

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 6: Ātma-Saṁyama-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/n09CKX7Rg34>

## Effort and dedication, over multiple births, takes a Yogi to salvation

The 6th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā is called **Atma Samyama Yoga - the Yoga of Self Discipline.**

It is a profound chapter that extends, very beautifully, Bhagavān's response to Arjuna's agonizing dilemma. Arjuna had many arguments as to why fighting with his cousins for land seemed so unnecessary. From Chapter 2 onwards, Bhagavān patiently explained why such battles are indeed necessary. In this chapter, he expands on the principle of self control, calling it a greatly significant and ideal Yoga.

The session began with the symbolic lighting of the lamp.

How should we lead our lives? This chapter gives us direction and a framework towards eventual merging with Bhagavān, much like the banks of a river gives support and direction to the flow of water towards the sea.

We must improve and control our lives and and make it even sweeter. An analogy that comes to mind is the the pulling of a string of instrument; it must be done exactly right in order to produce music that is sweet.

One way to do so is through effort; we should first have the desire to do so, of course. The other is the blessing of Bhagavān .

Bhagavān earlier said

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।

आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥ 5॥

exhorting us to make efforts in reaching such a goal.

The word "atma" can actually be interpreted to suggest the five senses, intelligence, the mind, the

body and our soul (the essence of our self). Controlling all of them has great positive results on our lives, as this chapter shows.

Indeed, Bhagavān has alluded to this earlier:

**युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।  
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥ 17॥**

advising us to apply restraint to all aspects of our lives, including sleeping, eating and so on, to progress.

Bhagavān goes on to say that severance from misery is the true Yoga and this path has to be traveled with complete confidence and determination.

**तं विद्याद् दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ।  
स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥ 23॥**

In Chapter 6, Bhagavān explains how this is to be done, very beautifully, asking us to look at the joys and sorrows of everyone as if they were their own.

**आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।  
सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥ 32॥**

Remember that he has said that the gifted are those who see me in everyone and everything.

**यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।  
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥ 30॥**

Such a person is indifferent to the outside world and seeks Bhagavān within.

We are, of course, ordinary people, subject to the currents of life. But Bhagavān gives us glimpses into the mind of a Yogi in this chapter. We must behave with others as we would wish others to behave with us. Only then would we be able to attain this Yoga.

Remember that the Kauravas have behaved viciously with the Pandavas in many ways, whether it was the burning down of the house of wax, or trying to poison Bheema or the humiliation of Draupadi. Ultimately it was about snatching away the kingdom of the Pandavas.

Such vile behaviour is a reflection of past Saṃskāras and not just about the experiences of this life.

The teerth of the Bhagavad Gītā helps us to make sense of our lives and take us on the right path.

As has been said so wisely,

**माला-निर्मोकनम् पुमसं जल-स्नानम् दीन  
दीन सक्रद गीतामृत-स्नानम्संसार-माला-नासनम्**

That is, reading the Bhagavad Gītā every day removes the dirt accumulated in our minds.

At the end of all this, however, Arjuna was still not convinced. He observes that our mind is always in a state of turbulence - anger, passion and so much more. We are driven by desire. It seems impossible to see Bhagavān in imperfect people near by, let alone within ourselves.

So he says that this attitude seems very difficult:

अर्जुन उवाच ।

योऽयं योगस्त्वया प्रोक्तः साम्येन मधुसूदन ।

एतस्याहं न पश्यामि चञ्चलत्वात्स्थितिं स्थिराम् ॥ 33॥

The choice of the word "madhu" is very apt. It addresses the sweet illusions of life and Krishna attracts this sweetness.

The erratic nature of the mind seems impossible to manage.

6.34

**cañcalaṃ(m) hi manaḥ(kh) kṛṣṇa, pramāthi balavaddṛḍham,  
tasyāhaṃ(n) nigrahaṃ(m) manye, vāyoriva suduṣkaram. 6.34**

For, Kṛṣṇa, the mind is very unsteady, turbulent, tenacious and powerful; therefore, I consider it as difficult to control as the wind.

Śrī Krishna, the mind is restless, turbulent, strong and obstinate, O Krishna. It appears to me that it is more difficult to control than the wind.

A beautiful rendition by a Genius Poetess Bahinabai an illiterate, hardworking village woman expressed the essence of her life through her poems/songs that were composed verbally in ovi metre in a mixture of two dialects: Khandeshi and Levaganboli.

Her son Sopandev, who became a well-known poet, transcribed them was shared here describing the nature of the mind.:

मन वढाय वढाय, उभ्या पीकातलं ढोर ।

किती हाकला हाकला, फिरी येतं पिकांवर ॥

Mind is fickle, like the animal in a crop; the more you cast it away; it turns back again to it.

मन लहरी लहरी त्याले हाती धरे कोन ?

उंडारलं उंडारलं जसं वारा वहादनं

She also says that mind is unpredictable; nobody can catch it; it flows along with the drift of the wind.

मन पाखरू पाखरू याची काय सांगू मात ?

आता व्हतं भुईवर गेलं गेलं आभायात

she compares mind with bird and says that sometimes mind is so small like Popeye seeds and sometimes it is so big that it cannot even fit in the sky in following words.

The mind goes in the direction that you ask it not to go to.

This highly unstable mind seems impossible to manage, just like an erratic wind. It is possible for the mind to make you sorrowful. How can anyone control the wind? The mind is the source of both sorrow and liberation.

6.35

**asaṃśayaṃ(m) mahābāho, mano durnigrahaṃ(ñ) calam,  
abhyāsenā tu kaunteya, vairāgyeṇa ca gr̥hyate. 6.35**

Śrī Bhagavān said:

The mind is restless no doubt, and difficult to curb, Arjuna; but it can be brought under control by repeated practice (of meditation) and by the exercise of dispassion, O son of Kuntī.

Bhagavān responds: O mighty son of Kuntī, what you say is correct; the mind is indeed very difficult to restrain. But by practice and detachment, it can be controlled.

(Note that it is a good practice to accept some truth in the words of someone you actually disagree with. This allows the person to give the right message and has a greater chance of being accepted.)

A student may be in class but his mind may be outside. How can we pull the student's mind back inside?

Bhagavān says that dispassion and practice is what will lead to control of the mind, even though it might appear not to be so.

A Sanskrit subhashita says:

**तन्मे मनः शिव संकल्पमस्तु**

That is, O mind, concentrate on good resolutions, move towards the heights ideals of life, towards the goal. This is the meaning of renunciation.

To reach anywhere, the most important step is to control the mind through practice of meditation and dispassion. Dispassion need not be interpreted as indifference to everything. One can be fully engaged during a period where engagement is necessary. For instance, when Krishna played the flute for one purpose in Gokul, he put it aside as he moved to Dwarka.

The mind must be steered from inappropriate thoughts to appropriate thoughts. An athlete must control his diet and otherwise be highly disciplined. A musician must also practice again and again. It is said that Lata Mangeshkar specifically avoided cold food and drink because she know their impact.

Gnyaneshwar Maharaj ji speaks of Vairāgya as ignoring small things in the quest of a larger objective, and that is how Spring blooms within one's mind.

**6.36**

**asaṃyatātmanā yogo, duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ,  
vaśyātmanā tu yatatā, śakyo'vāptumupāyataḥ. 6.36**

Yoga is difficult of achievement by one whose mind is not subdued by him; however, who has the mind under control, and is ceaselessly striving, it can be easily attained through practice. Such is My conviction.

Bhagavān agrees that Yoga (Atma Samyama Yoga) is difficult to attain for one whose mind is uncontrolled. "However", HE says, "in MY opinion, those who have learnt to control the mind, and who strive earnestly by proper means, can attain perfection in Yoga.

Sant Ramdas Maharaj ji was approached for a woman. she complained that her son ate jaggery

excessively. As the result he suffered from various ailments. Maharaj ji asked her to come after 15 days. She did so and Maharaj ji then advised her son to limit his intake of jaggery. The surprised woman asked Maharaj ji why this was not possible to do 15 days prior.

He said that he himself was fond of jaggery and so he decided to stop it for himself first before asking her son to do the same.

Bhagavān says that Arjuna is presently affected by many worldly issues, but in fact he has the ability to cultivate dispassion and practice. There was a precedent; did he not indulge in constant practice of archery?

A teacher gives confidence to a student and reminds him of latent abilities.

He had the ability to control himself too. Bhagavān

Śrī Krishna reminded Arjuna that when he went to heaven and saw Urvashi, regarded as an ancestor. Urvashi tried to seduce him and Arjuna politely rebuffed her and told her that he thought of her as a mother. This angered Urvashi who cursed Arjuna that he would be an eunuch for a year. But it made no difference to Arjuna.

This story was intended to encourage Arjuna that the path to this yoga was within reach.

Chinmaya said, "I **was clever yesterday, so I tried to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am trying to change myself.**" And thus Arjuna was asked to delve within, find strength and motivation and proceed.

### 6.37

**arjuna uvāca**  
**ayatiḥ(ś) śraddhayopeto, yogāccalitamānasaḥ,**  
**aprāpya yogasaṃsiddhiṃ(ñ), kām(ñ) gatiṃ(ñ) kṛṣṇa gacchati. 6.37**

Arjuna said:

Kṛṣṇa, what becomes of the aspirant who, though endowed with faith, has not been able to subdue his passion, and whose mind is, therefore, diverted from Yoga at the time of death, and who thus fails to reach perfection in Yoga (God-Realization)?

Through the Bhagavad Gītā we attain great spiritual levels but not all at once. Multiple births may be needed. Everything may not happen in this life, a concept that is not easy to digest,

In this beautiful shloka, Arjuna asks Bhagavān: What is the fate of the unsuccessful yogi who begins the path with faith, but who does not progress sufficiently due to an unsteady and relatively weak mind and is unable to reach the goal of Yoga in this life?

### 6.38

**kaccinnobhayavibhraṣṭaḥ(ś), chinnābhramiva naśyati,**  
**apraṭiṣṭho mahābāho, vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ(ph) pathi. 6.38**

Kṛṣṇa, swerved from the path leading to God-Realization and without any thing to stand upon, is he not lost like the scattered cloud, deprived of both God-Realization and heavenly enjoyment?

Arjuna continues, Does not such a person who deviates from this Yoga get deprived of both material and spiritual success, O Krishna, and perish like a scattered cloud with no position in either sphere?

"He was dispassionate and also practiced hard, yet he did not get anywhere. What would happen to him?" asks Arjuna, concerned.

**6.39**

**etanme saṁśayaṁ(ñ) kṛṣṇa, chettumarhasyaśeṣataḥ,  
tvadanyaḥ(s) saṁśayasyāsyā, chettā na hyupapadyate. 6.39**

Kṛṣṇa, only You are capable to remove this doubt of mine completely; for none other than You can dispel this doubt.

O Krishna, says Arjuna, please dispel this doubt of mine completely; you are the only one who can possibly do so. The world was kept aside and he did not attain spiritual success either.

We are reminded that the great Veer Savarkar suffered greatly in the Andamans. But despite all these hardships, he compiled a literary work "Kamala Kavya" at that place. He was asked, "How did you maintain your morale while suffering?"

He responded that the Bhagavad Gītā told him he was certain to achieve his objective in succeeding births and therefore he was not disheartened. He had great wisdom and understood that all objectives may not be reached in a single birth.

**6.40**

**śrībhagavānuvāca  
pārtha naiveha nāmutra, vināśastasya vidyate,  
na hi kalyāṇakṛtkāścid, durgatiṁ(n) tāta gacchati. 6.40**

Śrī Bhagavān said:

Arjuna, there is no fall for him either here or hereafter. For, O My beloved, none who strives for self-redemption (i.e., God-Realization) ever meets with evil destiny.

Bhagavān says, with great love: O Parth, one who engages on the spiritual path does not meet with destruction either in this world or the world to come. My dear friend, one who strives for God-realization is never overcome by evil.

मनुष्य गलती का पुतला है  
गलती अक्सर हो ही जाती है  
जो कर ले ठीक गलती को  
उसे इंसान कहते हैं।

Along the way, we do fall and get distracted. We are susceptible to anger and other emotions. But these failings do not cause evil and a sincere Yogi is sure to reach his destination.

What will we take when we die? Wealth and position will become irrelevant. But whatever progress we made at any of the five levels, the essence will go with us. And you will be reborn with that essence. There is no negative impact whatsoever.

**6.41**

**prāpya puṇyakṛtām(m) lokān, uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ(s) samāḥ,  
śucīnām(m) śrīmatām(ñ) gehe, yogabhraṣṭo'bhijāyate. 6.41**

Such a person who has strayed from Yoga, obtains the higher worlds, (heaven etc.) to which men of meritorious deeds alone are entitled, and having resided there for innumerable years, takes birth of pious and prosperous parents.

Śrī Krishna continues: The unsuccessful yogis, upon death, go to the abodes of the virtuous. After dwelling there for many ages, they are again reborn on the earth plane, into a families of pious and prosperous people.

**6.42**

**athavā yogināmeva, kule bhavati dhīmatām,  
etaddhi durlabhataram(m), loke janma yadīdṛśam. 6.42**

Or, if he is possessed of dispassion, then not attaining to those reasons he is born in the family of enlightened Yogīs; but such a birth in this world is very difficult to obtain.

Else, if they had developed dispassion due to long practice of Yoga, they are born into a family endowed with divine wisdom and knowledge. However, such a birth is very difficult to attain in this world.

To be born in a family where there is an air of piety would be a great blessing but it is not that easy.

Ultimately, this effort it is not a waste and does require time.

**6.43**

**tatra taṃ(m) buddhisamyogaṃ(m), labhate paurvadehikam,  
yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ(s), saṃsiddhau kurunandana. 6.43**

Arjuna, he automatically regains in that birth the latencies of even-mindedness of his previous birth; and through that he strives, harder than ever for perfection in the form of God-Realization.

On taking such a birth, Śrī Krishna says, O descendant of Kurus, they reawaken the wisdom of their previous lives, and strive even harder toward perfection of this Yoga.

It is noted that some very young children have great gifts and seem to have learnt the Bhagavad Gītā in a prior birth. We see similar abilities in music and so on. Thus, none of the efforts of prior births are ever wasted.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj ji says, gifted children attain great things at a very young age.

तैसी दशेची वाट न पाहतां । वयसेचिया गांवा न येतां ।  
बाळपणीच सर्वज्ञता । वरी तयातें ॥६-४५३॥

Just as light spreads out all around before the rise of the sun so omniscience weds him in his childhood without waiting for him to become a youth.

तिये सिद्धप्रज्ञेचेनि लाभें । मनचि सारस्वतें दुभे ।  
मग सकळ शास्त्रे स्वयंभें । निघती मुखें ॥६-४५४॥

Then the intelligence and all the lore's acquired in the previous birth attend upon him and all the scriptures issue from his mouth.

It seems that some young children wear garlands of great wisdom. One may say that it appears that Saraswati has blessed them and they are able to enunciate the Śāstras, this is clearly the effect of past Saṃskāras.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj ji and all his family members were ostracized by the society as children of Saṃnyāsi. Even under adverse conditions, he wrote Dnyaneshwari of nine thousand Ovis.

Sant Gulabrao Maharaj ji was blind. He wrote more than 130 books. He was able to do this work only because of the scriptures he had read in his previous birth.

#### 6.44

**pūrvābhyāsenā tenaiva, hriyate hyavaśo'pi saḥ,  
jijñāsurapi yogasya, śabdabrahmātivartate. 6.44**

The other one who takes birth in a rich family, though under the sway of his senses, feels drawn towards God by force of the habit acquired in his previous birth; nay, even the seeker of Yoga (in the form of even-mindedness) transcends the fruit of actions performed with some interested motive as laid down in the Vedas.

Indeed, such Yogis feel drawn or pulled towards Bhagavān, even against their will, on the strength of their past discipline (in previous lives). Such Yogis naturally rise above the ritualistic principles of the scriptures.

#### 6.45

**prayatnādyatamānastu, yogī saṃśuddhakilbiṣaḥ,  
anekajanmasaṃsiddhaḥ(s), tato yāti parāṃ(ñ) gatiṃ. 6.45**

The Yogī, however, who diligently takes up the practice, attains perfection in this very life with the help of latencies of many births, and being thoroughly purged of sin, forthwith reaches the Supreme state.

With the accumulated merits of many past births (Saṃskāras and efforts) , when these yogis engage in sincere endeavors to make further progress, they become purified from material desires and attain perfection in this life itself. He reaches the fruit of his efforts of previous births.

#### 6.46

**tapasvibhyo'dhiko yogī, jñānibhyo'pi mato'dhikaḥ,  
karmibhyaścādhiko yogī, tasmādyogī bhavānjuna. 6.46**

The Yogī is superior to the ascetics; he is regarded superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogī is also superior to those who perform action with some interested motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do become a Yogī.

Bhagavān reassures Arjuna: A yogi is superior to the *tapasvī* (ascetic), superior to the *jñānī* (a person of learning), and even superior to the *karmī* (ritualistic performer). Therefore, O Arjun, strive to be a yogi and continue on this path.

तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन

This is the motto of our Geeta Parivar. This is the Royal and an Ideal path.

6.47

**yogināmapi sarveṣāṃ(m), madgatenāntarātmanā,  
śraddhāvānbhajate yo mām(m), sa me yuktatamo mataḥ. 6.47**

Of all the Yogīs, again, he who devoutly worships Me with his mind focussed on Me is considered by Me to be the best Yogī.

Bhagavān says; there are yogis who are on this path, those whose minds are always absorbed in ME, and who engage in devotion to ME with great faith. I consider them to be the highest of all.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj ji says: such a Yoga who is involved in the Antaranga, in deep bliss, such a Yoga is the most superior.

Thus ended the viivechan which was followed by a **Q and A session**.

**Shambhu ji**

**Question:** In the 11th shloka, where there is a discussion of how to sit for asana, can we justify sitting on the skin of a deer?

**Answer:** It is intended to imply the skin of a deer that died naturally. However, in this day and age, we can use materials available these days.

**Question:** There is a reference to the Kuru dynasty. Then how was Duryodhana evil while the Pāṇḍavas were not?

**Answer:** It is not that the Kauravas were completely evil. There were good traits in them too. We are merely a collation of past traits and we can continue on the path of goodness.

We have to decide which path to take.

**Anita ji**

**Question:** I may be tilting towards devotion but my mind inside continues to be restless and unsettled.

**Answer:** The answer is in this very chapter. Only practice can address this issue. Prāṇayama is very effective in controlling the mind. Cultivating love towards Bhagavān is an effective means to control our mind.

**Sharada ji**

**Question:** I was born in a pious family but I am married to someone who is not pious and has poor habits. What is the solution?

**Answer:** These are tests for us. Gurudev advised that during such times, do not leave the path of devotion. One can also say that if I have been sent to such a family, there is a possibility that there may be an effect. Do not try to change people. Everyone has to go through their own paths. Be on your path and do not worry too much.

**H K Gupta ji**

**Question:** Sankalpa and Kamna. What comes first?

**Answer:** A word may have many meanings. The way we use a word in a sentence determines its meaning. The word Sankalpa is a decision. A good decision need not be discarded unless it is born out of a need. But needs that reflect the ego born out of comparisons are to be discarded.

**Mamta ji**

**Question:** what is the meaning of Tasmāt Yogi Bhavarjuna.

**Answer:** Yog means to join. Śrī Krishna urges Arjuna to continue to strive towards union with Bhagavān. We must understand that whether we are seen or not by anyone, it is clear that Bhagavān does see. Thus our lives must be spent in such a way.

**Om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ(m)  
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde ātmasaṃyamayogonāma ṣaṣṭho'dhyāyaḥ.**

Thus, in the Upaniṣad sung by the Lord, the Science of Brahma, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, ends the sixth chapter entitled " The Yoga of Self-control. "



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**Thank you-For reading the summary**

You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

**Jai Shri Krishna!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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