

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 6: Ātma-Saṁyama-Yoga

2/4 (Ślōka 8-18), Saturday, 27 May 2023

Interpreter: GĪTĀ PRAVĪṆA RUPAL SHUKLA

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/8Oz2phxooYg>

The Processes in Dhyana Yoga

The session began with the traditional 'deep prajwalan' and offering of prayers to Guru and Ishwar. We are the blessed ones with a charmed existence as we have been able to avail of this chance to learn and understand Srimad BhagavadGita. It is due to the blessings of Ishwara and our past good deeds or karma phala that has led to this fortuitous opportunity for us! Our spiritual journey has begun. Using Arjuna as the medium, Sri Bhagavan has actually conveyed this Divine knowledge to the rest of the mankind on the various ways to reach HIM. HE has explained to us the various paths through which we all can achieve Moksha or everlasting peace.

In the previous chapters, Paramatma has enumerated Gyana Yoga, Karma Yoga and also Karma Sanyasa Yoga. It is noteworthy that HE is only showing us the various avenues to reach HIM. Not even once does Ishwara impose HIS opinions. Arjuna had earlier asked HIM what would be the correct path, and in response, Sri Bhagavan had elaborated on the different paths, leaving the ultimate course for the choice of action upon Arjuna. The situation is akin to the wide range of saris that we see in a shop selling saris. Ultimately it is up to us, which sari we would choose to buy.

In the 6th chapter that is the Ātma-Saṁyama-Yoga, HE speaks to us about the Dhyana Yoga or the path of meditation. In the previous slokas(1-9) we have heard from HIM the importance of thought control (control of vasanas) which consequently leads to mind control. Take the example of two options that we may have: chocolates on the one hand, and medicines on the other. Our preference of chocolate would be termed 'preyas' and our choice of medicine would be considered 'shreyas'. After all, the mind can be our best friend or our worst enemy, depending entirely upon the course of action that we take and the control we exert over our mind.

Mind control is necessary for a karma yogi to perform Nishkama Karma or actions without any attachment to results; and the path of meditation helps us to achieve this easily. In the next few slokas Bhagavan is teaching us how to practice meditation. **HE explains the best practices to be followed in order to achieve equanimity of mind. After all, the ultimate ideal aim for every being on Earth should be to achieve a harmonious union with HIM.**

**jñānavijñānatṛptātmā, kūṭastho vijitendriyaḥ,
yukta ityucyate yogī, śamaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ. 6.8
Suhṛnmitrāryudāsīna, madhyasthadveṣyabandhuṣu,
sādhuṣvapi ca pāpeṣu, śamabuddhirviśiṣyate. 6.9
yogī yuñjīta satatam, ātmānaṁ(m) rahasi sthitaḥ,
ekākī yatacittātmā, nirāśīraparigrahaḥ. 6.10**

The Yogī whose mind is sated with Jñāna (Knowledge of Nirguṇa Brahma) and Vijñāna (Knowledge of manifest Divinity), who is unmoved under all circumstances, whose senses are completely under control, and to whom mud, stone and gold are all alike, is spoken of as a God-realized soul.

He who looks upon well-wishers and neutrals as well as mediators, friends and foes, relatives and inimicals, the virtuous and the sinful, with equanimity, stands supreme.

Living in seclusion all by himself, the Yogī who has controlled his mind and body, and is free from desires and void of possessions, should constantly engage his mind in meditation.

Those who seek the state of Yoga should reside in seclusion, constantly engaged in meditation with a controlled mind and body, getting rid of desires and possessions for enjoyment. Further elaborating, Ishwara says that a person should try to remain in solitude and try to fix his mind on a single thought of reunion with Paramatma. In this shloka, remaining in solitude means abstinence from all thoughts that lead to desire; it certainly does not imply that we remain physically isolated from others.

One has to subdue one's mind and body. Minimizing bodily requirements is imperative for a spiritual seeker. It does not mean that we should go to the extreme and stay away completely from tempting food. It just indicates that we should keep our greed and desire for delicious food under control. For example, what is the fun of keeping fast as a ritual on an auspicious day, if throughout the day one only thinks of good food instead of fixing one's mind on HIM?

If one controls desires for material possessions and bodily enjoyments, then one will be able to control one's mind which will further enable one to meditate better. Furthermore, we should be 'Nirashir', that is, free from all expectations, irrespective of whether we are doing something for others, or not doing anything at all. We should also be in a state of 'Aparigraha' or restraint from keeping possessions if they are not needed. Ponder over a situation wherein, at the age of ten years, we had our clothes and footwear. Now at the age of twenty if we still cling on to these possessions that have outlived their utility, then we are exemplifying attachment to material objects. There are some who, even at the time of death, would be reluctant to let go of their material attachments. **Such people are condemned to return to this mortal world repeatedly as they are not in the state of detachment.**

Our scriptures define meditation as **Samana Pratyaya Pravaha**. The Yoga Sutra defines meditation as '**Tatra pratyaya ekatanata dhyanam**'. A balanced, continuous flow of attention directed towards the same point or thought is meditation (*dhyana*). Here, Bhagavan explains that during meditation, one should remain in seclusion to avoid any disturbances from the external environment. If one is in contact with the external environment, people and worldly activities, it is easy for the mind to get attached to the worldly thoughts. When the mind is worldly, the tasks or activities related to the material realm tend to replay in the mind as repetitive thoughts. Whereas meditation is to constantly focus the mind on the same point or a single thought.

Guru Sharanand ji Maharaj used to say, only that person can meditate whose tasks are not pending. This is because our pending tasks would keep on plaguing our mind when we attempt to sit for *dhyana*. The '*pratyaya ekatanata*' or single-minded focus would come to us only if we are free from all such thoughts.

One should clearly do what is *shreyas* and not run after *preyas*. Sleeping till late in the morning is *preyas* for some students but it would lead to deferring of the results that they desire. We need the motivation to do the work that is *shreyas* in quality. **A controlled, steadfast mind helps us in choosing that which is *shreyas* over the *preyas*.**

6.11

**śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya, sthiramāsanamātmanah,
nātyucchritaṃ(n) nātinīcaṃ(ñ), cailājīnakuśottaram. 6.11**

Having firmly set his seat in a spot which is free from dirt and other impurities with the sacred Kuśa grass, deerskin and cloth spread thereon one upon the other(Kuśa below, deerskin in the middle and cloth uppermost), neither very high nor very low;

Before we start cooking, we need to understand the process that goes into this work. Similarly, meditation too requires a set of procedures to be followed. In this shloka Sri Bhagavan is enumerating the sitting postures and environment required for meditation. Having established for himself a clean spot, seated still and firm, a person aspiring to meditate should ensure that his/her seat is neither too high nor too low. He should prepare the seat by spreading some Kusha grass, laying over it a deer skin, and a clean cloth.

The kusha grass prevents the body's electric current from permeating onto the earth. In ancient times, rishis and munis used to put a deer skin or a tiger-skin over the kusha grass to prepare their seat. However, the skins were NOT procured out of killing the innocent animals; rather, these were skins of deer or tiger who had died a natural death. This arrangement enables the mind to focus better. A bed or swing or fashionable furniture are not good for meditation. Seat should not be too high, else one feels dizzy. In the earlier days Yogis used to go to the forest and meditate. If the seat is on the ground then there are good chances of insects and reptiles creeping in . Hence the seat should be a little elevated from the ground

6.12

**tatraikāgraṃ(m) manaḥ(kh) kṛtvā, yatacittendriyakriyāḥ,
upaviśyāsane yuñjyād, yogamātmaviśuddhaye. 6.12**

And occupying that seat , concentrating the mind and controlling the functions of the mind and senses, he should practice Yoga for self purification.

Once seated, one should practice restraining of the mind. The endeavour should be to stop the mind from wandering. Once the thought process is brought under control, automatically sense control happens. It is similar to the situation where muddy water is left undisturbed for some time. The mud settles down and the clear water becomes visible. In the same manner, we should focus on one thought only. This is the way meditation is to be practiced for self purification. Actually, the Self or Atman is always pure. Our effort should be to identify ourselves with that purified Self and not with the body and mind. Vedanta teaches us that we are part of the Absolute and not a single entity as a body. If the spectacles are covered with dust, the vision is blurred. Then, one has to take a cloth and clean the spectacles. All the processes (jnana yoga, etc.) may be equated to the cloth or water used for cleaning.

Only when we cleanse our 'Atma' do we get a glimpse of our 'swaroop'-if not in this birth , then surely in the subsequent ones.

Ramsundarji Maharaj had said that ultimately, everyone will get moksha. Of course, those listening to his discourse were astounded by his statement. He further clarified that everyone will get *moksha*; however, WHEN they will attain it, and in which lifetime will they get an insight into the true nature of their 'swaroopa' is something even HE does not know! That would depend entirely on our state of readiness and eagerness to start our spiritual journey. **For the devotees and students belonging to the Geeta Pariwar, this journey has already started!**

All the Yogas - Gyana Yoga, Karma Yoga, Dhyana Yoga are the instruments with the help of which we can realize this very essence or Tattva.

6.13

**ṣamaṃ(ñ) kāyaśirogrīvaṃ(n), dhārayannacalaṃ(m) sthiraḥ,
saṃprekṣya nāsikāgraṃ(m) svaṃ(n), diśaścānavalokayan. 6.13**

Holding the trunk, head and neck straight and steady, remaining firm and fixing the gaze on the tip of his nose, without looking in other directions.

Bhagavan explains in this shloka how one has to hold the body in order to achieve mind control. One should hold the body, the head and the neck erect while sitting straight. Sitting in this posture, he should gaze at the tip of his nose not seeing any other object nor shifting the gaze to any other direction. All of us have read the epic Mahabharata and are aware that when Raj Guru Dronacharya was conducting an archery contest, he asked all the participants what they saw. With the exception of Arjuna, the remaining Pandavas replied they saw other objects alongside the target bird. Only Arjuna had said that he could see nothing else but the eye of the target bird. Similarly, that singular, one-pointed focus should be our aim while we sit to meditate.

Dhyana is, after all, *Sama pratyaya pravaha* or single-minded focus.

In *Brahma sutra* and in the *Prakarana*, there is a discussion between the *Purva pakshi* and the *Uttar Pakshi*. *Purva Pakshi* plays the role of the devil's advocate and helps one in Supreme realisation through debates. The issue put forth by *Purva Pakshi* was, can one meditate while walking or sleeping? **Since thought control is difficult while walking or lying down, the Vedantas discouraged this practice. Sitting erect, while concentrating only on the tip of the nose and not seeing any other object helps focusing on a single thought.** With continuous practice all the thoughts will gradually vanish.

6.14

**praśāntātmā vigatabhīḥ(r), brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ,
manaḥ(s) saṃyamya maccitto, yukta āsīta matparaḥ. 6.14**

Firm in the vow of complete chastity and fearlessness, keeping himself perfectly calm and with the mind held in restraint and fixed on Me, the vigilant Yogī should sit absorbed in Me.

One who is *Prashanta Atma* that is to say one who is serene, fearless and practices *Brahmacharya*, should sit in Yoga thinking of HIM (Ishwar) with a calm mind. *Brahmacharya* here means not only being without *kama vasana* but avoiding any sort of allurements. A Yogic mind is always dedicated to communication with Paramatma alone.

We can understand this shloka with the real-life example of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who was the guru of Swami Vivekananda. Paramahansa ji was diagnosed with cancer. People would often advise him that if

he meditates upon the part of the body infested with cancer, that is, his throat, the ailment will cure and dissolve. As Paramahansa ji was a great tapasvi (ascetic or meditator), he had the ability to cure the cancer. To this advice given by his followers, Ramakrishna Paramahansa Ji responded that to focus his mind on the point of illness, he would need to take his mind off from the Supreme, something he was loath to do! He was in a constant state of meditation, ever meditating on the supreme self even while performing his worldly duties.

Sant Kabir Das ji's couplet signifies divine sentiments in every action of ours:

जहाँ जहाँ जाऊँ सोई परिक्रमा, जो कुछ करूँ सो सेवा।
जब सोऊँ तब करूँ दंडवत, पूजूँ और न देवा ॥

'As I walk, I think I am circumambulating HIM. Every action of mine is a service to HIM. When I sleep I think I am offering my prostrate obeisance to the Divine. I know nothing but my Bhagavan.'

For those who practice this for over a period, the mind gets absorbed in HIM and remains in the meditative state. Although Ramakrishna Paramahansa Ji is not physically engaged in meditation or meditative posture, his mind is completely absorbed and united with HIM. Whereas Swami Vivekananda would sit down for hours in meditation to unite his mind with HIM (i.e., to attain the state of oneness or union with HIM).

His Guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa Ji expected Swami Vivekananda to attain this state of meditation without physically engaging in meditation so that he could utilize his time in serving mankind - a mission for which Paramahansa ji was preparing Swami Vivekananda. However, Swami Vivekananda used to remain in a meditative state most of the time. Seeing his disciple Narendranath (later known as Vivekananda) meditating for long periods, his Guru Paramahansa reprimanded him that he needed to do Karma as well instead of just sitting in *Dhyana*. **The purpose of Swamiji's Divine birth had been to spread the awareness of divinity in mankind. His destiny was in serving society as well, and not only in meditating. Hence, Karma Yoga is equally important.**

6.15

**yuñjannevaṃ(m) sadātmānaṃ(m), yogī niyatamānaśaḥ,
śāntiṃ(n) nirvāṇaparamāṃ(m), matsaṃsthāmadhigacchati. 6.15**

Thus constantly applying his mind to Me, the Yogī of disciplined mind attains the everlasting peace, consisting of Supreme Bliss, which abides in Me.

By practicing constant control of the mind and by absorbing the mind in HIM, **the Yogi with a disciplined and balanced mind attains 'Nirvana' and abides in HIM in a blissful state of supreme peace.** We have seen in previous verses how an anxious Arjuna raises the concern with Bhagavan that controlling the mind is as hard as controlling the wind. Bhagavan acknowledges that indeed it is hard to control the mind. **HE clarifies that with regular practice, it would not be impossible to control the mind and that it could be achieved by putting in the best efforts.** A Yogi who controls the mind, attains the supreme peace which culminates in liberation or nirvana (ultimate happiness or moksha).

Bhagavan mentions the ultimate benefit of meditation which is *Nirvana*. **Sri Bhagavan has repeatedly reiterated in the Gita, that we are all a part of HIM, and not different from HIM.** The one who attains the Supreme Peace will not have any desires. As Bhagavan would explain later (Chapter 15, shloka 7)

Mamaivavsho jeevaloke jeeva bhootha sanaathanaha.

Bhagavan said that He is inside everyone, but unless one accepts this fact, it remains just a meaningless statement. Unless one believes it and tries to unravel it, this truth will remain forgotten. Through meditation, one's true nature is revealed and that realization causes immense joy or Supreme bliss.

We just have to come forward and make adequate efforts to reach HIM, and HE will then ensure that we merge into HIM and achieve peace.

6.16

**nātyaśnatastu yogo'sti, na caikāntamanaśnataḥ,
na cātisvapnaśīlasya, jāgrato naiva cārjuna. 6.16**

Arjuna, this yoga is neither for him who overeats, nor for him who observes a complete fast; it is neither for him who is given to too much sleep, nor even for him who is ceaselessly awake.

In this verse, **Sri Bhagavan explains the circumstances that hinder one from becoming a Yogi.** One who ignores the body would not be able to attain success or progress in the path of spirituality. The right amount of sleep with a proper and regulated diet is essential for a seeker to attain success in Yoga. Bhagavan puts emphasis on balanced food and adequate sleep. Yoga is not possible on the part of a person who either eats too much or eats too little. Yoga is also not possible when one either sleeps too much or sleeps too little. Food and sleep in right amounts are essential for the body. These should be neither in excess, nor in a miserly measure.

In the next shloka HE explains the yardsticks of behavior and action that can make one achieve a union with HIM.

6.17

**yuktāhāravihārasya, yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu,
yuktasvapnābodbhāsyā, yogo bhavati duḥkhahā. 6.17**

Yoga which rids one of woe, is accomplished only by him who is regulated in diet and recreation, regulated in performing actions, and is regulated in sleep and wakefulness.

This is one of the most important shlokas of Srimad Bhagavad Gita. In the previous shloka, Sri Bhagavan had mentioned the conditions that would NOT make a person a Yogi. In this shloka, HE elaborates on the procedures that aid one in achieving a union with HIM.

One whose eating and resting habits are regulated and balanced both in work and recreation can easily practice Yoga, which has the power to mitigate one's sorrows and pain. **The word 'Aahar' alludes not just to the food we eat for our bodily maintenance, but food that is needed for the Soul.** Meditation, prayers, perusal of holy wisdom from texts like The Gita and The Ramayana, and absorption in the thoughts of Sri Bhagavan are the 'Aahar' that can gratify the soul. There are umpteen number of stories of how Yogis used to endure their physical pain only by focusing mentally on Paramatma. **Just like eating or drinking water is a part of our daily chores, similarly meditation, worshipping and chanting should be incorporated into our routine.**

TheShastras have beautifully given a lucid account of how we should make use of the 24 hours of the day. The prescribed norms are as follows:

- 6 hours for eating, other daily chores and recreation.
- 6 hours for action or karma either for earning livelihood or serving society.
- 6 hours for sleep.
- 6 hours for wakefulness or constant remembrance of God, and engaging in other spiritual practices.

6.18

**yadā viniyataṃ(ñ) cittam, ātmanyevāva tiṣṭhate,
niḥspṛhaḥ(s) sarVākāmebhyo, yukta ityucyate tadā. 6.18**

When the mind which is thoroughly disciplined, gets riveted on God alone , then the person who is free from yearning for all enjoyments is said to be established in Yoga.

To one with a perfectly controlled mind, free from longing for kama and desires, Yoga comes easily. **The word 'kama' does not only refer to physical desires. It implies a longing and craving for anything that is materialistic.** The tide of desire creates storms in the mind, whereas detachment from all cravings makes the mind pure and peaceful, perfect for reunion with Ishwar through Yoga.

By practicing Yoga, those who learn to withdraw the mind from self-centered cravings and material desires, can attain a Union with HIM, and be free from the iron-like grip that our senses have over us.

To sum up, when one's mind is completely absorbed in divine consciousness, undisturbed by the worldly desires and the material pleasures that arise from the senses, then one is said to have achieved perfection in Yoga.

The session ended with Hari sankirtana ...'*Hari sharanam- hari sharanam- hari sharanam*'

Question-Answer session

Nanak Chand Garg:

Question: When does the conversation between Dhritarashtra and Sanjay take place (*i.e., the time sequence*)? Did Sanjay go into a flashback?

Answer: Sanjay gets the divine vision from Ved Vyas ji and he narrates the scene of the war to Dhritarashtra around the 10th or 11th day of the war.

The valedictory prayers were followed by a soulful rendition of the Hanuman Chalisa.



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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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