ēēēēē + ēēēē *etāni karmāṇi api* — but even these actions; oēfōēā *saṅgam* — attachment; jō^mēēē Sē *phalāni ca* — and the results; iāēCi ēē *tyaktvā* — giving up; Eōiēē^aēēēēēēē *kartavyāni* — are to be done; <ēēē ēā *iti me* — this is My; ēēēēēēēēēēē ēā *niścitam* — clear; =ēēēēēēēēēēē ēā *uttamam* — proper; ēēēēēēēēēēē ēā *matam* — vision

But even these actions are to be done giving up attachment and giving up the results. This is My clear, proper vision, *Arjuna*.

These three, *yajña, dāna*, and *tapas* are *nitya-naimittika-karmas*. *Dāna* can be a daily *karma* or a *naimittika-karma*. All three are capable of purification, but there is one thing you must note here. Even these *karmas*, *etāni karmāṇi*, in order to be a means for self-purification, have to be done with a certain attitude. Attachment, *saṅga*, to *ahaṅkāra*, is to be given up. The attitude is, 'They are to be done, *kartavyāni*.' It is given to me to perform these rituals. If I were ill, I could not do them, and therefore that I can perform them is given. These *karmas* are enjoined by the Vedas and are to be done for my own purification, my growth. And the results, *phalāni ca*, are also to be given up. For any meritorious action, there is an enjoyable result, like heaven. But if there is no thought that I will gain heaven or earn some *punya*, then *phala* is given up. Only then do they become means for self purification. Besides other duties involved in day-to-day

life, these *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapas* are duties to be performed by me. No matter what happens, I don't stop my daily prayers.

‘This is My vision, *me matam*,’ *Bhagavān* says. And what kind of vision? It is not a vague vision, but a clear vision, *niścitaṃ matam*, and it is proper and final, *uttamam*. These *karmas* are the cause for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, and therefore, they have to be performed.

Some people read *etāni karmāṇi* to mean *kāmya-karmas*. That reading is criticized by *Śaṅkara* here and he makes it clear that *etāni karmāṇi* means *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapas*. If someone is interested in *karma-phala*, he will get *puṇya*, not *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. How will he get out of the hold of *rāga* and *dveṣa* when the very *karma* he does is prompted by *rāga* and *dveṣa*? Every action that he performs is meant to produce a given result whereby he thinks he is going to be better off, and thus, he gets rid of desire only by fulfilling it. But what happens by fulfilling a desire? You only want a repeat performance. In the wake of a fulfilment of the desire there was *sukha*, and just to get back same *sukha*, you want to repeat the course of action that led to it. Naturally, you have to do it again. Or, if the desire was fulfilled but did not produce *sukha*, you find that the desire begins to wane. And if you got the opposite result, you have an aversion, a *dveṣa*, which is another form of desire. The pain is so great that you do not want to try it again. When do you fulfil a particular desire completely? More often, in the fulfilment of any desire, a few more desires are left behind. No *rāga* just goes away without leaving progeny. And, if even *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapas* are done in order to get some results, how are you going to get rid of the hold of *rāga-dveṣas*? There is no way you can do it because you are doing the wrong thing! And without getting rid of the hold of *rāga-dveṣas* there is no *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Therefore even these *karmas* have to be done giving up the *phala*. Then alone they become the cause for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*.

This is *Bhagavān*'s final conclusion, and there is no doubt about the fact that *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas* should not be given up unless you have *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Once you have been freed from the hold of *rāga-dveṣas* you can give up all *karmas* and do whatever you like. Your *prārabdha-karma* will take care of you. If you feel like giving up all *karmas*, there is no problem; *sannyāsa* will stick to you. But you cannot give them up just because they are painful. Giving up the painful and going for the pleasant is not, in the end, a pleasant thing, because there is no *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*.

Therefore, *Bhagavān* says,

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।
नियतस्य तु संन्यासस्य कर्माणो नोपपद्यते ।
मोहत्तस्य परित्यागस्तमसाहं परिकीर्तितः ॥७॥

*niyatasya tu sannyāsaḥ karmaṇo nopapadyate
mohāttasya parityāgastāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ*

Verse 7

īdī tu — but; ईदियतस्य कार्मानां — *niyatasya karmaṇaḥ* — of enjoined action; सन्न्यासः — *sannyāsaḥ* — renunciation; अस्ति न उपपद्यते — *asti na upapadyate* — is not proper; मोहात् — *mohāt* — out of delusion; इत्यस्य तस्याः परित्यागः — *ityasya tasya parityāgaḥ* — renunciation of it; इत्यस्य तस्याः परित्यागः — *ityasya tasya parityāgaḥ* — is called *tāmasika*

But renunciation of enjoined action is not proper. Renunciation of it (enjoined action), out of delusion, is called *tāmasika*.

TĀMASA-TYĀGA

Niyata-karmas are those that are enjoined by the Vedas, to be done obligatorily—the *nitya* and *naimittika-karmas*. Giving them up, *tasya sannyāsa*, is not proper, *na upapadyate*. Śāṅkara says here, ‘Because they are desirable for the purification of the one who does not know.’ If someone who is ignorant gives up this *niyata-karma*, under the spell of likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*, that *sannyāsa* is not proper, because for such a person, it is desirable to have a means for purification, and the *nitya-naimittika-karmas* are the means. If, because of some delusion, *moha*, some fascination or romanticism about *sannyāsa*, he gives up his daily prayers, etc., that giving up is called *tāmasika*, *tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ*. So many *karmas* are mentioned in the Vedas because *karmas* can purify the *antaḥ-karaṇa*.

Sannyāsa is not totally dismissed here; only the renunciation of enjoined *karma* is dismissed. Once you say it is enjoined, to renounce it is a contradiction. Why can it not be given up? Because it is enjoined. *Sannyāsa* is possible, if you are ready for it, but it is the exception, not the rule. The *sannyāsa* out of *moha* is called *tāmasa-sannyāsa*. Now he tells about the *rājasasannyāsa*.

दुःखमेवायत्कर्म क्लेशभयान्न क्लेशभयान्न
दुःखमेवायत्कर्म क्लेशभयान्न क्लेशभयान्न

*duḥkhamityeva yat karma kṣayakleśabhayāntyajet
sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgam naiva tyāgaphalam labhet*

Verse 8

दुःखं एव यत्कर्म — *duḥkham eva yat karma* — the *karma* which; क्लेशभयान्न — *kleśabhayānna* — out of fear of affliction to his physical body; दुःखमेवायत्कर्म — *duḥkham eva yat karma* — as indeed painful; इति — *iti* — (thinking) thus; त्यजेत् — *tyajet* — one may give up; सा — *saḥ* — he; राजसं — *rājasam* — *rājasika*; त्यागं — *tyāgam* — renunciation; कृत्वा — *kṛtvā* — having done; फलं — *phalam* — the result of renunciation; नैव लभेत — *naiva labhet* — would certainly not gain

One may give up the *karma* as indeed painful out of fear of affliction to his physical body. Having done that *rājasika* renunciation, he would certainly not gain result of renunciation.

RĒJASA-TYĒGA

Why would one give up the *niyata-karma*? Because it is painful. Getting up early in the morning daily to do *karma* is not an easy thing. Out of fear of affliction to his physical body, *kāya-kleśa-bhayāt*, he would give it up, *tyajet*. What kind of *tyāga* has this person done in giving up the *niyata-karma* in this manner? *Rājasaṃ tyāgam*, a *tyāga* born of *rajas*, born of sheer desire. Having done this kind of renunciation, he would not gain the result of renunciation, *tyāga-phalaṃ na labhet*. Generally, *Śaṅkara* takes *sannyāsa* as preceded by *jñāna*, or at least *viveka*. For that *sannyāsa*, the result is *mokṣa*; it is meant for *mokṣa*. If he gives up all *karmas* with this motivation, that is, of avoiding the affliction to the physical body, he is not living a life of *sannyāsa*, he is lazy, and will certainly not gain the result of renunciation.

Having shown both *tāmasa* and *rājasa-tyāga*, *Bhagavān* now tells us what characterizes *sāttvika-tyāga*.

एदं कर्तव्यं कुरु ॥ इति चेत् कुरु ॥ इति चेत् कुरु ॥ इति चेत् कुरु ॥ इति चेत् कुरु ॥
 ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥ इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायाः अष्टाध्यायः ॥ ११ ॥
kāryamityeva yat karma niyataṃ kriyate' rjuna
saṅgaṃ tyaktvā phalaṃ caiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ Verse 9

+ *वेदो* *arjuna* — O! *Arjuna*; *एदं कर्तव्यं कुरु* *B'É kāryam iti eva* — thinking, 'It is to be done';
अङ्गं यत् — which; *इति चेत् कुरु* *niyatam karma* — the enjoined *karma*; *ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः*
 — attachment; *इति चेत् कुरु* *phalam ca* — and also the result; *इति चेत् कुरु* *tyaktvā* — giving up;
इति चेत् कुरु *kriyate* — is done; *इति चेत् कुरु* *B'É sa tyāgaḥ eva* — that renunciation alone; *इति चेत् कुरु*
इति चेत् कुरु *sāttvikaḥ mataḥ* — is considered *sāttvika*

'It is to be done,' thinking thus when only the enjoined *karma* is done giving up attachment and result, O! *Arjuna*, it is considered to be a *sāttvika* renunciation.

SĒTTVIKA-TYĒGA

Niyataṃ karma is the *karma* that is enjoined by the *śāstra* as a thing to be done necessarily, not optionally. This includes all duties, both scriptural and secular, *vaidika* and *laukika*. And for those *karmas* to be *sāttvika*, they must be done with a certain attitude, 'It is to be done—*kāryam iti*.' The only purpose in doing this type of *karma* is obeying the mandate of the *śāstra*, that it is to be done. Although it is done for *antaḥ-*

karaṇa-śuddhi, that is not really considered another purpose because, as we have seen, it is yourself. Further, it is done giving up attachment to the very ritual, *saṅgaṃ tyaktvā*. Generally a ritual is done with the thinking, ‘I am doing this,’ and in this kind of doing, there is egotism, *ahaṅkāra*, involved. Instead of that, when the thinking is, ‘This is to be done by me; therefore I do it,’ then this what they call surrender. At this time and place, this action is necessary; it has got to be done. I have no choice in this; let it be an offering to *Īśvara*. Doing action with this attitude is *sāttvika-tyāga*. Giving up the result, *phala-tyāga*, means, it is not done for the sake of *puṇya*, or fame or power. An action done without those motives, purely for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and *Īśvara-prīti*, to please the Lord, is the one in which the result, *phala*, has been given up. *Karma* is not given up, only the *karma-phala*. That is considered to be a *sāttvika-tyāga*. In *rājasa* and *tāmasa-tyāga*, giving up *karma* is involved, due to fear of doing action or delusion, but here, *karma* is done, and the result, *karma-phala*, is given up.

Śaṅkara makes a note here that he has told us that the *nitya-karmas* do have a result. *Bhagavān* himself has said so. He reminds us of this because there is a contention that *nitya-naimittika-karmas* do not produce results, but are to be done because in not doing them, you incur fault, *akaraṇe pratyavāya*. That is not true; all *karmas* including *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, produce results. That is why they can be given up. The *nitya-naimittika-karmas* will produce *puṇya* all right, but you have no desire for that type of *puṇya* and are not doing them with that intention, *saṅkalpa*. Your expressed intention is only for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*.

Then he presents the other stand, seemingly accepting this argument of *akaraṇe pratyavāya*, to make the same point. An uninformed person may do a *karma* thinking that even though the result for a *nitya-karma* is not mentioned in the *śruti*, still the *nitya-karma* that is done creates the result, for oneself, of purification of the mind or removal of the ill effects of not doing it. If he gives up even that, *Śaṅkara* says, that is *phala-tyāga*. Why does he do the *karma*? Purely for *īśvara-prīti*. This is *śraddhā*. He does not even care for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. *Śāstra* has asked him to do this, and therefore, he does it. He does not care whether it produces *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* or anything else. He does it to fulfil the *śāstra*'s mandate, which is fulfilling *Īśvara*'s mandate. That is enough. That kind of attitude, *śraddhā*, makes the *tyāga*, *sāttvika*.

Whenever we perform the *karma*, we declare that we are praying for the sake of pleasing *Īśvara* through the destruction of all the effects of our wrong actions. We say it in so many words in the *saṅkalpa* that is done at the beginning of a ritual—*mama upātta-samasta-durita-kṣaya-dvārā śrī-parameśvara-prītyartham aham idaṃ kariṣye*. This is *karmayoga*. Pleasing the Lord is not to keep him in good humour, but purely to fulfil the mandate of the *Īśvara*. That is *īśvara-prīti*. Naturally, it is a means for purification of the mind because the *śāstra* accepts that *nitya-naimittika-karma* as the capacity to neutralize accumulated *pāpa*. Even the desire to neutralize the

accumulated *pāpas* can be given up, and one can do it only because one is asked to, and one can enjoy doing it. If you can do that, the result will certainly be there.

Śaṅkara raises a small objection here. It was said in the beginning that the renunciation of action, which is *sannyāsa*, is threefold. But, as they have been described, two of them are *karma-tyāga*, renunciation of *karma*, and one is *phala-tyāga*, the renunciation of the results of the action. Two are *karma-sannyāsa* and the third is *karmayoga*. How can these be classified together? Someone says, 'Three *brāhmaṇas* have come, but there are two *brāhmaṇas* who know the Vedas along with the six auxiliary branches of the Vedas, *śaḍaṅgas*, and the third is a *kṣatriya*.' How can he then say that there are three *brāhmaṇas*? Here too, we have renunciation of *karma* out of delusion, *tāmasa-tyāga*, renunciation of *karma* out of fear of physical affliction, *rājasa-tyāga*, and then, renunciation of the result of action, *sāttvika-tyāga*. Two are renunciation of *karma* whereas the third is renunciation of result! *Śaṅkara* says this is not a problem because we are not talking about renunciation of *karma*, we are just talking about renunciation. Renunciation being common in all of them, this amounts to praise of *karma-phala-tyāga*, because it is the one that is identified as *sāttvika*. Renunciation born of delusion or out of fear of doing work was completely negated as *tāmasa* and *rājasa*. That type of characterization of the renunciation serves as a criticism, and then, something else, *karma-phala-tyāga*, is praised by calling it *sāttvika*. The idea is, it is better to keep doing *karma* and give up *karma-phala*. Thereby you can gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*.

Introducing the next verse, *Śaṅkara* says that the person who does *karma* giving up egotism and attachment for results, his mind being unsullied by longing for results, is purified by *nitya-karmas*. Whatever *rāga* and *dveṣa* he may have had, gets cleared. Also, by doing *nitya-karma*, and avoiding *kāmya-karma*, he does not get further entrenched in *rāga-dveṣa*. The more *kāmya-karmas* you do, the more entrenched the *rāga-dveṣas* become. By avoiding them and performing the *nitya-naimittika-karmas* with the proper attitude, his mind becomes subject to this process of purification, and thus becomes pure. That mind, now rendered cheerful, is qualified for the vision of *ātmā*. That is, it is capable of *ātmā-anātma-viveka* without any hindrance. The person who lives a life of *karma-yoga*, and is committed to knowledge of *ātmā* for *mokṣa* gains this *antaḥ-karaṇa* which is more or less pure.

For him, the clear knowledge of *ātmā* takes place gradually. This has to be told and thus, *Bhagavān* says:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
 ॥ १० ॥

na dveṣṭyakuśalaṃ karma kuśale nānuṣajjate
 tyāgi sattvasamāviṣṭo medhāvī chinnaśaṃśayaḥ

Verse 10

tyāgī — renunciate; sattva-samāviṣṭaḥ — one who is endowed with a pure mind; medhāvī — one who has discriminative knowledge; chinna-saṁśayaḥ — one whose doubts are gone; + akūśalam karma — inauspicious karma; na dvesti — does not cling to; kuśale — with reference to auspicious karma; + na anuṣajjate — does not get attached

The renunciate (of the results of actions), (being) the one who is endowed with a pure mind, (then being) the one who has discriminative knowledge and whose doubts are gone, does not despise inauspicious (*kāmya*) karma, nor does he cling to auspicious karma.

SĀTTVIKA-TYĀGA LEADS TO AND IS CONDUCTIVE FOR JÑĀNĀNĪHĒ

Let us consider the *sāttvika tyāga* first. His *tyāga*, as we have seen, is *karma-phala-tyāga* and *tyāga* of egotism. He does his *nitya-naimittika-karmas* with surrender to *Īśvara* and without the intention of gaining a particular result. Then he becomes a *sattva-samāviṣṭa*, one who is endowed with *sattva*. His mind is not dominated by *rajas* and *tamas*. *Śaṅkara* says he is *sattva-samāviṣṭa* when he is filled, *samāviṣṭa*, with, *sattva* which is the cause for the clear discriminative knowledge of *ātmā* and *anātmā*. Because he is a *tyāgī*, a *karma-yogī*, has a *sattva*, an *antaḥ-karaṇa* which is pure, and because of that, he can discriminate between *ātmā* and *anātmā*. There is an order here. First he lives a life of *karma-yoga*, and because of that gains *sattva-saṁśuddhi*, and then has the capacity to do *ātmā-anātmā-viveka*. If he has that discrimination, he is called *medhāvī*. The one who has this knowledge, *medhā*, is a *medhāvī*. First he is a *karma-phala-tyāgī*, and because of his practice of *karma* with this attitude he becomes qualified for this knowledge, that is, becomes a *sattva-samāviṣṭa*. Then he becomes the one who has the knowledge, *medhāvī*.

Once he has the knowledge, he becomes a *chinna-saṁśaya*, the one whose doubts are gone. The doubts are many. Some of them can be enumerated here. They are:

Whether *ātmā* is free from time or time-bound, *nitya* or *anitya*.

Whether it is *Brahman* or not, whether it is real or not real, *satya* or *asatya*.

Whether its nature is fullness or sorrow, *ānanda* or *duḥkha*.

Whether it is the doer of action and the enjoyer of the result, *kartā* and *bhoktā* or it is *akartā* and *abhoktā*.

Whether *Īśvara* is different from me or is myself.

All these doubts are gone because of inquiring into *ātmā* and *anātmā* and gaining the knowledge of *ātmā*.

A doubt is born only of ignorance. Once he is a *medhāvī*, naturally, all doubts are gone because knowledge and doubt cannot co-exist. This is said in the *śāstra* also, ‘*bhidyate hrdayagranthiḥ chidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ kṣīyante α asya karmāṇi tasmin drṣṭe parāvare*—the knot of the heart is resolved, all doubts are gone and all *karmas* are destroyed in this non-dual vision.’¹ The knot of the heart is a technical term for *avidyā-kāma-karma*—ignorance, therefore desire, and therefore action and its result. Because of this, there is perpetuation of *saṁsāra*. How can he get out of it? First, he neutralizes all the *kāma* by *karma-yoga*, thereby taking care of *karma* itself at that level. Then, with this preparation, by inquiry into *ātmā*, he eliminates ignorance; thereby, this three-stranded knot called *hrdaya-granthi*, gets resolved, *bhidyate*. This means all doubts clear away, then, all the *karmas* also fall apart because there is no individual to sustain them. When does this happen? When he has the knowledge that *Brahman*, which is both cause and effect of this entire creation, is *ātmā*, myself. *Śaṅkara* says here that, the means for *mokṣa* is nothing but gaining a clear knowledge of *ātmā*.

After gaining this knowledge of the *ātmā*, he will not have the problem of feeling that it is not enough. He has no doubt about whether he has reached *mokṣa* or not, and is not going to ask anyone, ‘Do you think I have gained this knowledge?’ All such doubts are taken care of, when he is a *medhāvī*. Someone could challenge him, ‘You have only knowledge of *Gītā*, but you have not gained *Vaikunṭha* (heaven), which is *mokṣa*.’ The concept here is that self-knowledge makes you fit to go to heaven, the abode of *Viṣṇu*. Even though people may say this to him, it will not cause any doubt in him. He will not question whether he has *mokṣa* or not. There is no doubt about it. And fanatics will come and say to him, ‘What do you know?’ When he says, ‘I know myself,’ they will say, ‘That’s not enough, you are still a sinner and will go to hell,’ without batting an eyelid. When they say these kinds of things, are they going to create any doubt in him? If they do, he is not a *medhāvī*. If he is a *medhāvī*, he is free from any kind of doubt, he is a *chinna-saṁśaya*.

Being a *medhāvī*, a wise man, what does he do? *Na dveṣṭi akuśalaṁ karma*, he does not despise *karma* that is not auspicious, that is, he does not despise *kāmya-karma*, *Śaṅkara* says. Why are *kāmya-karmas* inauspicious? Even though they are rituals, they are performed for the sake of *puṇya*, so that one can get some results later, and in order to enjoy that *puṇya*, you must have a body. The *karma*, therefore, becomes the cause for beginning a new body, and thus, for the perpetuation of *saṁsāra*. Because it perpetuates *saṁsāra*, *kāmya-karma* is called *aśubha*, inauspicious *karma*. Having become a *jñānī*, a wise person, he does not despise even *kāmya-karma*. When somebody performs a *kāmya-karma*, whether *laukika* or *vaidika*, he will not detest that *karma* on the basis of the fact that it does not help in the pursuit of *mokṣa*, but only

¹*Muṇḍakopaniṣad* – 2-2-8

reinforces *saṃsāra*. If he does, he has a problem. When somebody is doing *karma*, why should you bother about it? He has a desire, and that is why he does it. Why should you look down upon it or despise it? There is no necessity to hate any *karma*.

Further, *kuśale na anuṣajjate*, he does not cling to auspicious *karma*, the *nitya-karma*, done for the sake of *mokṣa*. Previously he had a certain commitment to that *karma*. Now he is no longer bound to it. He may do *nitya-karma*, but he does not adhere to it with a clinging attachment. Even though that *karma* was once useful for him for gaining *mokṣa*, because by doing it he got *sattva-buddhi* and because of *sattva-buddhi*, he got the knowledge that is *mokṣa*, he does not look upon it as something very beloved. Why? Like a bandage, it no longer serves him. For some time, the bandage protects you, saving you from further hurt and from infections, and helps you to heal. Then you remove it. What is your attitude towards that bandage? Is it beloved to you? No. You just discard it, because it has done its job. Similarly, once this *nitya-karma* was useful to him, no doubt, but that does not mean it remains beloved to him. He has grown out of it. He may even still be doing it, but he does not look upon it as a means, because there is no purpose. The final purpose of doing *nitya-karma* is *ātma-jñāna*, which he has gained. Therefore, not seeing any usefulness in it, he does not look upon it as something particularly beloved, *na anuṣajjate*. Nor does he hate, *na dveṣṭi*, the *kāmya-karma*. We have seen before in the fifth chapter, *jñeyaḥ sa nitya-sannyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati*—a *sannyāsī* is to be known as the one who does not have hatred or longing.’ He is neither after something nor repelled by something. This is what is said here again.

In reading this verse, it is important to read the second line first, as we have done. Otherwise, it can be and has been for other commentators, very confusing. There is an order here. First he renounces the results of actions and does what has to be done, and becomes a *tyāgī*. As a result of that he gains *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and becomes a *sattva-samāviṣṭa*. After that he gains *ātma-jñāna* and becomes a *medhāvī*, and later eliminating all his doubts and assimilating the knowledge completely he becomes a *chinna-saṃśaya*. Being this, he is a free person, who has no hatred for inauspicious action or any clinging to auspicious action. As a *tyāgī*, even though one is a *sattva-samāviṣṭa*, he is still a *karma-yogī* and not completely free. *Śaṅkara* has something to say here. The one who is enjoined to do *karma*, the *kartā*, who has the notion, ‘I am the doer,’ is the person who is under discussion. By living a life of *karma-yoga*, and in time being one whose mind is purified, the one who is awake to the self becomes free. He gives up all *karmas* with the knowledge, ‘I do not perform any action.’ Thus knowing the self that is free from all action, which is not subject to birth and death and all the modifications in between, not doing any action himself, nor causing someone else to do—*naiva kurvan na kāraṇa*—gains a *jñāna-niṣṭhā* characterized by actionlessness. *Ātmā* is free from all action. And knowing this, he is one whose *svarūpa* is actionlessness.

Then who gains *puṇya*? For the actor there is *puṇya*, not for the action less. Action less *ātmā* never acted and therefore, does not gather either *puṇya* or *pāpa*. What about the ones gathered before? Thus, another question can be raised. Now he has gained knowledge, and therefore can accumulate no new *karma-phala*, but what about the previous *karma-phala*. It is something like an alcoholic who has damaged his liver. Now he is no longer taking alcohol, and therefore does no further damage, but what about the old damage that is already there? He still has to suffer digestive problems because of the old damage done to his liver. The same argument is used here. He has gained knowledge now, but he had already gathered a lot of *sañcita-karma* and has to account for all that. Who do you mean by ‘he’? If ‘he’ is the one who has understood that *ātmā* is *niṣkriya*, where is ‘he’? You are speaking as though there is an *ātmā*, which he had understood and then there is ‘he,’ who is separate from the *ātmā*. The truth is this. The one who understood the *ātmā* is the *ātmā*, which has always been *niṣkriya*. Even before, it did not gather *puṇya-pāpa*. Nor does it now. He thought he gathered it before; now there is no ‘before’ nor ‘later.’ He discovers himself to be action less; so all the old *karmas* evaporate, like those of a dreamer waking up. There is no old *karma*, no new *karma*, no future *karma*. That is called *mokṣa*. The bondage of *karma*, which is called *saṃsāra*, is not there for him.

Thus, by this verse is told the purpose of the previously mentioned *karma-yoga*. That is *mokṣa*. What about the purpose of the lifestyle of *sannyāsa*? That is also *mokṣa*. So it was said, ‘The one who sees the lifestyle of *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga* as one, he sees; he sees the truth of both of them—*ekaṃ sāṅkhyam ca yogaṃ ca yaḥ paśyati saḥ paśyati*.¹ Why? Because as the Lord says in the fifth chapter, ‘Real *sannyāsa* is difficult to attain without *karma-yoga*, O! *Arjuna*. The wise person who is committed to *karma-yoga* reaches *Brahman* before long—*sannyāsastu mahābāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ, yogayukto munirbrahma nacireṇa adhigacchati*.² *Karma-yoga* is presented here as a means in sequence, *kramaṇa*. That word *kramaṇa* must be understood. *Karma-yoga* is meant to give *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and prepare you for knowledge. That is why he says, finally, through assimilated knowledge one becomes a *medhāvī* and a *chinna-saṃśaya*. He is the one who does not revile inauspicious *karma* or cling to auspicious *karma* because he is above *rāga-dveṣas*. He is a *sarva-karma-sannyāsī*. All this is very clear. What was said earlier is again repeated here. This bears repeating because it is the vision of the whole *śāstra*, and therefore, should be understood well.

¹ *Gītā* – 5-5

² *Gītā* – 5-6

In the next verse, *Bhagavān* says,

खे ह्यनभ्यर्तते कर्मण्येवाहिं एतच्छ्रेयसादिभ्यः
 अतोऽप्येवमिदं कर्मण्येवाहिं एतच्छ्रेयसादिभ्यः ॥११॥

*na hi dehabhṛtā śakyam tyaktum karmāṇyaśeṣataḥ
 yastu karmaphalatyāgi sa tyāgītyabhidhīyate*

Verse 11

ह्यनभ्यर्तते *hi dehabhṛtā* — indeed, by the one who sustains a body; एतच्छ्रेयसादिभ्यः *karmāṇi* — actions; + कर्मण्येवाहिं *aśeṣataḥ* — completely; इत्येवमिदं *खे कर्मण्येवाहिं* *tyaktum na śakyam* — it is not possible to give up; अतोऽप्येवमिदं *yah karma-phala-tyāgi* — the one who is a renunciate of the results of action; एतच्छ्रेयसादिभ्यः *saḥ* — he; इत्येवमिदं *इत्येवमिदं* *tyāgi iti abhidhīyate* — is called a renunciate

Indeed actions cannot be given up completely by the one who sustains a body; but the one who is a renunciate of the results of action is called a *tyāgi*.

AS LONG AS ONE IDENTIFIES WITH THE BODY, ONE CAN ONLY RENOUNCE THE RESULT BUT NOT THE ACTION

The person in question is one who is enjoined to do *karma*, who is further explained as the one who identifies himself as the body and the body as himself. By this very identification, he sustains the body, he is *dehabhṛt*. His conclusion being that he is the body, and therefore an agent, he is ignorant; his understanding of the self as a doer is not negated. This conclusion, ‘I am the doer,’ is so very well-rooted that it is not possible for him to completely give up all *karma*, *na śakyam tyaktum karmāṇi aśeṣataḥ*, even if he takes *sannyāsa*. He may give up a few *karmas*, like duties, etc., but he will still look upon himself as one who has given up all the *karmas*. Who gives up *karma*? Not *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*; it never had any *karmas* to give up. The one who says ‘I have given up *karma*,’ is the one who looks upon himself as the agent, *kartā*. He can never give up all *karmas*, but he can give up the result of *karmas* while doing all the enjoined *karmas*. That is the *tyāga* that is relevant to him.

He retains the *kartṛtva*, doership, and at the same time converts his daily life into *yoga* by acting, not according to his *rāga-dveṣas*, but in keeping with *dharma*. ‘Perform the enjoined *karma*, because action is better than inaction—*niyataṁ kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hyakarmaṇaḥ*,’ so says *Bhagavān*.¹ Though there is *karma*, because there is no commitment to the results, *rāga-dveṣas* get neutralized. The internal pressure

¹ *Gītā* – 3-8

is gone, and he is cheerful, not because he gets what he wants and avoids what he does not want, but because of his attitude. In fact, what he does not want keeps happening, and what he wants does not happen. When he takes care of that by *karma-yoga*, his mind becomes cheerful. This is the *tyāga* that he is qualified for, not *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*. Let him work for *jñāna*, for which doing *karma* with this attitude and not renunciation of *karma*, is necessary.

Sarva-karma-sannyāsa is not mere renunciation of action, *karma-tyāga*; it is renunciation of doership in the *ātmā*. That takes place in the wake of the knowledge that *ātmā* is not the doer. There is no renunciation, really speaking, but it is a fact that, *ātmā* is *akartā* and doership is superimposed upon the *ātmā* due to ignorance, *avidyā*. When that superimposition goes, in the wake of knowledge, naturally one becomes *akartā*. Even performing action, he does not perform any action, *kurvan api na karoti*. That is called *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, which is the same as knowledge. To prepare yourself for that knowledge to take place you can either be a *karma-yogī* or a *sannyāsī*. Here the *karma-yogī* is praised and his *tyāga* is *karma-phala-tyāga*. Being ignorant, he cannot give up all *karma* and live a life of a *bhikṣu*. He still has identification with a given body-mind-sense-complex; and with this identification, he not only sustains this body, he sustains the next body also. When this body is gone, he will assume another, because, being a *kartā*, he is also a *karma-phala-bhoktā*. To enjoy the *karma-phala* that he has gathered, he has to assume new bodies. Then, when he assumes a human body or its equivalent elsewhere in this universe, he again becomes a *kartā*, and naturally, a *bhoktā* for which he has to assume another new body. This is what they call *saṁsāra-cakra*, the wheel of *saṁsāra*. What is said here is that the person who identifies himself or herself as the physical body is not a person with discrimination, that is, he is not a *vivekī*. For that person to give up *karma* totally is not possible.

The *vivekī* on the other hand, has no problem; he has no erroneous sense of doership, *kartr̥tva*; and there is no question of any *karma* being done by him. How does he perform an action or cause anybody to perform any action—even killing? He neither kills, nor causes someone else to kill because he has no *kartr̥tva* whatsoever. *Kṛṣṇa* has said earlier, *vedāvināśinaṁ nityaṁ ya enam ajam avyayaṁ kathaṁ sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṁ ghātayati hanti kaṁ*—the one who knows this indestructible time-free, unborn, imperishable (self), how or whom does that person destroy or cause to destroy? ¹ Whether I do something or I prompt you to do it, it is all the same. I am the agent, *kartā*. The one who knows the self, however, neither performs, nor asks someone else to perform an action. That knowledge is *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*.

This *sannyāsa* is not possible as long as you are identified with a body; *karma* cannot be completely given up by the one who is identified with a body—*na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṁ tyaktuṁ karmāṇi aśeṣataḥ*. Since he is ignorant and has the notion

¹ *Gītā* – 2-21

that he is a doer, he is enjoined to do *karma*. That being so, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* is not possible; but he can do *karma* making sure he is a renunciate of *karma-phala*. He does all the *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, giving up the *kāmya-karma*, not for any *artha* or *kāma*, but only for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and through that for *mokṣa*. If there is no attachment for security or pleasure, including heaven, in all his actions of prayer, rituals, etc., he has *karma-phala-tyāga*. Because he is a *tyāgī*, he will gain an *antaḥ-karaṇa* ready for knowledge, and thereafter, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* is possible. This does not mean that he will not get *karma-phala*. That is unavoidable; because *karma-phala* is *ṛta*, *avaśyambhāvī*, that which will surely happen. It is an unalterable fact that *karma* necessarily yields a result. Even though he does not want it, it will come to him. But then, he has no attachment with reference to it.

This is an oft-quoted verse in praise of *karma-yoga*. Even though he does *karma*, still he is a *tyāgī*. Total renunciation of *karma* is possible only by a person who has the vision of the *ātmā*, which is *akartā*. Naturally, he has no identification with the body and is, therefore, not one who sustains the body, *dehabhṛt*. He is not dead; it is just that he does not have the confusion that ‘I’ is the body. This is real *sannyāsa*. But as long as there is identification with the body, as long as you are a *dehabhṛt* what should you do? In this verse, *Kṛṣṇa* says you should be a *karma-phala-tyāgī*.

Now suppose the person is able to give up the identification with the body and gain *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, what would be the result? That is told in the next verse.

+ ई॒ए॒य॒ः ई॒य॒ः ई॒ः ए॒ः ई॒ः ए॒ः ई॒ः ए॒ः ई॒ः
 । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । १२ ।।
aniṣṭamiṣṭam miśram ca trividham karmaṇaḥ phalam
bhavatyatyāginām pretya na tu sannyāsinām kvacit
Verse 12

+ । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । *atyāginām* — for the non-renunciates; । ई॒ः ए॒ः । *pretya* — after death; + ई॒ः ए॒ः । *aniṣṭam* — undesirable; <। ई॒ः ए॒ः । *iṣṭam* — desirable; । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । *miśram ca* — and a mixture; । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । *karmanāḥ phalam* — the result of action; । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । *trividham bhavati* — exists as threefold; । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । *na tu kvacit* — but never; । ई॒ः ए॒ः । ई॒ः ए॒ः । *sannyāsinām* — for the renunciates

Undesirable, desirable, and a mixture, the threefold result of action, exists
after death for the non-renunciates, but never for the renunciates.

THE THREEFOLD RESULTS OF ACTION

The result of *karma* is threefold: *aniṣṭa*, undesirable; *iṣṭa*, desirable; *miśra* and a mixture of the two. The *aniṣṭa-karma*, *Śaṅkara* says is characterized by a sojourn in *naraka*, which is a temporary experience of pain, or by taking a birth in the form of an

animal or some other life form lower than that of a human being. The *karma*, which is *iṣṭa* is characterized by birth in a form higher than a human being, like a god, a man, a *gandharva*, etc. In *Taittirīyopaniṣad* we have a list of these forms in ascending order. Each one is better than the other because it enjoys a hundred times more happiness. Brahmaji and the denizens of *brahmaloka* are the last mentioned. If you have made it there, you have reached the top of *saṃsāra* and there is no return from there and one gains *krama-mukti* there. Then we have *miśra*, the mixture of desirable and undesirable, as in this human birth. That is why for the human being the morning is wonderful, and the evening turns out to be a problem. Because he is a *miśra*; the *karma* keeps on changing minute to minute. Some things are good, some are bad. Look at the President of the United States. He is the most fortunate person in the sense that he has the biggest job on this planet, but, he may not have the leisure to take a serious book in hand and read it; that is not possible while he is in that position. This is what they call mixture of *iṣṭa* and *aniṣṭa*. Every human being is a mixture of these two, a *miśra*.

WHO IS THE ONE WHO GAINS THESE RESULTS?

Thus *karma-phala*, the result of *karma*, is threefold, *trividham*. Even though there are really only two results, *puṇya* and *pāpa*, from the standpoint of the births one can take, the result is threefold. Any one of these three exists for whom? Only for *atyāgīs*, those who are not renunciates. After dying to the obtaining body, *pretya*, that is going away from this obtaining body, they will have to assume other bodies to enjoy one or more of these three types of *karma-phala*. For the renunciates, *tyāgīs*, this is not possible. These are the *tyāgīs* who have become *sarva-karma-sannyāsīs* by understanding that *ātmā* is *akartā*. For them, there is no *karma-phala* at all.

Śaṅkara makes a note here about how this *karma-phala* is produced. It comes from action and a number of factors necessary for performing the action—the agent, *kartā*, the thing acted upon, *karma*, the instrument used to perform the action, *kāraṇa*, and so on. All of them are born of ignorance. You cannot look at yourself as an agent without ignorance, *avidyā*. This is the root of all action. Seeing another thing to be acted upon, and a means for doing the action are also *avidyā*. Naturally, the result of action is set up by ignorance. *Śaṅkara* says it is like magic, in that it is not really there, and creates great delusion. It seemingly binds the innermost self, *pratyagātmā*. This result is called *phala* because it quickly perishes. The word *phala* refer to a fruit because it is subject to perishing. Like all fruits are labelled ‘Perishable,’ the human body, all results of action and everything else in this creation should also have such a label.

THE PARAMĒRTHA-SANNYĒSÌ DOES NOT GAIN KARMAPHALA

All real *sannyāsīs* will have no *karma-phala*. A *karma-phala-tyāgī*, however, will have *karma-phala* because he is still a *kartā*. But because he has started on the

journey, he is a *kalyāṇakṛt*, and even if he does not get *mokṣa* in this life he will pick up the thread in the next and continue. Once he is a *karma-yogī*, he is a *mumukṣu* and there is no going back. He will know later, if not now.

Here the *gītā-sāstra* uses the word *sannyāsī* instead of *tyāgī* to show that the *tyāgī* should become a *sarva-karma-sannyāsī*. Śaṅkara makes a distinction here between an *aparamārtha-sannyāsī*, the one who is not in reality a *sannyāsī*, but is a *karma-yogī*, and a *paramārtha-sannyāsī*, who is a *sannyāsī* in reality, because he is a *sarva-karma-sannyāsī*, and does not look upon himself as *kartā*, the doer. His commitment, *niṣṭhā*, is in the knowledge of the *ātmā* which is non-dual, and for him, there is no *karma-phala*. The clear vision of non-dual *ātmā* completely removes the cause of *saṃsāra*.

TOTAL RENUNCIATION OF KARMA IS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT CLEAR VISION OF ĀTMĀ

From these two verses we understand that total renunciation of all *karma* takes place only for those who have the clear vision of *ātmā*. This is because, the notion of *ātmā* being a doer, enjoyer, etc., is superimposed on the *ātmā* due to ignorance. If the knowledge that, he is not the doer is not there, then, no matter what he does, whether he is living the lifestyle of a *karma-yogī* or a *sannyāsī*, he is still subject to *karma*. If he has not accomplished what is to be accomplished as a *karma-yogī* or a *sannyāsī* in this life, he will pick up the thread in the next. There is no question of a lower birth for him.

Even though *karmaphala* is threefold, *trividha*, and there may be many types of *karmas* accumulated in the form of *sañcita-karma* for him, which can fulfil themselves only through bodies such as a mouse, rabbit, etc., still, those *karmas* will not have precedence over the *karma* of a *mumukṣu*. Once he has developed a desire to be free, *mumukṣutva*, which is again because of *puṇya*, it is all one-way. There is no possibility of his going back to a lower birth. Suppose he dies away while seeking, and then a *karma* to be a cockroach fructifies, will he become a cockroach, a silent meditator in somebody's cupboard? It is meaningless to say so; and Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says it is not possible. He may spend some time in heaven but then, he will definitely take a birth where he can continue his pursuit. Or, he may be born directly in a *karma-yogī's* family. We have an assurance there, which is understandable. If there were to be such a thing as *karma*, etc., then this would be logical within that. Though these people are *karma-yogīs* in this life and complete renunciation of *karma* does not take place, it will take place in a subsequent birth; because once started, there is no going back.

Once a person develops this *mumukṣutva*, he cannot push it back any longer. That itself is going against the general flow, and to reach that point, to question the very pursuer is not an ordinary thing. This *mumukṣutva* is reversing the whole process. Once the person's *karma* has gained such a momentum that it has reversed the process, there is

no question of stopping it. The *puṇya* is such that the process will get reversed. Generally, the flow is towards *saṃsāra*, seeking more security and pleasure. Even if one becomes religious, one only wants to go to heaven. But here, all the charitable actions, prayer, etc., have created the momentum to inquire in to the truth of oneself. ‘Who am I? Am I seeking correctly? This question is not just a million-dollar question; it is a million-life question. The *Gītā* says, ‘One among thousands makes an effort for gaining oneself, *manuṣyāṇāṃ sahasreṣu kaścid yatati siddhaye*,’¹ and ‘at the end of many lives the one who gains this knowledge gains Me—*bahūnāṃ janmanām ante jñānavān māṃ prapadyate*.’² If that question, ‘Who am I?’ has arisen, there is no question of going back.

Whether he is living the life of a *karma-yogī* or a *sannyāsī*, one thing is certain. The real *sannyāsa* is the vision of reality, *paramārtha-darśana*. And that takes place purely by knowledge, *jñāna*. Both *karma-yoga* and *sannyāsa* are for knowledge and there is some choice with reference to the lifestyle one is going to adopt. For *Arjuna*, *karma-yoga* seems to be more appropriate, because, he is a *kṣatriya* and not a *brāhmaṇa*. The society accepts that a *brāhmaṇa* is only suited for *sannyāsa* or performing rituals like *agnihotra*. It is not that a *kṣatriya* cannot take *sannyāsa*, but it is not expected that he will. If a *brāhmaṇa* takes *sannyāsa* nobody bothers. But if *Arjuna* takes *sannyāsa*, it is front page news. Then too, if a *brāhmaṇa* takes *sannyāsa*, as a *sannyāsī* he will still be teaching, praying, etc. There will not be much change in his activities, and therefore, not much disruption to the society. But the activity of a *kṣatriya* is entirely different. It is predominantly *karma* oriented, for the benefit of the people. His taking *sannyāsa*, therefore, has a lot of other ramifications. That is why *Kṛṣṇa* said in the second chapter, ‘For a *kṣatriya*, there is nothing better than a battle in keeping with *dharma*—*dharma-yāt yuddhāt śreyo’nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate*.’³ Here he is talking about a lifestyle *sannyāsa*.

But here in this verse, he is talking, not about a lifestyle, but real *sannyāsa*, *paramārtha-sannyāsa*, which is possible only by the vision of reality, *paramārtha-darśana*. That has nothing to do with *varṇa* or *āśrama*. That is, it is immaterial whether you are a *sannyāsī*, a *gṛhastha* or a *brahmacārī*. Nor does it matter whether you are a man or a woman, an Indian or an American—these things do not count at all, since we are talking about *jñāna*. If they count, it is not *jñāna*. The qualifications for *jñāna* are *viveka*, *vairāgya*, *śama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titikṣā*, *śraddhā*, *samādhāna* and *mumukṣutva*. Any human being or an equivalent being can develop all these. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Hanumān* is presented as a great inquirer, *jijñāsu*, to show that it does not make any difference whether you are a man or a *vānara*. Knowledge is dependent on nothing but the object of knowledge. To know, you require only a certain

¹ *Gītā* – 7-3

² *Gītā* – 7-19

³ *Gītā* – 2-31

type of mind. If you have the qualification, you can have the knowledge. Nothing else matters and nobody can deny it to you.

For the ignorant person who looks upon the agent, etc., as *ātmā*, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* does not take place, whether he is a *karma-yogī* or a *sannyāsī* who has no knowledge. There is only one way one can have total renunciation of all action—knowing *ātmā* to be *akartā*, the non-doer. The verses that follow show this.

ॐ पाञ्चैतानि महāबāहो कāराणāनि निबोध मे
सānkhyae kṛtānte proktāni siddhaye sarvakarmaṇām

pañcāitāni mahābāho kāraṇāni nibodha me

sānkhyae kṛtānte proktāni siddhaye sarvakarmaṇām

Verse 13

ॐ पाञ्चैतानि महāबāहो — O! Mighty armed, *Arjuna*; ॐ सारवाकर्माणाम् सिद्धये — for the accomplishment of all *karmas*; ॐ, ॐ-अ-एतानि सānkhyae kṛtānte — in the *śāstra* at the end of the Vedas (*Vedānta*); प्रोक्तानि *proktāni* — are told; एतानि *etāni* — these; { ॐ पाञ्च — five; एतानि कāराणāनि — causes; एतानि निबोध मे *nibodha* — understand from Me

Understand from Me, *Arjuna*, these five causes for the accomplishment of all *karmas*, told in the *śāstra* at the end of the Vedas (that is, *Vedānta*, which is the point of culmination of all *karma*.)

Kṛṣṇa, addressing *Arjuna* as the mighty-armed one, *mahābāho*, says ‘*nibodha*—please understand!’ This is said not only to draw the attention of *Arjuna*, but also to indicate that the subject matter changes now. It is connected to what has been said, no doubt, but still, there is a turn in the flow of his teaching. In order to show that the turn is taking place here, he says *nibodha*, please understand.

For the accomplishment of all forms of action, *sarva-karmaṇāṃ siddhaye*, whether scripturally enjoined, *vaidika*, or worldly, *laukika*, these are the five causes, *pañca etāni kāraṇāni*. He says these, *etāni*, keeping in his mind what is going to come. As we do today when we say, I met this man. You have not previously mentioned him. So, a pronoun is not appropriate and to use one is grammatically incorrect. Still, this has become common parlance because you have him in mind and are going to talk about him in more detail. It is the same here. These five types of causes are told, *proktāni*. Where? In the *vedānta-śāstra*.

ALL KARMAS FIND THEIR CULMINATION IN ĒTMAJŌĒNA

By way of praise of these causes, he says that they are told, *proktāni*, in *sānkhya*, which *Śānkhya* says is the *śāstra* that enumerates various things to be understood—in other words, *Vedānta*. That *śāstra* has an adjective here, *kṛtānta*. What is done, *kṛta*, is

called *karma*. The end, *anta*, or culmination of that is *kṛtānta*. This is the *śāstra* where all *karma* culminates in the knowledge of *ātmā* as *akartā*. Or, because the first part of the Vedas deals with *karma*, this is the *śāstra*, which is at the end of the enumeration of all these *karmas*. It is also that in which all the *karmas* resolve, having brought about *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. How do all *karmas* end in knowledge? Śaṅkara quotes a part of an earlier verse. Just as a well is useless when everything is flooded with water, so are all the Vedas for the wise—*yāvānartha udapāne sarvataḥ samplutodake tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ*.¹ The various rituals, etc., mentioned in all three Vedas are of as much use to a wise man as a well is to anyone when there is water everywhere due to flood. When the well itself is underneath water, of what use is it? That is how useful the *karmas* in all three Vedas are for the wise man. All the *karmas* are meant to make him happy, but he has discovered that happiness is his nature. There is nothing to be gained further. Everything that is to be done is done by him because when *ātma-jñāna* is born, everything else is accomplished in that all the *karmas* resolve into his knowledge. Therefore, *Vedānta* is called *kṛtānta*, the end of all *karmas*.

In this *śāstra*, the five factors that are necessary for the performance and successful completion of a *karma* are told. They are those factors because of which actions are accomplished, from which alone the *karmas* emanate. They are to be understood because if you know which are the causes directly involved in all these actions, *ātmā* will stand out as *akartā*. It is only to point out that *ātmā* is not one of them, but is independent of all of them, that he shows all these factors involved in an action.

What are they?

+ĒVĒCĀXĒĒĒ EoiĒĒEoĒĒĒSĒ {ĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ
ĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ {ĒĒĒSĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ {ĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ 12811

*adhiṣṭhānaṃ tathā kartā karaṇaṃ ca pṛthagvidham
vividhāṣca pṛthakcēṣṭā daivaṃ caivātra pañcamam*

Verse 14

+ĒVĒCĀXĒĒĒ *adhiṣṭhānam* — the physical body; ĒĒĒĒĒ *tathā* — so too; EoiĒĒĒ *kartā* — the agent; EoĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ {ĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ *karaṇam ca pṛthag-vidham* — and the separate, manifold means; ĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ {ĒĒĒĒĒĒ *vividhāḥ ca pṛthak* — the distinct and diverse; SĒĒĒĒĒĒ *cēṣṭāḥ* — activities (of the *prāṇas*); +ĒĒĒ *atra* — here; nōĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ *daivam ca eva* — and *daiva* (the presiding deities) is indeed; {ĒĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ *pañcamam* — the fifth

The physical body, so too the agent, the distinct and diverse activities (of the *prāṇas*), and indeed, *daiva* (the presiding deities) is the fifth here.

¹ *Gītā* – 2-46

THE FIVE FACTORS INVOLVED IN KARMA

The place where all accomplishments are possible, where you can fulfil a desire by taking action is the *adhiṣṭhāna*. This is the place from where you operate in the world to gain experiences, the locus of enjoyment, *bhoga-āyatana*, the physical body. Centred on this are all actions, because in it are placed all the *karmendriyas*, the organs of action. The word *adhiṣṭhāna* means basis and is used in a different context when we refer to the *ātmā* as the very basis, the *satya*, of the world, like the rope is the *adhiṣṭhāna* for the snake projected on it. Here *adhiṣṭhāna* means the basis for performing action, since the subject matter under discussion is *karma*. One of the factors necessary for performing action is the physical body. *Śaṅkara* says that, it is the basis for the manifestation of desire, aversion, happiness, sorrow and knowledge. Desire manifests in the form of an effort to fulfil it; aversion manifests as an action of repulsion; all the sense organs bring in the data on the basis of which you experience *sukha* and *duḥkha*, and each sense organ is placed in the physical body in its anatomical location. The eardrum is purely a physical thing, but it is absolutely necessary for hearing. Similarly, for every perception there must be a physical locus in which the relevant sense organ can operate. For knowledge, perception is necessary and that perception takes place only through sense organs, which are placed in the physical body. Even though knowledge is gained by the sense organs, the basis, the locus for all these sense organs, called *adhiṣṭhāna*, is the physical body.

Who does the action? The one who takes the initiative for an action with a certain intention, *saṅkalpa*, performs the action and owns it up, is the agent, the *kartā*, and is the second requirement in performing an action. Otherwise called *cidābhāsa* or *ahaṅkāra*, he is the one who does the *karma* and enjoys its results. With reference to what is done, he is called *kartā*, with reference to what is experienced, *bhoktā*.

Then, there is the means, *karaṇa*, the instrument with which the action is performed. This includes the five organs of action—*karmendriyas*, the five sense organs—*jñānendriyas*, the mind—*manas*, that entertains the fancy to do a given action, and the *buddhi* that resolves to do it. First desiring, then deciding, ‘Yes, I will do it,’ and then using the eyes, etc., the hands and legs, etc., one does the action. These means are manifold and diverse, each one being distinct from the other, *pṛthak*. The mind also is a *karaṇa*, called *antaḥ-karaṇa*. All of these have their own distinct activities.

The fourth essential factor is *prāṇa* which makes all these activities possible. Without the *prāṇa* the body will not hold the subtle body, which has the functional aspect of all these *karaṇas*. The activities, *ceṣās*, of this *prāṇa* are manifold *vividhāḥ*, each one distinct, from the other with its own separate function. There is respiration, consisting of inhalation and exhalation, *prāṇa*; and evacuation, *apāna*; circulation, *vyāna*; digestion, *samāna*; and the reversal of the physiological functions, *udāna*. These five, together called as the *prāṇa*, form the fourth factor necessary for performing

an action, without which, there cannot be any action. For any action you require energy and that is supplied by the *prāṇa*.

Then there is a fifth factor. The presiding deities of all these functionaries collectively called *daiva* form the fifth factor. Wherever there is function, there is a law involved. Otherwise it cannot operate. Why should the eyes see, not the ears? Why should the eyes not hear? There must be some law. What is it? We know that it governs not only your pair of eyes but every pair of eyes. That is why there is an ophthalmologist. The function of every eye follows certain rules that do not change. That means there is *Īśvara* in the form of eyes and in the form of laws that govern the eyes. There is a lord governing the law of hearing, the law of smelling, the law of tasting, the law of thinking, even of *sukha* and *duḥkha*, etc. All these are absolutely logical. Otherwise there could not be a subject called psychology or any other discipline of knowledge centred on the body. These disciplines exist because we can generalize that, if these are the conditions, then the following will be the outcome. When one thing takes place, the other necessarily happens. Thus, we have laws.

The physical body, the *prāṇas*, the sense organs, and the mind are all nothing but laws. If we look at *Īśvara* through those laws, each law becomes a *devatā*. The *devatā* for the eyes is the Sun-*āditya*; for speech, Fire-*agni* and so on. Whenever there is a problem with the eyes, we propitiate the presiding deity of the eyes, the Sun. Nothing is taken for granted. The fact that a particular amount of strength is necessary to lift a particular object is part of this law. That law which governs this and all actions, is *daiva*. If a given sense organ or organ of action is employed in the successful performance of that action, there is a presiding factor, the presiding deity, which is the law itself looked upon as a deity. For any *karma* to be accomplished, there must be *daiva*. If you recognize that, you are called an *āstika*. If you do not, you are a *nāstika*. According to us, the one who accepts the *śāstra* is an *āstika*. And the one who does not is a *nāstika*. But when you accept the *śāstra*, you accept the *devatās* also. These presiding deities, that preside over and bless the eyes and so on to make them what they are, form the fifth factor called *daiva*.

These, then are the five factors necessary for the performance of any action. What kinds of actions are done by them?

शरि०व०ान०म०भिर०य०ा०त्क०र्मा० प्र०रा०भ०हा० न०रा०ह०

न्य०ाय०य०ा०म० वा० वि०पा०रि०ता०म० वा० पा०ण्०चा०इ० त०स्या० हे०ता०वा०ह० ॥१५॥

*śarīravāṇmanobhīryatkarma prārabhate narah
nyāyyaṃ vā viparītaṃ vā pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ*

Verse 15

न्य०ाय०य०ा०म० वा० — whether proper; वि०पा०रि०ता०म० वा० — or the opposite;
शरि०व०ान०म०भिर०य०ा०त्क०र्मा० — that *karma* which; शरि०व०ान०म०भिर०य०ा०त्क०र्मा० —

with body, speech or mind; नाराह् — a man; प्रारभते — undertakes; इति तस्या — of that; एते पाञ्च — these five; हेतवाह् — are the causes

That *karma*, whether proper or the opposite (improper), which a man undertakes with body, speech or mind, has these five causes.

THESE FIVE FACTORS ARE THE CAUSE FOR ALL THE THREE TYPES OF KARMA

The word *nara*, etymologically means the one who does not die—*na rīyate iti naraḥ*. Here, it refers to a human being, because by doing *karma*, he perpetuates himself. This human being undertakes, *prārabhate*, various forms of activity, *karma*, which are divided into three groups from the standpoint of the three means used to perform them. A physical activity, *kāyika*, is done by the physical body, an oral action, *vācika*, by the speech, and a mental action, *mānasa*, by the mind. These are the three types of activities divided on the basis of the three means of action.

The type of *karma* done by these three means is again divided into two. An action that conforms to the moral order is called *nyāyyaṃ karma*, and that which does not, which goes against the order is called *viparītaṃ karma*. A system of logic is also called *nyāya*, meaning that which is proper, rational. For the same reason, justice also is called *nyāya*. Orally you can perform a proper or an improper action. If you verbally abuse someone, it is a *viparītaṃ karma*, while the proper use of words is *nyāyyaṃ karma*. Similarly, actions that hurt, such as stealing and so on, are *viparīta*, at the level of the physical body, *kāyikaṃ viparītaṃ karma* and even thinking ill of another person is a *mānasaṃ viparītaṃ karma*. Śaṅkara says *nyāyyaṃ karma* is that which has the sanction of the *śāstra*, while *viparītaṃ karma* does not. Some of these actions are voluntary, and some are not; but are necessary for living, like breathing. Every one of them, voluntary and involuntary, has these five causes, *pañca ete tasya hetavaḥ*. Here the attention is drawn to what was originally stated, that five factors are responsible for all kinds of activities. Though the types of *karma* are three-fold from the standpoint of the means used to perform them, the factors necessary for their performance are five.

Why is this said here? The intention is not really to understand the nature of *karma*, but to lift your vision, to see whether *ātmā*, yourself, is really involved in action. That is the intention, *tātparya*. When all these factors are required for a *karma*, how do you take *ātmā* as the agent, *kartā*? Even the *ahaṅkāra* cannot be the *kartā* because it is only one of the five factors required for a *karma*. Neither can any one of the other factors be the *kartā* for the same reason. The sense organ itself is not the *kartā*; the mind alone is not the *kartā*; the body is not the *kartā*; nor is any organ of action or the *buddhi*. If any one of them is not the agent, *kartā*, then who is? Nobody is the *kartā*. If you say all of them put together is the *kartā*, that *kartā* is clearly *mithyā*, dependent on

something else. The aim is only to point out that *ātmā*, the ‘I’ is free from all activities—always. When the nature of *karma* is defined, *ātmā* is not at all defined or included in any way, because it is not the cause for any action. It is not an active element in *karma* but the witness as well as the truth of *karma*, without which there is no *karma*.

īḥē B'ē'ā o'ēēīē Eoiēēōēēī ēēxāēā ē'īmā iēō'ā*
 {ē'āēī'āēēēīēēō'ū ēēzē o'ē {ē'āēēīē nōēēīē 112611

tatraivaṃ sati kartāramā tmānaṃ kevalaṃ tu yaḥ
paśyatyakṛtabuddhitvāna sa paśyati durmatih

Verse 16

īḥē B'ē'ā o'ēēīē *tatra evaṃ sati* — when this is so; iēō'tu — on the other hand; + Eoiēē-
 ēō'ū ēēīē *akṛta-buddhitvāt* — because of immaturity of the mind; āē yaḥ — the one
 who; + ēī' ēēxē'ā *ātmānam* — the *ātmā*; Eāē'īmō'ā *kevalam* — (which is) pure; Eāēēō'ā
kartāram — (as) the *kartā*; {ē'āēēīē *paśyati* — sees; o'ē nōēēīē *saḥ durmatih* — that
 one whose thinking is distorted; xē {ē'āēēīē *na paśyati* — does not see (the truth)

When this is so, the one who sees, on the other hand, the self, which is
 ‘pure,’¹ as the agent, because of an immature mind, that person whose
 thinking is distorted does not see (the truth).

THE ONE WHO SEES THE ĒTMĒ AS KARTĒ DOES NOT SEE THE TRUTH

‘When this is so, *tatra evaṃ sati*,’ means when these five factors just mentioned are the causes for *karma*. This being the case, one who sees the self as the agent is a *durmati*, one whose mind sees other than what is. Such a mind does not see things as they are, but sees everything in a distorted manner. *Śaṅkara* says the mind sees things so wrongly that it subjects itself to birth and death by subjecting itself to *karma* and *karma-phala*. When you see external things wrongly, no great harm may be done; but when you see yourself wrongly, it is a problem. You cannot afford to see yourself wrongly because if you do, everything else gets distorted. The self is pure, *kevala*, meaning it performs no action whatsoever, and while it does not undergo any change, in its presence all activities take place. If one sees that self as the doer, *kartā*, there is a distortion. Why does he see this? His mind is distorted, he is a *durmati*.

What is the cause for his distorted thinking? He is a person whose mind has not matured; he is an *akṛtabuddhi*. His mind is not ‘done very well,’ in that, it has not undergone the necessary process of learning, of purifying itself from all distortions.

¹ Here the word *kevala* means ‘pure,’ untouched by anything.

*yasya nāhaṅkṛto bhāvo buddhiryasya na lipyate
hatvāpi sa imāṃlokāna hanti na nibadhyate*

Verse 17

᳚᳚᳚᳚ yasya — for whom; + ½! ᳚᳚ ᳚᳚ ᳚᳚ ahaṅkṛtaḥ bhāvaḥ na — there is no I-notion;
᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚ yasya buddhiḥ — whose mind; ᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚ na lipyate — is not affected; ᳚᳚᳚᳚
saḥ — he; < ᳚᳚᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚ imān lokān — these people; ½᳚ ᳚᳚ + ᳚᳚᳚᳚ hatvā api — even
killing; ᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚ na hanti — he does not kill; ᳚᳚ ᳚᳚᳚᳚ na nibadhyate — nor is he bound

The one who has no I-notion, the one whose mind is not affected, he,
even killing these people, does not kill, nor is he bound.

THE ONE WHO SEES THE ĀTMĀ AS AKARTĀ IS NOT BOUND BY KARMA

The person who has undergone the proper process of learning with the help of the teacher and the *śāstra* does not have *ahaṅkṛtaḥ bhāvaḥ*, that is, the notion that ‘I am the doer.’ Such a person understands that, ‘Even though the doer is *ātmā* because there is no doer without the *ātmā*, in reality *ātmā* is not the doer.’ *Śaṅkara* explains how he gets this particular discriminative knowledge which takes the form of the cognition, ‘I am not the doer.’ The five factors, such as the physical body, senses, mind, etc., are superimposed upon the *ātmā* by ignorance, *avidyā*. Ignorance is the connecting factor, which makes it look as though *ātmā* has a body, a set of senses, a mind, etc., even though it is independent. He has the understanding that, these five factors are the performers of all the actions—*guṇāḥ guṇeṣu vartante*, the *guṇas* move about among the *guṇas* and not ‘I.’ I am the witness of all these activities. To illustrate, *Śaṅkara* quotes the *śruti* here, ‘*aprāṇo hyamanāḥ śubhro hyakṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ*—the one who is free from *prāṇa*, free from the mind, (and therefore) always pure, and above *akṣara*, the cause of all causes.’¹ He is the one who is the very basis of *māyā*. That self is free from any modification or action. The person who sees this is clear in his thinking.

He is the one whose mind is not affected at all, *buddhiḥ na lipyate*. He has no regret or remorse, and therefore does not say, ‘What good did I not do? What wrong did I do—*kim ahaṃ sādhu na akaravaṃ kim ahaṃ pāpam akaravam iti*.’² He has no guilt whatsoever and he is not plagued with the fear of retributions for all his omissions and commissions, thinking, ‘Why did I not do the right thing; why did I do the wrong thing?’ People are always regretful in this way. But here is a person whose *buddhi* is no longer affected by any such guilt. This is a very important thing, because every feeling of guilt is centred on ‘I.’ Things that were supposed to have been done by me were not

¹ *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* – 2-1-2

² *Taittirīyopaniṣad* – 2-9-1

done and things that should not have been done at all were done. This is the lot of everyone. There are varieties of omissions and commissions even in terms of accomplishment, education, skill, and so on. People regret, 'I should have gone to the medical college. I should have studied engineering. I should have learned music. I should not have learned music. Why did I become a teacher, of all things? I should have gone to the industry,' etc. People can always be regretful of what they did or did not do. All these are based on one's own action. But action itself does not cause guilt; it is action centred on 'I' that causes guilt. Guilt and 'I' go together. Fortunately, however, 'I' is free from any action. You may say a hundred different things, but 'I' performs no action. If that is so, what good or bad action is there for *ātmā*? It never did anything, and is therefore, free from guilt. Naturally, if one has this vision of *ātmā*, his mind is not affected in any way by regrets and remorse, *tasya buddhir na lipyate*. Repentance may be useful in management of your emotions, etc., but it is only for the person who looks upon *ātmā* as the *kartā*. We are not dismissing repentance here, but we are going one step further and saying that *ātmā* is *akartā*, and therefore, nothing that was ever done or not done by him can be repented.

EVEN IF THE JŌĒNĪ KILLS HE DOES NOT KILL

The one who sees this is the person who thinks clearly. The wise person who sees that, even destroying all these people assembled on the battlefield, he does not perform the act of destruction—*hatvāpi sa imān lokān na hanti*. When he destroys all these people in the battlefield, how can you say he does not destroy? *Śaṅkara* says from the standpoint of an onlooker, the person seems to perform the action; but in fact, *ātmā* performs no action. Therefore, he is not bound by the result of any action, *na nibadhyate*. It comes from the five factors including the body, but not from the *ātmā* directly. *Ātmā* is only the witness, *sākṣī* the very basis, *adhiṣṭhāna*, of the body and all actions, but itself performs no action. It is the person alone that counts here, and that person performs no action whatsoever. What is to be done is done. When a judge issues a judgement for a person to be hanged, can we say he is guilty of taking a life and therefore has to be given capital punishment? No, because it is the thing to be done. He has no guilt whatsoever, because he knows that he is just an instrument in the execution of the law. There is no ego there.

This is not a sanction for killing. But by dealing with the most difficult, improper action, all other actions are dealt with. This is called *prathama-malla-nyāya*. If you want to become the heavy-weight boxing champion, you only need to defeat the current champion. Similarly, here, by pointing out the action of killing, he has pointed out all other actions. We have seen, 'How can the person who knows this indestructible, eternal, unborn, imperishable kill anything or cause anything to be killed—*veda avināśinaṃ nityaṃ ya yenam ajam avyayaṃ kathaṃ sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṃ ghātayati hanti*

*kam?*¹ And also, ‘He does not kill nor is he killed—*nāyaṃ hanti na hanyate*.² And, ‘This unborn, eternal, ancient one is not killed even when the body is killed—*ajo nityaṃ śāśvatoyaṃ purāṇaḥ na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*.’³ It is not an object of action, much less subject.

In the previous verse it was said that the one who has not undergone the discipline of learning properly looks upon the self which is action less, as the agent, *kevalam ātmānaṃ kartāraṃ paśyati*. that is, *kevalaḥ ātmā kartā iti paśyati*. Before that it was said that there are five factors necessary for any action—*karaṇa*, *kartā*, *adhiṣṭhāna*, *prāṇa* and *daiva*. While the *kartā*, the doer is *ātmā*, *ātmā* is not the doer. We are not presenting a *kartā* other than the *ātmā*, in fact, we are not presenting anything other than *ātmā*. The *kartā*, being *ātmā*, is nothing but *sat-cit-ānanda*, which is completely free from doing. This is not seen unless one removes that ignorance about *ātmā*. Therefore the person who does not have clear a understanding about the *ātmā*, thinks that *ātmā* is the *kartā*.

EVEN IF ĀTMĀ BY ITSELF IS NOT THE KARTĀ, WHY CAN IT NOT BE A KARTĀ ALONG WITH THE OTHER FACTORS?

A pertinent doubt is raised here by *Śaṅkara*. Perhaps the verse means that the one who is not well informed, looks upon *ātmā* alone as the agent, *kartāram ātmānaṃ kevalaṃ paśyati durmatih*, not taking into consideration the other four factors required for an action. Without them, there is no possibility of *karma*. Although *ātmā* by itself has no agency, *kartṛtva*, in conjunction with the other four factors it has. Therefore, this does not mean that *ātmā* is *akartā*, it is still a *kartā*, but not by itself. *Kevala ātmā* is *akartā*. But in association with the body, etc., it becomes the *kartā*. Everyone knows this. Nobody looks upon *ātmā* alone as a *kartā*. Who thinks that he is independent of the physical body and yet performs an action like walking without the physical body? Nobody commits that mistake. If he does, he is a *durmati*. Why not take the verse this way?

Śaṅkara says that this is not difficult to answer. If *ātmā* in association with the physical body, etc., becomes the *kartā*, how does *ātmā* establish this association with the physical body, mind, and senses? *Ātmā* itself does not undergo any change to be able to form an association; it is *avikriya*. Being pure awareness, it has no part to associate with something, it is *niravayava*. How is pure awareness going to associate itself with anything? How can something which has attributes, like the physical body, be associated with another thing which has no part at all? If there are two objects, each having a

¹ *Gītā* – 2-21

² *Gītā* – 2-19

³ *Gītā* – 2-20

certain form, association is possible. But when one is absolutely free of attributes how is it going to associate with the physical body, which has attributes? It is not possible.

KEVALA-ĒTMĒ CAN NOT DO ANY ACTION

Then what is the meaning of the word *kevala* ? While it can be used in the sense of ‘merely,’ as it has been taken by the objector, it can also be used in the sense of ‘pure—it alone exists, nothing else.’ It is by nature free from any modification or attribute. The word, *kevala* here should be taken in this sense of purity, restating a fact about the self. Therefore in the previous verse *kevalam ātmānaṃ kartāraṃ paśyati durmatih*, does not mean that *ātmā* alone is seen as the *kartā*. That is not the meaning and the next verse confirms it.

That the self does not perform any action is very well known in the *śruti*, the *Gītā* itself, the *smṛti*, and it is also reasonable. *Gītā* says, *ātmā* is not subject to modification, it is *avikriya*. Actions are done by the *guṇas*, *guṇaireva karmāṇi kriyante*. Even though obtaining in the body, *Arjuna*, *ātmā* does not act and is not touched—*śarīrastho’pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate*.¹ The same thing is said in the *śruti*, ‘He seemingly meditates and seemingly moves away, *dhyāyati iva lelāyati iva*.’² *Ātmā* does not do any act of meditation; nor does it get agitated and move away; it only seems to do so.

BY REASONING ALSO WE CAN SEE THAT THE SELF IS AVIKRIYĀ, ACTION LESS

By reasoning also, it can be established that the self is without parts, not dependent on anything else, and not subject to modification. *Ātmā* is the one thing that is self-evident; and therefore, does not depend upon any other thing for its existence.

If *ātmā* has parts, they must exist in a locus, and a locus is necessarily an object, and therefore, *anātmā*. Parts of *ātmā* residing in *anātmā* is untenable, and therefore, *ātmā* having parts cannot be supported by reasoning. Also because it is self-evident, in the form of *caitanya*, everything else becomes evident to the self, including, limbs and attributes. They are not self-evident, and therefore, not *ātmā*. If you say *ātmā* is subject to modification, how do you know this? There should be another *ātmā* seeing the *ātmā* that is undergoing changes. And if we accept this we will get into infinite regression—second *ātmā* to see the first and the third to see the second and so on. Even if by some stretch of imagination you are able to say that *ātmā* is subject to modification, you still cannot establish that *ātmā* is the *kartā*, the doer. What would be its action? It could only be a change centred on *ātmā*. If the physical body, mind, senses, etc., are performing

¹ *Gītā* – 13-31

² *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* – 4-3-7

action, it is their action. How can their action be the action of the *ātmā*? Even accepting that *ātmā* is subject to change, the actions involved in bringing about that change are not the actions that emanate from the physical body, mind and senses. Further, if you accept that *ātmā* is independent of all of them, then that *ātmā* cannot be the agent, *kartā*, of actions done by the body, etc. When the physical body, mind and senses perform their actions, how can *ātmā* become the *kartā* even if it is subject to change. The action done by one person cannot go to another person who has not done that action. It has nothing to do with him. A given person's action belongs to that person alone and no one else can be held accountable for it.

You may argue that though the physical body performs the action, you have identification with it and take the physical body as yourself. Consequently, due to the ignorance now obtaining, *karma* that is done can go to *ātmā*. If you say this, I will say 'Live long! *āyusmān bhava*,' for that is exactly what I am saying. Even then, *ātmā* does not become the *kartā*. If, due to ignorance *ātmā* is taken to be a *kartā*, that agency, *kartṛtva* is not real. *Śaṅkara* gives an example. A shell that is mistaken for a piece of silver does not become silver. If you see silver due to your own ignorance of the fact that what you are looking at is a shell, you see a silver, which is not there at all. Similarly, if you see an action in *ātmā* due to your ignorance of the actionlessness of *ātmā*, that does not in any way belong to *ātmā*. It is like cloud forms seen as palaces and dust seen in space (sky) by children, not knowing that these things do not belong to the space.

It is impossible to perform an action without bringing about any change. That is the basis of *Śaṅkara's* argument. Without change on the locus of action, there cannot be any action. Conversely, wherever there is an action, the locus of that action must subject itself to some kind of change. Without action, you cannot even close or open your eyes. Even deliberately not opening the eyes implies a mental activity. Action always implies some motion, some change, and the changes that take place in a given part of the body, etc., belong only to it, not to *ātmā*. What is said here in this verse is proper—*yasya nāhaṅkṛto bhāvo buddhir yasya na lipyate, hatvāpi sa imān lokān na hanti na nibadhyate*. The mind of the one who has no notion that he is a doer is not affected. Even killing these people, he does not kill and is not bound. His mind is not troubled with remorse about what he did and did not do because there is no *saṅkara*, mix up. That wise person does not do the action of killing nor is he bound by result of action.

Śaṅkara points out the statement in the second chapter of *Gītā*. 'He does not kill nor is he killed—*na ayaṃ hanti na hanyate*.' That is because, it is said, 'He is not born, *na jāyate*.' This statement reveals the changelessness of *ātmā*. The entire view of the *gītā-śāstra* is presented here properly. Both, the one who looks upon the *ātmā* as an object, which can be destroyed, and the one who looks upon the *ātmā* as the subject of the action of killing, or any other action, do not know the *ātmā*—*ubhau tau na*

vijānītaḥ.¹ *Ātmā* does not perform the action of killing or become the object of somebody's act of destruction. You cannot objectify the *ātmā* to destroy it, and therefore, *Bhagavān* went on to say, '*naiṅ chindanti śāstrāṇi*—weapons cannot destroy it.' I cannot objectify you, the *ātmā*, in order to destroy you, nor can you as *ātmā* perform any action. It is not possible that *ātmā* is either the subject or the object of an action. Having made this initial statement, he gave the reason why *ātmā* is not subject to death, decay, etc. It was never born, *na jāyate*. There was never a time it was not there; nor having been there, later it will not be—*na ayaṅ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ*.² This kind of a problem does not exist for *ātmā*, because *ātmā* is not subject to time. It is unborn, it is eternal—*ajāḥ nityam*. By giving these statements of reasoning, he tells us that *ātmā* is not subject to modification—it is *avikriya*.

What kind of action can one perform? There are two types of actions; one that you do and one that you prompt someone else to do. Both are your actions. But the one who knows this indestructible, eternal, unborn, imperishable *ātmā* does neither of the actions. How or whom will that person destroy or cause to destroy?³ He does not perform any action whatsoever. This is *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* by knowledge. Such a person is no longer enjoined to do any *karma* because he is not a *kartā*. Having said all this briefly at the beginning of the *śāstra*, in the second chapter of the *Gītā*, *Kṛṣṇa* elaborates upon it wherever there is an occasion in the *Gītā*. Even while doing he does not do. He says, seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, etc., he does not think he is doing any action—*naiva kiñcit karomi iti yukto manyeta tattvavit, paśyan śṛṇvan sprśan jighran aśnan gacchan svapan śvasan...*⁴ He also says, 'The one who sees inaction in action and action in inaction, *karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśyet akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ*,⁵ he knows the truth.' And says in the thirteenth chapter, 'Even though obtaining in the body, *Arjuna*, he does not act.'⁶ We have seen varieties of verses like this in the *Gītā* showing that *ātmā* does not perform any action. Now he sums up the vision of the entire *śāstra* to bring it all together in one place. It is something like gathering rice grains that are scattered all over into one heap. *Kṛṣṇa* knows he is reaching the end of his teaching and therefore sums up the whole topic under discussion by saying here, that the wise person, the one who knows *ātmā*, does not destroy, nor is he bound.

¹ *Gītā* – 2-19

² *Gītā* – 2-20

³ *Gītā* – 2-21

⁴ *Gītā* – 5-8, 9

⁵ *Gītā* – 4-18

⁶ *Gītā* – 13-31

THE WHOLE GĪTĀ ŚĀSTRA DEALS WITH PRAVṚTTI AND NIVṚTTI

The whole *gītā-śāstra* is dealing with *karma* and *sannyāsa*. Śaṅkara also makes it clear in his introduction that it is centred on *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. And Lord Kṛṣṇa himself says, ‘Arjuna, in this world, a two-fold commitment was told by Me before, knowledge for the renunciates and *karma* for the *karma-yogīs*—*loke asmin dvidvidhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayā anagha, jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānāṃ karma-yogena yoginām.*¹ In this chapter you will see again how clearly the *śāstra* unfolds what is real *sannyāsa*, what is the lifestyle of *sannyāsa* and what is *karma-yoga*. The entire *Gītā* revolves around these three topics. *Sarva-karma-sannyāsa* is the main thing to be accomplished, for which you can live a life of either *karma-yoga* or *karma-sannyāsa* in which there is no other pursuit but knowledge. In both these pursuits there is *karma-phala-tyāga*, renunciation of the results of actions, because actions are not done for *punya*, but for *mokṣa*.

The one who has the knowledge of the *ātmā* is completely free from *karma* because he no longer has any sense of agency, *kartṛtva*, and therefore, no identification with the body. It is very clear to him that he performs no action because all sense of agency and actions stemming from that are caused by ignorance. When this is so, there is total renunciation of all actions in the form of knowledge, and therefore, the three types of results of *karma*, *iṣṭa*, *aniṣṭa* and *miśra* do not exist for him. Just five verses ago it was said, ‘After death, there is a threefold result of *karma*, desired, undesired, and a mixture of the two, for those who have not renounced (their sense of doership) but never for *sannyāsīs*.’ As long as there is an identification with the body, and therefore, a sense of doership, it is not possible to avoid *karma-phala*. It will stick to you because you are the doer of the action. Śaṅkara himself says here that this is the essence of the meaning of all the Vedas, and that after properly analysing it, it should be understood by learned people who are capable of discrimination and inquiry. These are those whose mind is rendered subtle, and can therefore probe into the subject matter.

Wherever there was an occasion for it, the difference between *karma*, *sannyāsa* and *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* was shown keeping in view the entire *śāstra* as well as reasoning. Reasoning is important as a support for the assimilation of the meaning of the *śāstra*, because there are other possible interpretations. What the *śāstra* says can be above reason, no doubt, but it cannot be irrational.

The whole tradition is presented very clearly here. The Vedic tradition is centred on *karma*. Either one does enjoined *karmas* and *kāmya-karmas*, in keeping with *dharma*. When *mokṣa* is established as the end to be accomplished, one gives up *kāmya-karma* and does enjoined *karmas* as *karma-yoga* while pursuing knowledge. Or, one gives up even the enjoined *karmas* and pursues only knowledge. All this one

¹ *Gītā* – 3-3

that occurs in your mind, for which the object is the flower, is referred to here as *jñāna*. This *jñāna* is the basis for *karma* because without knowledge of the action, and what is gained by it, how are you going to do any action? Whether the *karma* you do is a Vedic ritual, or a secular action, you must necessarily know what it is and what you are doing it for. Without the knowledge, *jñāna*, that this is the means for a given end, no action is possible. You do *karma* because you want to accomplish something, and you want to accomplish because you know there is something to accomplish. Then further, it is not enough to know what you want; you must know how to get it, so knowledge of the prescribed means to accomplish a given object is also necessary. Without that also, there can be no action. More often than not, we make use of knowledge to get things done. Even fundamental research is meant to gather knowledge that can be used, which is where technology comes in. Research into the mechanism of a cell, for example, is not just for the knowledge of the cell, but so that I can repair the cell if it is defective or affected in some way. Like a vulture, no matter how high it may soar, always has its eye open upon its prey, every human being has a relentless outlook for making use of things. Therefore, *Bhagavān* says here, that even our knowledge is only for *karma*'s sake. It doesn't help you get out of *karma* unless you make use of it differently. We will see that later.

Then we have the object of knowledge, *jñeya*. Why is it separately said? Every *jñeya* later becomes *jñāna*. You want a given object of knowledge, *jñeya*, only when you come to know about it. Therefore the object, *jñeya* also makes you perform an action. How do you come to know, 'I want this?' Because there is an object of knowledge, *jñeya*. Without that, no knowledge, *jñāna*, is possible. Known objects present themselves as very desirable and therefore, you do *karma* to get them. These two things then, *jñāna* and *jñeya*, are necessary for action. The third is the one who knows, *parijñātā*. These three things together become the cause for action. The knower, *jñātā*, knowledge, *jñāna*, and the thing to be known, *jñeya*, are the factors that instigate *karma*.

AGENT, OBJECT, AND INSTRUMENT, ARE THE THREE CONSTITUENTS OF ACTION

Earlier, we saw the threefold *karma* and the five factors necessary for an action, but here is another way of looking at *karma* from the standpoint of *kāraka*. What are the things involved here? One is the means used to perform an action, *karaṇa*. *Śaṅkara* says *karaṇa* is that by which something is done, *kriyate anena iti karaṇam*. It may be physical limbs, it may be the mind, organs of perception, organs of action—all of them are called as *karaṇa*, the means, instrument, of doing. Then there is *karma*, which is not action here, but is defined by *Śaṅkara* using the grammatical terminology of *Pāṇini*. He defines *karma* as *īpsitatama*, that which is the most desired by the agent. When a person wants to cook something, though the action he is performing may be cutting

विभक्तेषु *vibhakteṣu* — among the divided; सर्वभूतेषु *sarva-bhūteṣu* — in all things;
 + अविभक्तम् *avibhaktam* — undivided; + अच्ययम् *avyayam* — changeless; *BE* *ekam bhāvam* — one existence; *af* *yena* — by which (knowledge); *ik* *īkṣate* — one
 sees; *ī* *tat jñānam* — that knowledge; *ī* *sāttvikam viddhi* —
 know it to be *sāttvika*

That knowledge by which one sees one changeless existence in all things
undivided among the divided, may you know is *sāttvika* .

SĀTTVIKA KNOWLEDGE

We should make a note here that this verse is not from the *sāṅkhya-śāstra* . First let us take the phrase, *yena īkṣate*; it means, ‘by which one sees, appreciates.’ Seeing here implies *jñāna*, that knowledge, by which a person sees something is *sāttvika* . What does he see? If one sees many things in the world and takes them as many, is it *sāttvika* ? No. The knowledge by which one sees many things but at the same time, sees the one in the many is *sāttvika* . In all things, *sarva-bhūteṣu*, beginning from the unmanifest to the manifest and within that, all the non living and living beings, from the stationary plants to the most exalted beings like Brahmaji, he sees one existence alone, *ekam bhāvam īkṣate*. That knowledge by which one sees only one existence is *sāttvika* . *Śaṅkara* makes a note that even though the word *bhāva* means ‘that which is existent’ and can refer to any existent object, the word *bhāva*, here means the one *vastu*, which is *ātmā* . This is because he has also said, *sarvabhūteṣu*—‘(existent) in all beings,’ as a qualification to the word *bhāva*. And it is not one thing that has modified into all this. Previously it was one, and now also it is one, and therefore, he says, *avyaya*, changeless. In all beings, the one that has not undergone any change whatsoever, in itself or in terms of attributes and upon which all *nāma-rūpa* is a superimposition, is the changeless, *avyaya*, the basis of everything.

Not only that, it remains undivided among the many divided things, *avibhaktam vibhakteṣu*. The bodies differ, but it does not stand divided at all. *Śaṅkara* says it is like space, which has no holes or pockets. A body is there, a body is here; in between there is no body, and therefore, one body is different from the other. But it is not so for *ātmā* . Like space, there is no such place where the *ātmā* is not. As space does not stand divided, so too, *ātmā* remains one whole *pūrṇa-ātmā* among the many divided things.

By a knowledge that is *sāttvika*, one sees this, *īkṣate*. This is a wonderful word. He does not speculate but sees. It is clear for him because it is his nature, *svarūpa* of himself. In himself alone is everything, while he remains an undivided whole. The one who sees this has no ignorance about it. Once I say undivided whole, there is no subject-object in this seeing. The subject, agent, is *ātmā* and so is the object, *karma*. The knowledge, because of which one is able to see the *paripūrṇa-ātmā* is called

sāttvikaṃ jñānam. In fact, only this is knowledge because it alone releases you from *karma*; everything else is ignorance and useful for *karma*, not *mokṣa*. Instead of delivering you from bondage it only becomes a knowledge of means and ends and makes you go chasing one thing or the other and puts you further into bondage. What frees you is the knowledge of the one changeless existence, *ekaṃ bhāvam avyayam* in all things, *sarva-bhūteṣu*. This is *sāttvikaṃ jñānam*.

A question may be raised here. How can we qualify knowledge as *sāttvika*, etc.? This classification is understandable with reference to something like food. Knowledge can take place only in an *antaḥ-karaṇa* which has a predominance of *sattva*. If the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is not *sāttvika*, knowledge cannot take place. Therefore, it is true that any knowledge is *sāttvika*. That being the case why call this alone as *sāttvika*? That is because, here, when considering this knowledge, the word *sāttvika*, has a particular meaning. A mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa*, is considered predominantly *sāttvika*, in this context when it has qualities such as absence of demand for respect—*amānitva*, absence of pretence—*adambhitva*, not hurting another—*ahiṃsā*, accommodation—*kṣānti*, straight forwardness—*ārjava*, and so on. All these qualities are the qualities of a *sāttvika-antaḥ-karaṇa*, and therefore, the knowledge that takes place in such a mind is qualified as *sāttvikaṃ jñānam*.

Similarly, if the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is predominantly *rajas* what would be the type of *jñāna* that is there?

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।
 त्वत्कृपायाः प्रसादात्प्राप्तं ज्ञानं ।
 तद्विदुः सर्वे भूतानि तदात्मनः ।
 तद्विदुः सर्वे भूतानि तदात्मनः ॥२१॥

*pr̥thaktvena tu yajjñānaṃ nānābhāvān pr̥thagvidhān
 vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu tajjñānaṃ viddhi rājasam*

Verse 21

iṅtu — on the other hand; *ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय* *yat jñānam* — that knowledge by which; *ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय* *sarveṣu bhūteṣu* — with reference to all beings; *ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय* *pr̥thak-vidhān* — of different kinds; *ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय* *nānā-bhāvān* — manifold natures; *ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय* *pr̥thaktvena* — separately; *ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय* *vetti* — one knows; *ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय* *tat jñānam* — that knowledge; *ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय* *rājasam viddhi* — may you know it to be *rājasa*

On the other hand, knowledge by which one knows distinctly the manifold natures of different kinds of beings, that knowledge, may you know as *rājasa*.

RĀJASA KNOWLEDGE

Duality will be the reality for those whose mind is predominantly *rajas*, whereas the knowledge by which one sees the non-dual is *sāttvika*. As before, even though the

subject of the sentence, ‘yat jñānaṃ veti’ is *jñāna*, making the literal meaning, ‘which knowledge knows,’ we understand the sentence to mean, ‘by which knowledge one knows.’ What does one know? Every *ātmā* is seen as separate, *prthaktvena*, from every other *ātmā*. All the bodies being different, and *ātmā* being taken as the body, one sees only the many and distinct, *nānābhāvān*, *prthakvidhān*. Nobody, one could argue, takes another physical body as himself. And someone who holds this conclusion supports it with the reasoning that when he wants to get up, only his body gets up, not other bodies. Therefore, since the I-sense is confined to a given physical body and does not extend to any other, it is clear that the physical body is *ātmā*.

Even if one appreciates an *ātmā* other than the physical body, which survives the death of the physical body, still everyone thinks that *ātmās* are many. Every religious person accepts an *ātmā* that survives the death of the body. And therefore, he does consider the *ātmā* as something different from the physical body. At the same time, he does not recognize the non-dual nature of the *ātmā* and therefore for every physical body there is an individualized *ātmā* different from every other *ātmā*. In other words, he recognizes the *ātmās* as separate, *prthak*. He knows as separately, *prthaktvena*, the different beings or objects, *nānābhāvān*. Not only are they many, they are varied. Each one has his own likes and dislikes, joys and sorrows, *sukha* and *duḥkha*. Everybody is different from everybody else, because knowledge differs, desires differ and tastes differ. Thus Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘The knowledge by which one recognizes separateness with reference to all beings or recognizes the *ātmā* in all beings as separate, may you know that knowledge to be *rājasa*—*tat jñānaṃ viddhi rājasam*.’ It is born of *rajo-guṇa*. So, an *antaḥ-karaṇa*, which has predominantly *rajas* can have only this kind of *rājasa* knowledge.

What is *tāmasaṃ jñānam*? That is pointed out in the next verse.

यत्तु कृत्स्नावदेकस्मिन् कर्म्ये सक्तमाहृतकम्
 + अतत्त्वार्थवदल्पम् च तत्तमसामुदाहृतम्

yattu kṛtsnavadekasmin kārmye saktamahaitukam
atattvārthavadalpam ca tattāmasamudāhṛtam

Verse 22

यत्तु *yat tu* — whereas that (knowledge by) which; *BE* *ekasmin kārmye* — in one object; *E* *kṛtsnavat* — as though it is everything; *o* *saktam* — committed; + *ahaitukam* — that which is without reasoning; + *atattvārthavat* — that which is without truth; + *alpam ca* — and very limited; *i* *tat* — that; *is* *tāmasam udāhṛtam* — is said to be *tāmasa*

Whereas that (knowledge by) which (one is) committed to one object, as though it is everything (and) which is without reasoning, (illogical,) without truth, and very limited, that (knowledge) is called *tāmasa*.

TĀMASA KNOWLEDGE

To distinguish this *jñāna* from the other two that is *sāttvika* and *rājasa*, he uses the particle *tu*—whereas. Here, one is committed, *sakta* to one object, *kārya*, such as the body or anything else, as though it is everything, *kṛtsnavat*. Everything seems to end in a given object and nothing beyond that is seen because feeling is the basis of all conclusion. For example, that given object could be the physical body. A person who has this kind of knowledge thinks that there is nothing other than that. He thinks that the physical body has some qualities and one of them is consciousness. Since everything is in one physical body, when the body is gone, everything is gone. The conclusion here is, when the body is gone, I am gone; When the body is fat I am fat; when the body is tall I am tall. The body is the *ātmā* and *ātmā* is the body. There is nothing more than that. This is the contention of a *cārvāka*, a materialist. And therefore, such a person sees different beings as having distinct features, distinct bodies, distinct *karma*, distinct experiences of *sukha* and *duḥkha*, etc., even if he may recognize an *ātmā* surviving the physical body.

Śaṅkara mentions some other possibilities here. If the person is a devotee and worships a particular form, perhaps in stone or wood as though it is the only form of the Lord that is also *tāmasaṃ jñānam*.

Now for the sake of worship we have an altar, something we consecrate, installing the manifest presence of the Lord there.¹ And if anyone worships a given form, completely committed to that one object alone, *kṛtsnavat ekasmin kārye*, thinking that, that particular form alone is God, he also has *tāmasa-jñāna*. The capacity to discriminate, *viveka*, is lacking.

AS EXPERIENCES ARE DIFFERENT, ARE NOT ĀTMĀS ALSO DIFFERENT AND MANY?

A question may be raised here: Is it not true, after all, that the experiences of *sukha* and *duḥkha* are different for everyone? Your pain and pleasure belong to you; my pain and pleasure belong to me and therefore, they are definitely different. What is wrong with that? It is valid knowledge of things as they are. There is no erroneous perception here. How can you say that it is *rājasaṃ jñānam* and is therefore distorted? That is what the truth is. If on the other hand, *ātmā* is one and the same, then everybody should have the same experience. If I have *sukha*, everybody should have *sukha*; if I get liberated, everybody should get liberated; if I have *duḥkha*, everybody should have *duḥkha*. But that is not how things are. One is happy, *sukhī*, another is sad, *duḥkhī*; one is enlightened, *jñānī*, the other is ignorant *ajñānī*, therefore differences do exist, how can you say this is distorted knowledge?

¹ *In fact, what we are worshipping is not the idol, we are worshipping Īśvara. If anybody condemns you as an idol worshipper, he does not understand what we are worshipping.*

IN SPITE OF DIFFERENCES, THE BASIC VASTU IS ONE

It is true that *sukha*, *duḥkha*, and so on are all different attributes of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. There are attributes and they are different; but in spite of all the differences, there is only one thing that is there—the *nirvikalpa ātmā*, the self without attributes. See the difference! In spite of all these differences, there is only one *vastu* that is there, which is *ātmā*. And knowing that is *sāttvika-jñāna*, while seeing difference, is *rājasa-jñāna*. Just because one *antaḥ-karaṇa* has this perception of difference, it does not mean that *vastu* is not one. Just because different vessels have different volumes, it does not mean that space is divided into many parts. It remains one undivided whole. So too, clay is the same even though the forms it assumes are different. And similarly here the *vastu* is the same and the *nāma-rūpa*, the names and forms differ. What differs is called *anātma-dharma*. It is not the essential nature of *ātmā*. We are not shy of the perception of duality because in spite of this perception, there is non-duality. That is *sāttvikaṃ jñānam*. In spite of all the differences, there is non-duality alone. The so-called differences are not really differences at all; they are *mithyā* and therefore, the *vastu* is only one and that is myself. This is *jñāna*. When this is the truth, if only difference is seen, we have to say that it is *rājasa-jñāna*.

But when one sees only one thing as though it is the whole, that is *tāmasaṃ jñānam*. This person does not know what he is doing. Some devotees of Lord *Kṛṣṇa* are an example of this. The *mantra* they chant originally appears in the *kalisantarāṇopaniṣad* as ‘*hare rāma, hare rāma, rāma rāma, hare hare; hare kṛṣṇa, hare kṛṣṇa, kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa, hare hare.*’ But they will reverse the order and chant the name of *Kṛṣṇa* first, because of their commitment to the belief that *Kṛṣṇa* alone is the supreme Lord. And a fanatic has no understanding of what the *Īśvara* is and you cannot make him understand either. It is like talking to a wall. Nothing happens. This is *tāmasaṃ jñānam*, meaning, it is born of *tamoguṇa*. Either he thinks that the physical body alone is *ātmā* or that one given form alone is the Lord. Both are included here.

ILLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Śaṅkara mentions here a sect that holds that the body has to be purified in order for one to be released from all *karma*. They look upon the *ātmā* as other than the body but then, consider it to have the size of the body. As the size of the body increases, *ātmā* goes on enlarging. In this view again, *ātmā* is as good as the body. Even though they say it is distinct from the body, if it has the size of the body, if it has limbs and so on, then that means, it is only as good as the body. This is *tāmasaṃ jñānam*. You can't say *ātmā* is distinct from the body and subtler than the body, and at the same time say, it has the size of the body. What is that *ātmā* that is other than the body and still has the size of the body? That means you are attributing limbs to the *ātmā*. If it has no limbs, then it does not have the size of the body. It makes no sense and therefore *Kṛṣṇa* says it is *ahaitukam*, without reason, illogical. There is a no thinking involved in such views.

Then again such knowledge is *atattvārthavat*, knowledge, which has no element of truth, though it is held to be true. This kind of knowledge is not knowledge at all; but those who subscribe to it hold it very dearly as though it is knowledge. That is why it is said to be *tāmasa*—*tāmasam udāhṛtam*. There is another word used to describe this knowledge—*alpam*. Śaṅkara says that because it is without reason, *ahaituka*, it is *alpa*, precious little. Or, we can say it is *alpa*, because the result of it is very limited. It does not lead one anywhere. If you say the body alone is *ātmā*, it will only lead to sorrow, because the body cannot be maintained. It goes on ageing and finally dies. Anyone who holds this belief cannot avoid the fear of mortality. Therefore, the result he gets out of this knowledge is very little, *alpa*. Then again, the knowledge is limited because he does not see anything beyond the physical body. His knowledge covers only a limited sphere of perception.

THREEFOLD DIVISION OF KARMA

This is the threefold knowledge *Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa* promised to talk about. Now he is going to discuss the threefold nature of *karma*.

यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं

+ यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं ॥२३॥

niyatam saṅgarahitam arāga-dveṣataḥ kṛtam

aphalaprepsunā karma yattatsāttvikamucyate

Verse 23

यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं — that enjoined action which; + यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं — by a person who has no (binding) desire for the result; यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं — without attachment; यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं — without being impelled (purely) by likes and dislikes; यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं — which is done; यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं — that; यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं यत् कर्म कृतं — that is called *sāttvika*

That action, which is enjoined and which is done without attachment without being impelled (purely) by likes and dislikes by a person without a (binding) desire for result, is called *sāttvika*.

SĀTTVIKA-KARMA

Niyatam means that which is enjoined by the Veda. And in terms of the Vedic *karmas*, *niyatam karma* would be the *nitya-naimittika-karmas*. It can also mean any duty that is very evident; any job that has to be done in a given situation. That also becomes *niyatam karma*. This is *sāttvika-karma*, the *karma* done by a person whose mind has a predominance of *sattva*. And while describing it the definition of *karma-yoga* is given here. Any *karma* that is to be done which is performed without a certain kind of attachment, *saṅgarahita*, is *sāttvika*. It is free from such identification

as, ‘I am the one who is doing this.’ It is done without ego, without attachment, *sañga-rahita*.

Then again a *karma* that is done without being impelled by *rāga-dveṣas*, *arāga-dveṣataḥ kṛtam*, is a *sāttvikam karma*. Generally, the suffix *tas* indicates the fifth case, but it can also stand for any case, and here Śaṅkara takes it as the third case. A *karma* that is done purely out of *rāga* or *dveṣa*, not taking into account *dharma* and *adharmā* is called *rāga-dveṣataḥ kṛtam karma*. Any *karma* will have an element of *rāga* and *dveṣa*, because nobody can perform an action without the expectation of a result. But at the same time, *karma* can be prompted by a *rāga* or *dveṣa* without conforming to *dharma* and not eschewing *adharmā*. So when we say, *rāga-dveṣataḥ kṛtam karma*, we mean only that *karma*, which does not take cognisance of *dharma* and *adharmā*, what is right or wrong. But the *sāttvikam karma* is the opposite of that, *arāga-dveṣataḥ kṛtam*, not done impelled by *rāga-dveṣas* alone.

People do *karmas*, religious-*vaidika*, and secular-*laukika*, to amass merit, *puṇya*, so that they can enjoy heaven and other improved situations later. But the *karma* spoken of here is done by one who is not desirous of that kind of result, *phala*. He is called *aphala-prepsu*—one who is not desirous of gaining a particular result of an action. He is a *karma-yogī* and therefore interested only in *karma* for purifying his mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhyartham*, and for pleasing *Īśvara*, *īśvara-prītyartham*. Both are for the sake of *mokṣa*. That kind of *karma*, the action done by a person not desirous of a result, *aphala-prepsunā kṛtam karma*, is called *sāttvikam karma*.

How nicely the *śāstra* defines this *karma*! The more understanding you have of what *ś* *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the more subtlety you have in your appreciation of *karma*. You become more alert. That is why these divisions are made. It is something like appreciating the subtle nuances of colour. If you do not know the names of different shades you cannot even distinguish them properly. The more names you have the more subtle is your appreciation of the difference between one shade and another. Similarly, the more you understand varieties of things like emotion, renunciation, food, giving charity, and so on, in terms of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the more subtle your appreciation and your action becomes. We have seen how every action is divided in terms of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Here actions in general are divided in terms of these three *guṇas* and the *sāttvikam karma* has already been defined.

Now *Bhagavān* goes on to define the *rājasaṃ karma*.

यत्तु कामेपसुना कर्मा साहायकारेण वा पुनाह
 कियते बाहुलायसां तद्राजसामुदाहृतम्

*yattu kāmepsunā karma sāhaikāreṇa vā punaḥ
 kriyate bahulāyasaṃ tadrājasamudāhṛtam*

Verse 24

यत् तु कर्म — but that *karma* which; कामेप्सुना — by the one who has a (pronounced) desire for the result; साहंकारेणा वा पुनः — or again with arrogance; बहूलायसम् — with a lot of effort; कियते — is done; तत् — that; राजसम उदहृतम् — is called *rājasam*

But that *karma* which is done by one who has a (pronounced) desire for the result or again with arrogance (and) a lot of effort is called *rājasa*.

RĀJASA -KARMA

Again, the particle *tu* distinguishes this *karma* from the *sāttvikaṃ karma* described in the previous verse. The word *kāmeṣunā* has the same meaning as the word *phalapreṣunā*—by the one who has the desire to obtain results. *Kāma* is what is desired by you, the *karma-phala*. One wants *puṇya* so that he can improve his lot either here or elsewhere.

Śaṅkara says the word *punar* in this verse has no real meaning, and is only used to fill up the metre, or you can take it in its own meaning of ‘again.’ It will not hurt the sense that the verse conveys. Again, this is *karma* done with *ahaṅkāra*—*ahaṅkāreṇa*. This use of *ahaṅkāra* here is not in the sense of agency which is in contrast to a *jñānī*, who does action without any sense of doership, *anahaṅkāreṇa*. Here the word *ahaṅkāra* has the meaning of pride. Let us consider a person who is well informed, a *śrotriya*, who has knowledge of the Vedas, and a lot of other good qualities also, but does not have *ātma-jñāna*. He is humble naturally because the more knowledge you have, the more you realize, how much you do not know. Relatively we say he is free from *ahaṅkāra* by which we mean free from a certain pride. This is a *karma-yogī* as we saw in the last verse. One who is with *ahaṅkāra*, *sāhaṅkāra*, is the opposite. He has a strong identification, such as I am a great ritualist, I am a *brāhmaṇa*, I am strong, etc. This is not just a healthy self-image but arrogance. This is a pride related to his being a *vaidika*. If you perform a huge ritual, like a *somayāga* you get a name as a *somayājī* and some people get very inflated opinions of themselves as a result. In a non-vedic context, this is the type of person who shows off his riches. It is the same thing in a different form. Whether it is religious snobbishness or secular, it is *ahaṅkāra*.

Then further, this *karma* is done with a lot of effort, *bahulāyasaṃ kṛtam*. A person who does this type of *karma* will make elaborate arrangement and make it known that he is doing a great *karma*. This is called *rājasam karma*. It is born of *rajas*.

The third one is very interesting.

+xēōxvīē īāēāēāpēē ēxēēāē sé (ēēūē ēā
 ēēānīū ēīēāēō ēē ēēēē ēō ēēāēīā ॥२५ ॥

*anubandham kṣayam hiṃsāmanapekṣya ca pauruṣam
 mohādārabhyate karma yattattāma samucyate*

Verse 25

+xēōxvīē ēā *anubandham* — natural consequence; |ēāēā *kṣayam* — loss; ēāpēē ēā *hiṃsām* — injury (to others); (ēēūē ēā sé *pauruṣam ca* — and one's own capacity; +xēēāēāē *anapekṣya* — not taking into account; ēēānīū ēā *mohāt* — because of delusion; ēīēā ēō ēē +ēēāēāēā *yat karma ārabhyate* — the action which is begun; īēīēātāt — that; īēē ēō ēē ēā =Sāēāēā *tāmasam ucyate* — is called *tāmasa*

That action, which is begun not taking into account the natural consequence, loss, injury (to others) and one's own capacity because of delusion is called *tāmasa*.

TĀMASA -KARMA

Action which is begun without seeing or taking into consideration certain things is a *tāmasaṃ karma*. In such a *karma* one does not see the natural consequence, *anubandha*. Śaṅkara glosses the word *anubandha* as the thing, which comes later as a consequence of the action. What is consequential to an action is not taken into account at all in an action like stealing, for example. Further one does not consider the losses, *kṣaya*. Exhaustion of resources like money or loss of energy and effort, loss of credibility and self-respect are not taken into consideration in this type of action. Gambling is a good example of this. There especially, losses are not taken into account nor are the negative result that will come. A gambler always believes that he will succeed. Then again in a *tāmasaṃ karma*, one does not consider how the action will affect other people, particularly, the harm, *hiṃsā*, it may inflict on others. One must know what one is capable of and what one can complete successfully, for which one requires a proper recognition of one's own resources, strength, skills, man-power and so on. All these have to be taken into account when you perform an action and if they are not, it is a *tāmasaṃ karma*.

Why would a person begin an action without taking into consideration these factors? It is due to some kind of delusion, *mohāt*. The incapacity to properly discriminate is because of some grandiosity or false hope. We call it foolhardiness. One who undertakes such an action is embarking upon an action that is called *tāmasaṃ karma*.

THE THREE TYPES OF KARTĀ

This is the threefold *karma*. Previously we saw the threefold *jñāna*, and now, how the doer himself, the *kartā*, is threefold is told here.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।
 मुक्तसाङ्गो नानाहम्वादी धृतिउत्साहसामानविताह
 सिद्धसिद्ध्योर्निरविकाराह कर्ता सत्त्विका उच्यते ॥२६॥

muktasaṅgo'anaḥṃvādī dhṛtyutsāhasamanvitaḥ
siddhasiddhyornirvikāraḥ kartā sāttvika ucyate

Verse 26

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय । *mukta-saṅgaḥ* — the one who is free from attachment; + नानाहम्वादी *anaḥṃvādī* — who has no egotism; धृतिउत्साहसामानविताह *dhṛti-utsāha-samanvitaḥ* — the one who is endowed with resolve and enthusiasm; सिद्धसिद्ध्योर्निरविकाराह *sidhi-asiddhyoḥ* — in success and failure; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय *nirvikāraḥ* — one who is unperturbed; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय *sāttvikaḥ kartā ucyate* — is called a *sāttvika-kartā*

The one who is free from attachment, who has no egotism, who is endowed with resolve and enthusiasm and is unperturbed in success and failure, is called a *sāttvika* doer.

SĀTTVIKA-KARTĀ

The *sāttvika-kartā* is one whose mind is *sāttvika*. Once the mind is *sāttvika*, everything becomes *sāttvika*; both the knowledge and the action become *sāttvika*. Therefore, all you require is that the *antaḥ-karaṇa* be rendered *sāttvika*. But, for that, you must first know what is *sattva*. This is not any kind of a physical change but a change in thinking, which involves an attitudinal change.

The agent, *kartā*, here has a *sāttvika* mind, a mind that has *sattva* as its predominant nature, and is *mukta-saṅga*, one who has no attachment to what he does, and is without pride or egoism. He is said to be an *anaḥṃvādī*. He has no false expectations of accomplishment or any commitment to the result of the action that he is doing. He does not have any sense that ‘I am a big person and I am performing this action. By this I will get name and fame, etc.,’ even when he does a great sacrifice. On the contrary, his attitude is, ‘It is given to me to act, so I am doing this.’ Even though he may be in a privileged position, he sees himself in the position of giving and not taking, because he understands very well that he can as well be at the other end. He appreciates fully that everything is given to him, and therefore, has no *ahaṅkāra*. One who does not have the arrogance born out of ignorance recognizes that everything is given; the body, the mind, the senses, the resources, the world and all the opportunities.

Even if he wants to give something to somebody, he recognizes that somebody must be able to receive it. That also is given. Without it, he would be denied the pleasure

of giving. An appreciation that things are given, even the situations of giving, telling or doing, is what we call humility and it is born of understanding. This is not the false humility of self-devaluation. Real humility does not mean you should not recognize your virtues, but in recognizing them you also acknowledge that you are endowed with them. They are given to you. That is an entirely different attitude. ‘It is given to me, I can as well be any other person who was not given these gifts and opportunities.’ That attitude makes this person *anahaṃvādī*, one who does not boast about himself.

Further, he has *dhṛti*, resolution or perseverance. There can be different resolves; one can resolve to destroy somebody and that is also *dhṛti*. Hitler had *dhṛti*, great resolve, but with his wrong thinking, it became very dangerous. Anybody can have *dhṛti* and it can as well be *rājasī* or *tāmasī*, but the person under discussion here being *sāttvika* is going to have a *dhṛti*, resolve, that is good for him and for others, because his thinking is proper. His resolution is for his *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*, etc., for the sake of his own *mokṣa*. A *dhṛti* like that of *Arjuna* or *Dharmaputra*, which does not run against *dharma* is *sāttvikī*. The word itself comes from the root *dhṛ*, to sustain, and thus *dhṛti* is that which sustains a thing. If you start something, and then later relax your efforts or give it up there is no *dhṛti*. We start nicely, like freshly pressed pyjamas but then, we soon find everything becomes loose and in disarray. There are no tight, creased pyjamas. After five minutes, it is ‘pyjamas.’ Certain minds are like that; they lack *dhṛti*. Even if there is *dhṛti*, it must be backed by *utsāha*, the energy, the enthusiasm. Proper and adequate effort is required for the fulfilment of even a firm resolve. The one who is endowed with resolution backed by effort and enthusiasm, *dhṛtyutsāha-samanvitaḥ*, is a *sāttvika-kartā*.

Further more he is not subject to any emotional turbulence in success and its opposite, failure—*siddhi* and *asiddhi*. Whether he achieves victory or meets with defeat, there is no elation or depression. A good example of the opposite of this is the response of some people to competitions in sports. Whether it is basketball, baseball, or football some people will go on a rampage if their favourite team loses. They say that in San Francisco the crime rate increases if the San Francisco 49ers¹ lose and if they keep winning it goes down. Some people get very angry and they go about looting and vandalizing. Then there are the coaches and the managers; they go crazy shouting and waving their arms. These emotional upheavals are not ordinary, and it is all because of too much of identification with the team and a strong commitment to winning. Nowadays it is no longer a game but a commercial venture in which not only money but name, power and a hundred different things are involved.

What is a game? It is something without all these. If there is success, it is taken nicely, just as defeat is accepted graciously. Similarly, if one has the proper attitude towards ‘The game of life,’ there is not much emotional change in success and failure.

¹ A team of American Football

That does not mean you should be grim in success. There is a naturally manifest fullness in the wake of any success, but it will be a contained *ānanda*, not an eruption of joy. If there is such an eruption, it will not take much time to reach the antithesis. In *yoga*, we cut down the intensity and duration of these mood swings so that there is no elation or depression beyond what is manageable. Some modification will be there but it will be appreciable because of the recognition that there are so many factors contributing to success or failure. If you look at success as something that happened to you because of many factors, and keep in mind, ‘Everything went well for me this time, therefore I succeeded,’ you will have a joy of success that is contained and satisfying without the eruption and the following depression.

A devotee can say, ‘I am grateful to the Lord.’ It is not that the Lord decided to give this fellow success today. That would mean that he was kind to him today and unkind yesterday—like his uncle. When we say that God is kind we mean that a number of factors, including your own *karma*, happen to be good. Because of that, you happen to meet a friend for tennis who usually has a wonderful forehand but that does not work for him today. The ball either goes to the net or out of bounds, and you happen to win the match. What can you say? Everything went well for you and things did not go well for him. That does not mean that he is going to lose the next time, because his stars may change. There is always an element of luck, as you may call it, or our own past *karma*; sometimes it runs along with our pursuits and sometimes it runs counter to them. This is what we call *Īśvara’s* grace. It is the result of one's own prayer, one's own attitude, one's own *karma*, past and present. Since we cannot pin-point any one as the cause for success, we say it is all *Bhagavān’s* kindness. In fact, it is all your own *karma*. *Bhagavān* does not go about distributing success to someone today, somebody else tomorrow. It is our own *karma* and we call it grace. We can also see that the whole thing is *Īśvara*. Every law is *Īśvara*, and therefore, it is God, no doubt. This is how it is to be understood, otherwise we will have a lot of problems trying to account for why God is very kind one day and unfair another. This kind of appreciation of God as some kind of a tyrant is very dangerous. How are you going to relate to that God?

Here we see the disposition of a person who has a mind, which is containable, which is manageable, in success and failure. It is all *karma-yoga* which is addressed here. Further, *Śaṅkara* adds that this is a person who is engaged only in activities which are in keeping with the *śāstra*, in keeping with *dharma*, not those that are for the sake of getting this or that. Such a person is called *sāttvika*. In other words, he is a *karma-yogī*. We are not talking about the *jñānī* here, only the *kartā*. The attitude of a *jñānī* is not going to be very different from this, but for him, it is spontaneous.

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 V. P. E. Q. E. E. O. E. X. E. E. E. E. O. i. E. E. C. Q. V. E. O. E. E. E. E. O. O. I. E. I. E. 11 R. 7. 11

rāgī karmaphalaprepsurlubdho hiṃsātmako'śuciḥ
harṣaśokānviṭaḥ kartā rājasah parikīrtitaḥ

Verse 27

रāgī — one who has a predominance of *rāga* ; karma-phala-prepsuḥ — one who has predominant desire for the result of action; lubdhaḥ — greedy; hiṃsātmakaḥ — one whose nature is to hurt; + aśuciḥ — one who is not clean; harṣaśoka-anviṭaḥ — one who is subject to elation and depression; rājasah kartā parikīrtitaḥ — is called a *rājasa-kartā*

The one who has a predominance of *rāga* and a predominant desire for the result of action, who is greedy, whose nature is to hurt, who is not clean and who is subject to elation and depression is called a *rājasa* doer.

RĀJASA -KARTĀ

This describes the doer who is *rājasa* and he is called a *karma-phala-prepsu*. Why is he called *rājasa-kartā*? Because he is a *rāgī*, one who has a predominance of *rāga*. Because of *rāga* and *dveṣa* alone, he performs all secular actions, *laukika-karma*, and if he performs any *vaidika-karma*, it is purely for the result of that *karma*. Because he has a pronounced desire for the results of actions, he is called a *karma-phala-prepsu*. He wants only *dharma*, *artha* or *kāma*, and therefore is not a *karma-yogī* but a *karma-phala-prepsu*.

Then again he is *lubdha*, greedy or miserly. Śaṅkara says that he is the one who has a desire for somebody else's wealth. This is what we call greed. Coveting another person's riches or property makes him a *lubdha*. Not only that he does not give in situations where it is appropriate to give, but also actively covets another person's riches. Generally, people distribute money when they go to places of pilgrimage in India. Even that, this fellow will not do. He is a miser, *lubdha*. He covets the wealth of others and is incapable of spending money on himself or on others. Not only does he not give, he also tries to stop others from giving. It is all because of confused values. His heart is lost somewhere in some figures, in some particular column of a financial journal or in some property somewhere in Tanzania. His heart is invested all over except here. This person is called a miser; he has to undergo a lot of change in his thinking.

Then again, he is one whose nature is to hurt another person, *hiṃsātmaka*, and in that he finds some joy also. Because he is unhappy, he makes others unhappy, either deliberately or unmindful of the damage he is doing to others. And he is an *aśuci*, not clean, either inside or outside. There are people who do not bathe for days and then try to cover the odour with perfume. This person is externally and internally *aśuci*. This internal uncleanliness expresses as anger, hatred and so on. When one has a tendency to hurt others, and powerful likes, naturally he is not going to have internal purity. But at

least he can be clean outside. Even that is not there. *Śaṅkara* says he is devoid of cleanliness inside and outside.

Further, he is just the opposite of the person who has a certain contained emotion in success and failure. The person under discussion here is *harṣa-śoka-anvitaḥ*, one who is subject to elation and depression when things go well or badly for him. He is called a *rājasa-kartā*.

Then the third type of *kartā* is being described.

+āyuktāḥ |prākṛtāḥ |ōiśvāḥ |śāṭhāḥ |naiṣkṛtikāḥ |alasaḥ
 |viśādiḥ |nīpāyānī |sē |dīrghasūtrī |ca |kartā |tāmasaḥ |ucyate

*ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭho naiṣkṛtiko'lasaḥ
 viśādī dīrghasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate*

Verse 28

+āyuktāḥ *ayuktaḥ* — the one who is disturbed; |prākṛtāḥ *prākṛtaḥ* — immature; |ōiśvāḥ *stabdhaḥ* — irreverent; |śāṭhāḥ *śaṭhaḥ* — deceptive; |naiṣkṛtikāḥ *naiṣkṛtikaḥ* — cruel; +alasaḥ *alasaḥ* — lazy; |viśādiḥ *viśādī* — given to sadness; |nīpāyānī |sē |dīrghasūtrī |ca — and a procrastinator; |kartā |tāmasaḥ *kartā ucyate* — is called a *tāmasa-kartā*

The one who is disturbed, immature, irreverent, deceptive, cruel, lazy, given to sadness, and a procrastinator is called a *tāmasa* doer.

TĀMASA -KARTĀ

The word *yukta* refers to ‘one who is not together’—a person who is disturbed. He cannot apply his mind properly, and therefore, his thinking and behaviour are improper. And he has a mind that is *prākṛta*, immature. Even though he may be in his forties, his mind remains like that of a child because he has not undergone adequate educational discipline, the discipline of proper thinking, etc. When this is the situation, it would be natural for him to be very humble. But he is not; he is *stabdha*, irreverent. *Śaṅkara* says, ‘Remaining like a stick, unbending, he does not prostrate to anybody—*daṇḍavat, na namati kasmaicit.*’ There is no question of any kind of surrender to anything because, he is absolutely irreverent. Then further, he is a *śaṭha*, very deceptive. He can be so deceptive that he can present himself as though he is not deceptive. In other words, he is an impostor. And he is *naiṣkṛtika*, which *Śaṅkara* says is someone who is intent upon destroying somebody. He is cruel. Morose is another meaning for *naiṣkṛtika*, but cruel is more appropriate here. Moreover, he is *alasa*, completely lazy. He is not capable of doing the things that are to be done.

And he is *viśādī* one who is always given to sadness. Sadness is not a bad thing as long as one is addressing it. In that case the person is *sāttvika*. But if you don't address

Previously we saw how knowledge was divided into three types. Now the *buddhi* is being divided. And *buddhi* is after all, *jñāna*; so here a doubt is possible. Have these difference not already been told? What is the difference between *buddhi* and *jñāna* here? Śaṅkara clarifies this for us. *Buddhi* is the faculty of thinking, while *jñāna* is the actual thought modification, *vr̥tti*, which obtains in the *buddhi*. Even though there is no *buddhi* without *vr̥tti* and no *vr̥tti* without *buddhi*, there is a thinking faculty in general, and therefore, we make this distinction that *jñāna* obtains in the *buddhi* while the *buddhi* has *jñāna* in the form of a *vr̥tti*.

Then again, the *dhṛti*, resolve, is also threefold. This *dhṛti* that he is going to talk about later is also another *vr̥tti* obtaining in the *buddhi*. These two things, then, the mind and the resolve, *buddhi* and *dhṛti* are being explained in a threefold way, based on *guṇa*. This is now being told, completely without leaving anything to be desired, *aśeṣataḥ*. Here we have an introductory verse on what he is going to tell in the next three verses about *dhṛti* and *buddhi*. We will see, in general, what kind of *buddhi* and *dhṛti* are *sāttvikī*, etc.

THREEFOLD DIVISION OF MIND

First the *sāttvikī buddhi* is being told. How does it think?

॥ ई ईके से एके ईके से एके ईके से एके ईके से एके ॥

एवमेव एवमेव अहं ईके एवमेव अहं (ईके, ओके, ईके) ॥३०॥

pravṛttim ca nivṛttim ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye

bandham mokṣam ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī Verse 30

{ईके} *pārtha* — O! *Arjuna*; अहं एवमेव *yā buddhiḥ* — that mind which; ॥ ई ईके ए ईके से एके ईके ए ईके से एके ॥ *pravṛttim ca* — the pursuit of *karma*; ईके ईके ए ईके से *nivṛttim ca* — and renunciation; एके ईके ए ईके से *akārye* — what is to be done and what is not to be done; ॥ ईके ए ईके से एके ईके से एके ॥ *bhaya-abhaye* — what is to be feared and what is not to be feared; एवमेव एवमेव *bandham* — bondage; ए ईके ए ईके से *mokṣam ca* — and freedom; ईके *vetti* — knows; ओके (एवमेव) *sā* (*buddhiḥ*) — that (mind); ओके ईके *sāttvikī* — is *sāttvikī*

The mind, which knows the pursuit of *karma* and renunciation, what is to be done and what is not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, and bondage and freedom, that (mind), *Arjuna*, is *sāttvikī*.

SĀTTVIKA MIND

The *buddhi* that knows these few things is *sāttvikī*. What does it know? It knows that pursuit of *karma*, *pravṛtti*, is the cause for bondage. But when it is done as *karma-yoga*, *pravṛtti* is the cause for *mokṣa* because it involves *karma-phala-tyāga*,

renunciation of the result of an action. Then it is not really *pravṛtti* but *nivṛtti* because, where there is renunciation there is *nivṛtti*, even though the person may be engaged in many activities. When these activities are done for the sake of mental purification, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, with an attitude of making an offering to *Īśvara*, *īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhyā*, then *mokṣa*, release from bondage is the result, which is not a *karma-phala*, really speaking. The mental purification, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, is only the removal of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*'s impurities because every mind is already clean by nature. That is why everybody has sympathy, compassion, love, etc., which are the qualities of a pure *antaḥ-karaṇa*.

Nothing has to be created here; we only have to remove, in general, *rāga* and *dveṣa*. This is the term that we use for all the impurity, like guilt, hurt, anger, and so on. Removing all of them is not a real result because it is a 'getting rid of' and therefore, a kind of *tyāga*. *Sannyāsa*, of course is *nivṛtti*, but even a *karma-yogī* is not doing action for *puṇya*, for the sake of heaven or anything else. If he has *mokṣa* as the ultimate end in view, his *buddhi* has discrimination, and is, therefore, *sāttvikī*. He knows exactly what he is seeking, *puruṣārtha*. What is aimed at can be simple security or pleasure or *dharma*, to be exchanged later for security and pleasure. It is all the same. In order to get to and remain in heaven for some time, you must have the capital, which is *puṇya*. And again, you are going to enjoy heaven in terms of pleasures like music, dance, etc. It is the same old thing; all of them come under the bracket of *saṃsāra*. He knows he is not seeking any of these; he is seeking *mokṣa* and this clear ascertainment of his pursuit leads him to the knowledge that the cause for bondage is *pravṛtti*. But knowing this, one may not know what is the cause for *mokṣa*. Since his *buddhi* is *sāttvikī*, he also knows that the cause for *mokṣa* is *nivṛtti*, which means knowledge, *jñāna*, preceded by *karma-yoga* or *sannyāsa*. He knows exactly how to gain this knowledge.

Why do we not take *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* as 'do's' and 'don'ts'? That is a possible reading but not here because *Kṛṣṇa* has separately said, *kārya-akārye*. *Kārya* means those actions that have to be done such as enjoined *karmas*, *vihita-karmas* and *akārya* means those that are not to be done, prohibited actions, *pratiśiddha-karmas*. There are worldly 'do's and don'ts' such as traffic rules, tax laws, social norms and *vaidika* 'do's and don'ts,' including not only rituals but the universal values like truthfulness, non-injury, not stealing, etc. There again, we require value education. If that is missing, a person may do the right thing and avoid the wrong thing, not because of proper thinking or conviction about right and wrong, but just because he is afraid of being caught. If you ask him a few questions about why he acts as he does, he eventually has no answer. In terms of worldly 'do's and don'ts,' there are certain things that depend upon the time and place. What is acceptable at one time and place, may not be at another and sometimes subtle discrimination is required to determine this.

The *śāstra* says one should not harm anyone, *hiṃsām na kuryāt*, as does any government. But in the hunting season in Pennsylvania, you can get a license to hunt

deer for three months because of overpopulation of the deer. Just imagine! Suppose the deer population talks it over and decides, 'Pennsylvania is getting overpopulated with humans; we should do something about it,' and they start coming after the people with guns! Then we will understand how illegitimate this kind of thinking is. If we are at the other end, being hunted even for a day, we will understand what it means to be hunted. If you hunt you can be sure somebody will hunt you later. Perhaps these deer were all Americans hunting deer before. We do not know. Any universal rule cannot be categorical; we have to interpret it according to time and place, taking into account a number of factors. Even a prescribed ritual cannot be done on any day at any time, or with any oblation or *mantra*, or in any sequence. People who are religious should know exactly what is to be done and what is not to be done, if they are interested in *puṇya* and *pāpa*, etc. If they are interested in *mokṣa*, the knowledge of *kārya* and *akārya* is much more clear and intimate because of the predominance of *sattva* in the mind.

Then again, this is a person who has a mind that knows what he should be afraid of and of what he should not be. It means not being foolhardy in situations where you should be cautious. You cannot just say, 'I do not care, I am not afraid,' when you are in a dangerous situation, like facing a thief or a tiger. You cannot just say, 'I can manage the tiger. After all, a tiger has no hands; it has only four legs, while I have hands and legs!' An intelligent person should know how to manage a tiger.

Ten fellows were walking in the forest. One fellow saw a tiger and called out to the others, 'There is a tiger! Come on, those who are afraid of the tiger, please lie down on me!' That is called management! Then too, one should not create a situation, which is difficult to manage. If you are going into the forest, go in a jeep; otherwise do not go. If there is something that is dangerous and that you should be afraid of, stay away from it. It is foolish, for example, to go walking in certain sections of Manhattan after dark, even if you know karate. A mugger is not going to engage you in a bout of karate following all the rules. He hits you with a baseball bat or shoots you with a gun and you are finished. Going to places where you should not go, because of a false courage is dangerous. In the movies, it is fine; in real life, it does not work. It is not that you are afraid; you are prudent. From things that we should be afraid of, we should keep away. There are visible things, and there are also invisible things, which are not seen, of which we have to be afraid and from which we have to keep away. Invoking some *kṣudra-devatā* to gain some power, in other words, black magic, is dangerous. This is not the *adrṣṭa-phala*, one should seek; one should seek only grace, *puṇya*.

A person who is very clear about what is to be feared and what is not to be feared knows what is *bhaya* and *abhaya*. The *buddhi*, the faculty of thinking that knows what is proper and improper, what should be feared, what should be avoided, and what should be pursued, is a *sāttvikī buddhi*.

Then further, he knows what is bondage, *bandha*, and what is freedom, *mokṣa*. People often think bondage means having a job, a house, a wife, and children. Some people think having to cut your hair or shave is bondage. People have varieties of notions of bondage. But here is a person with a *buddhi* that knows that ignorance is bondage. The life of becoming, *saṃsāra*, born of self ignorance, is the bondage from which one seeks release. *Mokṣa*, therefore, is self-knowledge. The *buddhi* that knows this, is called *sāttvikī*.

Now, what is *rājasī buddhi*?

ययौ धर्मवैश्यायस्यै धर्मवैश्यायस्यै
 + ययौ धर्मवैश्यायस्यै धर्मवैश्यायस्यै ॥३१॥

*yayā dharmamadharmaṃ ca kāryaṃ cākāryameva ca
 ayathāvat prajānāti buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājasī*

Verse 31

{धर्मवैश्यायस्यै} *pārtha* — O! *Arjuna*; ययौ धर्मवैश्यायस्यै *yayā* (*buddhyā*) — the mind with which; धर्मवैश्यायस्यै + धर्मवैश्यायस्यै *dharmam adharmam ca* — *dharma* and *adharmam*; धर्मवैश्यायस्यै + धर्मवैश्यायस्यै *kāryam ca akāryam eva ca* — what is to be done and what is not to be done; + धर्मवैश्यायस्यै *ayathāvat* — wrongly; धर्मवैश्यायस्यै *prajānāti* — knows; धर्मवैश्यायस्यै *sā buddhiḥ* — that mind; धर्मवैश्यायस्यै *rājasī* — is *rājasī*

That mind, with which one wrongly knows what is proper and improper, what is to be done and what is not to be done, *Arjuna*, is *rājasī*.

RĀJASA MIND

This is the *buddhi* by which a given person knows certain things such as, *dharma* and *adharmam*, what is enjoined by the *śāstra* and what is not enjoined by the *śāstra*, what is negated, *pratiśiddha*, by the *śāstra* and what is not, what is to be done and what is not to be done, *kārya* and *akārya*. Looking at the list, it looks as though *Kṛṣṇa* is repeating what he said in the previous verse. But with one word in the second line, he just changes the whole thing. How does one know all these? He knows them wrongly—*ayathāvat*. To know something *yathāvat*, is to know it as it is; *ayathāvat* is to know these things, not as they are intended, but wrongly. He quotes and reads the *śāstra* wrongly, interpreting it according to his convenience. *Śaṅkara* says that this person interprets the *śāstra* without completely ascertaining what it is all about. Therefore, he not only knows, *jānāti* but he knows with conviction, *prajānāti*, that is, knows improperly.

ययौ धर्मवैश्यायस्यै धर्मवैश्यायस्यै
 धर्मवैश्यायस्यै धर्मवैश्यायस्यै ॥३२॥

*adharmam dharmamiti yā manyate tamasāvṛtā
sarvārthān viparītāṃsca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmāsī*

Verse 32

{(É|É) pārtha — O! Arjuna; (É|É) yā (buddhiḥ) — that (mind) which; iÉ'ÉÉ + É'ÉÉ
tamasā āvṛtā — (being) covered with ignorance; + vÉ'ÉÉ adharmam — adharma;
vÉ'ÉÉ <ÉÉ dharmam iti — as dharma; oÉ'É + iÉÉÉÉ sarva -arthān ca — and all things;
É'ÉÉ É'ÉÉ viparītān — as opposed (to what they actually are); É'ÉÉ manyate —
considers; oÉ'É sā buddhiḥ — that mind; iÉ'ÉÉ tāmāsī — is tāmāsī

The mind, which covered with ignorance considers what is improper as proper, and all things the reverse (of what they are), that (mind), O! Arjuna, is tāmāsī.

TĀMASA MIND

The person in the previous verse, with *rājasī buddhi*, knows but not properly. He may know a value, but not the value of the value; therefore, he compromises. But the person under discussion in this verse knows things as just the reverse of what they are. He will argue and present what is *adharmam* as *dharmam*. He will say, 'In this world you cannot survive unless you do these things. You have to be aggressive, you have to compromise, etc.' *Adharma* even seems to pass as a virtue for him! Or, he will say, 'You have to lie. Without lying you cannot survive.' If somebody wants to tell the truth, he will advise, 'It will not work, my dear! You have to learn this. You have no worldly wisdom at all. We all have learned it the hard way. You have to lie judiciously.' The *buddhi* that understands all this as *dharmam* is *tāmāsī*. What is not to be done is done; what is improper is taken as proper.

And further, *sarvārthān viparītān manyate*—he considers everything opposite of what they are. All things, *sarvārthas*, that are to be known in the world are understood as the reverse, of what they are, giving them more value than they have. Why is everything mistaken like this? Because the mind is covered by dullness or ignorance—*buddhiḥ tamasā āvṛtā*.

Here the three types of *antaḥ-karaṇas* are told—*sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*. But this does not mean they are permanently confined to that. The person who has a *tāmāsī buddhi* has to be brought to a condition of more *rajas*. For that we make him work, or get up and run a mile every day. Some education, some discipline is required and then *tamas* will go away. Sports is the best thing. You will find the fellow becomes bright, then developing *sattva* is easy. We have to understand that this sort of classification is not to judge anybody but just to know what is *rajas*, what is *tamas*, and what is *sattva*. Everybody is a combination of these three *guṇas* and here and there, there will be some adjustments to make. Where there is a problem, one can always change. That is the whole idea.

THREE TYPES OF DHṚTI—RESOLVE

Now we will look into the three kinds of resolve, *dhṛti*. First the *sāttvikī*.

वैभवाय यथायथा मनःप्रवृत्तयः
धृतिर्यथा यथा धारयते मनःप्रवृत्तयः

वैभवाय यथायथा मनःप्रवृत्तयः
धृतिर्यथा यथा धारयते मनःप्रवृत्तयः

dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate manaḥprāṇendriyakriyāḥ
yogenāvyaabhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī

Verse 33

{धृतिः} *pārtha* — O! *Arjuna*; {यथा} *yayā* — by which; + {वैभवाय} *avyabhicāriṇyā* *dhṛtyā* — unflinching resolve; {मनःप्रवृत्तयः} *manaḥ-prāṇa-indriya-kriyāḥ* — the activities of the mind, *prāṇa*, and the sense organs; {यगेन} *yogena* — by practice; {वैभवाय} *dhārayate* — one sustains; {धृतिः} *sā dhṛtiḥ* — that *dhṛti*; {सत्त्विकी} *sāttvikī* — is *sāttvikī*

The unflinching resolve, with which one sustains, by practice, the activities of the mind, *prāṇa*, and organs of action and knowledge, that resolve is *sāttvikī*, *Arjuna*.

SĀTTVIKA RESOLVE

Dhṛti, as we have seen, means resolution. The *dhṛti* that is *sāttvikī* is one that is steady, not subject to change. With an unflinching resolve, *avyabhicāriṇyā dhṛtyā*, a person sustains, *dhārayate*, the activities of the mind, the physiological functions, and the organs of actions and knowledge, *manaḥ-prāṇa-indriya-kriyāḥ*. This means that, he is able to discipline their activities, keeping them within certain bounds. Those bounds are determined by the way of life enjoined in the *śāstra*, in other words, a life of *dharma*. This is a person who is able to keep himself from going towards a life that is not in conformity with the *śāstra*. For this you require resolve, because the tendency to do things, which are against *dharma* is very natural, *svābhāvika*. Given proper understanding, the tendency to do the right thing is also *svābhāvika*. But as a child innocently grows in the society, he or she picks up certain tendencies, which are against the basic nature of a human being, and after some time, they seem to be natural. And then, what is natural to a human being is also what is enjoined in the *śāstra*. This is because one inherently knows what is right. Thus, naturally there is also a tendency to follow *dharma* and eschew *adharma*.

These two tendencies—the natural one that makes one follow *dharma* and the other one picked up that makes one go for *adharma*—are always at war with each other. In all mythologies, all over the world, the battle is always between the gods and the demons—right and wrong. Destruction is rampant in Sanskrit literature, which is reflected by the fact that there are a number of Sanskrit roots, which have the sense of

destruction. This is because the whole life is meant to destroy things that are improper. Everyone faces the conflict of whether to stay within the bounds of *dharmā* or to cross them, and it requires resolve, in the beginning, to stay within the bounds of *dharmā*. This resolve is born of one's understanding of the value of what is proper and improper, and it becomes firm by practice, *yogena*, by a life of discipline, attitudes, etc. This includes *karma-yoga* as well as meditation. A person who is able to control, with a firm resolve, these activities of the body-mind-sense-complex, by the practice of discipline, etc., has a resolution, *dhṛti* which is *sāttvikī*. It reveals the predominance of *sattva-guṇa* in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*.

The person who has a predominance of *rajas* also has a *dhṛti*. Even the *rākṣasas* and *asuras* have a firm resolve. *Bhasmāsura* had such a great resolve that he got Lord *Śiva* to appear in front of him. He had to have tremendous *dhṛti*, otherwise Lord *Śiva* would not have come. But when Lord *Śiva* asked him what he wanted, this fellow said, 'Whomsoever I touch should be reduced to ashes.' What kind of resolve is that? A few people in the business world have this kind of *dhṛti*, that is meant to destroy everybody else. Very few can really come to the top of a big corporation, and those who do, with a few exceptions, have a lot of cunning and do a lot of cheating. They cheat the government, they cheat the public, they cheat their co-workers. They even write books on, 'How to be Successful,' and again become successful from the book sales. These people all have great *dhṛti*. But that *dhṛti* is not *sāttvikī* but *rājasī*. Having great resolve does not make a person great; you have to find out what motivates his *dhṛti*.

Therefore, to make the difference between the *sāttvikī* and the *rājasī dhṛti* clear, *Bhagavān* begins the next verse.

यया तु धर्मकामार्थान् धृत्या धारयते रजुना
 प्राणैर्धृतिः सा पार्था राजसी ॥३४॥

yayā tu dharmakāmarthān dhṛtyā dhārayate 'rjuna
prasaṅgena phalākāṅkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī

Verse 34

{*धृतिः* *pārtha* — O! *Arjuna*; *तु* — on the other hand; *प्राणैर्धृतिः* *prasaṅgena* — according to the circumstances; *युष्मद् + धर्मकामार्थान्* *phala-ākāṅkṣī* — the one who has a longing for result; *यया धृत्या* + *धारयते* *dharmā-kāma-arthān* — religious merit, pleasure, and security; *यया धृत्या* *yayā dhṛtyā* — by which resolve; *धारयते* *dhārayate* — sustains; + *रजुना* *arjuna* — O! *Arjuna*; *धृतिः* *dhṛtiḥ* — that *dhṛti*; *राजसी* *rājasī* — is *rājasī*

Whereas, *Arjuna*, the resolve, with which the one who has a longing for result according to the prevailing circumstances, sustains (activities for) religious merit, pleasure, and security, that resolve is *rājasī*.

RĀJASA RESOLVE

This is the resolve with which one sustains; that is, engages in activities of the mind, senses and the body that are meant for *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*. *Dharma* means *punya* here, religious merit. Here we are discussing a person who spends his time planning how to get more *punya*, and how to get it more easily. Why? So that he will get better security, *artha*, and pleasure, *kāma*, later. He plans and schemes and does all the necessary activities because of a certain resolve, paying attention to *dharma* only for the sake of *artha* or *kāma*, not *mokṣa*. Then again, he is desirous of gaining a result, *phalākāṅkṣī*, whenever there is an occasion. As the occasion arises, he becomes desirous of the result involved, that is, he tries to convert every opportunity into something beneficial to himself. And the benefit here is not *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*, not *mokṣa*, but *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*. He exploits every opportunity to serve his own ends. Thus, he is an opportunist. He does not miss an opportunity to acquire *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, because of his very sustained resolve, *dhṛti*. Without that he will miss some opportunities; but while others are missing out, he has a vulture's eye on how he can benefit from a situation.

A vulture's eyes are always on the ground below, looking for something dead, no matter how high it soars. Flying so high, it looks unconcerned, as though it does not care what is happening down on the earth. But then you will find that suddenly it zooms down, as soon as there is a dead carcass anywhere, because its eyes are always looking for that. Similarly, this person also has eyes like those of a vulture, looking for opportunities to 'make a kill.' According to the conducive situation, *prasaṅgena*, he is a desirer of the result, a *phalākāṅkṣī*. And the sustained, unflinching resolve that makes him an opportunist, always thinking about *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, is called *rājasī* because it is born of *rajas*. As it was already said, the *dharma* here is religious merit for more security and pleasure.

Now the third type of resolve, the *tāmasī dhṛti* is being told.

अथैवो वृथापार्थादुर्मदधृतिर्ना विमुञ्चति तामसि
 खे एवोर्मदधृतिर्ना विमुञ्चति तामसि ॥३५॥

*yayā svapnaṃ bhayaṃ śokaṃ viśādaṃ madameva ca
 na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī*

Verse 35

{३५} पार्था — O! Arjuna; नुर्मदधृतिर्ना — the one whose thinking is improper;
 अथैवो (वृथापार्था) *yayā* (*dhṛtyā*) — by which (resolve); ० {खे एवो} *svapnam* — sleep; {३५} एवो
bhayaṃ — fear; {३५} एवो *śokam* — sorrow; एवो *viśādam* — depression; {३५} एवो *śe*
madameva ca — and intoxication; खे एवो *na vimuñcati* — he does not give up; ०
 वृथापार्था *sā dhṛtiḥ* — that *dhṛti*; {३५} एवो *tāmasī* — *tāmasī*

That resolve, by which the one whose thinking is improper does not give up sleep, fear, sorrow, depression and intoxication, is *tāmasī*, Arjuna.

TĀMASA RESOLVE

Here is another person who also has *dhṛti*, a very well committed resolve, but it is because he does not give up, *na vimuñcati*, certain things. If he does not give up these things even though you try to make him a little different, his *dhṛti*, must be very firm. He has some kind of commitment that does not allow him to give them up. For example, no matter what happens, he will not give up his sleep, *svapna*; it is very important for him. It is interesting that *Kṛṣṇa* uses the word *svapna* here, which can mean dream as well as sleep. From this we can understand that not only does he sleep too much, when he is awake, he spends his time daydreaming. If he does not sleep, he daydreams, and thus, we say he does not give up *svapna*.

We saw in the sixth chapter that there is no *yoga* for the one who sleeps too much. And it is *yoga* that destroys *duḥkha*, pain, or sorrow. But for this person under discussion, who has *tāmasī dhṛti*, there can be no *yoga*. Because when he is awake, he always has fear, *bhaya*, of one thing or the other—fear of death, naturally, and fear of losing money and the other resources. He cannot give up this fear because he will not do anything to get rid of it. You must do something to give up fear, and for that, a certain type of resolve is required, which he does not have. As long as he does not address the problem, the fear does not go. For the same reason, he cannot give up sadness, *śoka*. He will not do anything to address his sadness and if you talk to him for two minutes, he will make you also sad. He has such an infectious sadness that anybody coming anywhere around him becomes sad. Not only will he not give up this sadness, he will have some philosophy to justify it also. Besides *śoka*, tangible sorrow, he cannot give up his depression, *viśāda*, which generally pervades his entire daily activity. He is like someone who is under the spell of intoxication, *mada*, always pursuing simple gratification of the sense organs, because that is the only thing, which can keep him in good humour. At the same time, he will not listen to anybody, otherwise he would change.

This is also the *dhṛti*, of a person who makes light, the achievements of other people, while inflating his own. Because he is intoxicated by vanity, fighting his own inferiority complex, he puts on a superior air. Otherwise, he has to face himself and that is very painful. When he sleeps too much and has fear—*bhaya*, sorrow—*śoka*, and depression—*viśāda*, what kind of self-opinion will he have? How is he going to avoid an inferiority complex? It is impossible. But how does he fight that complex? By dismissing the whole world! That appears in the form of an air of superiority, which means he has no way of learning. Therefore, we say, he does not give up his intoxication, *madaṃ na vimuñcati*. If he would listen to somebody, he might change. Because of *mada*, the fellow cannot bend down to anybody. This arrogance is the expression of his ignorance.

And when he thinks, his thinking is not proper; he is a *durmedhā*. This resolve of a person whose thinking is distorted, is called *tāmasī dhṛti*.

THREEFOLD DIVISION OF HAPPINESS

Thus, the various activities, *karma*, and their accessories, the doer, knowledge, mind and resolve, *kartā*, *jñāna*, *buddhi* and *dhṛti* have been shown to be threefold based upon the three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The *sukha*, pleasure or joy that you get out of various actions can also be threefold depending on how you got it, how long it lasts, and the degree and nature of the *sukha*. All of these determine whether the *sukha* is *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa*.

ॐ एवमिति एतन्नो ह्येव एवमेव एतन्नो वा । एते एते*
 + । एते एते एते एते ननु एते एते एते एते सुखे ॥ ३६ ॥
*sukham tvidānīm trividham śṛṇu me bharatarṣabha
 abhyāsādramate yatra duḥkhāntam ca nigacchati*

Verse 36

एकेनो वा एते एते (एते एते एते एते एते
 इति एते एते एते एते एते एते एते ॥ ३७ ॥
*yattadagre viṣamiva pariṇāme'mṛtopamam
 tatsukham sāttvikam proktamātma-buddhiprasādam*

Verse 37

। एते एते *bharatarṣabha* — O! *Arjuna*; <ननु एते एते *idānīm tu* — now; ह्ये एते एते एते एते *trividham sukham* — about threefold happiness; एते एते एते *me śṛṇu* — listen to Me; एते एते *yatra* — in which; + । एते एते एते *abhyāsāt* — by repetition; एते एते *ramate* — one discovers joy; ननु एते एते एते *duḥkhāntam ca* — and the end of sorrow; एते एते एते *nigacchati* — one gains; एते एते एते *yat tat* — that which; + एते एते — in the beginning; एते एते < एते *viṣam iva* — like poison; (एते एते एते *pariṇāme* — when there is transformation; + एते एते = एते एते *amṛta-upamam* — is like nectar; + इति एते एते एते एते एते *ātma-buddhi-prasādam* — born of the clarity of self knowledge; इति एते एते एते *tat sukham* — that happiness; एते एते एते एते *sāttvikam proktam* — is called *sāttvika*

Listen to Me now, *Arjuna*, about the threefold happiness. That in which one discovers joy by repetition and gains the end of sorrow, which in the beginning is like poison (and) when there is transformation, is like nectar, that happiness is called *sāttvika*, born of the clarity of self-knowledge.

SĀTTVIKA HAPPINESS

Arjuna is addressed as *bharatarṣabha*, the one who is the most exalted in the family of *Bharata*. The word *tu* is used to indicate a new topic. 'Now, *idānīm*,' Lord

Kṛṣṇa says, 'listen to Me,' drawing *Arjuna's* attention to the new topic of the threefold happiness, *trividhaṃ sukham*.

The *sāttvikaṃ sukham* is that in which one revels in by practice, *abhyasāt ramate yatra*. The joy that one discovers by the repeated practice of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* is *sāttvikaṃ sukham*. In all these, a certain repetition is involved, and that repetition brings not boredom, but a *sukha*, a *sāttvikaṃ sukham*. And it is not discovery of a joy, which will be lost in time, but one in which one gains, a resolution of sorrow that is centred on the *ātmā*, *duḥkhāntaṃ nigacchati*. There is no sadness without the *ātmā*, because in every sense of sorrow, there is 'I.' And as this 'I' is released from the various notions that give rise to a sense of sorrow, the sorrow comes to an end, by recognizing that the nature of oneself is *sukha*.

THE PURSUIT OF SĀTTVIKA HAPPINESS MAY BE PAINFUL IN THE BEGINNING

The beginning of a *sukha* which is *sāttvika* is said here to be like poison, *viṣam iva*. When a person begins this pursuit of self-knowledge, which is *mokṣa*, he finds it difficult because he is beginning to address himself. Prior to beginning his pursuit, he kept himself busy doing one thing or the other, which always brought him some gratification. When you gratify yourself with various things, you do not see the pain, which drives you to search for gratification. That is why, when you begin to turn your attention towards yourself, you always feel you were better off before. But that is not true. If you were better, what is wrong now? After all, you are still yourself; that has not changed. In fact, you were not better; you were just not addressing your problems. Now when you turn your attention towards yourself, all the sorrows you never gave a thought to, the thoughts you never even thought you had, all come up because you are addressing them. It is like poison in the beginning because you require *vairāgya*, maturity, dispassion, objectivity, understanding your mind, etc., as it is, and dropping all of the past in handling all these that come up. All these things are not ordinary. They require a lot of self-searching, which is not easy; it is a painful process. Therefore, in the beginning a spiritual pursuit is fraught with pain. No spiritual seeker underwent a spell of seeking without some kind of pain. That pain is likened to poison which tastes vile and seems as though it is going to destroy you. You do not want to take it. But we have to gain knowledge, dispassion, and a capacity to contemplate, for which a lot of effort is required in the beginning, and therefore, it is painful.

Then again, we have to follow values, which is difficult initially, but then it becomes natural. And becoming a vegetarian can be another problem. Everything is different. Getting up early in the morning, attending the classes, and then, there is no progress in the subject matter! The first day the Swami said you are *Brahman* and after three hundred classes, he says the same thing. If you stay with me for twelve years, I¹

¹*Swamiji*

will be saying the same thing. Only titles and verses change, but the content is the same. And this study also implies sitting with yourself in meditation. That is all right for five or ten minutes, but suppose you have to sit for one or two hours, it is a problem. And so we say in the beginning it is like a poison. But once you have come to terms with yourself and are happy with yourself as you are, and have learned to live a disciplined life, there is maturity. You have taken care of your emotions, let go of the past, and can just be with yourself as you are. When whatever is to be done has been taken care of, what happens?

ON TRANSFORMATION , IT IS LIKE NECTAR

Pariñāme, when there is this change, in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, there is a happiness which, *Śaṅkara* says, is born of maturity in terms of understanding, dispassion, and so on. This dispassion, *vairāgya*, is not a will-based denial but a natural objectivity born of understanding. The happiness, *sukha*, that is born of that maturity is like nectar, *amṛtopama*. Nectar, *amṛta*, is something associated with heaven that we have only heard about in the *śāstra* but have not seen. This is an unusual example. How can something, which we do not know at all, serve as an example? Though like most examples, it is not something seen before, *dr̥ṣṭapūrvā*, still, it has been heard of before, *śṛutapūrvā*. Only occasionally is an illustration used in this way. There is a lot of description about *amṛta* in the *Purāṇas*, where it is presented as a kind of milk. If you take even a little of it, you become immortal. If this is literal, that nectar can only be knowledge, *jñāna* !

This *sāttvikam sukham* is equivalent to nectar, *amṛta*, because it immortalizes you. It never goes away because it is *ātma-buddhi-prasāda*, born of the clarity of knowledge of the *ātmā*, which is free from time. If it is born of an object, it will definitely go away in time. *Ātma-buddhi* means a mind which has knowledge of the *ātmā*, and because of the *ātma-buddhi*, there is a *prasāda*, a clarity like that of pure placid water which is so clear that you can see the sand and all the pebbles of different colours on the bottom, which are somehow not so colourful when they are dry. This is the purity of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. So too, it is like the water that flows, finding its way no matter what comes in its path, not resisting anything. Even if there is a big stone in the way, the water goes around it, and if there is a big valley, it just fills it up and proceeds. It does not bother about what is in front, but keeps going, never being caught up anywhere. The purity, the fluidity of this water is such that it lives a life of absolute non-resistance. A mind with this kind of purity does not resist anything, even itself. It has the attitude, ‘Whatever it is, it is alright; let it be so.’ That is *ātma-buddhi-prasāda*, the glad acceptance of whatever is. Self-knowledge itself is the *prasāda*, the blessing, and the *sukha* that arises from that is not dependent upon any object or even a condition of the mind, because it is knowledge, *jñāna*. All that is necessary for that *jñāna* has been taken care of, which is why, in the beginning, it is said to be like poison, *viṣam iva*. Later, however, after the change in the *antaḥ-karaṇa* has taken place, it is like nectar,

Then again, one can get a certain *sukha* if one has beauty, *rūpa*. A type of self-worth is generated from the admiration of others. But the beauty on which that is based cannot be retained and in the very process of enjoying it, you lose it. A person engaged in sense-pursuits will hardly find any time to think about anything of *dharma* and *adharmā*, *ātmā* and *anātmā*; and therefore, there is a loss of discriminative knowledge, *prajñā*, and in the process, memory, *medhā*, the capacity to retain things is also destroyed. Then of course you have to pay for your pleasures, so wealth, *dhana*, is destroyed. Enthusiasm also goes away because either you cannot get the same thing again or you have to make further effort to get it again, and when you do get it, there is an anticlimax. It is never like the first time. Or, you do not want it again and you have to look for something else. It is *amṛta* in the beginning, when you get it, but later it is lost, momentary experience being what it is, and that leaves you with a *duḥkha*.

Then the capacity to make effort for sense pleasure becomes depleted; it wanes away. When the change, *pariṇāma*, takes place, it becomes like poison, *viṣam iva*. Once the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is incapable of enjoying, or the sense organs, or the body, or things that are necessary to enjoy, like money, are not available, *sukha* is not possible. And since one does not develop *viveka* in a life of sense pursuits, when one reaches sixty or seventy years of age, there is no capacity to appreciate the leisure of old age. At that time, you cannot suddenly develop the *viveka* required to make retirement a blessing. If you maintain *viveka*, throughout your life, retirement will help; otherwise, it will be a tragedy.

This is *rājasam sukham*, like nectar in the beginning and like poison when it changes—*agre amṛtopamaṃ, pariṇāme viṣam iva*. While the *sāttvikam sukham* is like poison, *viṣam iva*, in the beginning in the sense that it is unpleasant since it implies a certain discipline on the part of the person, it ends in the form of nectar, *amṛtam iva*. This *rājasam sukham*, on the other hand, is very desirable in the beginning, but painful in the end. If your only pleasures are sense pleasures, you have to get them, no matter what and inevitably, there will be compromises in *dharma*. The consequences of those compromises can only come in the form of *duḥkha*. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says here that these pleasures are like poison in the end, because they are the cause for unpleasant experiences born of wrong actions, *adharmā*.

अग्रेणैव श्रेयैर्दुःखैर्व्यासेऽद्यैतेषामनुबन्धेनैतन्महत्

दुःखमनुबन्धेनैवैतन्महत्तद्दुःखमनुबन्धेनैवैतन्महत् ॥३९॥

yadagre cānubandhe ca sukhaṃ mohanamātmanah
nidrālasya-pramādottham tattāmasamudāhṛtam

Verse 39

अग्रेणैव श्रेयैर्दुःखैर्व्यासेऽद्यैतेषामनुबन्धेनैतन्महत्तद्दुःखमनुबन्धेनैवैतन्महत् ॥३९॥
āyāt sukham — that *sukha*, happiness, which; *दुःखमनुबन्धेनैवैतन्महत्तद्दुःखमनुबन्धेनैवैतन्महत्* = *nidrā-*
ālasya-pramāda-uttham — born of sleep, laziness and indifference; + *अग्रेणैव* *agre ca* —
in the beginning; + *दुःखैर्व्यासे* *anubandhe ca* — and at the end; + *इति* *इति* *इति* *ātmanah*

mohanam — is self-deluding; *tat* — that; *tāmasam udāhṛtam* — is called *tāmasa*

That happiness, which in the beginning and at the end is self-deluding (and) born of sleep, laziness and indifference, is called *tāmasa*.

TĀMASA HAPPINESS

This is a happiness, which initially, *agre*, and later also, *anubandhe ca*, involves the delusion of the person, *mohanam ātmanah*. It is the happiness one experiences in sleep, *nidrā*. Though there is some *sukha* in sleep, the mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa*, is not awake to experience it. We cannot say there is no *sukha* in sleep, but at the same time, it is completely overwhelmed by *tamas*, total ignorance, and therefore, there is no positive appreciation of *sukha*, even though we can say there is absence of *duḥkha*. In deep sleep, you become one with your own nature, *svarūpa*, because you are the only person that is there; *ātma-ānanda* alone is there. Even though you become the *ānanda* which is nature, *svarūpa*, of yourself, at the same time, there is no recognition of that whatsoever because the mind is overcome by *tamas*. Therefore, this is called *tāmasaṃ sukham*.

Then there is another *sukha* which is because of laziness, *ālasya*. When you exert no effort, you are free from the pain, *duḥkha*, which is implied in doing things. That is also *tāmasaṃ sukham*. There is a similar kind of *sukha* born of indifference, *pramāda*, towards things that are to be done. And often this is accompanied by a justification that you should not put pressure on yourself, that you must always have enough time for yourself. If not doing what is to be done is able to give you *sukha*, that definitely is *tāmasaṃ sukham*. An incapacity to do a certain thing that is to be done is a different thing altogether. But when one is indifferent to what one can do, and does not even worry about it, that is *tāmasaṃ sukham*. There is some *sukha* because you are avoiding the pain of doing it.

Now we have a verse summing up this section of the threefold division of varieties of things.

ॐ तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिव्येषु वा पुनाह
ॐ तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिव्येषु वा पुनाह

na tadasti pṛthivyāṃ vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ

sattvaṃ prakṛtijairmuktaṃ yadebhiḥ syāt tribhirguṇaiḥ Verse 40

yat (*sattvam*) — that (existent being) which; *ebhiḥ* — these; *prakṛtijaiḥ* — born of *prakṛti*; *tribhirguṇaiḥ* — from these three *guṇas*; *muktaṃ syāt* — would be free; *tat sattvam* — that existent

causes for the activity and the result of action, has been told in the fifteenth chapter by the illustration of the tree with its roots upward, *ūrdhvamūla*. Because of the result of actions, there is the birth of a body, and because of that, there is activity, which has a result that again leads to the birth of another body. Naturally, this is *saṃsāra*. And it is in the form of three *guṇas*, because all these consist only of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* in different proportions. For whom is this *saṃsāra*? It is only for the *ātmā*, because *saṃsāra* does not exist without 'I,' *ātmā*. Though it is not the cause, *ātmā* is the basis for *saṃsāra*. How can *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* be the basis for its opposite, *saṃsāra*? Well, the *saṃsāra* is superimposed on *ātmā* by *avidyā*, ignorance. That I am a doer and the enjoyer of the results of actions is purely ignorance, and this ignorance is the root of all *saṃsāra*. And it is undesirable because it is not *mokṣa*. In the previous verse we saw that all beings are subject to these three *guṇas* and this is *anartha*, it is *saṃsāra*. Even if you became a celestial, a *deva*, you would be within *saṃsāra* because you would not be outside the three *guṇas*.

Further, it was very clearly pointed out earlier in the fifteenth chapter, by illustrating *saṃsāra* as a tree whose roots are above and by saying that this *saṃsāra* has to be felled only by the axe of detachment, *asaṅga śastreṇa chittvā*. This means ascertaining clearly what is not the self, *anātmā*, and knowing what is, *ātmā*. Then one should gain that end, gaining which there is no return, *tataḥ padaṃ tat parimārgitavyaṃ yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ*. Everybody is under the spell of these three *guṇas* and wherever you go you will be within them. If you want to get rid of *saṃsāra*, you have to get rid of these three *guṇas* because *saṃsāra* consists of these three qualities, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. As long as you are under the spell of them, you cannot get rid of *saṃsāra*. Either you will have a golden shackle called a *sāttvika* shackle, or a silver shackle called a *rājasa* shackle, or some pig iron shackle called a *tāmasa* shackle. There is no possibility of getting released from the *saṃsāra* by bringing about a change. I can only change the shackle. I can change my form from this form to that of a *deva*, for example, and then have some celestial complexes such as, 'That one has golden wings; I don't have wings at all.' Release from *saṃsāra* is untenable by any of the means which we know, and therefore, how to get released from this *saṃsāra* consisting of three *guṇas* has to be told. For this, a new section begins.

The vision of the entire *gītā-śāstra* has to be summed up also, for this much alone, *Śaṅkara* says, is the meaning of all the Vedas and *smṛti* and this has to be pursued by those people who are interested in the *puruṣārtha* which is *mokṣa*. For this purpose alone divisions of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra* are told. These divisions are connected, of course, to the *guṇas*, but at the same time, it is a new topic.

THE DUTIES OF THE FOUR VARNAS ACCORDING TO GUṆAS

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ १४२ ॥

brāhmaṇakṣatriyaviśāṃ śūdrāṇaṃ ca parantapa

karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāvaprabhavairguṇaiḥ

Verse 41

{ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय*} *parantapa* — O! Scorcher of enemies, *Arjuna*; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय *brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya-viśāṃ* — of *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय *śūdrāṇaṃ ca* — and of the *śūdras*; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय *svabhāva-prabhavaiḥ* — born of *svabhāva* (*Īśvara's māyā*, one's nature and one's *karma*); ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय *guṇaiḥ* — as per the qualities; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय *karmāṇi* — the duties; ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय *pravibhaktāni* — are divided

The duties of the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras*, *Arjuna*, are divided according to qualities born of *svabhāva* (*Īśvara's māyā*, one's nature and one's *karma*).

This is the division of duties for *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and also for the *śūdras*. While *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas* are all listed in one compound, the *śūdras* are mentioned separately. Why is it so? *Śāṅkara* says that although all of these are classes and could be included in the same compound, the *śūdras* are considered unqualified for Vedic study and are therefore, mentioned separately. The separate mention could be purely because of the metre, or because of this convention that is pointed out by *Śāṅkara*. The duties of each one of these groups is different from those of the others. The duties of a *brāhmaṇa* are different from the duties of all others, as are the duties of a *kṣatriya*, and so on. They are mutually distinct from each other. How are they divided? Originally it was on the basis of *guṇas*, which is how it is described here. And these *guṇas* are *svabhāva-prabhava*, born of *svabhāva*, which, *Śāṅkara* says, is *Īśvara's māyā*. So they are divided on the basis of *guṇas*, which are the three qualities of *Īśvara's upādhi*. That *upādhi*, which we call *māyā* or *prakṛti*, is the cause for these qualities.

What are the duties, *karmas*, for one in whom *sattva* is predominant, or for the one in whom *rajas*, or *tamas* is predominant? If *sattva* is predominant, there is a natural duty prescribed for him. If *rajas* is predominant, one has to do the *karma* prescribed for him with a proper attitude and he will become *sāttvika*, the one in whom *sattva* is predominant. If a person has *tamas* as the predominant *guṇa*, he has to do his *karma* with the proper attitude and become *rājasika* initially, and finally, *sāttvika*. It is a method to grow into a more *sāttvika*, mature, person. In this way, everyone is meant to become *sāttvika*. A person who is *sāttvika* is a *brāhmaṇa* by *guṇa*. But that alone is not enough. Having thus become a *brāhmaṇa* by *guṇa*, then one can accomplish what is to be accomplished.

Then Śaṅkara gives another meaning for *svabhāva*—one's nature. One's nature, *svabhāva*, is the cause for the given activities, and the cause for that nature is the proportion of the *guṇas*. The disposition of a *brāhmaṇa* is born of a predominance of *sattva*, while that of a *kṣatriya* is due to a predominance of *rajas*, with *sattva* as the secondary. A *vaiśya* will also have a predominance of *rajas*, but for him, *tamas* is secondary, and a *śūdra* will have a predominance of *tamas* with *rajas* as secondary. This is the real definition of a *brāhmaṇa*, or a *kṣatriya*, or a *vaiśya*, or a *śūdra*, because it is based on the disposition of the person and it is universal.

Which society does not have these four types of people? How do you know whether a person has *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas* predominant? His behaviour gives some indication. When *sattva* is predominant there is tranquillity, composure, where there is a predominance of *rajas*, there is leadership. Wherever you put the person who has *rajas* predominant with *sattva* second, he will be a natural organizer. Then, where there is selfishness, greed, etc., we know that *rajas* is predominant with *tamas* secondary, and where there is delusion, dullness, etc., *tamas* is predominant. The *guṇas* are the causes of these dispositions and the dispositions, in turn, prompt certain types of activity.

Śaṅkara gives yet another meaning for *svabhāva*, that is *prārabdha*, where the problem all started. Why should one be born into a *brāhmaṇa* family? There must be some *karma* standing in his account that determines exactly where he should be born, why he is born into a situation where he is, going to be called upon to perform certain duties. In a duty-based system, duties exist and *prārabdha-karma* determines where you are born in that system. Unless you believe in *karma* you cannot follow these things properly. If the system is not there, like in America, you do not have a problem of duty-based classification. You consider only *guṇa*. But where there is this system, *prārabdha-karma* is applicable. Duties are defined and each one has to perform his duty. Lord Kṛṣṇa has said earlier in the third chapter, '*svadharme nidhanaṃ śreyah para-dharmo bhayāvahah*—even it is better to die doing one's own duty than being alive performing some one else's duties, because another's duty is fraught with fear.'¹ If such a system is available, *karma* will be governing the birth of a child into a family where he has to fulfil certain duties to exhaust certain *karmas*. The *guṇas* that manifest in the form of certain dispositions are because of *svabhāva*, one's own previously gathered *karma*. Even where the system of *varṇa-āśrama-dharma* is not operative, we can take it that one is born into a situation according to one's *prārabdha-karma*.

Whatever situation one is born into, one has to change to gain the disposition of a *brāhmaṇa*. A person may be a *kṣatriya* by birth and by duty, but *rajas* need not be predominant. He may be a soldier, but he may be a *brāhmaṇa* in his disposition. That is what Kṛṣṇa is saying here to *Arjuna*. Do your duty with a proper attitude and you are a *brāhmaṇa*; but by changing your duty you do not become a *brāhmaṇa*. Wherever you

¹ *Gītā* – 3-35

are and whatever you are doing is good enough to become a *brāhmaṇa*. It is not a change of place or change of duty but the change of attitude that changes a person. That is the whole contention, as we will see now.

If a person has a predominance of *sattva-guṇa*, what will his expression be? *Kṛṣṇa* answers in the next verse.

शमोऽसमाहं शमोऽसमाहं शमोऽसमाहं शमोऽसमाहं
यज्ञोऽसमाहं यज्ञोऽसमाहं यज्ञोऽसमाहं यज्ञोऽसमाहं ॥४२॥

śamo damastapaḥ śaucaṃ kṣāntirārjavameva ca

jñānaṃ vijñānamāstikyaṃ brahmakarma svabhāvajam

Verse 42

शमोऽसमाहं *śamaḥ* — composure; शमोऽसमाहं *damah* — restraint; यज्ञोऽसमाहं *tapas* — religious discipline; यज्ञोऽसमाहं *śaucaṃ* — (inner and external) cleanliness; यज्ञोऽसमाहं *kṣāntiḥ* — accommodation; + यज्ञोऽसमाहं *ārjavam eva ca* — and indeed, straightforwardness; यज्ञोऽसमाहं *jñānam* — knowledge; यज्ञोऽसमाहं *vijñānam* — assimilated knowledge; + यज्ञोऽसमाहं *āstikyaṃ* — accepting the veracity of the Vedas; यज्ञोऽसमाहं *svabhāvajam* — born of nature; यज्ञोऽसमाहं *brahma-karma* — (is) the duty of a *brāhmaṇa*

Composure, restraint, religious discipline, (inner and external) cleanliness, accommodation, and indeed, straightforwardness, knowledge, assimilated knowledge, and accepting the veracity of the Vedas is (collectively) the duty, born of nature, of a *brāhmaṇa*.

THE DUTIES AND DISPOSITION OF A BRĀHMAṆA

Notice that there is no particular *karma* involved in this description, only a disposition, *guṇa*. In the vision of the *śāstra*, everyone should become a *brāhmaṇa* by quality. The *śāstra*'s intent is not to define *karmas*, but to help a person grow. In its vision, as you will see, everybody should become a *brāhmaṇa* in disposition by doing his or her own *karma* with a certain attitude. Later *Kṛṣṇa* will say that the one who just goes about happily doing what is to be done in his own situation, becomes mature—*sve sve karmaṇyabhirataḥ saṃsiddhiṃ labhate naraḥ*.¹ Whatever *karma* is given to you by birth is good enough to make you mature, if that is what you want. If you want to make money or gain some power, you may have to change your situation to accomplish that, but if you want maturity, it is all available right where you are. You need not change your position or your profession in order to mature, because when your aim is maturity, the development is all internal.

The *śruti* offers a method to achieve this maturity, and that method, which is unfolded here, is universally effective. In personal growth, a given method may be

¹ *Gītā* – 18-45

effective for one person with a particular type of problem, but not for another. Here, however, we have something that is universally effective. Whatever you are called upon to do, you do, and you do it with a proper attitude, offering it to *Īśvara* for your *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. This is *karma-yoga* and the one who practises this, the *karma-yogī*, will mature because all his likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*, will come under his control. And he will be a *brāhmaṇa* by disposition. What are the things he has to pay attention to in order to accomplish that? Those are enumerated in this verse under the name *brahma-karma*.

In this verse, *brahma-karma* means that which belongs to a *brāhmaṇa*, that which makes one a *brāhmaṇa*. It is what he has to cultivate as a *brāhmaṇa*. And all these are born of his disposition, *svabhāvaja*. What are the things that constitute the disposition of a *brāhmaṇa*? The first is *śama*, which, as we have seen before, means mastery over the ways of one's thinking. We have to gain enough space between our thinking patterns and our own understanding so that we do not get easily carried away by any particular emotion or fancy. If one enjoys that space, he has *śama*. It is important to understand that this is not elimination of a process of thinking—which is neither necessary nor possible. Thinking goes on, but if one does not identify with a line of thought and can choose to act upon it or not, he enjoys what we call *śama*. When one practises and enjoys that quality, it becomes his own disposition, *svabhāva*.

Similarly *dama*, as we have seen, is exercising restraint with regard to impulses that need to be checked, and *tapas*, as was previously pointed out, is any religious discipline with reference to speaking, action, etc.

Then, cleanliness, *śauca*, not only external but also internal, is to be practised. Internal *śauca* is neutralizing hatred and other painful emotions by bringing the opposite value or emotion to the mind. This is also to be practised by a *brāhmaṇa*. These are things that have to be done every day. Just as the body has to be cleaned every day, similarly the mind also has to be kept clean. You cannot take *śauca* for granted. If there is hatred towards someone or something, you neutralize it by some kind of accommodation, or understanding. Later, it can develop into love, friendliness, etc., but in the beginning, it is simple accommodation, understanding people, as they are, without wanting to change them, or control them. Generally, we want the whole world to behave according to our own criteria. But if we really analyse those criteria, we find that we have to change ourselves first. Sometimes you may seem to be totally right, but then, the other person is also right from the standpoint of his own disposition and background. He behaves the way he does because he cannot behave differently. If he could, he would. It is as simple as that. Even if you say, he can behave differently but he does not want to. Well, his not wanting to behave differently is just another behaviour pattern that is a product of his disposition and background. It is all included. You will find that if you let people be as they are, you can have peace. If you do not want peace, then worry about what others do.

Ārjava means an alignment between thought, word, and deed. All that you think need not be told, but what is told must be true to what you think. And what you do is exactly what you said you would.

JÑĀNA AND VIJÑĀNA WITH REFERENCE TO DHARMA

Jñāna, here is knowledge of what is right and wrong, which is derived from the *śāstra*. We all have knowledge of values but mere *jñāna* is not enough. It should be assimilated knowledge, *viññāna*. Any assimilated value is yourself, and being not separate from yourself, it does not cause any conflict. But mere knowledge of a value, if it is not assimilated, remains an ideal for others to follow, and not for oneself. In terms of expectations of other's behaviour, everybody is one hundred percent ethical. That means everybody has *jñāna*. But, when it comes to my behaviour, there is a problem. More often than not, it is due to lack of assimilation of a given value. I¹ say more often than not because, even if you assimilate the value, there can be a residual habit that is contradictory to the value. However, once the value is really assimilated, it is easy to break the habit. If it is not assimilated, the knowledge, *jñāna*, of the value creates conflict when my behaviour contradicts that knowledge.

Then, why not dismiss the value and avoid conflict? If somebody raises an objection like this, just try standing on his bare toes with your ammunition boots for a few seconds. It will not take time for him to understand the value of *ahiṃsā*! I² can accept his argument if he can accept my standing on his toes with ammunition boots. If he does not want me to stand on his toes, this shows that there is a common value, which is shared by, and extends to, all living beings. It is not a particular personal value imposed upon anyone by society, but a commonly recognized value, which is part of a universally appreciated value structure that forms one basic fabric. Our behavioural expressions of a value may be different, but the value itself, the *dharma*, is one. And anything that goes against that existing order, that is in conflict with the underlying harmony, is what we call *adharmā*. Therefore, there is such a thing as *dharma*, and there will be conflict if it is not assimilated.

JÑĀNA AND VIJÑĀNA WITH REFERENCE TO ĀTMĀ

When there can be this difference of *jñāna* and *viññāna* with reference to *dharma*, what can we say when it comes to knowledge of *ātmā*? These two terms, *jñāna* and *viññāna* used in connection with the knowledge of *ātmā*, have been a source of misinterpretation of *Vedānta* both historically and in recent times. In modern times, certain people who claim to be *vedāntīs* say, that you should first gain indirect knowledge of *ātmā* from the *śruti* and then you should 'realize' that *ātmā*. In fact, there

¹Swamiñi

²Swamiñi

is no *ātmā* to realize; there is only you—*tat tvam asi*. The *śruti* does not say that you have to ‘realize’ *Brahman*, but that you are *Brahman*, which is an entirely different thing. But then, these modern *vedāntīs* will say that there is an *ātmā* which is all bliss, and which you have to realize. That is not how it is.

The *śruti* says that there is a cause of creation, called *Brahman*, and that *Brahman* is this *ātmā*, the self-evident ‘I.’ Knowledge of that has to be immediate knowledge; it can never be indirect. Some people say that initially one gains an indirect knowledge in the form of the understanding, ‘There is an entity called *Brahman*, which is the cause of this world.’ They call this *parokṣa-jñāna*. And they say, later, one has to realize that *Brahman* as oneself. This they say is the *aparokṣa-jñāna*. But this is not very correct. If I understand only the fact that *Brahman* exists, though one may call it indirect knowledge, *parokṣa-jñāna*, it is really only *śraddhā*. Some logic is given, no doubt, but still, *Brahman* is not understood because *Brahman* is *ātmā*, myself, and that being so, how will I understand *Brahman* indirectly as an object? There is no object called *Brahman*, nor is there any understanding of *Brahman* other than *ātmā*.

If *Brahman* is just known as a word that means the cause of creation, that is not really knowledge but simple *śraddhā*, just like a belief in the existence of heaven. The difference between these two beliefs is that I have to find out later whether heaven exists or not, but since the world is *Brahman* right now, by understanding that, I can know *Brahman* right now. When I say that I don't understand how the world is *Brahman*, that I see only the world but not *Brahman*, it is still *śraddhā*. Even if I say that *Brahman* is the cause and this world is the effect, I have some more understanding about it, but not real knowledge, *jñāna*, because *Brahman* happens to be myself. Therefore, this knowledge has to be converted into immediate knowledge, *aparokṣa-jñāna*, of myself as *Brahman*. Then, if in spite of having this knowledge, there is some doubt about myself or I believe just the opposite, about myself, this *viparīta-bhāvana* has to be taken care of by analysis, *manana*. And if there is a habitual error that makes me take myself to be other than *Brahman* in spite of clear knowledge, that has to be removed by contemplation, *nididhyāsana*. This will make the knowledge clear and free of doubt, vagueness, error, and any habitual orientation that is opposed to the knowledge. This clear knowledge is called *viññāna*. This is the distinction between *jñāna* and *viññāna* with reference to *ātmā*.

What we have seen here is the *karma* of the *brāhmaṇa*. He has to do everything that is necessary both to gain knowledge, *jñāna*, and to convert it into *viññāna*. This involves going to a teacher, sitting with that teacher, spending time in study, and doing whatever is to be done to gain clear knowledge, free from doubt, vagueness, and error. Knowledge will not just descend from heaven: there are certain things that have to be done.

ĀSTIKYA -BUDDHI

Naturally, all this presupposes an *āstikya-buddhi*, an acceptance of *śāstra* as a valid means of knowledge. Without that you cannot gain *jñāna* and *vijñāna*. But this *āstikya-buddhi* does not necessarily include the appreciation of *ātmā* as *sat-cit-ānanda*. A person with *āstikya-buddhi* may have only the understanding that there is an *ātmā*, which survives the death of this physical body, and that there is an unseen result, *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*, for an action in the form of *puṇya* and *pāpa*. And he also has the understanding that without the clear knowledge, that *ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda*, this *adr̥ṣṭa-phala* accrues to him in another life. This is also a good start because, due to this he will have a value for leading an ethical life and consequently gain the maturity that will lead him to inquire into the nature of himself. Being an *āstika*, he will look up to the *śāstra* as a means for that. Even though he may not understand what *śāstra* says, what it says is accepted as true and he makes an attempt to understand that. Once he understands what it says about *ātmā*, he no longer has simply an *āstikya-buddhi*, but knowledge. Some *āstikya-buddhi* will continue with reference to things that will always be remote, *nitya-parokṣa*, like heaven, etc. But once you know the nature of *ātmā*, the *śraddhā* one has now is different.

This *śraddhā* is different from the *śraddhā* of the *āstikya-buddhi*, because there is no promise here that you will become *Brahman* later. The *śāstra* says you are *Brahman*. If you don't think so, well, that is why the *śāstra* is telling you. The one who has this *āstikya-buddhi* will try to understand that, and naturally, it is a thing to be understood right now. Therefore, this *śraddhā* with reference to *ātmā* being *Brahman* is a different type of *śraddhā*. It is the *śraddhā* in the *pramāṇya* of the *śāstra*, which is nothing but the *śraddhā* in the veracity of the *śāstra* and in its capacity to reveal *ātmā*. This gives me the attitude to allow the words of the *śāstra* to operate and do the magic that they have to do.

Being a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, the *śāstra* has to work independently of every other *pramāṇa*. This is true of any *pramāṇa*. Only the eyes can see, and only the ears can hear. And just because the eyes see, that does not mean the ears do not hear. Just because the ears hear, that does not mean that what the eyes see is wrong. They operate independently. Ears bring in only sound, while eyes bring in only form; each means of knowledge works independently, without your consent. Whether you like it or not, a given sense organ will bring in data about a given sense object. When one is trying to meditate, who wants to hear the garbage truck of all things? But it is heard. Thus, the ears do not take your permission to report sound. They operate independently. Even inferential knowledge is automatic, once you have knowledge of the invariable concomitance. When you see smoke, you immediately know there is fire, or if you hear a particular sound, right away you know a car is passing by. The conclusion is immediate.

This knowledge, as any other knowledge, has to take place in the mind, not anywhere else. Some say that you have to transcend the mind and experience the *ātmā*, but if you transcend the mind, you will go to sleep, you will not get knowledge! How will you experience the *ātmā*, who is the experiencer of everything? If transcending the mind is enlightenment. I would have woken up from sleep as a wise man, a *buddha*, long ago. Nobody became wiser just because he slept. Knowledge has to take place in the mind, nowhere else. *Ātmā* itself does not require any knowledge because it has no bondage to get rid of by knowledge. It is always free. The body also has no problem about being mortal, etc., because it does not have any I-sense, *ātma-buddhi*. Being inert, *jaḍa*, it has no problem. Nor does the mind have any problem. It is purely an instrument for knowing and is free from the problem of being small or limited in any way. Then who has the problem? It is the confused *pramātā*, the knower, who does not recognize *ātmā* as it is. The *buddhi* has confusion and that is the problem. How are you going to solve this problem?

Experience alone does not teach you anything. You can only learn from it to the extent that you can interpret it properly, and that depends on what you already know. It is not possible to interpret any experience beyond the understanding you already have. If I only know myself as an idiot, every interpretation I make will only confirm how idiotic I have been. The helplessness is very clear. Therefore, the Veda has to be taken as an independent *pramāṇa*. How? Suppose I hold up a crystal and say, 'This is a rabbit.' Now, you want your Swami to be right, because you want to think that at least somebody can be right. But then, not only do I say it is a rabbit but I go on and on describing its colour and so on and asking it to sit still. What will you think? As much as you may want to believe it is a rabbit, you cannot. Why? Because it contradicts your perception. When there is a doubt about anything, only a *pramāṇa* is valid, and here, what is being said contradicts the *pramāṇa* of sight.

Look at your attitude towards your eyes here. That should be your attitude towards the Vedas. That is, you should be as sure of the capacity of the Vedas in revealing the truth about yourself as you are of your eyes revealing form and colour. This is called *śraddhā*, and only with this kind of *śraddhā* can the words do their job. The *śāstra* itself says, 'The one who has *śraddhā* gains knowledge—*śraddhāvān labhate jñānam*.' *Śraddhā* is not blind faith, but an attitude towards the *pramāṇa*, which we call *āstikya-buddhi*, that over-rules everything you may have concluded about yourself. I thought I was a mortal, then when I listened to the words of the *śāstra*, I see that I have been wrong. Even though, my mind may have been telling me for ages that I am this and that, at one stroke knowledge changes everything! The entire humanity thought that the sun travelled from East to West. Only one person said, it was not true, but he was right. Thus, an opinion that has the support of the majority is not necessarily true, while knowledge of one person, even though it is against what the entire humanity thinks, it is still valid because it is knowledge. Even if God were to come and tell me that the sun

moves from East to West, I would only try to educate him. That is the attitude of the person behind a valid *pramāṇa*, and that should be the attitude with reference to the *śāstra*. This is *āstikya-buddhi*.

This is the difference between *Vedānta* and religious theology. According to one theology you have to believe that you are a sinner, not because of what you did, but simply because your birth was not immaculate. Then, once you believe this, you have to believe that you can remove this sin by baptism. Or, that you can remove the sin of the wrongs you have done here through confession and penance. Generally, people have a firmer belief in the first part than the second. I¹ once had someone consult me who, in spite of going to confession, still felt guilty. He came to me to find out how to get rid of his guilt. That means he did not have the same degree of faith in the efficacy of confession as he did in his being a sinner. Both are created by the theology. Then there are beliefs that you have to be buried after dying in order to get to heaven, or that if you do not accept a certain belief, there is no possibility of going to heaven, or that after dying, God is going to sit in judgement of you. I thought God was one person who would not be judgemental, but would be someone I could go to, with an open heart, just as I am, and be totally accommodated. Now I learn that even though he has created all this, he judges whom he is going to save and whom he is going to condemn. We would be better off without such a God. A simple human being is better than that.

All these attributes that we have been discussing belong to a *brāhmaṇa*. Now you can understand why a *brāhmaṇa* is the one who is considered qualified for *Vedānta*. It is said in the *śruti*² that a person, who is a *brāhmaṇa*, discovers in himself a dispassion towards the general pursuits. After examining carefully the experiences gathered through action, he understands that what is not created is not going to be accomplished by action. He understands very well that what he seeks is entirely different from what he is doing. All the activities of a *brāhmaṇa* are meant only to create this understanding. Everyone has to arrive at this.

In the meantime, there are various combinations of the three *guṇas*, which dictate the duties and disposition of a person. Let us see what they are for a *kṣatriya*, for whom *rajas* is predominant and *sattva* is secondary.

शूर्यस्य तेजो दक्षिणेऽक्षयिणीं प्रोक्षन् यत्प्रोक्षन्
 नमस्कृत्यैतं यत्प्रोक्षन् यत्प्रोक्षन् यत्प्रोक्षन् ४३ ॥
śauryaṃ tejo dhṛtirdākṣyaṃ yuddhe cāpyapalāyanam
dānamīśvarabhāvaśca kṣātraṃ karma svabhāvajam

Verse 43

¹Swamiiji

²*Muṇḍakopaniṣad* – 1-2-12

शूर्यस्यै साuryam — valour; तेजसोऽस्तेजसः tejas — brilliance (born of self-confidence); धृतिर्युद्धे द्धृतिः dhṛtiḥ — resolve; नदीपतेः दक्ष्याम् dākṣyam — adroitness; युद्धेऽपि युद्धेऽपि yuddhe ca api — from a battle; + अपालायानाम् apalāyanam — not running away; दानम् दानम् dānam — giving; ईश्वरभवाच्च ईश्वरभवाच्च ईश्वरभवाच्च īśvara-bhāvaḥ ca — and overlordship (leadership); स्वभावजम् स्वभावजम् svabhāvajam — born of nature; कर्मात् कर्मात् kṣātram karma — is kṣatriya -karma

Valour, self-confidence, resolve, adroitness, not running from conflict, giving, and overlordship (leadership) are the naturally born duties and disposition of a *kṣatriya*.

THE DUTIES AND DISPOSITION OF A KṢATRIYA

A person who has *śaurya* is highly skilled and brave in warfare or any dangerous situation. When it is called for, he will exhibit heroism. *Śaṅkara* takes *tejas* as the brilliance born of self-confidence, and *dhṛti* as sustained enthusiasm. This is a person who is resolute in all situations, which are not very pleasant, which are even sometimes very inimical. Because of his resolve, he does not get depressed or easily frightened, and his enthusiasm does not get dampened.

Then again, he is a person who does not postpone, but does what is to be done at the right time and is even ready for a surprise. If a situation suddenly arises, which was not expected at all, he could regroup his resources, entirely change his plan and then face the situation without being confused. In the battlefield, this happens all the time, and life itself is a battlefield. Some people can only operate when they have a plan and everything happens according to that plan. If the plan is changed, they get completely unnerved and are incapable of facing the new situation. Unless they are able to control the situation, they panic and cannot function, because of a deep-rooted fear and insecurity. The readiness to change, completely reshuffle your ideas, marshal your resources, and face the situations as they arrive is what we call *dākṣya*. This is the capacity to face a situation however unfamiliar it is, however threatening it is, and just do what is to be done. Sometimes you have to retreat. You may lose the battle but still, you win the war.

Another duty, or disposition of a *kṣatriya* is not running away in a situation where he has to fight it out, *yuddhe apalāyanam*. Because he is a *kṣatriya*, a soldier who is supposed to defend *dharma*, or a ruler who has to wield the sceptre of justice, he should not run away. *Śaṅkara* characterizes it as ‘not showing his back.’ This is a very important thing in a battle. In Rajasthan, the Rajput women who receive the wounded soldiers from the battlefield first see whether the wound is in the back or front. If it is in the front, he will be received at home. If it is at the back, he will be sent away. Not retreating from any conflict is a very important thing for a *kṣatriya*.

Giving, *dāna*, is also very important. *Śaṅkara* gives a beautiful description of *dāna* here. He defines it as *deyadravyeṣu muktahastatā*, the nature of having a free hand with reference to things that are to be given. In general, *dāna* means giving, but as we have seen, there are a number of factors involved. Giving implies certain things that are to be given, the appropriate time and place for it, and the people who deserve to receive from you. When you give in these situations, your hands should not be tied. You give with a free hand; no strings attached. Because you are not tied down by any kind of consideration, you can be reckless. This is *dāna*. If you are always worried about what will happen, it is impossible to give in this way. You have to be a little bit reckless, though not totally reckless; because then you will have to beg for yourself. But a certain degree of recklessness is necessary when somebody has to part with something, and that recklessness is called by *Śaṅkara*, free-handedness, *mukta-hastatā*.

A *kṣatriya* is a natural leader, and thus has *asvabhāvaja*, natural, overlordship which *Śaṅkara* says is making his ruling power evident to those who are to be governed. As a ruler, he has to make it clear that he is in charge and see to it that his intentions are understood. The duty of a *kṣatriya* is definitely to govern, and if he is a *kṣatriya* by *guṇa*, this is very natural to him. When *rajas* is predominant, and *sattva* is second, it would be his natural tendency to rule. Because he has *sattva*, he will not be self-centred, but will have a community ego or an ideological ego. He will be ready to sacrifice his family and his own comforts to fulfil that ideology. Any idealist is a *kṣatriya* if he acts upon his ideology. The problem is, he does not see beyond the ideal, but thinks that, it is everything. There is nobility in his thinking because of *sattva*, but it is not complete because of the presence of *rajas*.

This is the nature of a *kṣatriya* from the standpoint of *guṇa*, and that can evolve. But from the standpoint of duties, there is definitely enjoined duty, *vihita-karma*, for a *kṣatriya*. Being born in a particular family, you know exactly what is to be done. It becomes very visible, even when you are young, and therefore, you do not have the problem of competition, or aggressiveness. It is an entirely different disposition wherein you do what is to be done and grow to be a *brāhmaṇa* or a *kṣatriya* by *guṇa*. That is an excellent system for inner growth. The structure, which made this possible, is not available now, so we have to edit the meaning of these verses properly, and understand the spirit of it. What is to be done in a given situation, I do and do it as *yoga*. *Bhagavān* will talk about this later. First, he talks about the duties, and later about the usefulness of those duties.

Now we will see the duties and disposition of a *vaiśya*.

एतन्मैत्र्याः कृत्वा वैश्याः कृत्वा वैश्याः कृत्वा वैश्याः कृत्वा वैश्याः
 कृत्वा वैश्याः कृत्वा वैश्याः कृत्वा वैश्याः कृत्वा वैश्याः कृत्वा वैश्याः ॥४४॥

gains; स्वकर्मनिरातः *svakarma-nirataḥ* — the one who is devoted to his own duty; यथा *yathā* — how; सिद्धिं *siddhim* — success; विन्दति *vindati* — finds; ततः *tat* — that; शृणु *śṛṇu* — listen

A man who delights in his own duty gains success. Listen to how one devoted to his own duty finds success.

COMMITMENT TO ONE'S OWN DUTY LEADS TO SUCCESS

This is all a part of *karma-yoga*. Śaṅkara takes *abhirati* as commitment. *Sve sve karmaṇi abhirataḥ* is a person who is totally involved in his own duties with commitment and enjoyment. Here is a person who is committed to doing his own duty and enjoys doing it. Not only does he experience the satisfaction that comes from doing what he is supposed to do, he is really happy in what he does and doesn't want to do somebody else's job. Naturally, he gains *saṃsiddhi*, success, which is *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* here. It cannot be *mokṣa* because *karma* is involved, and only the one who gains knowledge of *ātmā* gains *mokṣa*.

What is success for a human being? First, it is to be a mature individual. Just imagine a forty five year old crying because his or her balloon bursts. What will you think of this person? It looks ridiculous, but all of us have this kind of a child in us. I chose a balloon so that you can see what it is to be an adult, but we all have things that are equivalent to a balloon. The one who is mature sees all *karma* as the same. He doesn't think that some other job is better than the one he is doing because any *karma* comprises the three *guṇas*, *triguṇātma*, and therefore, is potentially binding. Finally speaking, any occupation, whether it is that of a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* or a *śūdra* will have a result that has to be experienced. There is no way of escaping from this natural defect of *karma* and no change of *karma* can bring about the necessary change in your heart.

Whenever I want to change what I am doing, the problem, more often than not, is not with what I do but with myself. I cannot accept myself in a given situation and think that I hate my job when in fact, I hate myself. When this is so, whatever I do will be problematic. It has nothing to do with the job, even though some jobs can be more suitable than others for any given person. In the vision of the *Gītā*, though, this is not accepted, because the system of *varṇa-āśrama* is accepted. Once the concept of duty takes hold in your psyche, anything is fine. If that concept is not there, we have to work it out differently, addressing the problem objectively, pragmatically, and at the same time seeing whether or not it is the job that is at the bottom of my dissatisfaction. Generally, it is not the job, but something else that requires attention.

Though there is no concept of duty in the West, as there is in India, there is still appreciation of what is to be done which has to be discovered in every situation. It is a

day-to-day affair. And we need not despair if we do not have this system because we do not need it; we need only the spirit of it. The system is meant to be grown out of anyway, and if we imbibe the spirit of it, we can grow out of it. Once you begin to enjoy the job that you are doing, you can give up any job, but switching does not really work. If the switching is frequent, it is very clear that the problem is elsewhere. If I keep on changing situations and still find myself not liking any one of them, that means the problem is myself. It has nothing to do with the situation. The invariable is me, no matter where I go or what I do, because wherever I go I am the same discontented person. The whole problem is nothing but 'I.' That is why I can solve it also. If something or somebody else is the problem, it is impossible to solve.

The one great blessing in this is that when I can see that the problem is me, the solution is available for me. I can simply change my attitude about myself. This body is just a vehicle meant for carrying me around. It is a simple counter for experiences, something that I handle. If I ask the body to get up, it just gets up, even though it has some problem like a back pain or knee pain. Until it is incapable, it always obeys. Who will work for me like this? I abuse it, or hardly use it, and yet, it keeps on obliging me. If one day it gives up, I would say it is legitimate. What basis do I have to judge myself from the standpoint of the body? Why talk of the body? People even judge themselves on the basis of their cars! It is just amazing to me how we are moving away from ourselves. We start with make up, then go on with dyeing the hair green and so on, and finally come to what kind of car or house we have. We have all sorts of things through which we judge ourselves. It is amazing! And *śāstra* says do not judge yourself on the basis of even the physical body which is only a vehicle, a simple counter for enjoyment. We have to use it; be grateful for all that it does and enjoy it, without judgement. The problem is looking at oneself and judging oneself from the standpoint of the body, mind, etc. We cannot afford to be self-critical and judge ourselves from the point of view of the body, mind, etc., and feel limited.

If the body and mind are not legitimate bases on which to judge myself, even less so is the duty I am assigned. Since we do not have a functional *varṇa-āśrama* system today, the interpretation of the words of the Lord, '*sve sve karmaṇi abhirataḥ*' should be in keeping with exactly what is available right now. What is expected of me now, I just do, and enjoy doing it. The one who lives his life doing his own duty with commitment and satisfaction gains success in terms of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, and once he has a prepared mind, there is no hindrance for him to gain knowledge, and thereby, *mokṣa*. Now how does he do it? 'Listen, *śṛṇu*,' says *Bhagavān* and continues.

यथाप्रवृत्तिर्भूतानाम् यथा सर्वमिदं तदा
 स्वकर्मान्तां तदाभ्यार्या सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवाः ॥४६॥

*yataḥ pravṛttirbhūtānām yena sarvamidaṁ tatam
 svakarmaṇā tamabhyarēya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ*

Verse 46

यथाऽ यताः — from whom; भूतानाम् प्रवृत्तिः — (is) the creation of the beings; येन — by whom; सर्वमिदं — all this; ततः — is pervaded; तम् — him; स्वकर्मान् — through one's own duty; + अभ्यर्च्य — worshipping; मनुष्यः — the human being; सिद्धिम् — success; विन्दति — gains

Through one's duty, worshipping him from whom is the creation of the beings, by whom all this is pervaded, a human being gains success.

WORSHIPPING THE LORD THROUGH ONE'S DUTY, MAN GAINS SUCCESS

WHAT IS IT THAT IS CREATED ?

Pravṛtti, here, means creation or coming into being, and the word, *yataḥ* means 'from whom' and it refers to the cause, *Īśvara*, from whom the entire creation consisting of all these living beings and elements, *bhūtas*, arises. Now when we say this, there is a problem here. If you say that the living beings, *jīvas*, are born, they have a beginning. But if the *jīva* is identical with *Īśvara*, who is beginningless, *anādi*, how can the *jīva* be born? There is no possibility of a beginningless *jīva* being born. This is true, but the fact that the *jīva* is beginningless, *anādi*, and is identical with *Īśvara*, is something that one has to discover. Until that non-difference is recognized, there is a seeming difference between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*, and the *jīva* appears to have taken a birth in a given form.

In reality, however, there is no birth of the *jīva*. This is a very important thing to know. No *jīva* is created, and, in fact, the notion of an entity called *jīva* is purely *mithyā* because there is no entity called *jīva* existing independently of *ātmā*. The notion of such an entity is superimposed upon the *ātmā* due to ignorance. Because ignorance has no beginning, the *jīva* also has no beginning. That being so, *Īśvara* does not create the *jīva*. If God creates the individual, his efforts are stifled by family planning, etc.! This would mean that God is less than those who stifle his efforts. So, it is unreasonable to think that God creates the individual.

What is created then? It is nothing but your physical body-mind-sense-complex which is but the five elements, space, air, water, fire, and earth, *ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *agni*, *āpaḥ* and *prthivī*. According to the model of the *śāstra*, the creation consists of five elements and the elementals, the five sense organs and five *prāṇas*. You can look at the world differently also. According to physics, there are many more elements, all of which are reduced to particles. For our purposes, we do not require all that. We simply reduce everything to five and then finally to *Brahman*. The creation consisting of these five elements and the elementals includes your physical body-mind-sense-complex.

THE TWO CAUSES OF CREATION

The cause from which, all of them are born can be either *nimitta-kāraṇa*, efficient, or *upādāna-kāraṇa*, the material cause. If this cause from whom is the arising of all these is simply an efficient cause, *nimitta-kāraṇa*, then that cause will be separate from what is created, like the potter is separate from the clay out of which he makes the pot. This five-elemental world that is created by *Īśvara* would be separate from him if he is only the efficient cause, and he would require a material, which is entirely independent of him, like the clay is independent of the potter. This is generally, what the theologians think. They look upon the Lord as another entity, who made this world like a doughnut-maker. He is separate from the doughnut he makes and therefore, you can eat the doughnut without eating the doughnut-maker. Now, if the Lord is like a doughnut-maker and the world is the doughnut, which includes space and time, where will this Lord be? If you say heaven, we have to ask if heaven is created or not? Heaven is also a place, after all, which is within space. If the Lord is only the efficient cause, we cannot solve these problems. The *Īśvara* that is presented here is not only the maker of the creation, but also the material. How do we know? The verse says, ‘*yataḥ, pravṛttiḥ bhūtānām*, from whom is the creation of all these elements, which constitute the world.’ When it is said *yataḥ* meaning, ‘from whom,’ or ‘from which cause,’ it can mean efficient or material cause, or perhaps both. And the word *yataḥ* does not itself suggest which meaning we should take.

There is another clause here, which makes the meaning clear—*yena sarvam idaṃ tatam*, by whom all this is pervaded. The same pronoun, *yat*, is used, saying that same cause, *yataḥ*, from which this entire creation made of these elements has come, is the very one by whom, they are all pervaded, *yena tatam*. An argument that can be raised here is that like the sun whose light pervades everything, the Lord, though sitting in heaven, pervades everything with his grace. But how will the proponents of this view explain such *Upaniṣads* sentences illustrating the cause as, ‘All this is, but a modification consisting of name alone resting on speech; clay alone is the reality—*vācārambhaṇaṃ vikāro nāmadheyaṃ mṛttiketyeva satyam*?’¹ Thus, we have not just one or two sentences like this, but many, and the whole thing is reasonable too. Therefore, the Lord is not only the maker, but also the material cause. Only then can he pervade the creation, a creation being non-separate from its material cause. And that cause is not inert but conscious because it is also efficient cause, the maker. It is also defined elsewhere as *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*.

LORD IS BOTH THE EFFICIENT AND MATERIAL CAUSE

Also, this *Brahman*, that is, *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, is also the material cause. There is no other material other than *Brahman* because *Brahman* is

¹ *Chāndogyopaniṣad* – 6-1-4

limitless, *ananta*. The material which undergoes change to become this creation, the *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*, *māyā*, is *mithyā*. That is why, when I analyse the creation, I do not find it having any basis at all. There is nothing other than *Brahman* here. Everything just reduces until all that I am left with is mere words, and they keep disappearing too, because when the object is gone, the name is also gone. Only *sadvastu*, *Brahman*, remains as the very is-ness of every object I analyse. I thought there was a pot, and then I find that it disappears and all I am left with is clay. There is no object for pot, only a word. And then, when I begin to look into clay, the clay disappears and atoms alone remain. They become the truth, until they are analysed. Things keep disappearing like this. That is the greatest magic there is. You can look at the pot and just see it disappear. I had a word, 'pot,' for which there was an object pot, but on inquiry, the pot as an object disappears, and along with it the name also disappears, because that particular object ended up with the form of a name, and once the object has gone, the name has no place to remain. Things just keep disappearing. This is the truth of creation.

For such a creation, all that you require is only some kind of cause that is good enough to account for it. That cause is a power inherent in *Brahman*, which we call *māyā*. This *Brahman* with *māyā* is what we call *Īśvara* because with reference to the creation he is both the efficient and material cause, *abhinna-nimitta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. From the standpoint of his own knowledge and power he is called the efficient cause, *nimitta-kāraṇa*. From the standpoint of his own *māyā-upādhi*, because of which he has the power to create, he is called *upādāna-kāraṇa*, material cause.

It is like a spider. A spider has a certain knowledge, which is evident from the fact that he chooses an appropriate place to build his intricate web. He selects a corner, not any other place, and then too, a particular corner which is relatively safe, not another. And then, the web he builds is a marvel in designing. All of this indicates intelligence and a tremendous skill or power. Therefore, the spider is the efficient cause of the web. But then, where did he get the material for the web? When a bird wants to build a nest, you should see how he flies about picking up one straw after another, placing each one very intelligently and beautifully to build up the nest. Certain types of straw are used for the outside and entirely different soft ones for the inside. All the materials are collected and wonderfully fashioned into a nest. But the spider does not need to run around like this, gathering material to create its web. It spins out all the material it needs from a gland in its own mouth. Therefore, what is the material cause for the spider's web? The spider. From the standpoint of the conscious being, sufficiently equipped with knowledge and skill, etc., it is the *nimitta-kāraṇa*. From the standpoint of the *upādhi*, because of which it is called spider, it becomes the material cause.

Now, what is *Īśvara*? *Īśvara* is pure consciousness, as the spider is essentially, but the same *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, with *māyā*, which itself is dependent upon that *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, becomes omniscient, *sarvajña*, and all-

powerful, *sarva-śaktimān*. Only from the standpoint of consciousness conditioned by *māyā*, do we call *Īśvara*, the *nimitta-kāraṇa*. And if we look at the same *Īśvara* from the standpoint of the *māyā-upādhi*, which forms the material for this creation, because of which he gains the name *Īśvara*, he becomes the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa*, of the creation. Since the creation is from *Īśvara* with *Īśvara* as the material cause, it is not going to be separate from *Īśvara*. Thus, we see that from the standpoint of the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa*, the creation is not separate from *Īśvara*. The grossified manifest world becomes the whole physical body, *sthūla-upādhi*, for *Īśvara*, whom in this form we call *Virāṭ*, and the subtle world is the subtle body, *sūkṣma-upādhi*, of *Īśvara* whom we now call *Hiraṇyagarbha*. The unmanifest *Brahman* with the *māyā-upādhi* is *Īśvara* as *avyakta*, which is not creation as we define it but the causal condition. We speak of creation only with reference to the subtle and gross manifestations comprising the five elements and the elementals.

This five-elemental model is complete because it covers the entire world. It accounts for the physical world, your mind, your senses, everything, and therefore, *Īśvara* alone is in the form of this entire *jagat*. From the standpoint of the *upādhi*, *Īśvara* pervades everything. All you have to do is see it as it is. *Īśvara* did not first create the world and then pervade it. There are not two things here. Can we say that the pot was first created and then came to be pervaded by the clay? That is what the *Vaiśeṣikas* think. But the truth is, the creation itself is *Īśvara* and without *Īśvara*, there is no creation here at all.

TO WHICH CAUSE DOES THE DEVOTEE RELATE?

Now what about the devotee who wants to relate to *Īśvara*? Which Lord he will relate to, the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa*, or the efficient cause, *nimitta-kāraṇa*? To whom do you relate, even in your everyday relationships? Suppose you are relating to your father, mother, or a friend. Is it to the physical body that you relate to, or to the person? To whom do you relate really? It is always the person. Similarly, a devotee is not relating to the material cause; he always relates to the efficient cause, the *nimitta-kāraṇa*. That is why there seems to be a separation and *Īśvara* is looked at as all-knowing, *sarvajña*, while I am of limited knowledge, *alpajña*; he is all-powerful, *sarva-śaktimān*, while I have limited power, I am *alpa-śaktimān*. When you offer a prayer to *Īśvara*, it is only to the *nimitta-kāraṇa*, not to the *upādāna-kāraṇa*.

HOW DOES THE DEVOTEE INVOKE THE LORD?

What do you do to invoke *Īśvara*, the *nimitta-kāraṇa*? It is very interesting. Suppose I¹ am sitting near you, dozing perhaps, and you want to get my attention. You call my name, ‘Swamiji,’ and nothing happens. No response. Then what do you do? You

¹Swamiji

are going to touch any immediately available part in the hope that I will wake up. When you touch, say, my little finger, you expect that not only this part of me is going to wake up, but the whole me. That part becomes only a *nimitta*, a place where you can invoke the whole 'me.' To get the whole me to come, all you have to do is pull my little finger. That is all you have to do. But with *Bhagavān* it is even easier because *Bhagavān* never sleeps! He only relaxes. We have some wonderful imagery of Lord *Viṣṇu* lying down on the coils of the serpent, *Ādiśeṣa*, the original spring mattress! Lord *Viṣṇu* is the one who pervades everything, *sarva-vyāpaka*, and is supposed to keep the creation going. He has to keep the air blowing, the fire hot, and every thing, as it should be. For each and every small action that you do, the appropriate result has to come, which requires that all the laws must be operating properly. How does Lord *Viṣṇu* do this huge job of sustaining the entire world? Even with a million computers, it is impossible, and yet, he does it without lifting a single finger, without even batting an eyelid. This is absolute power and is illustrated by showing Lord *Viṣṇu* lying on *Ādiśeṣa*, the symbol of all power, *śakti*.

By his mere presence, everything takes place. This is the one whom you are invoking. When the whole creation is his form, which part should you touch to invoke that Lord? That is why we have varieties of forms of worship. We worship space-*ākāśa*, air-*vāyu*, fire-*agni*, water-*āpaḥ*, and even the earth-*pṛthivī*. A so-called inert rock is sustained by *Īśvara*, like how the inert body is sustained by a conscious being, *cetana-ātmā*. The whole creation, which we divide into inert and sentient, is all *Īśvara*, and therefore, any particular form becomes a form in which I can invoke that Lord.

NOT ONLY THE CREATION, BUT ALSO THE LAWS ARE NON-SEPARATE FROM THE LORD

Not only that, the creation being not separate from *Īśvara*, all the various laws, known and unknown, are also non-separate from *Īśvara*. Therefore, *Bhagavān* is, for example, gravitation. If you are able to sit on a chair without flying off into space, it is *Bhagavān* who is holding you there, and if you slip and fall, it is *Bhagavān* who brings you down. It is all law. Nothing happens without any reason. That is why you can study events and predict such things as the velocity that a body of a given weight will have when a given force is applied to it under other given conditions. This is what we call *Bhagavān's* law, but what do we mean by that? We use such expressions as '*Bhagavān's* law' commonly, but when we use a possessive case for the Lord, in our understanding *Īśvara* can be a person who created an order because of which we get certain results. No, this is not how it is. From the standpoint of efficient cause, *nimitta-kāraṇa*, we say '*Īśvara's* order,' but the order itself is *Īśvara*. Not just certain things, but also every invisible law whose result you see is pervaded by *Īśvara*; in fact, the law itself is *Īśvara*. Nobody sees the law of gravitation, but when you see falling objects and the regularity of their behaviour, you understand that there is a force, which is not visible to you, though the effects are very visible. Any force, whose effects are visible to you, should be included as *Īśvara*.

THE LAWS OF DHARMA ARE ALSO EXPRESSIONS OF THE LORD

Because of the verse under consideration here, we have to go one step further. There are different types of laws. We have laws like the traffic laws, which are man-made and can, therefore, be different. The speed limit in Pennsylvania is 55 mph while on the autobahn¹ in Germany it is far higher. But then, there is an order which is not man-made and that is *Īśvara*. Gravitation is *Īśvara*, but more than that there is an order, on the basis of which, a human being interacts with the world. When I have a faculty of choice, I can do a given thing. I need not do it, or I can do it differently. If I want to make money, I can earn it legitimately, or I can rob somebody. What exactly is the means to follow? There is a man-made law that says I should not rob, which conforms to the law of *Īśvara*. If there is something common, some common value structure that is identical for you and for me and known to both of us without having to be taught, then that is a universal law. The fact that it is known inherently without being told is a very important element in this. If I have to be educated about a law or a principle, I will not call it universal. But if, whether, I am an Eskimo, or a New Yorker or a Boston Brahmin, I know a given principle without ever being taught, that is a universal principle. If neither the Harvardian nor the Eskimo likes me to stand on his toes, then I should know that there is a certain order, which, as human beings, we all commonly sense. That order is an intrinsic part of creation, which we called *dharma*, and also, the law of *karma*.

This law is connected to our will. Because we have a will, this capacity to choose, it has to be governed by some law and that law is what we call *dharma*. If the choice I make is wrong, naturally I pay for it. The law of *karma* makes sure of it. If I keep my finger in the fire, it will definitely burn; it is only law. I cannot blame the fire. If I have never come across fire in my life, I can plead ignorance, but with reference to these universal values, we can never plead ignorance. We all have the common sense knowledge that we want to survive, that we do not want to be hurt and so on. This common value structure is the fabric of *dharma*. It is like the other structures that we have. Our physical body is governed by a certain set of laws; our physiological conditions are governed by another set, as are our psychological conditions. So too, the exercise of my free will is governed by some laws and those laws are what we call the laws of *dharma*, which are a part of creation. Therefore, *dharma* is *Īśvara*. This being so, when I am called upon to perform an action at a given time and place, there is something to be done which is appropriate, and everything else is inappropriate. That action that is appropriate is *Īśvara*; it is *Īśvara's* creation. In the same way as how a square peg cannot go into a round hole; nothing else fits there. It is the law of *Īśvara*. If I find that only one course of action is appropriate in a given situation, and no other, I can

¹ An expressway is called autobahn in Germany and German-speaking countries.

be sure that it is *Īśvara*. Therefore, the appropriate action, duty, itself is *Īśvara*, and because it fits well with *dharma*, *dharma* is *Īśvara*.

DOING ONE'S DUTY IS WORSHIP TO THE LORD

As long as I think that I am the agent of an action, the *kartā*, who enjoys a will, and has a variety of desires to fulfil, I have to completely relegate my likes and dislikes to the background, and do what is obviously appropriate to the occasion. If the choice I make is the appropriate one, it is not really a choice at all, because what is called for is highly visible. When what is to be done is done, what choice did I make? I did not have to choose what to do because it was decided by the circumstances. I use my choice only when I avoid what I tend to do. I want to do something else, and I avoid using my choice, my free will to do it. Doing is the only choice there is with regard to duty. Or, choice is used when two courses of action are open which are equally appropriate. Otherwise, what choice do we have? There is no choice at all except in avoiding what does not fit. This is the only exercise of choice in doing one's duty, and because there is no choice, this is *Īśvara*. Therefore, by doing one's own *karma*, *svakarma*, what is appropriate at a given time and place, one is worshipping *Īśvara*, this is the *abhyarcana*, the Lord speaks of when he says '*tam abhyarcya.*' Who is that *Īśvara*? The one who is *sarva-vyāpī*, all pervasive, *sarvajña*, all-knowing, and *sarva-śaktimān*, almighty is *Īśvara*.

Here, the things that we normally identify with worship, like offering a flower, are not being called worship, *arcana*, but conformity to all the various duties and dispositions that was mentioned in the earlier verses with reference to the four classes of people is called as *arcana*. Or in modern times, it means all that has to be done by an individual at a given time, given the circumstances. Whenever I do exactly what is called for in a given situation, that is worshipping *Īśvara*, whenever I do what is appropriate, I connect myself to *Īśvara*. That is why there is so much joy and satisfaction in such actions. If I do what is inappropriate, neither I am happy nor is any other person, who is involved. If there is happiness in performing the appropriate action, you must know that action is connecting you to *Īśvara*. The law of *karma*, the law of *dharma*, and your action all become one and the same. There is a harmony here between the law of *dharma* and your actions and that gives you a sense of peace because of a release from the hold of the *rāga-dveṣas*. If you are doing this day after day, what will happen to your likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*? What hold can they have over you? They just fall apart. Only non-binding *rāga-dveṣas* remain, which are beautiful because they make you a unique individual.

WHAT IS THE SIDDHI MENTIONED HERE?

Once your likes and dislikes are non-binding, you have *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and can therefore gain the knowledge that completely frees you from *karma*. If a person has

the understanding that the performing of his duties is worshipping of *Īśvara*, he gains success, *siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ*—first in terms of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and finally, he gains the *siddhi*, that is *mokṣa* which is knowledge, *jñāna*.

The important thing that is being conveyed here is that, doing one's duty with a proper attitude is worship of *Īśvara*. Generally, worship is considered to be specific action—physical, oral, or mental. That restricted concept is negated here. These special *karmas* of ritual and prayer are considered worship because in them, there is an obvious connection between *Īśvara* and the individual. The problem is that one thinks that afterwards there is no connection, which is not true. *Īśvara* is not only the cause but also the effect, the whole creation is *Īśvara*. When that is so when are you going to be away from that *Īśvara*? Therefore, according to this *śāstra*, if you do any *karma* that is in conformity with *dharma*, which itself is not separable from *Īśvara*, and you are connected to *Īśvara*. This makes you a *karma-yogī*—but only if you recognize *dharma* as *Īśvara*. An atheist can be an ethical person but not necessarily a *yogī*, because being a *karma-yogī* means recognizing *Īśvara*. There is no other type of *karma-yoga*.

There can be a purely secular ethical person. We see many people who have no religious belief but are above all blemish in their conduct. Then again, a religious person can be ethical, but not a *yogī*. If his *karma* is not performed for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, or if he does not recognize *dharma* as *Īśvara*, he can only be a clean person who is free from conflicts. He is not a *yogī*. Therefore, it is clear that to be a *karma-yogī*, one must necessarily recognize *dharma* as *Īśvara*, as it is presented here *Yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānāṃ yena sarvamidam tataṃ, svakarmanā tamabhyarcya siddhiṃ, vindati mānavaḥ*—from whom is the creation of all beings, by whom all this is pervaded, by worshipping him through one's own duty one gains success.' In order to worship that *Īśvara* you do not need to do a particular *karma*, even though a particular *karma* brings about a conversion of an occasional devotee into an abiding devotee. But this special *karma* alone is not worship. Every time you conform to *dharma*, recognizing *dharma* as *Īśvara*, there is worship. Performing this worship, a person gains success, *siddhi*, in terms of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, and therefore, qualification for the knowledge of *ātmā*, which is the success or fulfilment of a human life.

In the context of the description of the duties of the *varṇas*, these are the *karmas* that are to be done. But all the prescribed duties of the four *varṇas* have to be performed with the right attitude. Without that, the performing of duty does not become *yoga*; it only leads to heaven, *svarga*.

Therefore,

ॐ ईशं वाचमसि ॥ इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायां अष्टमोऽध्यायः ॥ १४ ॥

*śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt
svabhāvanīyatam karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam*

Verse 47

É´EMÉ& viguṇaḥ — devoid of merit; °ÉVÉ´EQ svadharmāḥ — one's own duty; °ÉXÉCÖÉÉiÉÁ svanuṣṭhitāt — well done; {ÉVÉ´ÉÉÉÁ paradharmāt — duty of another (person); ÉÁÉÉÉÁ śreyān — is better; °ÉÉÉÉ´É-ÉXÉ´ÉiÉ´ÉÁ EÖ´ÉÉ svabhāva-nīyatam karma — action enjoined according to one's nature; EÖ´ÉÉÁ kurvan — doing; XÉ´ +ÉÉÉÉÉÉ na āpnoti — one does not gain; ÉEÖ´+É´É´ÉÁ kilbiṣam — fault

One's own duty, devoid of merit, is better than the duty of another, well-done. Doing action enjoined according to one's nature, one does not incur fault.

DOING ONE'S OWN DUTY IS BETTER THAN THE DUTY OF ANOTHER

If you understand duty in terms of a universal order, then *Gītā* has a scriptural value. Otherwise, *Gītā* would only be applicable to a particular group of people at a particular time and place and lose its status of being a scripture. In order to be considered a scripture, a text must have a universal message. The context can be cultural or topical, but its spirit must definitely be universal, because a scripture has to address not one group of people, but all human beings throughout the history of humanity. The *Gītā* here says, *mānava*, a human being, not *vaidika*, a Vedic person, because it is talking about facts, which do not change as the times change, or the society differs. If I¹ speak, keeping the human being in view, and the people in front of me happen to be Indian or a Chinese, naturally, that will condition the character of my talk, but not the content. In addressing the Chinese, I may say certain things that are relevant in China. There are topical issues at any given time and place in history which are pertinent to the people being addressed, and they will naturally form part of the discourse. The Bible, for instance, is a scripture because even when it is clearly addressing the fishermen it keeps people in general in view. In addressing the problems of the fishermen in the context familiar to them, it addresses the wider human problems. That is what makes it a scripture. Even though the form in which it is received can vary, the content of a scriptural message does not change in different situations and at different times.

Here, the context *varṇāśrama* is taken into account. One's own duty, *svadharma*, is determined by the societal group into which one is born, *varṇa*, and the particular stage of life, *āśrama*, that one is at. Whether one is a student, *brahmacārī*, or a married person, *gṛhastha*, or preparing for renunciation, *vānaprastha*, or a renunciate, *sannyāsī*, or a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, or *śūdra*, determines exactly what the duty of a given person will be at a given time. That is *svadharma*. The whole system is

¹Swamiiji

visualized for the purpose of one's inner growth, and it has prominence in the *Gītā* because *Gītā* is nothing but a *smṛti-grantha*, which visualizes the end, *mokṣa*—in keeping with what is said in the *śruti*—not as a thing to be accomplished later, but as something which is the very nature, *svarūpa*, of oneself. Keeping that end in view, the Veda must present a way of life that will help to accomplish it.

The Veda says all this for one's growth alone. If I talk about *mokṣa* to a person who is interested only in *arthas* and *kāmas*, securities, and pleasures and not ready for *mokṣa*, he will sympathise with me thinking I have missed out on life. So you have to be ready, and understand that, the Veda says that even though you go for security, *artha*, and pleasure, *kāma*, you should not give up *dharma*. In adhering to *dharma*, you will learn to yield a lot because likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*, have to be thrown into the background when duties have to be done. What is prohibited, *niṣiddha-karma*, has to be avoided and what is enjoined, *vihiṭa-karma*, has to be done. One may even do *kāmya-karma*, but not at the cost of *dharma*. This is the first lap of a human journey. Next, the Veda and the *Gītā* tell us that this is all useless, *yathā iha karmacito lokaḥ kṣīyate tathā amutra puṇya-cito lokaḥ kṣīyate*. Even though a person may have been performing rituals for limited ends, he would have been repeating the *upaniṣad-mantras*, which would give him some vague knowledge of *mokṣa*, and also, *Īśvara's* grace. That will bless him with *viveka*, discrimination, after which the inquiry really starts.

INQUIRY INTO THE ULTIMATE HUMAN END

What is the inquiry? The fundamental inquiry is into what exactly one wants in life, *puruṣārtha-vicāra*. Even if a person discerns that he wants liberation, *mokṣa*, we have to look into what he means by liberation. For some it amounts to a desire to go to heaven. It may not even be a well-thought out positive desire for heaven as the end in life, but more a fear of going to hell, as it is presented to him. Even that has to be inquired into. What is this hell they are talking about? Even though it is a belief, it has to be reasonable. Hell means painful experience as heaven means pleasant experience. Both are finite, and, being experience, cannot possibly be eternal. This is called *puruṣārtha-vicāra*. Once a person understands that he cannot do anything to gain the eternal, his way of life changes. Until now, all his energy and time have been invested in the pursuit of *artha*, *kāma*, and *dharma*, or *puṇya*. Now everything is turned toward *mokṣa*, because he has learned from analysing his experiences and the experiences of others that no experience is going to help him. Many people do not learn even from their own experiences. This is another wonder. Even though all his predecessors have passed away, and the fellow knows very well that he is standing in the queue, still, he cannot think that he is also going to pass away. This is the greatest wonder. This is the power of *māyā*. When a person sees through all that, naturally, whatever time he has is going to be invested in *mokṣa*. He has not sacrificed anything; he has just dropped what is not useful

to him. What you do not have value for, is not 'given up' by you. You can talk about giving up if you give up something for which you have a value. But what can you say about parting with your garbage? If you have a value for *mokṣa*, what do you give up? Nothing!

PURSUIT OF MOKṢA IS NOT SELFISH

Once you take to this pursuit, there are those who will say that you are self-centred. In fact, the *śāstra* asks you to be centred on the self. Everybody is self-centred, and anyone who says he is not, has not understood the nature of his own pursuits. Typically, a person who does charitable work will say that he is not self-centred, that he is helping others. I would ask him, 'Who are you to help others? So many people are necessary to keep you going. How many people have to work in the field of agriculture so that you can have bread today? You are kept alive because of hundreds of forces. Who is working for whom? So many people are working for you and you say you are doing some charity.' If a person or society allows you to do some charity, that is the greatest charity. Everybody wants to be on the giving end; nobody wants to be the recipient of anybody's charity. It is against human dignity. Therefore, if somebody receives from you, you must be blessed. Though the one who receives is obviously blessed, the one who gives is more blessed because he is able to give. That is the nature of charity.

Further, why does one do a charitable action? If you say you cannot be happy in the face of the suffering of another, then you help that person, so that you can be happy. That is very natural. You are part of the whole, and if there is some suffering there, you cannot be at ease, and so you try to do something about it. How is that selfless? It is all for your own sake, for your own growth and peace of mind. There is nothing wrong with that. I just want to make it clear that there is no such thing as selfless service; there is only self-service. It may be a community self, or a national self or a religious self but every action, including a charitable action is self-centred. In the pursuit of *mokṣa*, however, all one's attention, time, and resources are invested in one's own self-redemption. This is the greatest service you can do for society because once you are free, you are no longer a problem to anyone. Positively speaking, you become a refuge for others, and just by knowing you they can at least discover the hope of freedom. That is a great service.

To gain the necessary qualifications for this freedom, a life of *karma-yoga* is enjoined whereby you become free from the hold of likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*. Please note that I¹ do not say you should be free from *rāga-dveṣas*, because I do not consider that there was ever anybody who was ever free from *rāga-dveṣas*. Even Lord *Kṛṣṇa* picked up only a flute, not a guitar. He had his own likes and dislikes, as did

¹Swamiḥi

Śaṅkara, *Vasiṣṭha* or *Vāmadeva*. Nobody is free from *rāga-dveṣas*. They can be simple *vibhūti*s, glories, for you, or they can bind you. Whenever *śāstra* talks about *rāga-dveṣas*, it is not talking about your non-binding likes and dislikes. Though *Kṛṣṇa* had a preference for playing the flute, it was not a *rāga*, because if the flute were not to be available, he would not sit and cry. That means he had a non-binding liking for the flute. This is what we must understand. How can likes and dislikes bind? If a liking is not fulfilled, and frustration, depression, regret, or anger sets in, it is a binding like. The preparedness of mind that we talk about is purely psychological, and psychological conditions are arrived at purely cognitively. The mind requires an appropriate attitude, which is the outcome of a cognitive appreciation of certain facts. If you understand clearly the nature and connection of *karma* and its result, *karma-phala*, that is a cognitive appreciation, and because of that understanding, there is a certain attitude. Attitude is, after all, emotion; and an adjustment in attitude, born of your cognitive appreciation of certain facts, is the method through which you grow up. The attitude is the symptom of your inner growth.

Suppose you suddenly come across a situation, which is not very pleasant. You cannot trace your course of action to the outcome you are facing, and so it comes to you as a great surprise. Or, it may be very pleasant, but definitely sudden. How are you going to deal with it? If you do not get elated or depressed, *na abhinandati na dveṣti*, you should appreciate the fact that you have made it; you are prepared. We can be sure that a person is not in the hands of *rāga-dveṣas* when he does not seem to be bothered by any experience; it only makes him wiser. That person keeps moving, greeting each day afresh so that his whole life is a series of events unfolding for him. That is all life is. Events just keep unfolding one after the other with each tick of the clock, each one different from all the others. What are you going to do? Are you going to be here to meet the new event, or are you going to be buried in the past? Usually we are either in the cremation ground of the past, or still in the womb, unborn. New events keep coming, and I have to be alert to receive the message each one carries with it. If there is a person who can do that, he has made it! Where is binding *rāga-dveṣa* for such a person? He can sport a few more.

Thus, when the *śāstra* talks about *rāga-dveṣas*, it is referring purely to those that are binding. This is important to understand, otherwise, we will be working for something, which is not possible, and illegitimately thinking that because we have *rāga-dveṣas*, we have no knowledge, *jñāna*. We are talking about *mokṣa*, freedom—from trying to be somebody.

A lot of people will say ‘Be yourself.’ But how can I be myself when the self is not acceptable to me? The self must be acceptable and that is where *Vedānta* comes in to show us that the self is absolutely acceptable. It is not simply validation of your problems, even though validation is very important in being fit for this knowledge. If you validate your problems, you understand that neither you nor anybody else has

special problems; it is simply a situation of one plus one being two. Certain situations produce certain other psychological situations. Once you have validated yourself, you are ready for the journey, and this self-validation is gained by *karma-yoga*. Now, in this, which *karma* is better? Sweeping the floor? Cooking a meal? There are a hundred different things to do; I would like to know which one is better. None. What is better is for our attitude to grow, to understand the concept of duty, to see how beautiful it is. Once duty as a system is available, we are safe, because there is no better system for growth. But humanity must be mature to accept that. An emotionally childish society cannot even understand what this is. It will see only disparity, control, etc. In fact, this is the greatest system if humanity is enlightened enough to appreciate it. There are different types of work, none of which is superior to another. People have different skills, and we require different things to be done, so different people do different things. This is very well defined in a *varṇa-āśrama* structure, but even if it is not there, duty becomes highly visible at any place, at any time. It does not even have to be told. That is what is being said here.

IF OUR AIM IS INNER GROWTH SVADHARMA IS THE BEST MEANS

If my aim is growth, then my own duty is the best, *svadharmah śreyān*. But if my aim is to accomplish something else, I have to look for things like where the power is, which profession is better, what type of education I must have, etc. It starts from fifth grade onwards. If the vision is in anything other than one's own growth, the *varṇa-āśrama* system will not work. That is why it began to break down when people drifted away from the Vedic vision of life that keeps *mokṣa* as the end in view. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* specifically mentions seeing the purpose of seeing the reality, *tattva-jñāna-arthadarśana*, as a value. You should not lose sight of *mokṣa* as the end, because if this is kept in view, everything will fall in order. If it is shifted, then in its place comes a search for security, *artha*, and pleasure, *kāma*, and this system will fall apart, because it is only suitable for inner growth with *mokṣa* as the aim. Once that is recognized, any job is a good job and anything you do is not binding. You do not look down upon another job, nor do you think some job is superior to the others. You may like one job more than the other according to your disposition. That is natural. But to think that something is worse or better, and choose on that basis will not help. It never works. If you operate purely according to choice and choose only what you like, and if you do not get what you like, what will you do? It is better to like what you do than to always look for something that you like. Even if you find something you like, it will not take much time for you to find it monotonous and begin to look for something else. This goes on and on.

SVADHARMA EVEN WITHOUT MERIT IS BETTER THAN PARADHARMA DONE WELL

When it is a question of inner growth, one's own duty not so well done is better than the duty of another that is done well—*śreyān svadharmo viguṇah paradharmāt*

svanuṣṭhitāt. Śaṅkara notes that we have to add the word even, *api*, here, so that even if one's duty is not well done, it is better than doing the duty of somebody else well. The word *viguṇaḥ* can also be understood as something, which is not pleasant. Even if your duty is not liked by you, or not very remunerative or respected, it is better than the duty of another, which is well performed. It is interesting that he uses the word *śreyān* here, which has the meaning of exceedingly praiseworthy, *atiśayena praśastaḥ*.

How is it better? Doing one's own duty is even psychologically very important, because in the *varṇa-āśrama* system especially, one's *dharma* is determined by one's disposition, *svabhāva-niyataṃ karma*. According to the proportion of *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas*, which partially accounts for one's psychological make-up, certain *karma* was mentioned by the *śāstra*. Doing that, one does not incur any fault, *kurvan na āpnoti kilbiṣam*. The idea is that when one does one's own duty, there is no conflict or further problem. This can be a good basis for the healthy psychology of a human being and here, it is part of the means of preparation for the knowledge that you are the whole. What is enjoined according to one's own disposition is called *svabhāva-niyataṃ karma*. Doing the duty that is enjoined according to one's disposition, one does not gather any kind of impurity, *na āpnoti kilbiṣam*, because in expressing oneself according to the composition of one's *guṇas*, one has no conflict. This is a psychological truth. When you go against your natural disposition, you are trying to do something, which is not true to yourself, and therefore, it creates conflicts and does not help with your inner growth.

ONE WHO ACTS ACCORDING TO HIS SVABHĀVA DOES NOT INCUR FAULT

Further, impurity, *kilbiṣam*, in the context of *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*, is not merely conflict but *pāpa* because if you are not doing your prescribed duty, you are transgressing *dharma*. Since this follows the discussion about *karma* that is born of one's nature, *svabhāvaja*, it cannot be anything but a natural expression of one's own *guṇa* composition. If one's *karma* is chosen according to one's disposition, one avoids conflicts, and *sattva* becomes more predominant as the mind, free from conflicts, becomes tranquil. All these qualities of a matured mind that we talk about, like *śama* and *dama*, will be there if a person follows what is enjoined for him according to his disposition. However difficult or easy it is, he does it. Suppose a *brāhmaṇa*, who is supposed to do, Vedic chanting, decides that it is too boring, and wanting some challenge, joins the army. His natural disposition being what it is, he cannot be a good soldier, nor can he be a good *brāhmaṇa*, when he is in the army, so it is a problem. Whether there is a system that prescribes a duty, or duty is determined by disposition, we have to understand that this is all for the purpose of inner growth. The mind is given to tranquillity and it can also be restless, etc., and therefore, there is a certain process of growth involved for our mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa*.

Just as there is a physical maturity for the body, and an intellectual maturity for the mind, there is also an emotional maturity for the mind. The mind has to grow, not only in

terms of knowledge, but also in terms of its capacity to properly interpret and respond to different situations. It is very clear that the growth of the mind is not just in terms of information. The preceding generations did not have the information we have, yet they seemed to understand certain facts which one has to know: What is right living, what is wrong living, how to face situations, etc. That has always been the same for Stone-Age Man as well as Modern Man. If the modern man's computer does not work, he gets upset. When the Stone-Age Man's stone tool broke, he also had a mind to deal with. The problem is the same. You have to deal with the mind and any amount of information does not really alter the situation. Whether we have more information or less information, life has to be lived, and that means you have to face your mind. Emotion has to be mastered which involves growth, in so far as your emotional life and understanding are concerned.

There are two types of mental growth: one is cognitive and one is therapeutic. The maturity that you can gain cognitively is what the *Gītā* talks about and therapeutic growth is gained through your life experiences, primarily your interactions with people. All you have to do is marry and have a couple of children. This is what our forefathers did and it was good enough for them. Anyone who has done it knows that to live with another person all your lifetime is not easy. Necessarily you will grow.

Once the mind has matured, all you require is *pramāṇa*, nothing else. So, the whole life is for shaping the mind. Suppose you have to study calculus, how many years do you have to prepare for it? Many. Here you have to understand 'I am infinite.' If it takes some time to prepare yourself for that, it is understandable and it doesn't matter; it is worth it. The whole effort on one's part is the preparation of the mind; then all one needs is the *pramāṇa*, the means of knowledge to understand *tat tvam asi*. That understanding does not take time; it is the preparation that takes time, and because the *Gītā* shows us how to take care of that, it is a *yoga-śāstra*.

SAṆKARA'S INTRODUCTION TO THE NEXT VERSE

Introducing the next verse, *Śaṅkara* illustrates with an example the statement that when one does the *karma* that is enjoined according to one's nature, *svabhāva-niyatam*, one does not incur any fault. He says it is like the situation where a worm that is born of a poisonous worm is not harmed by that poison. The poison of the worm is harmful for all of us, but not for the worm itself or its offspring. Similarly, even though your own *dharma* may be ill performed, it will not destroy you, but doing the *dharma* of others will. By doing exactly what is in keeping with your disposition, you do not create any conflict for yourself and you quickly grow out of *rāga-dveṣas*. Therefore, a change of duty is not necessary in order to grow. It may be necessary if you want to earn more, or gain some power, etc., but not to grow emotionally and spiritually. *Karma-yoga*, doing one's duty with the proper attitude, is all that is required. Seeing one's *dharma* as

something that is to be done and looking upon *dharma* itself as *Īśvara*, a person gains success, *siddhiṃ vindati mānavah*, as it was said before.

Giving up *karma* is not an option—either for the enlightened, *jñānī*, or the ignorant. It is not possible for the ignorant person to give up *karma*, and the *jñānī* does not give up *karma* physically, but, by knowledge he gives up his notion of agency, *kartṛtva*. Even a *jñānī*, if he becomes a *sannyāsī*, has to go for *bhikṣā*, which is a *karma*. Nobody can physically give up all *karma*, but we can say that a *jñānī* does not perform *karma* because he does not look upon himself as a doer. That is the real renunciation. Giving up obligatory *karma* is an option as a lifestyle, the other choice being a life of *karma-yoga*, but there is no possibility of totally giving up *karma* for anyone. Therefore, it is better to continue to do the actions that are natural, *svabhāva-niyataṃ karma*. In that way, one does not incur any fault.

Therefore, *Bhagavān* says,

°É/ANÉ'ÉÁ EÖ'ÉÇ EÖRÍÉÁÉ °ÉnÁÁÉ'ÉÉÉ xÉ i°ÉVÉÁÁÁ
°É'ÉÉÇ;ÉÉ É/Á nÁÁÉnÉ VÉUÉÁÉnMÉÉ°ÉÉ'ÉÉÉ: 118211

*sahajaṃ karma kaunteya sadoṣamapi na tyajet
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenā gnirivāvṛtāḥ*

Verse 48

°É/ANÉ'ÉÁ EÖ'ÉÇ *sahajaṃ karma* — the *karma* that is natural (according to your birth);
EÖRÍÉÁÉ *kaunteya* — O! Son of *Kuntī*, (*Arjuna*); °ÉnÁÁÉ'ÉÁ +ÉÉÉ *sadoṣam api* — even
though defective; xÉ i°ÉVÉÁÁÁ *na tyajet* — one should not give up; °É'ÉÉÇ;ÉÉÉ É/Á
sarvārambhāḥ hi — because all undertakings; +É'ÉÉÉÉ *āvṛtāḥ* — are covered; nÁÁÉnÉ
doṣeṇa — with fault; +ÉnÉ <É *agniḥ iva* — like fire; VÉUÉÁÉ *dhūmena* — with smoke

The *karma* that is natural (according to your birth), O! *Arjuna*, though defective, one should not give up, because all undertakings are covered with fault, like fire (is covered) with smoke.

ALL UNDERTAKINGS ARE INHERENTLY DEFECTIVE

The *karma* that is natural, *sahaja*, is the *karma* that you are born into. This is the same as the *svabhāvajam karma* that we saw earlier. Any *karma* that is a natural consequence of the situation, into which one is born, one should not give up. Why would one want to give it up? Every *karma* is inherently defective, *sadoṣam*, because it is within the three *guṇas* and therefore, perpetuates a life of becoming, *saṃsāra*. That is why it was said earlier, ‘The topics of the Vedas are born of the three *guṇas*, therefore, *Arjuna*, be free of what is born of the three *guṇas*—*traiguṇya-viṣayā vedāḥ*

*nīstraiguṇyo bhavārjuna.*¹ Everything in the world is within the three *guṇas*, including *karma*. And all *karmas* are defective because by doing them, one cannot possibly get *mokṣa*. However, even though the *karma*, into which one is born, *sahaja*, is necessarily fraught with this defect, *sadoṣam*, one should not give it up, *na tyajet*.

WHY DOES KARMA HAVE A DEFECT?

What is the defect? It produces a result. Either it is going to produce *puṇya* or *pāpa*, neither of which is a solution to the problem, for even *puṇya* creates situations, however pleasant, that have to be gone through and do not lead to release. *Puṇya* may be a golden shackle, but it is binding nevertheless. The idea is that even though *karma* binds, giving up one's *karma* does not give freedom from *karma*, *naiṣkarmya*. Whereas, it is only by giving up one's ignorance, is one liberated. On the other hand, by doing *karma*, or *svadharma*, with the proper attitude, one gains success—*svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ*. If you perform your *karma* as a worship to *Īśvara*, looking upon *Īśvara* as *dharma*, you get free of the hold of *rāga-dveṣas*, and therefore, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says here, do not give up the *karma* enjoined upon you by birth, *sahajaṃ karma na tyajet*, even though it is inherently defective, *sadoṣam api*. Things that are not to be done, of course you have to give up, but not what is to be done. If you give that up, you are not going to accomplish anything because you will do something else in its place, which is as defective as, if not more than, what you gave up. And you cannot completely give up *karma* because that is not possible, as we have seen. If you want to give up *karma* so that you can gain knowledge, well, gaining knowledge isn't dependent upon your giving up *karma* because, being knowledge, it is dependent only on a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, and has nothing to do with what you do or do not do.

You may choose a lifestyle that will give you more time to pursue knowledge, but it will be fruitless if you are not ready for it. In *sannyāsa* you reduce the number of roles you have to play from father, mother, husband or wife, son or daughter to only that of a student, *śiṣya*. But then, there is no socialising, no outlet and that can drive a person crazy if he is not ready. It may look very easy, but it is not, and it can even be dangerous. So let the *karma* incumbent upon you be done with the proper attitude and you can accomplish the same thing as can be achieved by *sannyāsa*. *Karma-yoga* also is not easy and, besides, it is unavoidable. Even the *sannyāsi* who takes to the lifestyle of *sannyāsa* prematurely has to have the attitude of a *karma-yogī*, with reference to the *śarīra-yātra-nimitta-karma* that he is still doing, if his *sannyāsa* is to be successful. Therefore, it is said here, 'One should not give up the *karma* one is born into even though it has defects—*sahajaṃ karma sadoṣam api na tyajet*.'

¹ *Gītā* – 2-45

WHY SHOULD ONE NOT GIVE UP SAHAJAṀ KARMA ?

Why is the *sahajaṃ karma* not to be given up? Because all *karmas*, *sarvārambhāḥ hi*, are covered with fault, *doṣeṇa āvṛtāḥ*, like fire is by smoke, *dhūmena agniḥ iva*. Any beginning is considered an action and therefore, the word *ārambha*, which means beginning, is a name for *karma*. As there is smoke for fire, similarly for every action there is defect, *doṣa*. Smoke is an apt example because it can be blown away. Further, those who are familiar with performing rituals can easily understand it. The ideal fire to receive oblations is a brightly burning smokeless flame. Now, some of the offerings, like milk, make everything damp and the fire begins to smoke and even brings tears to your eyes. But all you have to do is fan away the smoke and the fire will reappear. Similarly, by *karma-yoga*, you can get rid of the defect in *karma* that brings tears. Any result of the *karma* does not bother you because you have the proper attitude of glad acceptance, *prasāda-buddhi*, and in choosing an action you go by *dharma*, therefore avoiding conflicts. The choice of work is in keeping with your disposition, so what is to be done is going to be different from person to person at a given time, but conformity to the moral order, *dharma*, is the same whether you are cooking or sweeping. What I do is dictated either by *svabhāva*, disposition, or by sheer situation, which has nothing to do with my disposition. I may be disposed to music but if somebody needs to be taken to the hospital, my music has no place in the choice I make. What is to be done is obvious and has no bearing on my disposition. What is to be done one should not give up, *na tyajet*.

The inherent defect in *karma* can partially be got rid of by *karma-yoga* and then, *karma* can finally be given up totally by knowing that there is no *karma* at all, in reality. The only way to completely eliminate the smoke is to extinguish the fire by removing the fuel. Here, the fuel, which was supplied to the fire, is taken away purely by knowing that I am free from doership, *aham akartā*. The fuel here is ignorance, *avidyā*, of being a non-doer and once that is burnt in the fire of knowledge, its by-products, *kāma* and *karma*, are also burnt asunder. Since the fire of knowledge burns the *kartā*, agent, naturally all the *karmas* are burnt.

WHO SHOULD NOT GIVE UP SAHAJAṀ KARMA?

Who should not give up this *sahajaṃ karma*? The one who knows he is not the doer cannot give up this *karma* because he has already given up all *karma*, not by giving up any action, but purely by knowledge. This renunciation of all action is *mokṣa*. *Śaṅkara* concludes his small commentary on this verse saying that since *karma* cannot be given up totally by one who is ignorant, it is said here that one should not give up the *karma* that is his duty. The reason that the ignorant person should not give up *karma* is that it is not going to alter his situation. Giving up one type of action is only going to be followed by taking up another, which is equally defective, because any *karma* is defective.

A DISCUSSION AS TO WHY KARMA CANNOT BE GIVEN UP TOTALLY

At this point, Śaṅkara introduces a possible objection. The objector is an *ekadeśī*, someone who does not adhere to any particular school of thought. In our tradition there are a few schools of thought which are sparring partners for a *Vedāntin*. They try to raise consistent objections, and differ in this way from an *ekadeśī* who just raises a question, and once it is answered, offers no further response. But if someone has an alternative vision of what *ātmā* is, what reality is, what cause is, what effect is, then he will consistently argue and therefore, you will get a very effective dialogue leading to clarity of understanding. You must know that whenever there is an objection it is not to criticise, but purely to gain clarity.

WHY CANNOT ONE GIVE UP KARMA ?

IS IT BECAUSE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE OR BECAUSE IT IS DIFFICULT?

The following question is asked by the *ekadeśī*, ‘Is it said that one should not give up *karma* because it is impossible to give up *karma* totally or because there is fault in giving up the *karma* into which one is born?’ He wants to know if it is because of the fear of incurring *pāpa* that one should not give up *karma*, or because of the impossibility of giving up *karma*.

Śaṅkara responds to this question by asking, ‘What is accomplished by this question?’ and the *ekadeśī*, answers with the following argument. If it were to be said that one should not give up *sahajaṃ karma* because it is impossible to totally give up *karma*, then if one were somehow to do it, it would be very meritorious. His thinking is that the meaning of ‘it is impossible,’ is not that it is literally impossible to give up *karma* but very difficult, and thus, he takes it as a challenge. If it is difficult, the benefit must be very great, once it is accomplished, and therefore, he wants to try. This is the sort of thinking that impels a person to climb Mount Everest. Some people like to do difficult things. If you want some strenuous exercise, there are many things that you can do. Why should you climb Everest, which is fraught with danger? Some people basically love adventure and if you tell them something is difficult, that is exactly what they want to do. If giving up *karma* entirely is difficult, then giving it up must be a great accomplishment.

Someone else enters the discussion here saying that, it is true that there would be great merit in giving up *karma* entirely if it were very difficult to do, but the problem is, it is not possible. The expression, *na śakyate*—it is impossible, can be understood either literally, or figuratively, as very difficult. He maintains that when Śaṅkara said that it is impossible to give up *karma* entirely, he meant it literally, for the renunciation of *karma* in its entirety is not tenable. It does not take place. From this he wants to conclude that there is no *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, only *karma* to be done as long as one lives. He would back up his contention with quotes from *śruti* like the second verse of

Īśāvāsyopaniṣad. ‘Performing actions alone, here, one should desire to live one hundred years. For a person like you, there is no other way that *karma* does not cling—*kurvan eva iha karmāṇi jijīviṣet śataṃ samāh*, *evaṃ tvayi na anyathā itaḥ asti na karma lipyate nare*.’ Until the body falls you should do *karma*, but if you do only the *nitya-naimittika-karma*, *karma* does not really bind you because it does not produce any result for you. The first verse in this *Upaniṣad* is about *sannyāsa* and the second is for the ignorant who are enjoined to do *karma*. Reinterpreting the first verse, he takes the second verse literally and says that, there is no *sannyāsa* at all. In this discussion, he says that there is no *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* because total renunciation of *karma* is not possible.

THE TWO CONTENTIONS AS TO WHY KARMA CANNOT BE GIVEN UP TOTALLY—THE SĀṆKHYA’S AND THE BAUDDHA’S

If that is the argument, a question can be asked here. Is the impossibility of renunciation of action because the person, *ātmā*, is always undergoing change, *nityapracalitātmakaḥ puruṣaḥ*, like the *guṇas* of the *sāṅkhyas*? If there is no time when *ātmā* is not active, how are you going to give up actions? *Karma-tyāga* is possible only because the very nature of *ātmā* is opposed to change, which is invariable with reference to activity. As the *guṇas* of the *sāṅkhyas* keep changing, if *ātmā* is also always changing, then, one cannot give up action.

Or, perhaps one cannot give up action because the action itself is the doer, *kriyā eva kārakam*, as in the scheme of the five momentary categories of the Buddhists, *yathā bauddhānām pañcaskandhāḥ kṣaṇapradhvamśinaḥ*. There, the very action is the doer, not even part of the doer, and the self is the action because, according to the Buddhists, there is no *ātmā*, only the five categories through which the Buddhist describes the whole experience of yourself and the world. The first is, *rūpa-skandha*, the various forms that comprise the entire world that you see. What we experience sensorially is called *rūpa-skandha*, and that experienced form is the only truth about the world for the Buddhist. There is no other world but mere experience, called *rūpa-skandha*. Then you interpret the experience itself. When you recognize a given form as ‘This is a pot,’ and that recognition is in keeping with what you see, it is called *jñāna-skandha*, technically, *vedanā-skandha*. Then, as we have a category of forms, *rūpa-skandha*, similarly, there is a category of names for all the forms in the creation, called *saṃjñā-skandha*.

The form is what you experience, and for each one of these forms, there is a name. When I mention the word, ‘tree,’ you understand what object I refer to by that word. That is *saṃjñā-skandha*, the name or names you have for an object. A single object will have many words associated with it because it consists of many forms; a tree, for example, consists of bark, branches, leaves, and then again, a leaf, has chlorophyll,

cellulose, cell walls, etc. We have varieties of words for a single object and the more you know, the more words you have. A further category consists of a constant stream of flickers of consciousness, the *viññāna-skandha*, in which the other *skandhas* resolve. In this alone you have *rūpa-skandha*, *saṃjñā-skandha*, and the *vedanā-skandha*. Then there is the world of memory, called *vāsanā-skandha* or *saṃskāra-skandha*. All the impressions stored in memory form this *skandha*.

Where is *ātmā* in all of this? Now you understand why they say *ātmā* is *śūnya*. For the Buddhist, there are only these *skandhas*, all dependent upon the flow of consciousness and nothing more. The flow of consciousness, *viññāna-skandha*, itself is not *ātmā* because each flicker is only momentary. In this view, there is no *ātmā*; everything is merely appearance. So, what is the agent of action here? Since there is no *ātmā*, it is only the activity, *kriyā*, which itself is an important category. There is no doer apart from the action. The action itself is the doer, and the doer is the action without any separation between them. All these *skandhas* exist only for a fraction of a second and are dependent upon *viññāna*, the consciousness, which itself is a flicker. It is like a movie in which you are seeing a rapidly moving succession of frames, each one completely replacing the one before it. Similarly, the whole creation is a constant flux of the five *skandhas*, according to the Buddhists. If the very change is the *ātmā*, the doer, there is no way of giving up all *karma* because the agent, the *kartā*, does not exist. There is nobody there to give up.

In either case—whether agency is innate to *ātmā*, and therefore it cannot but perform action, or if the world consists of only the five *skandhas* and action itself is *ātmā*; and hence there is no agent—it is not possible for one to totally give up all *karmas*. But the *Gītā* talks repeatedly of giving up all action, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*. Later the Lord will say, ‘Giving up all action, take refuge in Me alone—*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja*.’¹ And we have seen earlier, ‘Mentally renouncing all actions neither acting nor causing to act—*sarva-karmāṇi manasā sannyasya ... naiva kurvan na kārayan*.’² Therefore, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* should be possible, and it is necessary also because if there is no possibility of giving up all *karma*, there is no *mokṣa*. In that case, these two contentions will not be valid, and thus, a third contention is put forward by the *Vaiśeṣikas*.

THE VAIŚEṢIKA'S CONTENTION

When something acts, it has action, it is *sakriya*, and when it does not act, it is free from action, it is *niṣkriya*. The same thing, when it does something, becomes *sakriya*, and when it does not do anything, becomes *niṣkriya*. This is what *ātmā* is according to the *Vaiśeṣikas*. It is a substance that has the potential of doing *karma*, but is not the

¹ *Gītā* – 18-66

² *Gītā* – 5-13

basis upon which the action takes place. A top for example is not doing any action when it is still, but it has the potential of being active. When you spin the top, it is *sakriya*, and when it stops spinning, it is *niṣkriya*. Similarly, *ātmā* is sometimes active and sometimes inactive, and since it is possible for the *ātmā* to be free from activity sometimes, then it is possible for it to be totally free from all activities. By some method with which you engage *ātmā* in activity, you can put this *ātmā* at rest. Thus, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* is possible for an *ātmā* conceived of in this way. It is not eternally active, like the *ātmā* of the first contention, the *Sāṅkhya*'s, nor is it non-existent, like the *ātmā* of the second contention, the *bauddha*'s. The thing that distinguishes this *ātmā* from the *ātmās* of both the earlier contentions is that it is active and also not active. In an existent thing, a substance called *ātmā*, an action that was not there before, arises, exists, and is destroyed. Previously, there was no action at all in the object and therefore, the action was non-existent, then the action arises, exists for some time, and finally ceases. Since the very action, which was brought into being, is destroyed, the substance in which the action occurs remains pure. While it has the potential for action, it is not the locus for the action.

REFUTATION OF THE VAIŚEŚIKA CONTENTION

WHAT THE VAIŚEŚIKA SAYS GOES AGAINST WHAT BHAGAVĀN SAYS

What is the problem with this? *Bhagavān* had said earlier that there is no existence for a non-existent thing, *nāsato vidyate bhāvaḥ*, nor is there non-existence for an existent thing, *nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*. But in this contention of the *Vaiśeṣikas*, there is both existence for the previously non-existent action, and non-existence for the once-existent action, contradicting what *Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa* has said, and therefore, against the vision of the *śruti* also. The first proposition is that an action that was non-existent is born. This is known as *asatkāryavāda*, the contention that an effect was non-existent before its creation. A pot, they will say, was totally non-existent prior to its creation from clay, and since the previously non-existent pot is brought into being, the pot is a real object. This logic is extended to the creation to conclude that the creation begins. After being born, it gains existence, and then is finally destroyed and disappears. Thus, the non-existent gains existence and the existent gains non-existence, which is exactly the reverse of what *Bhagavān* says, 'For the non-existent there is no existence and for the existent there is no non-existence—*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*.'¹

VAIŚEŚIKA'S REPLY

Our *Vaiśeṣika* responds to this by saying that even though it is against the vision of *Bhagavān*, it is reasonable. This is the response of someone who does not accept the

¹ *Gītā* – 2-16

words of *Kṛṣṇa* or *śruti* as *pramāṇa*, a means of knowledge, for knowing things, and relies purely on reasoning to determine the validity of any given thing. What is logical alone should be accepted, not what is illogical, even if it is the statement of *Bhagavān*. A believer will end the discussion by saying that what *Bhagavān* says is final, whether you understand it or not, and if you do not accept the words of *Bhagavān* as true, there can be no further discussion. *Śaṅkara* is not a believer of this kind. He is a teacher, *ācārya*, and a *jñāni* for whom *Bhagavān* and his vision are not two different things, and therefore, for him, this response has to be answered by pointing out the defect in it. What has been said here is against all our means of knowledge, *pramāṇa-viruddha*, against all our experience and reason. Though he claims his contention is reasonable, *Śaṅkara* shows how it is not.

BASIS OF THE VAIŚEṢIKA'S CONTENTION

According to the *Vaiśeṣika*, before the creation there were atomic particles, called *paramāṇus*, which combined in pairs to form *dvyāṇukas*, the building blocks of the creation. Prior to the arising of the *dvyāṇukas*, there is no creation, so the creation is looked upon as something that begins at a given time. The *dvyāṇuka* also is considered totally non-existent before the joining of two atoms into a pair, and thus, the non-existent *dvyāṇuka* also newly comes into being. Once it is created, it is existent for some time, and then again becomes non-existent. It has both a prior and a posterior non-existence, *prāgabhāva* and *pradhvaṃsābhāva*. When this is so, we have the non-existent becoming existent and the existent becoming non-existent. Since, everything is real for him, *satya*, what is not *satya* is what is non-existent.

The contention is that the non-existent assumes the status of being existent and then becomes non-existent again, when it is destroyed. Before its creation, it is non-existent, like a rabbit's horn and to bring it into being a cause is necessary. The *Vaiśeṣika* speaks of three kinds of causes, the *samavāyi-kāraṇa* or inherent cause, like the cotton for the thread and thread for the cloth, the *asamavāyi-kāraṇa*, or non-inherent cause like the *tantu-saṃyoga*, the coming together of the thread for the cloth, and the *nimitta* or efficient cause, like the weaver, loom, etc. Depending upon these various causes, a non-existent cloth, for example, becomes existent. The problem with this is as follows. Firstly, it is not tenable that a non-existent thing is born. And secondly, it cannot be said that, it has a cause, because no such thing is seen for non-existent things like a rabbit's horn. We do not ever see a rabbit's horn or the son of a childless woman coming into being, much less depending upon some causes. The concept of something non-existent becoming existent is completely contradicted by means of knowledge we have at our disposal.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE VAIŚEŚIKA VIEW

If you say that it is only the manifestation of an existent thing that is dependent on a cause, that is possible to understand. An existent thing, like a pot that is to be produced, comes into being depending upon some cause for its mere manifestation. Things such as a pot exist in an unmanifest condition even before their creation into given names and forms—their creation depending on causes only for the manifestation of name and form. This is something one can understand, but how can things that are totally non-existent come into being? What kind of causes will they require? This is something that we do not see happening and it is contradicted by every means of knowledge that we have.

Furthermore, if the non-existent becomes existent and the existent becomes non-existent, no one can have any certainty in transactions. We have a certain understanding of our means of knowledge and the object to be known and of cause-effect relationships in general, which we rely on and on the basis of which we conduct our affairs. When we use our means of knowledge, it is with the understanding that one thing is the cause and another the effect. If we perform a given action, it is with the knowledge that this particular action is invariably the cause for a given result under certain conditions. If I put my foot forward, I move forward, if I put it behind me, I move backward. All transactions are undertaken under the basic assumption that from an existent cause there is an existent effect. A new thing does not come into being from a non-existent thing. Only an existent gold becomes the chain; existent clay becomes a pot. Never does anything existent come from non-existence. If it did, there could never be any certainty about what exists and what does not exist. When we say that a pot exists, we all understand that it means that it does exist and when we say there is no rabbit horn, there is no rabbit horn; it is conclusive. But we can never have this kind of understanding if what we thought was non-existent suddenly appears, and what we think exists disappears! According to the *Vaiśeṣika* view, it would not be possible to have this certainty that what exists, exists, and what does not exist, does not. But we do have it, and therefore, this view is untenable.

Further, they say that because the diad, *dvyaṅka*, originates, it has a connection both to its cause and to its own existence. Before it arises it is non-existent. Then later, depending on the activity of its own cause, the non-existent *dvyaṅka* is connected to the *paramāṅus* and to existence through an inherent connection, which they call *samavāya-sambandha*. This is an invention of the *Vaiśeṣika* to try and establish a non-existent entity becoming existent, *asatkāryavāda*. They maintain that the cause and effect are two independent principles, but are seen together because of this connection. The important thing here is that the *samavāya-sambandha* establishes the connection of a non-existent thing to its cause, allowing it to come into being—as an effect. When it comes into being it is connected to its cause and before its birth also, it is connected to its cause by this *samavāya-sambandha*. The previously non-existent *dvyaṅka*, when it is born, becomes existent.

THE VEDĀNTĪ'S QUESTION TO THE VAIŚEŚIKA

Here we ask a question. How can a non-existent thing have an existent cause? An existent thing can only serve as a cause to another existent thing, for something that is non-existent cannot be connected in a cause-effect relationship to something existent. Further, how can a non-existent thing establish any connection with anything, whether it is its own cause or some effect? What kind of connection is the rabbit's horn going to establish with the rabbit? There is no possibility of a connection. Nor is it possible to imagine the connection of the son of a childless woman either to the woman or to a father.

THE VAIŚEŚIKA'S REPLY TO THE VEDĀNTĪ

To this the *Vaiśeṣikas* reply that we do not hold that a non-existent thing has a connection to its cause, but that substances, like *dvyāṇukas* have a connection, which is known as *samavāya*, to their own causes, the *paramāṇus*. We only say that the existent *dvyāṇuka* has connection to its cause, the *paramāṇu*.

THE VEDĀNTĪ OBJECTS AGAIN

But this is not tenable because, according to the *Vaiśeṣika*, the *dvyāṇuka* does not exist before its connection to the *paramāṇu*, its cause. It amounts to saying that after the pot is created it gets connected to the clay. The problem is that he does not accept the existence of the pot before its connection to its cause, which means that the pot came into being without clay. Before the creation of the pot, there is no connection at all between the clay and the pot, and after its creation, the pot gets connected to the clay. It is not difficult to see the absurdity of this. The existence of pot, or anything, before its connection to its cause is not tenable.

Further, the *Vaiśeṣika* does not accept that the pot exists before the activity of the potter, and the wheel, etc. Before the application of all these causes, it does not come into being. Nor does he accept that the clay alone assumes the form of a pot, that the clay alone is this effect called pot, and therefore, between the clay and the pot there is a connection. He does not accept that the pot has not really come from clay but is only a form of clay. If he does, it becomes *Vedānta*. The pot becomes purely apparent, not real; it is only a form with a function, but it is not separate from clay. This he does not accept. His contention is that a non-existent pot comes into being, and so, there is no other choice but that the non-existent pot before its creation has a connection with its cause, the clay. This is the only possible position he can take—that the non-existent thing is connected to its cause. That, as we have seen, is untenable because a thing that is non-existent cannot have a cause, much less a connection with that cause.

THE VAIŚEṢIKA'S REPLY TO THE VEDĀNTĪ

Here the *Vaiśeṣika* again argues that even though it is non-existent, still it can have an inherent connection, *samavāya-sambandha*, with its cause. *Śaṅkara* reminds him that such a thing is not seen for non-existent things like the son of a childless woman. Does he write letters to his mother? There is no connection at all between the non-existent son and the existent woman.

At this point, he argues that because the previously non-existent pot has a connection with its cause, while the childless woman's son does not, they are different types of non-existence.

THE VEDĀNTĪ'S OBJECTION—WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ONE NON-EXISTENCE AND THE OTHER?

Before the creation of the pot there was a non-existence of the pot, and similarly, there is a non-existence of the son of a childless woman. Both are non-existent. What is the difference between the non-existence of the pot and the non-existence of the son of a childless woman? If the prior non-existence of the pot establishes a connection to its cause, it must be something entirely different from the non-existence of the son of a childless woman, who is admitted by both to have no connection to anything. Because one non-existence has connection and the other does not, there must be some difference between these two non-existences.

Śaṅkara says that it is not possible for anyone to show a distinction among any of the conceivable non-existences. For example, there is no difference between the non-existence of one object and the non-existence of two objects or the non-existence of many objects. Similarly the prior non-existence, *prāgabhāva*, of an object is not different from the later non-existence, *pradhvaṃsābhāva*, of the same object. Similarly there is no way, mutual non-existence, *anyonyābhāva* or total non-existence, *atyantābhāva*, can be different from any other *abhāva*.¹ If one person doesn't have

¹ *Abhāva* means absence of something. Let us consider that we are talking about the absence of a pot, *ghaṭa*. It would be called *ghaṭa-abhāva*. We can talk of two types of *ghaṭa-abhāva*, namely, the *prāgabhāva* and the *pradhvaṃsābhāva*. The absence of the pot that is present before the creation of the pot is called *prāgabhāva*. And when this pot that has been created is destroyed, the absence of the pot that follows the destruction of the pot is called *pradhvaṃsābhāva*. Now when we talk of a pot, *ghaṭa*, there is absence of any other object in it, say for example, a piece of cloth, *paṭa*. Similarly there is absence of *ghaṭa* in a *paṭa*. Thus there is a mutual non-existence of *ghaṭa* and *paṭa* in each other. This *abhāva* is known as *anyonya-abhāva*, mutual non-existence. There is another kind of *abhāva*, and that is absolute non-existence, *atyanta-abhāva*, like the son of a woman, who never gave birth to a child, or like the 'horns of a rabbit.'

knowledge of Sanskrit and another person doesn't have the knowledge of Hindi, what is the difference between the non-existence of the knowledge of Sanskrit and the non-existence of the knowledge of Hindi? Thus, there can be no distinction between one or the other of the *abhāvas*. There is no difference whatsoever. If there is a difference, that non-existence becomes existent because it has features. Only then, can there be differences. But between non-existences, there cannot be any difference at all.

Another argument is advanced. Even though there is no distinction between the two, still, somehow only the prior non-existence of the pot, with the help of the potter, gains the status of being a pot. Then, after gaining the status of being an existent pot, it gets connected to its own existent cause. Once it is connected, it becomes eligible for transactions; that is, it can hold water, etc. Even though it has no distinction from any other non-existence, still it is somehow able to come into being. Then, the same pot, having miraculously achieved this existence from non-existence, once it is destroyed, has a later non-existence.

Before the pot was born, there was pot non-existence; when the pot is destroyed, there is pot non-existence. What is the difference between the prior pot non-existence, and the later pot non-existence? According to him, though both the prior and the later non-existence are non-existence, still, only the prior non-existence will be empirically useful, whereas, the later non-existence of the pot will never be useful. Once the pot is destroyed, the non-existence of it that follows has no eligibility for any empirical use. The prior non-existence, however, has the eligibility to become created, and to be useful. It can get related to its cause and be spoken of as created, whereas the later non-existence cannot. This is the difference. The distinction that is drawn here, however, is not tenable, because, as was pointed out, there are no features in non-existence through which we can establish any differences.

REFUTATION OF THE SĀṆKHYA'S VIEW

THE SĀṆKHYA'S VIEW

The *Sāṅkhyas* enter the discussion here saying that we do not say that, there is a coming into being for non-existence. We only say that an existent thing alone become existent. That is, a pot becomes a pot, cloth becomes cloth, and there is no creation at all.

THE VEDĀNTĪ'S OBJECTION TO THE SĀṆKHYA'S VIEW

This also contradicts our *pramāṇa*, means of knowledge. If a pot, for example, is already existent, it cannot become existent. Even the view that through a modification the clay becomes a pot, is not tenable. In this view, the substance undergoes a real modification, attracting a new attribute, which was not there before and is now added to the substance. To the existent clay, the new attribute called potness is added, and the creation of the pot takes place. When the created thing is destroyed, that attribute is

destroyed. In this view, the attribute, potness, is as real as the substance, clay. This is not really different from the view of the *Vaiśeṣika*, inasmuch as it accepts the coming into being and destruction of a previously non-existent property. We have to ask if this potness was existent before or non-existent? If it was non-existent, then we have the same problem of the existent coming from the non-existent, and we address it with the same arguments that were presented for the *Vaiśeṣika*. If, on the other hand, it is already existent, there is no creation.

Even accepting that it is a mere manifestation and disappearance, we have the same problems. Firstly, there is the manifestation of a new quality in a clay, which is the potness, then the disappearance of that quality. When it disappears, we call it destruction; when it appears, it is called creation. Even accepting the manifestation as well as disappearance of this new quality, we have to analyse whether it exists or not before the manifestation and after the destruction. Did this attribute, the potness, which arrived for the clay, exist before it manifested in the clay or not? If it did not exist, we have the problem of the non-existent coming into being. Then, when it disappears, we have the existent becoming non-existent. What is existent disappears and what was non-existent appears, which is against our experience, and against our knowledge gained by valid means, *pramāṇa*.

There are some people who say that the cause alone undergoes a change, assuming a different state to become the creation, so that creation is merely a new state of the cause. Then again, the same thing undergoes another change assuming a new state that is called destruction. The creation is one state of the cause and the destruction is another. Accepting that, we have to ask if the new state is real or unreal? For him it is real because the cause is real. Naturally, if the cause is real, the new state is also real. Accepting that the new state of the cause really arises, we ask whether before its creation, it was existent or non-existent and we have the same argument that we have just seen. In the beginning, it looks like a different argument, but when we analyse it, it is the same.

We have to remember that the discussion here is to understand the nature of *ātmā* and of *karma* in order to establish whether or not renunciation of all actions, and therefore, *mokṣa*, is possible.

VEDĀNTĪ'S VIEW

So far, we have seen that the existent cannot come from the non-existent, nor can it come from the existent. How shall we resolve this? When there is no other possibility, we have to find a way out by looking at the whole thing differently. By a process of elimination, we have made every possibility absurd so that now there is only one way out. The only possibility here is that what we call an existent thing, like a pot, is neither existent nor non-existent. It is not independently existent because it has no existence

apart from the clay, nor we can dismiss it as totally non-existent because it has a functional reality. It is something in between, which we call *mithyā*. This is the status of the whole creation. What is independently existent is real, *satya*, and what is dependent upon it is called *mithyā*. The only thing that does not depend on anything else, that is independently existent, is *ātmā*, yourself, and everything is dependent upon that. Though there is only one existent reality, due to ignorance, that same existent reality seems to be born, exist temporarily, and get destroyed, just as one clay seems to be born in the form of a pot, seems to exist for some time, and then seems to get destroyed.

I would like to know how and when the pot is created. You may call it a pot, but that pot, by itself, does not exist for me. If it has an independent existence apart from clay, then there is a necessity for me to prove when and how it is created. But when I say that the pot itself does not exist, where is the necessity for me to prove its creation? Looking at it from the standpoint of words, I have two different words, 'pot' and 'clay.' For clay, I have an object, but I do not see an object at all for the pot. In the place where you show me the pot, I find clay. Where is the pot? What is created? If an object, called pot, comes out of clay, I can say that a pot is created, but the clay does not undergo any change of state; clay continues to be clay.

In the same way, *ātmā* does not undergo any change to become a waker or dreamer or sleeper; it remains as the same consciousness, *sat-cit-ānanda*. Since there is no waking state for *ātmā*, it is purely because of ignorance, *avidyā*, that I say I am a waker, dreamer, or sleeper. All these conditions are superimposed upon *ātmā*, which, in fact, is neither a waker nor a dreamer nor a sleeper, nor an enjoyer of any other condition. All these superimposed concepts have to be negated because they are false.

Similarly, a pot is not something that is created, because, in reality, there is no such thing as a creation, the meaning of the word itself being as *mithyā* as the pot. To say that there is a creation called pot means that at a given time the pot was created. I would like to know when the pot was created. The pot was created when the clay was created, really speaking, because for the pot to exist, the clay must be there. Before the creation of the pot, was there a substance out of which the pot came or not? There was. When was the substance created? You can see that this line of questioning will get us into an infinite regress. Even if we analyse the status of the potter, we get into the same thing; it is beginningless. Only the argument begins, and that itself is because of ignorance, as are the creation and the destruction of the pot. There is really only one thing, which is imagined or talked about in many ways; from one standpoint it is creation, from another, it is destruction, as though something was created and something destroyed. That 'as though' is the crux of the whole thing.

Śaṅkara likens it to an actor. One single actor appears as a beggar, a king, and a soldier. He keeps on changing roles and costumes so that even though he is only one person, he appears as though many. Similarly, one *ātmā*, which is *Brahman*, appears as

though it is the cause, as though it is the effect, comprising of creation, sustenance, and destruction. All are the same *vastu* appearing in these many ways. This is the vision of *Bhagavān* in the verse, ‘There is no existence for the non-existent; there is no non-existence for the existent—*nāsato vidyate bhāvah, nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*.’¹ In our example, the pot does not have any existence of its own, and the clay has no real destruction.

What is *sat*, real, is never destroyed. Whether you say that the pot is, the chair is, the table is, the man is, the sun is, the moon is, or any given thing is, what is common is that ‘is-cognition—*sat-pratyaya*.’ Try to think of one moment when it is not there. When you say the pot is, it is there. When you say the pot is destroyed, it is still there adhering to the clay. Every cognition has these two components—the particular form, which varies, and the existence, which is constant. It never goes away. That existence is yourself, the consciousness that is seemingly qualified as a knower, knowledge, and a particular known thing, which we collectively call creation. When you have a cognition of a pot, that pot-knowledge can be replaced by flower-knowledge, but the knowledge, the consciousness, inheres no matter what form the cognition assumes. It is never displaced. Even if there is no particular cognition, as between two thoughts, consciousness remains. It is exactly like the clay and pot; when the pot is there, the clay is there; when the pot is in another form or is not there, the clay is still there. With reference to the pot, we call the clay the cause, and thus, the pot becomes an effect. Both because it is dependent on the clay for its existence and because it comes and goes, we call it *mithyā*. What does not come and go and is not subject to negation in any of the three periods of time, we call real, *satya*. Even time keeps going, moment by moment, and once gone, it is gone forever, never to return. Where does it go? It just resolves into *ātmā*. There is no such thing as the past or the future, either. They are just concepts, like time itself, which is an arbitrary mental construct. The very basis of time is not in any way going to be negated by the three conceptual modifications of that time.

The truth is, everything is only an appearance of one *vastu*, and therefore there is no cause or effect at all. If we provisionally allow that there is cause and effect, the reality of that cause is *satya* and of the effect is *mithyā*. The so-called cause is true and the effect, because it has no independent existence apart from its cause, is *mithyā*. Just try to think of one thing which is independent of another thing; that is only yourself. Now try to think of one thing that is independent of yourself. It is impossible, because whatever you may think of, you are there.

Thus, *Śaṅkara* establishes the changeless nature of *ātmā*, and dismisses the contention that *ātmā* is active when it performs action, and inactive when it does not.

¹ *Gītā* – 2-16

**AS ĀTMĀ IS AKARTĀ, RENUNCIATION OF ALL ACTIONS IS IMPOSSIBLE
WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF THIS FACT**

Now a question is raised. If *ātmā* does not undergo change to become an agent of an action, how can you say that total renunciation of action is not possible? No one can renounce a *karma*, which did not take place at all. When *ātmā* has not undergone any change to become an agent, what action can it do that it can renounce?

We do not renounce any action. The term renunciation of action is only used because you think you are the agent, *kartā*, and you think you are doing *karma*. When we say that one should renounce all *karmas*, we mean that one should discover the absence of agency, *akartṛtva*, in oneself. Renunciation of action, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, is purely knowledge, *jñāna*, because if *ātmā* is free from action, we do not need to renounce anything except the notion of being an agent, which can only be accomplished by knowledge of the real nature of the self.

Śaṅkara explains this in the following manner. Whether the *guṇas* are real, as the *sāṅkhya* maintains, or are superimposed on *ātmā* by *avidyā*, an action, *karma*, is nothing but the property of the *guṇas*. The *sattva-guṇa* and other *guṇas*, appearing in the form of desire, etc., express themselves in the form of action. If one does not know that they are superimposed on the action less self, due to ignorance, he cannot give up all *karma* even for a moment. It is possible, however, for the wise person, whose ignorance of the self has been negated by knowledge, to give up all *karmas*. Why? Even a trace of anything that is superimposed upon the self by *avidyā*, ignorance, cannot remain when that ignorance is gone.

Suppose you see a snake on a rope, not knowing it is a rope. Once the ignorance of the rope is gone, no trace of the snake is left behind. You cannot say that your ignorance is gone, and at the same time, some superimposition remains, because the nature of superimposition is such that it vanishes once ignorance is gone. Similarly, once the ignorance of the action less nature of the self is gone, there can be no remaining *karma*, it being a superimposition due to ignorance.

Śaṅkara gives an example. Suppose, even though there is only one moon, you see two, because your eye has cataract. After the cataract is removed, there is no part of the second moon remaining because the cataract was the cause for seeing the second moon. Once the cause is removed, there is no trace of its effect. Similarly, when the ignorance of the self as being action less is removed, there is no remaining *karma* for the self. When this is seen, the following words of *Bhagavān* are meaningful. ‘Giving up all actions with his mind, the one who is the indweller of the body, the one who has mastery, remains seated happily in the nine-gated city, neither acting nor causing to act—*sarva-karmāṇi manasā sannyasya āste sukhaṃ vaśī, nava-dvāre pure dehī*

*naiva kurvan na kārayan.*¹ Here, the expression, ‘with the mind’ means ‘by knowledge.’ A *jñānī*, giving up all *karmas* by the knowledge that *ātmā* is not a doer, *akartā*, is completely relaxed, neither doing any action nor ordering anyone else to do something. He does not even ask the mind to do anything, but is simply the *anumantā*, the one who blesses whatever happens in the mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa*. Without *ātmā* there is no mind, no thinking, but the self does not think; it always remains as a pure presence because of which everything takes place. The one who knows this performs no action; and hence, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* is possible for him.

THE STATEMENT THAT ONE GAINS SUCCESS BY PERFORMING ONE’S DUTY IS NOT CONTRADICTIONARY

Other seemingly contradictory statements are also understandable in this light. Consider the following; *śve sve karmaṇi abhirataḥ saṃsiddhiṃ labhate naraḥ*—delighting in his own *karma*, a person gains success,² and, *śva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ*—worshipping him with his own *karma*, a person gains success.³ If one does not know the self as actionlessness, and has superimposed upon himself the notion of doership, he can choose to be a *karma-yogī*, and by doing what is to be done by him at a given time and place, with a proper attitude, gain freedom from conflicts and release from the hold of likes and dislikes. Thereby, he gains a mind that is prepared to understand that *ātmā* is *akartā*, free from actions. Both types of statements make sense. One talks about *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* which is knowledge, *jñāna*, and the other, about *karma-yoga* which is also for knowledge, but looks at *karma* from the standpoint of the one who is self-ignorant. Worshipping the Lord by doing what is to be done, one gains success, *siddhi*, in terms of preparedness of the mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, leading to knowledge.

Now we can understand why Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says that even though it implies a lot of effort and is inherently defective, *sadoṣam api*, one should not give up, *na tyajet*, one’s own duty, *sahajaṃ karma*. This is said from the standpoint of ignorance, in which any *karma* is defective, *sadoṣam*, because it cannot release you from *karma*. If you change from one set of duties to another, you have not improved your situation, because, whatever your subjective evaluation may be, one set of duties is not in any way inferior or superior to another. Both are *karma*; one is in the form of the three *guṇas*, *triguṇātmaka*, and the other is also *triguṇātmaka*; one is finite, and the other is also finite; one can produce *saṃsāra*, and the other also can produce *saṃsāra*. If you stay where you are, doing what is to be done with a proper attitude, and thus, get yourself free from likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*, you can gain *mokṣa*. This is the contention of this particular verse.

¹ *Gītā* – 5-13

² *Gītā* – 18-45

³ *Gītā* – 18-46

The discussion we have just seen is necessary to deal with the question of whether *sarva-karma-sannyāsa* is possible or not. We see that it is possible because, by nature, *ātmā* is free from all *karma*, and therefore, by knowing this, one is free from all *karma*. It is important to understand that you do not become free from all *karma*, because you have always been free from *karma*. Before you were a *sarva-karma-sannyāsi*, and now also, you are a *sarva-karma-sannyāsi*; but you did not know it before, and you know now. This is the difference between the previous condition of bondage and the present one of freedom. Both are only for the one who has the problem, not for *ātmā*. It looks as though *ātmā* has the conditions of freedom and bondage, but in fact, both are superimposed upon it due to ignorance. From this we can understand that *mokṣa* is not a state. If it was, you would lose it, and a freedom that is gained and lost cannot be considered a real freedom. Due to ignorance, I have the particular notion that I am bound, and when that notion gets resolved, we call it *mokṣa*, but only from the standpoint of the prior notional bondage. Thus, it is clear that the nature of *mokṣa*, which is freedom from all *karma*, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, is not different from the nature of *ātmā*.

THE IMMEDIATE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF KARMAYOGA IS A PREPAREDNESS LEADING ULTIMATELY TO JÑĀNANIṢṬHĀ

The accomplishment resulting from a life of *karma-yoga* is characterised as a preparedness for abiding knowledge of the nature of the self. When daily activities are done with an attitude, which converts every action into *yoga*, a means for self-purification, the mind undergoes a change. This changed condition of the mind is what is called preparedness, the eligibility for abiding knowledge, or for a commitment to knowledge of the self, *jñāna-niṣṭhā-yogyatā*. Any ultimate aim in a given pursuit is called *niṣṭhā*, so a *niṣṭhā* in knowledge of *ātmā* means a knowledge of the self, which has gone as far as it can go; it does not leave anything to be desired. A knowledge of the self, which is free from vagueness, free from error or doubt, is what is called a *jñāna-niṣṭhā*.

This particular compound, *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, has been confusing for many who have misunderstood this word and other statements that, you must first gain knowledge of the self, and then, afterwards, gain experience of it. They create a division between knowledge and experience. But experience in this instance is not wanting, for experience is the nature of yourself. All experiences are strung together in the experience of yourself. You are a conscious person, and that consciousness that obtains in you as yourself is called ‘experience,’ *anubhūti* or *anubhava*, which is always present as the self-evident ‘I’ in all forms of experience. Therefore, it is not to be experienced; it is to be understood. There is no question of first gaining knowledge and then later converting it into experience, because knowledge is final. Lack of experience of myself is not the problem here. I can only lack experience of what I do not have, and ‘I am’ is experienced

all the time. What I lack is only recognition of what the self is. If that self is mistaken for anything other than what it is, then the resolution of the mistake means correcting the error about myself. It is knowledge.

The eligibility for this knowledge is what is accomplished by *karma-yoga*, which accounts for complete freedom from the hold of my own likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*. The whole *Gītā* deals with the psychology of a person in terms of likes and dislikes, as we have seen. As long as I am in their hands, I will have problems in gaining *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, and therefore, management of the *rāga-dveṣas* is the preparedness that is essential for this knowledge. The final result of a life of *karma-yoga* is this knowledge, but the *karma-yoga* itself does not produce knowledge. This is true of any knowledge. You cannot gain it just because you are prepared; you have to adequately employ the appropriate means of knowledge. The knowledge thus gained has its own result, and that is going to be told here. But one thing I would like you to know here is that whether you gain knowledge or not, the result of *karma-yoga* itself is desirable. With reference to the knowledge it is called preparedness, but the immediate result of *karma-yoga* is desirable in its own right because if I can manage my likes and dislikes, I have more or less made a success of my life.

WHAT IS REAL SUCCESS IN ONE'S LIFE?

After all, what is success? If it is being able to fulfil my likes and dislikes, I am bound for failure because it is not possible to fulfil all of them. In their non-fulfilment, I am going to feel wanting and become critical of myself, judging myself as a failure. As long as one has self-criticism, no matter what one accomplishes, no matter what laurels, titles and great prizes one receives at the hands of humanity, one will not feel good about oneself. You will only feel that people are being charitable; had they known you, they would have withdrawn all of them. Such is your opinion about yourself. Even if one is not self-critical, while accomplishments can create a certain sense of self-worth, it can never be total because there is no end to the things you can accomplish or the improvements you can bring to any accomplishment. Any discipline of knowledge you have only opens up wider and wider areas of ignorance as you delve into it more deeply. No matter how much knowledge you have, you can never feel great about yourself from the standpoint of what you know. Mere accomplishment in terms of skill, knowledge, money, power, etc., does not really create your self-worth. Nor do you require self-worth, as long as you do not criticise yourself, because the self is already worthy.

As long as you do not criticise yourself you are safe, very safe. When we are self-critical we want to develop self-worth to counteract that, but with the background of self-criticism, no pursuit is going to be fruitful. Self-examination is quite a different thing, which is desirable and even necessary, to interact appropriately with the world. That is entirely different from being critical of yourself all the time. Everybody has this

habitual self-criticism, and if you take care of that, you will be mature; because handling the inner critic is also part of managing one's likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*.

GAINING A MASTERY OVER OUR LIKES AND DISLIKES THROUGH KARMAYOGA IS SUCCESSFUL LIVING

The management of one's likes and dislikes includes not being swept off my feet when they are fulfilled and accepting gracefully a so-called failure. There is no such thing as failure if you analyse it, but rather, simply an action, and a result. Failure is only in terms of our expectation of what the result would be, an expectation stemming from our knowledge. Having an expectation is unavoidable, otherwise we could not perform an action, and having an expectation unfulfilled is also inevitable because our knowledge is not complete. With inadequate knowledge we project an outcome for our activities and then conclude that we have failed if the outcome is less than or the opposite of what we expected. We have not failed, but have fulfilled what is expected.

Because our knowledge is so inadequate, we are always at the risk of failing. Even if we have planned everything out very well, it is still a calculated risk. We can only plan, and then act according to the plan, and then wait to see what happens. In every future projection, there is a risk of this so-called failure. We cannot consider it a failure because, a human being's knowledge is limited; and therefore, if the expectation based on this limited knowledge can go wrong, failure is natural. If it goes right, we should feel grateful for the powers that be, but if it is wrong, it is very natural.

Knowing that it is expected that things will not always happen as I wish, makes it easy to develop an attitude of *karma-yoga*. There seems to be a law—based on my own free will, or in which my free will is included—about which I have very little understanding. That is the law of *karma*, the law of *dharma*—which may include my own past action—that is perhaps enhancing or stifling the result of an action I do now. That is why in every culture, we have expressions equivalent to good luck and bad luck. There is no such thing as chance at all. It is only a way of saying that we do not know all the factors involved. The mango did not decide to fall on your head, but it happens to fall on your head, nobody else's. You can simply take it as chance; or you can appreciate that there may be some unknown factors operating here.

Everything has causes. In any endeavour, the law of *karma* may be operating against what I want or in favour of what I want. Whether one understands this or not, every human being has the concept of good luck and bad luck. A cow may not think that 'I am lucky' because it finds itself in a meadow with a lot of grass. The concept of luck is understood only by the human beings who experience things going smoothly or things going in sixes and sevens on a given occasion. The animals may not have this concept even though they experience varying situations. Thus if you understand that you cannot determine the outcome of your actions, you have the proper attitude.

This attitude includes appreciating the Lord as the one who shapes the actions, *karma-phala-dātā*, according to the law. The laws themselves are the Lord, *Īśvara*. Recognizing that, you do not look upon any unpleasant thing that comes as some kind of conspiracy of the laws against you. It is not so. The laws cannot conspire against you because they are not partial. That is why they are laws. A law being what it is, there is no way it can cheat you. If you analyse it carefully you can see that even another human being cannot cheat you. You just expected too much from him. Similarly, nobody can disappoint you. You just expected something that he could not live up to. If he could have, he would have. It is that simple. The problem is, he is incapable of what you expected. And if you ask why he is incapable, it is like asking why salt is salty, and not sweet. We do not complain that salt is salty, or sugar is sweet. Similarly, if a person behaves under certain circumstances in a given manner, you should know that if you had the same background, same parentage, same upbringing, same environment, same schooling, etc., you would find it impossible to behave any differently. Then you would be able to understand that he cannot behave differently. It is all very logical.

The laws always operate logically; there is no mistake there. Only we make mistakes because our knowledge is inadequate. But if we understand that our knowledge is inadequate, half the battle is won. As human beings, we tend to think that we are in charge of everything, and have a need to control situations because of our insecurity. A secure person is one who can accept that nothing necessarily goes his way and enjoys the fact that his life is full of surprises. I can either sit and cry about the fact that I cannot control my situations, or I can just be ready for surprises. This readiness for surprises and the capacity to take things as they come is *karma-yoga*. Naturally the *rāga-dveṣas*, likes and dislikes, lose their hold. The capacity to take things as they come, leave things as they go, and be ready for a surprise is the attitude of a *karma-yogī*. It is important to note that, it is not a certain type of *karma*, but this attitude that brings about the preparedness we are working for. When that is there, the knowledge that is pursued will gain a reality because there is nothing to oppose it.

The thing that opposes this knowledge is our own incapacity to have a hold over our *rāga-dveṣas*. We have *rāga-dveṣas*, even with reference to the mind, wanting it to behave in a certain manner. As a *karma-yogī*, you let the mind be as it is. There is nothing wrong with any mind as long as it is not crazy, and if you think it should be like this or that, you will make it go crazy in no time. The mind is a simple instrument, meant for thinking, and sometimes moving according to its own laws. You just let it go. You can allow it to have its own leisure time, as long as it is available for you when you have a job to do. That is all you need. You don't judge yourself on the basis of your mind, because unsteadiness, *cañcalatā*, is its nature. It has got to be so. Self-judgement is the problem, and that will be there as long as you have binding *rāga-dveṣas*, though you can have as many likes and dislikes as you want if they don't bind you.

one does not. External objects are divided into three groups, things that I like, things that I do not, and things that I am indifferent to. While the objects are external, the likes and dislikes are inside, which means that the objects of these likes and dislikes are not only outside, they are inside. Our day-to-day activities are totally dedicated to fulfilling these *rāgas* and *dveṣas*. Is there any exception to this? There is nothing wrong with this either. The problem comes only when there is an intense reaction if they are not fulfilled—which is often the case. The person is so committed to the fulfilment of these likes and dislikes, that a non-fulfilment generates a lot of frustration, depression, sorrow, and so on.

What does this mean to be not attached in this way, that is, to be an *asakta-buddhi*? This is not simple detachment, but a thing that is to be understood well. *Karma-yoga* is such a sensitive thing. It is very subtle because it is an attitude more than anything else, and therefore, it is really only understanding. The more you understand, the easier it is to have the attitude of a *karma-yogī*. What does it mean to be an *asakta-buddhi* with reference to likes and dislikes? *Śaṅkara* will only say that it is freedom from attachment, without really explaining what that is, or where the attachment is, but we understand from all that has been said that, it is freedom from an attachment to the fulfilment of likes and dislikes. This is the sameness of mind that defines *karma-yoga*—*samatvaṃ yoga ucyate*.¹ A *karma-yogī* enjoys more or less a sameness of mind, in that neither is there an exhilaration when something desirable is accomplished, nor a depression or frustration if something is not accomplished. Since he has freedom from attachment with reference to accomplishment, likes and dislikes are not so important that they will cause him to go against what is right and wrong. On the other hand, they are in keeping with right and wrong. What is not to be done, he does not like, and what is to be done, he likes.

As long as what is right and wrong is kept in view in the choices you make to accomplish what you want, there is no problem whatsoever. There are hundreds of means of accomplishing various ends, but your options are only within the range of *dharma*. In choosing an action, you go by *dharma*. When you have a mind that does not give you so much pressure from likes and dislikes that you are constrained to choose a means, which is not fair, you are an *asakta-buddhi*. And when the result comes, you accept it gracefully. Whether the *karma-phala*, the result of your actions is in keeping with your expectation, or more than, or less than, or opposite to what you expected, you are ready to accept it gladly. The likes and dislikes do not rule. Now you understand what detachment is. It is not a word that can be used glibly because it is full of meaning. The one who has the mind described here is an *asakta-buddhi*.

This freedom from attachment extends to everything, and thus, *Bhagavān* says that this person has freedom from attachment everywhere, *sarvatra*. *Śaṅkara* gives son,

¹ *Gītā* – 2-48

spouse, etc., as examples of some of the things that can be objects of an excessive attachment. A person who has this type of freedom with reference to son or daughter, wife or husband, has freedom everywhere, *sarvatra*.

MASTERY OVER ONESELF

In other words, he is a *jitātmā*, one who has mastery over himself. He has gained this mastery through living a life of *karma-yoga*, keeping the *rāga-dveṣas*, likes, and dislikes, under check. He allows *dharma* to rule his life and not *rāga-dveṣas*, and thus, has mastered his mind. When the pressure of likes and dislikes is no longer there, what kind of a mind will he have? One that is not a problem. A life of proper attitude, a prayerful attitude, accounts for this mastery of the mind, in that he does not come under its spell. If there was any problem, it has been taken care of.

FREEDOM FROM LONGING

Then again, being one who has self-mastery, being a *jitātmā*, naturally he is one who is released from longing for various things, *vigataspr̥ha*. To understand what this longing is, just observe some of the youngsters that you see moving about in groups with bandannas on their heads, chains on their necks, no buttons on their shirts, looking for varieties of things, roaming from place to place, with their tongues hanging out. This is called longing. The young and the restless. While it is very visible in a youngster, it does not necessarily go when you grow up physically. Though you cannot do those things anymore because of a certain etiquette and an image that you want to present, the longing for them still remains. You have become an adult physically, but inside you are the same restless adolescent. That is what we call longing. Giving up things does not always mean that the pressure to have those things is gone. Sometimes they are given up because they cannot be fulfilled. You compromise and reconcile yourself to the fact that you cannot accomplish what you want.

But the freedom from longing that we are talking about here does not involve that kind of giving up. Here, there is a certain understanding about oneself and the nature of one's own pursuits. This cognitive appreciation of the limitations of all the various pursuits can bring about a certain dispassion, *vairāgya*, which is a mature, objective way of looking at things. When you can be objective, the longing is gone and you are *vigataspr̥ha*.

These characteristics, that is, being an *asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra*, a *jitātmā*, a *vigataspr̥ha*, are all the outcome of *karma-yoga*. A person who enjoys them gains the accomplishment of freedom from action, *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*. Please note that it is not by giving up *karma*, but by doing *karma* with the proper attitude, he eventually gains *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*. The *karma-yoga* itself does not give him *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*, freedom from action, but it equips him with a vehicle with which one can gain

naiṣkarmya-siddhi. Once he has the vehicle for it, he must necessarily know the *ātmā*. Since there is no longer any hindrance for him, he discovers himself to be exactly as what is unfolded by the teacher as it is taught. The vision of the teaching is non-separate from himself. Such a person, being taught, gains *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*.

WHAT IS NAIṢKARMYA -SIDDHI?

What is *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*? Śaṅkara says that, the one who has this is the one from whom all *karmas* have gone. There is no *karma* at all for him. How? Because of clear knowledge of himself as the action less *Brahman*. *Ātmā* that is *Brahman* is not subject to any kind of change; it is always the same. When a person comes to know that *ātmā* is *Brahman* which is free from all action, he discovers that there is no action in the self, and naturally, all *karmas* go away from him. All *vaidika*, religious, and *laukika*, secular, *karmas* that he was doing—past actions, present actions, and future actions—have all gone away in the wake of the knowledge that *ātmā* is *Brahman* which is free from all activities. It never performs any action at any time. The one who knows that is called *naiṣkarmā* and his disposition or status is *naiṣkarmya*, actionlessness. This is an accomplishment, *siddhi*, because it makes you totally free. Thus the accomplishment of actionlessness is called *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*.

Śaṅkara gives a second meaning for *naiṣkarmya-siddhi* as the state of actionlessness, which is called *mokṣa*. Either way it is the same. This *naiṣkarmya-siddhi* is the most exalted, *paramām*. Why? An accomplishment like heaven, etc., or any locally gained power, name, etc., that is born of good *karma* still leaves the *jīva* a beggar. He remains a constant beggar of the crumbs of happiness that fall to him by chance, which is not much of an accomplishment. *Naiṣkarmya-siddhi*, however, is the treasure of your own fullness, and nobody can take it away from you. It is entirely opposed to any accomplishment born of any type of activity, for it is in the form of freedom right now, not later, a freedom that is not centred on anything else except yourself.

Therefore, it does not depend upon any other factor. To be free you require only your known self. If you know yourself, you are free; if not, you are bound, and no accomplishment, however exalted, can alter that. What is the use of the bound person, who does not know the *ātmā*, adding embellishments to himself? It is something like a person, who has already concluded that he or she is not good looking, trying to improve his or her looks by various means. What is the use? The person cannot cover the knowledge that he or she is not good looking. But when one accepts the fact about one's looks, one is free. And if you are free and you know that you are free, nothing can deny you that freedom. Nobody else can make you free, nor is your freedom dependent upon anything. It depends entirely upon you, not your mind, or body, or anything else but just you. True independence can never be centred on anything other than yourself, and if the

self is already free, only then can you be free. If freedom is intrinsic to *ātmā*, once you know, nobody can take away that freedom.

HOW DOES ONE GAIN THIS NAIṢKARMYA-SIDDHI?

How do you gain that freedom? *Bhagavān* says that it is by renunciation, *sannyāsa*. Since we have seen that total actionlessness cannot be accomplished except by knowledge, *Śaṅkara* equates *sannyāsa* with clear vision of the *ātmā*. *Sannyāsa* here is renunciation of all *karmas*, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, which is identical with knowledge. Because *ātmā* is always free from all *karma*, knowing that, you become free from all *karma*. Therefore, the state of actionlessness, *naiṣkarmya*, should not be construed as simple vegetating, without doing any action. It is purely in the form of knowledge—knowing what I am, is what is called *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*. To understand the meaning of *sannyāsa* here, *Śaṅkara* reminds us of the verses he quoted earlier. ‘By knowledge, giving up all action, neither doing nor causing (anyone) to do—*sarva-karmāṇi manasā sannyasya ... naiva kurvan na kārayan.*’¹ He does not give up any *karma* except by the knowledge that he performs no action. Doing, he can say that he does not do; talking, he can say he does not talk. ‘But,’ you may object, ‘*Bhagavān* has just recited so many verses here. How can he say he does not talk?’ To understand this, you must understand his vision of ‘I.’

There is a story about *Kṛṣṇa* that illustrates this very well. Standing on the bank of the river *Yamunā*, *Kṛṣṇa* was being admonished by the *gopīs* for having too many wives. He listened to this for some time, and then told them to cross the *Yamunā* and feed one Swami who was living on the other side and had not eaten for many days. When they set out, the river was dry, but as they approached it to cross over with the food they had prepared for the Swami, there was a flash flood and the river was suddenly in spate. So they went back to *Kṛṣṇa* complaining that the river was impossible to cross, even in a boat. *Kṛṣṇa* smiled, and asked them to go back to the river and say, ‘*Yamunā*, please subside if *Kṛṣṇa* is a *brahmacārī*.’ They all giggled hysterically and reluctantly went back to the *Yamunā*. Then, with great difficulty, because they were sure this was against the truth, they repeated *Kṛṣṇa*’s words. Immediately the *Yamunā* subsided and there was sand everywhere. They were astonished. Crossing the river and reaching the other side, they found the Swami and gave all their food to him. Plateful after plateful he ate, leaving only the empty vessels. When he had finished, the *gopīs* returned to the *Yamunā*, only to find it once again in spate. Since *Kṛṣṇa* was not there to help them this time, they went back to the Swami. After listening to their problem, he smiled and told them to go back to the *Yamunā* and say, ‘*Yamunā*, if the Swami had never eaten in his life, please subside.’ Again they giggled and half-heartedly approached the *Yamunā*. No sooner had they spoken the Swami’s words, the *Yamunā* subsided.

¹ *Gītā* – 5-13

What does this reveal? What *Kṛṣṇa* knows, the Swami knows. *Kṛṣṇa* knows that he never performed any action; he is neither married nor a bachelor, neither man nor woman, neither old nor young, but the action less *Brahman*. The Swami knows the same thing. Through this story is highlighted the following statements of the *Gītā*: ‘Even doing, he does not do—*kurvan api na karoti*,’ and ‘Neither doing nor causing to do—*naiva kurvan na kārayan*.’ Obtaining in this physical body, as though enclosed by this body, while the body is moving, while the mind is thinking, and everything is active, he performs no action. All these activities are blessed by the presence of *ātmā* which itself performs no action. That is indeed ‘I’—there is no other ‘I’ anywhere. The one who recognizes this gains the most exalted accomplishment of actionlessness—*naiṣkarmya-siddhiṃ paramāṃ adhigacchati*.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEXT VERSE

This is the result. Now the next verse explains briefly the method by which one gains *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*, which is *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. *Śaṅkara* introduces the verse recalling what was said before. Previously it was said that worshipping the Lord by doing one's duty at a given time and place, a person gains the accomplishment characterised as inner maturity, *svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ*. His job may be tending the cow, but done as a worship of *Īśvara*, it will result in the same success as any other action done with this understanding. Offering flowers to the Lord is also worship and so is doing exactly what is to be done. Because *dharma* is the Lord, when you conform to that order, recognizing it as *Īśvara*, you are in tune with *Īśvara* and your action becomes worship. What is the accomplishment, *siddhi*, gained by this? By this *karma-yoga* you gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, preparedness of mind for the knowledge spoken of here. Then again, the one who has the knowledge of what is *ātmā* and what is *anātmā*, *ātmā-viveka-jñāna*, what is an agent, *kartā*, and what is not, *akartā*, in whom the knowledge of *ātmā* as real has arisen, gains an ultimate certainty in the knowledge of the *ātmā* which is non-dual. The order in which that happens is told briefly in the next verse.

सिद्धिं प्राप्ता यथा ब्रह्मा तथैव ऋषिर्ब्रह्मणोऽप्यनुब्रवीत्
समसेनाैव कौन्तेय निश्चिन्तया ज्ञानस्यैव परं निश्चिन्तया ॥५०॥

*siddhiṃ prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me
samāsenaiḥ kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā*

Verse 50

kaunteya — O! Son of *Kuntī* (*Arjuna*); *siddhiṃ prāptaḥ* — the one who has gained the accomplishment (of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*); *yathā* — how; *niṣṭhā* — that which is the ultimate certainty of knowledge; *brahma* — *Brahman*; *āpnoti* — he gains; *tathā* — just so; *samāsenā eva* — just in brief; *me nibodha* — learn from Me

How the one who has gained the accomplishment (of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*) gains the ultimate certainty of the knowledge that is *Brahman*, learn from Me in brief, O! Son of *Kuntī*.

Here the accomplishment, *siddhi*, is preparedness of mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. *Śaṅkara* says that it is characterised by an eligibility of the body and senses for a commitment to knowledge and that eligibility is the result of the grace earned by worshipping *Īśvara* through doing one's own duty. This restatement of what was said before, *svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavah*, is for the sake of what comes later—*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja*. What is born of the grace of *Īśvara* is that, his mind, body, and senses do not create any disturbance in him. This is the greatest grace that you can think of. If you look into it, it amounts to looking at yourself nicely, rather than looking down upon yourself. We always think we need grace for this and that, but all we really require is that the mind, body, and senses be available for us when we need them. This implies not only mental purity, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, but the co-operation of the body too. If the body falls apart, what is the use of the mind having grace? You need not enjoy an especially healthy body, but then it should be available to serve the needs of your pursuit and not interfere with it. The mind must be clean and the body should be fit; both of these require grace.

What is it that the one who has gained this accomplishment, *siddhiṃ prāptaḥ*, going to accomplish later? He gains *Brahman*, *brahma āpnoti*, in the form of certainty of knowledge. How does he gain that? What is the means whereby this *karma-yogī*, enjoying this accomplishment of mental purity, but who, nevertheless, considers himself a doer, *kartā*, gains the knowledge of *Brahman*? Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, 'Please understand from Me.' Is he going to start another seventeen chapters? No. He is going to explain it briefly, *samāśena*. All that he has said before is going to be presented in an essential form so that *Arjuna* can keep it in his mind and do what is to be done.

GAIN OF BRAHMAN IS NOTHING BUT CERTAINTY OF KNOWLEDGE

What is that gain of *Brahman*, *brahma-prāpti*? It is nothing but knowledge of *Brahman*, which is the ultimate end of knowledge, *jñānasya yā parā niṣṭhā*. The culmination of a pursuit is its *niṣṭhā*. Generally, the pursuit of knowledge has no end to it. You come to know only a little more than what you knew before, and even more about what you do not know. Previously you did not know that you did not know, and now you know something about how much you do not know. Thus, there is no end for any type of knowledge except knowledge of the self, *ātmā*. Because *ātmā* is partless, you cannot have partial knowledge of *ātmā* and still call it knowledge. It is possible to be mistaken about *ātmā* because it is always available, *nitya-prasiddha*, but it is not possible to have partial knowledge of the real nature of *ātmā*, it being totally free from

parts. Therefore, knowledge of the *ātmā* is the only knowledge that has culmination, *niṣṭhā*.

Every other knowledge is inconclusive; it has parts because the object of any knowledge necessarily has attributes. Being dependent upon something else, *mithyā*, any object of knowledge is nothing but attribute. There is no substantive in the world for everything that we call a substantive becomes an attribute, upon inquiry, implying another substantive. In a clay pot, pot is only an attribute of the substantive called clay. But even the clay is not a substantive; it is only an attribute of the substantive called atom. Any form is going to be reducible like this. Therefore, the formless alone can be a substantive, and that happens to be yourself. Knowledge of yourself, then, is the only conclusive knowledge possible, and therefore, the most exalted, *parā*. In what order you will gain that knowledge, *Bhagavān* is going to tell here, and thus, he draws the attention of *Arjuna* saying, ‘Learn from Me—*nibodha me*.’

But first, *Śaṅkara* has a very interesting and important *bhāṣya* here, which we will look into carefully.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF JÑĀNANIṢṬHĀ ?

Śaṅkara has characterised the certainty of knowledge, *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, as where the knowledge of *Brahman* ends. Now the question is raised, what is the nature of this certainty of knowledge, *jñāna-niṣṭhā*? *Śaṅkara* says that in whichever form the knowledge of *ātmā* is, the certainty, *niṣṭhā*, is in that form. What we are calling *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is not different from knowledge of *ātmā*. The next question is, what is the nature of this knowledge of *ātmā*, *ātma-jñāna*. *Śaṅkara* says that whatever the nature of *ātmā* is, that is the nature of *ātma-jñāna*. Between the knowledge of *ātmā* and *ātma-jñāna*, there cannot be any difference, for knowledge is always as true as the object. If one asks what is the nature of this *ātmā*, *Śaṅkara* says that, it is in the form in which it was told by *Bhagavān* through the sentences of the *Gītā* as well as the *Upaniṣads*, and by reasoning. Here *Śaṅkara* can answer that the nature of *ātmā* is *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, but he does not, because his topic is the nature of the knowledge. We should also make a note that when *Śaṅkara* talks of reasoning here he means that what is said should be reasonable. What is said by the *śāstra* is examined and ascertained to be not against reason. If any other interpretation of *ātmā* is proposed, he will show the fallacy in that proposal through reasoning.

IS ĀTMAJÑĀNA POSSIBLE?

SINCE ĀTMĀ HAS NO FORM, SELF-KNOWLEDGE IS NOT POSSIBLE—OBJECTION

An objection is raised here. It has been said that knowledge is always in the form of the object of knowledge. The knowledge of a pot, for example, is going to be as good as the pot, in that, when you know a pot, the knowledge you have of the pot will be in

keeping with the nature of the pot. It cannot be different. If it is, you will not understand the pot as a pot. Therefore, it is well-known that knowledge assumes the form of the object. But nowhere is it accepted that *ātmā* is an object, or that it has a form. The self is not an object, because if it were, who would be the subject? Being yourself, *ātmā* is never an object, which you can objectify. By nature, it is not subject to objectification. In that case, if it is not an object, how are you going to gain knowledge of it when knowledge is always in keeping with the object? Further, for knowledge to take place, the object of knowledge must have a form. But *ātmā*, according to you, as pure consciousness, has no form. If *ātmā* neither has a form nor is an object, how are you going to know it? It is not like a pot, which is both an object and has form, and therefore, can be known. Even an atom has its own attribute through which you can know it because you can objectify it, not sensorially, but inferentially. It is an object of knowledge for you, the subject, which is distinct from what you objectify. You are not an atom; you are objectifying an atom and it is identifiable in a given form. But what about *ātmā*? It has no particular form, nor is it an object. How are you going to gain knowledge of that *ātmā*? And if you cannot gain the knowledge itself, where is the question of gaining *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, the certainty in that knowledge?

AN EKADEŚĪ'S VIEW THAT IT DOES HAVE A FORM

Someone offers an answer here. Citing the *śāstra*, a meditator, an *upāsaka*, says that *ātmā* does have a form. What is that form? It is in the form of the sun—*āditya-varṇa*; it is in the form of light, *bhārūpa*; it is self-shining, *svayaṃ jyotiḥ*. If *ātmā* is in the form of self-shining light, he argues, it must have a form because, fire, whose nature is light, is the first element in the sequence of creation that has form. The first element is space, *ākāśa*, and the second is air, *vāyu*, neither of which has a form. Next is fire, *agni*, which is the first to have a form. Since *ātmā* is said to be light, the special property of fire, why should we not consider that *ātmā* has a form?

ANOTHER EKADEŚĪ'S VIEW

Another participant in the discussion answers that this is not true, because such statements are meant only to negate the inertness, which is opposed to consciousness. They point out that *ātmā* is not inert, *jaḍa*, and is beyond the darkness of ignorance, *tamaśaḥ parastāt*.¹ The *śruti* specifically says this immediately after saying it is like the sun, *āditya-varṇa*, in order to say that it is not ignorance, nor is it inert, nor does it need to be illumined by anything else. He explains that, if forms like substance and attribute are negated from *ātmā*, one can conclude that it is in the form of ignorance or darkness. It is to negate this argument that, these statements are made. Besides that, form is specifically negated by very clear statements such as, *arūpa*, without form.

¹ *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* – 3-8, *Gītā* – 8-9, *Puruṣa-sūkta* – 8

ŚAṆKARA ANSWERS—ĀTMĀ CAN NEVER BECOME AN OBJECT

Further, there is form only for an object that you can objectify, and there are equally unambiguous statements that say that *ātmā* is not available for any objectification. Statements like, ‘There is nothing equivalent to its form; no one sees it with the eye—*na sandṛṣe tiṣṭhati rūpam asya na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścana enam,*’¹ and ‘Without sound, without touch, *aśabdāṃ asparśam,*’ tell us that *ātmā* is free from being an object of our sight, our ears, our sense of touch, or any other sense organ. From all these statements of the *śruti*, we understand that *ātmā* is not an object. Therefore, he concludes, knowledge enjoying the form of *ātmā* is not tenable. How can there be knowledge of *ātmā* when it is well-known that any given cognition is of the form of that given object, and *ātmā* has been repeatedly said to be without form, *nirākāra*? Knowledge must be in keeping with the object. If it is knowledge of a pot, it is in the form of a pot, if it is knowledge of a cloth, it is in the form of a cloth. Thus, each piece of knowledge is in the form of the object. But here we are talking about an *ātmā* that is free from form, and thus, knowledge of *ātmā* is not possible.

Having argued that both *ātmā* and the knowledge of *ātmā* have no form, his question is, ‘How are you going to gain self-knowledge, *ātma-jñāna*, leave alone *niṣṭhā* in that knowledge?’ For *niṣṭhā* you need to contemplate upon the knowledge in order to make it certain. What can you contemplate upon here? It is something like saying that cancer can be cured by an extract of rabbit’s horn. Similarly, if you gain *ātma-jñāna*, *saṃsāra* will disappear. The only problem is, it is not possible. How are you going to gain *ātma-jñāna* when *ātmā* is neither an object for you to know, nor has a form for you to objectify? Once I know, I am free, but then, *ātmā* is not available for such knowledge. Therefore, there is no *mokṣa* by knowledge, and we have to look for another solution. It is pointless to talk about contemplation because to be contemplated upon, the *ātmā* must have some form, but it is formless. Without a form there is no cognition, *vṛtti*, and without a cognition, what are you going to contemplate upon to gain *niṣṭhā*? If I ask you to think of *ātmā*, what will you think of? If it has a form, if it is like a flame or like a sound, it is possible to think of it. But if it has no form, what are you going to think of?

EVEN IF ĀTMĀ CANNOT BE OBJECTIFIED, ITS EXISTENCE IS WELL KNOWN

Śaṅkara answers this in the following manner. He says that, the conclusion that has been reached is not true. While it is true that *ātmā* is not available for objectification, its presence is available. It is known to you because it is self-evident. It is present in the

¹ *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* – 4-20, *Kāṭhōpāniṣad* – 2-3-9

In the Bhāṣya of the Śvetāśvataropaniṣad on this mantra, Śaṅkara explains the phrase ‘na sandṛṣe tiṣṭhati’ as follows: asya svarūpaṃ cakṣurādi-grahaṇa-yogyā-pradēse na tiṣṭhati—its form is not available to the scope of the senses, like the eyes, etc.

mind, *buddhi*, which has the capacity to reflect consciousness which is *ātmā*. The whole argument of the opponent here is on the basis of *ātmā* not being an object because it has no form. True, it has no form, but it exists. In spite of not being an object, and having no particular attribute, still, it exists. How do we know this? Like your face in a mirror, the consciousness that is *ātmā* is reflected in the *buddhi* because it is made of a subtle substance that has the capacity to reflect consciousness. The reflection or manifestation of consciousness in the *buddhi* is non-separate from the consciousness that is the *ātmā*. This is because the reflection and the *ātmā* are one and the same. There is no reflection which is totally separate from the *vastu* because the reflection is not a real entity. When you stand before the mirror, it is you that is seen, even though two entities seem to be there. Similarly, the *buddhi* is made up of such a subtle substance that it is able to reflect or manifest this consciousness, and therefore, consciousness appears reflected there.

BECAUSE OF THE REFLECTION OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS ALONE, THE BODY, MIND AND SENSES ARE CONSCIOUS

The ‘I-thought,’ *ahaṃ-vṛtti*, which is the *buddhi*, becomes conscious because it reflects the consciousness of the self and so too, the ‘this-thought,’ *idaṃ-vṛtti*, in the mind. Then again, because the mind is in association with the sense organs, they also become conscious. When the senses become conscious, the body becomes conscious because one sense organ, the sense of touch, is all over the body. Through the sense of touch, the whole body becomes aglow with consciousness like an iron ball becomes aglow with the brilliance and heat of fire. *Ātmā* does not need to be known to you as conscious and existent by any other means of knowledge. It is already evident. The only problem is that because consciousness, which is the nature of *ātmā*, pervades the entire body, people think the body is *ātmā*. Because consciousness is present in this body, if you touch the body, actually, it is *ātmā* you are touching. Though the body is inert, *jaḍa*, in both the hand that touches and the hand you are touching, there is consciousness, because *ātmā* is there; you are there.

There is no difference between the reflection of consciousness, *ābhāsa*, and consciousness, *caitanya*, though the reflection, *ābhāsa*, is consciousness while consciousness, *caitanya*, is not the reflection. Therefore, in the physical body, the reflection, *ābhāsa*, there is *caitanya*. That is the *ātmā*. This is why *Śaṅkara* says that people in general, who have not inquired into the *śāstra* and therefore, do not have any discrimination, think that the physical body alone is the *ātmā*. Without any *vicāra*, inquiry, the body is taken to be the *ātmā*, and that is natural, because the body, *deha*, is conscious. It is very natural to conclude that this conscious body is me and everything else is other than myself. How can you say *ātmā* is unknown?

In fact, the body is not really taken to be *ātmā*. It is only because of the consciousness there, that I look at the body and say, ‘This is me.’ What I identify myself as is nothing but the conscious being. Therefore, that consciousness, which is the *ātmā*,

is known already. The problem with taking the *ātmā* to be the body alone is that it is going to be subject to ageing, illness and death, as the body is. This conclusion is due to lack of discrimination, *aviveka*. Since *ātmā* is already known, but wrongly, we have to do the negation of all that it is not, in the form of ‘*neti neti*.’ Then, whatever remains as the innermost self, *pratyag ātmā*, is told to be *Brahman*—*ayam ātmā brahma*. That is the teaching, *upadeśa*, wherein the cognition, the *vṛtti*, that *ātmā* is *Brahman* removes ignorance and goes away. Once the *vṛtti* has removed ignorance of the *ātmā*, you do not need a special *vṛtti* to know *ātmā*, for *ātmā* is always present in any *vṛtti*.

Only the *caitanya*, the consciousness, that is reflected in the *vṛtti*, is called *jñāna*. It is important to understand here that the *vṛtti* itself is not *jñāna*. Even when we talk of ‘pot knowledge,’ knowledge belongs to consciousness alone, because the knowledge aspect is consciousness. The qualifying is done by a name and form, *nāma* and *rūpa*. Therefore, every *vṛtti* has the presence of consciousness. In the knower consciousness, knowledge consciousness, known consciousness—in all the three—one consciousness alone is present. Therefore, there is no way of missing *ātmā* at any time.

ONE TAKES BODY, ETC., AS *ĀTMĀ* OF THE PRESENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

According to a mechanical materialist, the body alone is *ātmā*—*dehaḥ eva ātmā*. Another materialist, *lokāyatika*, says that the physical body is endowed with or is qualified by consciousness. The body enjoying the attribute of consciousness is the *ātmā*. When the body is dead, the consciousness, *caitanya*, goes away and there is no longer an *ātmā*. For others, the senses, *indriyas*, enjoying consciousness are the *ātmā*. These are also *cārvākas* who have thought about this *ātmā* and have concluded that the senses, *indriyas*, are *ātmā*. They contend that merely the body alone cannot be the *ātmā* because without the functioning of the senses, the body cannot function—as in sleep. Therefore, the senses are the real *ātmā*.

Another *cārvāka* says that the mind is the *ātmā*. Because of reflection of the mind in the sense organs and body, they also become conscious. Therefore, according to him, the mind is *ātmā*.

Then, there are others, the *kṣāṇika-vijñānavādīs*, who say that the flickers of consciousness obtaining in the *buddhi* in the form of *vṛttis* are the *ātmā*. The *vṛtti* alone is *ātmā*.

Still others say that *ātmā* is interior to the *buddhi*. The *buddhi* is only an effect, *kārya*, while *ātmā* is its cause, *kāraṇa*. In deep sleep, *ātmā* is available, but the *buddhi* is not, and therefore, the existence of *ātmā* does not depend on the *buddhi*. Through the method of invariable concomitance and discontinuance, *anvaya-vyatireka*, they arrive at the conclusion that whatever obtains in deep sleep is the *ātmā*. The unmanifest, the *avyakta*, the undifferentiated, *avyākṛta*, state of ignorance is taken as the *ātmā*. Those

people who do not recognize the *ātmā* as independent of *avidyā*, see *avidyā* as the intrinsic attribute of *ātmā*.

SINCE ĀTMĀ IS KNOWN TO ALL, IS THERE A NEED FOR AN INJUNCTION TO KNOW IT?

Now in all these situations, whether the *buddhi* or the body is taken as *ātmā*, one thing is certain. The cause for the error about *ātmā* is the reflection of the consciousness that is *ātmā*. Therefore, one can say that knowledge for which *ātmā* is the object is not subject to any kind of injunction, *vidhi*. Unless an object is totally unknown to you, you cannot be enjoined to know it. I can legitimately say that you must know a mangosteen, for example, because you have no idea as to what it is. Whereas, to say that *ātmā* has to be known by you, *jñātavya*, is not because it is not something totally unknown, *ajñāta*. In the body, the senses, mind, and even the unmanifest condition, *avyakta*, is the reflection, *ābhāsa*, of the consciousness which is the *ātmā*. They are all conscious because they enjoy the reflection of consciousness. And because of this reflection, there is the delusion that each one is *ātmā*. Why do I take the body as the *ātmā*? It is because this consciousness is there. I am a conscious being who is conscious of the world, and this consciousness seems to have a limit—the physical body. I become one column of consciousness, one individual consciousness.

The body being conscious, it is but natural for a person to take the body as the *ātmā*. So too, it is natural to take the *prāṇa* as the *ātmā*, the mind as the *ātmā*, the senses as the *ātmā*, the *buddhi* as the *ātmā* because they are all conscious. The unmanifest, *avyakta*, is also taken as the *ātmā*, since the state of deep sleep is an experience which everybody has to account for. The basis for all these delusions about the *ātmā* is the reflection of consciousness in these various media. Because it is not totally unknown, someone comes to the conclusion here that the knowledge of *ātmā* need not be enjoined. Going one step further, he questions, if this is so, why should we have such *śruti* statements as, ‘The self, my dear, is to be seen, listened to against contentions and contemplated upon—*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ nididhyāsitavyaḥ*.’ In this statement the suffix *tavya*, indicating a command, is repeatedly used. If *ātmā* is already known, such a statement would be meaningless. Then he asks finally the question he is really driving at—‘Why should we even study the *śruti* if *ātmā* is already known?’

EVEN THOUGH THE ĀTMĀ IS PRASIDDHA, THERE IS CONFUSION ABOUT IT

It is true that *ātmā* is not to be known like an object, like mangosteen, but there is a confusion about *ātmā* and that confusion alone is to be removed. Because *ātmā* is well-known, *prasiddha*, for everybody, anybody can take it for anything. *Ātmā* is the most abused word in this world, and also the object of utmost concern for anyone. If you say that you are not concerned about yourself, but about your father, I will ask you, ‘Why are you concerned about your father?’ If you say, ‘It is because he is not well,’

then I would say that, he should be concerned about that and not you. If you then say that, if he is not well, you cannot be happy, then my question would be, 'About whom are you concerned?' Then you have to answer that, you are concerned only about yourself even when you are concerned about your father.

There are many objects in the world about which we have various degrees of concern. But if there is one word whose object receives our utmost concern, that is *ātmā*—'I.' At the same time, it is the word about which there is the most confusion. In fact, all the concern is due to the confusion. Because there is confusion, there is concern, and the concern reveals that there is confusion. Therefore, the *śāstra* enjoins us to resolve the confusion. The concern of mortality, ageing, being nobody, and thus wanting to prove that I am somebody are all centred on 'I' and this concern is what we call *saṃsāra*. *Saṃsāra* can be summed up as concern about yourself, and this concern is due to confusion. Therefore, *ātmā* is not unknown; it is known, but not properly—not as it really is. There is no injunction, *vidhi*, that *ātmā* be known as an object, for it is already known, but wrongly. You are committing a mistake, and therefore, only the correction of the mistake has to be done. The *śruti* draws your attention to this in its statements of negation—*neti neti*. Anything which you think is *ātmā* is not the *ātmā*.

REMOVAL OF SUPERIMPOSITIONS ALONE IS ĀTMAJÑĀNA

Śaṅkara says, all that has to be done is, the removal of all that is being superimposed upon the *ātmā*. What is superimposed? All that we have mentioned, which can be summed up as name and form, *nāma-rūpa*. *Ātmā* is mistaken for *avidyā* or *avyakta*, the unmanifest cause, then variously as the effect, in the form of the mind, functioning either as *buddhi* or *manas*, which is a *vṛtti* that has no existence apart from the *ātmā*. Being superimposed, none of these is real. Similarly, *indriyāṇi*, the senses, *deha*, the body, etc., all of which are not *ātmā*, are superimposed upon *ātmā*, and that superimposition has to be removed by knowledge.

Here *Śaṅkara* elaborates here what he said in his opening statement that *ātmā* can never become an object, in order to make it very clear. He says that, what has to be accomplished is not knowledge of the consciousness which is *ātmā* but the removal of the superimposition of the *anātmā*, that is, the *nāma-rūpas*, on the *ātmā*—*nāmarūpādi-anātma-adhyāropaṇa-nivṛttiḥ eva kāryā na ātma-caitanya-vijñānam*. With such straightforward statements as these, one wonders, where do people get the idea that there is a super-consciousness that is to be known? They say that beyond the body is a mind, beyond that a *buddhi*, and beyond all that a super-consciousness that you should realise. But *Śaṅkara* says very clearly here that you need not gain knowledge of the consciousness that is *ātmā*. Why? Because that is one thing, which is, present all the time. When you see something, or hear something or smell something and when you do not experience anything at all, consciousness, which is *ātmā* is present.

Then what do we have to do? We have to remove the varieties of notions we have superimposed upon the *ātmā*. How? By inquiry, *vicāra*—into what is *ātmā* and what is not—with the help of the *śāstra*. *Ātmā* is commonly taken as the various things that are superimposed upon it by ignorance of its *svarūpa*. In such forms as the mind, as eyes and ears, in anything you see, anything you encounter, in that form, the consciousness that is *ātmā* is always present, *prasiddha*. It is known to everyone, including the Buddhist, the *Cārvāka*, and the Naturalist, as qualified by the mind, or by the sense organs, or by the body.

Whatever be the school of thought, all that they do is, adding a qualification to the *ātmā*. Even a person who has not thought about it has some conclusion about the *ātmā*, which is wrong. Being known to everybody with all these superimpositions, *ātmā* is not to be known, as we usually understand ‘knowing,’ but is to be known in a special way, that is, by removing all the erroneous notions about it. It is already known but with confusion, and therefore, removal of the confusion is what is called *ātma-jñāna*. There is no objectification of the *ātmā*. That is why it is said in the *Kenopaniṣad* that he who says he knows the *ātmā* does not know the *ātmā*. Of course, he who says he does not know the *ātmā*, also does not know. But even though he says he does not know the *ātmā*, the one who says so is the *ātmā*. *Ātmā* is always *prasiddha*, evident, to one. And therefore, knowledge of the *ātmā* is not one of an *aprasiddha viṣaya* at any time.

Suppose you have knowledge of a crystal. Previously it was not known by you and now it is. Therefore, in your mind, the *vṛtti*, the thought is there, for which the object is the crystal. This is knowledge. It is the same for any knowledge of a particular object. Now, suppose I say you must gain knowledge of the consciousness, which is *ātmā*. What will you do? How can consciousness, which is *ātmā*—in which the seer, and all forms of knowledge, and all objects of knowledge shine—shine as an object, like the crystal? That is the only thing you do not need to know as an object. That in which all the *vṛttis* of all objects are illumined, which is the very nature, *svarūpa*, of every *vṛtti* is the consciousness which is *ātmā*. You cannot objectify this consciousness because it is the one thing, which is not available as an object. Nor it is necessary for you to objectify it.

BUDDHISTS SAY BUDDHIVṚTTI IS ĀTMĀ BECAUSE IT REFLECTS CONSCIOUSNESS

Śaṅkara says that, it is because of this fact, that is, the reflection of consciousness is available in every *vṛtti*, that the Buddhists, the *kṣaṇika-vijñāna-vādīs*, take the *vṛtti* as the *ātmā*. In their view, only momentary consciousness is available at any given time. When you see me right now, for example, it looks as though I have been sitting here for the past several minutes. I seem to be shining in your mind constantly. But it is not true; your mind is moving and the *vṛttis* keep on changing. It seems as though the same person sitting here because of memory; but what really happens is that the *vṛttis* in your mind keep changing like the frames in a movie.

Because the *vṛtti* is imbued with consciousness and is momentary, the Buddhist concludes that the *ātmā* is a momentary flicker of consciousness. In taking the *vṛtti* as *ātmā*, he is not incorrect, but he is not correct in saying that *ātmā* is the *vṛtti*. Once he takes the *ātmā* as the *vṛtti*, then the *ātmā* is also momentary like the *vṛtti* and therefore, *ātmā* has no reality other than the *vṛtti*. In fact, there is no *ātmā*. That is why he says that the *ātmā* is nothing but flickers of consciousness and that there is no object outside, only a *vṛtti* that keeps changing, like in the dream, and there is no *ātmā*. Outside is a concept, as is inside. In this view, all we have is a concept, and the concept keeps on changing. If there is a semblance of continuity, that is the delusion. Momentary existence is the reality.

If one were to ask, how can the *vṛtti* be known if there is no knower, he has an answer for that. He says that no other means of knowledge is required because he accepts that, being consciousness, the *vṛtti* has the status of being known by itself. When it obtains, it is self-revealing; it does not require anything else. For him there is no dependence upon any other *pramāṇa*, which means no knower is necessary. We also say that *ātmā* is self-revealing, but it is not momentary. How do you know that a flicker of consciousness is the *ātmā*? The flicker cannot know because it only exists for a moment and goes away; it does not know that it is changing. In its view, the next moment has not come, and the flicker was not there previously to know of its own arrival. There is no way to logically account for this view.

Therefore, Śaṅkara says, only the negation of the superimposition onto *Brahman* due to ignorance has to be done; no effort has to be made for the knowledge of *Brahman* because it is absolutely *prasiddha*. There is no question of how to experience *Brahman* because everything is experienced in *Brahman* and you are that *Brahman*. There is no effort involved here, only negation. And the negation does not require effort because it is not like sweeping to remove the dirt from the floor. We are not trying to remove some impurity from the *ātmā*, because it is always pure, *śuddha*. The removal here is purely like the removal of the snake upon the rope. The kind of effort you have to make for that is the effort you have to make here. All you have to do is remove the properties superimposed upon *ātmā*, which really belong to what is not *ātmā*, that is, the *anātma-dharma*. No other effort is required because *Brahman*, which is *ātmā* is very well known, *atyanta-prasiddha*, in the sense that nothing else is more known to you, is more present, or more available. Once the superimpositions are removed, it is known as limitless, because all the limitations that were nothing but superimpositions are removed from it.

IF NO EFFORT IS NEEDED, WHY IS BRAHMAN NOT KNOWN?

If there is no effort involved in gaining knowledge of *Brahman*, why does everyone not know it? Śaṅkara says it is because the mind is robbed away by the various modes of names and forms. One mistakes *ātmā* for any one of them and thinks

ātmā is a doer, *kartā*, enjoyer, *bhoktā*, ignorant, *ajñānī*, etc. But even for those people whose mind is robbed away, *Brahman* is totally present all the time, the most easy to know and the very nearest. There is nothing nearer than the *ātmā* because it is yourself. Even so, for those whose mind is robbed away like this, it is to be known. If discrimination is lacking, what is present seems to be not present and difficult to understand; what is nearest seems very far away and other than oneself. *Brahman* which is the *ātmā* which is always present looks as though it is something to be accomplished, something to be reached after transcending everything. Even though it is the easiest thing to understand, it becomes difficult, complex. And even though it is the very nature of oneself, one always wants to look outward for it, or wants to dive deep within for gaining this *ātmā*. In some form, the person is always searching because of lack of discrimination, *aviveka*. Because his mind is occupied with varieties of things like heaven, and other local things, he does not think that what he is seeking is himself. He thinks there is something other than himself that he has to gain, and therefore, *ātmā* is difficult to know, *durvijñeya*.

FOR THE ADHIKĀRĪS BRAHMAN IS EASILY KNOWN

On the other hand, there are those whose minds are freed from concerns about external objects, who have discovered a certain objectivity in themselves. These people who are mature have gained two types of grace. One is the grace of the teacher, *guru-prasāda*. Some people think, this means the *guru* touches you somewhere, and you get some special experience, as though he is transferring some power to you and awakening your *kuṇḍalinī*. This is all nonsense. They say everything is *mithyā*, but this *kuṇḍalinī*, which is equally *mithyā* somehow becomes *satya*. Any experience including *kuṇḍalinī* is *mithyā*; it is within *saṃsāra*. The grace of the teacher here is teaching, *upadeśa*, of the meaning of the *mahāvākya*, *tat tvam asi*. Then you need *ātma-prasāda* also. You have to bless yourself. If you look down upon yourself, what can the *śāstra* do by telling you that you are *Brahman*? You have to look upon yourself as one who is fit to know this. Then alone is it available. For those who have this type of mind and a proper teacher, this twofold grace, there is nothing more well-known, nothing that can be understood more easily, nothing more immanent.

This was said in the same form in the ninth chapter—*pratyakṣāvagamaṃ dharmyam*. This *vastu*, which is not away from *dharma* and can be understood by living a life of *dharma* is directly, always available. That means that for these people, *sat-cit-ānandaṃ brahma* is the meaning of the word, ‘I,’ not anything else. With reference to consciousness, anything limited is negated, anything inert is negated. If you think it is an effect, that is also negated. If you think it is a cause, that is also negated. If you think it is attached to something, it is negated. If you think it is located somewhere, that is also negated. And if you think it is time-bound, that is also negated. *Satyam*

jñānam anantaṃ brahma is *ātmā*; and therefore, there is nothing more well-known, nothing nearer, nothing better, nothing else present, other than this *Brahman*.

AS BUDDHI CANNOT COMPREHEND THE FORMLESS BRAHMAN, ONE SHOULD MEDITATE ON SAGUṆA -BRAHMAN—OBJECTION BY AN UPĀSAKA

Now, a certain objection is raised by worshippers of *Īśvara* who are committed to meditation on *Brahman* with form, *saguṇa-brahma-upāsana*. A verse often quoted by some of them, the *Bhāgavatas*, is as follows:

*kalau kalmaṣa-cittānāṃ pāpa-dravyopajīvinām
vidhi-kriyā-vihīnānāṃ harernāmaiva kevalam*

In the *kali-yuga*, the name of *Hari* (Lord *Kṛṣṇa*) is the only refuge for those whose minds have impurities, who live on ill-gotten gains, and who do not perform the enjoined rituals.

By ‘the name of *Hari*’ they mean the chanting of the *Viṣṇusahasranāma*, *pārāyaṇa* of other texts, *pūjā*, etc. This is the only refuge in the *kali-yuga*, for those whose minds have the impurities of *puṇya-pāpa*, and likes and dislikes—*rāga-dveṣas*. They have accumulated wealth and power, which is not always fairly earned, but often at the cost of someone. In other *yugas*, the means for purification was the *karma* enjoined by the Veda, *vidhi-kriyā*. These daily fire rituals, like *agnihotra*, are not being done now. So what can people do to gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*? Only prayer. And the form mentioned here is chanting the name of *Hari*. Prayer is the only means we have now for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, and any prayer is good enough, whether it is to *Hari* or Jesus. Remember, this is not for *mokṣa*, but for purifying the mind.

That is the mistake they make in interpreting this verse. Their contention is that, it is very difficult to meditate on the formless self, and therefore, one should meditate on *saguṇa-brahma*. This is the argument of modern *Vedāntīs* all over the world. They pay some lip service to *Vedānta* and then say that since it is very difficult to contemplate upon the *ātmā*, you must raise your *kuṇḍalinī* to some *cakra* or the other, or do something else. There is no basis for this argument at all. Meditation upon *saguṇa-brahma* is not as easy as they think. They say *bhakti* is easy, as though it is! *Bhakti* implies love and when we cannot even love the people we know, who have done so much for us, how are we supposed to love God? If you think knowledge is very difficult, but *bhakti* is easy, then go ahead, ‘do’ *bhakti*; do not talk about it. The question is, can you ‘do’ *bhakti*? *Bhakti* is an attitude; nobody ‘does’ an attitude. Love is not an action; it is purely a noun. Even though there is the verbal expression, ‘I love you,’ what it means is that I have love for you. If love were an action, I could do it whenever I wanted, like clapping my hands or putting on a hat.

But it is not like that; it is not something I can command at will. They say it is easy but the truth is, it is as easy or difficult as anything else. It all depends on where you are, what you are. *Bhakti* is not in any way inferior to what we are talking about, in the sense that we have to start with prayer, or worship of *saguṇa-brahma* in some form. Whether we sing in praise of God, or offer our prayers, or do an elaborate ritual every day, it is fine; we have to keep doing that. But if we try to make a philosophy out of it, that is a different thing. A devotee does not talk about *bhakti* and the ones who talk about it are not devotees. Such people are the propounders of meditation on *Brahman* with attributes, *saguṇa-brahma-upāsakas*. They are not committed to *saguṇa-brahma-upāsana*, but only to championing it.

If they were really interested in *saguṇa-brahma-upāsana*, they would not have time for all this. Who are these people? *Śaṅkara* says they are people who consider themselves scholars. Not the people who are prayerful, but the people who talk. What do they say? They argue that because the *ātmā* has no form, the mind cannot reach it. They accept that *ātmā* does not have a form, but conclude, on that basis, that the mind cannot comprehend it. As the mind cannot grasp space, which is formless, similarly, because *ātmā* has no form, the mind cannot grasp it. Therefore, it is very difficult to accomplish certainty in the knowledge, *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, of the *ātmā*. Their understanding of *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is that the knowledge of *ātmā* should stay in the mind. If there is a particular form like, for instance, the form of *Viṣṇu* with *śaṅkha*, a conch, *cakra*, a disc, *gadā*, a mace, etc., meditation on that form and therefore this *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is possible, but not if there is no form.

ŚAṅKARA'S ANSWER TO THIS

Śaṅkara concedes that this is true—for those who do not have a traditional teacher! *Śaṅkara* is very careful here.

IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NO GURU AND SAMPRADĀYA

Even though one may study *Vedānta*, one cannot understand it just by studying the book. A teacher is necessary. And there are some who have a teacher, but that teacher himself has not been taught according to the tradition of teaching, *saṃpradāya*. This is a very well-thought-out method of teaching in which there is a beginning, an end, and a way of unfolding. A teacher who does not know this method can give you a *mantra*, or some advice, but not *Vedānta*. It is a very great tragedy to have a teacher who is not able to teach properly and such a teacher is bound to be confusing. Only *Bhagavān* can save a person in such a situation because there is an emotional investment in one's teacher, which makes it very difficult to be objective and make proper choices. Therefore, when you choose a teacher, make sure that he has *saṃpradāya*, tradition. For those who do not have such a teacher, *Śaṅkara* agrees that the certainty in knowledge of *ātmā*, the *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, is very difficult to accomplish.

IT IS ALSO DIFFICULT FOR THOSE WITH NO PREPARATION OR HAVE NOT DONE PROPER ŚRAVAṆA, MANANA AND NIDIDHYĀSANA

Then, having the right teacher alone is not enough. You must listen to him unfold *Vedānta*. For those who have not heard the *vedānta-śāstra* taught properly, certainty in the knowledge of *ātmā* is also difficult to accomplish. Further, even though one has a traditional teacher and has listened to him teach *Vedānta* for some time, it is still possible that certainty in the knowledge of *ātmā* is difficult to accomplish. Why? Some further preparation is required. And also for those whose minds are totally committed to external objects, *atyanta-bahirviṣaya-āsakta-buddhīnām*, this *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is very difficult. External objects include heaven also. You must know that. A person whose mind is preoccupied with externals has not yet discovered the proper value of things and does not have his priorities properly arranged. If *puruṣārtha*, what one really seeks in life, is not very well understood, then the mind is committed to varieties of things and does not stay with the pursuit. What is lacking is objectivity, *vairāgya*, and mental composure, *samādhāna*.

Śaṅkara says again that it is also difficult for those who have not put in proper effort with reference to *pramāṇas, pramāṇeṣu akṛta-śramāṇām*. Even if a seeker has all this, he or she still has to do *manana*. Suppose one has doubts, which is possible because, here, the whole thing is in the form of knowing. Knowledge has to be free from doubts, and to free it from doubts one requires *manana*. For that, proper effort has to be made with reference to various *pramāṇas*, like perception, inference, etc. You may have a doubt on the basis of experience, or logic, and you must analyse what exactly created that doubt. What is the logic of the argument or the data, on the basis of which the doubt occurred? That has to be analysed. Otherwise, everything will seem all right, which means that nothing is all right.

So, clarity in this knowledge is also difficult to accomplish for those who are not equipped to do this kind of analysis. If what *Vedānta* says is true, then every argument that is given against *Vedānta* must be fallacious, and the fallacy of the argument has to be seen. There cannot be any accommodation at all in this. Any conclusion that is different from what *Vedānta* says, is not just different; it is contradictory. *Vedānta* says that you are *Brahman*. An opinion other than that is going to be just the opposite, for *Brahman* is limitless, and what is not *Brahman* is limited. Any other conclusion amounts to saying, 'I am limited,' whether you consider the self to be *śūnya*, void, *kṣaṇika*, momentary, *baddha*, bound, or anything else. That is why the *Kenopaniṣad* says, '*iha cetavedīt atha satyam asti*—if anyone were to know here, in this life (about the *ātmā*), then there is truth (in his life).'¹ On the other hand, the *Upaniṣad* continues, '*na cet iha vedīt mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ*—if one were not to know, then, the loss is infinite.' The reasoning is simple. If you commit a mistake about your being the infinite, the loss

¹*Kenopaniṣad* – 2-5

is infinite. Therefore, in order to negate all the notions about ourselves, we require *manana*. This is difficult for people who have not made adequate effort in employing the different means of knowledge, and who seem to accept everything that is said as true.

From this we understand that certainty in the knowledge of *ātmā* being *Brahman* is easy to attain for those who have a traditional teacher and have listened to him unfold *Vedānta*, if they also have a certain objectivity and are able to make proper and adequate use of the means of knowledge, the *pramāṇa*. For a wise person, there is no real duality, because the reality that was previously attributed to the knower-known situation is falsified. Other than the *ātmā*, there is no second thing because the knower is non-separate from consciousness, the instrument of knowledge is non-separate from consciousness, and the known object is also non-separate from consciousness. From the standpoint of consciousness, there is no separation at all.

JÑĀNĪ SEES NO REALITY IN EMPIRICAL EXPERIENCES

He will still have all the empirical experiences, but they now have no reality for him. In his vision, there is nothing other than *ātmā*. This has been shown all over the *Gītā* and *Śaṅkara* reminds us here of a verse in the second chapter which says that what all beings are awake to, the wise man sees as night, *yasyāṃ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ*.¹ In other words, for those people who have a proper teacher, and who can really analyse the *śāstra* properly, the meaning of the *śāstra* is like daylight. Just as you do not need to consult anyone about whether the sun is out or not, because it is so very evident, so too for these people, the self-revealing self is as clear as daylight. For others, who do not have these qualifications, it is like night. Thus, we have two visions here, and *Śaṅkara* says that while there is nothing easier, it is also difficult if the preparation is inadequate.

THE ELIMINATION OF BHEDABUDDHI ALONE HELPS THE BUDDHI TO ABIDE IN ĀTMASVARUPA

Therefore, the means for knowing the nature of the self is only removal of the concept of difference in ‘external’ forms. A mind, which objectifies an external object, is not a problem and is not opposed to *ātmā*. But the notion of external and internal, that this is external and I am the knower—this notion of difference between the knower and the known—is the problem, and this alone has to be removed. And the elimination of the conclusion of duality due to lack of discrimination, is the cause for gaining the knowledge and also certainty in the knowledge of the nature of *ātmā*. All that is necessary is the negation of the notion of difference, *bheda-buddhi*. Why? Never for anyone is *ātmā* not present. It is always available to everyone, and therefore, need not be reached, given up, or acquired. It is yourself, whether you know it or not. Everything you do is meant for *ātmā*. *Śaṅkara* will say later that all the objects, all the pursuits that you

¹ *Gītā* – 2-69

have, are for *ātmā*. Everything is for *ātmā*—even for the one who raises objections about the *ātmā*.

Therefore, everybody has the *ātmā* and it is known to everybody, but what a person concludes about himself belongs to his mind. Some think about it and conclude wrongly and some do not think about it and conclude wrongly. There is not much difference between the two. When we have lived with these funny notions for ages, and then someone comes and tells us that we are wrong, naturally we do not want to feel foolish. In fact, the foolish person is the one who hangs on to these notions. The intelligent one, the courageous person is the one who accepts that all these years he has been foolish. This is courage. In spite of all his investment of thought and heart in his notions, he is still able to say, ‘I was wrong.’ That is intellectual honesty; that is real courage. And that courage is required. It is one thing to correct a person who is mistaken through lack of thinking. To make a person think is not a very big problem. But for the so-called thinking person, to give up all the conclusions he has been nursing for so many years, is very difficult.

Thus, there is nothing to do here but remove all the errors about the *ātmā*. This error removal culminates in the recognition of *ātmā* being *Brahman*. You are not limited but limitless, not unreal but real, not ignorant but the very nature of knowledge, not bound but free. Because we have all these notions, the revealing of the nature of the self is in the form of negation.

REASONS TO SHOW THAT *ĀTMĀ* IS ALWAYS PRASIDDHA *ĀTMĀ* IS NOT UNKNOWN TO ANYONE AT ANYTIME

This removal of the notions of difference is the only way to appreciate the nature of the self, *ātmā*, because *ātmā* is never unavailable, *aprasiddha*, to anyone. It is always present and never totally unknown for it is always appreciated as the meaning of the word ‘I.’ Suppose there is an object, which is to be known by a means of knowledge. That object may be known to you, may not be known, and even if it is known, it might be forgotten. All of this is possible. *Ātmā*, however, is not available for any of the means of knowledge we have at our disposal. Nor does it require any means of knowledge, for when you say, ‘I am,’ that is *ātmā*.

ĀTMĀ IS TO BE NEITHER ACCOMPLISHED NOR GIVEN UP

This *ātmā* is not something that is to be accomplished, not something that we have to reach, or create, or know through a means of knowledge. Neither can *ātmā* be given up by us. We may give up a lot of things, but never *ātmā*, for the one who gives up is *ātmā*. This is where people can get into a problem. People want to give up the ego, *ahaṅkāra*, but it is just not possible because it is the *ahaṅkāra* that does the giving up. Giving up the *ahaṅkāra* is only possible by the knowledge that the *ahaṅkāra* is false.

By knowing that the *ahaṅkāra* has an existence that depends upon the *ātmā*—like the clay pot depends upon the clay—the *ahaṅkāra* is ‘given up.’ There is no other surrender of the ego. The one who wants to surrender is not *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*; it is the ego alone. A devotee will daily surrender everything to the Lord—wealth, body, mind, senses, etc. Why every day? Why is once not enough? Because he cannot give up the *ahaṅkāra* because it is not an object that you can give up; it is your self. This does not mean that there are two *ātmās* either. There is only one *ātmā*, either confused or enlightened. Whether *ātmā* is looked upon as *sat-cit-ānanda* or the *ahaṅkāra*, it cannot be given up by you, because, either way, it is yourself. Being yourself, you can neither approach nor get away from *ātmā*.

IF ĀTMĀ IS UNKNOWN ALL ACTIVITIES WILL BE MEANINGLESS

Then *Śaṅkara* says that if this *ātmā* were not there, *aprasiddha*, the undesirable consequence would be that all activity would be fruitless for the one who does it. All our activities are meant either to gain something or to get rid of something for ourselves. No matter what activity we undertake, it is only for our own sake; there is no such thing as doing something for the sake of another. If someone is in trouble and I try to help him or her out, it is for my own peace of mind. Any given mind has empathy and therefore, if anyone is in pain, that pain becomes my pain. Naturally, I want to get rid of it. All actions, even altruistic ones, are centred on oneself. This means that if the self is not there, all action is absolutely fruitless. When *ātmā* is not there, that is, when the doer or the enjoyer is not there, there is no purpose in any activity. Either you enjoy things or you do things in order to enjoy. These two, the enjoyer, and the doer go together and are mutually dependent. Enjoyment is not possible without the enjoyer, much less is it possible without the agent to produce it. And the agent will not undertake an action if he is not going to be there to enjoy it.

Any *karma* implies an agent, *kartā*. Whether agency is real or not is another question. We are not eliminating the agent here, but the notion that *ātmā* is the agent. Either a person is doing an action or enjoying the results of an action; the same *ātmā* is either agent, *kartā*, or enjoyer, *bhoktā*. If that *ātmā* is not there, *aprasiddha*, all activities become absolutely useless. Nor is this possible. Even if you accept that the activities can be useless, you still cannot perform an action without your being there. It is just not possible. Therefore, *ātmā* is *prasiddha* and all the *karmas* we do are only for the *prasiddha-ātmā*. The fact that our life is full of activities proves that *ātmā* is there. It is not an inference.

Further, *Śaṅkara* says that we cannot say that we do all these things for the sake of something that is inert, like the physical body. If I say that my body is not doing well, and therefore I am giving it some exercise, or massage, it is not for the body's sake; it is for my sake. Even if I want to listen to music, it is not for the eardrum's sake. The eardrum does not want all these noises, etc.; it is all for my sake alone. Therefore, it is

not possible to even imagine that all the activities we do are meant for the body, etc. The body itself does not have any desire for any action to be performed on its behalf.

THE PURPOSE OF ALL ACTIVITY RESOLVES IN REACHING ONESELF

Then someone argues that even though it is true that activities are not for the body or the senses or the mind, because they are inert, still, they are for the sake of some happiness. That is not totally true. Why? Because the purpose of all activity resolves in reaching the self. If a person performs an action to enjoy a result, it is so that he will be happy. It is all only for one's own sake, one's own happiness, not for an entity called happiness. *Ātmā* may be happiness, that is another thing, but all action is only for one's own happiness, not for the sake of happiness, *sukha*. Similarly, there is activity to eliminate pain, not for the sake of the pain, *duḥkha*, but for one's own sake. It is always for *ātmā* alone. The end, *avasāna*, is reaching oneself, *ātma-avagati*.

Suppose you see an object, a flower, for example. The eyes pick up stimuli in the form of light reflected from the flower. They form a frame, which is the thought of the flower. Where does the object of the thought go and resolve? All objects—all forms, all sounds, all tastes, all smells, and all types of touch—go and fall at the feet of *ātmā*, consciousness, *caitanya*. Varieties of people—some who say nice words, some harsh words—all go and reach whom? Only *ātmā*. If you are aware of the fact that, all harsh words and all good words go and resolve in *ātmā*, then there will be no excessive rejoicing or aversion—*na abhinandati na dveṣṭi*.

But suppose I do not know that *ātmā*, *caitanya*, is myself. Then I take myself to be the body-mind-sense-complex, and thus, being small, either I feel bigger in the wake of something pleasant, or I react in the wake of something unpleasant. The harsh words people say bounce back and there is a reaction. When ten people are standing together and someone from behind calls 'John' or 'Mary' one of them may turn around. But if someone calls, 'Idiot,' all of them will turn. Everyone has a doubt inside about himself or herself, and therefore, there is a reaction. But if you analyse it, the word 'idiot' was received by the mind, and that particular object was illumined by *caitanya*, *ātmā*. The word, having given you the meaning in the form of a thought, *vṛtti*, just resolves immediately. Where does it resolve? Only in the *caitanya-ātmā*. Therefore, all activities have their end in you. Their only purpose is to reach *ātmā*—nowhere else.

Suppose you do some good *karma* like performing a ritual. To whom does the result of the ritual go? Only to *ātmā*. A result of any kind—*puṇya*, *pāpa*, *sukha*, *duḥkha*, *drṣṭa* or *adrṣṭa*—goes to *ātmā* alone. All activity, *vyavahāra*, has its end only in reaching you. In seeing any object, the sight has its end in reaching you; in hearing, the *śabda*, sound, has its end in reaching you. Therefore, all activities have the status of reaching you, the *ātmā*, finally. Whether it is a 'known you,' or 'an unknown you,' 'a well understood you,' or 'a not very well-understood you,' it is very much there,

prasiddha. Whether enlightened or not, all activity always reaches you. Whatever we do, even our simple daily routine is all done for the sake of our own fulfilment. My daily walk is not meant for the park. It is not that without seeing me, the park will suffer, and therefore, I walk there. It is for my sake. Every activity has its end in *ātmā* alone. Think it over.

Even if the person is enlightened, and therefore, seeing everything as himself, when he reaches out to do something for someone, it is all only for *ātmā*. There is no one else. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘There is nothing for me to accomplish which I have not yet accomplished, yet I remain always in activity—*na anavāptam avāptavyaṃ varta eva ca karmaṇi*.’¹ Whether it is as a result of the prayers of the people, or because it is a thing to be done, even Lord *Kṛṣṇa*’s actions, resolve into *ātmā* alone; and they leave it untouched. Therefore *Kṛṣṇa* said *‘na māṃ karmāṇi limpanti*.’² Even the notion of ‘I,’ the *ahaṅkāra*, finally goes to the *ātmā*.

ĀTMĀ IS WELL ACCOMPLISHED FOR THE DISCRIMINATING

Śaṅkara now establishes here, that gaining certainty in the knowledge of *ātmā* is very well-accomplished, *suprasiddha*, for those who are discriminating. Suppose you want to distinctly understand a given object among other objects. Your eyes converge upon the object creating the sight of the object, and that sight excludes every other object. This is called *pramāṇa-paricchedana*. By a given *pramāṇa*, that is, the eyes, the object is *paricchinna*, limited in the sense that it is the object of your sight, which excludes every other object. Now in order to know my own physical body, what kind of *pramāṇa* must I use? Perception? Inference? Though the eyes see the body all right, they only see the attributes of the body, like its colour, etc. And further, if the eyes are blind, I still know that this is my body. Even if the eyes can see but there is total darkness, I do not go searching for my body in the dark! Impossible. In order to distinguish my body from every other body, no *pramāṇa* is necessary because there is no confusion. Just as you search out your own shoes or umbrella or coat from among those of others, do you search for your body?

Nobody has this problem. Why? Because it is never away from your presence, from you the witness, *sākṣī*, once you are awake. When you are sleeping you do not search for your body because the body does not come into the picture, and when you are dreaming, you have a body of your own there and have no occasion to search for this one. When you are awake you are not searching for this body because you search for something only when it is away from you, or though there, still not recognized. But here, there is no such thing. Because it is known by you, the witness, and because one sense

¹ *Gītā* – 3-22

² *Gītā* – 4-14

organ, the sense of touch, covers the entire body, no other means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, is required to distinguish your body from all other bodies.

AS NO PRAMĀṆA IS NECESSARY TO KNOW ONE'S BODY, NO PRAMĀṆA IS NECESSARY TO KNOW THE ĀTMĀ

When the various means of knowledge, like inference, etc., are not necessary to know your physical body, how much more so is this true for *ātmā*, which is even closer to you than the body? The body, though it is known by the witness, *sākṣivedya*, is still an object of your consciousness, but *ātmā* is just you. There is nothing more inner or closer than that. However, it is not inner in the sense of some interior place to be reached. Time, space, all the sense organs are all simply *ātmā*, in that they have their being in *ātmā-caitanya* alone. It is not like the inner chamber, *antahpura*, that is the queen's quarters in a palace. There you have to cross all sorts of corridors and gatekeepers, and then women gate keepers and room after room until finally you can see the queen. You do not, in a similar way, first have to cross the *anna-maya-kośa*, then the *prāṇa-maya-kośa*, the *manomaya-kośa*, *vijñāna-maya-kośa*, and finally *ānanda-maya-kośa*, until you finally see *ātmā* sitting there glowing!

There is no such thing. Anything you see at any level, wherever you look, that sight itself, that object has its being in the *ātmā*. Nothing is away from the *ātmā*. Therefore, whether it is a sound heard, or a sight seen, or any form of experience you have at any time, whether you are thinking foolishly or in a very enlightened way, *ātmā* is the basis, like the water is the basis of the wave. *Ātmā* being 'the innermost,' *antarātmā*, is simply the basis of everything, while it itself neither has nor requires any other basis. Being the ear of the ear, eye of the eye, mind of the mind, *śrotrasya śrotram*, *cakṣusaḥ cakṣuḥ*, *manaso manaḥ*, *ātmā* is therefore, said to be 'the innermost.' For the recognition of that *ātmā* you do not require any *pramāṇa*, not perception, inference, etc., or even the Veda. Why? Because all recognition is due to the presence of *ātmā*. Therefore, gaining certainty in the recognition of the *ātmā*, by negating what it is not, is very well accomplished for discriminative people.

WITHOUT ĀTMĀCAITANYA NO KNOWLEDGE IS POSSIBLE—THEREFORE ĀTMĀ IS PRASIDDHA

Further, it has to be accepted that knowledge is always present. The knowledge that is consciousness has no form, *nirākāra*. Generally, knowledge has a form, an object, *sākāra*. There are some who say that knowledge that does not have an object, that is, *jñāna*, which is *nirākāra*, cannot be known—it is *apratyakṣa*. In this contention, *ātmā* which is pure consciousness, which has no form whatsoever, cannot be known. Even those who hold such a view, *Śaṅkara* says, have to accept that knowledge is always present, since knowledge of an object is always through knowledge. Gaining the knowledge of an object always implies the presence of formless knowledge.

It must be there in order to gain the consciousness of a pot, for example, because a pot is nothing but consciousness plus a given name and form, *nāma-rūpa*. To gain knowledge of a pot there must be another knowledge, which does not have any form. If that knowledge also has a form, its form will get superimposed upon the pot and the ‘pot-knowledge’ will be defective. No so-called ‘object-knowledge’ is possible without the objectless consciousness. That consciousness joins every object so that object-consciousness is nothing but objectless consciousness plus a so-called object mixed together. Without objectless consciousness, there is no object-consciousness. Therefore, objectless consciousness is always present, *prasiddha*. Śaṅkara likens it to the presence of happiness, *sukha* or sorrow, *duḥkha*. You do not need to operate any means of knowledge to know your own happiness or sorrow. Its presence is evident to you. Similarly, *ātmā* is always evident to you, without requiring any means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*. It is that in whose presence alone all activity involving a means of knowledge, object of knowledge, and so on, take place.

WITHOUT ĀTMACAITANYA NO DESIRE IS POSSIBLE—THEREFORE ĀTMĀ IS PRASIDDHA

Śaṅkara gives further reasoning for this. If consciousness is not absolutely present, there would be no desire to know anything because a desire to know is not tenable without the presence of the knower. If *ātmā* is totally unknown to you, if it is not self-evident, who is going to inquire? The one who is going to inquire is indeed the *ātmā*, consciousness, and therefore, a desire to know anything, including the *ātmā*, the consciousness, is not tenable. I cannot say that I have a desire to know consciousness, because to say that, I must be consciousness. Suppose I say that consciousness is an object that I have to know; it is the object of my desire to know, like a pot, for instance. Then we have to ask whether the one who wants to know is a conscious being or not. No person who wants to know can be inert. Hence, it has to be conceded that the person is conscious. Since the person is conscious, how can that consciousness be an object of a means of knowledge through which he or she is going to understand this consciousness? Being the nature, *svarūpa*, of the very inquirer, consciousness is not something that one desires to know. One can desire to know *Brahman* but not *ātmā*. That is why the *śāstra* says, ‘*athā’to brahmajijñāsā—therefore, thereafter, there is the desire to know Brahman.*’¹ *Ātmā* does not become the object of inquiry. It is the consciousness because of which one knows everything else.

Let us look at this again more closely. If this consciousness which is the nature of the *ātmā* is not evident, what will happen? Then one would have a desire to know it, like any other object to be known. If the consciousness that is the *ātmā* is something that is not known, then it becomes an object which you have got to know, and requires a means of knowledge in order to be known. Just as a pot, for instance, becomes an object of

¹ *Brahmasūtra* – 1-1-1

inquiry, similarly consciousness would become an object to inquire into and know. Is there such a thing? No, there is no such thing. If there is 'someone' to whom consciousness is unknown, that 'person' has to be inert. And if he is inert, how is he going to have a desire to know anything? Something inert cannot even wish to know a pot, let alone consciousness. Consciousness is the nature of the self. No one has any doubt about it. No one wonders if he or she is a conscious being or not. Even if one thinks over the matter and concludes that one is not conscious, only a conscious being can make that conclusion. Something inert is not going to conclude that it is inert or conscious. Therefore, since it is not inquired into, it is evident that consciousness is self-evident.

There are some people who believe that there is a super-consciousness beyond the body-mind-sense-complex, and are searching for it in all seriousness. They will be searching for eternity and still missing it because the one who is searching is the only consciousness there is. Therefore, because consciousness does not become the object of a desire to know, it is totally self-evident. There is no living being to whom consciousness is not present. Even a mosquito is aware of itself. It may not know the word 'mosquito' but it is able to recognize other mosquitoes, even though there are so many insects of the size of a mosquito. To that extent, it is self-conscious.

Thus, since consciousness is always present, so also, *Śaṅkara* says, is the knower. In the one who wants to know something, consciousness is already present as a knower. Then, in order to know a given object he employs an appropriate means of knowledge. Suppose you have to see a form or a colour. What do you do? You do not close your eyes and try to see the colour through your ear. You always open your eyes because you know that the eyes are the appropriate means of knowledge here. Who is the person that handles the means of knowledge? It is the knower, *jñātā*, in whom consciousness is present. Thus, the knower also is not unknown, but present, *prasiddha*. Nobody finds it necessary to use a means of knowledge to discover the knower because it is never absent when there is something to be known. Consciousness assumes the status of a knower with reference to an object to be known, and therefore, becomes, as it were, the knower, *jñātā*.

In conclusion, *Śaṅkara* says that because of all this, no effort is to be made in self-knowledge. In fact, in any knowledge, there is no effort. If the object of knowledge and the means of knowledge are there, knowledge takes place effortlessly. At least operation of a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa-vyāpāra*, is required in empirical knowledge, but in the knowledge that one is conscious, no operation of a *pramāṇa* is required. But the *śāstra* says that *ātmā* is *Brahman*, which is nothing but consciousness. 'To know that, all that is necessary is to remove from *ātmā*, the notion of what is not the self,' says *Śaṅkara*. Because *ātmā* is *Brahman*, if it is taken for anything other than that, naturally *ātmā* becomes 'not-*Brahman-abrahma*.' Therefore, all that has to be done is the removal of the notion of 'I' in the *anātmā*. All the inquiry

we do is only to negate the *ātma-buddhi*, I-notion, in the *anātmā*. Any analysis that we do to remove doubts, etc., is only for that. We are not creating *Brahman* or embellishing the consciousness that is *ātmā* to make it become *Brahman*. *Ātmā* is *Brahman* which is limitless, being, as it is, pure consciousness. Thus, knowledge in the form of negation or dropping is required.

Which is more difficult in this world, lifting or dropping? Lifting is difficult; dropping is no problem at all. All you have to do is let go. Now, tell me, is *saṃsāra* good for you or bad for you? If it is good for you, dropping it is going to be difficult. If it is like a hot potato, how difficult is it? What effort is required? Do you have to consult somebody? If *saṃsāra* is fraught with pain, *duḥkha*, what should you do? Drop it. Where is the difficulty? Like a hot potato we have to drop all the notions we have about *ātmā*. That is why *Śaṅkara* says, finally, that *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is the most easy thing to accomplish, *susampādyā*. There is no difficulty there at all.

WHY SHOULD WE HAVE TWO WORDS, JÑĀNA AND JÑĀNANIṢṬHĀ?

At the same time, the mind seems to want to hold on to things, which are clearly not good for one at all. There is always someone who, even though holding a hot potato, keeps holding on to it, all the while complaining, ‘It is so hot, it is so hot, what shall I do?’ He says he wants to drop it, but it does not fall from his hand. The mind also seems to be like this. We do not know whether we are holding on to things or they are holding on to us. It is something like a person who was sitting on the bank of the river, which was full and deep. He wanted to reach the opposite shore but did not know how to swim. Then he saw something that looked like a log of wood, which came floating down the river. Slipping into the water, grabbed hold of it. He was so happy, thinking that he would be able to reach the other shore now. Then he found that his log of wood had a pair of hands and was grabbing him. He thought he had grabbed the log of wood, but the log of wood was grabbing him. He had grabbed on to a bear! What he thought was a solution to his difficulty turned out to be even more of a problem. Now he wants to get out of its grip but it is not that easy. He can neither let go of it, nor get along with it. This is what we call *saṃsāra*.

We keep holding on to our notions even though the nature of the self is self-evident and that is the nature of *Brahman*. All the words that indicate the nature of *Brahman* or the self, like *satya*, *jñāna*, *ananta*, or *śuddha* (pure), *buddha* (enlightened) *mukta* (free), etc., are only to eliminate the I-notion that we have in what is ‘not-I, *anātmā*.’ These words that are the *lakṣaṇa* of *Brahman* are meant to negate the varieties of notions we have about the *ātmā* based upon the *anātmā*. The properties of one have been superimposed upon the other and that has to be sorted out.

Even though the whole pursuit is in the form of dropping and we do have the capacity to drop, there seem to be some difficulties. People tell me all the time that they

understand this teaching very well, but still they are in pain. Not physical pain, but mental pain. This is only because of an incapacity to drop things. Why should they not drop something that is hurting them? They want to drop it; nobody wants to have pain. What causes mental pain, after all? It is nothing but a particular form of thinking. We do not even need to drop that thinking; we just need to understand that this thinking is just thinking. Then, you will find that you have nothing to do with pain. Just let the thinking be; you need not bother about it.

REMOVAL OF THE OBSTRUCTIONS TO GAINING THE RESULT OF JÑĀNA IS JÑĀNANIṢṬHĀ

If, in spite of understanding this, a person is not able to drop his notions, we have to say that the knowledge has some obstruction. The psychology of the human mind has its own logic, its own truth, and therefore we have what we call a commitment to the pursuit of knowledge—*jñāna-niṣṭhā*. Knowledge, *jñāna* is good enough. The conscious *ātmā* is self-evident and that consciousness, *ātmā*, is myself which is *Brahman*. It is so simple, but at the same time, there seems to be some difficulty. Therefore, the word *niṣṭhā* is added to *jñāna*. It is all based on the experience of seekers. It is against all logic, really speaking, because when *ātmā* is consciousness and that *ātmā* is *Brahman*, all you require is discrimination between *ātmā* and *anātmā*, *ātma-anātma-viveka*. The *śāstra* is the means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, which makes it very clear that the self, *ātmā*, is *Brahman*. It is eternal, *nitya*, it is pure, *śuddha*, it is limitless, *ananta*, it is unattached to anything, *asaṅga*, it is free, *mukta*, it is the basis for everything, the *adhiṣṭhāna*, the truth of everything, the *satya*, without which there is nothing. All that is here is *Brahman* and you are that *Brahman*. Where is the problem? Every word is clear. Still, even though a seeker has a proper teacher and has listened to the *śāstra* from that teacher, he or she goes on complaining. What does it mean? Seekers have their own experience, which defies all logic.

THE ROLE OF ŚRAVAṆA IN REMOVING THE OBSTRUCTIONS

Śaṅkara recognizes this, the *śāstra* recognizes this, and all the teachers, *ācāryas*, recognize this. Therefore, the *śāstra* says, ‘The self, my dear, is to be seen, inquired into, analysed and contemplated upon—*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ nididhyāsītavyaḥ*.’ The first two, seen and listened about, should be enough. The self is always present, *prasiddha*, but as a doer and an enjoyer; in a word, as a *saṃsārī*. It has to be known as *Brahman* which is not subject to any problem, for which we should give up the I-notion in what is not-I, *anātmā*, and remove all doubts about it through listening to the *śāstra*. The root ‘*śru*,’ to hear or listen, has the meaning of inquiring, *vicāraṇe*.

The *śāstra* says that *ātmā* which is *Brahman* is not a *saṃsārī*. That *śāstra* is in the form of words, and therefore, has to be analysed and understood by you. Only two instructions should be enough here. First, *ātmā* is to be seen, *draṣṭavyaḥ*. That is to

draw our attention to both our confusion and the solution. We have a confusion about the *ātmā*, thinking that it is a *saṃsārī* and that is why we have to know the *ātmā*. That is the solution. What should we do to know the *ātmā*? Listen to, inquire into the *śāstra*, *śrotavyaḥ*. That is enough. In listening to the *śāstra*, it is revealed that *ātmā* is *Brahman* and the operation of the *pramāṇa* to know *ātmā* is complete. It is like analysing a transparent object to see if it is a glass bead or a crystal. All you have to do is go close to it and check the properties of it, its weight, etc. That is enough. It is over.

Similarly, to know *ātmā*, you need to analyse it properly and for that, you require a mirror. An ordinary mirror will only reveal that you are the body, etc. You already know that. Such a mirror can perhaps give me a little more detail, but to know what I am, if there is a confusion, I require another type of mirror which will reveal the real me. That mirror is in the form of words and is called *Vedānta*. When I look into the word mirror that is called *Vedānta*, what do I see? *Sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Through the word-mirror I recognize that *ātmā* is *paraṃ brahma*. Then what should I do? *Śāstra* reveals that *ātmā* is *Brahman*. No effort is required for that knowledge to take place.

THE ROLE OF MANANA IN REMOVING THE OBSTRUCTIONS

In spite of that, even though there is no effort to be made, still the *śāstra* recognizes that people do not always come away knowing the *ātmā* just because they listen to the *śāstra*. Sometimes it only creates more doubt. A person may have had some doubts about himself before listening to the *śāstra*, but listening seems to have created new doubts, because he is turning his attention towards himself. Previously his problem was whether somebody loved him or not. Now he wonders, 'Do I love myself?' All because of the *vedānta-śāstra*. This is very natural, because *Vedānta* turns everything towards yourself. *Vedānta* says you are nothing but love.

There is no reason for you not to love yourself. But this fellow says, 'I do not love myself. I am only 5' 6" and I don't like it at all.' What does it mean? This fellow has a confusion about *ātmā*. He thinks it is the body. If the body is *ātmā*, how can you love yourself? And if the mind is *ātmā*, of course you cannot love yourself.

And again, there are others who will protest that you cannot be *Īśvara*, since you are not omniscient, etc. Initially you had your own doubts about yourself, and there were ordinary people to confirm them, but now you find there are philosophers, religious people, and even huge organisations with millions of followers confirming your misgivings about yourself. When all these people are protesting against your being *Brahman*, there is a pressure to conform.

At least in listening to *Vedānta* I thought, 'I am not that bad!' When the *ṛṣis* say that I am wonderful, definitely I cannot dismiss their desirable vision and conclude the opposite, that I am not wonderful. But when all these people gang up against me,

perhaps it is better to be one of the gang. Otherwise, I am one against so many. I am as lonely as non-dual *Brahman*.

What *Vedānta* says is so desirable because it tells me I am *ānanda*, I am everything. And there seems to be some logic to it, and also, the confirmation of my own experience. No matter how depressed I may have been, there has always been moments when I laughed with abandon at a joke. What does it mean? I have to do an analysis, *manana*, and compare what all these various schools of thought that challenge the vision of *Vedānta* say to my own insight about myself and determine which is true in the light of what the *śāstra* says. I have to determine if there is any truth in what they say or not. It all has to be thoroughly analysed. Therefore, the *śāstra* says *ātmā vā are mantavyaḥ*.

Sometimes you will hear people say that they have a conviction that *ātmā* is *Brahman*. Those who have great conviction in the *ātma-jñāna* are all victims of wrong thinking. I can have a conviction that I will go to hell. That is OK. But *ātma-jñāna* has nothing to do with conviction. Conviction is mental; it is some kind of a thinking, some kind of hope, etc., which moves you to commit yourself to something. But this is not a matter for conviction. I know what I am. Then what? I have no problem.

THE ROLE OF NIDIDHYĀSANA IN REMOVING THE OBSTRUCTIONS

After years of studying *Vedānta*, we can see people saying, ‘I know I am *Brahman*, but...’ The ‘but’ seems to remain. The first ‘but’ is, ‘Am I *Brahman*?’ Then one says, ‘Yes, the *śāstra* says so and it is made clear by inquiring into the *śāstra*, by *śravaṇa*.’ And now the second ‘but’ comes up. ‘But am I really what the *śāstra* says?’ That doubt is also removed by analysing what the *śāstra* says, by *manana*. After *manana* it looks as though one has to admit that I do know that I am *Brahman*. But the ‘but’ seems to continue. Then what is the problem? Then the third ‘but’ comes up and one says, ‘Swamiji, I know I that am *Brahman*, but I do not behave like I am *Brahman*. I still have fear, worry, etc. If I am *Brahman* how can I get worried?’ This is because the knowledge that I am the limitless *Brahman*, full, and complete, is not yet completely owned up. This owning up requires sitting down quietly and owning up this fact about myself and removing all subtle obstructions that prevent this owning up. This is called *nididhyāsana*.

The obstructions are always due to old habit. I have the age-old habit of considering myself to be small and insignificant. Worry comes out of the small ‘I,’ not out of the big ‘I.’ In fact, worry, concern, anxiety, panic, are all born of the child in us. It is not even the small person; it is the smallest, the child. Even though the body has grown to become an adult, a child remains buried under the adulthood. When you reach forty, it begins to probe its way to the surface. It can wait for forty years, not more than that. After that, it cannot remain hidden any longer. Thus, there seems to be a condition in which your experience is opposed to what you know, a *viparīta-bhāvanā*. It is purely

due to childhood. That is why we can call it habit or *kaṣāya*. We can call it anything as long as we understand that it is all from the past. It has nothing to do with the present. Events of the present only serve as a trigger to awaken unresolved issues from the past. The anger that comes for the small thing that happened today is not appropriate to what happened today. Even an ordinary person who does not know anything about *Brahman* can see that the anger that this situation evokes is too great for the situation. It is something like hanging a person for a traffic violation. The reaction is not appropriate at all. Therefore, we understand there is some *kaṣāya*, or whatever you want to call it, from the past.

By the past, we do not mean past *karma*. That can only create situations wherein you can feel happy or unhappy, depending on your own disposition. It can give you a disease, or some external mishap, etc., which are not conducive for comfortable living. But it cannot give sorrow, *duḥkha*; that comes purely from your self. And the self is *Brahman*, in which any situation is simply absorbed. Where is the question of a reaction of anger, etc.? The one who is free and full, who knows he is *Brahman*, cannot be angry.

Once two swamis that I know—one was perhaps in his forties, the other, in his fifties—were discussing some verses in *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* where there is a description of a *jñānī*, a wise person. The description of the wise person by the *śāstra* is meant to be a *praśaṃsā*, praise, and not to make any judgement about who is a *jñānī*. The description is purely meant to inspire a person so that he would love to become a *jñānī* and therefore, pursue knowledge. And sometimes, in the description of a *jñānī*, we understand the nature of the knowledge itself and so it becomes a means to reveal the *vastu*.

One of these swamis, the older one, was explaining the meaning of a verse describing a *jñānī*. The younger one, who was a little better educated, said, ‘Swamiji, how can we discuss what a *jñānī* is, unless we are *jñānīs* ourselves?’ At this question, the older swami got very angry! ‘How can you say that I am not a *jñānī*?’ he said and he walked out. Later he left that place for good.

This kind of behaviour is all due to childhood problems. The issue here is not what makes a *jñānī* or who is a *jñānī*, but what is this knowledge, *jñāna*? *Ātmā* is *Brahman*. Either you know this fact or you do not know it. Nobody can say anything about this. Even to say ‘I am a *jñānī*’ is a silly thing. The one who knows that he is *Brahman* will not say he is a *jñānī*; he will say, ‘I am *Brahman*!’ Whether one is a *jñānī* or an *ajñānī* is not a matter for discussion.

It is a matter of understanding what the knowledge is, a process of learning and getting clarity. It is silly to say somebody is enlightened and somebody is not enlightened. We are not here to make a judgement about anybody nor about ourselves. I neither say anything about myself, nor about others. Free from judgement, I simply

enjoy the process of knowing. Where is the question of judgement? It is not that on a particular day I got up enlightened. *Ātmā* is always present, *nitya-siddha*; it is not an event. *Śāstra* says that you are always enlightened, *nitya-buddha*, always liberated, *nitya-mukta*. So where is the problem? How can anyone say that he got enlightened at a particular time on a particular day? It is not that suddenly everything becomes clear. You are always enlightened.

On superficial analysis, the situation in which the elder swami got angry looks justifiable; because according to him, he is a *jñānī* and somebody insinuated that he is not. But on the other hand, if one looks carefully it is not justifiable at all. That is why the other Swami said, 'If he is a *jñānī*, he is fulfilled, *āpta-kāmī*, and there should be no anger.' For an *āpta-kāmī*, situations that may make others angry are like one drop of water dropping into the ocean. What will happen? Nothing. It just gets lost. Similarly, if you are limitless, *akhaṇḍam brahma*, what is it that he is going to respond to? If at all there is response, it will be laughter. Some joy, some empathy, compassion, love can be there. Where is anger? There is no possibility at all.

Perhaps the Swami who got angry did have the understanding of the *śāstra*. In spite of understanding, if there is still inappropriate anger, inappropriate hatred, and inappropriate sorrow, we call that *viparīta-bhāvanā*. For that we have contemplation on what we know, *nididhyāsana*. Thus, the *śāstra* says, *ātmā vā are nididhyāsitavyaḥ*—the *ātmā* has to be contemplated upon. And all the *viparīta-bhāvanās* have to be removed by this contemplation. With that in view, the *śāstra* adds one more word—*jñāna-niṣṭhā*.

This *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is a knowledge, which has no obstruction whatsoever. Why is such a word necessary? Because of the experience of the seekers, *mumukṣus*. It is not logical at all, but that is how it is. Without taking this into account, there are some teachers who will just advise a seeker who has some problem to dismiss it all as *mithyā*. If he says he feels bad, the teacher will ask him, 'What is bad? Your body? Your mind? *Ātmā*? There is no badness; it is all *mithyā*. Forget it.' This is all correct, but it is a thing to be understood, not passed off as advice in a cryptic sentence. Neither the person who uses that sentence knows anything, nor does the one who receives the sentence gains anything. They just have some words. That this is *mithyā* or *mayā* is a thing to be discovered. It is not a matter for advice. If it is handled by advice, the problem remains a problem. The *śāstra* recognizes the problem and shows us how to address it through a life of prayer, proper attitude and finally, by what is called *nididhyāsana*, contemplation. It is this contemplation that removes the notion we have of ourselves that is opposed to what we know, *viparīta-bhāvanā*, and leads to *jñāna-niṣṭhā*.

giving up; रोगं ह्युद्वेष्टौ rāga -dveṣau — likes and dislikes; अस्मिन् येन सैव vyudasya ca — and giving up

The one who endowed with a mind that is very clear, mastering the body-mind-sense-complex, being endowed with firm resolve, and giving up the sense objects such as sound, etc., and giving up likes and dislikes...

एवमेवोद्यते त्वं लघ्वशी चैव यो यो ददाति ह्येवम्*

वक्ष्ये तान्मेत्सु खैरात् एतन्मया यो यो ददाति ॥५२॥

viviktasevī lghvāśī yata-vākkāyamānaśḥ

dhyānayogaparo nityaṃ vairāgyaṃ samupāśritaḥ

Verse 52

एवमेवोद्यते viviktasevī — one who lives in a quiet place; त्वं लघ्वशी lghvāśī — one who eats lightly; अस्मिन् येन सैव एवम् yata-vākkāyamānaśḥ — one whose speech, body and mind are mastered; वक्ष्ये तान्मेत्सु dhyāna -yoga -paraḥ — one who is committed to contemplation; खैरात् एतन्मया nityaṃ — always; एतन्मया vairāgyaṃ — freedom from longing; यो यो ददाति samupāśritaḥ — who has completely resorted to

The one who lives in a quiet place, who eats lightly, whose speech, body and mind are mastered, who is always committed to contemplation, who has completely resorted to freedom from longing...

+ अहंकारं बलं दारपम क्रोधमपि विग्रहं

एवमेष खैरैश्च शान्तिर्यावद्भक्तो यो यो ददाति ॥५३॥

ahaṅkāraṃ balaṃ darpaṃ krodhaṃ paraigrahaṃ

vimucya nirmamaḥ śānto brahmabhūyāya kalpate

Verse 53

+ अहंकारं ahaṅkāraṃ — misplaced I-sense; बलं balaṃ — power; दारपम darpaṃ — vainfulness; क्रोधं krodhaṃ — binding desire; विग्रहं vi-grahaṃ — anger; एतन्मया nityaṃ — ownership (of external things); एवमेष evameśaḥ — giving up; खैरैश्च nirmamaḥ — the one who has no sense of ownership (of his own body, etc.); शान्तिर्यावद् śāntaḥ — the one who is tranquil; यो यो ददाति brahmabhūyāya kalpate — is fit for certainty about being *Brahman*

Giving up misplaced I-sense, power, vainfulness, binding desire, anger, ownership (of external things), the one who has no sense of ownership (of his own body, etc.), and who is tranquil, is fit for certainty about being *Brahman*.

THE WAY TO PURSUE JÑĀNANIṢṬHĀ

The one who follows all the things prescribed here becomes qualified to ‘become’ *Brahman*, *brahmabhūyāya kalpate*—he is fit to gain *niṣṭhā* in the knowledge of *Brahman* being himself. Here, the various qualifications mentioned throughout the *Gītā* are brought together in these three verses.

A person who has lived a life of *karma-yoga*, a prayerful life, for a length of time, is endowed with a mind that is very clear, *buddhyā viśuddhayā yuktaḥ*. He no longer has any confusion about what he seeks in life. Because he is very clear about what he wants, he does not attribute to things a value, which they do not have, and get carried away by false pursuits. This clarity about what is to be accomplished in life makes him free from the hold of likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*.

Dhṛti is courage backed by proper discrimination—a firm resolve with proper attitude. *Ātmā* here means the physical body-mind-sense-complex. *Niyamya*, gaining mastery, over the physical body-mind-sense-complex means making it serve oneself as a vehicle, rather than it being a project. Maintenance of the body and keeping the mind and senses busy to satisfy their demands becomes an all-consuming project if one lacks proper discrimination and the capacity to act on the basis of that *viveka*. For the one who recognizes that the purpose of life is not satisfying fancies, and has a commitment to his pursuit of *mokṣa*, the physical body-mind-sense-complex becomes a vehicle for his pursuit. This is with reference to contemplation, and also, lifestyle. Keeping the body-mind-sense-complex under his control, means, not using it to satisfy fancies, and living a very conscious, deliberate life with the end, *mokṣa*, always in view. Thus, this person, *dhṛtyā*, with a firm resolve, *ātmānaṃ niyamya*, gaining a mastery over his body-mind-sense-complex, comes to abide in *Brahman*.

Here we are talking about a life of renunciation, the life of a *sannyāsī*. This involves giving up pursuit of the sense objects. So, *Kṛṣṇa* says *śabdādīn viśayān tyaktvā*. The five sense objects, sound, touch, taste, form, and scent, *śabda-sparśa-rūpa-rasa-gandhas*, are not pursued as ends. He does not completely abandon all of them, for that would mean giving up food, for instance, which would lead to death. He is pursuing *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, and to do this, he must have his body properly maintained. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* makes a note here that except those required for maintenance of the body, he gives up all other pursuits. With reference to situations and things that are necessary for the sustenance of the body, there are likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*, even for a *sannyāsī*. Those also, he gives up. His is a life totally dedicated to the pursuit of *jñāna-niṣṭhā*.

Generally, as a *sannyāsī*, one lives a life of a mendicant. A *sannyāsī* is told to live this particular lifestyle as a *sādhana*. He is supposed to move around, staying only three nights in one place. The idea is that he does not develop roots anywhere. But when the pursuit is *jñāna-niṣṭhā* even that stops. He lives in a quiet place, *vivikta-deśa*. He has to

stay in one place in order to gain this *niṣṭhā*. *Vivikta-deśa* is a place which is free from people, and therefore, from noise. *Śaṅkara* says it can be a forest, or a sandy bank of a river, or a hill or a cave. The idea is that it should be a quiet place. The one who has the disposition to live in such a place, and follows that inclination, is *vivikta-sevī*. This is a person who is given to a life of contemplation. If you go to a quiet place and are not ready for contemplation, you will only feel lonely and spend your time writing letters to everybody and seeking other diversions. Or, you will leave the place.

When he is doing only contemplation, there is not much expenditure of energy and, therefore, he is a person whose food intake is light, *laghvāsī*. He does not eat too much, nor is he fasting all the time. Neither is conducive for contemplation. He eats moderately. *Śaṅkara* says he should eat lightly to ward off obstructions to his contemplation like sleep, etc. If he is over-eating, too much blood is used for digestion, and not enough is available for the mind. Limited food intake is very important for a contemplative life because when you have nothing else to do, the tendency is to sleep. And to contemplate, one has to have a bright mind that is fresh and contemplative.

A person who is committed to a life of *jñāna-niṣṭhā*—whether he wants to convert his knowledge into *niṣṭhā*, or gain the knowledge and convert it into *niṣṭhā*—must necessarily have mastery over his speech, organs of action, and mind. He should be a *yata-vāk-kāya-mānasa*. This is accomplished only by practice. With reference to the organs of action, there is no wasted activity, no mechanical action. Buddhist monks are very diligent in their practice of this. They are very careful about the movements of all their limbs. This alertness with reference to one's movements is an important discipline.

Similarly, with reference to talking, there is a certain mastery. Since he is living in a quiet, relatively isolated place, there are not many occasions to talk, but still, as a person, he has to have taken care of the pressure to talk. Otherwise, he will be raving. If there is nobody to talk to, it will not take very long for him to begin talking to himself, or the trees, or the mountains. If there is a pressure to talk, you must talk. To avoid it, is dangerous. Therefore, he should be a person who already has control over speaking. Then he can be a *vivikta-sevī*. And his mind also is taken care of. That is why a contemplative life is meant for a *sannyāsī* who has lived a life of *karma-yoga*. A person gains this kind of disposition by living in the midst of society with the right attitude. If he then chooses to live a life of *sannyāsa*, that is the life for him.

Such a person is totally committed to contemplation, *dhyāna-yoga-para*. There are two ways of explaining the compound *dhyāna-yoga-para*. The one who is committed to a life of meditation, *dhyāna-yoga*, can be called *dhyāna-yoga-para*. Or, according to *Śaṅkara*, *dhyāna* means contemplation upon the nature of *ātmā*, while *yoga* means making *ātmā* the single focus of attention. I try to direct my attention to the words that I have come to understand with the help of the *śāstra*, and appreciate the meaning as myself. The self is all this—*ātmā idaṃ sarvam*; this self is complete—

ayam ātmā pūrṇaḥ; the self is pure—*ātmā śuddhaḥ*; the self is always free—*ātmā nitya-muktaḥ*; the self is limitless *Brahman*—*ātmā paraṃ brahma*; the self is the cause of everything—*ātmā sarvasya kāraṇam*.

This *śabda-anuviddha-savikalpa-samādhi* is called *dhyāna*. The entire *vedānta-śāstra* talks about *ātmā* and what it says is to be applied with reference to *ātmā*. When I commit my mind to the *śruti*'s vision of myself, that is called *dhyāna*. Then *yoga* is gaining an absorption in that contemplation. This presupposes a commitment to bringing the mind again and again to that point. That alone is kept in view, nothing else. If anything else comes, you again bring the mind back to what you are contemplating upon. This is called *yoga*.

The one who is committed to this does nothing else significant. *Dhyāna-yoga* alone is the commitment. He does it all the time—*nityam*. That is why this verse is for a *sannyāsī*. If he is a *karma-yogī*, he cannot do *dhyāna* all the time. He has duties to do. The word *nityam* reveals that he is a *sannyāsī*. Secondly, *Śaṅkara* says that, the mention of the word *nityam* qualifying the word *dhyāna-yoga-para*, shows that there is nothing else, like *mantra-japa*, to be done. Having taken to a life of *sannyāsa*, he has already done a lot of *mantra-japa*, invoking the Lord's grace to gain knowledge. That has all paid off in terms of his capacity to contemplate upon the truth of himself, and therefore, it no longer has any value for him personally. His *mantra-japa* resolves into *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. Since he commits himself to this life of meditation, he has nothing further to do.

All this is possible only when there is dispassion, *vairāgya*, which means he is free from the hold of his likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*. This applies both to situations and objects, known and unknown. Even heaven does not hold any fascination for him. That disposition is called *vairāgya*. Without that, though he may choose to stay in a quiet place, and commit himself to *dhyāna-yoga*, his mind will not stay. However, once he has this kind of dispassion, what else will he do but meditate!

REMOVING THE OBSTACLES TO CONTEMPLATION

Further, a few more qualifications are mentioned. He has also freed himself from a number of things that would inhibit his capacity to contemplate. The first is *ahaṅkāra*, the misplacement of his sense of 'I' in the body-mind-sense-complex, and especially in the sense of doership. This has been accomplished first by the cultivation of an attitude of doing what is to be done, because it is enjoined by *Īśvara*. An action is chosen and done not merely with the attitude that it is the Lord's will, but with an understanding that, though it is done by me, in order to do all this, I require a body, a mind, and a variety of other things. All these are given to me, and therefore, it is given to me to do. This is entirely different from the sense of 'I do,' where there is a lack of *viveka*, an arrogance

born of ignorance. That is *ahaṅkāra*. It is completely given up by this *sannyāsī* who understands that in a given situation he is called upon to do certain things.

Bala is strength in terms of capacity, power, skills, etc., which is backed by *kāma* and *rāga*. These are not things that can be given up, nor do they need to be. But they can give rise to a pride or expectation of recognition. This is what is given up by the *sannyāsī*. He acknowledges that he has certain gifts but does not flaunt them or misuse them. He does not manipulate the world with his powers, etc., whatever they may be.

When you accomplish something, the sense of success can give rise to an elation, *harṣa*. Then, when you look around for recognition that is called *darpa*. Every child wants this. When he jumps from the bench, the first thing he does is to look at his mother. He wants her to say, ‘Yes, you are wonderful.’ He wants approval and congratulation, and that is necessary for the child to develop a healthy self-image. In the beginning, he must have that to develop self-respect and dignity. If the child does not get adequate approval, he will continue to seek this kind of acknowledgement as an adult. Then it is called vanity. It is good, perhaps, for mental health, but it is not helpful to a spiritual pursuit. If the need for such recognition persists, and he keeps on gathering it, he will develop an inflated ego to compensate for his impoverished sense of self-worth. Once his ego is inflated, it will be hard for him to respect anything and it will not take long for him to transgress the laws of *dharma*. Śaṅkara quotes here, ‘The elated becomes vainful and the vainful crosses *dharma*—*hr̥ṣṭo dṛpyati dṛptaḥ dharmam atikrāmati*.’ Being vainful, he will not respect anyone, thinking that, there is no one equal to him; nor will he respect the moral order. This was the problem of *Hiraṇyakaśipu*. He would not allow his son, *Prahlāda*, to repeat the Lord’s name, saying, ‘Only my name should be repeated.’ This is born out of vainfulness.

The *sannyāsī*, however, has no need for this kind of recognition. He is awake to the nature of himself and finds his fulfilment in his own fullness, *pūrṇatva*. Any recognition he may receive will fall far short of what he knows himself to be. So, it is not going to cause any elation in him. He recognizes that everything is himself, and therefore, every glory everywhere is his. From another standpoint, he understands very well that any accomplishment is dependent upon a large number of factors, all of which are given. Moreover, he knows that he never did anything at any time; he is *akartā*. Therefore, there is no sense of ownership, with reference to any accomplishment, that may lead to *darpa*. All that is given up.

Naturally, he has given up desire, *kāma*, in the sense that any desire that he may have is non-binding. In its fulfilment, he is happy, and in its non-fulfilment also, he is happy. When that is so, a frustrated desire is not going to cause anger, *krodha*.

There are two types of *parigraha*, possession, internal and external. By giving up *kāma* and *krodha*, the *sannyāsī* has already taken care of the problem of *parigraha*—the need to possess or own various things—internally. Now we come to the *parigraha*

with reference to external objects. When he is already a *sannyāsī*, what kind of *parigraha* will he have? A *sannyāsī* is one who has given up his house, job, and all his possessions. All he has left with are a few things like his clothes, his *kamaṇḍalu*, and *japamālā*. Therefore, there is no possibility of *parigraha* for him. Still, *parigraha* is mentioned because, even with reference to these few objects, there can be a tendency to accumulate and hoard. He may have ten *kamaṇḍalus*. Or, even though he is a mendicant, he may have a collection of begging bowls. That is *parigraha*. Possessions have a knack of gathering around you, unless you consciously keep clearing them away all the time. Being a *sannyāsī*, he has also given up his family connections and other relationships. Yet, it is said here that he gives up the sense that ‘this is mine.’ With reference to what? *Śaṅkara* says that even though he has given up everything else, he can still have a sense of ownership with reference to his own body. Once he gives that up, he has no *mamatva* even in the sustenance of the body. He has no agenda for how long it should last and therefore, as long as it is there, he is happy. This is just another reflection of the fact that he lives one day at a time. *Śaṅkara* says that because he has no *mamatva*, he is content with himself. Being free from elation and depression, naturally, he is tranquil, *śānta*.

Such a person can gain certainty in the knowledge ‘I am *Brahman*.’ This is called *brahma-bhūya*, *brahma-bhavana*—‘becoming *brahma*.’ He is fit for it, *kalpate*, that is, he is ready for immediate knowledge of that fact. For that he has to live a life of *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, which is also the end. The one who has clear knowledge that he is *Brahman*, and also the one who is committed to the pursuit of that knowledge is called a *jñāna-niṣṭha*.

ब्रह्मभूताः प्रसन्नमनो न शोचन्ति न कङ्क्षन्ति
सर्वेषु भूतेषु समोऽपि महिमां परमं भक्तित्वां लभते ॥५४॥

brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati.

samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktim labhate parām

Verse 54

ब्रह्मभूताः *brahmabhūtaḥ* — the one who has ‘become’ *Brahman* (has recognized oneself as *Brahman*); प्रसन्नमनो *prasannātmā* — one whose mind is cheerful; न शोचन्ति *na śocati* — does not grieve; न कङ्क्षन्ति *na kāṅkṣati* — does not long for anything; सर्वेषु भूतेषु समोऽपि *sarveṣu bhūteṣu samaḥ* — the one for whom all beings are the same (as himself); महिमां परमं भक्तित्वां लभते *parām madbhaktim labhate* — gains

The one who has ‘become’ *Brahman*, (has recognized oneself as *Brahman*) whose mind is cheerful, does not grieve or long for anything. The one for whom all beings are the same (as himself) gains the highest devotion to Me.

Brahmabhūta, the one who has ‘become’ *Brahman*, that is, has recognized oneself as *Brahman*, can be taken absolutely, or relatively, since there is a verse that says, ‘Such a person comes to know Me later.’ If it is relative, it means one who has gained knowledge of *Brahman* indirectly, *parokṣatayā*, and not *aparokṣatayā*, as himself—not as ‘*ahaṃ brahma asmi*.’ He has come to know through the *śāstra* that *ātmā* is *Brahman* and, as a *sannyāsī*, has taken to a life of *jñāna-niṣṭhā* to understand that.

He is *prasannātmā*, has a cheerful mind. This is an important thing. It indicates that he has gone through a life of *yoga*. Śaṅkara says that one gains such a disposition. It is not natural, but something he has acquired by living a life of *karma-yoga*. He has done whatever is necessary to gain a cheerful disposition, and is more or less happy with himself. Only then is *brahma-niṣṭhā* possible, because the *sādhana* for that is contemplation, which implies a mind that is contemplative. That is not accomplished just by will. It is something that grows on a person over a period of time, as one lives a prayerful life and takes care of all one's psychological problems.

Such a person does not come to grief, *na śocati*, either because of a lack of resources or because of the limitations of the body, mind, or senses. He accepts the body-mind-sense-complex as it is, whatever limitations it may have. Even if it is lame, or old, or weak, these things do not affect him. Nor is he affected by any lack of money, security, etc. Because he is a *sannyāsī*, he has given up all these things, but if he is not ready for that, he may regret it later, wishing he had retained certain things. The person under discussion here has no regrets. He has no sense of deficiency, but rather, is content with what he has. When this is so, naturally, he does not have any longing, *na kāṅkṣati*, for things he does not have. What is not with him, he does not bother about. And with reference to the people and other living creatures around him, he sees them the same as himself. He understands that what makes him happy, makes them happy; what makes him unhappy makes them unhappy. He knows that what he needs is sought after by all; what he does not want to happen to him is exactly what is not wanted by others. This is the disposition of a person who is not self-centred and has a clear appreciation of *dharma*, the universal order. If one is self-centred, he is controlled by *rāga-dveṣas*, likes and dislikes. If he looks upon all other beings as himself, he is free from the hold of *rāga-dveṣas*. That person, *Bhagavān* says, ‘gains the highest devotion to Me—*madbhaktiṃ labhate parām*.’

Bhakti was defined in a fourfold way, according to the type of devotee that is talked about. There is the devotion of a distressed person, *ārta*, who prays only when he is in a difficult situation. Otherwise, he does not think about *Bhagavān*. When things do not go well, and nothing else has worked, the last resort is God for such a person. Then, there is the devotee, *arthārthī*, who turns to God, not only when he is in distress, but when he wants to accomplish something. Besides the efforts he makes, he appeals to the Lord to make up for all the omissions and commissions, so that he can get what he

wants. The third type of devotee is the *jijñāsu*, the one who wants to know the Lord, and the fourth is the one for whom that quest is fulfilled, *jñānī*.

The *jñānī* is the devotee mentioned here in this verse. For him, the knowledge of the identity between himself and the Lord is a certainty. This is called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*; as is the attempt to gain that clarity through *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. His devotion is the best because there is no division between the *jīva*, the devotee, and *Īśvara*.

What is the characteristic of that knowledge?

॥१०-१ ॥ ११ ॥ १२ ॥ १३ ॥ १४ ॥ १५ ॥ १६ ॥ १७ ॥ १८ ॥ १९ ॥ २० ॥ २१ ॥ २२ ॥ २३ ॥ २४ ॥ २५ ॥ २६ ॥ २७ ॥ २८ ॥ २९ ॥ ३० ॥ ३१ ॥ ३२ ॥ ३३ ॥ ३४ ॥ ३५ ॥ ३६ ॥ ३७ ॥ ३८ ॥ ३९ ॥ ४० ॥ ४१ ॥ ४२ ॥ ४३ ॥ ४४ ॥ ४५ ॥ ४६ ॥ ४७ ॥ ४८ ॥ ४९ ॥ ५० ॥ ५१ ॥ ५२ ॥ ५३ ॥ ५४ ॥ ५५ ॥ ५६ ॥ ५७ ॥ ५८ ॥ ५९ ॥ ६० ॥ ६१ ॥ ६२ ॥ ६३ ॥ ६४ ॥ ६५ ॥ ६६ ॥ ६७ ॥ ६८ ॥ ६९ ॥ ७० ॥ ७१ ॥ ७२ ॥ ७३ ॥ ७४ ॥ ७५ ॥ ७६ ॥ ७७ ॥ ७८ ॥ ७९ ॥ ८० ॥ ८१ ॥ ८२ ॥ ८३ ॥ ८४ ॥ ८५ ॥ ८६ ॥ ८७ ॥ ८८ ॥ ८९ ॥ ९० ॥ ९१ ॥ ९२ ॥ ९३ ॥ ९४ ॥ ९५ ॥ ९६ ॥ ९७ ॥ ९८ ॥ ९९ ॥ १०० ॥

bhakti *māmabhijānāti yāvānyaścāsmi tattvataḥ*
tato māṃ tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram

Verse 55

॥१०-१ *bhakti* — by knowledge; ११ ॥ १२ ॥ १३ ॥ १४ ॥ १५ ॥ १६ ॥ १७ ॥ १८ ॥ १९ ॥ २० ॥ २१ ॥ २२ ॥ २३ ॥ २४ ॥ २५ ॥ २६ ॥ २७ ॥ २८ ॥ २९ ॥ ३० ॥ ३१ ॥ ३२ ॥ ३३ ॥ ३४ ॥ ३५ ॥ ३६ ॥ ३७ ॥ ३८ ॥ ३९ ॥ ४० ॥ ४१ ॥ ४२ ॥ ४३ ॥ ४४ ॥ ४५ ॥ ४६ ॥ ४७ ॥ ४८ ॥ ४९ ॥ ५० ॥ ५१ ॥ ५२ ॥ ५३ ॥ ५४ ॥ ५५ ॥ ५६ ॥ ५७ ॥ ५८ ॥ ५९ ॥ ६० ॥ ६१ ॥ ६२ ॥ ६३ ॥ ६४ ॥ ६५ ॥ ६६ ॥ ६७ ॥ ६८ ॥ ६९ ॥ ७० ॥ ७१ ॥ ७२ ॥ ७३ ॥ ७४ ॥ ७५ ॥ ७६ ॥ ७७ ॥ ७८ ॥ ७९ ॥ ८० ॥ ८१ ॥ ८२ ॥ ८३ ॥ ८४ ॥ ८५ ॥ ८६ ॥ ८७ ॥ ८८ ॥ ८९ ॥ ९० ॥ ९१ ॥ ९२ ॥ ९३ ॥ ९४ ॥ ९५ ॥ ९६ ॥ ९७ ॥ ९८ ॥ ९९ ॥ १०० ॥ *yāvān yaḥ ca asmi (iti)* — as to how much and who I am; *tattvataḥ* — in reality; ११ ॥ १२ ॥ १३ ॥ १४ ॥ १५ ॥ १६ ॥ १७ ॥ १८ ॥ १९ ॥ २० ॥ २१ ॥ २२ ॥ २३ ॥ २४ ॥ २५ ॥ २६ ॥ २७ ॥ २८ ॥ २९ ॥ ३० ॥ ३१ ॥ ३२ ॥ ३३ ॥ ३४ ॥ ३५ ॥ ३६ ॥ ३७ ॥ ३८ ॥ ३९ ॥ ४० ॥ ४१ ॥ ४२ ॥ ४३ ॥ ४४ ॥ ४५ ॥ ४६ ॥ ४७ ॥ ४८ ॥ ४९ ॥ ५० ॥ ५१ ॥ ५२ ॥ ५३ ॥ ५४ ॥ ५५ ॥ ५६ ॥ ५७ ॥ ५८ ॥ ५९ ॥ ६० ॥ ६१ ॥ ६२ ॥ ६३ ॥ ६४ ॥ ६५ ॥ ६६ ॥ ६७ ॥ ६८ ॥ ६९ ॥ ७० ॥ ७१ ॥ ७२ ॥ ७३ ॥ ७४ ॥ ७५ ॥ ७६ ॥ ७७ ॥ ७८ ॥ ७९ ॥ ८० ॥ ८१ ॥ ८२ ॥ ८३ ॥ ८४ ॥ ८५ ॥ ८६ ॥ ८७ ॥ ८८ ॥ ८९ ॥ ९० ॥ ९१ ॥ ९२ ॥ ९३ ॥ ९४ ॥ ९५ ॥ ९६ ॥ ९७ ॥ ९८ ॥ ९९ ॥ १०० ॥ *mām abhijānāti* — he (*brahma-bhūtaḥ*) knows Me properly; *tataḥ* — thereafter; *tattvataḥ* — in reality; ११ ॥ १२ ॥ १३ ॥ १४ ॥ १५ ॥ १६ ॥ १७ ॥ १८ ॥ १९ ॥ २० ॥ २१ ॥ २२ ॥ २३ ॥ २४ ॥ २५ ॥ २६ ॥ २७ ॥ २८ ॥ २९ ॥ ३० ॥ ३१ ॥ ३२ ॥ ३३ ॥ ३४ ॥ ३५ ॥ ३६ ॥ ३७ ॥ ३८ ॥ ३९ ॥ ४० ॥ ४१ ॥ ४२ ॥ ४३ ॥ ४४ ॥ ४५ ॥ ४६ ॥ ४७ ॥ ४८ ॥ ४९ ॥ ५० ॥ ५१ ॥ ५२ ॥ ५३ ॥ ५४ ॥ ५५ ॥ ५६ ॥ ५७ ॥ ५८ ॥ ५९ ॥ ६० ॥ ६१ ॥ ६२ ॥ ६३ ॥ ६४ ॥ ६५ ॥ ६६ ॥ ६७ ॥ ६८ ॥ ६९ ॥ ७० ॥ ७१ ॥ ७२ ॥ ७३ ॥ ७४ ॥ ७५ ॥ ७६ ॥ ७७ ॥ ७८ ॥ ७९ ॥ ८० ॥ ८१ ॥ ८२ ॥ ८३ ॥ ८४ ॥ ८५ ॥ ८६ ॥ ८७ ॥ ८८ ॥ ८९ ॥ ९० ॥ ९१ ॥ ९२ ॥ ९३ ॥ ९४ ॥ ९५ ॥ ९६ ॥ ९७ ॥ ९८ ॥ ९९ ॥ १०० ॥ *mām jñātvā* — knowing Me; *tadanantaram* — soon after that; ११ ॥ १२ ॥ १३ ॥ १४ ॥ १५ ॥ १६ ॥ १७ ॥ १८ ॥ १९ ॥ २० ॥ २१ ॥ २२ ॥ २३ ॥ २४ ॥ २५ ॥ २६ ॥ २७ ॥ २८ ॥ २९ ॥ ३० ॥ ३१ ॥ ३२ ॥ ३३ ॥ ३४ ॥ ३५ ॥ ३६ ॥ ३७ ॥ ३८ ॥ ३९ ॥ ४० ॥ ४१ ॥ ४२ ॥ ४३ ॥ ४४ ॥ ४५ ॥ ४६ ॥ ४७ ॥ ४८ ॥ ४९ ॥ ५० ॥ ५१ ॥ ५२ ॥ ५३ ॥ ५४ ॥ ५५ ॥ ५६ ॥ ५७ ॥ ५८ ॥ ५९ ॥ ६० ॥ ६१ ॥ ६२ ॥ ६३ ॥ ६४ ॥ ६५ ॥ ६६ ॥ ६७ ॥ ६८ ॥ ६९ ॥ ७० ॥ ७१ ॥ ७२ ॥ ७३ ॥ ७४ ॥ ७५ ॥ ७६ ॥ ७७ ॥ ७८ ॥ ७९ ॥ ८० ॥ ८१ ॥ ८२ ॥ ८३ ॥ ८४ ॥ ८५ ॥ ८६ ॥ ८७ ॥ ८८ ॥ ८९ ॥ ९० ॥ ९१ ॥ ९२ ॥ ९३ ॥ ९४ ॥ ९५ ॥ ९६ ॥ ९७ ॥ ९८ ॥ ९९ ॥ १०० ॥ *(mām) viśate* — he enters (Me)

By *bhakti* (knowledge), he (*brahma-bhūtaḥ*) knows Me properly as to how much I am and who I am in reality. Thereafter, knowing Me in reality, he enters (Me) soon after that (knowing).

BY BHAKTI, 'IN THE FORM OF KNOWLEDGE,' HE KNOWS ME IN REALITY

Kṛṣṇa says, 'He knows Me through *bhakti*.' This *bhakti* is knowledge, because there is no way of knowing anything except by knowledge. By simple prayer, you do not recognize an object. This is *bhakti*, which is in the form of knowledge of *Parameśvara*. Such as we have seen, is the *bhakti* of a *jñānī*. *Abhijānāti* means he knows properly, totally, that is, he recognizes *Īśvara* as himself. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* glosses the word, *bhakti*, as *jñāna-lakṣaṇayā bhakti*, by a *bhakti* that is not other than knowledge.

Further, he knows 'How much I am.' This is with reference to the varieties of *upādhis*, because of which, there seem to be differences. This entire creation, *jagat*, is nothing but *Parameśvara*, who is but *Brahman* with *māyā-upādhi*. Within that, there are all the elements beginning with space, and further *upādhis*, so that we have the *devas*, like *Indra*, etc., and varieties of other *jīva-upādhis*, like *Arjuna*, *Dharmaputra*, etc. This extent of *Parameśvara*, how cosmic he is, this person comes to know. He knows to what extent *Īśvara* expresses himself, in terms of his total, *samaṣṭi* and individual, *vyāṣṭi*, *upādhis*. Not only does he know this *sagunaṃ brahma*, with reference to these *upādhis*, but he also knows the essential nature of *Īśvara*. *Kṛṣṇa* says,

‘He knows Me essentially—*mām abhijānāti yāvān yaḥ ca aham asmi tattvataḥ.*’ That is, he knows *Īśvara* as the one who is totally free from all *upādhis*. This is *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, spoken of in the fifteenth chapter as *uttama-puruṣa*, who is free from any particular attribute or location. *Śaṅkara* says he knows this non-dual consciousness—*advaitaṃ caitanya-mātra-ekarasaṃ mām abhijānāti*. How can you know the non-dual consciousness? If there is a knower involved, there is duality. Thus, he says, it is only as one's own consciousness that one knows this non-dual *Brahman*. *Śaṅkara* makes it all very clear here. He is unborn, not subject to age, is not subject to change or death; nor is he subject to any fear because there is no second thing at all. And he cannot be destroyed in any manner. The whole creation is subject to destruction, but not this *paraṃ brahma* into which it resolves.

WHAT IS ENTRY INTO THE LORD ?

Then, *Kṛṣṇa* says ‘Knowing Me in reality, after that, *tadanantaram*, he enters into Me—*mām viśate.*’ Expressions like this are all problematic if they are not understood properly. He enters in the sense that, once he knows *Paramēśvara*, he is no longer separate. It is like the snake entering into the rope. In the same way, the *jīva* resolves in the recognition of *paraṃ brahma*.

This verse is a real problem for the dualists, and yet, because they do not understand it, it is a matter for celebration for them. They will say that the statement, ‘He enters into Me,’ means ‘He enters into My world, *Golokabrindāvan.*’ And they further say that, there, in *Golokabrindāvan*, one will meet *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa*.’ They are very serious about it. This, however, is a very far fetched interpretation when it is said, ‘He enters into Me.’ This has to be properly understood. As an individual, you cannot enter into *Brahman* and still retain your individuality, like an amoeba entering into a stomach. You will remain the same as you are. If you gain some beatitude because of *Īśvara*'s grace, how long will it last? You cannot say it is eternal, because what is eternal cannot begin. It will end and you will again be the same individual. And what is that beatitude? If there is duality, and you enjoy beatitude, there is a problem. Wherever there is duality, the resolution is not complete, because you retain your individuality. If there is a real resolve, all that is there is *Bhagavān*. Therefore, it is unreasonable to think that you will remain an individual and gain eternal beatitude. It can only be like any other *sāṃsārika-sukha*, which will be lost in time, because if it is something that is gained, it will be lost. Further, how did you get this beatitude? If it is because of your prayer, prayer being a finite *karma*, the result will also be finite. Here, the entering is like the wave entering the ocean, once it knows it is water. These are all expressions that have to be properly understood.

KNOWING AND ENTERING ARE NOT TWO DIFFERENT THINGS

Similarly, ‘after that’—*tadanantaram*, and ‘having known’—*jñātvā*, are words expressing the prior conditions necessary to become one with the Lord. That alone is pointed out; two periods of time are not involved here. What are the prior conditions required for gaining identity with *Īśvara*? Here it is said, ‘After knowing Me, he enters Me—*jñātvā māṃ viśate*,’ It is like saying, ‘After eating, he appeases his hunger.’ It is not that after eating he has to wait for some time, and then appease his hunger. Similarly, after cutting it, he doesn't do anything to make the log into two pieces. In the cutting itself it has become two pieces. There is no time gap between the completion of the act of cutting and the division in to two pieces. Similarly here, when we say, ‘After knowing he enters,’ knowing itself is the entry. And that knowing is a necessary condition for entering because you stand isolated from the whole without knowing the truth. That means you were never away from the Lord. You have always been non-separate from the Lord; the sense of separation is purely notional; it is a thought. Because there was a separation, there is a necessity to say that knowing, he becomes one with the Lord. *Śaṅkara* makes a point by saying that there are not two different actions involved here. After knowing, there is no other result called *mokṣa*. Knowledge is the *mokṣa*. Knowledge, however, is not the *puruṣārtha*, and therefore, we speak of *mokṣa*. I am not interested in the knowledge of *ātmā*; I want to be free from unhappiness, etc. That is the end to be accomplished, and that end happens to be in the form of knowledge of the truth about myself. *Mokṣa* is ‘after knowledge,’ *jñāna-anantaram*, in the sense that it is by knowledge that there is *mokṣa—jñānena mokṣaḥ*; and because of knowledge there is *mokṣa—jñānāt mokṣaḥ*. *Mokṣa* is the end, *sādhya*, while *jñāna* becomes the means, *sādhana*, and therefore, from the standpoint of *sādhana-sādhya*, it is said ‘after that (knowledge)’—*tadanantaram*. Here, however, the means happens to be identical to the end, so ‘after’ is not in terms of time.

Śaṅkara introduces a very interesting discussion here about how one knows, ‘*abhi-jānāti*.’ In this verse, he had said at the outset, ‘By *bhakti*, knowledge, he knows Me—*jñāna-lakṣaṇayā bhaktyā māṃ abhi-jānāti*.’ The *pūrvapakṣī* objects to this and says you are contradicting yourselves. All along, you have been saying that, ‘By that ultimate *niṣṭhā* of knowledge, he knows Me—*jñānasya yā parā niṣṭhā tayā māṃ abhi-jānāti*.’ And now you say by a *bhakti*, that is knowledge, *ātmā* is known. The discussion then revolves around what is understood as the meaning of the word *niṣṭhā*. Taking it to mean repetition, *āvṛtti*, an objection is raised that these two statements are contradictory.

TO SAY ONE KNOWS BRAHMAN BY JÑĀNANIṢṬHĀ IS CONTRADICTIONARY—AN OBJECTION

When knowledge of a given object arises for a knower, then, at that time, the knower knows that object; he does not require a repetition of that knowledge. But

according to the second statement, it would mean that he does not know by knowledge but by repetition of the knowledge—*jñāna-āvṛtṭyā jñāna-niṣṭhayā*.

Suppose a person comes to know a pot as ‘This is a pot.’ When does he know the pot? The moment he comes to objectify a pot, that very moment he knows, ‘this is a pot.’ No repetition is required. If he knows, he need not repeat, ‘this is a pot, this is a pot, this is a pot.’ If, after two-and-a-half days of repetition you come to know, this is a pot, and during all the two-and-a-half days, you did not know it, that repetition has nothing to do with knowing the pot. Suppose someone was repeating ‘pot, pot, pot,’ not knowing what a pot is, and then someone said, ‘This is a pot,’ removing his ignorance of pot, what has that knowledge got to do with what he repeated? The previous repetition was useless. His knowledge is not a result of his repetition of the word ‘pot’ whether the repetition was before or after knowing the pot.

Now here, if I do not recognize that I am *Īśvara* by knowledge, how is repetition of ‘*ahaṃ brahma asmi*—I am *Brahman*’ or some equivalent statement, going to help? If I do not understand the meaning of the original statement the first time, how will I know the second or third or the *n*th time? If I know the first time, why should I have to hear it a second time? Once I know, I know it. The repetition has no meaning at all.

When recognition is by knowledge alone, why do I require a *niṣṭhā* in the form of a repetition of the *jñāna-vṛtti*, *ahaṃ brahma asmi*? The particular *vṛtti* that removes the ignorance of my being *Brahman* is what is called a *jñāna-vṛtti*. By this *vṛtti* alone, one knows, *abhi-jānāti*. This is true of any object I want to know. If I want to know a pot, the thought form because of which I recognize a pot, the *ghaṭa-vṛtti*, will give me the knowledge, not mere repetition. To say that knowledge requires repetition is a contradiction. Here, the confusion is about myself, *ātmā*. The *vṛtti*, because of which the removal of the confusion takes place, is called *jñāna-vṛtti*. If, at one given time, there is a *vṛtti* in my mind, that I am *Brahman*, that *vṛtti* should destroy the ignorance about *ātmā* being *Brahman*. That is all that is required here. *Ātmā* is not seen as *Brahman* and that confusion has to be resolved. The *ātmā*, which is always self-evident, is mistaken as something else, and that mistake must be removed, for which I require a *vṛtti*, called *jñāna-vṛtti*. But once it takes place, I should recognize *ātmā* as *Brahman*. Therefore, what is the necessity for *niṣṭhā* in the form of repetition of the same *vṛtti*? When I look at a pair of glasses and I know that these are a pair of glasses, I don't need to repeatedly have the *vṛtti*, ‘These are a pair of glasses.’ Once is enough.

JÑĀNANIṢṬHĀ IS NOT REPETITION BUT THE ULTIMATE CERTAINTY OF KNOWLEDGE

This argument is based on taking the meaning of the word *niṣṭhā* as repetition, *abhyāsa*. It has this meaning, no doubt, but that is not the sense in which it is used here. *Śaṅkara* responds to this by explaining the meaning of the word *niṣṭhā*. It can be understood in two ways. The practice of contemplation and *manana* on the meaning of

the *śāstra* as revealed by the teacher, is called *jñāna-niṣṭhā* or *jñāna-yoga*. Because the person has no commitment other than to gaining knowledge, his *niṣṭhā*, commitment, is in *jñāna*. He has no *niṣṭhā* in *tapas*, or *mantra* or *karma* but only in gaining knowledge, *jñāna*. Here, some practice, *abhyāsa*, is accepted. There is *asakṛt upadeśa*, repeated exposure to the teaching, because it is a question of gaining increased clarity, which finally must end. That end, *avasāna*, is also called *niṣṭhā*. Knowledge, which has an ultimate certainty, *parā niṣṭhā*, is knowledge that cannot be improved upon. Not only the process, but what is accomplished by that process is also called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. Whatever takes place in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the ultimate result of a process or whatever you do in order to know, is *jñāna-niṣṭhā*.

Suppose you are arriving at a piece of inferential knowledge, which implies many steps, like the solution to a mathematical problem. There is a complex process of inquiry, at the end of which is a result. Both the process and the result are called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*—the certainty of the knowledge and the process by which it is reached. But here, *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is used in the sense of the result, the end, *avasāna*, of the process of knowing. In this context, the word *niṣṭhā*, when it is used in this sense means immediate knowledge that *ātmā* is *Brahman*. The certainty in that knowledge is the ultimate end of that *jñāna*. He recognizes Me by a knowledge which leaves nothing to be desired, and having recognized Me, he gains Me—*mām abhijānāti*, in terms of identity with Me. That is the meaning of this sentence. That is why the word *tattvataḥ* meaning ‘in reality,’ is used. Therefore *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘The one who knows Me in reality enters into Me—meaning he is no longer separate from Me.’

From this we understand that there is an order, *krama*. One recognizes the Lord as oneself because of this *niṣṭhā* in knowledge. *Śaṅkara* adds that this *niṣṭhā* is knowledge which is coupled with the causes for its transpiring, the preparedness of the mind—in other words, obstruction-free knowledge. What are the possible obstructions? Lack of *śama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titikṣā*, *śraddhā*, *samādhāna*, *viveka*, *vairāgya*, *mumukṣutva*, all the values and attitudes that we have seen, obstructs the knowledge. If all or any of these are inadequate, the knowledge may arise, but it will be fraught with obstructions. How are you going to remove them? By what is called *jñāna-abhyāsa*. If the knowledge itself is attended by doubts, you clear those doubts by *manana*. If contradictory opinions about yourself seem to have a hold over you, then you require whatever is necessary to correct those opinions, mainly contemplation, *nididhyāsana*.

This kind of knowledge ends where there is absolute certainty that *ātmā* is *Brahman*. This immediate knowledge is what is meant by the word *niṣṭhā*. *Jñāna-niṣṭhā* is knowledge without any obstruction, knowledge with certainty. Even though the practice leading to this is also called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, that is not the cause for knowing that *ātmā* is *Brahman*. The practice only removes the obstructions. *Pramāṇa* gives rise to the knowledge. The net result is knowledge that is free from obstructions.

THE DIRECT AND SECONDARY CAUSES FOR KNOWLEDGE

This is the *bhakti* spoken of in this verse, *bhaktyā mām abhijānāti*. The means of gaining this knowledge is *śāstra* handled by a teacher who knows the import of the words of the *śāstra*. Because of the teaching, knowledge is born, but, for that knowledge to be fruitful, there are certain qualities and values to be cultivated by the student. The teacher, employing the *śāstra*, makes it very clear that you are *Brahman*. For this knowledge to take place, to be received properly, there are certain requirements in terms of the preparedness of the mind in which the knowledge is to arise. This preparedness is a secondary cause. It is *pramāṇa* that produces knowledge. And if that *pramāṇa*, properly employed, does not produce knowledge, it is evident that there is some obstruction. Anything that removes that obstruction is called a secondary cause, *sahakārikāraṇa*. *Śaṅkara* reduces these secondary causes to two here. They are, freedom from the hold of *rāga-dveṣas*, likes and dislikes, and the qualities beginning with *amānitva*, spoken of in the thirteenth chapter. Though there are many items in that list, for a *mumukṣu*, these things come naturally. Everybody has them in some degree; otherwise, they would not get into this pursuit at all. The qualities are there in every seeker, but perhaps not adequately.

Śaṅkara explains the knowledge, which is born as that of the oneness of the *kṣetrajñā*, the individual, with *paramātmā*, the Lord. All that is here is one complete, *pūrṇaṃ brahma*. In this knowledge there is non-duality, there is identity. Then, he characterises that knowledge further as a knowledge, which implies a total renunciation of all activities. Activities imply certain necessary factors, like an agent, *kartā*; the object which is the recipient of the action, *karma*; the means of doing it, *kaṛaṇa*; the source from which it proceeds, *apādāna*; and the location where the action takes place, *adhikaraṇa*. All of them may not be there in a given action, but the agent and the object have got to be there. The differences among these must be appreciated in order to perform an action. For example, the knowledge that, 'I am the doer, I am doing this for the purpose of achieving heaven,' is necessary to perform the ritual for going to heaven. Here, however, the knowledge implies the renunciation of all activities, which have their causes in knowledge of the duality obtaining among the various factors necessary for performing action.

This knowledge is in the form of certainty with reference to oneself being non-separate from *Īśvara*, the Lord. That is the ultimate end of knowledge, *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. This *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is the real *bhakti*, the *bhakti* of the fourth type of devotee, the *jñānī*. His devotion is the greatest because, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, 'The one who knows Me is Myself.' That wise person is non-separate from the Lord. That final knowledge is called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*.

JÑĀNANIṢṬHĀ IS REMOVAL OF THE OBSTRUCTIONS AND ENJOYING JÑĀNAPHALA

If it is knowledge, why not just say *jñāna*, why *jñāna-niṣṭhā*? The word *jñāna* is adequate, but we have to use these extra words like *jñāna-niṣṭhā* and *jñāna-abhyāsa* because, due to obstructions, knowledge does not necessarily take place by merely exposing oneself to the teaching. When the means of knowledge is there, and the thing to be known is available, knowledge should transpire. Why does it not transpire? When I say, ‘You are *Brahman*,’ the one who is addressed should see it like daylight. But then, one does not—or one sees and does not see. What does it mean? There is a problem, which we cannot simply ignore. We have to recognize the problem and address it by examining our attitudes and values, by living a prayerful life, by gaining a mastery over the ways of thinking, and by spending time in contemplation. All these are necessary for gaining what is called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. There seems to be a condition where *jñāna* is there but at the same time, one is not completely free. After an adequate exposure to the teaching, you can never say, ‘I don't know that I am *Brahman*,’ or ‘I am not sure if I am *Brahman*.’ Yet you cannot say, ‘I am *Brahman*.’ This is why we have the expressions like *jñāna*, knowledge and *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, knowledge free from obstructions.

This situation has been there for everyone; it is an age-old problem. That is why so much is said about prayer, values, attitudes, etc. Prayer and a prayerful attitude in all your activities are the most important factors, so Śaṅkara mentions them here. Another one is *sannyāsa*, also called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, now the word indicating a lifestyle wherein the person does nothing else except pursue knowledge.

THINGS TO PAY ATTENTION TO, IN ORDER TO GAIN JÑĀNANIṢṬHĀ

By the practice of contemplation, *nididhyāsana*, and developing dispassion, *vairāgya*, through inquiry, a cheerful disposition of the mind is slowly gained. Because of that, there is clarity of the knowledge, ‘I am *Brahman*.’ In this, the notion of division between the individual and the Lord disappears. To appreciate this, first, you have to understand that *Īśvara* is both the material and the efficient cause of the creation, and therefore, the entire creation is *Īśvara*. Knowing that I am *Īśvara* who is this entire world means the entire world of name and form is non-separate from myself. And the Lord is non-separate from myself because the essential nature of the *jīva* is consciousness, *caitanya-ātmā*, which is non-dual. That is the whole vision—the vision of the whole. The resolution of the difference between *Īśvara* and me amounts to my being everything. There is nothing that is separate from me.

Finally, he has no more doubt. This is the *bhakti* that is talked about here—otherwise called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, knowledge. The *śāstra* that enjoins a life of renunciation becomes meaningful only when this life of *jñāna-niṣṭhā* (lifestyle) leading to *jñāna-niṣṭhā* (knowledge without any obstructions) is the ultimate end. If that is understood, you can meaningfully give up all *karma* and pursue knowledge. Otherwise, you cannot

give up *karma*, but you can give up *karma-phala*, like heaven, etc., and pursue knowledge as a *karma-yogī*. Either way you can get *mokṣa*. To give up all *karma* one must be free from the desire for security, *artha*, pleasure, *kāma*, and a better lot later, *dharma*. That implies *vairāgya*, and without it, though I may give up the pursuits, the desires will persist, and will obstruct my pursuit. Desires are never successfully given up. One grows out of them through an inquiry, *vicāra*, resulting in dispassion, *vairāgya*.

Every one of us has grown out of a few desires in our lives. To understand what real renunciation is, look at your attitude towards objects that you have grown out of, such as balloons. Even if you would like to have one, it is not a binding desire. If you get it, you will enjoy it; but if you do not get it, you are not going to become unhappy. Nor will you be upset if you get it and it bursts. With reference to balloons, we all have *vairāgya*. We do not go after them, nor are we frightened of getting them. This is called *sannyāsa*. But when you were a child, you did not have the same attitude. That means we grow up to become a *sannyāsī*. If you can reduce everything to the status of balloons, you are the *sannyāsī* that is talked about here. The attitude we have towards balloons, we can enjoy with reference to everything in this world.

When one has grown out of all the three pursuits—*dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*—it is possible to live one day at a time. When you do not care for tomorrow, you are already a renunciate. For that you have to be mature, otherwise you will feel miserable. To gain that maturity, that inner security, one has to live a life of *karma-yoga*. Then life becomes meaningful.

There is no other meaning for *bhakti* here. This can be the *bhakti* of a *jñānī*, the fourth type of *bhakti*, or that of a *jijñāsu*, the third type. Because of this reason, *Bhagavān* says, ‘he knows Me—*mām abhijānāti*.’

To gain *mokṣa*, the *śāstra* enjoins a life of *sannyāsa*, which is a life of *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. This *mokṣa* is not a result of any action, *karma-phala*. It is appreciating the *pratyagātmā* as *paraṃ brahma*. When that recognition is free from any vagueness or doubt, that is what we call *niṣṭhā*. We are not trying to improve the status of *pratyagātmā*. If it undergoes a change, there is something we can do. But if it does not, what are we going to do? Being not subject to any modification, improvement is not possible. But *Brahman* being what it is, it is not necessary. Previously, I was *Brahman*; now also I am *Brahman*. It does not, and need not, undergo any change to become something else. *Mokṣa* is nothing but knowing this.

Then why do we define the *puruṣārtha* as *mokṣa*, and not knowledge? Nobody is interested in this kind of self-knowledge. One may be interested in knowledge of electronics because that is useful. But one will not be interested in self-knowledge unless he recognizes that all pain is centred only on the self. Since he is interested in getting rid of the sense of limitation centred on the self, the interest is only freedom from *duḥkha*. The *puruṣārtha* is not *jñāna*, but *mokṣa*. Even a scientist who is interested in

knowledge for its own sake, is not really interested in knowledge but in the joy of discovery and the sense of satisfaction he derives from gaining a better understanding of the laws of the universe. Finally, his pursuit is centred on himself, on his own happiness. Freedom alone is the ultimate end of the *jīva*, not knowledge. But *mokṣa* is in the form of knowledge, and that is where conversion from a *mumukṣu* to a *jījñāsu* takes place.

A *mumukṣu* can get carried away doing any number of things—from dieting to closing the eyes and looking for varieties of things. If, by doing so, he thinks that he is going to get *mokṣa*, that is very unfortunate. Any of these things may be useful, but they are not going to solve the problem. Only knowledge is *mokṣa* because you are already liberated. It is for this knowledge that one takes to a life of *sannyāsa*. Śaṅkara contrasts this to a life meant for *karma-phala* by saying that it is not possible for a person who wants to go to the western ocean and a person who wants to go to the eastern ocean to travel the same path. They are going in opposite directions. *Karma* is meant for one who is interested in small ends, like heaven, etc., and therefore, his approach, his attitude, his whole commitment is different. The one who is interested in *mokṣa*, which is in the form of knowledge, is interested in *jñāna-niṣṭhā*.

Śaṅkara again defines *jñāna-niṣṭhā* as the commitment to the pursuit of knowledge leading to *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, abiding knowledge without any obstruction. He uses the word *abhiniveśa*, which means total commitment, like one who is possessed. Under the possession of anything, even anger, or greed for power or money, a person finds in himself an extra power. Here it is a complete commitment to the pursuit of knowledge, with a passion. There is a consistent flow of contemplation upon *Brahman* as oneself. Using words like *śuddha*, *nitya*, *pūrṇa*, *satya*, *jñāna*, *ananta*, which reveal the nature of *Brahman*, he continuously appreciates that *pratyagātma*, the inner self, is identical with *Brahman*.

That kind of commitment is just the opposite to the pursuit of *karma*, and therefore, it cannot be accompanied by the pursuit of *karma*. One depends upon an agent, and the other dismisses it, so there is no possibility of a synthesis of *jñāna-niṣṭhā* and *karma-niṣṭhā*. They are as different from one another as a mountain and a mustard seed. How can they possibly be confused? A hill can be taken as a mountain, but you can never commit the mistake of taking the mustard seed for a mountain. Such is the difference between *jñāna-niṣṭhā* and the pursuit of *karma*. There is so much disparity that it is a contradiction. ‘This is the conclusion of those who know the *śāstra*,’ Śaṅkara adds.

Jñāna-niṣṭhā therefore, is to be accomplished by the renunciation of all *karma*, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*. It is important to note here that while *karma* is opposed to *jñāna*, *karma-yoga* is not opposed to *jñāna* because it is meant for preparation of the mind, which is again meant for *jñāna*. Therefore, he is now going to talk about *karma-yoga* in the next *śloka* and a few others.

Śaṅkara says, that the use of the word *api*, ‘also,’ along with the word, *sarvakarmāṇi*, ‘all actions,’ indicates not only the actions that are to be done, *vihiṭa-karmas*, but also those that are not to be done, *pratiṣiddha-karmas*. Here it seems as though a *karma-yogī* can do prohibited actions too. That is not the meaning of this statement of Śaṅkara. It means two things here. Firstly, what is right and wrong is relative. What is wrong may be right when the circumstances change. Therefore, sometimes what is generally considered to be wrong may be unavoidable. In these situations a *karma-yogī* takes it as a part of *Īśvara*’s order and being committed to *Īśvara* does that action, and does not incur *pāpa*. Secondly, sometimes an action, like a small hurt to some beings, like stamping an ant, etc., is done unknowingly. Even then, this *karma-yogī*, who does all actions being *madvyapāśraya*, that is, being totally dedicated to *Īśvara*, does not incur *pāpa*. He gains that ultimate end due to the grace of *Īśvara*.

Even a simple ethical person who has nothing to do with the Lord or religion does this. He lives a clean legal and ethical life, doing all that is to be done and not doing anything that is not to be done. I say both legal and ethical because, even though you are clean legally, ethically you need not be. The legal code is such that you can interpret it to your own advantage, even when you have transgressed the moral law. Conversely, ethically you may be right, but not legally. This is a big problem in the United States where it is so easy to file a malpractice suit against a doctor. If a doctor is passing the scene of an accident, he is ethically bound to stop and give medical aid. But if anything goes wrong, he can be sued. Certain actions, which are ethical, become illegal. But here is a person who is living both a legal and an ethical life. He is pragmatic. But he has nothing to do with religion or *Īśvara*.

Such a person is not a *karma-yogī*. And his life style cannot be called *karma-yoga*. It becomes *karma-yoga* only when you recognize *Īśvara* as the one who gives the results of all actions, *karma-phala-dātā*, and the one who is the very law of *dharmā*. I am saying this because there is so much confusion about *karma-yoga*. It has come to be known as skill in action. By that definition, even an expert pickpocket becomes a *karma-yogī*. All over the world this is a big misconception about *karma-yoga*, which has no support from the *Gītā* at all.

HE TAKES REFUGE IN ĪŚVARA

Nowhere in the *Gītā* is there any mention of *karma-yoga* without *Īśvara*. It is a life of prayer and prayerful attitude with reference to *karma*. This particular surrender is recognition of and conformity to *Īśvara*’s *dharmā*. That alone changes the person. *Kṛṣṇa* makes it very clear here by saying, ‘the one who has taken refuge in Me—*madvyapāśrayaḥ*.’ For a *karma-yogī*, the Lord is not separate from *dharmā* and he does not lose sight of this because of his *rāga-dveṣas*. While choosing his course of action, he is conscious of the Lord in the form of *dharmā*, in the form of

karmādhyakṣa, and at the time of facing the results, he is aware of the Lord as the giver of the fruits of action, *karmaphaladātā*, and receives that result as *prasāda*. At no time can he lose sight of *Īśvara*. This is a person for whom the basis of all actions and the source of the results of all actions is *Īśvara*. He is called *madvyapāśrayaḥ*. Performing all actions, *sarvakarmāṇi kurvāṇaḥ*, he never loses sight of *Īśvara*.

BY ĪŚVARAPRASĀDA HE GAINS ŚĀŚVA TAṀ PADAM

Because of *Īśvara*'s grace, '*matprasādāt*,' as *Kṛṣṇa* says, 'He gains an end, which does not come to an end—*śāśvatam avyayaṁ padam avāpnoti*.' This is *mokṣa*. How does he get *Īśvara*'s grace? Because he has taken refuge in *Īśvara*, he gains *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, whereby there is cheerfulness, clarity and tranquillity. That is *prasāda*. Then, there is exposure to proper teaching, *upadeśa*, that is necessary for clear knowledge. Without the grace of *Īśvara*, he will not find a proper *guru* and have access to the *śāstra*. The body and mind must also be conducive for his pursuit as well as the surrounding conditions. All these are due to the grace of the Lord—*Īśvara-prasāda*. If you really look into it, you will find the whole pursuit is nothing but *Īśvara-prasāda*.

In time, the *karma-yogī* gains the same *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. A *karma-yogī* is also a *mumukṣu*. He is not doing *karma* for the sake of heaven or anything, like a *karmaṭha*. But he does *karma* for the sake of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and continues to pursue the study of the *śāstra*. Therefore, surely he will gain *mokṣa*.

This being so, *Kṛṣṇa* asks *Arjuna* to do his duty with the attitude of *karma-yoga*.

Śāśvatam avyayaṁ padam avāpnoti
 madvyapāśrayaḥ sarvakarmāṇi kurvāṇaḥ

*cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparaḥ
 buddhiyogamupāśritya maccittaḥ satataṁ bhava*

Verse 57

Śāśvatam avyayaṁ padam avāpnoti *cetasā* — with the mind; madvyapāśrayaḥ sarvakarmāṇi — all actions; matparaḥ (san) — being the one whose (only) end is Me; buddhiyogam — a life of *karma-yoga*; = maccittaḥ upāśritya — resorting to; satatam — always; maccittaḥ — the one whose mind is in Me; bhava — may you become

Being one whose (only) end is Myself, mentally renouncing all actions unto Me, resorting to a life of *karma-yoga*, may you become one whose mind is always in Me.

**THEREFORE, ARJUNA, TAKE TO KARMAYOGA
ALWAYS HAVE YOUR MIND IN ME**

Arjuna is advised, ‘May you become one whose mind is always with Me—*maccittaḥ satataṁ bhava.*’ Certain minds are not in *Parameśvara* at all. For others, the mind is in *Parameśvara* occasionally, on certain days, like Friday or Sunday and at certain times, like morning and evening. In those moments of prayer, the mind is committed to *Īśvara*, but not otherwise. Here, *Kṛṣṇa* is asking *Arjuna* to be ‘one whose mind is always with Me.’ What does this mean? Should he never have any other thought, other than that of *Parameśvara*? How can he always think of *Īśvara* and go about doing his work? It is possible only when he appreciates that everything, the whole *jagat*, is *Īśvara*. Then doing anything or not doing anything, he never misses *Īśvara*.

MENTALLY RENOUNCE ALL YOUR ACTIONS UNTO ME

Kṛṣṇa says, *cetasā*, by the mind one should renounce all actions. What kind of mind does he talk about? *Śaṅkara* says it is a mind that has discrimination, *viveka*. Activities have two different types of results—seen, *dṛṣṭa*, as well as unseen, *adrṣṭa*. When you do charity for instance, there is a visible result in the form of the satisfaction you get, and an unseen result, called *puṇya*, which will manifest as something desirable later. Similarly, when you perform a ritual, or offer daily prayers, there is the immediate result of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, your composure and acceptance of whatever has happened, giving a degree of freedom from *rāga-dveṣas*. Then, whether you want it or not, there is *puṇya* accrued as a result of those actions. Some *karmas* are done for the purpose of an immediate result, like *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, and some are done for a result that is to be realised later, like heaven. All these actions, *sarvakarmāṇi*, are to be offered to *Īśvara* with a proper attitude. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘Mentally renouncing all actions unto Me—*cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi sannyasya.*’ That is the proper attitude.

Previously he had said, ‘Whatever you do, do it as an offering to Me—*yat karoṣi... tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam.*’¹ Because something presents itself to be done by you, therefore, you do it. This is *Īśvara*’s order. The very fact that you are placed in a given situation which calls for an action on your part, means that you are caught in this fabric of *Īśvara*. To appreciate this fact—that the action, which you have got to do, is enjoined by *Īśvara*—is not an ordinary thing. If you analyse it, you will find that any inevitability is nothing but *Īśvara*. In common parlance, there is an expression, ‘Man proposes, God disposes.’ Or, whatever happens is said to be *Īśvara*’s will, *Īśvarecchā*.

This has to be understood properly. It is not that God goes about desiring something to happen to you. He is not going to decide about the headache you may get tomorrow. It is the law that is *Īśvara*. *Īśvarecchā* implies your own past *karma*, and that

¹ *Gītā* – 9-27

law of *karma*, law of *dharmā*, that brings about a given result is not merely mechanical. It is a manifestation of *Īśvara*, the conscious being. Any inevitable situation is *Īśvarecchā*, and once you understand that, you do whatever the situation calls for. It is a part of the whole colossal *yajñā* of the cosmos in which there is a constant flux of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. The creation is something like a boiling pot of water. You find an arrangement of bubbles that keeps on changing. But it is all very logical. One bubble is big, another is small. One has burst already, and another is just breaking up. There is logic that determines why a bubble is here now, why one is big or small, etc. They all follow some laws, which perhaps we have not yet decoded. We are like bubbles. Each one has to do certain things at a certain time and this is *Īśvarecchā*. When the called-for actions are done with a mind that has this appreciation, it is an offering to *Īśvara*.

HAVE ME AS YOUR ONLY END

This person, *Kṛṣṇa* says, is *matparaḥ*—the one for whom *Īśvara* is paramount. *Īśvara* is the only end for him, nothing else. He does not use *Īśvara* as an accomplice for gaining smaller ends. Not that there is anything wrong with making use of *Īśvara*'s grace for the purpose of getting some small result. A person who does so is also a devotee, an *arthārthī*. But here we are talking about a *jjñāsu*, one who wants *Īśvara*'s grace, not to gain some small end, but to gain *Īśvara*. Being one for whom *Īśvara* is the end, he has no other refuge but *Īśvara*. *Kṛṣṇa* says, taking refuge, *upāśritya*, in a life of *karma-yoga*, here called *buddhi-yoga*. 'May you become one whose mind is always resolved in Me—*maccittaḥ satataṁ bhava*.' Not in the morning or in the evening, but always surrendered at the feet of *Bhagavān*.

Karma-yoga is a life of surrender, a religious life. *Īśvara* has to be accepted, and therefore, there is no secular *karma-yoga*. When you want to accomplish things without *Īśvara*, you create a lot of unnecessary pressure because you are taking charge of things that you are not capable of controlling. When you make yourself responsible for things for which you are not responsible at all, you build up pressure and invite problems. In the beginning, you may enjoy some success, but later, you will suffer a breakdown. In *karma-yoga*, efficiency is natural because you are free from anxiety. When there is no pressure, all your faculties are available to you because you do not spend your time worrying about what will happen. You just do what you can do. Real efficiency is not perfection; it is the availability of the total person. All your faculties, your emotion, your mind, senses, and skills are available for the task at hand. And the fact that what is available is limited, is not a problem. Everybody has limited powers, but the limited powers you have are at your disposal because you are using them for making an offering to *Īśvara*. There is no question of your not being efficient, but it is not right to define *karma-yoga* as, 'efficiency in work.'

Karma-yoga is purely a religious life so there is no *karma-yoga* without devotion. *Śaṅkara* says *buddhi-yoga* is a firm resolve of the mind. As we saw in the second chapter,¹ the one who has discovered that *mokṣa* is the only *puruṣārtha* has a mind that is resolute, while the one who has not properly ascertained this end, has a mind that is fragmented. If the end is not clear, the ends are endless, and if the end is very clear, the only project I have is fixing up myself so that I can understand my identity with *Īśvara*. Everything is for that purpose and therefore, everything has a purpose. No matter what it takes, no matter how many years it takes, it does not matter. The resolution, the commitment is to *mokṣa* as the end, and therefore, *karma* becomes *yoga*.

If one's mind is always resolved in *Īśvara*, then what happens?

“मच्चित्तं मे सदा मच्चित्तं मे सदा मच्चित्तं मे सदा
+ । ए सदा ए सदा ए सदा ए सदा ए सदा ॥५८॥

maccitah sarvadurgāṇi matprasādattariṣyasi
atha cettvamahaṅkāraṇa śroṣyasi vinaṅkṣyasi

Verse 58

“मच्चित्तं (मे सदा) *maccittah (san)* — being one whose mind is always in Me; “मच्चित्तं मे सदा” *matprasādāt* — because of My grace; “मच्चित्तं मे सदा” *sarvadurgāṇi* — all difficulties; “मच्चित्तं मे सदा” *tariṣyasi* — you will cross; + । ए सदा *atha cet* — but if; + ॥ ए सदा *ahaṅkārat* — because of egotism; । ए सदा *tvam* — you; ए सदा *na śroṣyasi* — you do not listen; ए सदा *vinaṅkṣyasi* — you will perish

Being one whose mind is always in Me, because of My grace, you will cross all difficulties. But if, because of egotism, you do not listen (to Me), you will perish.

BY PLACING YOUR MIND IN ME YOU WILL CROSS ALL DIFFICULTIES

Durga means that which is difficult to cross. A mountain peak or a narrow passage, which is difficult to negotiate, is called *durga*. It is something that can be traversed only with great difficulty. *Śaṅkara* says it is the cause of *saṃsāra*. These are the *karmas*, which create *punya-pāpa* that cause new births. They are born of a sense of agency, *karṭṛtva*, which itself is born of ignorance, *ajñāna*, all of which are very difficult to cross. But, being one who is committed to a life of *karma-yoga*, you will cross, all these things, which are difficult to cross—*sarvadurgāṇi tariṣyasi*.

IF YOU DO NOT LISTEN TO ME, YOU WILL PERISH

‘Now,’ he says, ‘suppose you don't listen to Me—*atha cet na śroṣyasi*—because of your own egotism, *ahaṅkārat*, you think you know everything and are going to take

¹ *Gītā* – 2-41

charge of everything and that you need not follow this at all. Due to arrogance, born of ignorance, you do not understand what I have been telling you. If that is the case, you will get destroyed, *vināṅkṣyasi*, meaning, you cannot accomplish what you want.’

The *śreyas* that you are seeking will be denied to you because you are not ready for it. If you are not ready for *sannyāsa* and you give up *karma*, you will neither be a *sannyāsī* nor a *karma-yogī*. Therefore, you will get destroyed, in the sense that you will not get that end which you are seeking. *Kṛṣṇa* says this only to make sure that *Arjuna* has understood him properly because later he is going to give him the freedom to choose whatever he wants, *yathā icchasi tathā kuru*. Now he wants to make sure that he has said everything he has to say.

Kṛṣṇa is telling *Arjuna* that even though the duty he has to do here is not pleasant, if he gives it up, he will have to do something more unpleasant later, because his nature will force him to do so. When people taunt him for running away from the battlefield, he will get so angry that he will fight with them, because no one can completely give up his nature. *Arjuna*’s disposition at that time was something that had to be taken care of. Later he is going to say, ‘*naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā kariṣye vacanaṃ tava*—I have no more delusion, I will do what you have said.’ He understands that performing action also is a means for *mokṣa* for him, his disposition being what it is. He had knowledge all right, but from his behaviour later, and also from what *Bhagavān* says to *Arjuna* right now, we understand that his knowledge has some obstructions. They have to be taken care of.

YOUR DISPOSITION WILL IMPEL YOU TO FIGHT

Śaṅkara introduces the next verse saying that one should not think, ‘I am independent, why should I do what someone else says?’

यदाहङ्कारमस्त्रित्या ना यत्स्य इति मन्थस्ये
मिथ्यैषा व्यवासयस्ते प्रकृतिवृत्तं नियोज्यति ॥

*yadahaṅkāramāśritya na yotsya iti manyase
mithyaiṣa vyavasāyaste prakṛtistvāṃ niyokṣyati*

Verse 59

+ यदाहङ्कारमस्त्रित्या + ना यत्स्य इति मन्थस्ये *ahaṅkāram āśritya* — resorting to egotism; अहङ्कारमस्त्रित्या *yat*¹ *manyase* — that which you think; यदाहङ्कारमस्त्रित्या *na yotsye iti* — that ‘I will not fight’; मिथ्यैषा *īṣā*

¹ This verse has a different reading available too. The difference is as follows.

यद्याहङ्कारमस्त्रित्या ना यत्स्य इति मन्थस्ये
मिथ्यैषा व्यवासयस्ते प्रकृतिवृत्तं नियोज्यति

Verse 59

Here the word *yat* is read as *yadi*, and connecting with *manyase*, it would mean, ‘*yadi manyase* – if you were to think,’ instead of ‘*yat manyase* – that which you think.’

Arjuna! Out of delusion, being definitely bound by your own action, which is born of your natural disposition, you will helplessly do just what you do not wish to do.

What is born out of one's disposition, determined by the composition of the three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, is called *svabhāvaja*. By this, one is definitely bound, *nibaddha*, to perform certain actions—even what you do not want to do, *yat kartuṃ na icchasi*. Why would you not want to do what is in keeping with your nature? Because of some delusion, *mohāt*. Due to some impulsive decision or some misplaced sympathy. *Arjuna* wanted to call off the war. Sympathy is a good quality, but here it is misplaced because *Duryodhana* is a person who has committed every crime in the book. He doesn't require sympathy now; he has to be stopped. If you act upon a misplaced sympathy for someone just because he is a cousin, you will have a lot of problems. That is an action born of lack of discrimination, *mohāt*. That very action that you do not want to do now, you will uncontrollably do later, *kariṣyasi avaśo'pi tat*. When the pressure goes away, you will regret your failure to act, or perhaps people will goad you into it. Whatever be the impetus, being completely possessed by a given disposition, you will definitely act in accordance with it. There is no escape from it because you cannot change your disposition by will. By your will, you can create a condition for yourself that is conducive towards a change; but it takes its own time. A change in disposition does not happen overnight. *Arjuna* has to go through this experience of war. That is the situation, which has presented itself before him, and he has to do what is to be done. If he does not, he is not acting in keeping with his disposition. From this, we should understand that each one of us must do what is appropriate for us. What someone else does is not a legitimate basis for our choice of action. What is good for you, you have to decide and then do it.

Doing *karma* as a *yoga* is not in any way opposed to *mokṣa*. *Karma* itself is by nature opposed to *mokṣa* because it is a product of ignorance of the self. If the *karma* is meant only for achieving a few limited ends, you will get only those things, and thus, it is bondage, not *mokṣa*. But if the *karma* is done as a *yoga*, not for a given end, but for *mokṣa*, it can prepare you for *mokṣa*. As a *karma-yogī* you have a field wherein you can change your disposition into a *sāttvika* disposition, which is necessary for knowledge that is free from obstructions. To remove all the obstructions, *pratibandhakas*, one has to go through a life of duty keeping *Īśvara* in view. In the fifth chapter, *Bhagavān* pointed out that, what is accomplished by the *sannyāsī* is reached by the *karma-yogī* also—*yat sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṃ tad yogairapi gamyate*. You cannot simply impose your will upon your disposition. It does not change. That very will is a product of an impulsive disposition, which has to mature. Making a resolve to be a *sannyāsī* does not generally work because it is not easy to gain the disposition of a *sannyāsī* without a life of *karma-yoga*—*sannyāsastu mahābaho duḥkhamāptum ayogataḥ*. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* tells *Arjuna* that *karma-yoga* is better—*karmayogaḥ viśiṣyate*.

ॐ ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति
 ब्रह्मयानसर्वभूतानि यान्त्ररूढानि मायायां

īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ hṛddeśe'ṛjuna tiṣṭhati
bhrāmayansarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā

Verse 61

+ ॐ *arjuna* — O! *Arjuna*; ॐ यान्त्ररूढानि *yantrārūḍhāni* — (like) those which are mounted on a machine; ॐ सर्वभूतानि *sarvabhūtāni* — all beings; ॐ मायायां *māyayā* — by (the magic of his) *māyā*; ॐ ब्रह्मयान *bhrāmayan* — causing to move (revolve); ॐ ईश्वरः *īśvaraḥ* — the Lord; ॐ सर्वभूतानां *sarvabhūtānām* — of all beings; ॐ हृद्देशे *hṛddeśe* — at the seat of the intellect; ॐ तिष्ठति *tiṣṭhati* — remains

The Lord remains at the seat of the intellect of all beings, *Arjuna*, causing all beings to move, revolve, by (the magic of his) *māyā*, (like) those (figures) which are mounted on a machine (are made to revolve).

MEANING OF THE WORD ARJUNA

Śaṅkara has chosen this occasion to give the meaning of the name, *Arjuna*, as the one whose disposition is pure. He has a clean mind. This meaning of the word, *arjuna*, as something that is clear or bright is also seen in the *ṛgveda*,¹ where the day is described initially as *kr̥ṣṇa* meaning dark, overcast and cloudy. Immediately the day is said to be *arjuna*, meaning *atīsvaccha*, very clear, not cloudy. Thus, *Arjuna* is the one who has a clean mind like the cloudless day. That does not mean he does not get angry, but there is no deceit. Because he has a clean mind, he has compassion, as we have seen, but at the same time, he has other obstructions like legitimate anger. All the *Pāṇḍavas* have that kind of mind. Even *Bhīma* has that kind of mind. But if you taunt him, he is going to pulverise you. So, he is not going to be a *sādhu*. They were all people of great self-respect. If you say something, which will in anyway belittle them, you will have to answer for that. This is not the mind of a *sādhu*, but of a simple-natured human being.

LORD, SEATED IN THE INTELLECT, CAUSES ALL BEINGS TO FUNCTION THROUGH MĀYĀ

Īśvara is the one in whose presence the mind, senses, etc., function as they do and the whole universe is as it is. That *Īśvara* is said to reside at the seat of the intellect, *hṛddeśe*, because that is where consciousness is manifest, where you experience the whole world, where you recognize the presence of *ātmā*. There alone you recognize, 'I am.' And this is true for all beings—*sarvabhūtānām*. Residing there, *Īśvara* is causing all beings to move—*bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni*. Because of his presence alone, without

¹ + ॐ ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति

ahaśca kṛṣṇam ahararjunaṃ ca (ṛk-saṃhitā – 6-1-1)

surrender to; tātprasādāt — by his grace; parām śāntim — absolute peace; śāśvatam sthānam — the eternal abode; prāpsyasi — you will gain

Surrender to him alone with your whole heart, *Arjuna*. By his grace you will gain absolute peace, the eternal abode.

ACCEPT ĪŚVARA WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART, AS THE ONE IN CHARGE

You are in charge of your life to an extent, but if you think you are totally in charge, you are mistaken. Everything is given to you—even the ego that thinks it is in charge. If the ego is the I-sense in the body-mind-sense-complex, that ‘I’ is given to you, along with the body, mind and senses. And if you find that you have no control over your behaviour, it is because that itself is ‘I.’ Naturally you will go by whatever happens in the mind. If you feel like giving up, then you will give up. If you feel like doing something, you will do it. There is no discrimination, *viveka*, available for you, unless you can step aside and see that you have jurisdiction only over actions, never over the results—*karmaṇi eva adhikāraḥ te mā phaleṣu kadācana*. Then again, everything is given to you by *Īśvara*, who is the indweller, in keeping with your own *prārabdha-karma*. According to that *prārabdha-karma*, things happen. How are you going to deal with that? It is better to give to *Īśvara* exactly what belongs to him. You do what you have to do and he does his job. At the very level of yourself as an individual related to *Īśvara*, the Lord, you do not dictate all the terms. So why do you take charge of things for which you have no responsibility?

The acknowledgement of our limitations is such an important thing. We have no power over so many things. This war, for example, that *Arjuna* is facing, would certainly have been avoided by him if it were within his power. Certain situations simply have to be faced, and faced with intelligence. Not facing an inevitable situation is unintelligent. Then after facing it, you can deal with it foolishly or intelligently. What *Gītā* is talking about is facing a situation intelligently. *Arjuna* Does not want to face this situation because he is overpowered by sympathy. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* is asking *Arjuna* to surrender to him, *tasmāt tameva śaraṇaṃ gaccha*. When you surrender your disposition to *Īśvara* who is identified as *prārabdha-karma*, then you accept that what is to happen will happen, *bhavitavyaṃ bhavati eva*. This is a very beautiful thing, and not easy to assimilate completely. What is to happen will happen and I do what is to be done.

For that, *Īśvara* has to be recognized as the one who is in the form of the law of *karma* itself. This creation is a huge ritual, *yaज्ञा*, in progress, in which you are a wheel or a cog. Your place is very important; otherwise, you would not be here. The very fact that you are in this contemporary society, or in a particular situation, however

insignificant you may think it is, is significant. You are significant. In a large piece of machinery, the bolt may think its job of sitting tight is unimportant since it seems to be doing nothing at all. But sitting tight is very important, for if it does not, the whole machine will come to a halt. Therefore, you are where you are because you have to be there. Whatever role you are called upon to play is important; that is why you are there.

Therefore, *Arjuna* is told to surrender to *Īśvara*. *Śaṅkara* says, ‘To remove the pain of *saṃsāra*, surrender to *Īśvara*.’ This takes the pressure off yourself. If you take the help of *Īśvara*, you do not blame yourself and then you allow yourself to let go of the past and get into the flow of situations as they unfold themselves day after day. Today the situation is in a particular form; tomorrow it will be in another form, and the next day it is going to be something different. That is what makes life interesting. After all, if tomorrow is going to be exactly like today, why should we have tomorrow? But every day is a bundle of surprises. There is always something new happening to keep us interested. If I let go of my past and do not think that I am in charge of everything, but that *Īśvara* in the form of my *prārabdhā-karma* is in charge, I get into the flow of events and do what I can do. The relief in this is not ordinary.

Emotionally we have to do this, not purely rationally. With our heart, intimately, at the emotional level we have to let go because our problems are only emotional. The cognitive change that takes place by an understanding of *Īśvara* helps one even to emotionally accept *Īśvara*. That emotional acceptance also is indicated here by the word, *sarvabhāvena*, meaning, with your whole heart. The Lord says ‘May you accept *Īśvara* as the one who is in charge, with your whole heart.’ There is a beautiful imagery in the *Gītā-dhyāna-śloka*, in which, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is considered to be the boatman, *kaivartaka*, who takes one across. It says, ‘The blood-soaked river was crossed by the *Pāṇḍavas*; *Kṛṣṇa* was the boatman—*sottīrṇā khalu pāṇḍavaiḥ raṇanadī kaivartakaḥ keśavaḥ*.’ *Raṇanadī*, is the river of *saṃsāra*, of conflicts, of sorrow. This river cannot be crossed easily. It is full of big rocks and whirlpools, and raging rapids. How are you going to cross it? Even a boat is useless, unless you have an expert boatman. No ordinary boatman can help you cross this river; he himself will be drowned in the process. He should be one who knows exactly what he is doing and where he is going, the depth of the river at every point, how to avoid the whirlpools, and where all the unseen rocks are. Only *Bhagavān* can be your boatman. You hand over everything to him and you will definitely reach the shore. *Arjuna* did this when he asked *Kṛṣṇa* to be his chariot-driver. In the same way, one has to hand over one's life to *Bhagavān*. The big *yajña* is going on, and within that, we are doing our own little part, surrendering to the order that is *Īśvara*.

This order includes the moral laws and the law of *karma*. In fact, the law of *karma* and *dharma* are the same, because *dharma* produces *puṇya* and *pāpa*, which form the very order. *Arjuna* is born here, facing this situation all according to *puṇya* and *pāpa*. The law of *karma* centred on your free will and *dharma-adharma* are all highly

interconnected. Therefore, to that one Lord who is in the form of the very order of *dharma*, the order of *karma*, you surrender and do what is to be done. We conform to *dharma* because *dharma* is *Bhagavān*.

Then what happens? Because of the grace of that *Īśvara*, *tat prasādāt*, you have *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*, and therefore, will gain first a relative composure—*śāntiṃ prāpsyasi*. Once you have that relative *śānti*, you will, in time, gain absolute *śānti*—*parāṃ śāntiṃ śāśvataṃ sthānaṃ prāpsyasi*. This is a *śānti*, a peace, which is not a condition of the mind, but the nature of yourself. It is different from the simple *śānti* born of your attitude of surrender. Because it is not dependent upon anything, but is the very nature of yourself, it is *śāśvataṃ sthānam*, an abode that is eternal, from which there is no coming back. This is *mokṣa*. This is *Īśvara* who resides in the intellect of all, *sarvabhūtānāṃ hr̥ddeṣe tiṣṭhati*. You think you are there, but you are not there at all. Your *ahaṅkāra* is only a status; all that is there is *paramātmā*. There is no separate *ahaṅkāra* at all, only *Īśvara*. You please try to understand that *Īśvara*, please seek—*śaraṇaṃ gaccha*. Then you will gain relative *śānti* and then *mokṣa*, the *parā śānti*.

In the next verse, *Bhagavān* partially sums up the teaching:

<ÉÍÉ íĒāYĒÉÉ?ÉJ^aÉÉ:ÉĀMĒĒÉ?Ā:ÍÉ@É ÉĀÉÉ*
É'É'ÉĀÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ É'ÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ É'ÉÉÉ ÉĒŪ | 163 |

*iti te jñānamākhyātaṃ guhyādguhyataraṃ mayā
vimṛśyaitadaśeṣeṇa yathechasi tathā kuru*

Verse 63

<ÉÍÉ *iti* — thus; MĒĀÉÍĒĀMĒĀ:ÍÉ@ÉĀ *guhyāt guhyataram* — more secret than any secret; YĒÉÉÉ'ÉĀ *jñānam* — knowledge; ÉĀÉÉ *mayā* — by Me; íĒā *te* — to you; +ÉJ^aÉÉÍÉ'ÉĀ *ākhyātam* — was told; +ÉĀÉÉÉÉ *aśeṣeṇa* — completely; BÍÉÍĒĒÉ'É'ÉĀÉÉ *etat vimṛśya* — considering this; É'ÉÉÉ <SUĀÉÉ *yathā icchasi* — just as you wish; íÉÍÉÉ ÉĒŪ *tathā kuru* — so may you do

Thus, the knowledge that is more secret than any secret was told by Me to you. Considering this completely, you may do just as you wish.

THE MOST SECRETIVE KNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN TOLD TO YOU

This knowledge is more secret, more hidden than what is generally known as hidden, *guhyāt guhyataram*. Why is it so? For one thing, it is not available through the means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, which we commonly have at our disposal, like perception and inference. Then again, even when the *pramāṇa* is available, it can remain hidden, like anything known through a *pramāṇa*. The equation, $E = mc^2$, for example, can be explained in detail, but until you understand that explanation, it is a secret. That *ātmā* is *Brahman*, is definitely a secret until *śāstra* reveals it to me. Even when it is revealed, it can remain a secret because we see people, who even if they have

listened to the *śāstra*, still do not know—*śṛṇvantaḥ api bahavaḥ yaṃ na vidyuḥ*.¹ If it remains a secret even when it is available, that is a greater secret than any other secret, *guhyaṭ guhyataram*. Further, it is the nature of yourself, and therefore, it is not available for the one who is looking for it. And naturally it is not available for the one who does not look for it.

The *Upaniṣad* says, ‘The one who chooses which (*ātmā*), by him that is gained—*yameva eṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ*.’² *Ātmā* is available only for the person who chooses to know, not for anybody else. Because it is not an object, you will not stumble upon *ātmā*. You have to choose to know. It will not happen one day of its own accord. You have to initiate the process of knowing because it is yourself. This is called *mumukṣā*, which converts to *jijñāsā*, the most essential qualification for this knowledge. Then, there is acknowledgement of self-ignorance, and when you expose yourself to the *pramāṇa*, it will be meaningful. Again the *Upaniṣad* says, ‘It is not gained by your retentive power, not by listening to various other *śāstras*, and not by the recitation of the Veda—*nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyaḥ na medhayā na bahunā śrutena*—but by the one who chooses to know the *ātmā*.’³ Please understand the significance of this statement. It has got to be chosen by you; only then can it be known. Therefore, it is a greater secret than any other secret. And also, the best hiding place for the *ātmā* is the *ātmā*, myself. That eternal, *ānandaṃ brahma*, which I am seeking, is hidden in the very *ātmā*, the seeker, as the nature of the seeker. There is no better hiding place.

‘This knowledge,’ *Bhagavān* says, ‘is explained by Me to you—*te jñānam ākhyātaṃ mayā*.’ Now what should *Arjuna* do? He is urged to properly contemplate upon, think over all that *Kṛṣṇa* has said, not partially, but completely, *aśeṣeṇa*, not by considering selected sections, but by viewing all that he has told as a whole. He must understand the whole of it—what is *karma*, what is *karma-yoga*, what is *sannyāsa*, what is *mokṣa*, etc. Everything must be understood properly. Any given topic becomes meaningful only when you understand the whole. Because *Arjuna* wants *śreyas*, he must know very clearly the position of *karma* in the pursuit of *mokṣa*.

HAVING ANALYSED THIS COMPLETELY, DO AS YOU WISH

‘Having considered all this completely, that is, having analysed all this completely—*vimṛśya etad aśeṣeṇa*,’ *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘do as you wish—*yathechasi tathā kuru*.’ This is the confidence of a teacher. He has already made sure that he has told *Arjuna* everything that has to be told, and lastly told him also that if he chooses not to fight, his resolve is false, *mithyā*. You cannot say more than that. After having said all this, he still leaves the decision to *Arjuna* because *Kṛṣṇa* is a teacher here, not a

¹ *Kāthopaniṣad* – 1-2-7

² *Kāthopaniṣad* – 1-2-23, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* – 3-2-3

³ *Kāthopaniṣad* – 1-2-23, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* – 3-2-3

consultant. If, after all this teaching, he still has to make decisions for *Arjuna*, what kind of teacher is he, and what kind of student is *Arjuna*? If, at the end of eighteen chapters he makes decisions on behalf of *Arjuna*, he neither has respect for himself as a teacher, nor for *Arjuna* as his student. Therefore, he says, ‘As you desire, so you do.’ He gives him a blank cheque.

Lord *Kṛṣṇa* has said to *Arjuna* that he has taught him all that is to be taught and gives him a sanction to do as he wishes, *yatheccyasi tathā kuru*. He can follow the lifestyle of either *sannyāsa* or *karma-yoga*, for the sake of *mokṣa*. After giving him this blank cheque, *Kṛṣṇa* has something further to say.

ॐ सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचनं
 <यः + ईष्यते + इति + ततो + वक्ष्यामि + ते + हि + तम् ॥४॥

sarvaguhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
iṣṭo'si me dr̥dhamiti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam

Verse 64

bhūyaḥ — again; *paramam* — ultimate; *sarva-guhyatamam* — which is the most secret of all; *me vacaḥ* — My statement; *śṛṇu* — listen; *me* — to Me; *dr̥dham* — definitely; *<Y + EEE + I* *iṣṭaḥ asi* — you are beloved; *<EIE iti* — thus; *IEIE tataḥ* — therefore; *EVEE EA hitam* — what is good; *IEA EI AEEE E te vakṣyāmi* — I will tell you

Again, listen to My ultimate statement, which is the most secret of all.

You are definitely beloved to Me, therefore, I will tell you, what is good.

Even though it was told before, it is pointed out again here that this is the greatest secret of all, *sarva-guhyatamam*. Because it is not available for any *pramāṇa* that we can employ, it is the most hidden. Though *ātmā* is self evident, the particular knowledge, which is *Brahman*, is not available for any *pramāṇa* such as perception, etc. This is to be understood only through *śāstra*. For this and various other reasons I have given you, it remains the most well hidden secret. The person who is seeking the ultimate end—in the form of *ānanda*, happiness, *satya*, freedom from limitations in the form of time-bound existence and *jñāna*, freedom from ignorance—happens to be that very end, and therefore, it is hidden. Being not available for objectification, it is hidden. And sometimes, even one who is taught may not understand if he is not prepared, and therefore, it remains hidden. Though a person has listened to the teaching, there is no guarantee that he sees exactly as he is told. The words of the *śruti* are supposed to create direct, immediate knowledge of the non-difference of *ātmā* and *Brahman*. Through implication, *lakṣaṇayā*, the *mahāvākya* must necessarily reveal the *vastu* to him as he listens. If it does not, that is only due to his lack of preparation. Therefore, it is *sarva-guhyatamam*.

Now Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, ‘Please listen to My essential statement—*me paramaṃ vacaḥ śṛṇu.*’ He is going to tell again briefly, in essence, all that he has to say at the end. Therefore, he says, ‘Please listen.’ Why? Because, he is very dear to Kṛṣṇa. ‘You are beloved to me—*iṣṭaḥ asi me.*’ Arjuna has always been dear to Kṛṣṇa as a friend, but now he has also become a student, *śiṣya*. And he is a devotee, *bhakta*, as we saw previously, ‘You are my devotee and a friend—*bhaktō’si me sakhā ceti.*’ In the very beginning Arjuna declared, ‘I am your student—*śiṣyaste’ham.*’ It is not that Arjuna has become dear to Kṛṣṇa only now. He has always been dear and Kṛṣṇa is very sure that, that fact is not going to change at any time. It is definite, *dr̥ḍham*.

Because Arjuna is so dear to him, he says, ‘I will tell you what is good for you—*te hitaṃ vakṣyāmi.*’ The whole *Gītā* is nothing but a way of pursuit for *mokṣa*, *pravṛttimārga*, and a way of withdrawal from all other pursuits, *nivṛttimārga*. Either you can be a *karma-yogī* and gain *mokṣa* or be a *sannyāsī* and gain *mokṣa*. While performing duties you can pursue knowledge, or without duties, if you are ready for it, you can pursue only knowledge. The same thing is repeated briefly here as Kṛṣṇa sums up everything in two sentences, one for *karma-yoga*, and the other for *sannyāsa*.

In the second chapter, he first talked about *sāṅkhya*, knowledge, and then said, ‘Listen to Me about this *karma-yoga*—*yoge tu imāṃ śṛṇu.*’¹ Later, in the third chapter, he said, ‘In this world, two committed lifestyles were told by Me before, Arjuna—knowledge for the *sannyāsīs* and *karma-yoga* for *karma-yogīs-loke asmin dviividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayā anagha jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānām karma-yogena yoginām.*’² Here at the end he again sums up the entire *Gītā* in these two words—*karma-yoga* and *sannyāsa*—in the next two verses.

The Lord says, ‘This is *hita*, something that is good, for you.’ There are many things that are good for a person, but what is absolutely good is *mokṣa*, the knowledge of *ātmā* being *Brahman*, and the means for that is also considered *hita*. The next verse considers *karma-yoga*.

“Éx”ÉxÉÉ |É-É “É’ Hôôâ “É-t-ÉVÉÔ “ÉÉxÉ”É°EÖ *

“ÉÉ”ÉâÉ°ÉÉ°É °Éi°âÉiÉâ |ÉÉiÉVÉÉxÉâÉ|É°ÉÉ°É°É “Éâi |Éx | |

manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṃ namaskuru
māmevaiṣyasi satyaṃ te pratijāne priyo’si me

Verse 65

“Éx”ÉxÉÉ& *manmanāḥ* — one whose mind is offered to Me; “É’ Hôô& *madbhaktaḥ* — one whose devotion is to Me; “É-t-ÉVÉÔ *madyājī* — one whose worship is to Me; |É-É *bhava* — become; “ÉÉ”Éâ *mām* — to Me; xÉ”É°EÖû *namaskuru* — do salutations; “ÉÉ”ÉâBÉ *mām eva*

¹ *Gītā* – 2-39

² *Gītā* – 3-3

— to Me alone; $\text{B}^1\text{ā}^{\text{ff}}\text{ō}^{\text{f}}$ *eṣyasi* — you will reach; $\text{ō}^{\text{f}}\text{ī}^{\text{ā}}\text{f}^{\text{ā}}$ *satyam* — truly; $\text{ī}^{\text{ā}}\text{te}$ — to you; $\text{ī}^{\text{ā}}\text{ī}^{\text{ā}}\text{v}^{\text{ā}}\text{t}^{\text{ā}}$ *pratijāne* — I promise; $\text{ī}^{\text{ā}}\text{ī}^{\text{ā}}\text{f}^{\text{ā}}\text{ā} + \text{ī}^{\text{ā}}\text{f}^{\text{ā}}$ *me priyaḥ asi* — you are dear to Me

Become one whose mind is offered to Me, one whose devotion is to Me, one whose worship is to Me; do salutations to Me. You will reach Me alone. I truly promise you. (Because) you are dear to Me.

SUMMARISING KARMAYOGA

If he becomes all this, *Arjuna* will reach *Kṛṣṇa*. ‘*Manmanāḥ*’ means the one who has *Parameśvara* as the object of his mind. The mind itself is offered to *Īśvara*. Naturally, he is ‘*madbhaktaḥ*.’ His devotion, his commitment is to *Īśvara* alone. Whatever he does is for the sake of *Īśvara*. All his rituals, *yāgas*, all *karmas* are only for *Īśvara*—‘*madyājī*.’ *Īśvara* alone is his refuge, the locus of his surrender, and thus *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘May you salute Me—*māṃ namaskuru*.’ And *Śaṅkara* adds, ‘May you salute only Me.’ When this is so, ‘You will reach Me alone—*mām eva eṣyasi*.’ He gives him a promise, ‘I truly promise you—*satyaṃ te pratijāne*.’ Here the end, *sādhya*, is *Īśvara* and the means, *sādhana*, and what is offered, are all for *Īśvara* alone. Any action that is performed by the mind, speech, or limbs is done as worship to *Īśvara* for the sake of gaining that very *Īśvara*. Generally, these instruments of action are pressed into service to perform acts of worship keeping in view a certain result like heaven. Here, the result is only *Parameśvara*. You do not want anything less than *Parameśvara*. Then again, all the instruments of action, *kaṛaṇas* are non-separate from *Parameśvara* and the very actions, *kriyās*, which you do, are for the sake of *Parameśvara*. Whatever duties you are enjoined to do are all for the sake of *Īśvara*.

We have seen this before:¹ ‘Worshipping him (*Īśvara*) with one's own duty, a person gains success—*svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavah*.’ When you do something just because the situation demands it, that is duty. When you analyse this properly, it is clear that what is to be done in a given situation and what we call *dharma* are one and the same. What is not to be done and *adharmas* will also be one and the same. Conformity to *dharma* is exactly what ‘worshipping’ means here. The commitment has to be in keeping with *dharma* because *dharma* is non-separate from *Īśvara*, who is both the efficient and material cause—*abhinna-nimitta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. That is pointed out by saying that ‘*tam*,’ the one who is to be worshipped, is the one ‘from whom all beings emerge, and by whom they are sustained—*yataḥ pravṛttiḥ bhūtānāṃ yena sarvam idaṃ tatam*.’

Though the *jīva* is not created, but is *paramātmā*, still, due to ignorance, all the subtle and gross *upādhis* and all the subtle and gross aspects of the five elements arise from that same *Parameśvara*. Therefore, it is not merely the maker, the intelligent

¹ *Gītā* – 18-46

cause, *nimitta-kāraṇa*, but because it pervades everything, it is necessarily the material cause, *upadāna-kāraṇa*, also. Therefore, all that is created is non-separate from *Īśvara*. If that is so, all the natural laws and laws of *dharma*, which are not created by any individual, are also non-separate from *Īśvara*. What is commonly sensed by all of us is *dharma*, which is non-separate from *Īśvara*. Conformity to that is what is told here as *karma-yoga*. *Karma* is meant for varieties of things; *karma-yoga* is meant for only one thing—*antaḥ-kāraṇa-śuddhi* for the sake of *jñāna*. The *karma-yogī* has no confusion about what he wants, *puruṣārtha*. He knows that nothing, but the discovery of his identity with *Īśvara*, will solve his problem. No *jīva* can accept anything less because nothing else is going to work. Whatever he does, he will continue to be a seeker. That will only be resolved when his sense of isolation is given up and that is only possible by discovering that he is everything. Until then, no *jīva* will rest content. Therefore, *Īśvara* is his end.

Thus, *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘You will come to Me alone—*mām eva eṣyasi*.’ The obtaining non-separation, obtaining oneness, is not a created oneness; it has to be discovered. Any created oneness will end in separation. Because if two things are brought together, they will separate, either by death or some other calamity. Some form of entropy will cause the separation to take place. But here, the oneness is already accomplished. *Ātmā* is *Brahman*—*satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. It is the only source of consciousness, not the knower, known, or instrument of knowledge, but the consciousness that is common in all three, that obtains as the basis of, the invariable in, all three. The recognition of that oneness that already exists, is what is called *mokṣa*, or gaining *Īśvara*.

Here Lord *Kṛṣṇa* gives *Arjuna* a promise that he will reach him, *satyaṃ te pratijāne*. He need not say this at all; but he tells this to *Arjuna* in order to create *śraddhā* in him. He can make such a promise because there is no way you can miss him; he is you. Why does he say this, when he need not? He himself gives the reason, ‘Because you are beloved to Me—*priyaḥ asi me*.’ You follow what *Bhagavān* says here and you will reach him. All you have to do is to prepare your mind and pursue knowledge as you are doing now. The result, *mokṣa*, is inevitable, and there is no question of missing *antaḥ-kāraṇa-śuddhi*, because devotion to *Īśvara* will take care of *rāga-dveṣas*. They get neutralized because you are doing what is to be done, not purely what you like, and you are doing it with devotion. Therefore *antaḥ-kāraṇa-śuddhi* will take place and *mokṣa* is not going to be far away. Therefore, pursuit of knowledge is also part of a life of *karma-yoga*. The clarity of knowledge increases as the *antaḥ-kāraṇa* becomes freed from the hold of *rāga-dveṣas*. This end is assured for one who has devotion to *Īśvara*. He is the end to be accomplished and he is the one whose grace I seek to help me recognize my identity with him.

The end to be accomplished is *Īśvara* and the accomplishment is in the form of ‘I am *Īśvara*—*īśvaro’ham*.’ Thus, I become one for whom *Īśvara* is the end. Previously it

was said that whatever you do, *yat karoṣi*, you should do it as an offering to Me, *tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam*. When all actions are offered to *Īśvara*, keeping him as the goal, and for the purpose of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, all our *rāga-dveṣas* get neutralized and have no more hold over us. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* has said that *rāga-dveṣas* are there in the mind of everyone and exhorts us not to come under their control—*rāga-dveṣau sarveṣāṃ buddhau vyavasthitau; tayoh vaśaṃ na āgacchet*.¹ Having *rāga-dveṣas* does not mean that you have a problem. But if they have you, you have nothing but problems. Gaining mastery over our *rāga-dveṣas* is accomplished by *karma-yoga*, which is not one action but a committed lifestyle of doing what is to be done with a proper attitude. Because of this, one gains *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, and is, therefore, prepared to gain knowledge, *jñāna*. Besides this *karma-yoga*, the *Gītā* also talks about renunciation of action, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, through knowledge, which is *mokṣa*, and also the lifestyle of *sannyāsa*. In the next verse, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is going to talk about renunciation of action through knowledge, *jñāna-karma-sannyāsa*.

ŚAṄKARA'S INTRODUCTION TO THE NEXT VERSE

Introducing this verse, *Śaṅkara* says that the greatest secret of commitment to *karma-yoga* is surrender to *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is the sole refuge to whom the individual, *jīva*, surrenders all his *karmas*. In this, *dharma*, the moral order, is looked upon as *Īśvara*. Only then can we call it *karma-yoga*. If that vision is not there, one can be an ethical person, but not a *karma-yogī*, for, *karma-yoga* implies accepting *Īśvara* as the very order of *dharma*. Once that appreciation is complete, what is the result? *Karma-yoga* itself is not the end; but through that you pave the way for the clear vision of what is what, *samyag-darśana*, namely ‘you are *Brahman*.’ This is what we call *jñāna-karma-sannyāsa*. It was said, ‘The one who sees no action in action and action in inaction, he, among men, is wise—*karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśyet akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu*,’² and, ‘Mentally renouncing all actions, the indweller of the body is seated happily in this nine-gated city, neither doing nor causing anything to be done—*sarvakarmāṇi manaśā sannyasya āste sukhaṃ vaśī navadvāre pure dehī naiva kurvan na kārayan*.’³ Throughout the *Gītā*, *Kṛṣṇa* has talked about *jñāna-karma-sannyāsa*, renunciation of all *karmas* by knowledge.

What is that knowledge? I, *ātmā*, am not the agent, *kartā*. By knowing that, all *karmas* are completely negated. ‘The one whose mind is in that (*Brahman*), whose self is that, whose commitment is that, whose impurities are destroyed by knowledge, do not return again—*tad-buddhayaḥ tad-ātmānaḥ tan-niṣṭhāḥ tat-parāyaṇāḥ gacchanti*

¹ *Gītā* – 3-34

² *Gītā* – 4-18

³ *Gītā* – 5-13

*apunarāvṛttim jñāna-nirdhūta-kalmaṣāḥ.*¹ ‘Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, breathing, talking, releasing, grasping, opening and closing the eyelids, contemplating that the sense organs move about among the sense objects, the one who knows the truth, who has self-mastery, thinks, ‘I do not do anything at all—*naiva kiñcit karomi itiyukto manyeta tattvavit paśyan śṛṇvan sprśan jighran aśnan gacchan svapan śvasan pralapan visrjan grhṇan unmiṣan nimiṣan api indriyāṇi indriyārtheṣu vartante iti dhārayan.*’² All these verses should be remembered as we look into this 18th chapter, because the essential part of all that has been said is going to be presented here.

Finally, renunciation of action through knowledge, *jñāna-karma-sannyāsa* and the *sannyāsa* as a lifestyle are pointed out here. This verse deals with both *sannyāsa* as a *yoga* or a means, in terms of a lifestyle, called *vividīṣā-sannyāsa*, which is the result of a life of *karma-yoga*, and also the result of that *sannyāsa*, which is *jñāna-karma-sannyāsa*—renunciation of all action by knowledge, knowing that I am not an agent. Both are covered in this verse. Therefore, it is a complete summing up of the topic of *sannyāsa*. The previous verse sums up *karma-yoga*, and here, it is pure knowledge.

ॐ एवैः सर्वैः (ॐ एवैः ॥ ६६ ॥
+ ॥ ६६ ॥ ॐ एवैः (ॐ एवैः ॥ ६६ ॥ ॐ एवैः ॥ ६६ ॥

*sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja
ahaṃ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

Verse 66

ॐ एवैः सर्वैः *sarva-dharmān* — all *karmas*; (ॐ एवैः) *parityajya* — giving up; ॐ एवैः *mām ekam* — Me alone; ॐ एवैः (ॐ एवैः) *śaraṇaṃ vraja* — take refuge; ॐ एवैः (ॐ एवैः) *sarva-pāpebhyo* — from all *karma*; ॐ एवैः *tvā* — you; + ॐ एवैः (ॐ एवैः) *ahaṃ mokṣayiṣyāmi* — I will release; ॐ एवैः (ॐ एवैः) *mā śucaḥ* — do not grieve

Giving up all *karmas*, take refuge in Me alone. I will release you from all *karma*; do not grieve.

This is considered to be the last verse of teaching in the *Gītā*. The teaching of the *Gītā* begins with the statement, ‘You are grieving over what does not deserve to be grieved for—*asocyān anvaśocastvam*,³ and it ends here with, ‘Do not grieve—*mā śucaḥ*.’ Therefore, it is clear that the whole purpose of the *Gītā* is to remove sorrow. Here, it is said, ‘*sarva-dharmān parityajya*—giving up all *dharmas*, *mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja*—take refuge in Me alone.’ We have to see what *dharma* is here. Lastly,

¹ *Gītā* – 5-17

² *Gītā* – 5-8, 9

³ *Gītā* – 2-11

Kṛṣṇa says, ‘I will free you from all *pāpa*, therefore do not grieve—*ahaṃ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*.’

WHAT IS MEANT BY GIVING UP ALL DHARMAS?

GIVING UP ALL DHARMAS IS GIVING UP ALL ACTIONS THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

When we closely analyse the whole *vākya*, we can see that, *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is what is mentioned here. *Śaṅkara* says that when it is said that all *dharmas* should be given up—*sarva-dharmān parityajya*—the word *dharma* here includes both *dharma* and *adharmā*, because the intended meaning of both the *śruti* and *smṛti* is freedom from action, *naiṣkarmya*. This means the complete giving up, *parityāga* of all *karmas*. As long as one is subject to *karma*, one is in *saṃsāra*, and therefore, one has to become free from all *karmas* in order to be free from *saṃsāra*. If *Gītā* is a *mokṣa-śāstra*, it has to provide a means to get rid of all *karmas*. We know that it is impossible to get rid of all *karmas* by exhausting them, because they are countless. Nor is it ever possible to give up action, even for a second—*na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhati akarmakṛt*. There is only one way—actions are given up by sheer knowledge, *jñāna-karma-sannyāsa*. *Ātmā* is not an agent, *kartā*, nor is it an object, *karma*, of any action, nor connected in any way to any kind of action. That is the nature of the *ātmā*, and therefore, it is by nature free from all *karma*. Actionlessness, then, is equated to *mokṣa*.

GIVING UP DHARMA INCLUDES GIVING UP ADHARMA ALSO

By explaining that *adharmā* is to be included in the word, *sarva-dharma*, *Śaṅkara* has made it clear that giving up *dharma* does not mean failing to give up *adharmā*. This is supported by the *Kaṭhopanīṣad*, which says that the gain of *ātma-jñāna* is not possible for the one who has not withdrawn from improper activities.¹ That *adharmā* is included when we say, ‘*sarvadharmā*’ is expressed not only in the *śruti*. In the *Mahābhārata* too it is said that, one has to give up *dharma* and *adharmā*,² and that one should give up both truth and falsehood, finally give up that by which one gives up. The notion by which one thinks that one has given up, that also should be given up—by knowledge. That means the notion of agency, *kartṛtva* should be given up.

¹ *Kaṭhopanīṣad* – 1-2-24

² *īśā of īśā dharma iśā dharma iśā dharma*

= *īśā of īśā dharma iśā dharma iśā dharma* म० भा० १२.३२९.४०

tyaja dharmamadharmam ca ubhe satyānṛte tyaja

ubhe satyānṛte tyaktvā yena tyajasi tattyaja *Mahābhārata Śāntiparva* – 12-329-40

Please give up dharma and adharmā. Give up both truth and falsehood. Giving up both truth and falsehood, give up that by which you give up.

GIVING UP ALL ACTIONS CAN DENOTE VIVIDIṢĀSANNYĀSA ALSO

The practice of *dharma* and *adharma* is only in terms of action, *karma*. Here we are asked to give up both actions, which are looked upon as right, *dharma*, and those, which are looked upon as wrong, *adharma*. That amounts to all actions. How can anybody give up all actions? There is only one way, which Lord *Kṛṣṇa* tells here—*mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja*. This is true even if *sarvadharmā* is taken as all the actions that we generally do to fulfil desires, *kāmya-karmas*. This would include those actions enjoined by the *śruti*, *vaidika-karmas* or *śrauta-karmas*, and those enjoined by the *smṛti*, *smārta-karmas*. All of them are given up when one takes to a life of *sannyāsa* for the pursuit of knowledge of *Īśvara*, *vividiṣā-sannyāsa*. Thus, *Īśvara* is the only refuge.

ONLY MOKṢĀRTHĪ CAN GIVE UP ACTIONS

When *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* are not the ends, naturally the *karmas* to attain them have no purpose and are given up. If they are the ends, *karma* can never be given up because *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* can be gained only by *karma*. That is why the whole Veda, except for the *Upaniṣad* portion, is occupied with *karma*. It is the only means by which these ends, *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, can be accomplished. This is also why the last portion of the Veda containing the *Upaniṣads* is considered a separate section. Unlike the first section, it is meant for *mokṣa*, because in it *karma* is not the topic; *jñāna* is the topic.

GIVING UP DHARMA IS NOT GIVING UP THE CODE OF DHARMA -ADHARMA BUT ACTIONS BASED ON THEM

From the standpoint of those who are committed to *karma*, the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsakas*, the entire *śāstra* is analysed in order to understand what *karma* is to be done to gain the various desired results mentioned in the Veda. The first *sūtra* in their book of analysis is, ‘Hereafter (after the study of the Veda), therefore, is an inquiry into *dharma*—*athāto dharmā-jijñāsā*.’¹ The word *dharma* in the *sūtra* includes *adharma* also, and ultimately, it means *karma* because first, the whole topic is *karma*, and secondly, *dharma* is meant only for *karma*. By tradition then, the word *dharma* means *karma*. Since all *dharma*, *sarvadharmā*, has to be understood to include *adharma*, when it is said that all *dharma* is to be given up, it means that all *karma* is to be given up. There is no ‘giving up’ of *dharma* and *adharma*, what is right and wrong. We can perhaps give up the notion of right and wrong, but still, empirically, there is such a thing as right and there is such a thing as wrong. This is not something that is within our power to give up. What we can give up is action, *karma*, that is based on *dharma* or *adharma*.

¹*Jamini-sūtra* – 1-1-1

WHAT DOES 'ME ALONE' MEAN HERE?

Using the first person, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says here, 'Take refuge in Me alone.' Why has he said, 'Me alone?' It can be a jealous statement, 'Do not go to any other God; come only to Me. All other gods, like *Indra*, *Varuṇa*, *Agni*, etc., cannot give you *mokṣa*; you have to come only to Me for that.' This is how some devotees like those of the 'Hare Krishna Sect' present this verse. Only *Kṛṣṇa* is the real God. You have to surrender only to him. Here we have to see how to take this 'ekam-only' in the proper manner, in keeping with the whole teaching. Two things are mentioned here by *Śaṅkara*. One is that, when *Bhagavān* says, 'Me,' we are to understand that as the one who is of the nature of all.

There are different things in this world, all of which can be brought under two heads—*cetana*, that which is sentient, and *acetana*, that which is insentient. The sentient includes all creatures from Brahmaji down to a worm, *ābrahma-stamba-ṣaryantam*. That is one group. Then there is the group made up of inert materials, *jaḍātmaka*, the insentient things. *Kṛṣṇa* is saying, in effect, 'I am the very nature, *svarūpa*, of all of them.' Why? Because of being the cause of all things that are here—*sarvasya kāraṇatvāt*. The so-called sentient and insentient, *cetana* and *acetana*, are both nothing but the five elements—*pañca-bhūtas*. All that is here is either the subtle aspect of the elements, *sūkṣma-bhūtas*, or the gross aspect, *sthūla-bhūtas*. If we analyse this in terms of consciousness, from a provisional standpoint, we can say that all of these elements are really inert because everything other than the *caitanya-ātmā* is inert. When we divide things into sentient and insentient, what we call insentient is really that which has no subtle body, *sūkṣma-śarīra*, while the sentient is that which has a subtle body. But the concept of inert and conscious is only from a point of view.

In fact, everything is one consciousness, *Brahman*. Try to think of an object minus consciousness. You cannot. Even if you say that, it is inert, the fact that you are seeing it, lighting it up, means that it is not away from *ātmā*, consciousness. It is just that only the existence aspect, *sattā*, of *ātmā* is manifest there, while in a conscious or sentient object, there is the presence of a subtle body, *sūkṣma-śarīra*, and therefore, a manifestation of consciousness which expresses itself as a knower, etc. Consciousness, *caitanya*, is present everywhere. There is no question of there being anything that is away from *caitanya-ātmā*, which is *Brahman*, and therefore, *Śaṅkara* calls the Lord *sarvātmā*, the *ātmā*, the nature of all—because he is the maker as well as the material cause of everything. This is looking at the whole thing from the standpoint of cause and effect—the effect is non-separate from the cause.

When one says, 'I am the self of all,' *ahaṃ sarvātmā*, where does this 'I,' *ahaṃ*, come from? *Śaṅkara* says that *ahaṃ* is the one who obtains in all things, *sarva-bhūtastha*. Why does he say this? Is not *sarvātmā* good enough? No. It is possible to construe from *sarvātmā* that *ātmā* has modified into the world. Therefore, we have to

say that it has not modified; it transcends everything and is also immanent. If we only say that, it obtains in all things, *sarva-bhūtastha*, you may think that if *ātmā* is inside you, it is not outside, and everything else is separate from you. Therefore, we have to say both the statements, '*ahaṃ sarva-bhūtastha-ātmā*—I am the very being of all living beings' and '*ahaṃ sarvātmā*—I am in the form of all beings.' Even though the Lord that is consciousness is present in everything, it is only the conscious being who is in the *buddhi* that can be known as the same consciousness, *ātmā*. The whole creation is standing in the same *caitanya-ātmā*, which means that *Īśvara* obtains in everything, not fractionally, but in full measure. Suppose there is one big lump of something that is distributed to everybody. Then everyone will have a bit of it. If it is consciousness, everyone will have one spark of some column of consciousness. Does everybody have a spark of consciousness within, like the sparks emanating from fire? No. We cannot make a spark out of consciousness; it is *satya*—the only thing here. In your *buddhi*, there is a complete, *pūrṇa-saccidānanda-ātmā*. The same *saccidānanda-ātmā* alone is *Īśvara*, and therefore, the Lord who is everything, *sarvātmā*, is the one who obtains in all beings, *sarva-bhūtastha*. That means *ātmā* is *sarvabhūtastha*—one that is present in every being. We understand that *ātmā* is *bhūtastha*, that is, it is immanent inside every being, like a thread that passes through every bead in a necklace.

This has also been shown in the thirteenth chapter where, again using the first person, *Kṛṣṇa* says, 'Know Me as the knower of the *kṣetra* in all *kṣetras*—*kṣetrajñāṇa cāpi māṃ viddhi sarva-kṣetreṣu bhārata*.' The *kṣetra* is the body, mind, senses, and the entire world; and the one who knows the *kṣetra* is the *kṣetrajñā-ātmā*. Therefore, when *Kṛṣṇa* says, 'Understand Me as the *kṣetrajñā*,' he is also saying, 'Understand yourself to be the *kṣetrajñā*, and that *kṣetrajñā* is Myself.' Thus, this is a *mahāvākya*. Further, know Me, as the essential nature, *svarūpa*, of all—*sarvātmā*, and obtaining in all—*sarva-bhūtastha*, as *sama*, the same—that which does not undergo any change. Being whole, it is complete, it is always the same. And it is also equal. In everybody's heart, there is one *ātmā*, and that *ātmā* is whole, *pūrṇa*. It is not complete in one person, and incomplete in another. It is the same fullness in all beings and it does not undergo any change. Therefore, *Īśvara*, the Lord, is also that which is not subject to destruction, *acyuta*, free from getting into a womb, and therefore, not born, or subject to death. Who is that? That '*Īśvara* is Myself alone,' says *Kṛṣṇa*.

TAKING REFUGE IN ĪŚVARA IS KNOWING THAT THERE IS NOTHING OTHER THAN ĪŚVARA

What does it mean to take refuge in that *Īśvara* alone? It means to understand, to know, that there is nothing other than me, *ātmā*, which is not different in nature from *Īśvara*. There is no separation between *ātmā* and *Īśvara*. Other than *Īśvara*, there is nothing, and that *Īśvara* is non-separate from the *ātmā*. We do not say that there is one God; we say all that is there is God. I am not other than *Īśvara*, and *Īśvara* is not other than me. In other words, *tat tvam asi*—you are that. The predication here is only for

you, *tvam*, the one who is self-evident. There is confusion only with reference to 'you' alone; *tat* has no problem; and if it did, you would not know it. Your problem is solved when you understand who you are, what you are; that is, when you understand that you are that *Brahman* which is *Īśvara*. This is the meaning. To take refuge in the Lord who is of the essential nature, *svarūpa*, of everything, *sarvātmā*, the one who is obtaining in all, *sarva-bhūtastha*, the same, *sama*, not subject to destruction, *acyuta*, and free from birth and death, etc., is to understand that there is nothing other than that Lord. This means that you are not separate from the Lord.

PROBLEMS WITH OTHER EXPLANATIONS OF 'SURRENDER'

This is the meaning that *Śaṅkara* gives here. And it is the only meaning that can be defended. With any other meaning, the giving up of all *dharma* will be a problem. Suppose one says that, I should give up all *dharma*, all good and bad actions, and surrender to God. Then, is the surrendering a good action or a bad one? If it is taken as good, how can I give up good and bad actions and surrender to God? Surrender is also good. It may be a new good action, which is better than all the others, but it is still a good action, and therefore, I cannot both surrender and also give up all good actions. It is impossible. Perhaps I can give up prohibited action, *niṣiddha-karma*, and desire-prompted action, *kāmya-karma*, but never all *karmas* by an act of surrender.

Further, who is to surrender to whom? I have to surrender. All right, I will give up all my good and bad activities. I am neither going to do good to anybody, nor do harm to anybody. I give up all the good and bad activities, yet I am left behind. Now if I am asked to surrender my ego, how will I do that? Who will do it? The ego has to surrender the ego. How is that possible? If the object of surrender is the ego, there should be some other entity other than the ego that picks up the ego and places it at the feet of the Lord. But then, this ego is not an object for me because the ego is myself. It is not an object that I can place at the feet of *Bhagavān*. And another thing, where are those feet? That is another problem. Where will I find *Bhagavān's* feet? It is all wishful thinking. That is why people do not accomplish much in this kind of thing. Even though it gives them a feeling, an attitude, *bhāvanā* of surrender, which is good, finally speaking it does not solve the problem.

Here at the end of the *Gītā*, when *Kṛṣṇa* is going to tell *Arjuna* the essence of the entire teaching, he cannot give him just a simple feeling. This is a *mokṣa-sāstra*. He has to talk about what will give *mokṣa*. Therefore, if you analyse the possible meanings of surrender to *Bhagavān*, you will find that no other meaning can be defended except the one that is given by *Śaṅkara* here. Giving up all *karmas* and taking refuge only in *Īśvara* are almost one and the same thing. It is something like cutting a log and making it into two. They are not two separate things. Is cutting the log one action, and making it into two another action? No. There is only one action. Cutting the log itself is dividing the log into two. When does making it into two pieces take place? When the action of

cutting is completed. In fact cutting is making it into two. Similarly here, giving up of all *karmas* is recognizing *Īśvara* as the *ātmā* and *ātmā* as *Īśvara*. This is called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. Any other meaning will not work nor will it give the promised result of freedom from all *karmas*—*sarvapāpebhyo mokṣaḥ*.

WHAT IS RELEASE FROM ALL PĀPAS?

It is very interesting that *Kṛṣṇa* has said, ‘I will release you from all *pāpas*.’ Does it mean that you should give up all *dharma*, surrender to *Bhagavān* and he will release you from all the *pāpas* you have done? Does he mean to say, ‘Don’t worry, keep killing, stealing, committing all sorts of atrocities upon society, create as much havoc as you can, and make people miserable, and then I will take care of all your *pāpas*. The only thing is, you must surrender to Me.’ It is exactly like a godfather talking—not God, the Father.

To make sure that this verse is not misunderstood in this way, *Śaṅkara* explains what kind of ‘you’ is released. This is a person who has a clear understanding, *niścita-buddhi*, that there is nothing other than *Īśvara*, the cause of everything. Other than that cause, there is no effect at all. When you recognize that *Īśvara* is *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, and you understand that *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma* only as the *ātmā*, you will be released. There is no other source of consciousness, *jñāna*, apart from *ātmā*, and therefore, in the definition of *Brahman*, *ātmā* is defined. If *ātmā* happens to be *Brahman* and *Brahman* happens to be the *ātmā*, the definition of either of them should be complete and reveal the identity between them. When you say *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, it is nothing other than *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. When you say *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, it is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* alone. One definition should be as good as the other, because both are identical. Identical is not the word; *ātmā* is *Brahman*. When *ātmā* is predicated as *Brahman*, the definition of *Brahman* is the definition of *ātmā*. If that is understood, naturally, there is nothing other than myself—*mattaḥ anyat kiñcit nāsti*. The one who has no more vagueness or error about this is called *niścita-buddhi*. You, *tvā*, who has this kind of *buddhi*, I will release, *mokṣayiṣyāmi*.

From what? From all *pāpa*, *sarva-pāpebhyaḥ*. What are the *pāpas*? *Śaṅkara* says that *sarva-pāpa* is that which is in the form of bondage and includes both *dharma* and *adharmā*. Whether we consider it as an action that is in keeping with *dharma* or *adharmā*, or as a result, that manifests as *puṇya* or *pāpa*, it is all the same. From all *karma*, *puṇya* and *pāpa*, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘I will release you—*ahaṃ tvā mokṣayiṣyāmi*.’

IF IT IS KNOWLEDGE THAT RELEASES, WHAT IS THE PLACE OF ĪŚVARA IN THIS?

A question can be raised here. If I give up all *karmas* by knowing that I am *Īśvara*, then, who is *Kṛṣṇa*, as *Īśvara*, to release me? It is something like the kettle

saying, ‘Fill me with water, put me on the stove until the water is boiling, then put in some tea bags, hold me in your hand, and then pour my contents into the cup and I will give you tea.’ What a great giving is that! One can say to *Īśvara*, ‘Once I know that I am *Īśvara* and you are myself, that I am not separate from you and you are not separate from me, who are you to release me?’ Release, at this point is purely figurative. We only speak of release from the standpoint of the problem that existed due to lack of proper understanding. Release is not a new action that *Īśvara* is going to perform.

Śaṅkara takes care of this neatly by saying that the release is by means of revealing the nature of one's own self, *svātmabhāva-prakāśikaraṇena*. It has to be shown that the self is *Brahman* because that fact is shrouded in ignorance. That ignorance is removed by revealing the nature of *ātmā*, of oneself, as *Īśvara*. By the knowledge that you are *Īśvara*, you are released. There is no action of releasing because you are already, have always been and always will be, liberated, *nitya-mukta*. You come to understand and own that, and thereby, release yourself.

Śaṅkara reminds us that the same thing was said earlier by the Lord, ‘Remaining as the essential nature, *svarūpa*, of the self, I will destroy, (the darkness, *tamas*, of ignorance) by the light which is the lamp of knowledge—*nāśayāmi ātmabhāvasthaḥ jñānadīpena bhāsvatā*.’¹ What is the knowledge? It is the cognition, *ṛtti-jñāna*, that *brahma aham asmi*—I am *Brahman*. It is only that cognition, which takes place in the mind, *buddhi*, that is opposed to ignorance. The *jñāna* that is consciousness is not opposed to ignorance. If it were, there would be no ignorance at all because consciousness is always present. This knowledge that is opposed to ignorance, the *ṛtti-jñāna* and removes the ignorance in the *buddhi*, does not take place without the operation of a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*. Thus, the word ‘lamp,’ *dīpa*, is significant here. Light has to be brought in because there is darkness in the *buddhi* in the form of ignorance. To dispel the darkness, we require the light of the lamp of knowledge. That light is the cognition, *ṛtti-jñāna*, ‘I am *Brahman*.’ Remaining as the *ātmā* in everybody's heart, *ātma-bhāvastha*, the Lord destroys ignorance through the light of knowledge, which dispels the darkness of ignorance and reveals the very nature of the Lord as the nature of the self. Therefore, ‘You should not grieve—*mā śucaḥ*.’

THIS ŚLOKA CAN ALSO INDICATE THE PURSUIT

This can also be taken as a pursuit. Then it would mean, ‘Give up all the *puṇya-pāpa-karmas* and then come to Me as *asannyāsī* and seek Me. I will give you the knowledge by revealing Myself to you because you are seeking Me. By gaining the *ṛtti-jñāna*, you will recognize Me as yourself, and thereby, be totally free from *puṇya* and *pāpa*.’ Taken this way, it becomes a clear statement indicating *sannyāsa* as a lifestyle. The previous verse is for *karma-yoga*, but this is for *sannyāsa*. It was made

¹ *Gītā* – 10-11

clear that *karma* itself does not give *mokṣa*. Now we understand, neither does knowledge. You are already liberated, *mukta*. Knowledge will release you from ignorance, and once ignorance goes, bondage goes. Knowledge only removes the notion that you are bound. You are already free, and therefore, do not require *karma* or knowledge, to be free. But if you do not recognize that you are free, you require *jñāna*. What is the *jñāna*? Here it is that which is capable of removing the ignorance that is the cause of *saṃsāra*. It is only that knowledge that you require, nothing else. This is going to be told in this verse, and *Śaṅkara* is going to discuss how neither *karma* is necessary for *mokṣa*, nor a synthesis of *karma* and *jñāna*. Even *jñāna* is not necessary for *mokṣa* because the self is already free. If you do not see that, we are constrained to say that you have ignorance and therefore, require knowledge to remove that ignorance.

ABABABAB

*tat pravakṣyāmi yad jñātvā amṛtam aśnute.*¹ And in this chapter, we have seen, ‘Thus, knowing Me, in reality, after that, he enters into Me—*tato māṃ tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram.*’² There are a number of *vākyas* like this in the *Gītā*, not just one or two. Every chapter has a sentence one can quote to prove that the gain of *mokṣa* is purely by knowledge—without any *karma*. This is one set of *vākyas*. Then we have another set, like, ‘Your choice is only in *karma*—*karmaṇi eva adhikāraḥ te*’³ and ‘Do *karma* alone—*kuru karmaiva.*’⁴ Then again, ‘The one who does actions, resolving them in *Brahman* and giving up all attachment is not touched by *pāpa*, like a lotus leaf in water—*brahmaṇi ādhāya karmaṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā karoti yaḥ lipyate na sa pāpena padma-patram ivāmbhasā.*’⁵ Elsewhere it is said that even maintenance of the body, *śarīra-yātrāpi*, is not possible without *karma*⁶ and that ‘no one remains, even for a moment, without performing action—*na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhati akarmakṛt.*’⁷ Further, a person gains *mokṣa* or *siddhi*, by doing his own *karma*, and offering it to the Lord, *svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ.* Thus, there are other sentences in the *Gītā* which show that *karma* definitely has the status of something to be done.

What do we have now? *Karma* is to be done for *mokṣa*; knowledge itself will give you *mokṣa*. Once we have two different types of statements like these, naturally there will be a doubt. Which will give me *mokṣa*? Because both *karma* and knowledge are taught by the same *śāstra*, is a combination of both required for *mokṣa*? How is this to be construed? Perhaps neither mere knowledge nor mere *karma* is enough for *mokṣa*. But when they are synthesised, they have the status of being the means for *mokṣa*. When we have these two types of sentences, a doubt like this is definitely possible.

THE PURPOSE OF ANALYSIS

All right, let there be a doubt. Perhaps any one of these three possibilities can give *mokṣa*. Why should we bother about it? No. The one who wants *mokṣa* cannot leave such a doubt unresolved. When there is a doubt about a sentence in the *śāstra*, we have to analyse it and ascertain its meaning. Why? What is the result of this analysis?⁸ *Śaṅkara* raises the question and says that it is the determination of which among them is the best means for *mokṣa*. ‘Best’ is not really the word here. Among the three options

¹ *Gītā* – 13-12

² *Gītā* – 18-55

³ *Gītā* – 2-47

⁴ *Gītā* – 4-15

⁵ *Gītā* – 5-10

⁶ *Gītā* – 3-8

⁷ *Gītā* – 3-5

⁸ *EEo (Eo)E “Eo EEAE; oMōEā EEEo BAO 11*

presented, only one is the means for *mokṣa*. Is it knowledge, *karma*, or a combination of the two? What do we get by knowing that? Only then can we get *mokṣa*. Otherwise, we will be worried and confused about how we should proceed with our pursuit. Our question would be, ‘Should I do a little bit of this and a little of that?’ Some *jñāna* in the morning and some *karma* in the evening, or on some days *karma* and on other days *jñāna*? Before we embark upon the whole thing, we must know which can serve as the means for *mokṣa*. Otherwise, we will be wasting our time. It is not that we have not discussed this before. We have analysed *karma*, its limitations, etc., over and over. But now while summing up, we have to ascertain the meaning of the *gītā-śāstra*.

GĪTĀ IS NOT A PEP TALK BUT A MOKṢA - ŚĀSTRA

Some people say it is nothing more than a pep talk to motivate *Arjuna* to get up and fight the battle. In fact, it is a pep talk in the beginning. When *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘In such crisis from where has this despair come upon you, O! *Arjuna*? It is not at all becoming of an upright man and does not add to your good name. Nor is it which leads one to heaven—*kutastvā kaśmalam idaṃ viśame samupasthitam ...*,’ and says further, ‘O! *Pārtha*, the vanquisher of enemies, do not yield to unmanliness. This does not befit you. Give up this lowly weakness of the heart and get up—*klaibyaṃ mā sma gamaḥ pārtha...*,’¹ it is nothing more than a pep talk. I myself told you it is a pep talk. But *Arjuna* was not pepped up. That is the problem. *Arjuna* says to *Kṛṣṇa*, ‘Please teach me; I am your disciple. I do not think that the *śoka*, sorrow, I have, will go away. It is the same old sorrow invoked in this situation by having to slay *Droṇa* and *Bhīṣma*. The weeping of the soul which now is invoked by this situation I would like to completely silence. For that, I know that I should be a disciple and must get *śreyas, mokṣa*. Therefore, please teach me.’³ Until this point, the teaching had not begun. It was only a pep talk. Previously *Kṛṣṇa* answered *Arjuna* by trying to shame him into acting. Now *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘You are grieving for that which does not deserve grief, even though you speak words of wisdom. The wise men do not grieve for those who have gone or for those who have not yet gone. The non-existent has no existence, and the existent has no non-existence. The seers of truth, however, see the truth of both of these.’⁴

If you can understand this, there is nothing more to know even in the *Upaniṣads*. Those who know both *sat* and *asat* are those who see the truth, *tattva-darśīs*. Those whose mind is committed to that and whose impurities are burnt away by knowledge do not have further birth, *tad-buddhayaḥ tad-ātmānaḥ tanniṣṭhāḥ tat-parāyaṇāḥ*

¹ *Gītā* – 2-2, 3

² *Swamiji*

³ *Gītā* – 2-4, 5, 7, 8

⁴ *Gītā* – 2-11, 16

ascertain this thoroughly so that there is no doubt about whether *karma*, or *jñāna*, or both, will give *mokṣa*. This subject matter has to be analysed.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF ALONE IS THE MEANS FOR MOKṢA

Having said this, Śaṅkara now begins the analysis. His opening statement is his vision of the truth about this. ‘However, knowledge of the self is the only means for *mokṣa*.’¹ This ‘*tu—however,*’ indicates that the opposing views of *karma* and the combination of *karma* and knowledge are negated as means for *mokṣa*. He will discuss this use of *tu* later in his commentary. Now, at the outset, he states unequivocally that knowledge of *āt̥mā* alone is the cause of *mokṣa*. In fact, knowledge is *mokṣa*. Without knowledge, there is no *mokṣa*, and therefore, knowledge is considered the means. But it is also the end, because after knowledge takes place, nothing further is required for *mokṣa*. If knowledge itself is *mokṣa*, why do we need to use the word *mokṣa*, freedom, at all? It is because this alone expresses what I am seeking, *puruṣārtha*. *Mokṣa* is the *puruṣārtha*, not knowledge. I want to be free from sorrow, *duḥkha*—that is my value. The primary value is not for knowledge, but for freedom. Since the means for that is knowledge, I pursue knowledge. The result, which is non-duality, *kaivalya*, alone is the ultimate end for this knowledge of *āt̥mā*. How long will the pursuit of this knowledge continue? Until I gain the vision of non-duality which is *mokṣa*. There, the knowledge of *āt̥mā* culminates. That very knowledge happens to be *mokṣa* because without knowledge, there is no *mokṣa*, and when knowledge is there, *mokṣa* is gained. Thus, the knowledge of *āt̥mā* is the means for *mokṣa* because it culminates in non-duality, which is *mokṣa*.

HOW DOES KNOWLEDGE LEAD TO MOKṢA ?

How is this so? How does the knowledge of *āt̥mā* have its culmination in *mokṣa*? Śaṅkara says that it is by being the remover of all notions of duality. We have to understand this well. Self-knowledge has the capacity to negate all notions of duality.² Why? Because the self is non-dual, that is, because the self is *Brahman*. That *Brahman* is *satya*, it is *jñāna*, and it is *ananta* because nothing is standing separate from it. All that is here is one *Brahman*, and that is *āt̥mā*; there is nothing else. Therefore, once one knows the self, there is no notion of difference. Why does Śaṅkara say this? The negation of all notions of duality is *mokṣa*, the state of being non-dual. If that is *mokṣa*, as long as there is a notion of difference, there is no *mokṣa*.³

1 +Ét̥ éyèééòàé iéôèâéímòàé éxé& éâé èy&èò éâé éâééi àéèéé éíééoi éâé éòéè±àé; òm̐à- + éòééxi ééiââ éééò ààò ॥
 2 |Éâéèò à éxé éíééoi ééiââ éééò ààò ॥
 3 Éòâé-èòééò; òm̐à; |Éâéèò à +Éééàé +Éíééé éxéiàéjé èxéé éé é èòéé; +1&èòééè + éòéé; òm̐àé <n&èòééèèòéâééé é <éié <à +Éééé +xéèèèèéééé èxéé* éééò ààò ॥

Suppose this notion of difference is negated. What will be the situation with reference to action? We have seen this in the verse, *brahmārpaṇaṃ brahma-haviḥ brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutaṃ brahmaiva tena gantavyaṃ brahma-karma-samādhinā*. Here, the one who does the action is *Brahman*, the object of the action is *Brahman*, the instrument of action is *Brahman*—everything is *Brahman*. What does it mean? Doing takes place, but it is negated. Such action is like a roasted seed, good for enjoying, but not for germination—*bhogāya na tu prasavāya*. Similarly, if you are looking at the whole thing as *Brahman*, the agent, *kartā*, is *mithyā*, the object, *karma*, is *mithyā*, the action, *kriyā*, is *mithyā*. They all become *mithyā*, only when we know the *satya*, which is *akartā*, that is, not an agent, and in which everything takes place. Knowing that I am that *satyaṃ brahma* makes everything else negated, *bādhita*. Then, whatever happens is all entertainment.

The whole time that you cry in the theatre, you know it is a movie, or a play. You may identify with the hero or heroine, and even though you know there are only actors standing on the stage or projected on the screen and you know it is all a drama, still, because of the identification, you cry. In this country, there is an entertainment tax. If you laugh, you pay tax; if you shed tears, you pay tax. Why should you pay to shed tears? Because it is entertainment. In drama, this sentiment is called a *rasa*, and it is a *rasa* only when you know the situation is false. If someone is crying because a loved one has passed away, it is not a *rasa*. There is no aesthetic value if somebody is really in sorrow. In real life, we get horrified when somebody is shot, but if we see it in a movie, especially if the hero slays the villain, we consider it entertaining. It is the same here. Once you know that all this is false, *mithyā*, it will still evoke emotions in you, but it will not touch you at all. That is called *bādhita-anuvṛtti*. That recognition that everything is *Brahman* is present; that is, there is this *brahma-buddhi* with reference to everything. The means of doing the action is *Brahman*, what is done is *Brahman*; the one who does it is *Brahman*. That is called *bādhita-anuvṛtti*. When we say that everything is *Bhagavān*, it is because everything is false, *bādhita*. Only then can everything be *Bhagavān*. Otherwise, everything is what it is. A tree is a tree, a horse is a horse, and a cow is a cow. You cannot say that all these are ‘one’ unless they are looked upon as *mithyā* and something else is ‘one.’ It is like saying that a pitcher, a pot, a lid, a cup, and a saucer, are all clay. That is *bādhita-anuvṛtti*. All of them are clay, even though you will use a cup for serving coffee, not a lid. You know what to use for what. There is purpose, usefulness, even though your vision of all of them is of one clay. That is called *bādhita*. Therefore, if all the *karmas*, and the agent, the instrument, etc., are *bādhita*, there is non-duality.

What kind of *karma* is necessary, then, for *mokṣa*? Self-know ledge first negates the agent, *kartā*, and all the other *kāraṅkas* associated with action. The agent is *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. The body is not separate from *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, nor is the result of the action separate. All that existed before, including the manes, *pitṛs*, are not

separate from *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, and neither are those who will be born later. The individuals, *jīvas*, who are unmanifest, are now *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* and so are those who are in the process of being born somewhere. All of them, their *karmas* and their results, *phalas*, are not separate from *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*. Now where is *karma* in this? The knowledge of the self, *ātma-jñāna*, just removes the doer-result-action division, *kartṛ-karma-kriyā-bheda*. When this is gone, where is the question of a synthesis of knowledge and action, *jñāna-karma-samuccaya*? The notions of duality, which are necessary for performing *karma*, are negated. You may still do *karma*, but the notion of division, *bheda-pratyaya*, is negated.

WHAT IS BHEDAPRATYAYA?

Śaṅkara enumerates the possible divisions that may be involved in an action. In any action there is the action itself, *kriyā*, the things connected to the action, *kāraṅka*, and the result of the action, *phala*. The action is the basis for all the *kāraṅkas*. If you ask who does the action, that gives the first *kāraṅka*, the agent. What does he do? That tells us the second *kāraṅka* and if we ask how he does it, that gives us the third. For what purpose he does it gives us another, the fourth, and from where he does the action, gives us the fifth. Finally, where the action was done gives us the seventh. The sixth relationship is not a *kāraṅka* because it is not involved in the action itself. It is a nominal connection, and therefore, *Śaṅkara* mentions it separately, as the result, *phala*. When all these are seen as separate, it is called *bheda-buddhi*.

The one who does the action must be separate from what he does, why and how he does it, when and where he does it. The result also is separate. Let us look at this in terms of one ritual, the *jyotiṣṭoma*. By whom is it performed? The one who is desirous of heaven, *svarga-kāmena*, not, as in the *mantra* we saw, by *Brahman*, *brahmaṇā*. It is done by the one who thinks. 'I am an agent, *kartā*,' and wants to achieve the result, *karma-phala*, which is heaven, *svarga*. This is called *bheda-buddhi*. If you know that you are *Brahman* doing this action, there is no problem. You enjoy doing it. Here, however, it is done by the one who has the notion that *ātmā* is the doer. Then, what is offered? The offering in this ritual is ghee, *samit*, etc. Ghee is not *Brahman* there, but something separate from the one who offers. Where does he offer the ghee? Into the fire, *agnau*, but *Agni* is not *Brahman* for him; it is other than himself. What is offered, *huta*, the ghee, is different, the ladle, *arpaṇa*, by which it is offered, is different, and those for whom it is offered, *Agni*, *Sūrya*, and *Prajāpati*, are all different entities. None of these is looked upon as *Brahman*. That is called *bheda-buddhi*.

IGNORANCE IS THE CAUSE OF THIS BHEDABUDDHI

What is the reason for this *bheda-buddhi*? It is only due to ignorance. If all of them are one thing alone, *Brahman*, then ignorance of that *Brahman* creates all the duality. Due to this ignorance, the self, *ātmā*, is taken as the agent, *kartā*, and

everything else becomes different. This is my action; I am the agent; I will do this action for that result. Even if you disown the *karma*, the law will see that you get the result. It is all due to ignorance and ignorance-born notions, which are also called ignorance, *avidyā*. Śaṅkara uses *avidyā* in both senses. When did this ignorance of *Brahman* start? It has no beginning, it is *anādi-kāla-pravṛtta*. However, it does have an end.

WHAT BRINGS THIS IGNORANCE TO AN END?

What brings this ignorance of *Brahman* to an end? The knowledge of the self—*ātma-jñāna*. Why? Because it removes the notion of difference, the *bheda-buddhi*, which is nothing but ignorance of non-duality. Knowledge of the self is capable of destroying the idea that I am the doer; this is my *karma*; this is the purpose for which I am performing this action, etc. In all these notions, the result is different from the agent and the action; the agent is different from the action, and so on. This notion of difference, *bheda-buddhi*, which is called ignorance, *avidyā*, is removed by the knowledge of *ātmā*. What is that knowledge, *jñāna*? It is the firm knowledge—that I am this pure non-dual consciousness alone, I am not an agent, I am free from any action, and one for whom there is no result of an action. When I do not enjoy the result, where is the question of my doing anything? I am not the enjoyer, nor do I perform action at any time. And again there is nothing whatsoever that is separate from me. When there is no one else except me, for whose sake or for what sake will I do anything? Which heaven will I go to when that heaven is myself? How will I make offerings to *Agni* and *Indra* when *Indra* is myself, and *Agni* is also myself? Other than myself, there is nobody.

As this kind of knowledge for which the object is *ātmā* is born, ignorance, which is in the form of a notion of difference, is destroyed. It is this notion of duality that is the cause for the pursuit of *karma*. From this, it is clear that *karma* cannot be the cause for *mokṣa*. Removal of the notion of difference, *bheda-buddhi*, is *mokṣa*, and that *bheda-buddhi* will not go unless I remove *avidyā*. Once the *bheda-buddhi* goes, action, etc., is not possible. That means that if I do an action, I have this notion of difference, *bheda-buddhi*, and as long as this notion exists, ignorance, *avidyā*, is there. As long as *avidyā* exists, *mokṣa* cannot be there and I will continue to be a doer, *kartā*, different from everybody else, and thus, an individual, *jīva*. Therefore, where is the role of action here? If we are talking of *mokṣa*, *karma* does not have any place at all. In the wake of knowledge, the cause of *karma*, which is the *bheda-buddhi*, that is born of *avidyā*, goes away. When that goes away, action is not there.

In spite of this, another question is raised. Suppose I perform an action, can it remove my notion of difference, *bheda-buddhi*? No. Action is the product of *bheda-buddhi*, and the product cannot remove the cause because it is not opposed to it, *virodhī*. *Karma*, therefore, is not opposed to *avidyā* because it is its product, as a clay pot is not inimical to the clay because it is a product of the clay. If the pot is inimical to clay, when the pot appears, the clay will disappear. Any product, being dependent upon

IF MOKṢA IS UNCAUSED , THEN KNOWLEDGE IS ALSO USELESS—AN OBJECTION

Now, it has just been said that this uncreated *mokṣa* cannot be produced either by *karma* or by knowledge. Based on that, a question is raised. If *mokṣa* cannot be produced by knowledge, how is knowledge a means for *mokṣa*? Is it not also useless?¹ If knowledge is the means for *mokṣa*, *mokṣa* is created by knowledge. But if *mokṣa* is not created, neither knowledge, nor anything else, can be the means for it. All these arguments are very close arguments, so please follow them carefully. Since *mokṣa* is *nitya*, it is not created either by *karma* or by knowledge. Once *karma* is dismissed on the basis that *mokṣa* is not created, knowledge also has to be dismissed in the same fashion. Then, knowledge as a means for *mokṣa* is useless and the statement that knowledge is the only means for *mokṣa* has no validity.

KNOWLEDGE REMOVES IGNORANCE AND LEADS TO MOKṢA

Śaṅkara responds.² No, we do not say that *mokṣa* is produced by knowledge. It only removes the cause for bondage, ignorance. When ignorance is removed, the visible result is *mokṣa* and in this way, knowledge seemingly produces *mokṣa*. Knowledge has the status of removing the ignorance, and also has its end in the immediate result of *mokṣa*. It is not a result that is not immediately seen, *adrṣṭa-phala*, like heaven. Once ignorance is removed by knowledge, there is *mokṣa*—in fact, *mokṣa* is in the form of this knowledge. Thus, removal of ignorance alone is called *mokṣa*. This can be understood with an illustration. The sun is always in the form of light. But now, though seen, it is not properly seen by you because of the clouds. The clouds themselves are illumined by the sun alone. But now you see only the clouds and not the sun, that is its bright nature is not appreciated. Then a breeze blows and drives away the clouds and now the sun shines bright. What has the breeze to do with the sun getting back its brightness? Its brightness is not because of the breeze. You cannot say that the breeze gave the sun its brightness. At the same time, the breeze does a job of removing the clouds covering the brightness of the sun, and enables you to appreciate it. So too knowledge also does not produce *mokṣa*; it only removes the ignorance that is the cause for bondage.

Freedom is always from bondage and here it is the bondage created by ignorance, *avidyā*. Once knowledge removes the *avidyā*, it goes away and what remains is the immediate result of *mokṣa*. The real nature of the self is known right away, not later. Previously there was unknowingness, that is, the status of being ignorant. For whom? It is *ātmā* that is viewed from the standpoint of being ignorant. Ignorance is not the property of *ātmā*, but for the time being, as long as one is ignorant, ignorance is

¹ एतन्मोक्षं किं ज्ञानं तद्विना तन्नो भवति ।।

² न ज्ञानं मोक्षं करोति तन्मोक्षं करोति तन्मोक्षं करोति तन्मोक्षं करोति ।।

In the same way, freedom, the result of *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, is not something that is to be accomplished later, but is seen, that is, it is immediate, because *ātmā* is already free. Here too, there is a knower, *jñātā*, the instrument of knowledge, *jñāna*, and something to be known, *jñeya*, involved in the various things undertaken to know, like *śravaṇa*, etc. Now for this activity to know the *ātmā*, what is the result? The result is the knowledge of the non-dual *ātmā* and because of that, no other result is possible, nor is any other *karma* possible once that result is accomplished. Therefore, *jñāna-niṣṭhā* cannot be accomplished by *karma*. Knowledge is always as true as the object, and for that, you require only a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*. Here, because I cannot objectify the *ātmā*, the knower is exposed to the teaching, and the teaching reveals the nature of the knower as *Brahman*—the ear of the ear, *śrotrasya śrotram*, the eye of the eye, *caṅkṣuṣaścaṅkṣuḥ*, the mind of the mind, *manaso manaḥ*. You are the very nature of the seer, the hearer, the one who is not an agent, and the one who is *akartā*. After receiving that knowledge, is there something else I should get, something else that I should do? For what purpose? Even in *karma* we do not do further action once we have the result, so how is it possible to think of knowledge followed by some *karma* to get that knowledge? I do *śravaṇa*, etc., in order to gain *mokṣa*, which is *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. Once that is gained, why should I do *karma*?

THOUGH KARMA IS NOT USEFUL IN GAINING MOKṢA, IT IS USEFUL FOR GAINING OTHER RESULTS—AN OBJECTION

Accepting that knowledge and *karma* cannot be simultaneously combined for *mokṣa*, a *pūrvapakṣī*¹, now asks why they cannot be done consecutively, like two different types of action. Suppose a man wants to go to heaven. He performs the appropriate *karma*, *agnihotra*, etc., but at that time, he cannot eat. After the *agnihotra*, he can eat, but the two actions cannot be done simultaneously by the same agent. The performance of *agnihotra*, the ritual, the prayer, is meant for going to heaven, and eating is meant for appeasing hunger. One action can be done now and the other later. Similarly, why can you not first gain knowledge, then afterwards do *karma*? Even though you cannot do them together, you can always do them consecutively. And also the act of eating, *bhujikriyā*, is a *laukika* action and has only *drṣṭa-phala* and no *adrṣṭa-phala*. Whereas *agnihotra* has the *adrṣṭa-phala* of heaven. A person who wants both the results has to do both. In this manner, the same person can accomplish two results—the seen result, *mokṣa*, and later, the unseen result, heaven, *svarga*. He will get both the results. Knowledge will give the immediate result, *drṣṭa-phala*, and *karma* will give the unseen result, *adrṣṭa-phala*. The same person is not doing two things at the same time for the same result, but two different actions at two different times for the purpose of getting two different results. Similarly here, why not we accept a combination

¹An opponent

that *jñāna* will give *mokṣa* here in this life and other *karmas*, like *agnihotra*, will give *svarga-prāpti* later for the same person when done at different times?

**A MOKṢĀRTHĪ WILL NOT DESIRE FOR ANYTHING ELSE, THEREFORE, KARMA IS USELESS—
ŚAṄKARA'S ANSWER**

Previously it was said that *karma* and *jñāna* could not be performed by the same person because the person who is pursuing *ātma-jñāna* has no desire for the result of *karma*. If it is suggested that both can be done, one after the other, Śaṅkara negates that. It is not possible because when the knowledge, which has the result of *mokṣa*, is gained, a desire for the sake of a given result is not tenable.¹ There is no possibility of any other result. This is similar to the 'gain' of the tenth man.² Here too, the knowledge alone is the result. If he is the tenth man, and does not recognize it, thinking that there are only nine because he has failed to count himself, the knowledge that he is the tenth man is the result. This is the discovery of the tenth man. Gaining the tenth man is in the form of knowing the tenth man. Because he himself is the tenth man, all he requires is to discover, 'I am the tenth man.' Knowing that, the tenth man is gained. Similarly, when knowledge, which has the result of non-duality is gained, a desire for another result or an action, which is a means for that, is not tenable.

Or, we can put it this way. Any action implies a certain knowledge of what you are doing, how it is to be done, and why you are doing it. Without knowledge, no one can begin any type of meaningful activity. A Vedic ritual, especially, is dependent upon knowledge gained from the Veda. But mere knowledge of the Veda will not give you the result. For that, you have to perform the appropriate *karma*. Only practice, *anuṣṭhāna*, which is preceded by knowledge, can produce a result such as heaven or progeny, etc. Knowing that the *agnihotra* ritual produces the result of heaven and also knowing how to do the ritual does not result in going to heaven without the ritual being performed. Similarly, knowing that *ātmā* is *Brahman* does not produce *mokṣa*. It has to be followed by the enjoined *karma*. Then you will get *mokṣa*. No, this is also not tenable. Why? Because, knowledge of *ātmā* is the result. It is immediate, *drṣṭa*. When you gain the knowledge, 'I am *Brahman*,' that is *mokṣa*, and therefore, there is no necessity to perform any subsequent action to attain the result of *mokṣa*. Whether it is a *karma* enjoined by the Veda or any other *karma*, he has no desire to perform it. Why?

INADEQUACY IS THE BASIS FOR ALL DESIRES

All desires come from the sense of inadequacy, which is centred, on ignorance. That is, they are centred on my notion of myself as inadequate. This sense of inadequacy

¹ खे* एवेतदेव; अतः ज्ञानं यद्वैदिकं गोप्यं; अतः ज्ञानं वैदिकं एवेतदेव* ॥ ११० ॥

² Please see: *The story of the tenth man — footnote, page 121, Vol III, Bhagavadgītā Home Study Course.*

limited because then I would not have the advantage of being here. There in *brahma-loka* there is no cricket, football, baseball, or tennis. The gain of *brahma-loka* will exclude all the gains that I would have in other worlds. But the gain of *Brahman*, being everything, includes all the fourteen worlds, seven above, and seven below. There cannot be a desire for any further gain. After knowledge, what *karma* would one do to gain what? When he is *Brahman*, what is he going to get? Even as one who is seeking this knowledge, a *jijñāsu*, he is seeking a freedom that he knows includes *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*. All three are included in his desired end, *mokṣa*.

Therefore, he is not going to desire any other small thing. He is interested in only one thing, and that one thing includes everything. He recognizes that his problem is the notion that ‘I am wanting,’ and he addresses that directly. He is not trying to appease this wanting fellow. That is what we call *saṃsāra*—and it never ends. Did anybody ever solve the problem of appeasement? Never. Appeasement never ends. The more you appease your demand, the more it increases. Neither in management will it work, nor in life. Appeasement just buys some time. But it will not be long before there is another demand. The one who knows he is *Brahman*, however, has no need of appeasement; he is full.

Śaṅkara gives another example here.¹ Suppose there is a person who is engaged in an activity to gain a new kingdom. Does he also engage in another activity to gain a few acres within that kingdom? The one who is interested in *mokṣa* is interested in a limitless kingdom, one which has no boundaries whatsoever. This boundary-free kingdom called *Brahman* is called the empire of the self, *ātma-sāmrājya*. For the one who wants to gain this limitless boundless empire of the self, where is the interest in gaining heaven or progeny or some security? It is meaningless. When a person is interested in mining all the gold in his gold mine, he is not interested in bartering the mine for one sovereign. Just as the one who is seeking a kingdom will not have any desire for a few acres of land within it, the one who knows or want to know that he is *Brahman* will not have a desire for anything else, for there is nothing that is not *Brahman*.

THEREFORE, ALONE OR COMBINED, KARMA IS NOT A MEANS FOR MOKṢA

Therefore, *karma*, alone or combined, is not a means for *mokṣa*.² *Karma* that is talked about here refers to the *karma* enjoined by the Veda. When this is the status of *vaidika-karma* as a means for *mokṣa*, what is the status of any other *karma* as means for *mokṣa*? *Karma* of any kind does not have the status of being a means for *mokṣa*.

¹ खे एव निर्वर्तते; नो एव एतन्मार्गोऽस्ति; नो एव एतन्मार्गोऽस्ति, इत्युक्तं वासुदेव + तैर्वा एतन्मार्गोऽस्ति ॥

² तेनैव एव एतन्मार्गो + तेनैव एतन्मार्गोऽस्ति; नो एव एतन्मार्गोऽस्ति, इत्युक्तं वासुदेव + तैर्वा एतन्मार्गोऽस्ति ॥

Nor does *karma* combined with knowledge, *jñāna*. Some people talk of this kind of combination—a little bit of knowledge and a little bit of *karma* brought together to produce *mokṣa*. They argue giving the following example to support their contention. They say that, mere betel leaf will not turn your tongue red; there must be lime and betel nut along with the betel leaf. Only then, the red colour will be produced. Similarly, neither mere knowledge nor mere *karma* will produce *mokṣa*; they must be combined.

Let us see, what will really happen if one does combine them. The *karma* will produce its result; but that will be *adrṣṭa-phala* and will not fructify in this birth but in some other later birth. On the other hand, knowledge gives *mokṣa* here and now as *drṣṭa-phala*. Even if one were to assume that the *adrṣṭa-phala* of the *karma* will produce *mokṣa*, it will be only in some other later life and not now in this life. If this is so, that is, if you pursue knowledge, you will get *mokṣa* now in this life itself, and if you pursue *karma*, you will not get *mokṣa* now, but in a later life, who would be interested in that *karma*? And perhaps, at the most, since he is doing good *karma* and has started pursuing knowledge, in the next birth he will be pursuing pure knowledge. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* assures us that he will not come to a bad lot and will pick up the thread and continue in the next birth—*na hi kalyāṇakṛt kaścit durgatiṃ tāta gacchati*.¹ Further, knowledge, which has *mokṣa* as its result does not require any assistance from *karma*. It is true that mere knowledge of the means for gaining heaven will not give heaven, and *karma* also, if it is done without the know-how, cannot produce the proper result. Only if the *karma* is backed by knowledge and then practised, the desired result will be gained. But when *mokṣa* is the result, it is not like that. Knowledge does not require the help of *karma*, because knowledge itself is *mokṣa*. An argument is made that if one person is trying to lift something and another person comes and helps, the lifting becomes definitely easier. Or, even though *mokṣa* is gained by knowledge, perhaps *karma* will make it easier. We negate both these possibilities and say, ‘No, knowledge does not combine with *karma* at all in any manner.’ There is no connection because one is born of a means of knowledge and is centred on the object to be known, *vastu-tantra*, while the other, *karma*, depends entirely upon the will of the person, *puruṣa-tantra*. Knowledge is going to be as true as the object. Where does *karma* come into the picture?

AS JÑĀNA AND KARMA ARE OPPOSED, THEY CANNOT BE COMBINED

Moreover, knowledge is totally opposed to *karma*. What does knowledge do? It removes ignorance, the very ignorance that is necessary for *karma*. Once knowledge has removed the cause of *karma*, how are you going to do *karma* again? *Karma* implies a doer. What does knowledge do? First it destroys the notion, ‘I am the doer.’ When that is gone, who is going to do *karma* and for what? Only when the sense of agency is removed is there *mokṣa*, and knowledge alone is sufficient for that.

¹ *Gītā* – 6-40

Knowledge is opposed to *karma* because it removes ignorance, which is the cause of *karma*. Therefore, knowledge that results in *mokṣa* does not require *karma*.

WHAT IS THE INDIVIDUAL ROLE OF KARMA AND JÑĀNA IN ATTAINING MOKṢA?

Please understand the point here. We do not say that *karma* is useless. But we only say that *karma* is not the direct means for *mokṣa*. When we say that knowledge is the means for *mokṣa*, it is like saying that heat is the means for cooking. Without it, there cannot be any cooking. That does not mean that I am saying that you do not need fuel. It is just that the fuel does not cook; the heat does. When I say that *mokṣa* is accomplished by knowledge, I mean it in the same way when I say that cooking is done by fire. As you require to gather fuel and other things for cooking, you also need to prepare your mind through prayer, attitude, etc., for *mokṣa*. All that comes in quietly here. Nothing is really dismissed. We can include *yoga*, or any other discipline, even diet. They are all aids for the preparation of the mind. And the preparation can be very elaborate because of what is at stake here. ‘Only one in thousands even gets interested in *mokṣa*,’ it is said, and among those who get interested, only one among thousands makes the effort—*manuṣyāṅāṃ sahasreṣu kaścit yatati siddhaye*. Of those, who gains knowledge? The one who is prepared. And what is the preparation? It is purity of mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*.

Suppose you want to earn one million dollars. It is not an easy thing, even in America. But here, what is at stake is to be infinite. For that, you have to give up everything, not just one thing. First, you must give up your past, all that happened to you, all your depression, and all your problems. Then you have to give up anything you have at present. And once you have given up everything, you have to give up the feeling that you have given up everything, *yena tyajasi tat tyaja*. If *Brahman* is limitless, there is no way to gain that; you have to know, ‘I am *Brahman*.’ What is at stake here is not an ordinary thing. And yet, there is nothing at stake here because there is no gambling. You are already *Brahman*. Nothing has to disappear, nothing has to appear. There is nothing to be given up and nothing to be reached. All that is required is preparation, which is easy once you have ascertained what you really want, *puruṣārtha-niścaya*.

Giving up of everything is only in the form of giving up of ignorance; *tyāgena eke amṛta tvam ānaśuḥ*. It is giving up my sense of owning anything, because in owning, etc., there is a smallness. That is how the whole past is given up; parentage is given up; the concept of male-female is given up; the concept of young and old is given up. The concepts of strong and weak, skilled and unskilled, educated and uneducated, being a doer, *kartā*, or an enjoyer, *bhoktā*, are all given up. What is *mokṣa*? *Mokṣa* is nothing but giving up—all the way it is giving up.

Or, it could be acquiring, gaining! Let us put it in the form of acquiring. I am the sun, I am the moon, I am space, I am time, I am the earth, I am everything. I am the past, I am the present, I am the future—everything that is going to come is myself. *Indra* is myself. *Varuṇa* is myself. *Gaṅgā* is myself. *Yamunā* is myself. The Mississippi is also myself.

Whether you give up everything or acquire everything, it is all the same. Either way it requires preparation. Like fire requires fuel, we require a mind, which ignites when the knowledge is unfolded. The fuel should not be wet; it should be dry and to keep it dry, we do varieties of things. Everything that we do for this purpose is useful; prayer is useful, as is anything that we do to fix up our mind. This is called *sādhana*. We are not tired of it and we keep doing whatever that has to be done. That word, ‘*sarva*—all’ has to be understood here, because there is a complete negation of *karma* in this passage. We have to know exactly what is said here—it is responsible learning and responsible teaching.

The vision must be very clear. As I told you before, when I say that by eating three times a day you are not going to learn Sanskrit, it does not mean that if you give up eating you will learn Sanskrit. When I say that *karma* will not give you *mokṣa*, I mean it, because it is not a matter of the result of our *karma*. It is something that is already accomplished—*siddha-viśaya*. I have to know that I am *Brahman*, *ahaṃ brahma asmi*; and that knowledge is *mokṣa*. It does not mean that I should not do *karma*, or that I should not prepare myself for that. That is not what is said here. And *Kṛṣṇa* has already talked about *karma* in the previous verse—*manmanā bhava* ... There he repeated what he had said earlier—whatever you do, please do it as an offering to Me, *yat karoṣi... tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam*.¹

THE CONTEXT HERE

Here that *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, which is *sannyāsa*, is being discussed and that is a different topic. *Karma* will not help here. We all know that light and darkness are opposed to each other. If I am in a place that is totally dark, and I ask someone to bring some light, and he brings a burnt-out light bulb, how will it help to illumine that place? You have to bring in light. In the same way, knowledge and ignorance are opposed to each other. And *karma* being a product of ignorance, is not opposed to ignorance. Therefore, *Śaṅkara* says that, just as darkness cannot remove darkness, *karma* cannot remove ignorance.² Therefore, knowledge is the only means for *mokṣa*. The idea is that *karma*, being a product of ignorance, cannot remove ignorance. And removal of ignorance is *mokṣa*, freedom, because *ātmā* is already free.

¹ *Gītā* – 9-27

² खे एव हेतुः किं च तद्विना किंचिदपि न भवति । एतन्मोक्षोक्तं तद्विना किंचिदपि न भवति । ११० ॥

pounds. That itself does not give you any result. The statement of fact has to be connected to a prescription for it to be useful. The Veda is interested in making you do something or avoid something so that you can get some *sukha* or avoid *duḥkha*. This is the contention of the *Mīmāṃsaka*. Though there are different schools of *Mīmāṃsakas*, the *prābhākaras* and the *bhāttas*, they all maintain that *karma* gives you *mokṣa*.

AS MOKṢA IS NITYA , EVEN JÑĀNA CANNOT PRODUCE IT—AN OBJECTION

One of these *mīmāṃsakas* does agree that *mokṣa* is not produced by *karma*. He accepts that *mokṣa* is always available, because if it is produced, it will be lost. However, even though *mokṣa* is already accomplished, still, we have to take care of *karma*. We have varieties of *karmas* and we have to ensure that they do not perpetuate. He is saying here that the state of *mokṣa* is disturbed by our *karma*.

That means they are parallel realities. Even though the *ātmā* is eternally liberated, right now, it is disturbed because of *karma*, and the *karma* alone produces further birth, *janma*, etc. So, if you take care of *karma*, you have taken care of *mokṣa*. Look at this argument. According to him, *mokṣa* is eternal, *nitya*. We also say the same thing. But he argues that because it is eternal, it cannot be gained by knowledge. If it is gained, then it is not eternal, but *mokṣa* must be eternal, and therefore, it is not available for production by knowledge.

IF KNOWLEDGE IS THE ONLY MEANS FOR MOKṢA WHAT IS THE PLACE OF VIHITA-KARMA?

He also has another problem if *mokṣa* is gained by knowledge. And that is with reference to the daily obligatory *karma*, *nitya-karma*, and those that are to be done on certain occasions, *naimittika-karma*. If you get *mokṣa* by pure knowledge, then the result is gained right here, *dṛṣṭa-phala*. In that case, you do not need to do any *karma*. Therefore *nitya* and *naimittika-karmas* need not be done anymore. That he cannot accept. Why? If a person does not perform obligatory *karma*, *nitya-karma*, he will be incurring the fault of omission called *pratyavāya-doṣa*. An omission can cause problems. As it is said, a stitch in time saves nine. Suppose, for instance, you do not take a shower. Nothing is accomplished, but it can cause problems for you and for others. This is the argument of this person who is committed to *karma*. If you are incurring the fault of omission, there is going to be a consequence of that. And you will have to be born again to experience that. Therefore, there can be no *mokṣa* through knowledge alone. Therefore, even after gaining the knowledge one has to do *nitya* and *naimittika-karma*. They can never be given up. This is the contention of the *Mīmāṃsaka*.

PŪRVAMĪMĀMSAKA'S CONTENTION
NOT DOING VIHITA -KARMA WILL GIVE PRATYAVĀYA -DOṢA

The obligatory *karmas*, *vihita-karmas*, are enjoined by the *śruti*. It is legitimate for him to bring this up because we are dealing within the realm of the *Vaidikas* here. According to you, he would tell us, the Veda says that *ātmā* is *Brahman* and knowing that is *mokṣa*. Therefore, knowledge is enough for *mokṣa*. Being followers of the Veda, we have to analyse what the Veda says and do what is enjoined by the Veda. And the *śruti* definitely enjoins us to do certain *karmas* every day, like *agnihotra*, and others on special occasions, like *śrāddha*. When they are not done, *pāpa* will be the unseen result.¹ This is called *pratyavāya* technically.² Since the *karmas* we are talking about are enjoined by the Veda, they have to be done. If you do not do them, you will be incurring *pāpa*, which will result in a painful experience later. That means you will have another birth, and therefore, there is no *mokṣa*. The mere knowledge, 'I am *Brahman*,' is not going to help you. You may think that you will not be reborn until you find yourself somewhere else because you did not do your daily enjoined *karmas*. Thinking that you are not the performer of any action, because *ātmā* is not an agent, that is, it is *akartā*, you give up all the enjoined *karmas* and are free. This is a pipe dream. You will end up later in one of those undesirable wombs. This is the *Mīmāṃsaka's* contention.

THEN MOKṢA WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE AT ALL—ŚAṆKARA'S COUNTER-OBJECTION

Śaṅkara answers him. If there is no *mokṣa* by knowledge, there cannot be any *mokṣa* by *karma* either. Once it is acknowledged that *mokṣa* is eternal, how can it be produced by *karma*? If there is no *mokṣa* by knowledge, and there is no *mokṣa* by *karma* either, there is no possibility of gaining *mokṣa* at all.³ In this view, the pursuits of a human being are only *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*—there is no *mokṣa* at all.

The problem, however, is that this *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* also has to talk about *mokṣa*. Everybody, whether he is a *Vaiśeṣika*, a *Naiyāyika*, a *Sāṅkhya*, a Buddhist, a Muslim, Christian, or anybody else, accepts *mokṣa*, an ultimate end. Everybody has a

¹ xE* EūEīEēEōnēā|Eīaf EēE|EēEā EōēE± E E Sē EūEīEī EēEā aEīEā iEē EīEā EōāE EēEēEīEā EōēE± aE|EēEēE & <iāEānā iēnā + °EīEā aEīEāEūEīEēEēEāEō EēEā EōEōEōEē Eā + Eōnēā|Eīaf EēEāEēEē EēEēEēE EīEā EēEā EēEā °EēEā °EēE° भा० ॥

² *Pratyavāya* is the technical term the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* uses to refer to the *pāpa* incurred by not doing the *vihita-karma* (*nitya* and *naimittika-karma*). This *pratyavāya* will have to be experienced as *naraka* or a future birth in a lower form of life like that of an animal or insect.

Naraka is nothing but a field of experience where there will be consistent pain for a period of time. It is not eternal damnation. And opposed to this is the field of experience called heaven, where there is consistent pleasure, *sukha*, for a given length of time.

³ xEēEōB EāEīEīEā EōEēEā EēEāEāEēEīE <EīE + EēE EēE E E* °EēE° भा० ॥

definition of it. And everybody has to talk about it. There is no way to avoid a consideration of *mokṣa*. And if it is eternal, it has just been eliminated by these arguments. If *mokṣa* is eternal, it cannot be produced. Thus according to him, by *karma* there is no *mokṣa*, and by knowledge also, there is no *mokṣa*. Then what will produce *mokṣa*?

**IF YOU REMOVE CAUSES FOR REBIRTH, MOKṢA BEING NITYA WILL AUTOMATICALLY TAKE PLACE—THE PŪRVAMĪMĀṢAKA 'S NEAT PLAN
BY DOING NITYA -KARMA YOU CAN AVOID PRATYAVĀYA**

The *Mīmāṃsaka* has an answer for that. His contention is that, being eternal, there is no need to create *mokṣa*.¹ Therefore, *karma* need not produce *mokṣa*. Then why should we do *karma*? He has a clean plan for that. This is how you become liberated. Now you are bound to *saṃsāra* by *karma*. We also accept that. You are born again and again only because of *karma*. Therefore, we have to get rid of this *karma*. How? First of all, the daily duties that are enjoined by the Veda have to be done. That will not produce any result, but it will avoid any *pratyavāya-doṣa*—the fault of omission, so that one type of *karma-phala* is partly taken care of.

BY AVOIDING PROHIBITED KARMAS FUTURE UNDESIRABLE BIRTHS ARE AVOIDED

Secondly,² there is something that is not to be done. All the *karmas* that the Veda prohibits, the *pratiṣiddha-karmas*, are avoided. In that way, there is no gain of an undesirable body. Look at this. You do all the do's, and avoid the results that would be produced if you did not do them, and you avoid all the don'ts, avoiding the results, you would incur if you did them. In this way, all accumulation of *pāpa-karma* is avoided.

BY AVOIDING KĀMYA-KARMAS FUTURE DESIRABLE BIRTHS ARE AVOIDED

Thirdly,³ he says, do not do the enjoined *karmas* that are meant to produce *puṇya*, the *kāmya-karmas*, like *iṣṭāpūrṭi*. There are varieties of *karma* enjoined by the Veda to produce *puṇya*. By doing them you are going to gather a lot of *puṇya*. And if you have *puṇya*, what will happen? You will have to take another birth to enjoy it. Therefore, avoid the *kāmya-karmas*, the rituals and other *karmas*, which are meant to produce *puṇya*. In that way, you will avoid obtaining a birth in a desirable body. You do not do any prayer, ritual, etc., for the purpose of attaining a desired end, and therefore, you have no results of *puṇya-karma* to experience. Having avoided all the *karmas* that produce

¹ खे B'É नमः, एवैः एी ईँः एा एा* एवैः एवैः एवैः एा + खे एवैः एा | एी एा एा + ईँः* एँः भा० ॥

² | ईँः एँः एा एा + एवैः एवैः + एवैः एवैः* एँः भा० ॥

³ एा एा एा एवैः एवैः + एवैः एवैः* एँः भा० ॥

pāpas, and also all the *karmas* that produce *puṇya*, there is no occasion for you to assume another body and take another birth.

Then, if we were to ask him, what about the *karma* that has already begun, *prārabdha-karma*, because of which this body is here, he has a ready answer.

THE PRĀRABDHA-KARMA IS EXHAUSTED IN THIS LIFE BY UPABHOGA

For that, he says that, when the *karma* that has already begun to fructify in obtaining the physical body that you have now is exhausted, there will be no further birth.¹ Everyday, in every experience, you are experiencing the results of *prārabdha-karma*. When the last vestige of the *prārabdha-karma* is expended by going through the varieties of experiences it has caused, that is, when this physical body has fallen, there is no cause for the creation of another body. Why is there no cause? Because there is no *karma*. You have taken care of all of it. All the *prārabdha-karma* is exhausted; you do all the obligatory, *nitya-naimittika-karma*, and avoid all the prohibited, *pratiṣiddha-karma*, like telling lies or causing injury, and therefore, *pāpa* is not incurred; you do not do the *karmas* that will produce *puṇya*, the *kāmya-karma*, and therefore, *puṇya* is not gathered. How can you avoid *kāmya-karmas*? This is possible because you do not have any longing for anything; you want only *mokṣa*.

THUS MOKṢA IS GAINED WITHOUT ANY EFFORT

Thus, all *karma* is taken care of, and *karma* being the cause of birth, there is nothing to precipitate further birth. You simply remain with yourself because *karma* is not there. The self, *ātmā*, can no longer be bound; it is free from *saṃsāra*. Only if you assume a body, there is *saṃsāra*, and there can be no further body because there is no cause for it, no *karma*. The self, *ātmā*, is eternal, and you remain as *ātmā* alone. There is no birth at all for you. That is called *mokṣa*, and it is accomplished without any effort.² It is not produced.

OBJECTION BY ŚAṆKARA

WHAT ABOUT THE SAŅCITA -KARMAS STANDING IN ONE'S ACCOUNT?

If that is his argument, we have one or two questions to ask here. Let us accept his plan for the time being. Still, he is accepting *karma*, and in accepting the *karma* model, he should accept it totally. It should be logical. Since he is accepting *prārabdha-karma*, we have to ask when did he get this *prārabdha-karma* that accounts for this body, and is in the process of being unfolded day after day? If he says in his previous life or lives, we have to ask how many previous lives he had? Once you accept 'previous,' you are in

¹ एतन्नरकर्मणा जन्मैर्नरकर्मणश्च न भवति । न च कर्मणो रक्षणं कर्मणो रक्षणं कर्मणो रक्षणं । न च कर्मणो रक्षणं कर्मणो रक्षणं । न च कर्मणो रक्षणं कर्मणो रक्षणं ।

² एतन्नरकर्मणा जन्मैर्नरकर्मणश्च न भवति । न च कर्मणो रक्षणं कर्मणो रक्षणं कर्मणो रक्षणं । न च कर्मणो रक्षणं कर्मणो रक्षणं । न च कर्मणो रक्षणं कर्मणो रक्षणं ।

This is what happens in an animal's life. A water buffalo does the *nitya-karma*¹ and does not commit any transgressions at all. Daily he goes to the pond and he does not eat meat, etc., eats only grass! His *prārabdha-karma* gets exhausted, and therefore, after being a water-buffalo, he will gain *mokṣa*. We cannot accept this. Why not? Because his *sañcita-karma* remains. It is the same here. Infinite *karmas* will be standing in your account. How are you going to exhaust them? Even though you tried to avoid all new *karmas* in this birth, still, the old *karmas* standing in your account have to fructify, and for that we do not know how many births you require.

MOREOVER IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO AVOID KĀMYA -KARMAS

Also, it is impossible not to acquire new *karmas*. When you are a doer, *kartā*, you will definitely acquire new *karma*. How are you going to avoid the *rāga-dveṣas* that impel you to do *karma*? It is a pipe dream. There is no chance for you to get *mokṣa*, if this is your argument.

PŪRVAMĪMĀṂSAKA 'S REPLY

THE DUḤKHA SUFFERED BY DOING NITYA -KARMA EXHAUSTS THE SAÑCITA -KARMA

The *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* has an answer for this. Daily you have to do *karma*. If you do not do it, you will incur sin. When you do it, it does not produce any result, but it does produce *duḥkha*. You have to get up early in the morning. You have to gather all the ingredients for the ritual, light the fire, sit before the fire and say all the proper prayers and make the proper offerings. It implies a lot of pain, a lot of work. In experiencing that pain, it is possible to exhaust all the pain that is the result of the *pāpa-karmas* standing in your account, the *sañcita-karma*.² Why not?

OR DOING NITYA-KARMA IS LIKE DOING PRĀYAŚCITTA-KARMA

Or, the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* says that, doing your daily and occasionally enjoined *karma*, *nitya-naimittika-karma*, is like *prāyaścitta-karma*, expiatory *karma*. *Prāyaścitta-karma* is an antidote that is meant to neutralize the results of previous wrong actions. We do this all the time. In cooking, if there is too much salt, we add some more vegetables or throw in some flour. This is called *prāyaścitta-karma*. If there is any undesirable result, we neutralize it by doing something else. To neutralize the result of a wrong action, we do an expiatory action, an action that is meant to neutralize that undesirable result. In the Veda we have plenty of *prāyaścitta-karmas*. In the Christian tradition, there is confession and the penance done to neutralize the confessed actions. It is also a *prāyaścitta-karma*. The Veda has *prāyaścitta-karma* for all kinds of wrong *karmas*. If you really have *śraddhā* about *puṇya* and *pāpa*, and you look into this

¹ His daily routine.

² खे, एकेतेषु तेषु कामे + एते नो कर्तव्ये, एते ते वै, उभयैः कर्तव्यैः तेषु कर्मा * एते भा० ।।

prāyaścitta-karma, you will never do a wrong action. The *prāyaścitta-karma* is always more severe than what you gained by doing the wrong action. Just to avoid the *prāyaścitta-karma*, you have to avoid all these wrong actions.

Taking it a step further, the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* says that, the daily prayers and rituals we do, like *agnihotra*, are like *prāyaścitta-karma*, which are done as an antidote for all our wrong actions. *Prāyaścitta-karmas* are those that are enjoined by the *dharma-śāstra* to neutralize the negative effects of some negative *karma* one did. The *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka's* argument here is like how *prāyaścitta* neutralizes the negative effects of previous *karma*, doing *nitya-karma* will also neutralize the *anārabdha-pāpa-karma* standing in our account.¹ We also say, in the *saṅkalpa*,² before a ritual, 'I will do this for the removal of all my accumulated impurities—*mama upātta-samasta-durita-kṣayārtham aham idaṃ kariṣye*.' We declare this to the Lord, and it also serves as an auto-suggestion. In order to eliminate all the *pāpas* that I have gathered, I perform this *karma*. This includes old *pāpas* that are fructifying in this life because of things that were done in other births, and *pāpas* that have been done in this birth also. I perform this *karma* to neutralize all of them. The daily prayers that I offer are meant only to exhaust all the *pāpas* standing in my account. It is not to produce any new result, only to clear the old account.

SUMMARY OF THE PŪRVAMĪMĀṢAKA'S NEAT PLAN

The whole argument³ of the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* is based on the assumption that the *karma* that I do now will neutralize the result of old *karma*, or that the old *karmas* get exhausted through the pain that is involved while performing these *nitya-karmas*. Either way you take it, it does not matter for him. The old *karmas* are eliminated. The *karma* because of which this body has come into being will get exhausted by daily experiences. If you have a headache, one *pāpa* is gone. Daily experiences of pain and pleasure will take care of all the *puṇya* and *pāpa*. You need not do anything to exhaust this *prārabdha-karma*. Just keep living, and it will get exhausted. But you have to be very careful that you do not do any wrong actions or any action that will produce *puṇya*. By not doing any action that will produce an unseen result that has to be experienced at some time in the future, and doing actions to neutralize *pāpas* that have been accumulated in the past, you will get *mokṣa*, *kaivalya*, without any effort. The *karma* that brought this body into being gets exhausted just by living, and when the body dies, the *prārabdha-karma* is completely gone. The old *karmas* are cancelled by the daily and occasional rites, *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, and no new *karmas* are gathered because no prohibited actions, *prāyaścitta-karmas*, and no desire-prompted actions,

¹ *prāyaścittakāryeṣu prārabdhakārmabhiḥ śrautakarmabhiḥ ca karmasamastairaparibandhahīnaḥ kaivaḥ kaivaḥ kaivaḥ ॥*

² *The statement of intention with reference to a karma.*

³ *prāyaścittakāryeṣu prārabdhakārmabhiḥ śrautakarmabhiḥ ca karmasamastairaparibandhahīnaḥ kaivaḥ kaivaḥ kaivaḥ ॥*

kāmya-karmas are done. Therefore, there is no possibility of any more births. And this is *mokṣa*. This is the contention of the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka*.

ŚAṄKARA'S NEGATION OF THE WHOLE ARGUMENT

ALL ŚĀSTRA -PRAMĀṆAS SAY THAT THERE IS NO WAY FOR MOKṢA OTHER THAN JÑĀNA

This is all very interesting, but it is not tenable. And there is no basis for it.¹ Which *śruti* talks like this? Is there any means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, for all this? On the contrary, the *śāstra* says, 'Having known that, he goes beyond death; there is no other way—*tam eva viditvā atimṛtyum eti*.'² Knowing that *Brahman* as oneself, *pratyagātmā*, one goes beyond death, meaning one gets out of this *saṃsāra*. Other than knowing this, there is no other path for *mokṣa*—*na anyah panthā vidyate ayanāya*.³ This has to be said because there will always be people who conclude that there is more than one way. The idea that there are four paths is just imagination, as we have seen. In fact, some say that there are as many paths for *mokṣa* as there are human beings. This may be true with reference to religions, and the aims of religions too, but not with reference to *mokṣa*. Purification of the mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, which is exactly what we are aiming at too, can be accomplished by various means, and so each one can follow his or her own particular religious form. Even in the same religion, one person will do some of the prayers and rituals, and another will do others. You can always choose what is suitable to you.

For *mokṣa*, however, this is not the case. What was already unfolded as *Brahman*, earlier in this statement in the *puruṣa-sūkta*, as all this, *idaṃ sarvam*, what existed before, what will come later and what is now, *yad bhūtaṃ yacca bhavyam*,⁴ has to be known as that which obtains in your heart, in your mind, as the *ātmā*. But it is not the *ātmā* that is enclosed in this body, for, all the heads are its head, all the feet are its feet, all the hands, its hands. Knowing that, one crosses death; he gains *mokṣa*. Why is there no other way? Because *mokṣa* is the opposite of bondage. If bondage is real, you cannot remove it, because we define what is real as something that cannot be removed. If the *ātmā* is bound, and the bondage is real. You cannot remove it. If it is unreal, if it does not exist, you need not remove it. If you think it exists, then you have to remove it, and that removal can only be by knowledge. If you think you are bound, that thinking has to go, and it can only go by knowing. Stopping the thinking does not work; that is anaesthesia. We have to understand that the thinking is wrong by understanding that

¹ खं* ऽदे॒ ता॑ ए॒ ते॒र्ना॒ ते॒ + ए॒ते॒ ए॒प॒रो॒चि॒ते॒ ख॒रे॒प॒रे॒ (ख॒रे॒ ए॒ ए॒त॒ि॒रे॒प॒रे॒ए॒ < ए॒ते॒, (- ए॒ते॒ - ए॒ते॒रे॒रे॒रे॒रे॒ना॒ ३-८) ए॒ ए॒त॒े॒ए॒ + ख॒रे॒ (ख॒रे॒रे॒रे॒रे॒रे॒ ख॒रे॒ ए॒ ए॒त॒ि॒रे॒ए॒ते॒, ए॒रे॒* ए॒ते॒ भा० ॥

² *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* – 3-8 and *Puruṣa-sūkta* – 8

³ *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* – 3-8 and *Puruṣa-sūkta* – 8

⁴ *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* – 3-15 and *Puruṣa-sūkta* – 1

ātmā is *Brahman*. Therefore, the *śruti* says that there is no other path for this—*na anyah panthā vidyate*. Other than *vidyā*, knowledge, there is no way for *mokṣa*.

Not only does one *śruti* say this, but many *śrutis* do. It is said that *mokṣa* is as impossible for one who does not know *ātmā*, as it is to wrap oneself with *ākāśa* like a skin around the body.¹ How will you do that? It is not possible. Thus quoting this verse from the *śruti*, *Śaṅkara* says that, it is just as impossible for the one who does not know the *ātmā* to gain *mokṣa*.² Not knowing the *ātmā*, you will only gain sorrow and remain in *saṃsāra*. The idea is that you can gain *mokṣa* without knowing *ātmā* only when you can clothe yourself with space. In other words, it is not possible. Knowledge alone liberates.

Not only that, the *purāṇas* and *smṛtis* also say, ‘One gains *mokṣa* by knowledge.’³ By saying it in two ways, there is no room for misunderstanding. There is no *mokṣa* without knowledge and by knowledge alone *mokṣa* is gained. If he had said just that *mokṣa* is gained by knowledge, it may also allow *mokṣa* to be gained by *karma*. But then he says that by knowledge alone there is *mokṣa* and without knowledge there is no *mokṣa*. How can there be any doubt here?

EVEN ACCEPTING THAT NITYAKARMA REMOVES ALL PĀPAS, SAÑCITA -PUṆYA CANNOT BE NEUTRALIZED

Still, there is another problem. Accepting for the time being that all the *pāpa-karma* can be exhausted by the pain involved in doing obligatory *karmas*, *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, only the *pāpa-karma* standing in your account is removed. What about the *puṇya-karma*? That is also infinite. Even assuming that the *nitya-karma* is an antidote for the results of all the wrong actions that were done, which is a big assumption, the *puṇya* will be standing there unaccounted for. Just as there are infinite *pāpa* in the *sañcita-karma* yet to be exhausted, there are also infinite *puṇya* waiting to fructify. They cannot be neutralized by doing *nityakarma*. If at all *nityakarmas* can neutralize anything they can neutralize only *pāpa* and not *puṇya*. It has to express itself and therefore, being not exhausted, will precipitate another birth. You will have to be born in Texas in the family of a tycoon. And even that will not take care of all of the *puṇya*. This *puṇya* will be expressed; it has to be encashed.

Even the possibility of neutralizing all the *pāpa-karmas* by obligatory, *nitya-karmas* was accepted only provisionally. That also is not tenable. For how long can one do these *karmas*? Fifty years, sixty years, seventy years, eighty years? How can that neutralize all the *pāpa* that has been gathered in an infinite number of births? There is no

¹ *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*– 6-20

² स एतन्महात्मानो विदुःश्रुतान्मोक्षमिति चेतसा ब्रूयन्तः ॥ १ ॥

³ यथाप्यपि कर्मफलकामेषु सांख्ययोगिनो नैवेद्योपनिषदि नैवेद्योपनिषदि नैवेद्योपनिषदि ॥

ŚRUTIS AND SMṚTIS TALK OF PUṆYA AS PHALA FOR NITYAKARMA

Further, it was said that by doing *nitya-karma*, no result is produced. That also is not true. Those who do those *karmas* have the result of heaven, *svarga*. There are enough *śruti* and *smṛti* statements to confirm this. And there is even a rule that whenever there is *śruti* injunction to do a *karma* and the result is not specifically mentioned, that *karma* should be understood to result in a better birth—*puṇya-loka-phala*. The *smṛti* also says that those who are following the *varṇa* and *āśrama-dharma*, doing exactly what is to be done according to their situation in life will also gain better lives, *puṇya-loka*. There is no *karma* enjoined by the *śruti*, which does not have *puṇya* as its result. The *śruti* will not ask you to do it if there is no result. It is not that if you do not do it there will be a negative result—*akarṇe pratyavāyah*. But when it is done, it has a positive result called *puṇya*.¹

Though there is no direct fault incurred, it is true that when you do not do your daily duties, you may be doing the wrong things. If you do not do the right action, it will not take time for you to do the wrong action. Therefore, you have to keep doing what is right in order to avoid what is wrong. Otherwise, there is laziness, which is the breeding ground for all crimes. Now by avoiding all *pāpa-karmas* and doing only *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, this person is under the impression that he is not getting any result. After death, do you know what will happen? All the *devatās* of those *nitya-karmas* will be ushering him into heaven! He may protest that he wanted *mokṣa* and not heaven, but he will have to go. Because *nitya-karma*, being a *karma*, will surely produce a result. How can you do a *karma* without causing a result? You cannot drop a stone in a pond without creating a ripple. You have to enjoy that *karma-phala*; there is no way, no other way of avoiding it except one. What is that? Knowing that *ātmā*, the self, is not an agent, *akartā*. Then one is free of all *karma-phala*.

THE MODEL OF KARMA AND THE ADHYĀROPA-APAVĀDA METHOD

By this, the whole model is destroyed. This is called deliberate superimposition and negation—*adhyāropa-apavāda*. You first say that *ātmā* is a doer, *kartā*, and therefore, gathers a lot of *karma*, both *puṇya* and *pāpa*. He is a *saṃsārī* and has to reap the result of all these *puṇya-pāpas*, by taking births in different *lokas*. Then at the end of it you say that in fact, *ātmā* was never born, never did anything, never performed any action. Knowing that, you are free from all *karmas*. The fire of knowledge burns all the *karma* to ashes, *jñānāgniḥ bhasmasāt kurute*. This is possible because they are all standing in the name of Mr. so-and-so, the agent, *kartā*, and once the *kartā* is gone, there is no *karma* to be accounted for. This is called *adhyāropa-apavāda*.

¹ *Śruti* and *smṛti* statements confirm this. And there is even a rule that whenever there is *śruti* injunction to do a *karma* and the result is not specifically mentioned, that *karma* should be understood to result in a better birth—*puṇya-loka-phala*. The *smṛti* also says that those who are following the *varṇa* and *āśrama-dharma*, doing exactly what is to be done according to their situation in life will also gain better lives, *puṇya-loka*. There is no *karma* enjoined by the *śruti*, which does not have *puṇya* as its result. The *śruti* will not ask you to do it if there is no result. It is not that if you do not do it there will be a negative result—*akarṇe pratyavāyah*. But when it is done, it has a positive result called *puṇya*.¹

is available to a *brāhmaṇa*, he will perform a large *yajña* and distribute the wealth as *dakṣiṇā*. These are the three pairs of *nitya-karmas* mentioned for a *brāhmaṇa*.

Similarly, there are certain duties that are mentioned for all the castes, *varṇas*. In general, we can say that certain duties are to be performed and some of them are prayers or are in the form of rituals. These are called *nitya-karmas*. Then, on certain occasions, there are certain *karmas*, rituals, that are to be performed, and they are called *naimittika-karmas*. Both are enjoined by the Veda. While enjoining these *karmas*, the Veda does not mention any particular result for them. Generally, for every ritual a particular result is mentioned. The one who wants heaven must perform a particular ritual for that—*svarga-kāmaḥ jyotiṣṭomena yajeta*. Or, the one who wants a son should perform a *putra-kāmeṣṭi* ritual. But when it comes to the *nitya-naimittika-karmas*, the Veda does not mention any result at all.

From that, the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* extrapolates his stand. Since the result is not mentioned for *nitya-karmas*, they do not produce any result. Then why should anyone do them? They are enjoined by the Veda, and therefore, they have got to be performed. Now anything that you have got to do, that is mandated, implies pain. That is why people are lazy. Getting up and doing things is not easy. Here, every day the *brāhmaṇa* has to get up early in the morning before the sun rises, which itself is a problem, and then has to do the *karma*, which takes about an hour. Therefore, there is pain involved, because effort is involved. This is an ingenious presumption made just because the Veda does not mention the result for the *nitya-karmas*.

Even though these arguments do not have any immediate bearing on our lives, it is nice to know exactly the thinking involved, because in the process we develop a discipline of thinking. Since the Veda does not mention any result and at the same time enjoins these *karmas*, they must have an unknown result. If you are doing it and there is no result except the pain of doing, that pain itself must be a kind of a payment. Some past sin is paid off by this kind of *karma*. An intelligent man, whenever he goes through a painful experience, accepts it happily, because some *pāpa* is exhausted. Here, the results of the *nitya-karma*, being in the form of pain, are the result of the *pāpa* one did before. This is not what the *śāstra* really says; it is an argument of an opponent.

We analyse these different points of view just to understand what the *śāstra* is saying. Just as boxers have a sparring partner, similarly here, we have an opponent just to sharpen our understanding. His view is that since this *nitya-karma* is in the form of pain, it is the result of whatever *pāpa* was done before. Now you are experiencing the pain of it. But these *nitya-karmas* have no result other than what is experienced in doing them. That is, they have no unseen result, *adrṣṭa-phala*. We are not talking about the visible result, *drṣṭa-phala*, but the unseen *puṇya* that may occur from doing a *karma* enjoined by the Veda. According to him, there is no *puṇya* for a *nitya-karma* because the result is not mentioned by the *śruti*.

Further, there is another reason why there is no other result. These are things that are to be done just to live your life. Like breathing. There is no particular result for that except living. If you ask me, ‘What do you accomplish by breathing?’ What will I say? I will say, ‘Just to live, to have my life, I must breathe.’ There is no result except living. When I do not breathe, I do not live. Breathing does not have a special result. A discipline of breathing, like *prāṇāyāma*, can result in a cerebral haemorrhage or tranquillity, depending on how you do it, but simple breathing does not have any result in life. Living implies breathing. Similarly, *nitya-karma* is something that is implied in living. One has got to do it and there is no way of escaping it, because it is enjoined by the *śruti*. Those who have *śraddhā* in the *śruti* are supposed to perform these *karmas*; they are necessarily done because the person is alive.

Thus the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* says that the *nityakarmas* do not have any *phala*; they are the result of the previous *pāpa* and also they have been ordained as the *karma* one has to do to just keep the life going according to his *varṇa* and *āśrama*. This is his argument.

THE SAÑCITAKARMA THAT ARE YET TO FRUCTIFY CANNOT GIVE YOU RESULT IN THIS JANMA FURTHER, ALL PĀPAS CANNOT GIVE THE SAME TYPE OF PAIN

Now the counter -argument comes. No, this is not true. Why? Śaṅkara gives two reasons.¹ If the pain that is involved in doing these *nitya-karmas* is the result of the wrong things done before, it is a result which has come to fructify. Therefore, accepting that it is a result, the maximum it can be is a result of the *prārabdha-karma*. It is not the result of a *karma* that has not yet begun, *anārabdha-karma-phala*. Otherwise, there would be no difference between *prārabdha-karma* and *sañcita-karma*. It is not right to say that the *karma-phalas* that have not begun to fructify at the time of death in the life in which they were done would begin to fructify in a life which is due to the fructification of some other set of *prārabdha-karma*.²

We have seen before that there is a type of *karma*, called *sañcita*, which is like a term deposit that has been accumulated and is standing in an account. Its results have not yet begun to fructify and thus, they are called *anārabdha-karma-phalas*. All the *karmas* cannot fructify in one particular incarnation; there is only one set of *karmas* that can be fulfilled in this particular life, with this parentage, with this childhood, and so on. Those *karmas*, which are in the process of getting unfolded we call *ārabdha-karmas* or

¹ खे* + |É ÉRéxÉÉÆÖ ÉQÉÆ; jöM öbxÉ - + öÉ |É ÉÉÉÆ; nÖJÉ; jöM ÉÉÆÉxÉQÉ(ÉÉK& SÉ öÆÉÉÆ ¶ÉÉ Ö ÆÖ 11

This is a brief statement, a saṅgraha-vākya, and the detailed explanation follows.

² æÉÖÆ (ÉÖVÉx ÉÖÉÖÉÖÉÆÖ ÉQÉÆ; jöM ÉÉxÉÆÉÖ ÉQÉÖÖxÉ - + ÉÆÉÖÉ-nÖJÉÆ; ÉVÖÉÉÆ<ÉÉ ÉÉÖÉÉÆ xÉ ÉV) ÉÖÉÉÉÖÆ ñ jöM öbxÉÆ + xÉ! ÖÖ; ÉÖÆ ÖÖ ÉQ& jöM öÆ + xÆÉÖÉÉÖVÉx ÉÉxÉ =É; ÉVÖÉÉÆ<ÉÉ =É(ÉÉK&* ¶ÉÉ Ö ÆÖ 11

prārabdha-karmas. Accepting that the pain involved in *nitya-karma* exhausts *pāpa*, it cannot be the *pāpa* that has not yet manifested.

Secondly, in *nitya-karma* you have one type of effort, one type of pain. If that is the pain of all the *pāpas*, they must also be of only one type. But there are *pāpas* of many different natures. What about them? Every painful experience is a result of the old *pāpa*, a *durita*. If you say that the pain involved in the performance of the *nitya-karma* is the result of old *pāpas*, what about the pain involved in disease, and various other problems that you face everyday? There are many different types of pain. Suddenly the stock goes down. The pain in this has nothing to do with the pain that is involved in the daily ritual, etc. Then again, the tenant says he will not leave the house when the landlord wants to occupy it. Why does he get this kind of a tenant? There can be a better tenant who will leave, but this fellow will not. Why? There is some *pāpa*. We have varieties of *pāpa*. The results are not always the same. Therefore, if you say that all the *pāpas* are exhausted by the pain of doing *nitya-karma*, how do you explain the other types of pain that you have? It would be wonderful if we only had the type of pain involved in doing *nitya-karma*. I would happily do this *nitya-karma* if I wouldn't have any other pain at all.

Śaṅkara now takes up the issue of the pain experienced in doing the *nitya-karma* being the result of faults incurred in a previous birth. It was said that the result of the *pāpas* is the pain which is involved in performing the daily rites, the *nitya-karmas*. That is not tenable. Look at this. Here is a person who has lived his life performing all the daily *karmas*, like *agnihotra*, and also some actions, which are capable of producing pain. He has done some *puṇya-karma* and some *pāpa-karma*. At the time of death, what are the *karmas* that will give him the next birth? Not all of them. Only certain *karmas* will give a certain birth. For instance, the *agnihotra* and other good *karmas* that he did will give him entry to heaven and a body appropriate for that. Now suppose he has that body, a *deva-śarīra*. What about the *pāpa-karmas* that he had done? They cannot be experienced in the same body. In one incarnation, the *karmas* that have not yet begun to fructify, the *anārabdha-karmas*, which are standing in his account, cannot be enjoyed. They can only be enjoyed in another birth. One set of *karmas* orders only a given physical body. His *pāpas* will not fructify in the birth that gives him the body of a *deva*, because that body is meant only for pleasure, not pain. Therefore, the *pāpas* will have to remain suspended; they have to wait for their chance to express. It is not reasonable, *Śaṅkara* says, that the result of a *karma* that has not yet begun to manifest would be experienced in a birth that has begun because of another set of *karmas*.

Otherwise, what will happen? Suppose a person has faithfully performed his duties like *agnihotra* and because of which, he gets a birth for the experience of heavenly enjoyment. The *karmas* he did were supposed to give him pure pleasure, and therefore, he has come to heaven. The old *pāpas* that he has gathered should not come along with him. If all the *pāpas* also get exhausted there in the form of pain, where is heaven,

previous *janmas*. And then Śaṅkara goes on to explain that. He says, what is accepted by everyone is that there can be no neutralization of the *karma-phala* that has not begun to fructify. That being so, what you are talking about is the exhaustion of those *karma-phala* that have begun to fructify in this *janma*. That means, you have to accept that all the pain that one experiences in this life is due to those *pāpa* that have begun to fructify. Then it is not right to say the pain of doing the *nitya-karmas* alone are the result of the *pāpa* accumulated in the previous *janmas*. There are many more types of pains experienced by one in any one life. And also then, the Veda would not have the need to enjoin *nitya-karmas*; because they would be helplessly enjoyed by one as the result of previous *pāpa*.¹ Later Śaṅkara talks about this further. We shall see that later.

BOTH PUṆYA AND ANTAḤKARAṆAŚUDDHI ARE THE RESULTS OF NITYAKARMA

Now, let us complete the vision here before we proceed. The *nitya-karma* is not enjoined by the *śāstra* for neutralizing the effects of wrong deeds done in the past, either in this life or previously. It does produce a result, *puṇya*, that can lead you to heaven. But if the same *nitya-karma* is done for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, it can neutralize the results of past wrong actions. Why does the *śruti* not mention a result? It wants you to do the *nitya-karma* for the purification of your mind. It is something like taking a shower. We need not talk about it saying, ‘You should take a daily shower; it is good for you.’ It is a thing to be done. Similarly, daily prayer is also a thing to be done. Every day we pick up enough *rāga-dveṣas* to make it necessary. Daily prayer, etc., takes care of all our hurt and anger, and so on. Otherwise, our whole personality develops edges and we are not the same simple person we were when we were young and innocent. When you are born, you are absolutely innocent. Then you keep growing until the body has grown into adulthood and the mind is more and more informed and even highly educated. Then you should be a happy person, a simple, uncomplicated person. But that is not so. We develop a personality. Certain things we cannot stand, certain other things alone we can accept. Then we develop complexes, and all kinds of notions.

Why? It is all because of lack of *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. Every day we pick up all kinds of impurities and they have to be taken care of. Otherwise, it is something like rain water hitting the ground. It is clean water until it reaches the ground. Before it touches the ground, you can collect it in a vessel and can live on it. It is absolutely clean. Similarly, when a child comes into this world, he or she is clean, absolutely innocent. That is why everybody likes babies, whose ever the baby is. Whether it is the baby of

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ignorant parents from a slum, or the baby of a great scientist, it is the same. Both are innocent. The mathematician's baby does not come with calculus inside. Then what happens? The child grows. That is fine. He must grow, but not at the cost of innocence, not at the cost of purity. Originally, there was no scheming, no manipulating, and no complexes. The child was pure and simple and innocent. But then, it faces difficult situations, circumstances, and picks up fears, anxieties, and all sorts of problems.

What can we do about it? As parents, we should build in them a value for prayer and prayerful attitudes. Then, when the time comes, they can understand what is prayer, and when they pray, they can neutralize all these problems that the mind picks up. That is why in the eighth or ninth year, the child is initiated into *mantra-japa*. As the child grows, the prayer is understood better, and thereby, all the *rāga-dveṣas*, fears, etc., are neutralized. Just as the body has to be showered daily, the mind also has to be cleaned every day. Daily showering is a thing to be done, and similarly daily prayer is a thing to be done. Therefore, the *śāstra* does not mention the result of daily enjoined *karmas*. That does not mean there is no result. It does produce *puṇya*. But it is also meant for neutralizing the *duritas*. That is why we make the following statement before beginning any ritual or prayer. We say, '*mama-upātta-samasta-durita-kṣayārtham ahaṃ idaṃ kariṣye*—I am doing this action for the sake of exhaustion of the results of all my wrong actions.'

PRAYER CAN REMOVE THE OBSTACLES CAUSED BY OUR PĀPAS

I do not know whether these were gathered by me in this life or in the previous ones. But they are fructifying in the form of pain and in the form of impediments to my pursuits. Every human body is a mixture, *miśra*, of *puṇya* and *pāpa*. That is why we do not win all the time. And we need not win. But daily prayer keeps the *durita* under check. It does not allow new *durita* to come, and it neutralizes old *duritas*. Thereby, day-to-day my mind is clean and I am ready to face all situations. Because of the prayer, what would cost me my neck, costs me only my crown. This is what happened to *Arjuna*. When the *nāgāstra* was coming to his neck, *Kṛṣṇa* pressed the chariot into the ground so that the *astra* missed *Arjuna's* neck and removed only his crown, because *Arjuna* had surrendered to him. Of course, he did not press it sufficiently so that the *nāgāstra* would go above *Arjuna's* crown, because *Kṛṣṇa* also knows that the prayer's efficacy is only that much, only a few inches. What came to his neck went with his crown. That is the result of prayer.

People often say, 'I prayed, but nothing happened.' If you had not prayed you should see what would have happened! In 1962, eight planets came to Capricorn at the same time. Eight planets never gather like this, and astrologers all over the world predicted that it was not good for the world. They were waiting for something bad to happen. In India, they do not wait. Do you know what they did? They began doing rituals in every village, in every temple, to ward off the malefic effect of this

configuration of the planets. So many rituals were performed—and nothing happened! Afterwards there was a complaint that so much money had been spent and nothing happened. But we can also say that because these rituals were done, nothing bad had happened. We spent so much money and avoided a calamity. It saved us in India and the whole world. It all depends on your way of looking at your effort.

The idea that not doing something will create *pāpa* is wrong. If not doing produces a result, why should I do anything? And which non-doing produces which result? Not doing a *karma* enjoined by the Veda will not produce any result, but by not doing it, I will let the *duritas* take over my life, and therefore, I will have problems. Doing the *nitya-karmas* will avoid all those problems. That is why there is an expression like *akaraṇe pratyavāyaḥ* in the *śāstra*, but it is not meant as it has been interpreted here by the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka*. It is meant to keep the mind clean. The body can be showered, but the mind cannot be cleansed by water, *na vāriṇā śuddhyate antarātmā*. What detergents will you use to clean your mind? You cannot open your skull and spray some detergent! The mind is not a hardware, but pure software. Naturally, you have to introduce a programme to remove all the bugs. What are the bugs? All our *pāpas* in the form of *rāga-dveṣas*. The daily prayers, *nitya-karmas*, are meant for removing them alone. *Śaṅkara* is going to talk about this later.

IF THE VERY EFFORT OF DOING NITYAKARMA IS THE RESULT OF PĀPA, WHY SHOULD VEDA ENJOIN IT?

And there is another problem. The *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* says that because the *nitya-karmas* do not have any result, the very effort of doing them is the result. This is not true because the *śāstra* clearly enjoins that these are to be done. There is a statement in the *śruti* that says that you must do the *sandhyā-vandana* every day—*aharahaḥ sandhyām upāsita*. Every morning at the rising of the sun, and every evening at the setting of the sun, and then, when the sun is right over your head, neither on the right nor on the left, at noon, certain prayers are to be done. Similarly, the *śruti* says that every spring, the *jyotiṣṭoma* ritual is to be performed—*vasante vasante jyotiṣṭomena yajeta*. This is what they call a *vidhi*, what is enjoined by the *śāstra*. Now, if you say that the result of all your wrong *karma* is merely the effort involved in doing the *karma* and nothing else, all the *vidhis* become meaningless. If the practice of a *nitya-karma* is itself a *karma-phala*, why should the *śāstra* enjoin you to do it? Why should the *śāstra* ask you to do this *karma* if this is going to be your result?

It is something like the body being born. Why was it born? The body was born because of *karmas*. It is not because the *śāstra* enjoined this body, and therefore, it was born. The *śruti* need not enjoin us to do something unless it has a result in view. The very fact that the *śruti* enjoins me to do the *karma* shows that it can be done, or it need not be done by me. It must have a result. Only then will I be interested in doing that *karma*. But if the pain and effort in doing the *karma* is the result of all the *pāpas*, which are fructifying through this body, the *vidhi* of the *śāstra* asking me to do the *nitya-*

karmas will become useless. I will exhaust all those *pāpas* naturally because they have already begun—*ārabdhatvāt*, with the birth of this body. Therefore, the *vidhi* of the *śruti* is not necessary. As you naturally exhaust your *pāpas* in the form of disease and so on, all *duritas* will be completely exhausted by you, without your doing anything, because, after all, it is the *prārabdha-karma-phala* you are talking about. What is enjoined by the *śāstra* is not the result, *phala*, but actions that are to be done by you.

There is another fact to be considered here. How are you going to make the distinction between *ārabdha-karma* and *anārabdha-karma*? How can you ever call the *karma*, *ārabdha-karma*, if there is no such thing as *anārabdha-karma*? Only if there is something that has not yet begun to fructify, can you call this *karma* that has begun as *ārabdha-karma*. And *karma* that has not begun to fructify, *anārabdha-karma*, cannot be exhausted by *karma* that is now expressing in this life, *ārabdha-karma*, because it remains there, unmanifest.

Thus, going along with his argument, which is not to say that we agree with his argument, the *vidhi* of the *śāstra* ordaining *nitya-karmas* is useless if all the *duritas* are exhausted in the pain you go through in living your life. That is why animals are not given any *vidhis*; neither can they follow them. Only a human being can follow a *vidhi*. A *vidhi* is a rule that is given to you so that you can follow it in order to get some result. All these *karmas* enjoined by the Veda can produce certain results. Moreover, the result should be something desirable; only then is it an enjoined *karma*. There is no *vidhi* of the *śāstra*, which is useless; it must have a result. If the *nitya-karma* is the result of some old *durita*, the *śāstra* need not enjoin you to do it at all. You will naturally go through that pain. Why should *śāstra* talk about it? The *śāstra* does not say, ‘You should get a fever,’ ‘You should get cancer.’ If there is a result according to your *karma*, you will get the result. *Śruti* need not talk about it. The *śruti* tells you that if you have a problem, you can perform this *karma* and produce some result which can neutralize the *duritas*. It gives us the means, some helping hand so that we can get rid of some of our *duritas* which are giving us problems.

There are certain *karmas* that are to be avoided, and the *śruti* says explicitly what they are; one should not do harm, *hiṃsāṃ na kuryāt*; one should not eat meat, *kalañjaṃ na bhakṣayet*; one should not drink alcohol, *surāṃ na pibet*, and so on. There are certain *karmas* like these that are prohibited. Why? It is not just because these things are not good for your health. Any informed nutritionist will tell us that. We do not require a Veda for it. What *śruti* has to say is that such actions incur an unseen result, *adrṣṭa-phala*, a result that is not favourable, *pāpa*. The concern of *śruti* in these injunctions is only with results that are not immediately seen, *adrṣṭa-phala*. Thus, it becomes a means of knowledge for us because we have no other means of knowing whether certain actions produce *puṇya* or *pāpa*. Our common sense may confirm what is right and wrong, but that is not the point here. Whenever the *śruti* says that something is not to be done, we understand that doing it is going to attract *pāpa*.

PRĀYAŚCITTA IS A KIND OF NAIMITTIKA-KARMA

Nobody does the *prāyaścitta-karma* unless there is a reason. In fact, a *prāyaścitta-karma* is a kind of a *naimittika-karma*. For example, it is said that if you chant the *Rudram* you can neutralize the result of stealing gold—*yaḥ śata-rudrīyam¹ adhīyet svarṇasteyāt pūto bhavati.*² The *prāyaścitta-karma* is enjoined keeping in view a cause, *nimitta*, of some *pāpa-karma*. Now the *karma* that is enjoined just for living becomes like a *prāyaścitta-karma*. What does a *prāyaścitta-karma* do? It neutralizes the result of a previous action. Similarly, the *nitya-karma* that is enjoined just for living, *jīvanādi-nimittaṃ vihitaṃ karma*, also must have a result, a *phala*. Because it is enjoined by the Veda, you cannot say that it has no result. Nor is it itself the result of a previous *karma* just as the *prāyaścitta-karma* is not the result of previous *karma*.³ Both are enjoined for a reason; they have a cause, *nimitta*. Therefore, they should have results. The *nitya-karmas* are enjoined because one is alive. Just to live one's life properly, the Veda says that these *karmas* are to be done. We cannot say that the *nitya-karma* itself is the product of previous *karmas* any more than we can say that a *prāyaścitta-karma* is the result of previous *karmas*.

ŚAṄKARA NOW MAKES ANOTHER POINT

AS THE PERFORMANCE OF KĀMYAKARMA IS NO DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF NITYAKARMA, THE PAIN OF KĀMYAKARMA WILL ALSO BECOME RESULT OF PĀPA

Śaṅkara now makes another point. Besides the *prāyaścitta-karma*, there are two other types of *karma*, as we saw, the *nitya-karma* and *kāmya-karma*. When either of these two *karmas* is performed, there is pain involved. *Agnihotra* is a *nitya-karma* enjoined by the Veda as a *nitya-karma* for all the three *varṇas*. Now the same *agnihotra* ritual can also be done as a *kāmya-karma*, for a particular result with a particular *saṅkalpa*, intention, by the one who is performing it. Now when he does it as a *nitya-karma* or as a *kāmya-karma*, either way, the pain in performing it is the same. When that is the case, how can you say that only the pain that is caused by the performance of the *nitya-karma* is the result of previous *pāpas* but the pain of the *kāmya-karma* is not? That should also be the result of previous *pāpa* because the pain experienced is the same. And if that is so, there will be no result for a *kāmya-karma* because it was used to exhaust old *pāpas*. Then there will be no such thing as *kāmya-*

¹ *Śatarudrīya*: This is a hymn found in the *Yajurveda* praising the *rudra-devatās*. It is also called popularly as *Rudram*. It gets the name because it is a hymn praising the *śata-rudras*. Here the word *śata* just has the meaning of ‘many,’ and not ‘hundred.’ *śataṃ rudrān adhikṛtya kṛtaṃ śata-rudrīyam* — *Vācaspatyam*

² *Kaivalyopaniṣad* – 2-5

³ *Śaṅkara* explains that the *prāyaścitta-karma* is not a *nitya-karma* but a *kāmya-karma*. He says that the *prāyaścitta-karma* is performed with a specific intention to neutralize the result of a specific *pāpa*. Therefore, it is a *kāmya-karma*. He also says that the *nitya-karma* is performed without any specific intention and is therefore a *nitya-karma*. He concludes that the *prāyaścitta-karma* is a *kāmya-karma* and not a *nitya-karma*.

karma. Since there is no difference between the two types of *karma* in terms of pain, *duḥkha*, experienced, the pain involved in performing a *kāmya-karma* should also be a result of the wrong actions done in previous lives.¹

The contention that the practice of *nitya-karma* does not produce *pāpa* or *puṇya*, but it produces pain, which is the result of previous *pāpa* causes another problem. Now suppose I do not do any *nitya-karma*. What will happen? There will be no pain. Therefore, you will say that the old *pāpas* are still waiting there. But when I perform the *nitya-karma*, the old *karma* gets exhausted by the very pain of performing the *nitya-karma*. Therefore, the experience of pain itself is the result of the *nitya-karma*. Having said that *nitya-karma* does not produce any result, and at the same time to say that it produces the result of pain is a contradiction.

Then there is a further problem. As we mentioned earlier, the *agnihotra* can also be done as a *kāmya-karma* if it is done for heaven, *svarga*, or any other particular result apart from being done as a *nitya-karma*. What is done in either case is the same thing, so the *duḥkha* involved is the same, whether doing the *agnihotra* takes you to heaven or does not produce anything. The method of doing it does not change and there are no other additions or subtractions. There is no difference between the *agnihotra* as a *nitya-karma* and the *agnihotra* as a *kāmya-karma*, except in the attitude of the one who is doing it. Since the *karma* is the same, how can you say that one will produce a result and the other will not? Even if you are not interested in it, doing a ritual enjoined by the Veda will produce *puṇya*. Since you are not interested in that *puṇya*, doing the ritual can give you *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, but at the same time, even though you are indifferent to it, *puṇya* will be getting accumulated in your name. It is like your father saving money for you. Even though you do not care for it, he goes on piling it up in your name. Just because we are not interested in certain things, it does not mean that they do not happen. *Karma* will produce a result, and there will be *puṇya* for a Vedic *karma*.

The point here is that there is no *mokṣa* by *karma*. This plan of doing *nitya-karma* and avoiding *kāmya* and *pratiśiddha-karma* so that when the *prārabdha-karma* gets exhausted you will naturally get *mokṣa*, will not work.

That is why *karma-yoga* is not merely doing a particular *karma*. It is a change of attitude. That makes the difference between *karma* as a *yoga* and *karma* done for the result. If the person doing the *karma* is a *mumukṣu*, a seeker who wants *mokṣa*, he is not interested in *dharma*, *artha*, or *kāma*, and the *karma* that he does is not meant to produce those results. Its purpose is to prepare his mind so that he can gain knowledge. Now in the performance of the *agnihotra* as a *nitya-karma*, there is a certain exertion involved. According to the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka*, that exertion is the result of previous

¹ *Īeōsē + xāēīā ēxēīāōāē Eāē āōāē sē + ēnīāēēēā + xēōōē + ēāōēēnōēōāē īēēāēī ēēnāēxēīāēēēōōē + ēāēōēēnōēēēāē ēōēōēēnōēēēē ; ōmāxē īēōēēē āēēēōōēē + ēēēēēnōēēēāēēē ē ēēēāēē xēēōēē <ēēē īēēēēē ēōēōēēēōēēē ; ōmāēēēōēēāēēē**

From that we understand that a particular *karma* that is enjoined or prohibited by the *śāstra* has an unseen result, *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*. There alone *śāstra* serves as a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*. *Śāstra* is not *pramāṇa* with reference to visible results, *dr̥ṣṭa-phala*, but to subtle, unseen results, *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*. When the *śāstra* says that one should not eat meat, *kalañjaṃ na bhakṣayet*, it is not on the grounds of health. Though it may confirm your common sense, your instinctive values, it has some other purpose. By prohibiting it, the *śāstra* tells us that doing such an action will produce an unseen undesirable result, *pāpa*, that will be experienced as an unpleasant situation at some time in the future. As a prohibited *karma* will produce an *adr̥ṣṭa-phala* called *pāpa*, an enjoined *karma* will produce *puṇya*. Because *puṇya* and *pāpa* are not immediately seen by you, they are called *adr̥ṣṭa*, but they are standing in your account. How do we know? Because the *śāstra* says so. There is no other means of knowledge for it. The result that is seen is not the concern or the domain of the *śāstra*. When this is so, if the pain that is involved in *kāmya-karma* as well as the *nitya-karma* is the only result of doing them, why should the *śāstra* enjoin us to do them?

The *śāstra* need not tell us how to get an immediate result, and why should it tell us to do something that is going to cause pain? In fact, doing a *karma* enjoined by the Veda helps us avoid pain. I do not know anything about an *agnihotra-karma* and when I look into the *śāstra*, I find that it tells me that I must do this daily. Why do I do it? Because I will get some result. And what is the result? Well, if it is pain, *duḥkha*, who will do it? How can the *śāstra* enjoin it? The *śāstra* does not have to say anything about a visible result. If it did, there would be no effort on the part of the *śāstra* to enjoin a *karma*, which is meant to produce an unseen result, like heaven, etc. If *karmas* produce only visible results, *dr̥ṣṭa-phala*, why should the *śāstra* engage itself in pointing out results like heaven that are unseen results, *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*? They will fructify in time, either in this life later or in another life. Therefore, the unseen result alone is in the vision of the *śāstra* when it enjoins a *karma*.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO IMAGINE THAT SAṅKALPA ALONE CHANGES THE RESULT—VEDĀNTĪ

If there is no difference in the nature of the *karma*, whether it is a *nitya-karma* or a *kāmya-karma* the result should be the same.¹ But the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* says that there is a special result for *kāmya-karma*, which is not there for *nitya-agnihotra*. If the *agnihotra* done as *kāmya-karma* implies additional rituals, etc., we can say that it has some other result because something more is added. But there is nothing else added to the *agnihotra*. Whether it is a *kāmya-agnihotra* or a *nitya-agnihotra*, the method of doing it, *itikartavyatā*, does not change. That being so, the special result of heaven for the *kāmya-karma* can only be due to it being the result that is desired by the one

¹ (ब्रह्मिणोऽपि यथा कर्म कुरुते तथैव फलं प्राप्नुयति) + एतन्मतेन न कर्म कुरुते तथैव फलं प्राप्नुयति = (ब्रह्मिणोऽपि यथा कर्म कुरुते तथैव फलं प्राप्नुयति) + एतन्मतेन न कर्म कुरुते तथैव फलं प्राप्नुयति + फलं प्राप्नुयति + एतन्मतेन न कर्म कुरुते तथैव फलं प्राप्नुयति < एतन्मतेन न कर्म कुरुते तथैव फलं प्राप्नुयति > भा० ११ ।

the conclusion, ‘I am the doer, *kartā*.’ A *karma* that is done with this notion is born only of *avidya*—whether it is an auspicious, *śubha*, *karma*, one that brings *puṇya*, or an inauspicious one, *aśubha*, that brings *pāpa*, both are based in ignorance, and therefore, the cause for their exhaustion is knowledge alone.

The *kartā* has been gathering a lot of *karma* in his various accounts due to ignorance. One account is a term deposit, called *sañcita-karma*. The second is a current account, the *karmas* he is currently gathering, the *āgāmi-karmas*. Of course, there is the *prārabdha-karma*, which is the third. All these are standing in the account of the *kartā* as long as the *kartā* is there. How are you going to exhaust them? By doing *nitya-karma* or anything else, you are only adding to them. Or, perhaps, if you are doing them with the proper attitude, as a *yoga* for gaining the right type of mind, as a result of those *karmas* you will gain the right mind and you will come to appreciate the fact, ‘I am not the doer, I am *akartā*.’ Then, whatever *karma* has accumulated in your account, old or new, is destroyed by knowledge.

Knowledge, *vidyā*, is the cause for their exhaustion in one stroke. Why one stroke? You knock off the kingpin, and when you do that, all that is resting on that falls apart. It is like the dreamer waking up. All the *karmas* done by that dreamer, good and bad, are cancelled. He cannot demand that someone that he loaned money to in the dream has to pay him back. If a person is accused like that, he can only say, ‘If you meet me in your dream tonight, I will pay you then.’ This is a meaningless thing. Once a person wakes up to the reality of the *ātmā* being *akartā*, there is no longer any *karma* standing in his account. This is what we call *mokṣa*. The *avidyā* is the kingpin. To knock that off, you have to bring in knowledge, *vidyā*.

TOTAL SURRENDER IS THE SURRENDER OF EGO

While some good *karmas* can neutralize some bad *karmas*, in order to eliminate *karmas* entirely, *aśeṣataḥ*, you have to eliminate the notion of being a *kartā*, the kingpin. The notion, ‘I am the doer’ will not eliminate itself. People will say, ‘Surrender the ego. In *kali-yuga*, surrender is the easiest.’ In fact, it is just the opposite. In any *yuga* surrender is the most difficult. Why? Surrender itself is a very interesting thing. To whom should I surrender? If someone says, for example, that I should surrender to the king, this is an arrangement. I surrender to him, and he gives me protection. It is the same with *Bhagavān*. What is that surrender? It is a contract; it is not surrender. I will do *namaskāra* to you and you give me this much. This is not an act of surrender. It is just another type of contract. Surrender is not that easy. Who is to surrender? Mr. Ego. What does he have to surrender? Only himself. He cannot surrender anything else because it all belongs to *Bhagavān*. His body belongs to *Bhagavān* because it is part of the creation.

That is why it is illegal to commit suicide. The father has a claim over his son's body, the mother has a claim, the state has a claim, all the bugs have a claim. They are all inside, saying, 'This is our house.' What claim do you have? Nothing belongs to you, and therefore, because you have nothing to surrender, you cannot surrender anything. All you have is your notion about yourself, your *ahaṅkāra*; that is the only thing you can surrender. How are you going to do that? The *ahaṅkāra* is the one who goes about surrendering everything else. How can he surrender himself? In order to surrender the I-notion, *ahaṅkāra*, there must be another 'I-*aham*.' All I have is the *ahaṅkāra*. If it is a 'this-*idam*,' I can surrender; I can remove the *ahaṅkāra* and give it to you. Who is to remove it? That is me. Therefore, I cannot surrender anything to anybody.

That is why we keep on surrendering daily, 'My body, my wealth, everything belongs to you, O! Lord—*tan man dhan sab kuch hai terā*. Yesterday he said the same thing. Yesterday he gave away everything and today also, he does the same! How can he give the same thing repeatedly? Suppose you want to borrow some money, say \$10,000, because your small business is in some trouble. Your friend gives you \$10,000, as cash in an envelope. You are so very happy. And as you are happily going away, if he said to you, 'Please leave that envelope behind.' 'Why?' you ask. He tells you, 'I will give it to you tomorrow.' You thought, 'Okay, when I am getting \$10,000, I can come tomorrow; it is no problem.' So, you return the money and go again tomorrow and the same thing happens. Then you ask in exasperation, 'Why do you keep doing this?' and he tells you, 'Because I have decided to give you \$10,000 daily!' How would you feel? This is adding insult to injury!

HOW DOES ONE SURRENDER THE EGO?

You cannot give the same thing again and again. But we are doing this every day to *Bhagavān*. Because he is *Bhagavān*, we can get away doing this! After this also he is allowing us to be alive here! I am not asking you to stop doing it, because that prayer has a result, which can be very helpful. But it is not surrender. There is only one surrender, and that is the dismissal of the *ahaṅkāra*. It can be dismissed in only one way, by inquiry. It cannot stand inquiry, *vicāraṃ na sahate*, because it is false. Therefore, the only way the *kartā* can go is by inquiring into the nature of it.

There again, there is a problem. How can I inquire into the *ahaṅkāra*? If I go on asking the question, 'Who am I? Who am I? Who am I?' What answer will I get? The answer depends on my conclusion about myself, because I am asking myself. If I think, I am an idiot, that is what the answer is going to be. By asking the question, 'Who am I?' repeatedly, how am I going to get an answer that is anything more than what I already know about myself? If I can know something more about myself, it is only about my psychology. That is all I can know. And that does not solve the problem. It does help, but it does not solve the problem completely.

ātmā as the one who is killed, *yaścainaṃ manyate hatam*, that is, as the enjoyer—do not know the *ātmā*. He starts with the most important fact. The *ātmā* is not a doer or an enjoyer. Why does *Kṛṣṇa* choose the action of killing to illustrate this? By the analogy of *prathama-malla-nyāya*, ‘defeating the champion boxer,’ all other actions are automatically covered. For example, if you want to become a heavyweight champion in boxing, what should you do? Should you box with the entire humanity? No. You only need to defeat the existing heavyweight champion.

Similarly, here, there are many activities, but the worst one, the one that invokes the most hurt and guilt, is killing someone. Therefore, the verse says that both—the one who looks upon oneself as one who has destroyed somebody, and the one who looks upon oneself as being destroyed—do not know the *ātmā*. Why? Because, the *ātmā* does not destroy, *na hanti*, meaning it does not perform any action; nor does it get destroyed, *na hanyate*, that is, nor does it become an object of anybody’s action. Therefore, *ātmā* is neither the subject of action nor the object of action. Only if there is anything else can it be the subject or object, but there is nothing at all other than *ātmā*—*ātmanah anyat kimapi nāsti*. The object is the *ātmā*, the subject is also the *ātmā*. Therefore, the subject-object distinction is purely *mithyā*. What does all this say? That the *ātmā* is not an agent, and therefore, there is no *karma* here. That is knowledge, *jñāna*.

To support this further, *Śaṅkara* quotes, ‘*vedāvināśinaṃ nityam*,’ quoting from the following verse: ‘*vedāvināśinaṃ nityaṃ ya enam aḥam avyayam, katham sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṃ ghātayati hanti kaṃ*—the one who knows that which is not subject to time, and therefore, not subject to destruction, the one who knows that *ātmā* as himself, how does such a person destroy or cause destruction, whom does he destroy?’¹ There are two types of action—you do it yourself or you make others do it. Either way, you are the prime agent. The *ātmā* does neither of these types of action. In its *sannidhi*, in its presence, activities take place. Therefore, *ātmā* is *akartā*, not a doer.

Then again, *Śaṅkara* quotes, ‘*jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānāṃ karmayogena yoginām*—there is the pursuit of knowledge for the renunciate, and the pursuit of *karma* for the *karma-yogī*.’² This is the verse in the third chapter in response to *Arjuna*’s confusion about whether he should follow *karma* or renounce everything for *mokṣa*. He says to *Kṛṣṇa*, in effect, ‘You praise *jñāna* and you also praise *karma*; I am confused; which will give me *mokṣa*? Why do you confuse me like this? Why don’t you say, “This is right; do it?”’

Lord *Kṛṣṇa* answers that there is a twofold committed lifestyle for *mokṣa* given by him before, ‘*loke’smīn dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayā anagha jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānāṃ karmayogena yoginām*.’ One is purely the pursuit of knowledge and the

¹ *Gītā* – 2-21

² *Gītā* – 3-3

other is the pursuit of knowledge with a life of *karma-yoga*. Even though there are these two lifestyles, Śaṅkara almost considers a *karma-sannyāsi* to be a *jñānī* because he has given up *karma* for the sake of knowledge and that knowledge will make him a *sarva-karma-sannyāsi* in time. Then Śaṅkara quotes, ‘For those ignorant ones who are attached to *karma*—*ajñānāṃ karma-saṅginām*.’¹ The rest of the verse says, ‘Do not disturb their minds—*na buddhi-bhedaṃ janayet*.’ They are doing some good *karma*; do not go and tell them that *karma* will not give them *mokṣa*. Do not disturb the attitude of such a person, because he will give up the *karma*. Even though *karma* does not directly produce *mokṣa*, if a person is committed to *karma*, it is the only thing he can do to accomplish a certain frame of mind that will allow him to gain this knowledge. If you criticise *karma* to those who do not have discrimination, they will give up *karma* and will neither have the benefit of *karma*, nor will they have knowledge. On the other hand, the one who knows the truth of this *karma*, *tattvavit*, knows, ‘I do not perform any action at all—*naiva kiñcit karomi iti manyeta*,’² whether seeing, hearing, talking, or doing anything else. It is the sense organs that move about among the sense objects—*indriyāṇi indriyārtheṣu vartante*.³

The one who is a *tattvavit*, who knows that *ātmā* does not perform any action, recognizing that only the *guṇas* in the form of the senses, mind, etc., move about among the *guṇas*, is not bound to *karma* or its results—*tattvavit tu guṇā guṇeṣu vartante iti matvā na sajjate*.⁴

Further, we saw in the 5th chapter, ‘Mentally renouncing all *karmas*, the one who has self-mastery, who indwells the body, remains seated happily in the nine-gated city, neither doing nor causing any action to be done—*sarva-karmāṇi manasā sannyasya āste sukhaṃ vaśī navadvāre pure dehī naiva kurvan na kārayan*.’⁵ It is said, that all *karmas* are given up. We understand by the word *sarva* that it is not one *karma* that is given up, but all. This is not possible unless one has knowledge, and therefore, the renunciation is not physical, but through the mind, *manasā*. Renouncing all *karmas* by knowing that the self is action less, one remains happily seated in the body. He is always free from the weariness of *karma* and the disappointment, etc., of *karma-phala*. Where? In this body itself, not after death. While the person is alive in this physical body, he is liberated. Neither doing any action nor causing anyone else to act, *naiva kurvan na kārayan*, he remains always free from action, *akartā*.

The one who knows the truth of *ātmā* looks upon oneself as a person who does not perform any action at all. The one who knows the truth would think, ‘I do not

¹ *Gītā* – 3-26

² *Gītā* – 5-8

³ *Gītā* – 5-9

⁴ *Gītā* – 3-28

⁵ *Gītā* – 5-13

perform any action at all—*naiva kiñcit karomi iti yukto manyeta tattvavit.*' He does not consider that he does even a small bit, *kiñcit*, of an action, like thinking, for instance. He knows this while thinking, not later. That is why the present continuous is used—while seeing—*paśyan*, hearing—*śṛṇvan*, touching—*spṛśan*, smelling—*jighran*, he knows that doing all these he performs no action. Then, Śaṅkara says that by implication we understand that the one who does not know the truth of *ātmā* thinks that he does perform action. Seeing he becomes a seer; hearing he becomes a hearer; whatever he does he becomes the agent of that action. Therefore, he looks upon himself as an action-conditioned person.

Further, it was said in the 6th chapter, that for the one who wants to gain this knowledge of the self, the *mumukṣu*, *karma* becomes the means—*āruruṅṣoḥ muneh yogaṃ karma kāraṇam ucyate*. For the one who is an accomplished *karma-yogī*, or has gained the knowledge, renunciation of all activity, either relatively or absolutely, becomes the means for *mokṣa*—*yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate*.¹ Then Śaṅkara recalls the 7th chapter where it is said that there are four types of devotees. One is the devotee in distress, *ārta*, who implores the Lord to protect him when he is in trouble. This in itself is good because he thinks of the Lord at least when he is in trouble. Another one, the *arthārthī*, prays not only when in distress, but also when he begins any undertaking. In order to get the results he wants, he first thinks about the Lord and then starts his work. This one is better because he appreciates *Īśvara* a little more than the first one. He is interested in various pursuits and worships the Lord in the form of various deities and then starts his undertaking.

Then, the third one is a *jijñāsu*, the one who wants to know *Īśvara*. He is better than the other two because he worships *Īśvara* not for any other end but for knowing *Īśvara*. He is a *karma-yogī* or a *sannyāsī*. Whether you pursue only knowledge of *Īśvara* or pursue knowledge along with *karma*, you are a *bhakta*. All the words that are studied, the words of the Veda, are *Bhagavān's* words, and therefore, the *jijñāsu* looks upon the Veda as a *pramāṇa*. This is *śraddhā* in the Veda, which is *śraddhā* in *Bhagavān* alone. Therefore, in the form of the words of *Bhagavān*, the one who wants to know, *jijñāsu*, invokes *Bhagavān*. In time, he comes to know what the *śāstra* says and is called a *jñānī*. All of the first three devotees are good, *trayaḥ api udārāḥ*, because they are devotees, but they are ignorant. The *jñānī*, on the other hand, *Kṛṣṇa* says, is Myself—*jñānī tu atmaiva me matam*.

All of them worship *Īśvara*, seek *Īśvara*. The first two are seeking *Īśvara's* help for accomplishing their own ends. The *jijñāsu* is seeking *Īśvara's* help in order to understand *Īśvara*. He knows the problem, and therefore, is seeking *Īśvara* directly. He is not invoking the grace of *Īśvara* to get one more thing, but is invoking *Īśvara* for the knowledge of *Īśvara*. He also is a devotee, but still, he is different from *Īśvara*, because

¹ *Gītā* – 6-3

he has yet to understand that *Īśvara* is himself. The *jñānī*, however, is non-separate from *Īśvara*.

Then *Śaṅkara* reminds us in the 9th chapter, of those who use the three Vedas, *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda*, while performing rituals, take the *soma* as the *prasāda* of the ritual and having been purified of all wrong-doing become *pūtapāpas*; and, worshipping by means of the ritual, they pray for heaven—*traividyā māṃ somapā pūtapāpā yajñairiṣṭvā svargatiṃ prārthayante; evaṃ trayīdharmam anupapannāḥ gatāgataṃ kāmakāmā labhante*.¹ Then what happens? Naturally, their prayers are answered and after death, they go to the world, born of *puṇya*, where *Indra* lives; and in that heaven, they enjoy celestial happiness—Then afterwards, having enjoyed the heavenly abode, when the *puṇya* that took them there and kept them there gets exhausted, they enter again into the world of mortals, *kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokaṃ viśanti*. This world, or anything equivalent to it where there is disease, decrepitude, old age, etc., is called *martya-loka*. These ignorant people, *ajñānīs*, who wish for desired objects, *kāmakāmīs*, only come back from where they have gone, *gatāgataṃ labhante*. Even though they are following the *karma* enjoined by the three Vedas, what do they gain at the end? Having gone to some desirable place, they again come back. What is the net result? They remain in *saṃsāra*.

Whereas, look at these others who contemplate upon *Īśvara* as no longer separate from themselves, *ananyāścintayanto mām*. For those who are always one with *Īśvara*, the Lord has said, ‘I take care of all their *yoga* and *kṣema*—*teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānāṃ yogakṣemaṃ vahāmi aham*.’² This being taken care of by *Īśvara* is relative for the *karma-yogīs*, because they have *prasāda-buddhi*, and absolute for the *jñānīs* because they are complete, *pūrṇa*. These people are *nitya-yuktas*, constantly inquiring into or are one with the *ātmā* as it has been explained in this chapter as equivalent to space, *ākāśakalpa*, pure and limitless, free from all *puṇya* and *pāpa*, *akalmaṣa*. Further, he says, ‘those who contemplate upon Me, who are seeking me with great love, I give that knowledge whereby they gain me—*dadāmi buddhi-yogaṃ taṃ yena mām upayānti te*.’³ That is the whole idea here. They do not go to heaven or any other place; they become one with *Īśvara*. From this it is understood that the others, the ignorant ones who are committed to fulfilling desires, do not gain *Īśvara*. By knowledge people gain *Īśvara*, and not by *karma*. by *karma*, they only go to different worlds of experience.

What about those who are doing only *karma* that is enjoined by the Veda, and therefore, enjoined by *Bhagavān*? The attitude with which this *karma* is done is of two types. One is that of devotees who are ready to do anything that is enjoined, just because it is enjoined. They do this *karma* for no other reason than that it is enjoined by

¹ *Gītā* – 9-20, 21

² *Gītā* – 9-22

³ *Gītā* – 10-10

Bhagavān. Nothing is more sacred to them. These are like the people we see in India removing the weeds, grass, etc., from the temple yard, sweeping the floor, bringing flowers for *mālās*, and doing varieties of other things in the temple. Then, there are those who do the enjoined *karma* in order to please *Īśvara*, *bhagavad-ārādhanaṁ* *aham idaṁ kariṣye*. Either you do the *karma* with the attitude that it is enjoined by *Bhagavān*, and therefore, it is to be done, or you do the *karma* for the sake of *Bhagavān*. Both attitudes make the *karma bhagavat-karma*. Those who do *karma* with these attitudes are *karma-yogīs*. Even though they are the most steadfast in their *karma-yoga* attitude, they are still *karmīs*.

How can you say so when all they are doing is religious prayer, ritual, etc., that is enjoined by the Veda? It is because they are ignorant, and therefore, look upon the *ātmā* as a doer, *kartā*. In the third chapter we saw that the person who is ignorant, *ajñānī*, looks upon himself as a doer—*kartāham iti manyate*. Even though the sense organs move about among their respective sense objects, the one who is deluded, looks upon the *ātmā* as an agent. Still, he has a number of means, *sādhanas*, to help himself, the last of which is giving up the results of actions. In the 12th chapter it was said that if you cannot pursue that which is not available for words *anirdeśya*, that which does not decline, *akṣara*, etc., and cannot resolve your mind steadily in *Bhagavān*, you can still gain *Bhagavān* by *abhyaśa*, the practice of contemplation. If you are not able to do even that then you can gain success by doing *karma* for the sake of *Bhagavān*. And if you are not able to do even that, then you can at least give up the results of actions, *karma-phala-tyāga*.¹ Why is this the last? It is only from the standpoint of the other things that were said. If none of them is possible, this, at least, can be done. Even though this too is a *karma* that connects him to *Bhagavān*, still, he is ignorant, and therefore, a *karmī*.

In the 12th chapter from verse 13, which says, ‘The one who is free from aversion to any living being—*adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām*,’ up to the end of the chapter, a number of qualities are mentioned which are the natural expressions of a wise person. These are to be cultivated by the one who wants to be wise. They are, friendliness—*maitrī*, compassion—*karuṇā*, absence of ownership—*nirmamatva*, freedom from egotism—*nirahaṅkāratva*. These are natural characteristics only of one who knows the nature of the *ātmā*. This is because, he alone is free from likes and dislikes.

Unless one is beyond *rāga-dveṣas*, one cannot be totally free from aversion to any living being. These qualities, and others that are discussed up to the end of the 12th chapter are the means to be followed by those who are seeking knowledge of the reality, *vastu*. These people are entirely different from the people who are performing *karma* as a *yoga*. Then again, in the 13th chapter the means for knowledge, *jñāna-sādhana*, was given, and there, no mention of any specific *karma*, like *agnihotra*, was made. The means that were enumerated there were, absence of pride—*amānitva*, absence of

¹ *Gītā* – 12-9 to 12-11

pretentiousness—*adambhitva*, absence of intent to harm—*ahiṃsā*, accommodation—*kṣānti*, straightforwardness—*ārjava*, reverence for the teacher—*ācāryopāsana*, purity—*śauca*, being focused—*sthairya*,¹ mastery over oneself—*ātma-vinigraha*, dispassion with regard to sense objects—*indriyārtheṣu vairāgya*, absence of egotism—*anahankāra*, and repeatedly and clearly seeing the inherent defect of pain in birth, death, old age, disease—*janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣa-anudarśana*, etc.²

In the 14th chapter it was said, ‘He does not hate anything undesirable that comes, much less does he long for anything desirable that has gone away. He remains seated like someone who is indifferent, undisturbed by the *guṇas*—*na dveṣṭi sampravṛttāni na nivr̥ttāni kāṅkṣati udāsīnavad āsīno guṇair yo na vicālyate*.³’ Note that he is like an indifferent person. He is not indifferent, but different—he is free from the dependence upon conducive and non-conducive situations to be happy. He is not disturbed at all by various internal and external situations.

Then further, in the 15th chapter, it was said, ‘Those who do not have the delusion of being an agent, who have conquered the various concerns with reference to attachment, affection, etc., who are totally committed to seeing the nature of the self, who are completely free from desires for heaven, etc., who are completely above the pairs of opposites like *sukha* and *duḥkha*, such people, who are never deluded, go to that end from which there is no return—*nirmānamohā jitasaiṅgadoṣā adhyātmanityā vinivr̥ttakāmā dvandvairvimuktā sukha-duḥkha-saṃjñaiḥ gacchanti amūḍhā padam avyayaṃ tat*.⁴’ Thus in these three chapters beginning with the 13th chapter, the various means for gaining knowledge were given.

However, these become means only for the seeker and not for a *jñānī*. The three types of results of action—desirable, undesirable, or a mixture—are not there for those who have renounced all actions. Action, as we saw in the beginning of this chapter, has five causal factors—the physical body, the sense organs, the notion of agency, instruments of action, and the presiding deities of all these.⁵ All these are necessary for performing *karma* and all *karmas* have been given up by these people—the *jñānīs*. How did they give up all these *karmas*? You cannot give up your body and sense organs, etc., when you are alive. That being so how can one give up *karma*? *Śaṅkara* says that, they have the knowledge of the non-dual nature of *ātmā*, and therefore, they know that they are not the agent of any action. *Karma* requires these five factors, but *ātmā* is one and everything else, including all these five, is *mithyā*. Therefore, one plus

¹ This can also mean *sva-karma-niṣṭhā* commitment to what is to be done, i.e., commitment to one’s duty.

² *Gītā* – 13-7 to 13-11

³ *Gītā* – 14-22, 23

⁴ *Gītā* – 15-5

⁵ *Gītā* – 18-14

five is still one. The one who understands that is freed completely from all things connected with action, *kāraṅkas*. If he is free from all *kāraṅkas*, he is neither an agent, *kartā*, nor an object, *karma*, of any action. The results of action are not for those who have this knowledge of the non-dual self, which is absolutely free from action.

The result of an action can be desirable, undesirable, or a mixture of the two. None of them will be there for these people who abide in this knowledge, who, in other words, know the truth of *Bhagavān*. These are the real *sannyāsīs*. In gaining the knowledge of the nature of *Bhagavān* they have completely resolved, or taken refuge in the oneness of the *ātmā*, which is identical with the nature of *Bhagavān*. The threefold result of *karma* is not for them. It is for everybody else.

Whether he is a person who follows the Veda, a *vaidika*, or is purely secular, *laukika*, whether he is a believer, *āstika*, or non-believer, *nāstika*, religious or non-religious, whether he is a *paṇḍita* or an illiterate, he is subject to these results of actions. Those who are doing good actions will reap desirable results, no doubt, but they are still subject to the results of actions. While those who know the nature of the self are not subject to the results of actions, all others, being ignorant of this fact, and therefore, taking themselves to be agents of action, are subject to the results of those actions. They are given to *karma* because they have not yet come to understand the *ātmā*. Since they have not given up *karma* by knowledge, they are subject to the result of *karma*. Thus, we have this division. For those who know the nature of *ātmā*, the *jñānīs*, there is no result of action, *karma-phala*, unlike for those who do not know, the *ajñānīs*.

Since they have *karma-phala*, they have got to act in order to get the results they desire. Those who know, however, need not do anything. Thus, we have this division of action being necessary, *kartavya*, for the ignorant, and not necessary, *akartavya*, for the wise person spoken of in the *Gītā*. Because he is free from all actions, the Veda does not enjoin any *karma* for the one who knows the nature of the self, *jñānī*. The Veda does enjoin *karma* for the *ajñānī*, however, in order to help him gain purity of mind, *antaḥ-karaṅga-śuddhi*, or any other result, *kāmya-karma*, that he may want. He already thinks he is an agent, and the Veda goes along with him, enjoining him to do *nitya-naimittika-karma* to get rid of *pāpa* and gain *antaḥ-karaṅga-śuddhi*, so that he can gain knowledge. Thus, the Veda gives us a clean plan to live a meaningful life, one that is useful for gaining *mokṣa*.

In the vision of the Veda what is meaningful is to gain *mokṣa*. Just imagine a life without any exposure to this *ātma-jñāna*. How did you live before this? I also try to imagine how I was living without any exposure to this knowledge. It is foolish, absolutely foolish, to live a life without any exposure to this teaching. Such a life has no meaning whatsoever, because one does not know what one is doing. It is a total surrender to some kind of a general idiotic pursuit. Until you begin searching you cannot say that anything is useful. When you look back at all these pursuits, it all looks so silly.

prohibited actions are done by those who have ignorance, so too, these *karmas* are done only by the one who has ignorance of the nature of the self. When the *śāstra* gives not only its prohibitions, but also its injunctions, it is keeping in view only the person who is ignorant of himself.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DO NITYAKARMA WITHOUT KNOWING THE ĀTMĀ AS DISTINCT FROM THE BODY—PŪRVAPAKṢĪ'S OBJECTION

Now this person raises another argument based on his understanding of ignorance, *avidyā*. It is impossible, he argues, for a person to do *nitya-naimittika-karma*, like *agnihotra*, etc., without knowing that the self is distinct from the body.¹ Why? When you perform an enjoined *karma*, it produces *puṇya*, whereas doing a prohibited *karma* produces *pāpa*. Are they visible? No. They are credited to the account of the individual, *jīva*, who does the *karma*, to be encashed by him later. Therefore, the one who does such *karma* must necessarily have the knowledge that there is an *ātmā* who survives the body who is going to reap the unseen results of the actions done here. Unless he has that knowledge, how can he perform such a *karma*? You cannot perform the *śrāddha-karma* for the departed soul, for example, unless you accept a soul that has departed. Nor can you perform *karmas* for entry to heaven, because you know that this body is left behind here. Who is going to enter heaven? If you take the body as the *ātmā*, you cannot do a *karma* whose result is going to accrue to the one who survives the death of the body. Nobody performs *karma* enjoined by the Veda without knowing that there is an *ātmā* other than the body. That means he has no ignorance, *avidyā*, but rather, he has knowledge, *vidyā*. How can you say that all *karma* is preceded by ignorance? This is an argument raised by the opponent.

MERELY KNOWING THE ĀTMĀ AS DISTINCT FROM BODY IS NOT TOTAL KNOWLEDGE—VEDĀNTĪ'S ANSWER

This argument is not valid, because, the knowledge of *ātmā*, spoken of here is not complete. The knowledge that the self is distinct from the body comes under religion, and it is common to all religions, including Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. In fact, it is not so much a knowledge as it is a belief. For *Vedānta*, this is only a part of the method of teaching, *prakriyā*; it is not what it wants to convey, *tātparyā*. I am not teaching *Vedānta* to tell you that you will be reborn. You were never born. Where is the possibility of being reborn? That you think you were born is your problem. So in the vision of *Vedānta*, we are not committed to rebirth, but it has to be part of the *prakriyā* when we are considering the model of *karma*. We have varieties of *prakriyās*. The model of *karma* along with the concept of rebirth is one of them. But we have no commitment there at all.

¹ ननु अविद्याविना न कर्म + विद्यायां कर्म एव अस्ति नो विद्या + अविद्यायां कर्म एव अस्ति नो विद्या भा० ॥

How do you know that you survive death? You can only say that the *śāstra* says so. You cannot know it for certain until after death. And no one can return from death to verify this fact for us. Everyone is born totally ignorant of what preceded the birth of that body. It will be always the same, and therefore, will remain always a mystery. It can be called a belief. We consider it knowledge, because it is revealed by the *śāstra*, but it is knowledge that will always be mediate, *nitya-parokṣa-jñāna*. That knowledge, however, is not what we call knowledge of *ātmā*. Even the person who knows that the self survives death thinks, ‘I perform this action,’ and by that he means, ‘I am an isolated individual who is the agent, *kartā*, and the enjoyer, *bhoktā*, of the results of action.’ As long as he looks at himself purely as a *kartā* and *bhoktā*, his knowledge is not complete. That knowledge, and the knowledge of means and ends, *sādhana-sādhyā*, is not real knowledge. It is ignorance, because it is opposed to the truth about the nature of the self, that the self is neither an agent nor an enjoyer. This is why we say that *karma* is preceded by *avidyā*.

ANY KARMA IS DUE TO IGNORANCE ALONE—VEDĀNTĪ

Śaṅkara negates the *pūrvapakṣī* and defines ignorance here, and in the process, defines *karma* as that which is in the form of activity, *calanātmaka*. He says that any action, which is *calanātmaka* is *anātmakartṛka*, that is, it is *na ātmakartṛka*, not done by *ātmā*. That is, it is done by one who has this notion that ‘I am doing this action.’¹ Whatever be the *karma*—whether it is enjoined by the Veda, *śrauta-karma*, or enjoined by *smṛti*, *smārta-karma*, or it is done as an atonement, *prāyaścitta-karma*, or it is a prohibition, *pratiśiddha-karma*, or it is in the form of a mandate, *nitya-naimittika-karma*, or it is in the form of an option to fulfil a desire, *kāmya-karma*, or it is purely a secular action, *laukika-karma*, or is done physically, *kāyika-karma*, orally, *vācika-karma*, or purely mentally, *mānasa-karma*—it implies some kind of motion. There is movement, change, even in breathing, opening and closing the eyelids, and hearing, etc.

Any mental activity is also motion. There is movement from one thought to another; one object is there, then that is gone and another appears. On the part of the doer also, there is constant change. Now he is a seer, now a hearer, now a thinker. There is no *karma* without change, and therefore, motion. Now a *karma*, which is subject to change is performed by whom? By *anātmā* alone. Is the body *ātmā* or *anātmā*? Even according to this person who is arguing, the body is *anātmā*. Even though it is the body, which is doing the action, and this fellow knows very well that the self is other than the body, what does he say? ‘I do—*ahaṃ karomi*.’ He does not say, ‘My hand is offering the oblation,’ or ‘My body is bathed,’ but rather, ‘I offer the oblation, I bathed.’ He does not say that his tongue repeats the *mantras*, nor does he expect the tongue to get some

¹ * SE... + ... + ... <... >... ॥

results. Who is the *karma-phala-bhoktā*? It is the person who thinks that he is going to get the results.

Even though the action is done by the body, the body does not think that it is the agent or that it is going to be the one who experiences the results, whereas the person says, 'I do the action. I will enjoy the results.' There is the ignorance, *avidyā*. Even though I have a belief that the self is other than the body, I can never avoid identification with the physical body, etc., because this is a belief only about the situation after death. The appreciation of the *ātmā* should be total, otherwise it can only be a simple belief. The notion that I am the body, or that I am the agent, *kartā*, will be there, because the subtle body, *sūkṣma-śarīra*, is identified with the body.

Naturally, whatever happens there happens only to me. That notion of agency will not go away simply by a belief that the self is other than the body. The self is not subject to any movement, *acala*, and therefore, where is the agency, *kartṛtva*. Not even the *śāstra* can address this *ātmā*. The *śāstra* can address only an agent of action. Keeping that in view it says, 'Do this.' Can it address *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*? No. It says that you are *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* who does not perform any action and is free from *saṃsāra*, and when it enjoins an action, it is only from the standpoint of the mind which is superimposed upon *ātmā* and has *ātmā* superimposed upon it. Because of this mutual superimposition, there is a sense of agency, *kartṛtva-buddhi*. This is a false notion, and therefore, every action is preceded by ignorance.

THE EXPRESSION 'I DO' IS ONLY GAUṆA, A FIGURATIVE EXPRESSION—PŪRVAPAKṢĪ'S OBJECTION

When *Śaṅkara* says this, the *pūrvapakṣī* argues back by saying that when any one says, 'I do,' it is only a figure of speech.¹ It is like saying, 'I did 60 miles an hour.' I know I did not do 60 miles an hour; my car did it. Similarly, when I say 'I do,' it is only figurative. I know I am distinct from the body, and that it is the body that acts, but still I say, 'I do.' The I-cognition in the body-mind-sense-complex is only figurative, *gauṇa*; it is not false, *mithyā*. When somebody says, 'I am fat, etc.,' he knows very well that he is not this body, etc., but at the same time he uses these expressions, not in their primary sense, but only in a secondary sense. It is not an erroneous notion, *mithyā-pratyaya*, like mistaking a rope as a snake. When I say, 'I do—*ahaṃ karomi*,' it can be an error; the body can be taken as *ātmā* and *ātmā* can be taken as the body. That is an erroneous notion. But here it is not error; it is only figurative. This is the argument of the *pūrvapakṣī*.

¹ ननु शरीरं कर्तृत्वं प्राप्नुयति + अहं कर्तृत्वं मे भवति चे ईदृशं च ११० भा० ॥

accomplished by what it is 'figuratively' said to be. For instance, even though the father says that the son is himself, when the son eats, it is not equal to his eating. But here, even though the *karma* is done by the body-mind-sense-complex, the notion, 'I am the agent' is very much there. If it is not, how can he ever perform a *karma*, like the *agnihotra*? Since he is doing it, definitely there is a sense of agency, *kartr̥va-buddhi*, imputed to the self. Anything done by the body is done by the self. But that is not the case with reference to something that is the object of a *gauṇa* expression. The action that the son does is not done by the father. Whereas here, the body does the action, but the notion is, 'I do the action.' This is not *gauṇa*; it is false, *mithyā*.

Śaṅkara explains further. There are two types of comparative expressions. If you say a person's courage is like that of a lion, it is a *vyakta-upamā*, or a simile. The courage of the lion and the courage of this person are identical. There is also a form of comparison which is not adequately stated, an elliptical comparison, *lupta-upamā*, or metaphor. *Śaṅkara* gives a couple of examples of this type of comparison. If you say that *Devadatta* is a lion, for instance, all the qualities of the lion do not concur with those of *Devadatta*. The lion has four legs, *Devadatta* has only two; the lion has a mane, *Devadatta* does not, and so on. But at the same time you say that *Devadatta* is a lion. What does it mean? In one aspect of the lion there is a certain identity with *Devadatta* and only that identity is pointed out by this word, 'lion.' He has the fierceness of the lion, or the courage of the lion. This is a *gauṇa* expression. Even though there is a point of similarity, what the lion does, *Devadatta* cannot do at all. The lion can kill an elephant or a tiger, without a rifle. Will *Devadatta* be able to do that? No. So too, in the expression, 'The student is fire,' the similarity is only in terms of his brilliance or skin colour, *Śaṅkara* says. He cannot do what fire can do. In other words, you cannot boil a kettle of water on his head. The object of the *gauṇa* expression cannot do exactly what the thing to which it is compared can do.

On the other hand, when you say, 'I do,' you mean it. The *ātmā* is taken to be the agent. If you do not accept that, what you are saying is what *Vedānta* says. If you know that in spite of the body and mind doing various things you are not doing anything, you understand that *ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda*. Only then can you say that *ātmā* is *akartā*. If that is so, we have nothing further to discuss. But if whatever the body does, *ātmā* does, and whatever is *ātmā*, that is the lot of the body, it is a *mithyā* statement, and not *gauṇa*. A *gauṇa* expression, either as an expression of elliptical comparison, or metaphor, is only meant to praise or reveal a quality of the thing being compared. It is not meant to be used to reveal a thing directly.¹ What is accomplished by a lion can never be accomplished by *Devadatta*, nor can what is accomplished by fire be accomplished by the student.² That is *gauṇa*. On the other hand, one does experience the

¹ खे मूढोऽपि स्यात् एवमेव हि तदात्मनो देहेतुः स्यात् कर्तृत्वमपि तदात्मनो देहेतुः स्यात् भा० ॥

² अतिरिक्तं यथा नृशोकं, + एतन्मनुष्येण हि तदात्मनो देहेतुः स्यात् कर्तृत्वमपि तदात्मनो देहेतुः स्यात् भा० ॥

ŚAŅKARA NEGATES—THEY ARE ALSO DUE TO MITHYĀ-PRATYAYA ALONE

Śaṅkara says this is not valid, because these three things that were mentioned—memory, desire and effort—are themselves preceded by a false notion. They are born of a *mithyā-pratyaya*.¹ Memory is born of a *mithyā-pratyaya*, as is desire and effort. How? A *mithyā-pratyaya* to be present has the following requirement—in the body, etc., which is not *ātmā*, you must first have the notion that it is *ātmā*, that is, there should be an *ātma-buddhi* in the body, etc. Because of this, a person looks upon himself as incomplete and tries to prove that he is somebody. Being a self-conscious person there is a self-judgement that, the self is wanting. Then he wants to get rid of the wanting person, but not knowing that, he tries to get rid of his many and varied wants.

According to his culture and tastes, some things are found desirable, some are undesirable. In other words, he has *rāga* and *dveṣa*. Once he has the desire, he makes effort to experience the desirable object, or avoid the undesirable. Once he has that experience, it goes into his memory, his store of knowledge, and becomes the basis for further desire, which, in turn, leads to further effort. This goes on. In fact, you can take it as beginningless, as Śaṅkara does here. The memory, etc., is preceded by the impression, *samskāra*, produced by the results of actions in the form of desirable and undesirable experiences that are caused by a false notion, *mithyā-pratyaya*, that the body-mind-sense-complex is *ātmā*. All of these, therefore, are due to the *mithyā-pratyaya*, and consequently, you cannot say that *ātmā* is a *kartā* and goes about doing these various actions with the help of memory, desire, and effort. These themselves are born of a *mithyā-pratyaya*, and the notion that *ātmā* is a *kartā* is also due to *mithyā-pratyaya*. Therefore, *mithyā-pratyaya* is the basic factor in creating *karma*, etc.

SAṂSĀRA HAS NO BEGINNING—ONE IS BORN WITH THIS MITHYĀ-PRATYAYA

Śaṅkara says further that this *samsāra* has no beginning. I am born with this *mithyā-pratyaya* that the body is ‘I.’ How did I get this *mithyā-pratyaya*? Because of the previous birth, which is also due to *mithyā-pratyaya*. It has no beginning, a fact that has to be inferred on the basis of how things are in this birth. The *mithyā-pratyaya* creates a sense of limitation, and therefore, desire, and therefore, effort to fulfil the desire. The effort culminates in an experience, because of which there is again memory. This goes on. From this we can infer that this is how it has been, and this is how it will be in the future also. As long as you think that you are a *kartā*, you have *mithyā-pratyaya*.

In this birth, there are actions that are proper and improper, *dharma* and *adhama*, arising from the likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣas*. These likes and dislikes are

¹ xE* iEaEÆE iE aEEiE aEÆE(EEÆE oi EEEÆ E iE aEEiE aEÆEÆE EKE <YÆEÆEYo + xEÆEÆE EG aEE; o^m NEEÆE E EÆEÆEÆE (EEÆEÆE EÆE
o^ EEEÆ <SUÆ EÆEÆEÆÆE* ¶EEo ३A o 11

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO KNOW THE ĀTMĀ AND YET HAVE AN IDENTIFICATION WITH THE BODY

The point is, the removal of identification with the body is not physical; it is not experiential. It is purely cognitive. It is the elimination of a false notion, *mithyā-pratyaya*, that I am the body. This elimination is purely in the form of knowledge. You cannot say that you know the *ātma-svarūpa*, and also say, you have to do something to withdraw yourself from, to transcend, the body-mind-sense-complex. It is contradictory to say so. *Ātmā* stands transcended.

Even when you see something, know some other object, the *ātmā* stands transcended all the time from all your experiences. Nothing really touches *ātmā*. Therefore, the removal of the identification with the body is accomplished by knowledge because the identification is due to ignorance. The removal is not physical, it is removal of *mithyā-pratyaya* alone. Otherwise, there is no possibility of getting away from this body. If you get away from this body, you will identify with another body and travel. This will continue forever—until the *mithyā-pratyaya* falls apart. And like any false notion, that will not go unless knowledge takes place, because the false notion is ignorance. Therefore, the complete resolution of *saṃsāra* is possible when there is certainty of knowledge.

Śaṅkara gives an example to show how it is not possible to say that you know the *ātmā*, and yet, have an identification with the body, etc. Knowing that one is other than the cows and that the cows are other than oneself, no one has an I-notion in those cows.¹ If two objects are clearly understood as different, one does not take one for the other. No one considers that the cow is himself, except in a figurative, *gauṇa*, sense. Even if you say, ‘The cow is my life,’ it is *gauṇa*, not *mithyā*, because you know that the cow is different from you. He gives another example to illustrate how, on the other hand, even though two things are different, one can be taken for the other. Not knowing, one can have ‘knowledge’ of a person in a tree-stump. So too, due to lack of discrimination, one can have the notion that the body-mind-sense-complex is ‘I.’ Knowing the self, however, one cannot have this perception, like knowing the stump, you cannot say it is a person.²

And further *Śaṅkara* sums up the negation of the *gauṇa* argument of the *pūrvapakṣī* by saying, the I-notion in the son, that you talked about, by quoting the *śruti*, *ātmā vai putra-nāmāsi*, is *gauṇa* because it is based on the *janya-janaka-sambandha* between the father and the son.³ That is why what is done by the *gauṇa-ātmā* cannot be of any benefit to the *mukhya-ātmā*, that is, the son cannot eat for the father. This is like how the *gauṇa* lion and the *agni*, the student who is compared to the

¹ xē ēva tmācāme tēnu aē + xē + 1/2 ēkē • ē + xēāme tēnōē < ēē vēxēā tēāē + 1/2 ēē ēē | ēāēāē ēāēēāēē • ēēā
² + vēxēā tēō tēhēē (ēōvēē ēvēxē ēnā + ē ēēōtē nāpēnē, dēā ēōōēā + 1/2 ēēē | ēāēāxē ē ēēōtē vēxēā

³ The son is born of the father; therefore, the father is called the janaka, and the son is the janya. And the relationship they share is called janya-janaka-sambandha.

and that is not possible, Śaṅkara says, unless you have a false notion, *mithyā-pratyaya*, about yourself. If you understand the difference between the real self, *mukhya-ātmā*, and the secondary self, *gauṇa-ātmā*, you can never feel that you are the agent, *kartā*. But that is not the fact. Everyone feels, ‘I am a mortal. I am a human being. I am unhappy.’ In this, there is no doubt. That being so, the body, etc., are not looked upon as *ātmā* in a *gauṇa*, secondary sense, but in a *mukhya*, primary sense.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF ĀTMĀ WITH THE BODY IS ONLY BECAUSE OF IGNORANCE

How does this happen? By false identification alone. The *ātmā* is absolutely uninvolved in anything. It is purely in the form of consciousness, and cannot get involved with anything, because it does not have any features. Water can join milk, because both have certain properties. But if there is one thing with no property at all and another thing that has a form, a property, how can both of them join? It is something like putting some bolts and rivets on space. How will you do that? Similarly, how can the *ātmā*, which is featureless consciousness, get involved with a body which is so tangible? This can only happen through a false notion, *mithyā-pratyaya*. That will accomplish everything. It can turn a rope into a snake; it can even turn the conscious into the inert.

The ‘I’ having the status of being connected to the body, mind, and senses is all because of *mithyā-pratyaya*. How do we know?¹ When that *mithyā-pratyaya* is not present, there is no false I-sense in any of these, and when it is present, those notions are there.² In sleep, for instance, there is no false cognition, because there is no cognition at all. Even in waking, there is no false notion of being the body, etc., at a moment when you are happy. Because in a moment of happiness there is total resolution of the *mithyā-pratyaya* for the time being and therefore no identification with the body-mind-sense-complex. Also, when there is knowledge of the self, there is no mistake of this kind. Therefore, the *jñānī* does not have an identification with the body-mind-sense-complex. Thus, we see that when one is there, the other is there; one is not there, the other is not there.³ Therefore, the presence of one accounts for the presence of the other. When there is a false notion, *mithyā-pratyaya*, of *ātmā*, the *ātmā* is identified with the body-mind-sense-complex. And when there is no *mithyā-pratyaya*, *ātmā* is not identified with the body-mind-sense-complex. Śaṅkara explains it further. When there is ignorance, those who have no discrimination are seen to have the I-sense in the body-mind-sense-complex. It is experienced as notions such as, ‘I am tall I am fair.’ Under the spell of ignorance, naturally, there is lack of discrimination.⁴ For those who have discrimination, however, this problem of false identification with the body is not there, because they

¹ एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं भा० ॥

² एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् + एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् + एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् + एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् भा० ॥

³ एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् + एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् भा० ॥ (This is called *anvaya-vyatireka*.)

⁴ + एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् + एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् + एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् + एतदेतन्मिथ्याप्रत्ययं न भवेत् भा० ॥

If there is no clear understanding of the body and the *ātmā* as two distinct things, it is an error, *mithyā-pratyaya*. In other words, you must understand the two things as two things—*anātmā* as *anātmā*, and *ātmā* as *ātmā*. We are not talking about the ontological status of *ātmā* and *anātmā* here; we are only seeing the distinction between the two. If you ask me what the relationship is between *ātmā* and the *anātmā*, in terms of reality, I would say that, they are not two different things, like table and chair. The table can be there without chair, and the chair can be there without table. Here, however, though *ātmā* can be there without *anātmā*, the *anātmā* does not exist without *ātmā*. That is the ontological relationship between *ātmā* and *anātmā*. Now, however, we are talking purely of the properties of *ātmā* and *anātmā*. If *ātmā* is understood and the properties of *anātmā* are understood to belong to *anātmā*, there is no problem. Then, if one says, ‘I am fat,’ it can be *gauṇa*, figurative. But if it is not understood, it is a *mithyā-pratyaya*, a false notion, like the rope being mistaken for a snake. That is not *gauṇa*, because you are jumping for the snake, not for the rope. *pūrvapakṣī*¹

IF ĀTMĀ IS NOT A KARTĀ THE ŚRUTI WILL LOOSE ITS VALIDITY AS A PRAMĀṆA—PŪRVAPAKṢĪ'S OBJECTION

Now *Śaṅkara* considers the argument presented earlier¹ by the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* that if *ātmā* is not an agent, *kartā*, the *śruti* will lose its status as a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, because, in its injunctions, etc., it is addressing a *kartā*.² This is a presumption, *arthāpatti*. How? When the *śruti* says, ‘If you want this, do this action. If you want to avoid pain, do not do this,’ it is addressing someone who does an action, a *kartā*. If *ātmā* were *akartā*, the *śruti* would not ask it to do various things. Nobody tells a bald-headed person to tie his hair properly, and nobody says to a human being, ‘Polish your horn.’ Similarly, the *śruti* cannot tell me, ‘Do this,’ if I am not a *kartā* in the vision of the *śruti*. So it is presumed that the *ātmā* is viewed by the *śruti* as a *kartā*.

ŚAṅKARA'S ANSWER

VEDA IS A PRAMĀṆA ONLY WITH REFERENCE TO UNSEEN THINGS

Śaṅkara says that this is not true. The *śruti* has the status of being a means of knowledge only with reference to things that cannot be known by any other means of knowledge, and are, therefore, unseen, *adr̥ṣṭa*.³ It can serve as a means of knowledge for

५१ + मीमांसकाः ईदृशं प्रत्ययं ईदृशं कर्ता च त्रैलोक्यं ॥

¹ See: *Another Argument by the Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka*, page: 486

² अकर्तृ-हेतु-प्रत्यय-ईदृशं कर्तृ-हेतु-प्रत्ययं ॥

³ ईदृशं कर्ता ईदृशं प्रत्ययं + अकर्तृ-हेतु-प्रत्यय-ईदृशं कर्तृ-हेतु-प्रत्ययं + अकर्तृ-हेतु-प्रत्यय-ईदृशं कर्तृ-हेतु-प्रत्ययं ॥

things that cannot be known by perception, etc., like the means and ends, *sādhana-sādhya*, such as the *agnihotra* ritual and heaven. But it does not have the status of being a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, for things that can be known by perception, etc., for its scope is in what is not known by these means. Without any exposure to the *śruti*, and before any exposure to the *śruti*, do not people have the sense, I am doing, I am seeing, I am happy, I am unhappy, etc.? From this it is clear that you do not need *śruti* to tell you whether you are a *kartā* or not. It is very well known to you through your experiences of seeing, etc. You need only yourself, not *śruti*, to determine that you are a doer.

DEFINITION OF A PRAMĀṆA

A *pramāṇa*, means of knowledge, has its access only with reference to things that are not known, *anadhigata*.¹ But what is brought to light can be right or wrong, because a snake is also brought to light. Thus, we cannot say that anything that a *pramāṇa*, as it has been so far defined, brings to light is valid, because the same eyes that make me see the rope, also make me jump for a snake which is not there. Therefore, we have to add one more word to the definition of *pramāṇa*. It not only brings to light what was not previously known, *anadhigata*, but what it reveals must be *abādhita*, not negatable. We cannot say that anything that the sense organs or any reasoning bring to light need always be valid knowledge, *pramā*, because there can always be an error, *bhrama*. To cover this possibility, we have to say that *pramāṇa* is that which is capable of producing knowledge of an object, which is not so far known, and that knowledge cannot be negated later. What it reveals cannot be arrived at by perception-*pratyakṣa*, inference- *anumāna*, presumption-*arthāpatti*, comparison-*upamāna*, or the means for the cognition of non-existence-*anupalabdhi*, and therefore, it is an independent means of knowledge.

WHAT IS REVEALED BY ŚRUTI IS NEITHER REVEALED NOR NEGATED BY OTHER PRAMĀṆAS

It has to talk about something that cannot be known by any of these means. Then again, it cannot be contradicted by any other *pramāṇa*, because no other *pramāṇa* has access to its subject matter. If it can be contradicted, then it is dealing with an object that is available for other means of knowledge. When the *śruti* says that there is a heaven, how can we contradict it? We cannot argue that there is no heaven because we do not see one. That is why we need the *śruti* to say that there is one—because we do not see. If we could, *śruti* need not say that. That is why *śruti* does not tell us that there is Antarctica. It knows that we can see that fact by ourselves. Therefore, *śruti* must talk about

॥ ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे |

¹ + ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे |

‘ + ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | ईहं च खे | is another way of defining a *pramāṇa*.

saṃsāri,' etc. Even a dog knows that! When a dog is eating, it does not feel that somebody else is eating. When it wants to wag the tail, it does not wag some other tail, but only its own. That is called a sense of agency, *karṭṛva-buddhi*, and every individual has it. The *śāstra* need not reveal that you are a *kartā*.

It does say, however, that any *karma* you do produces a result that is not seen, *adr̥ṣṭa*. Thus, the *śāstra* reveals *puṇya* and *pāpa*. Then, the *śāstra* also reveals that, if you do this *karma*, you will get this result. I do not know what the *jyotiṣṭoma* ritual is, nor that if I do it I will go to heaven, nor that there is a heaven, nor that I will survive death. This is all beyond my perception and inference, and therefore, the *śāstra* serves as a means of knowledge in revealing it, but not in establishing the *kartā*. Finally, the *śāstra* reveals that *ātmā* is not a *kartā*, it does not perform any action; it is *Brahman*. That knowledge negates any sense of agency, *karṭṛva*, or enjoyership, *bhokṭṛva*; in other words, *saṃsāritva*. It points out the real nature, *svarūpa*, of the *kartā*, finally, negating the sense of doership, *karṭṛva-buddhi*.

Now the question is, just as the *karṭṛva-buddhi* is negated by *akarṭṛva-buddhi*, perhaps the *akarṭṛva-buddhi* can also be negated by *karṭṛva-buddhi*. Śaṅkara says, 'No, it cannot be negated.'¹ Why? Once the *karṭṛva-buddhi* is negated, and *ātmā* is discovered to be *akartā*, the *karṭṛva-buddhi* cannot arise in the same place because being *akartā* is the truth of *ātmā*; it is *satya*, and in the discovery of that, the false notion, *mithyā-pratyaya*, that *ātmā* is a *kartā* goes away. Once it has been removed by knowledge, how can that false notion come again? Whenever there is ignorance, it is not mandatory that there should be a false cognition, as in sleep, or when something is totally unknown. But whenever there is a false cognition, there is always ignorance. If that ignorance has gone, there is no possibility of a false cognition occurring. In the wake of knowledge, ignorance goes away, and therefore, a false notion arising from it cannot come back. We cannot negate what is real, *satya*, but only what is false, *mithyā*. If the real *ātmā* can also be negated, then what is *satya*? The *ātmā* that can be negated becomes *mithyā*, because only that which is not subject to negation can be called *satya*.

Śaṅkara explains further. Once you have knowledge that fire is hot and brilliant, can it be negated? But suppose you think that fire is always covered by ashes, is that true? No, it is a false notion and it can be negated by the knowledge that fire is hot and brilliant, a knowledge that cannot subsequently be negated. Similarly, the ideas that the sun rises in the eastern sky, or that the earth is flat, are false notions, and though they were once held as true, they were later negated. Now, here, can you say that the recognition of *ātmā* as *akartā* is also subject to negation? There is no way of negating the *ātmā*, because what cannot be negated is the *ātmā* that is neither a doer nor an enjoyer. Anything that is *satya* cannot be negated—*abādhitam satyam*. The one who negates everything is *ātmā*, and that person is a conscious being who cannot be negated

¹ अकार्तृत्वबुद्धिः किं नकार्यते? अकार्तृत्वबुद्धिः नकार्यते। भा० ॥

at any time. Anything you are aware of, any object of consciousness you can keep negating, but what cannot be negated is the one who negates, who is consciousness. It is something like space—you can move anything around in space, but you cannot move space around. Therefore, it is not possible to negate the nature of *ātmā*.

The *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka*'s argument is that if the sense of agency in *ātmā* can be negated by the *śruti* that reveals knowledge of *Brahman*, then that *śruti* also stands negated by the *śruti* that enjoins *karma* for a *kartā*. Then, both fail to be means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, and therefore, the Veda loses its *prāmāṇya*. No, the *śruti* that enjoins *karma* is negated by the *śruti* that reveals *brahma-vidyā*, and that is why *Vedānta* comes later, and *karma* comes first. It is like every erroneous perception. Will the correct perception come earlier or later? The correcting perception always comes later, after the erroneous perception. The perception that *ātmā* is a *kartā* is first. Everybody has it. Later, the *śruti* comes and tells us that it is not a *kartā*. That cannot be negated by the already negated notion that *ātmā* is a *kartā*. Once it has been negated, it cannot come and negate the truth.

Once the snake is negated by pointing out that it is a rope, the snake will not come and appear there again. You will not mistake that rope for a snake again. In that example, the same mistake may be committed at a different place and time, but here, place and time do not come into the picture. When does the *ātmā* disappear? How many *ātmās* have you got? When can you commit the mistake? We cannot say that there is inadequate light, because light is *ātmā*. How are you going to miss that *ātmā*? It is not memory-based; it does not have a location; it is yourself. It is not dependent upon a time because time is *mithyā*, nor does it appear in a particular state, because all the states are dependent upon the *ātmā*. Therefore, once known, when can you again commit a mistake about *ātmā*? It is not possible. Once the false notion, *mithyā-pratyaya*, is understood as false, it stands negated, *bādhita*, and the truth remains.

We have seen that the sentences of the *śruti* which reveal the reality of *ātmā* as *Brahman*, cannot be negated by those *śruti* sentences that reveal various means for various ends which are not otherwise known to us. There is another thing to be noted about these two different types of *śruti*. While the first portion of the *śruti* reveals certain ends and the means that can be employed to gain them, in the second portion, the *śruti* itself is the means and the end is the very knowledge gained from the words of the *śruti*. The knowledge itself is liberation, the end. Why should anybody study the *Vedānta-śāstra*? At least in the first portion of the Veda, you understand what is desirable and what is not desirable, and how to accomplish the varieties of ends. But why should I study the last portion, which is dealing with some reality. We are not interested in reality; we are interested in achieving ends. Therefore, I study *Vedānta* not just to know something, but also in order to gain freedom, *mokṣa*. The value is for *mokṣa*, and here, knowledge itself is that end. What I am seeking happens to be myself, and therefore, the knowledge of myself is itself the end here. And there is no other end

when the *śruti* talks about *ātmā* being *Brahman*, and therefore, not a *kartā*, all the *karma* is already negated. When it says that immortality cannot be gained by *karma*, or by progeny, or by wealth, but by renouncing all these—*na karmaṇā na prajayā dhanena tyāgena eke amṛtatvam ānaśuḥ*, it is not contradicting itself. At a particular stage it talks about *karma*, and doing that *karma* can lead to renouncing all of it. In that sense, it makes you ready. Therefore, a religious life is enjoined for inquiry into *Vedānta*. Without a religious life there is no fruitful inquiry into *Vedānta*, because it is not simply dry philosophy. Thus, it is in a religious atmosphere alone that *Vedānta* is studied.

Further, when the *śruti* reveals that everything other than *Brahman* is *mithyā*, the *karma-kāṇḍa* has already become negated, *bādhita*. How can you say that it is *mithyā*, and at the same time, a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*? Even though it is *mithyā*, still, it is a means, an *upāya*. From the standpoint of what is to be accomplished, it has a certain empirical reality, in keeping with the reality of what is to be accomplished. Suppose a person is frightened by a snake that he has seen. His friend comes along and realises that he is mistaking a rope for a snake. What does he do? He brings in a flashlight, an *upāya*, to reveal the rope. Now the means, the *upāya*, that he used has not produced anything, nor has it scared away the snake. It only reveals the truth. In revealing the truth, it solves a problem that was based on ignorance.

If you are *Brahman*, free from bondage, etc., then where is *mokṣa*? Finally the *śāstra* says that there is no seeker, no desirer of this knowledge, and no liberation. This is the truth. If the whole problem is false, *mithyā*, the means for solving it is also *mithyā*. Still, it enjoys a certain empirical reality, which is fine, because it leads you to the reality. *Śaṅkara*, keeping in mind that he is talking to a *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka*, says that it is like *arthavāda*—statements of fact that are auxiliary to injunctions. *Śaṅkara* gives him an example that he can easily understand.

EVEN THOUGH THE ŚRUTI IS MITHYĀ, IT IS STILL VALID BECAUSE WHAT IT REVEALS IS SATYA

The *Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka*'s view is that the entire Veda is meant to make you act, and not to reveal an existent fact. If there is any statement of fact, that statement, called *arthavāda*, has to be connected to a main injunction, otherwise it is meaningless—*āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyam atadarthānām*.¹ For example, in the Veda it is said that *Agni* wept tears of silver. What do I gain by knowing this fact? The Veda is not literature; it is a scripture, and it has to be meaningful. It is meaningful; because from this statement we understand that giving, silver in the ritual is prohibited. If you do, you will have reasons to cry. Thus, this statement of fact, *arthavāda*, becomes part of the description of how the ritual is to be done—*itikartavyatā*. Similarly, *Śaṅkara* says that the entire *karma-kāṇḍa* can be like an *arthavāda* for the *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. Even though

¹ Please see the footnote on page 427

the means is *mithyā*, it has some reality because of the reality of the end.¹ It is not directly a means for *jñāna*, but it does not lose its status of being a *pramāṇa*, because it is indirectly useful for the main thing.

IT IS VALID AS IT IS USEFUL, LIKE SECULAR TRANSACTIONS

Even in secular transactions, we use these sorts of means. If we want a child to drink milk, we tell him that his hair will grow if he drinks it. It is true that it is a false statement; but it does the job.² We say a lot of things just to make the child do things, which are good for him. Similarly, even though it is *mithyā*, the *śāstra* talks about the *karma-kāṇḍa* as though it is a *pramāṇa*, in order to make you do what it says, so that you will gain *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi* and prepare yourself for the knowledge that makes you free. We follow a *mithyā* means to achieve a real result. To know *Brahman* which is real, *satya*, we have many *upāyas*, means, that are all *mithyā*. *Śaṅkara* connects the entire *karma-kāṇḍa* to *brahma-vidyā* in this way.

IT IS VALID FOR THOSE WHO HAVE I-COGNITION IN THE BODY

Then he gives an alternative argument for the *karma-kāṇḍa* being a direct means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, even though it is *mithyā*. Suppose someone is not ready for *mokṣa*, then *karma* and its results are real for him. In that case, the *karma-kāṇḍa* is a direct means for gaining limited ends.³

Only the knowledge that is generated by the *vedānta-śāstra* is not subject to negation, it is *abādhitaṃ jñānam*, and therefore, fulfils the definition of a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, which we have defined as that which gives rise to knowledge which is not subject to negation and which is not gained by other means of knowledge—*abādhita-anadhiga ta-jñāna-janakam pramāṇam*. All our other means of knowledge, like inference, *anumāna*, etc., do not really give rise to a knowledge, which is not negated. That way eventually, even the *karma-kāṇḍa* is not a *pramāṇa*. Though it talks about means and ends, *sādhana-sādhyā*, that we cannot otherwise know about, those means and ends are negated by knowledge of *Brahman*. When it is revealed that everything is one alone, non-dual *ātmanā*, they all become negated, *bādhita*. In its own sphere, in the empirical world, the *karma-kāṇḍa* becomes a *pramāṇa* giving rise to knowledge of means and ends. These can be used for mental purification, *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*, in order to gain *mokṣa*, and thereby, the *karma-kāṇḍa* becomes useful. Even though it is not directly involved in giving rise to *mokṣa*, indirectly it is useful. Secondly, it can be considered directly useful, if we confine ourselves to the sphere of

¹ एतदर्थं तां धियां प्रयत्नयित्वा तस्मात्प्रयत्नोऽस्ति सा साधना नान्यथा तस्यैव हेतुर्भवति । तस्मात् सा साधना प्रमाणम् । भा० ॥
² अत्र साधना प्रमाणम् तस्मात् साधना प्रमाणम् तस्मात् साधना प्रमाणम् । भा० ॥
³ एतदर्थं तां धियां प्रयत्नयित्वा तस्मात्प्रयत्नोऽस्ति सा साधना नान्यथा तस्यैव हेतुर्भवति । तस्मात् सा साधना प्रमाणम् । भा० ॥

ignorance. If one is satisfied with simple security and pleasure, then the *karma-kāṇḍa* is directly a *pramāṇa* for gaining those limited ends.

The *śruti* statements, that talk about various *karmas*, are relevant for people who have not yet gained self-knowledge. While previously *Śaṅkara* argued that they are indirectly valid means of knowledge for gaining *mokṣa*, here he shows how they are directly means of knowledge prior to the gain of knowledge of *ātmā*. It is like perception, etc., which are valid means of knowledge for one who is identified with the body, etc. Only when the body, mind, senses are identified as the *ātmā* do these become *pramāṇas*. Otherwise, they are all sublated, *bādhita-pramāṇas*. Even though they continue to operate, they have only empirical reality, not absolute reality, once one knows the self. Similarly, before the knowledge of the *ātmā*, the *karma-kāṇḍa* has validity as a direct means of knowledge, like perception, etc. We do not say that the *karma-kāṇḍa* has no validity as a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, only that it has no validity for the person who has gained knowledge of *ātmā*. Even within the *karma-kāṇḍa*, an injunction is only valid for the person who is qualified to do it. An injunction for a married person, has no validity for a *brahmacārī*. Similarly, for the person who is qualified for *mokṣa*, or for the person who already knows the nature of *ātmā*, the *karma-kāṇḍa* has no *pramāṇya*, validity.

ĀTMĀ IS NOT A KARTĀ EVEN BY ITS MERE PRESENCE

BECAUSE ALL ACTIONS TAKE PLACE IN ITS PRESENCE, ĀTMĀ BECOMES A KARTĀ—

PŪRVAPAKṢĪ'S OBJECTION

Now another objection is raised. The objector here accepts that *ātmā* performs no action, that actionlessness is the nature of the *ātmā*. He says that even though in itself it does not undergo any change in order to do an action, by its mere presence alone the body-mind-sense-complex performs action. That is as good as the *ātmā* performing the actions.¹ There are different types of agency, *kartṛtva*. Either you yourself do the action, or you make another person do it, or by your simple presence, you make another person act. Here, he is saying that by its mere presence, *ātmā* performs action. That is, the *ātmā* has agency, *kartṛtva*, because without its presence, there cannot be an action by the body, mind, and senses. This type of agency is primary, *mukhya*. If that is the case, he will have to admit that it cannot be considered secondary, *gauṇa*. He gives some examples of this type of agency.

Just because of his presence, the king is said to be engaged in the battle when his soldiers are fighting, even though he does not fight at all. Even though the king is sitting in his own chamber with a glass in his hand, the people say that the king is fighting. He

¹ अहंकारेण कर्मणो लक्षणं तदा + अहंकारेण कर्मणो लक्षणं + एतत्तु कर्मणो लक्षणं एवमित्येवमिहोक्तं स एव कर्मणो लक्षणं तदा + एतत्तु कर्मणो लक्षणं ॥

karmas, sarvadharmān parityajya, I will release you from all *pāpa* and *puṇya*. Who is this 'I'? It is *ātmā*, the innermost self, the self of all, the *paramātmā*. Recognition of this *ātmā*, the real nature of the Lord and the individual, *jīva*, is the release.

In this chapter, the entire *gītā-śāstra* is being summed up. And in the previous two verses, it was again briefly summed up. In one verse, *karma-yoga* was mentioned, and in the other, *jñāna-karma-sannyāsa*, renunciation of all actions by knowledge—*sarva-dharmān parityajya*.

TEACHING SAMPRADĀYAVIDHI

Here, at the end of the *śāstra*, is a *sampradāya-vidhi*, a rule to be observed by the person who teaches the *śāstra* and knows the tradition of teaching, *sampradāyavit*. To whom should that person give this teaching? This is told in the next verse.

ॐ ननु एषां विद्यां न तापस्कया न भक्त्या न कदाचन
 न अशुश्रुषवे न च मामभ्यास्यति ॥६७॥

*idaṃ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana
 na cāśuśrūṣave vācyam na ca māṃ yo'bhyasūyati*

Verse 67

ॐ ननु एषां *idaṃ* — this (teaching which has been taught); *te* — for you; *न* *vācyam* — is not to be taught; + *एषां विद्यां* *atapaskāya* — to the one who has no religious discipline; *न कदाचन* *kadācana* — ever; *न* + *भक्त्या* *na bhaktāya* — not to the one who has no devotion; *न* *अशुश्रुषवे* *na cāśuśrūṣave* — and not to the one who is not willing to listen; *न* *मम* + *अभ्यास्यति* (*न* *च*) *na ca māṃ abhyasūyati (tasmai)* — and not to the one who finds fault (when there is none) with Me

This (teaching which has been taught) to you is never to be taught to the one who has no religious discipline, nor to the one who has no devotion, nor to the one who is not willing to listen, nor to the one who finds fault with Me (where there is none).

Alternative: This (teaching given) to you is never to be taught (by you) to one who has no religious discipline, nor to one who has no devotion, nor to one who is not willing to listen, nor to one who finds fault with Me (where there is none).

This, *idaṃ*, here refers to the *gītā-śāstra* beginning with, 'You are grieving for no reason—*asocyān anvaśocastvam*,'¹ and ending with, 'Do not grieve—*mā śucaḥ*.' The entire *gītā-śāstra* that has been taught (we have to add the word *uktam* here),

¹ *Gītā* – 2-11

Bhagavān says, ‘to you—*te*,’ is not to be taught, *na vācyam*, to certain people. By saying to whom it is not to be taught, he says, by implication, to whom it is to be given. *Śaṅkara* adds that it is told, *ukta*, for your benefit, *tava hitāya*. We also have to add *twayā*, by you, it is not to be taught, *na vācyam*. Although this is addressed to *Arjuna*, we can extend it to include all those who know the *śāstra*.

Śaṅkara explains that it is ‘for your benefit—*tava hitāya*,’ because it destroys *saṃsāra*. Thus, the *Gītā* is a *mokṣa-śāstra*, unlike the *karma-kāṇḍa*, which cannot be directly a *mokṣa-śāstra*, though it is connected, because knowledge of *Brahman* is not taught there, as a rule. Even though here and there we can find *mantras* in it talking about the reality of the *ātmā* and *Īśvara*, that is not what is directly taught there. What is taught there is the various means and ends, *sādhana-sādhya*, to fulfil various desires for *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*. The fourth *puruṣārtha*, *mokṣa*, is not the value that is kept in view, as it is in *Vedānta*. That is why we separate the Veda into the *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. Whereas, if we look at the *Bhagavadgītā*, as early as the second chapter, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* has said that all the Vedas have as their subject matter things that are characterised by the three *guṇas*, *traiguṇya-viśayāḥ vedāḥ*, and urges *Arjuna* to be free from the three *guṇas*, *nīstraiguṇyo bhava arjuna*. That is *mokṣa*, going away from all the three *guṇas*. If you have *mokṣa* as the main goal, your mind is set on one thing, there is *vyavasāyātmikā-buddhi*, and all other goals subserve that main goal and your life becomes *karma-yoga*. Therefore, *karma-yoga* is possible only for a person who wants *mokṣa*, a *mumukṣu*. If one has not discerned that *mokṣa* is the human goal, there is only *karma*, not *karma-yoga*, and the ends are going to be manifold. In other words, if you do not choose the limitless as the end, the desires will be limitless. Thus, this *gītā-śāstra* should only be given to certain people, and not to others.

TO WHOM SHOULD IT NOT BE GIVEN ?

TO ONE WHO HAS NO RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE

To whom should it not be given? To the person who has no religious discipline, *atapaskāya*, which would include those who have no intellectual discipline, *amedhāvīs*. These are generally said together. *Tapas* is also considered to be knowledge or the pursuit of knowledge. *Bhṛgu* is told by his father in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, ‘By *tapas*, may you understand *Brahman*—*tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva*.’ There, *tapas* is purely inquiry. But here we can say that the one who has *tapas* has a commitment and is ready to put forth effort to equip himself for this knowledge. To the one who does not have this, *atapasakāya*, it is not to be given.

TO ONE WHO HAS NO DEVOTION

Further, this teaching should not be given to the one who has no devotion, *abhaktāya*. This devotion should be for both the *guru* and the Lord. That means *śraddhā* and a certain awareness of *Īśvara* is necessary for *mokṣa*. This devotee

appreciates the necessity of invoking *Īśvara's* grace for *mokṣa*. Here, the devotee is necessarily the *jijñāsu-bhakta*. As he has devotion to *Parameśvara*, he also has commitment to the teacher and the teaching. From this we understand that even if he has a great commitment, *tapas*, for this knowledge, but has no devotion, this knowledge is not to be given to him.

When should the teaching not be given to such people? *Bhagavān* says, *na kadācana*, never, for emphasis. *Śaṅkara* says, that it should not be given under any condition, that is, not even under duress. If some one knows the *śāstra* and does not follow the *sampradāya*, and if he teaches, the student may not get the benefit of the *śāstra*. Therefore, saying this, that is, in laying down the rules on who should be taught, he is giving the tradition, *sampradāya*.

TO ONE WHO HAS NO INTEREST TO LISTEN

Then again, it should not be told to the one who has no desire to listen, *aśuśrūṣave*. Even if such a person goes to the class, his mind will be elsewhere, or he will sleep. The one who has a desire to listen, *śrotum icchuḥ*, is a *śuśrūṣu*. He has a great love for listening to the *śāstra*, and is committed to it. He alone should be taught, not the one who is indifferent. And there is a rule for the teacher that he should not teach unless this knowledge is specifically asked for—*na apr̥ṣṭaḥ kasyacit brūyāt*. That means, unless a person asks for this knowledge, this knowledge should not be given. Even though *Bhṛgu* was *Varuṇa's* son, he had to ask for this knowledge, and *Varuṇa* did not give it to him until he asked. Therefore, one must be a *śuśrūṣu*. That is, one should have a love to sit in the class and listen.

TO ONE WHO FINDS FAULT WITH KṚṢṆA

To whom else should this not be given? It should not be given to one who finds fault with the *Gītā* or *Kṛṣṇa*. One may look upon *Kṛṣṇa* as arrogant, for instance, because he says, '*mattaḥ parataraṃ nānyat kiñcit asti*—there is no one other than or superior to Me,' '*mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja*—you should come to Me alone,' '*mayi avyabhicāriṇī bhaktiḥ*—a devotion to Me that is unswerving,' '*manmanā bhava*—be one whose mind is in Me,' '*madbhakto bhava*—be My devotee,' '*madyājī bhava*—do all rituals for Me,' '*māṃ namaskuru*—salute Me.'

There are many more expressions like this in the *Gītā*. If a person uses the first person too much, people can think that he is arrogant. But here, *Kṛṣṇa* talks as *Īśvara*, and if he is viewed as *Īśvara*, the teaching becomes effective. While anyone who knows and teaches the *śāstra* is a *śāstravit*, *Kṛṣṇa* is *śāstrakṛt*, being the one who is the author and the revealer of the *śāstra*. If one looks upon the *gītā-śāstra* as coming straight from the Lord, then the *śraddhā* is different and it blesses the person. If, on the other hand, one finds fault with *Kṛṣṇa*, when there is no fault, that is *asūyā-guṇeṣu doṣa-*

darśana. When *Bhagavān* is the one who has all the virtues in absolute measure, *sarva-guṇavān*, to find fault there is seeing a defect where there are only virtues. *Śaṅkara* says that the person who does find fault, does not know that *Kṛṣṇa* is *Īśvara*. Such a person, who has *asūyā*, is not to be taught. Why? Because, with such an attitude, the teaching will not be fruitful.

WHO CAN RECEIVE IT?

In describing the one to whom this teaching is not to be given, the one to whom it is to be given becomes evident. The one, who has religious discipline, devotion, a keen desire to listen, and does not find fault with the teacher, is to be taught.

THE RESULT OF THIS TEACHING

Now, when one teaches following the tradition, *sampradāya*, what is the result for that teacher?

यह < इमं पारमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेषु भिद्ध्यति
 इमं पारमं भक्तिं मे परमं भक्त्या ममेवाश्रित्यसंशयः ॥६८॥

ya imaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ madbhakteṣu bhidhāsyati
bhaktiṁ mayi parāṁ kṛtvā mām evaiśrityasamśayaḥ

Verse 68

yaḥ — the one who; *< imam* — this (*śāstra*); *{ paramam* — most exalted;
guyam — secret; *' e' madbhakteṣu* — to My devotees; *+ e' evaiśrityati*
abhidhāsyati — teaches; *' e' mayi* — to Me; *{ param bhaktim* — the
 highest devotion; *Ebi e' kṛtvā* — (and) having offered; *' e' mām eva* — to Me alone;
B' e' eṣyati — will come; *+ aśamśayaḥ* — there is no doubt

The one who teaches this most exalted, secret (*śāstra*) to My devotees, having offered the highest devotion to Me, will come to Me alone. There is no doubt.

THE BENEFIT FOR THE TEACHER

When he says, '*yaḥ abhidhāsyati*—the one who teaches,' we understand that this applies not only to *Arjuna*, but to whomsoever one teaches this *śāstra*. This *śāstra* is considered the most exalted, *parama*, because understanding its subject matter will give *mokṣa*. And this teaching, which is in the form of a dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, is most sacred and secret, *guhya*. Why is it to be kept a secret? It may damage a person who does not need it, and is not ready for it. A simple devotee, if he is told that he is *Bhagavān*, he may give up his devotion, and may not gain knowledge and be worse

off than he was before being exposed to this teaching. Thus, this knowledge must be taught only to the person who is ready for it. Therefore, it is a secret.

More than that, it gives the *parama-puruṣārtha* and therefore, being the most valuable, it should be given only to the person who has a proper value for it. Otherwise, it will not work. Further, it is the most secret because it is not available for other means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, like perception. And also, it is the nature of oneself, the very seeker who is looking for a solution. His very seeking keeps it hidden, because the seeker is the *ātmā* that is sought. Even if it is taught, if the person does not have the proper qualifications, the teaching will not convey anything, and thus, remains a secret. And if a person is oriented towards employing means and achieving ends, the teaching will remain a secret, because here, there is no means and no end. There is only knowing the self which is so subtle, *atisūkṣma*, that it is not available for objectification, but is revealed through the implied meaning, *lakṣyārtha*, of the words of the *śāstra*. Thus, it is *guhya*.

To whom is the teaching given? ‘To My devotees—*madbhakteṣu*,’ the devotees of *Parameśvara*. Generally devotees are committed to security and pleasure, *artha* and *kāma*, and take the Lord's help to achieve those ends. But here, the devotees want the knowledge of *Parameśvara*. They do not want anything less than that. They go to *Parameśvara* not to get something from *Parameśvara*, but to get *Parameśvara*. They are *jījñāsus* and their only goal is *mokṣa* and they are, therefore, *jījñāsu-bhaktas*. Such persons are fit to be given this knowledge. By saying that these devotees are the ones to whom this teaching is given, *Kṛṣṇa* is emphasising the importance of *bhakti* here. Even though one has to have discipline, *tapas*, and be one who is eager to listen to the *śāstra*, the *śūśrūṣu*, the importance of *Īśvara-bhakti* is pointed out here.

ONE WHO TEACHES THE GĪTĀ IS A GREAT BHAKTA

Then, *Kṛṣṇa* says here that the one who is teaching this knowledge is doing the ‘highest form of devotion to Me—*bhaktiṃ mayi parām*.’ When he is teaching, he is revealing *Bhagavān*, and that is his service to *Bhagavān*. To do that he has to understand *Bhagavān*, and thus he is a *jñānī*, whom *Bhagavān* has equated to himself—*jñānī tu ātmaiva*. That is *parama-bhakti* because between the Lord and the devotee, there is no longer any difference. When the subject matter of this knowledge is *Bhagavān*, and the fact that all that is here is *Bhagavān*, the teacher who is teaching this knowledge is not separate from *Bhagavān*. Because of his knowledge, the ego is resolved, and when he teaches, it is as if *sākṣāt Bhagavān* is teaching. Having achieved identity with *Parameśvara*, he is a *jñānī-bhakta*, and by teaching, he continues to serve *Parameśvara*.

What happens to him? ‘He reaches Me alone—*mām eva eṣyati*.’ In this life he is liberated—he is *jīvan-mukta*. If he has any problem with *niṣṭhā* in this knowledge, he

gains it by teaching. Since the nature of *Īśvara* and the nature of the *jīva* is one, in this life itself he has recognized that he is not separate from *Parameśvara*. Secondly, he reaches *Parameśvara* after death also, because, when the *prārabdha-karma* is exhausted, there is only *Parameśvara*.

There are many types of devotees, some doing *pūjā*, some doing other rituals, and so on. But even though, here, there is no substance, *dravya*, or fire, among all the devotees there is no one who is more dear to *Kṛṣṇa* than the one who is teaching this knowledge.

ॐ स ए इ० ई० ए० ऐ० ओ० ए० ई० ए० ई० ए० ई०
 ॥ ६९ ॥

*na ca tasmānmanuṣyeṣu kaścīnme priyakṛttamaḥ
 bhavitā na ca me tasmādanyaḥ priyataro bhuvi*

Verse 69

ॐ ए० ई० ए० ई० *manuṣyeṣu* — among all men; इ० ई० ए० ई० *tasmāt* — other than him; ॐ ए० ई० ए० ई० *me priyakṛttamaḥ* — one who is the best among those who do what is dear to Me; ॐ ए० ई० ए० ई० *na kaścīt* — there is none; स *ca* — and; इ० ई० ए० ई० *tasmāt* — other than him; + ॐ ए० ई० ए० ई० *anyaḥ* — another; ॐ ए० ई० ए० ई० *me priyataro* — one who is dearer to Me; ॐ ए० ई० ए० ई० *na bhavitā* — there will not be; ॐ ए० ई० ए० ई० *bhuvi* — on the earth

And there is no one other than him who is the best among men who do what is dear to Me, and there will not be another dearer to Me than him on the earth.

NONE IS, OR WILL BE, DEARER TO ME THAN THE BHAKTA WHO IS A JÑĀNĪ

Among all devotees, there is no other devotee who is dearer to *Bhagavān*. Why? The one who knows Me is Myself—*jñānī tu atmaiva*. The self is the most beloved, its nature being limitlessness, *ānanda*, which experientially is happiness. That is the object of anybody's love. The person who knows *ātmā* is teaching *ānanda-svarūpa* and he is not separate from *ānanda-svarūpa*. Thus, there is no one dearer than the one who teaches this knowledge.

Perhaps now there is no one, but the future generation may produce a better devotee. No. In the future, on this earth, there is no one who is going to be more beloved than him. The word *ca* here can be used to connect the current and the future. Or, it may indicate that there never was a *bhakta* more beloved than this, that is, neither in the past, nor in the present, nor in the future.

Thus concluding, *Bhagavān* himself says that the one who teaches this knowledge is the most beloved to him.

Further, the one who studies this, or even just repeats the verses of the *Gītā* is praised here.

+V^āā^āā^āā^ā Sē āē <''ēāē^āāē^ā o^āāē^ānūēē^ā ē^āāē^ā*
 Yēē^āē^āē^āē^ā ē^āēē^ā/ā^ā ē^āā^ā o^āāēē^ā ēē^āē^ā ē^āā^ā ēē^āē^ā ॥१७०॥

*adhyeṣyate ca ya imaṃ dharmyaṃ saṃvādamāvayoh
 jñānayañena tenāhamiṣṭaḥ syāmiti me matiḥ*

Verse 70

Sē ca — further; āē^ā *yaḥ* —the one who; +É^āēēē^ā *āvayoh* — of ours; <''ē^āēā^ā vē^āāēēē^ā o^āēēē^ānūēē^ā ēā^ā *imam dharmyam saṃvādam* — this dialogue that is unopposed to *dharma*; +V^āā^āā^āā^ā *adhyeṣyate* — studies or recites; ē^āāē^ā *tena* — by that; Yēē^āē^āē^āē^ā *jñāna-yañena* — through that ritual in the form of knowledge; +Y^āā^ā <Y^āā^ā o^āāēē^ā ēā^ā *aham iṣṭaḥ syā* — I would be worshipped; <ē^āēē^ā ēē^āē^ā *iti me matiḥ* — this is My conclusion

And the one who studies or recites this dialogue of ours, that is unopposed to *dharma*, through that ritual in the form of knowledge, I would be worshipped. This is My conclusion.

ONE WHO STUDIES THE GĪTĀ WORSHIPS ME THROUGH JÑĀNAYAJÑĀ

In this verse, the one who studies or recites this dialogue wherein the knowledge of *Brahman*, *brahma-vidyā*, and *karma-yoga* are discussed, is praised. The dialogue, *saṃvāda*, has as its subject matter, *dharma*, and is therefore, *dharmya*, unopposed to *dharma*. Here, *dharma* can be taken relatively, and also absolutely. In a relative sense, this discussion deals with *dharma* as *karma-yoga*. In the absolute sense, it gives the knowledge of *Brahman*. By the person who studies this dialogue, *Bhagavān* says here, 'I am invoked, I am worshipped.' How? He is only studying the *Gītā*; but then, he is worshipping *Īśvara* by the ritual of knowledge, *jñāna-yañena aham iṣṭaḥ*. Any form of ritual, *yañna*, is worship. Here, it is not a ritual in which materials are offered, *dravya-yañna*, nor one of religious austerities, *tapo-yañna*, nor *mantra* recitation, *japa-yañna*, but worship through the ritual in the form of knowledge, *jñāna-yañna*. *Śaṅkara* mentions four types of rituals here. They are: *vidhi-yañna*, a ritual that is enjoined by the Veda and involves materials, fire, etc., *japa-yañna*, a ritual in the form of oral recitation of a *mantra*, *upāṃśu-yañna*, again a ritual in the form of a recitation of a *mantra* with the difference that it is chanted very softly, barely audible, and finally, *mānasa-yañna* a ritual in the form of a purely mental recitation of a *mantra*.

Among these, the mental ritual, *mānasa-yañna*, is considered to be the most efficacious. This is because, when an action is done physically, or orally the mind can be elsewhere with the physical or oral action continuing mechanically. On the other hand, when the mind alone is doing an action, if the mind goes away, then the action also stops. Then, one comes to know that the mind has gone away and can bring the mind

back and the action can continue. Here too the study of this dialogue in the *Gītā* is a ritual in the form of knowledge. Naturally, it is purely mental, that is, cognitive, and because of that, it is considered most efficacious. Śaṅkara adds that even if you do not study the *Gītā*, but only recite it, you get a result equivalent to the kind of result you get from a mental ritual, *upāsana*, that has a deity, *devatā*, as its object, *viṣaya*. That is the praise here.

We can understand here that the one who studies this *Gītā* is worshipping *Īśvara*, and need not worry that he is not doing other forms of worship. This is a general problem of a lot of people. People want to ‘do’ *bhakti*, and they feel that they are not doing *bhakti*, they are only studying. Thus, *Īśvara* himself says here that even when they study this, they are performing worship. Even though there is no fire or oblation involved, the study of the *śāstra* also invokes *Īśvara* because that is the subject matter of the entire *śāstra*. Previously *Kṛṣṇa* had said that there are four types of devotees. First is the one in distress, *ārta*. The one who takes the help of *Bhagavān* for his accomplishments, *arthārthī*, is the second. Then, there is the one who wants to know *Īśvara*, *jijñāsu*. What does he do? He studies the *śāstra*. He is a devotee, in *Kṛṣṇa*’s own words; this is his form of worship. Finally, there is the one who knows *Īśvara*, the *jñānī*, the fulfilled devotee who is the dearest to *Īśvara* because he is no longer separate from *Īśvara*. Thus, the pursuit of the knowledge of *Īśvara* is also a *yajña*. ‘By that ritual in the form of knowledge, I would be worshipped. This is My conclusion—*jñāna-yajñena aham iṣṭaḥ syām iti me matiḥ*,’ Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says here, praising the person who studies the *Gītā*.

At the end of the *śāstra*, generally the result of listening to that *śāstra*, the *phala-śruti*, is told. It is called praise, *praśaṃsā*, of the *śāstra*. This is the style of the traditional literature. Having praised the person who studies or recites this dialogue, *Bhagavān* now praises the result for the one who listens to the *gītā-śāstra*.

ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः । श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ।

ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः । श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ।

śraddhāvānanasūyaśca śṛṇuyādapi yo naraḥ

so’pi muktaḥ śubhāṃllokān prāpnuyātpuṇyakarmaṇām

Verse 71

ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः — the person; ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः — who has trust (in this *śāstra*); + ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः + ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः — and who does not find fault (with this *śāstra*); ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः + ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः — even if he would merely listen; ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः + ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः — even he, being liberated; ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः + ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः — of those who do good karma; ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः + ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः — auspicious worlds; ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः + ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः — would gain

The person who has trust (in this *śāstra*), and who does not find fault with (this *śāstra*), even if he merely listens (to the *Gītā*), even he, being liberated, would gain the auspicious worlds of those who do good *karmas*.

BENEFIT OF LISTENING TO THE GĪTĀ

The person under discussion here who listens to the *Gītā* is one who has *śraddhā*, the *śraddhāvān*, who looks upon *Kṛṣṇa* not as an individual, but as *Parameśvara*, the Lord. Further, he does not try to find fault with this *gītā-śāstra*—he is *anasūya*. Such a person, even by listening to this *gītā-śāstra* becomes freed. From what? It all depends. Here *Bhagavān* says that he would go to those auspicious worlds which are born of *punya-karma*. That means he is freed from *pāpa* by simple listening, without even understanding the meaning. Here *Śaṅkara* says, ‘What to talk of the one who has the knowledge!’ If he has knowledge, he is totally liberated. Even by listening to the *Gītā* a lot of *pāpa* gets destroyed for the one who has *śraddhā*, because these are the words of *Bhagavān*. Thereby, one can gain an auspicious world, *śubha-loka*. This is one thing. Then, suppose he studies the *śāstra* and understands the meaning. He will gain *mokṣa*, liberation from *saṃsāra*.

THE ĀCĀRYADHARMA THAT BHAGAVĀN SHOWS

Now, as a teacher who wants to know whether *Arjuna* has understood all that has been taught or not, *Kṛṣṇa* asks a question. As a teacher, surely, and again as *Īśvara* too, he should know whether *Arjuna* has understood or not; he should know what is going on in his student's mind. Then why does he ask the question to *Arjuna*? Therefore, *Śaṅkara* introduces the verse saying that, by asking this question, *Bhagavān* makes a point here. Suppose *Arjuna* has not understood the *śāstra*, then *Kṛṣṇa* wants to indicate that he should teach him again. Even though there is nothing more to teach, he can follow some other method and then teach the subject matter again. One can always be creative and find some other method to make the person understand. That is the intention of *Bhagavān* when he asked this question to *Arjuna* here. It is the teacher's duty to take some other course of action, if the student has not understood. The student must necessarily discover that he has found what is to be found, he should feel that he is *kṛtārtha*, the one who has achieved what has to be achieved, before the teaching can be considered complete.

Thus, this question is recorded to make the point that if the person does not understand, one must teach again using another method. That point is made here.

EdēcēnōēSūvā(ēē)ē i ēāēēōē Sēāēōē*
Edēcēnōēēēōē...ēēē | ēhēyō iēā vēēōēē 119211

kaccidetacchrutaṃ pārtha tvayaikāgreṇa cetasā.

kaccidajñānasammohaḥ praṇaṣṭaste dhanañjaya

Verse 72

{ÉÉÉÉ} *pārtha* — O! Son of *Prthā*; i ÉÉÉÉ *tvayā* — by you; BEÉÉÉÉÉ SÉÉÉÉÉ *ekāgreṇa cetasā* — with a single pointed mind; EÉÉÉÉÉÁ BÉÉÉÉÉÁ ÉÉÉÉÉÁ *kaccit etat śrutam* — I hope this has been listened to; ÉÁ *te* — your; + YÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *ajñāna-sammohaḥ* — delusion that is caused by ignorance; EÉÉÉÉÉÁ ÉÉÉÉÉÁ *kaccit praṇaṣṭaḥ* — is it destroyed; VÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ *dhanañjaya* — *Arjuna*, the victor of wealth

Has this been ‘listened to’ by you, *Arjuna*, with a single pointed mind? Is your delusion that is caused by ignorance destroyed, *Arjuna*?

ARJUNA, DID YOU LISTEN WELL? IS YOUR DELUSION GONE?

Kṛṣṇa asks *Arjuna* here, calling him *Pārtha*, son of *Prthā*, *Kuntī*, who was his own beloved aunt, ‘Has this *śāstra* been listened to by you?’ He wants to know, not only if the *śāstra* has been listened to, but if it has been listened to properly, that is, with a mind which is single pointed, that is attentive, *ekāgreṇa cetasā*. That means, only one thing is there at the time of listening. With this qualification, the question, therefore, means, ‘Have you understood?’ From this we understand that attentiveness is a very important thing in listening. One has to suspend all ideas and prejudices for the time being, and just expose oneself to the teaching as it comes. That is what is important. Only what is being taught now is listened to with an attempt to understand, not what was listened to before, or what is inside your mind. Those things do not come and cloud the listening, creating a problem. That capacity to suspend all one’s ideas and just listen to what is being taught is called *ekāgratā*. There is only one subject matter in front of the mind. Not only that, *Śāṅkara* adds, ‘Did you listen without indifference?’

Then *Kṛṣṇa*, addressing *Arjuna* as *Dhanañjaya*, the winner of laurels, asks a second question, ‘Is your delusion gone?’ In delusion there is confusion, things are not seen as they are—*ātmā* is not seen as *ātmā*; *anātmā* is not seen as *anātmā*; between them, there is confusion. Wherever there is delusion, there is confusion, and that confusion is always due to a mix-up between two things. There are two types of delusion. One is at the absolute level, the confusion between *ātmā* and *anātmā*, and the other is a relative confusion, between *dharma* and *adharmā*. Both are born of ignorance, *ajñāna*. *Kṛṣṇa* asks here if this delusion born of ignorance is destroyed. That means the whole *śāstra* is meant to destroy delusion. When he asks if *Arjuna* listened properly, he wants to know if his understanding is such that it has destroyed all the delusion. *Śāṅkara* says that this delusion is not something we have to create. It is very natural, *svābhāvika*. This is true even of values. Even though we have an inbuilt knowledge of right and wrong, the value of those values has to be assimilated. For that, one has to initiate the process of assimilation. It is to eliminate both types of delusion

that we make effort to listen to the *śāstra*. The teacher's effort in teaching is also meant to remove the delusion.

With this question, Lord *Kṛṣṇa*'s words are over. The beginning was, 'You are aggrieved for no reason—*aśocyān anvaśocastvam*,¹ and at the end of the teaching he said, 'Do not grieve—*mā śucaḥ*.'² The next few verses summed up the dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, and end here with the last word spoken by *Kṛṣṇa* being, *Dhanañjaya*, which means the one who wins all wealth. There are different types of wealth, and spiritual wealth is also called *dhana*. Therefore, it is a very auspicious end.

Now *Arjuna* answers *Kṛṣṇa*'s question. Suppose he had said, 'You praise *sannyāsa* and then *karma-yoga*. Tell me which one of these two is best—*sannyāsaṃ karmaṇāṃ kṛṣṇa punar yogaṃ ca śamsasi yat śreyaḥ etayorekaṃ tan me brūhi suniścitam*.' Then *Kṛṣṇa* has to start all over again. But here, *Arjuna* answers *Bhagavān*'s question very positively, and therefore, the *Gītā* comes to an end.

+ VĒŪĒ = ĒĒĒ*
 xĒYā ĒĒā °ĒĒĒ°VĒĒ i Ēi|Ē°Ēnā ĒĒĒĒĒ*
 Ő|ĒĒĒĒĒ°Ē ĒĒĒ°ĒnāĒ ĒĒĒ°ĒĒ ĒĒĒĒĒĒĒ Ē|ĒĒĒ|Ē

arjuna uvāca

naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtirlabdḥā tvatprasādānmayācyuta

sthito'smi gatasandehaḥ kariṣye vacanaṃ tava

Verse 73

+ VĒŪĒ *arjunaḥ* — *Arjuna*; = ĒĒĒ *uvāca* — said;
 i Ēi|Ē°ĒnāĒ *tvatprasādāt* — by your grace; ĒĒā xĒYā *mohaḥ naṣṭaḥ* — (my) delusion is gone; ĒĒĒ *mayā* — by me; °ĒĒĒ°VĒĒ *smṛtiḥ labdhā* — recognition (of myself) is gained; + SĒĒĒ *acyuta* — O! *Acyuta* (*Kṛṣṇa*); ĒĒĒ°ĒnāĒ *gata-sandehaḥ* — (as) one from whom all doubts have gone; Ő|ĒĒĒĒĒ + Ő°Ē *sthitaḥ asmi* — I remain; ĒĒĒ ĒĒĒĒĒĒ *tava vacanaṃ* — what you say; ĒĒĒ°ĒĒ *kariṣye* — I will do

Arjuna said:

By your grace, (my) delusion is gone; and I have gained recognition (of myself.) *Acyuta*, I remain as one from whom all doubts have gone. I will do what you say.

ACYUTA, MY DELUSION IS GONE, I WILL DO WHAT YOU SAY

Addressing *Kṛṣṇa* as *Acyuta*, the one who is free from any kind of change, *Arjuna* says, 'My delusion is gone. He has gained recognition, *smṛti*, of himself, that is,

¹ *Gītā* – 2-11

² *Gītā* – 18-66

knowledge of *ātmā*.' How? He has gained this knowledge by the grace of *Kṛṣṇa*. 'By your grace—*tvatprasādāt*,' he says, which means by the teaching of *Kṛṣṇa*. And further, he says that he remains as a person from whom all doubts have disappeared, *gatasandeha*. Now he is ready to act according to the words of *Kṛṣṇa*. He has no longer any sense of doership, and therefore, can do what is to be done just because it is to be done.

Kṛṣṇa himself had said, 'I have nothing at all to accomplish in the three worlds, and still, I am engaged in *karma*—*na me pārtha asti kartavyaṃ triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana nānavāptam avāptavyaṃ varte eva ca karmaṇi*.'¹ Similarly, *Arjuna* has his own *prārabdha-karma*, and therefore, should act. If he has gained knowledge, then he does not lose anything by being active, but is merely fulfilling his *prārabdha-karma*, and if he has not gained the knowledge, then he had better do what is to be done as a *yoga*, because, it is better to get destroyed doing your duty than doing something else—*svadharme nidhanaṃ śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ*. *Śaṅkara* here views *Arjuna* as one who has gained this knowledge of *ātmā*, not just some freedom from confusion with reference to *dharma* and *adharma*. Thus, the delusion that is gone is that which is born of the ignorance, which is the cause of all *saṃsāra*. That *saṃsāra* is very difficult to cross, like an ocean. But it has completely gone by the recognition of the self, which is completely free from notions, the self that we experience in deep sleep or in a moment of joy, etc. The self is always self-evident, and thus, the knowledge is only recognition of what is. *Śaṅkara* says that the recognition, the gain, is of the truth of *ātmā*. Because of that gain, one is released from all the knots of the heart in the form of ignorance, desire, and the action that the desire instigates. Thus, by saying that his delusion is gone, 'due to your grace—*tvatprasādāt*,' *Arjuna* thanks his teacher.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY OF THE ŚĀSTRA IS TO REMOVE DELUSION

Śaṅkara says that by this question on the part of *Kṛṣṇa*, and *Arjuna*'s answer to it, it is very clear that the result of the study of the entire *śāstra* is the elimination of delusion, *moha*. It is also clear that the removal of *saṃsāra* takes place when the removal of the delusion takes place. Therefore, delusion is the cause for *saṃsāra*, and this clearly means that there is no real *saṃsāra*. Thus, 'You are grieving for what does not deserve to be grieved for—*aśocyān anvaśocastvam*,' is a very appropriate beginning for this conclusion, 'My delusion is gone—*naṣṭo mohaḥ*.' The grief is for no reason because it is due to delusion. The destruction of the delusion takes place by knowledge, and because of that also, there is both the recognition, *smṛti*, and the gain, *lābha*, of the *ātmā*. This is the result of the study of the *śāstra*.

That this knowledge results in total freedom from all the knots of the heart, is also shown by the *śruti* in which *Nārada* says, 'I, the one who does not know the self, am in

¹ *Gītā* – 3-22

sorrow—*so'haṃ bhagavaḥ na ātmavit śocāmi*.¹ Even though *Nārada* knows a lot of things, including the four Vedas, he is still subject to grief because he does not know the *ātmā*. Thus, he requests *Sanatkumāra* to help him cross this ocean of sorrow—*śokasya pāraṃ tārayatū*. To *Nārada*'s request, *Sanatkumāra* says, 'You know everything except one thing which makes the difference between sorrow and joy, and that is indeed *ātmā* which is limitless, *bhūmā*.' Similarly, it is said elsewhere in the *śruti*, 'The knot of the heart is resolved. All doubts are destroyed—*bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiḥ chidyante sarva saṃśayāḥ*,² when the *ātmā* is known as *Brahman*. Then again, in the *Īśāvāsyaopaniṣad* there is a statement that says, 'Where is delusion, where is sorrow for the person who sees the oneness of the *ātmā*—*tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ ekatvam anupaśyataḥ*.³

Now that *Arjuna* is free from doubt, he says to *Kṛṣṇa*, 'I will do what you have said—*tava vacanaṃ kariṣye*.' *Śaṅkara* says that the meaning of this statement is, 'By your grace I am fulfilled, I am a *kṛtārtha*, and there is nothing that remains to be done by me.' In gaining *mokṣa*, all the *puruṣārthas* are gained. Then the pursuit of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* has paid off. Therefore, *Arjuna* can say, 'There is no longer anything for me to do.' Earlier he had thought that, he should go to *Rishikesh*, but now he finds that whatever is to be done, he can do, without any problem. From this we also understand that the pursuit of inquiring into the *śāstra* continues until the delusion goes. Then there is nothing more to do.

The scene now shifts from the battlefield to the palace. The whole dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* was reported by *Sañjaya* to *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, the blind king, the father of all the hundred *Dhṛtarāṣṭras*, who was hearing from *Sañjaya* what was going on in the battlefield. The *Gītā* opens with him asking, 'What did my people and *Pāṇḍavas* do assembled and armed for battle in *Kurukṣetra*, the place of *dharma*, *Sañjaya*—*dharmaḥ kurukṣetre samavetaḥ yuyutsavaḥ māmakaḥ pāṇḍavāḥ ca eva kim akurvata sañjaya*?'⁴ *Sañjaya*'s answer was the whole *Gītā*, first giving the context, and then reporting the dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, in which he confined himself only to what *Kṛṣṇa* said and what *Arjuna* said.

¹ *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* – 7-1-3

² *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* – 2-2-8

³ *Īśāvāsyaopaniṣad* – 7

⁴ *Gītā* – 1-1

that took place in the battlefield, wherever he was. Therefore, *Saṅjaya* says in the next verse, by the grace of *Vyāsa* I could hear this dialogue between *Bhagavān* and *Arjuna*.

ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥ १७ ॥

ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥ १७ ॥

*vyāsapra sādācchrutavānetadguhyamaham param
yogaṃ yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt sākṣāt kathayataḥ svayam*

Verse 75

ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥ १७ ॥ *vyāsaprasādāt* — by the grace of *Vyāsa*; ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥ १७ ॥ *etat guhyam param yogaṃ* — to this secret and ultimate *yoga*; ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥ १७ ॥ *yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt* — from *Kṛṣṇa*, the Lord of *yoga*; ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥ १७ ॥ *svayam* — himself; ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥ १७ ॥ *sākṣāt kathayataḥ* — directly teaching; + ॐ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥ १७ ॥ *aham śrutavān* — I have listened

By the grace of *Vyāsa*, I have listened to this secret and ultimate *yoga* from *Kṛṣṇa*, the Lord of *yoga*, directly teaching (it) himself.

BY VYĀSA'S GRACE SAṅJAYA GOT TO HEAR IT DIRECTLY

Saṅjaya was hearing all this by the grace of *Vyāsa*, because *Vyāsa* gave him a special eye, a *divya-cakṣu*, with which he could see and hear whatever that happened in the battlefield—that is, wherever he was, he would never miss all that happened anywhere in the battlefield. Another thing is understood here by implication. With ordinary eyes, we can only see what is available for perception. But with a *divya-cakṣu* and a prepared mind, one can see what is beyond the scope of perception. Otherwise how could *Saṅjaya* understand *Kṛṣṇa's* message? He could understand that *ātmā* is *Brahman* because of his preparedness.

What did he hear? He heard all about *yoga*. The *śāstra* that talks about *yoga* is also called *yoga*, like how the book whose subject matter is *Upaniṣad* is also called *Upaniṣad*. This *yoga* is twofold—*jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga*. It is called *parā*, because it is capable of giving *mokṣa*. From whom did *Saṅjaya* hear it? *Śaṅkara* makes the point that it is not passed down, *paramparayā*, but comes directly, *sākṣāt*, from the source itself, *Bhagavān*. Suppose *Arjuna* heard this teaching, and then he told somebody else, and then somebody else told somebody else, and somebody else. That is *paramparā*. By the time it comes to you, some things could be added and some of them dropped, so that, what you get is only an edited form, sometimes a distorted form. But here, it is right from the source. *Bhagavān* himself talks about himself. He is the lord of all *yoga*, *yogeśvara*, the one who initiated both *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga*.

He had himself talked about this earlier in the *gītā-śāstra*, ‘I told this imperishable *yoga* to *Vivasvān*, he told it to *Manu* and *Manu* told it to *Ikṣvāku*—*imaṃ vivasvate yogaṃ proktavān aham avyayaṃ vivasvān manave prāha manurikṣvākave*

*abravīt.*¹ Therefore, he is called *yogeśvara*. And also, it is he alone that is to be accomplished by the *karma-kāṇḍa* or *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, as he himself says, ‘I am the one to be known by all the Vedas—*vedaiḥ ca sarvaiḥ aham eva vedyah.*’² He is both the initiator of this twofold *yoga*, and the subject matter of this *yoga*.

Saṅjaya heard this, not from the flute-playing, mountain-lifting, butter-eating, cowherd, *Kṛṣṇa*, but from *Kṛṣṇa* the teacher—*svayaṁ kathayataḥ kṛṣṇāt*. *Kṛṣṇa* did not just say a couple of sentences like ‘You are *Brahman*. All this is *māyā*,’ or give some advice, but taught exhaustively in seventeen chapters. When *Saṅjaya* says, *kathayataḥ*, we understand that it is not simple talking, but proper teaching that went on there.

Then *Saṅjaya* says to *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* :

ॐ नमो राजानं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं
 ॐ नमो राजानं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं ॥७६॥

rājan saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya saṁvādamimamadbhutam
keśavārjunayoḥ puṇyaṁ hr̥ṣyāmi ca muhurmuhuḥ

Verse 76

ॐ नमो राजान — O! King; ॐ नमो राजानं — between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*;
 < नमो राजान — this; + ' ॐ नमो राजानं — wondrous; { नमो राजानं — auspicious;
 ॐ नमो राजानं — dialogue; ॐ नमो राजानं ॐ नमो राजानं — repeatedly
 recalling; ॐ नमो राजानं ॐ नमो राजानं — again and again; ॐ नमो राजानं ॐ नमो राजानं — I rejoice

O! King, repeatedly recalling this wondrous, auspicious, dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, I rejoice again and again.

Here *Saṅjaya* addresses *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* as a sovereign, *rājan*, O! King. The repetition of the word, *saṁsmṛtya*, remembering, indicates that always, at every moment, he remembers all those words of the dialogue again and again. What kind of dialogue? One that destroys all *pāpa*, all the causes of bondage, because it gives you *mokṣa*. It is, therefore, *puṇya*. Dwelling upon the words of *Kṛṣṇa* and on *Arjuna*’s questions, etc., he says, ‘I rejoice—*hr̥ṣyāmi*,’ again and again, *muhurḥ muhurḥ*.

Not only that, *Saṅjaya*, further expresses his wonder dwelling on the *viśvarūpa-darśana* that *Kṛṣṇa* gave *Arjuna*.

इति राजानं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं
 इति राजानं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं सशस्त्रं ॥७७॥

¹ *Gītā* – 4-1

² *Gītā* – 15-15

*tacca saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya rūpamatyadbhutaṁ hareḥ
vismayo me mahān rājan hr̥ṣyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ*

Verse 77

SE ca — and further; hareḥ — of the Lord, Hari; tat atyadbhutam rūpam — that most wondrous form; saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya — repeatedly recalling; mahān vismayaḥ me — great amazement for me; rājan — O! King; punaḥ punaḥ — again and again; hr̥ṣyāmi ca — and I rejoice

And further, repeatedly recalling that most wondrous form of the Lord, Hari, I have great amazement, O! King, and I rejoice again and again.

Not only was the dialogue presented here, but also the description of the visual form of *Kṛṣṇa* as the entire cosmos. In the eleventh chapter, at the request of *Arjuna*, *Kṛṣṇa* showed his cosmic form, in which *Arjuna* could see everything, including time, all the elements, Lord *Yama* and all the *devatās*. And whatever *Arjuna* saw, *Saṅjaya* also saw. In that particular form they could see everything, and *Saṅjaya* found it the most wondrous form of the Lord—*atyadbhutaṁ rūpaṁ hareḥ*. Recollecting it again and again, there was great amazement, *mahān vismaya*, for him. As the words are wonderful, the form is also wonderful, and as he rejoices in remembering the dialogue, *Saṅjaya* also rejoices in recollecting the cosmic form of *Kṛṣṇa*.

Saṅjaya now sums up by expressing his devotion to Lord *Kṛṣṇa* and his sure opinion as to the outcome of the war.

yaत्रा योगेश्वराḥ कृष्णो यात्रा पार्थो धानुर्धराḥ
तत्रा श्रीविजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नित्तिर्मामा
*yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ
tatra śrīvijayo bhūtirdhruvā nītirmatirmama*

Verse 78

yaत्रा yatra — wherever; yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇaḥ — *Kṛṣṇa*, the Lord of *yoga*; yaत्रा yatra — wherever; pārthaḥ dhanurdharaḥ — *Arjuna*, the one who bears the bow; तत्रा tatra — there; श्री śrīḥ — wealth; विजय vijayaḥ — victory; भूतिḥ bhūtiḥ — various riches; ध्रुवा dhruvā — definite; नित्तिḥ nītiḥ — justice; मामा matih — (this is) my conclusion

Wherever there is *Kṛṣṇa*, the Lord of *yoga*, wherever there is *Arjuna*, the one who bears the bow, there wealth, victory, various riches, and definite justice are present. This is my conclusion.

Saṅjaya says, ‘Wherever, *Kṛṣṇa* is, there is *śrī*, wealth and *vijaya*, victory. And wherever *Arjuna* is, there too there is wealth and victory.’ And when he says wherever

Kṛṣṇa is, he means, in whose heart *Kṛṣṇa* is. *Arjuna* here is called the one who carries a bow, *dhanurdhara*. That is significant here and later we will look into it further. Wherever *Kṛṣṇa* is, all wealth will be. Nowhere else; because *Lakṣmī* is inseparable from *Kṛṣṇa*. This wealth is not ordinary wealth, but includes all kinds of wealth, *bhūti*—moral wealth, material wealth, spiritual wealth, etc. They will all be there for the one who has *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* in his heart. It is certain, *dhruvā*. There is no failure possible. Then again, justice, *nīti*, will also certainly be there. That means there will be order, proper government, in terms of *dharma*. Justice will be there, because *Kṛṣṇa* is *dharma*. It is not *Kṛṣṇa's dharma*. *Kṛṣṇa* is *dharma*! Even though *Kṛṣṇa* is more than *dharma*, *dharma* is not separate from *Kṛṣṇa*. Of course, *Saṅjaya* didn't want to attract the wrath of *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, and therefore, he says, 'This is my conclusion—*matih mama*.' Otherwise, *Saṅjaya* is telling *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* here that if he has some blind hopes that *Duryodhana* would win, he had better forget it. Wherever there is *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, there will be wealth, victory, and justice. In this way, *Saṅjaya* concludes the whole conversation.

WHEREVER THERE IS PROPER ATTITUDE AND EFFORT, LORD'S GRACE IS ALWAYS THERE

Let us look now at why *Saṅjaya* calls *Arjuna*, *dhanurdhara*, the one who wields the bow. Mere *Arjuna* will not achieve victory. He must be ready to do what is to be done. Only then can there be victory, etc. By calling him *dhanurdhara*, *Saṅjaya* indicates that *Arjuna* is a human being who is ready to perform his duty. And it becomes *yoga* when *Kṛṣṇa* is recognized. Otherwise, it is simple *karma*. Where a person recognizes Lord *Kṛṣṇa* and is ready to do his duty, there will be *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*, and then knowledge. Thus, *śrī* here can be considered knowledge as well as material wealth. Everything will be there for him, because he does not sit and regret. And that is because, he knows that the giver of the results of all actions, *karma-phala-dātā*, is by his side. Once you have that *daiva* on your side, that unknown factor is no longer unknown, in the sense that it is not going to spoil the result of your undertaking. The unknown factor is controlled by invoking *Īśvara*. Real control is taking *Īśvara* into account. If you want to have control without taking *Īśvara* into account, you are in trouble. Not all the variables can be controlled, but if you take the controller on your side, you have surrendered, and that attitude makes life simple. Then *karma* becomes *yoga*, and because of that, there is a grateful acceptance, *prasāda-buddhi*, of whatever comes. Therefore, there is no failure; there is always victory.

If we learn from every experience, there is no need to draw a line. Generally, we draw a line, as though it is all over. An enterprising businessman who incurs some losses does not wind up his business. If he has incurred a loss, he tries to find out what happened, and keeps going. He knows that it is a process in which sometimes you incur loss and sometimes gain. Therefore, he does not draw a line. If you do not draw a line,

you are always a winner; draw a line, and you are a loser. In living a successful life, there is no necessity to draw a line, because the whole life is a complete life, to be lived purposefully, learning at every step. When should you draw the line? Only at the time of death. The whole life is a process, and if *Kṛṣṇa* is on your side, you are a winner. If not, you are not. Even though *Duryodhana* thought that he called all the shots, as he had larger armies, and all the invincible warriors, he lost the war. Without *Kṛṣṇa*, even *Arjuna* would have met Lord *Yama* on the first day itself. Because *Kṛṣṇa* was sitting there as his driver, he went on to victory. Without that driver, in spite of all his weaponry and skills, *Arjuna* would not even have fought. At the beginning of the fight, he was caught between the horns of a dilemma, of having to choose between duty and affection. He could not even start. Where is the question of fighting? Because *Kṛṣṇa* was there, there was victory.

Certainly there will be justice, *nīti*, and prosperity, *bhūti*. Because it is mentioned separately, *śrī* can also be taken as knowledge, *vidyā*. Everything will be there. We can understand this to be true individually, and also with reference to a society. Where there is *nīti*, each one does his job, and therefore, there is plenty for everybody. In whichever period of time or place that *Kṛṣṇa* is there, people are ready to do what is to be done. Then all these will be there. Thus ends chapter eighteen of the *Bhagavadgītā*. With this the *Bhagavadgītā* itself and *Śaṅkara's* commentary also ends. Now we shall see the concluding statements of the *bhāṣya* and the *Gītā* itself.

॥ इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायाः अष्टादशोऽध्यायः ॥
 ॐ इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायाः अष्टादशोऽध्यायः ॥
 ॥ इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायाः अष्टादशोऽध्यायः ॥

*om tatsaditi śrīmahābhārata śatasāhasryāṃ saṃhitāyāṃ
 vaiyāsikyāṃ bhīṣmaparvaṇi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu
 brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde
 mokṣasannyāsayogo nāmāṣṭādaśo'dhyāyah*

We conclude with *Om tat sat*. *Om* is everything, and that alone is *satya*. In the epic of ten thousand verses written by *Vyāsa*, in the *Bhīṣma-parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, in this section called the *Bhagavadgītā*, which enjoys the status of an *Upaniṣad* because its subject matter is the knowledge of *Brahman*, *brahma-vidyā*, and which is also a *yoga-śāstra*, in the dialogue that took place between *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, is this chapter called *mokṣa-sannyāsa*, the renunciation—that is the renunciation of all activities by giving up the sense of doership, *kartṛtva*, in the wake of the knowledge that *ātmā* is not a doer—that gives freedom. Many things were told in this *śāstra*, but predominantly, renunciation of all actions, *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*, was pointed out, and thus, the last chapter is rightly called *mokṣa-sannyāsa*.

<ÉÉ ÉÖÉİ (É?ØÉVÆÉ- (ÉÉ?MÉEVÉÉSÉÉ?ÉÉMEÉÉ Éxñij ÉMÉ Éİ (ÉVaf (ÉÉnŋjÉ?afÉ ÉÖ ÉnŋSÉEÉÉÉ?Ø?É? ÉİÉ&
 EbiÉÉÉ ÉÖ; ÉMÉ É?ØİÉÉİ ÉÉ?afÉ ÉÉā É?É?afÉÉÉā xÉÉ ÉÉVŋŋjÉÉ?ØvafÉÉ&**
 iti śrīmatparamahaṃsa-parivrājakācārya-
 govindabhagavatpūjyapādaśiṣyaśrīmadācāryaśaṅkarabhagavataḥ
 kṛtau śrībhagavadgītābhāṣye mokṣasannyāsayogo
 nāmāṣṭādaśo'dhyāyaḥ

And finally, this chapter was commented upon by the revered teacher Śrī Śaṅkara, who is the disciple of the parama-haṃsa-sannyāsī, Śrī Govinda-bhagavat-pāda .

°É ÉÉÉÉÉ ÉMÉ ÉÉnŋŋjÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉÉ ÉĀ*
 samāptimagamadidaṅ gītāśāstram

Thus ends the gītā-śāstra .

ABABABABAB

Generally, when we complete a book like this, we repeat the first verse, so that we start all over again. This is to indicate that it's study is a continuous study, a study of a lifetime.

वैशंपयानो वचनम् ॥
 वीर्यवान् धर्मवत्सुतः ॥
 धृतराष्ट्र उवाच ॥

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

*dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ
 māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva kimakurvata sañjaya*

Verse 1-1

om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

ABABABAB

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