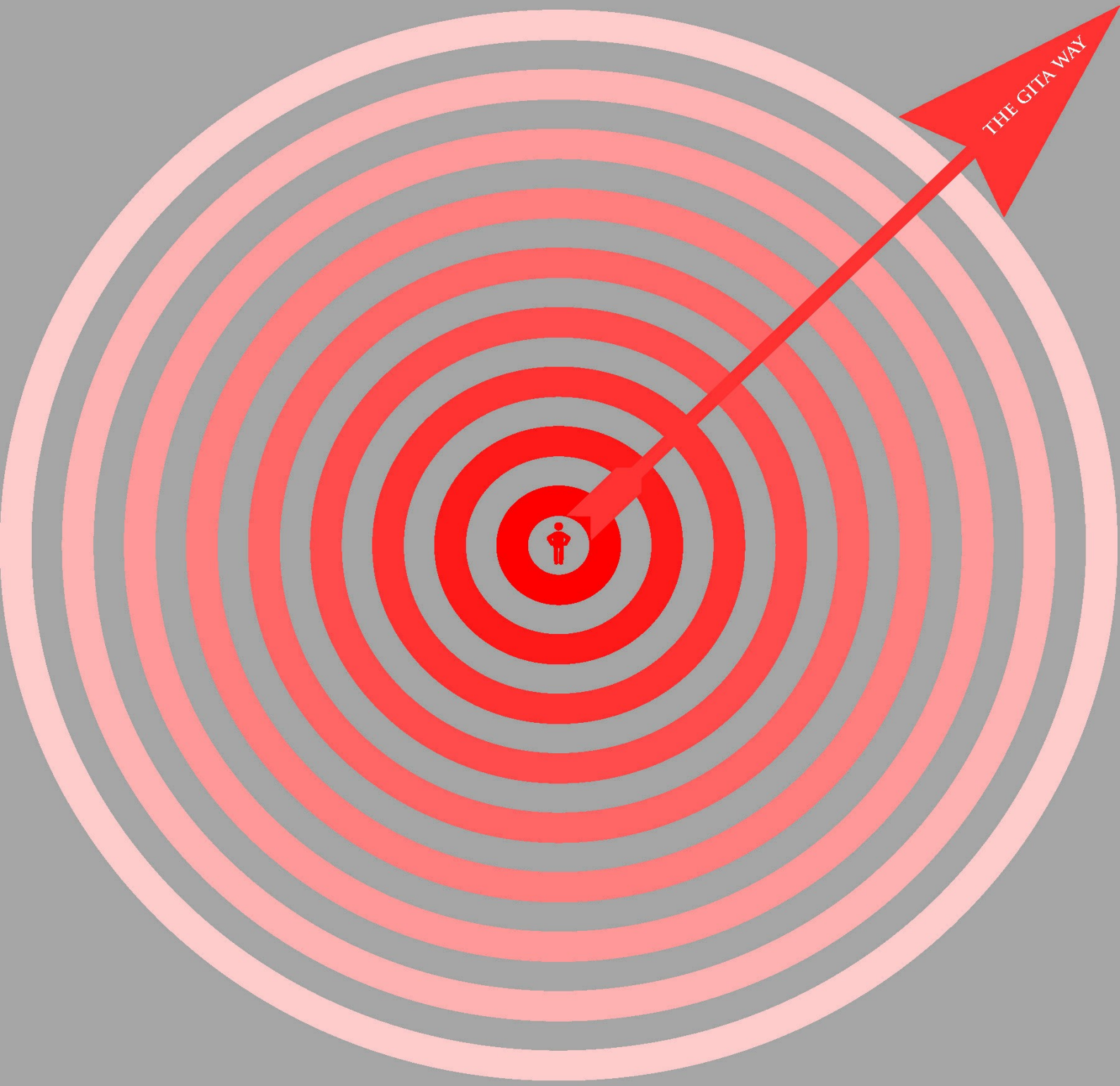
Bhagavad-Gita & You



Nirmal Kishore

Bhagvad Gita

&

You

Nirmal Kishore

A Nirmal Kishore Publication

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Dedication

Dedicated to revered Amma, Daddy and Jaimangal Mama

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Foreword

My father gave me the first Gita in Hindi when I was in B.Sc. and about twenty years of age; unfortunately, I started studying it in right earnest only when I was in my fifties when I was facing the rough end of the stick. Whatever I understood of it, I tried to practice (in bits) and I benefitted by the same. As luck would have it results both in my private life and professional life started improving. I ruled out 'chance' as the reason for it and gave the credit to my following the teachings of Gita; but I must confess I followed it in my own way. I regret that I lost three decades; if I had started following its teachings earlier, perhaps I would have benefitted through the years.

Gita's emphasis is on two aspects: first to make one strong, confident and a superior human being through spiritual consciousness and, second, to focus on the goal like Arjuna did on the eyes of the bird. At the very outset I must make it clear that spirituality is a discipline for conducting one's life. It has nothing to do with Hindu religion or any dogma. Any one, from any religion can be spiritual and practise the discipline of Gita.

I was impressed by Gita. Perhaps my being a Hindu, brought up in a religious environment influenced my thinking. Rama and Krishna are routinely worshipped in a Hindu family. Gita was revered by us even when I knew little about it and Krishna being its author helped me. I found its teachings to be the nectar of wisdom and my reverence for it went on increasing. But I must admit that I cannot claim to have understood the true meaning of Gita in its entirety. This is, because there is a big gap between my knowledge level and that of the author of Gita, and it will take me several lives to understand the gist of what Krishna said to Arjuna.

As my interest in Gita increased I started reading some of the authors who had written books or commentaries on Gita, books on the life and deeds of Krishna, about the legend 'Mahabharata'; and Srimad-Bhagavadam. The prominent ones who influenced me were Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Swami Paramhans Yoganand, Swami Bhaktivedanta the founder of ISKCON, Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Parthasarthy, Ms. Jaya Row, Dr. Gunwant Shah, Jaydayal Goyandka of Gita Press Gorakhpur and a few others.

After following Gita and Krishna related literature for about 15 years, I thought of sharing with others through a book whatever I had understood of

Gita. I was convinced that if young people studied Gita and followed its teachings they would benefit immensely. They would achieve a disease-free strong body and a clear mind. It would urge them and help them achieve greater success, even excellence in their lives. Besides for sure they would become better human beings. Above all they would enjoy greater happiness in life.

Not only my young friends but anyone, irrespective of age, religion, gender, colour, caste, race and geography etc who reads and follows Gita, would benefit both spiritually and even materially. They would enjoy a greater degree of mental peace and happiness. No doubt younger people will have the advantage of their years and would gain more. Most authors have written their commentaries on Gita verse-wise quoting Sanskrit verses from scriptures. I have written a chapter-wise summary, for I believe that it would be a lot easier for the reader to understand it. Once, one gains a fair idea, he/she can read the book verse-wise and try to appreciate the subtle nuances. I have not quoted any Sanskrit verses either. I must admit that I have the limitation of not being well versed in Sanskrit.

At the time of Mahabharata (Gita is a part of Mahabharata), social discontentment was high. The country had an unjust blind king (Dhritrashtra) who was worried only about retaining his throne. His eldest son Duryodhana, whom he loved blindly, ran the administration on his behalf; and he had his coterie. He was highly egoistic, self-centred and a man of low character. For him nothing was too low for achieving his goal. He wanted to usurp the kingdom of Hastinapur that rightfully belonged to his cousins 'Pandava'. This led to the Mahabharata war with catastrophic consequences. Krishna gave the message of Gita to Arjuna at the battle ground of Kurukshetra. His aim was not limited to the war. He wanted to arrest the decay of the society and re-establish justice and righteousness. His emphasis was on a sound and disease-free body for all and spiritual uplift of the society.

In the 21st century, the world has greatly advanced both scientifically and materially. We have reached a stage where with our mobile phone we can do almost anything. It won't be a great surprise if a nuclear missile is fired through a mobile phone some day. God forbid! Unfortunately, like what happened at the time of Mahabharata, the powers that rule today are highly self-centred and there is considerable disparity between the rich and the poor and, the unrest in the world is mounting. There are wars here and there with stronger nations throwing their weight around; and terrorists are blowing up installations and killing innocent people for perceived ideological reasons and

to grab power and control over vast tracts of land. Everyone wants to display his authority and supremacy.

Despite great material advances, our system of education and administration has totally failed us. The social fabric has become weak and flimsy. We have become spiritually bankrupt. We have to understand that no amount of technological or material advancement can ensure peace and security in the world, and provide happiness to the people. What is to be done to correct the situation? We have to change our mind-set; we have to do different things and do them differently. The best of the institutions in the world have failed to teach moral norms, character building and the art of co-existence. A beginning has to be made as soon as possible, for it may take three decades to start showing some results.

Gita teaches simple attitudinal elements like humility, modesty, simplicity, non-violence, tolerance, integrity, uprightness, patience, respect for and service to the teacher and the society etc. Its chief tools are yoga, pranayaam and meditation and selfless service amongst others. It is all about discipline but one doesn't have to become a saint or renounce the world. Even a house holder following his/her routine life can do it so long he/she follows a discipline and restricts himself/herself to correct actions (*karma*) and does not resort to wrong actions. If one follows Krishna's advice as given to Arjuna in Gita he/she will gain both materially and spiritually. One would then follow a spiritual way even in the pursuit of material goals.

Gita demands singular focus on the task, without any worry for the fruits of our actions. It insists that the results are not in the hands of the doer, hence, wasting time and energy worrying about them does no good to us, it diverts our attention from the task and makes us skeptical; our focus is disturbed and we lose confidence. The energy spent on worrying could well be spent on accomplishing the task thereby augmenting our efficiency and success rate.

Simply put, success needs a discipline that Gita provides and with it we can for sure create a new and better social order in due course that will be more tolerant, just and accommodating. Thus, there would be two-fold gains. The individuals will gain both materialy and spiritualy and will be happy; and the society as a whole will gain and will enjoy greater peace and happiness.

Introduction

There are only two things to aim for in life:

- To get whatever we want.
- To enjoy what we get.

Few achieve the first sometime, but only the wisest enjoy the second. Sometimes the results are contrary to our desire.

Before I proceed, I must admit that I have used masculine gender (he) in all explanations and examples but the facts, the teachings of Gita are universal and apply to all in the creation.

Across the cross section of the society today it is very difficult to say who is happy, perhaps there is no one! And what are we doing to achieve happiness for ourselves and others? The correct query would be, are we doing anything at all? There is so much of unease, strife, misery, discontentment and inequity in the world today. The result is mugging, burglary, cheating, scams, murders, rioting, terrorism and wars; and at personal level, depression. And we oversimplify and think only in terms of region or religion, class, race, colour or caste specific, and overlook the truth. The argument is usually about the husk, missing the kernel. We don't know how to seek happiness and much less how to retain it.

Most of us lead a routine ridden life that is dictated by a desire to be somebody. We never ever pause to think what is in our best interest, what we are capable of and how we can achieve it? We like to possess things as per our desire, not as per our needs. We toil hard for things we don't need; things or positions that we cannot handle. We are unhappy if we don't get it. Ironically, we become equally unhappy if we get it, for then we start thinking of something else. We are rarely happy and satisfied. The more we get of what we desire, the more restless we become.

Gita is a scientific manual; it provides the recipe to achieve a decent life of success with happiness. It teaches the skill to use our intellect correctly and work selflessly for achieving our goal. If we follow its teachings, we learn to perform the right actions by the correct method and use proper means. We utilize time purposefully and that makes us confident and fearless. Our focus becomes pin-pointed and we start knowing the unknown and the fear of the unknown gets banished.

Bhagavad Gita (for short Gita) is popularly considered a Hindu religious book in the class of Upnishads. But truly it is a universal treatise on human behaviour, a manual for life and living. Its teaching transcends space and time and embraces the entire gamut of human species, from savage to saint, and from slave to royalty. It influenced Buddhist thinking and that extended its reach to China and Japan; and later it gained respect in the western world. J.W. Hauer, a German Sanskrit scholar who worked as a missionary in India, called the message of Gita "a work of imperishable significance" that influenced German faith.

It may be worth noting what Aldous Huxley, English writer and philosopher, said

about Gita. I quote below his words: "The Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the Perennial Philosophy ever to have been made. Hence its enduring value, not only for Indians, but for all mankind …. The Bhagavad Gita is perhaps the most systematic spiritual statement of the Perennial Philosophy."

In the context of Gita, British-American Author Christopher Isherwood said: "God's light dwells in the Self and nowhere else. It shines alike in everything and one can see it with one's mind steadied."

Gita is neither the guiding text of Hindu religion nor it is limited to it. There are several other books that deal with the Hindu religion. It is a capsule of Spiritual Science, except that science is too small a word to define it. Mahatma Gandhi once said that 'It was easy enough to be your friend's friend, true religion lies in being a friend to one who considers himself your enemy'. It is the quintessence of the message of the Gita. It is all about everything positive and dynamic, the skill for achieving a successful and a happy life that provides serenity, peace and contentment under all circumstances.

Perhaps Gita came to be considered as a respected Hindu religious book because Krishna was the main character in it. He has been universally accepted by Hindus as a complete God. Indian scriptures (*Shashtras*), epics, mythology and folk lore describe him as an incarnation of Lord ***Vishnu***, one of the trinity of Hindu Gods. It has also been accepted that Krishna was one God who had all the sixteen distinctive qualities or virtues that one could possess and for that reason he was addressed as the complete God (*solaho kala samppann*). Religious books and mythologies overwhelmingly influence the psyche of the masses. To get the real value and true meaning of Gita one has to get out the religious bias, and study it for the secret knowledge and the

technique of self-management that Krishna imparts to Arjuna. This knowledge is required for achieving excellence and happiness in life.

Gita is a part of the great Indian legend 'Mahabharata' written by the greatest Indian scholar and teacher (*Guru*) Ved Vyas[1]. Presenting the nectar of Vedas, Mahabharata is considered as the fifth Veda. Our objective is not to study and practise Gita with a view to go to heaven. We want to live and enjoy our life here and now. We are worldly people, working for a salary or in a profession, business or as an entrepreneur etc. We have a family to look after and social commitments to honour. We are not sages or scholars, we need a working knowledge of Gita that could help us conduct our affairs better and achieve greater continuing success and happiness in life.

Our first requirement is to cultivate willingness, and find time for reading (really, it is more than reading, it is truly studying) Gita. Here, no one can help us in the matter and there are no options either. It is like the case of one who is desirous of going to heaven, he has to first die himself; out-sourcing is not possible. But at the very outset I must assure that one who ventures to study it and practices its teachings enjoys its benefits fairly soon and the same goes on increasing as well.

Origin of Bhagavad-gita

Gita was not a planned book. It just happened and Ved Vyas included it in his legend 'Mahabharata'. In Annexure I, I have given a brief write up on the story of the Mahabharata war between Kauravas and Pandavas. 'Mahabharata' is the name of the book as well as the war. Bhagavad-gita is called Gita for short. 'Bhagavad' means the 'words spoken by God' and Gita is from Sanskrit word *Geet* (song). The book has also been called as 'Krishna's Song of Life' or 'The Celestial Song'.

The scene was the battle field of *Kurukshetra* where the epic Mahabharata war was just about to commence. Pandava prince and renowned archer Arjuna along with Krishna went out to inspect the deployment of forces. He saw such greats as Bheeshma, Drona and a number of respected elders standing opposite on the Kauravas' side. He realised that he would have to fight with them and may have to even kill them in the war. He suffered a mental turmoil and virtually became an emotional wreck. In a moment of weakness, he dropped his bow in the chariot and declared to Krishna that he would not fight as he was convinced that the fraternal war would be catastrophic and it was a sin to fight with one's elders and greater sin to kill them hence, the war was not justified.

Arjuna was lifelessly sulking in his chariot. Krishna was his brother-in-law but truly he was his mentor, moral and spiritual guide, and also his charioteer. He was a strategic-guidance angel to Pandava brothers. Krishna had earlier tried to broker peace with Duryodhana (on behalf of Pandavas) to avoid the war, but he was very arrogant and had insulted him. To Krishna the war was unavoidable. It had become an ethical necessity for establishment of rule of law, fair play, justice and supremacy of righteousness in the society. It had also become the moral duty (*dharma*) of Pandavas and they had to honour the same. Duryodhana, mad with his power and greed, was hell bent on usurping the kingdom that rightfully belonged to Pandavas. He had left Pandavas with no option other than a war.

Arjuna's unexpected and untimely sulking in the chariot led to a dialogue between Krishna and him. They discussed a wide range of subjects like one's actions (*karma*), duties (*dharma*), yoga, meditation, spiritual development and how one should perform actions to gain success, excellence and happiness in life. Krishna even advised him the discipline one had to follow to gain the ultimate goal of one's life which was to seek union with God. Arjuna asked questions and sought clarifications and Krishna replied to them and did the explaining. Since Arjuna was very dear to Krishna, he took pains to repeatedly explain every small detail and covered a wide spectrum of issues so as to focus his mind on his duties as a Kshatriya prince. The scope of his talks went far beyond the war; it covered spiritual development of the society, how to raise it to a higher level of existence and even as a passage to union with God. The entire discussion was in poetry and had a musical tenor. It was actually sung by either party; hence, it became a *Geet* (Song) and was called Gita. There are 700 verses in Gita which are spread over 18 chapters.

What is Gita About?

Krishna was shocked by Arjuna's breakdown at the eleventh hour. He was the greatest manager and teacher and his managerial expertise was being tested. He sensed that Arjuna could not be easily persuaded to change his mind. Even if he succeeded in cajoling and prevailing upon him his conviction would be lacking and he would not be able to give his best to the war effort. He had to convince him about the propriety and need of the war; that it was his rightful duty to go to the war with Kauravas. He chose a wider canvas. He talked about gods, demi gods, the Supreme God and their worlds (*lokas*), nature (*prakriti*), humankind, their behaviour, responsibilities and duties. He covered the

creation of the cosmos, its sustenance and extinction, various kinds of devotion and prayers, action, cause of action, inaction, Yoga, Meditation, knowledge, renunciation and relinquishment. Arjuna was a learned, noble and brave Pandava prince with enormous self-belief therefore Krishna adopted a holistic approach.

At Arjuna's request he even showed him God's Universal Form. He talked about the three modes of nature (*gunas*), God's Opulences, *Maya*, imperishable soul and perishable body; desire and desire less action, *Gyaan*-yoga, *Karma*-yoga, *Dhyaan*-yoga and *Bhakti*-yoga and a variety of subjects. His focus was on spiritual development, what one should do and what should not be done. His aim was to raise Arjuna to a higher level of spiritual awakening and make him aware of his duties (*dharma*) of which he had become oblivious. He was overwhelmed by an emotional turmoil, he had to come out of it and regain his intellect, memory, discretion and judgment. He had to rise above his emotions to perform his duties. He had forgotten his obligations to his people as a Kshatriya prince. He ignored the fact that Pandavas had no option about the war, they did not choose it but it was thrust upon them. It was a necessity for upholding the cause of righteousness, and also the prestige of his clan. Krishna's job was to remove his mental clutter. Without clarity of mind he could not become aware of his duty of upholding the cause of righteousness.

What Krishna spoke to Arjuna in Gita was the universal truth. He shared with him a whole lot of secret information that was needed for spiritual advancement. He gave him a knowledge capsule, a practical philosophy for attaining success by adding value, wealth and happiness in a cascading manner. Everyone wants to be wealthy as we think that it gives us position, a feeling of success and happiness. What happens in real life? With every success, our tension level goes up our fear factor rises due to competitive challenges. Fear of losing what we have grips us and we lose our peace and strangely at the same time our greed goes on increasing. The end result is that we do not truly enjoy the success we achieve.

Gita[2] tells us how to cope with such issues and be tension free and contented. Krishna felt that the society was slipping fast into the abyss of moral decay and he had to address the problem. He chose Arjuna for doing the same. Therefore, he gave him all the information needed for appropriate self-management for his benefit. He expected that others would follow his example and eventually the entire society would benefit. He discriminated between material growth and spiritual development; between scientific knowledge (*vigyaan*) and intuitive wisdom (*adhyaatmic gyaan*). He explained the two in detail. He made

it simple: what originates from matter is material and what comes from the spirit is spiritual.

Strangely spiritual development and material growth follow an inverse equation. When material growth is high, spiritual development is low. Those who are materially rich are usually spiritually poor and vice–versa. In other words, those who are poor in spirit need a high level of material growth to enjoy some comfort. Krishna says that everything material has a short life. The spirit (soul) on the other hand being a part of Cosmic Spirit is imperishable and eternal. Our spirit is not involved in what we do but it gives us a hint about what is right and what is wrong. It gives us intuitive wisdom; if we follow its directions we achieve spiritual growth and rise to a higher plane. Our way of thinking changes, we become non-material and selfless.

Those who are spiritually weak hanker after material gains, wealth, position and power etc. They do not know the right way of achieving it hence, they resort to short cuts and improper means. They try and do anything to achieve their goal. Very soon this causes their downfall and they get in trouble. Krishna highlights, that means are as important as the goal.

Gita is popularly considered to be a Hindu religious legend but truly it is not a religious book. It deals with spirituality. Krishna condemned rites and rituals[+]. He suggested ignoring the Vedic injunctions in this regard. He discriminates between religion and spirituality. He simplified the method of prayers to God. By this action he antagonized the Brahmin community and orthodox religious scholars of his time. They severely criticized him for challenging the established religious order based on the Vedas. Krishna's emphasis was on spiritual discipline as against rites and rituals. It was interpreted by Brahmin class as a defiance of the Vedas which were accepted as the words of God. In truth, this affected their earnings and social standing for they (Brahmins) were the ones who conducted the religious ceremonies (for a fee), hence, they campaigned against him.

Elements of Spirituality, Karma, *Gunas* (modes of Nature), Yoga, Meditation, Self and self, Detachment, Renunciation, Continuity of life and Selfless devotion to God are important concepts that have been frequently mentioned in Gita. We will briefly discuss the first three presently viz. Elements of Spirituality, Karma and *Gunas*. Other important concepts will be discussed as we proceed.

Elements of Spirituality

Krishna advocates yoga for growth of spirituality for it brings positivity in one's thinking and his self-belief goes up. It helps one to focus on the real and lasting and discard the unreal and temporary. It is the voice of spirit that tells us to be humble, modest, non-violent, fearless, steadfast, patient, forgiving and upright with high integrity, purity of mind and respect for the teacher. It further tells us to shed our ego and practice non-attachment and equanimity and non- identification with sense objects at all times at all times. These are divine virtues and are called the elements of spirituality. Spirituality also demands unwavering devotion and absolute faith in God. The attributes of spirituality help one to control his mind and provide him a route map for attaining excellence, eventual perfection and happiness. Gita is truly a management treatise. If one follows its teaching, he can achieve continuing success, excellence and happiness.

Karma

The origin of *karma* (action) lies in our ideas and thoughts that are desire driven and these create further desires. Humankind has a gift of free-will and our actions depend on how we use our free-will. If, our free-will chooses to overrule our desire then we do not take to action driven by it. Krishna asked Arjuna to practise yoga; in relation to *karma* the same becomes *Karma*-yoga. A person in yoga must acquire spiritual virtues and through the same he learns to use his free-will correctly ignoring his emotions and subjectivity. Let me explain this with the example of Arjuna in Mahabharata:

Arjuna was greatly confused and uneasy from within. Krishna told him he had no option but to fight; his mind told him the war was not justified. He had accepted that the loss of face, prestige and even possible loss of life was better than the war against his respected elders. He was therefore, in search of an escape route. When Krishna tried to tell him the propriety of his action in fighting the war he went on asking him questions and seeking clarifications. Krishna had earlier told him about *Gyaan*-yoga[3]. He had also highlighted the importance of action and how the same should be done that is called *Karma*-yoga. Subsequently he told him about *Chaturvarnayaam* system introduced by him where he explained that dynamic action, governance and administration was the duty and a natural trait of Kshatriyas as a class.

In his state of bewilderment Arjuna asked Krishna that in case *Gyaan*-yoga was better than the *Karma*-yoga (path of action) then why he was forcing him into waging a war with his relations? He was partly justified for Krishna had talked about both the paths for happiness and eventual salvation. He

therefore, demanded clear cut instructions with justification. Krishna understood his predicament that he was unable to discriminate between the two paths and was willing to ignore his moral duty as a Kshatriya and a king. He was compromising his ethical scale and was unable to use his free-will judiciously. He had already made up his mind even before discussing the matter with Krishna who was not only his charioteer but primarily he was the mentor and strategic consultant to Pandavas.

Krishna went on to describe in detail various types of actions, the correct one and what must not be done. He finally recommended that a person in yoga who seeks eventual salvation should perform selfless action; all his actions should be for God and in his service and not for any gains or the fruits of his action. In yoga one must follow the tenets of spirituality in dealing with others. He should refrain from sense gratification through sense objects. Arjuna was clearly defaulting; he was being overwhelmed by his emotions. Bhishma, Drona and other elders were his sense objects who were playing on his senses. This was not in keeping with yoga that teaches one to control his senses and always refrain from sense gratification. His proposed action was incorrect. Therefore Krishna had to do detailed explaining to make him realise his duty.

Krishna later advised Arjuna that *Gyaan*-yoga, *Karma*-yoga and *Bhakti*-yoga were all paths leading to the same destination of union with God but he indicated his preference for *Karma*-yoga over *Gyaan*-yoga. He later recommended *Bhakti*-yoga (devotion to Personal God) for house holders as the same was convenient to them. However, he was quite clear that an integral approach including all the three could speed up matters. Hence, one had to take the help of all the three yogas for faster results.

The desire for an action crops up due to the influence of three *Gunas* on the person. *Gunas* are qualities that are a function of God created *Maya*.

Modes of Nature (*prakriti*) or *Gunas* and Karmic Cycle

God first created *Mula Prakriti* that remained un-manifested. From it he created *prakriti* that became manifested. *Prakriti* had *Maya* as a tool to manage the creation. It made further creation in conjunction with God as everything is created through interaction between God and *prakriti*. God is called the Knower of the Field (*Kshetrajana*) and *prakriti* is known as the Field (*kshetra*). *Maya* had three sets of qualities or *gunas*[*] for differentiation. These were *sattva or sattvik* (goodness), *rajas or rajasik* (passion) and *tamas or taamsik* (ignorance). The three *gunas* act independently on all individuals. The

dominant *guna* determines the individual's thinking, his personality and his actions good or bad.

A person's desires and actions are not his own, these are caused by the influence of the dominant *guna* on him. The net result of his actions (good, bad and ordinary), are recorded in his karma account that determines his future thinking and further actions. His free-will is also conditioned by the *gunas*. The *karma* account gets a set off by good deeds performed by the person. Whatever is left in his account at the end of his life is carried forward to his next life. The *karma* account creates a karmic cycle. When the net balance in one's karmic cycle account becomes zero he becomes entitled to freedom from further *karma* and achieves union with God. He enjoys freedom from birth and death.

Hence, it is the modes of nature or *gunas* that are responsible for one's actions good or bad. The nature or *prakriti* created by God is a part of him. Therefore, effectively it is the God who is the real doer or owner. Any claim of ownership or doer-ship by an individual is incorrect and a misplaced perception. However, God has given us the option to improve our *gunas* through our deeds, thus graduating to a higher level like from *rajasik* to *sattvik*. Maharishi Baalmiki aka Vaalmiki who wrote the original Sanskrit Ramayana is a good example, born as a Shudra he rose to the status of a Brahmin. He is counted amongst the greatest sages.

Like, one can improve his *guna* by his deeds one can transcend *gunas* and rise above these. This is possible when one is spiritually so advanced that he can see his *gunas* and the action these prompt him to undertake, and at that point of time he has the udgment to change and take another action that he thinks is correct. A person who rises above *gunas* or transcends *gunas* is called *Jeevanmukta*. While living his normal life he becomes free from the burden of the same. He accumulates only positive balances in his *karmic* cycle i.e. he has nothing to pay back due to wrong actions. He performs no wrong action. King Janak of Mithila who was the father of Goddess Sita (Lord Rama's wife) makes a good example. He was living a king's normal life but had accumulated enough positive credit in his *karmic* cycle to achieve Self-realisation or union with God. His consciousness was supreme.

The *Chaturvarnayaam* system (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra) was created by Krishna on the basis of *gunas.*

Essence of Gita

We cannot achieve happiness in life unless we have peace of mind and for achieving the same Krishna suggested the following to be understood and practised sincerely:

- All worldly possessions including our body are transient and perishable and therefore, these at best can provide temporary happiness. Only the soul (self) and Super Soul (Self or God) that are eternal can provide us lasting peace and happiness.
- Through Yoga we have to concentrate upon self and seek its guidance and follow the same. Through the self we can reach the Super Self.
- Our desires and sense of ownership give rise to greed, jealousy, lust, anger and vanity (*ahamkaar*) which in turn mould our character and actions towards unending possessions that are all mirages and do not provide even shadows of happiness.
- All creations like us are a part of the Supreme God and therefore, we should treat all, as we treat ourselves and as the same and equal.
- To facilitate the process of learning he advised taking the help of Spiritual Masters in all sincerity and with humble submission.
- All are subject to the same fundamental laws of nature. Isaac Newton, the great philosopher, discovered one of these, the law of gravitation according to which, what goes up must come down. In real life this applies to human beings as well. Success and failure are universal and one should remain the same under all circumstances, neither rejoicing the former nor lamenting the latter; this is equanimity.
- One should never flinch from his duties (*dharma*). Instead of blaming others for his problems he should perform his duties selflessly with no anxiety for the results, for that (the result) falls in the domain of the God.
- One should practise Humility, Modesty, Simplicity, Non-violence, service to the Society all the time.
- We should at all times, devote ourselves to the worship of Supreme God for his grace and guidance. Rituals suggested in the scriptures can be ignored as they provide temporary gains and joy. For lasting gains and bliss (supreme happiness) we should devote ourselves with all of our wealth, body, mind, speech and deeds in the pursuit of the Supreme God.

- Happiness is always within us (in our soul) we have to realize the same[4].

While reading Gita one has to remember that Arjuna was an intellectual and a noble person. He was a man of strong will and conviction. Krishna therefore had to be very patient and had to repeatedly explain the minutest of details.

Important Concepts & An Overview of Gita

Broadly speaking there are two kinds of people in the world. There are those who have a materialistic mindset (majority are this kind), they consider 'matter' to be at the core of everything we do in our life. The other category is of those who have a spiritualistic mind; they consider Spirit to be the cause of everything that happens in the world.

Ironically materialistic mind supposedly has a scientific approach; it believes that everything that is true or real must be derived through rational theory, equations, calculations, observations and measurements that can be proved through experiments. They think that if something doesn't fall in this category it can't be true or real. Here, everything (including social relationships) is governed by an equation that must yield a tangible profit or gain even though it may be short lived. The spiritualists believe that God or the Spirit is the cause of every action; that there is a God who controls all actions in the cosmos. Their approach is non-material; they work for permanent or eternal goal. The former (materialistic mind) targets short term goals that yield temporary and unreal gains.

Krishna has been accepted as an incarnation of God. He had a spiritualistic mindset and he worked for eternal goals. He worked for establishment of spirituality in the society. The society in his time had a decayed justice system; and fair- play and righteousness were nearly non-existent. It had become highly materialistic and 'might is right' had become the order of the day. Even Pandavas were not spared by the blind King (who was their uncle) and his sons (the Kauravas). The common man was suffering the most. Krishna's mission was to restore normalcy and righteousness in the society so that even the weakest could claim his right. He thought that the only way it could be done was by establishing the primacy of spirituality against the ruling dominance of materialism that had overwhelmed the society. He chose Arjuna to give his message of spirituality.

Spirituality requires a discipline. Krishna explained the same to Arjuna in great detail and advised him to inculcate the same. However, it must be understood that what he told him was nothing new as the same had been discussed in Vedas and other spiritual texts and was lost over time. He was only trying to re-establish the same discipline and who could be better than Arjuna to re-launch the same.

Arjuna's despondency just before the Mahabharata war offered him an opportunity and Krishna latched on to the same. He broadened the spectrum of his discourse to cover a wide variety of subjects. He highlighted the elements of spirituality and the tools required for gaining the same. He talked of yoga, pranayaam, meditation, consciousness and selfless action etc and how to practise the same. We will discuss some of the concepts and the terms used in Gita so that understanding his message becomes easier. Before we proceed further i would like to advise the reader to accept Krishna as the God. This advice had been originally given by Bhaktivedanta Swami in his book 'Bhagavad-Gita As It Is'. He said that if we accept Krishna as the God, understanding his message of Gita becomes a lot easier. Initially reluctantly, but i followed his advice and benefitted. i must confess that his birth like any of us, his very worldly behaviour, playful nature and his great love for playing on flute and dancing etc makes it difficult to accept him as God, for the same does not fit into the accepted concept of the behaviour of God.

Gita strongly believes in majesty of God and his unlimited powers and he advocates undistracted devotion to him. It discriminates between body and soul, the former being temporary that keeps changing from time to time, while the soul being a part of God is eternal and is not subject to death and change like a body; hence, there is a continuity of life. Our *karma* or actions determine what we make of ourselves in our present and subsequent lives. It is not God but our *karma* that in reality determines what happens to us; it makes our destiny.

Krishna was aware of the immense potential of human beings if they could acquire the correct attitude. If one could acquire pure soul consciousness forgetting his body consciousness he can do anything because he would become like Super Soul. For this, one doesn't have to renounce the world or retire to Himalayas. One can live his usual life and attend to his duties only he has to do everything for the Spirit (God) and think about him all the time. He will then do nothing for his own-self, nothing for a worldly gain and his actions will be dedicated to the Spirit and is done in his service. This needs a psyche that is soul oriented. He can then achieve excellence in life.

Krishna advised Arjuna how to perform actions correctly; and step by step he tried to bring him on the right path. He told him what should be his attitude and how to obtain the same. Humility, modesty, simplicity, non-violence, compassion and forgivingness etc are known to everyone but acquiring these requires a discipline and continued practise. God or Spirit may entirely be an imaginary object like mind and soul but these are necessary for attaining a

singular focus and obtaining guidance from our spirit that is very necessary for achieving excellence. Gita deals with such issues in all its chapters and tries to teach us one step at a time that is why there are 18 chapters in Gita.

Yoga & Meditation

Yoga is one word that finds mention throughout Gita, followed by meditation and consciousness. These are tools needed for achieving a sound body and a clear and calm mind. Yoga[5] is a Sanskrit generic term it applies to various aspects and actions in our life. It literally means 'to bind', 'collect together'. It helps us collect all the positivity that we have in our thoughts and actions; and it also banishes all the negativity, scepticism, and ambivalence that create fear and confusion in our mind. It further consolidates the positivity into a single stream; makes our body strong and flexible. It is truly a discipline that equips us to stand up to difficult situations in life and coupled with meditation it helps us banish fear from our mind.

The scope of Yoga as described in Gita is different from the one described in Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra. Yoga, according to Krishna is a skilled way of doing things.

Yoga makes our body strong and flexible and the mind becomes agile, sharp and focussed. It raises our immunity to infection and resistance to vagaries of weather and environment. It helps us to incorporate spiritual attributes in one's psyche and clears the mind. It is truly a process to achieve pin point focus on what we do. Like the anecdote goes that when Drona asked Arjuna as how could he pierce the eye of the bird kept 30 feet away on a tree, he replied that he saw only the eye not any other part of the bird. He did the same when he pierced the eye of the fish that was hanging inverted from a rotating ring mounted on a pole at Draupdi's *swayambar*.

Meditation is difficult but an interesting process. It requires one to achieve a clutter free mind and a state of thoughtlessness, a vacuum in mind to be able to become maturely thoughtful later. It demands of us to be ignorant of our surroundings to be our original self, innocent like a child, unconcerned and in a way with no knowledge of the world. It is a learning process, by which we opt ourselves out of the race for being somebody, or imitating somebody; and be content with what we are. Its gains are enormous. It helps us achieve a clear focus that unravels several options that otherwise remain dormant in a cloud of confusion. It gives us the capacity to think intensely through various possibilities and enhances our self-belief and most of all makes us fearless.

Whereas, Yoga needs both physical and mental effort, meditation is purely a mental exercise, banishing all thoughts from the mind.

Our mind is cluttered with so many thoughts all the time. Meditation is a process that helps in weeding out the superfluous. In this process, one does not talk; in fact, he has to even stop all thoughts. It is strange that a process of thoughtlessness is employed to make one thoughtful to enable him think clearly. It is a pure listening exercise through which we learn to listen to our inner voice. It is difficult and for that reason, for meditation one is asked to retire to a secluded and calm place and sit erect on a hard surface and concentrate his mind upon God or one who is dearest to him. Simply put meditation is a process in which one concentrates on one idea or thought intensely. It helps in achieving singular focus. Krishna has dealt with this in detail including where and how to sit, what should be the posture of the body etc.

Pranayaam is a part of yoga. It deals with various breathing exercises. It helps us control the flow of our breath that is needed for lubricating and activating various body organs with flow of blood and oxygen in the entire system including every nook and corner while at the same time expelling harmful toxins from the body.

Scientific Study of Meditation

It has been scientifically proved that meditation delays the process of ageing and increases human longevity. When one meditates his brain produces low intensityEM waves called 'theta and alpha' in the frequency range of 4 to 12 Hz with predominant concentration around 7 – 8 Hz. These EM waves help the body to rejuvenate by repairing damaged cells (DNA) and speeds up creation of good cells.

French scientist Luc Montagnier, winner of Nobel Prize for medicine (2008) for his discovery of HIV virus, conducted an experiment to show how to replicate and transfer DNA from one test tube to another by passing low level EM waves around 7 Hz. If this process is applied to human body and we are able to transfer good DNA Cells and replace the damaged ones, then we can keep the body healthy and strong. The practice of Meditation precisely starts this process.

It has been scientifically established that meditation delays the ageing process by increasing the telomerase activity. Telomerase is an enzyme which repairs the DNA. Chromosomes are a thread like structure of nucleic acid and proteins

that are found in the nuclei of the living cells. These carry the genetic information in the form of genes. The chromosomes have several DNAs at their ends forming a cap. The DNA caps are called telomeres. These telomeres become smaller when cells divide into parts. Eventually such cells die. This causes the ageing process to set in. Telomerase enzyme stops this process of shortening of the DNA caps that causes breaking of cells and its death. Meditation creates a rejuvenation process that delays the ageing. It triggers the activity of telomerase enzyme.

In Luc Montagnier's experiment, he transferred DNAs from a test tube containing dilute solution to one containing only water. This has immense potential for it implies that low level radiation at low frequency of 7 Hz can create the memory of DNAs under transfer (study) in water. This process opens the possibility of teleportation of human form as was shown in TV serial 'Star Trek'. It proves that memory structures can be formed in water through external stimuli. This leads to a possible scientific basis for the Vedic process of 'Achaman' where one transfers water from one hand to the other and sips it after reciting Vedic mantras as a part of a ritual. Vedic mantra is the external influence that can cause the creation of memory structures in the water used in achaman.

A separate study at Harvard University showed that meditation switches genes on and off to combat free radicals that are produced in our body on account of physical /emotional stresses. It actually acts as a stress reliever and thus helps us in gaining a better focus.

Self and self

Krishna, repeatedly talks about self and Self (*atma aur Paramatma*); Self, Spirit, Soul and Brahman connote God. Other words that are used for God are Cosmic Spirit, Supreme Consciousness and Super Soul etc; in Hindi Brahman or Ishwar is commonly used for God. A small fragment of Spirit or an individualised God resides in all human beings; it is called soul, spirit, self or *atma*. A human being is called an embodied soul. It (soul) does not interfere in what we do; its role is that of a silent witness. It helps a living being by providing him intuitive wisdom from time to time; a hint about what one should do and what one must avoid doing and the likely consequence of a wrong doing. It leaves us to take note of it or ignore the same.

God is unborn, primeval and eternal and it doesn't die. The soul, when it comes to be, never ceases to be. It can't in anyway be destructed or affected by heat, rain, sun, water, fire, wind or anything else, it is unchangeable. It can't be

injured or killed by sword or any other weapon. One, who says he has killed it, lacks correct perception of the truth. We always identify ourselves and others with our bodies. The truth is that we should identify ourselves with the soul. When a person dies, the soul just walks away, to take a new body that new body depends on his good or bad deeds in his life. The accumulated *karma* (deeds) determine our present and future as well.

Krishna advised; since the soul being indestructible it cannot be hurt anyway and it is wrong to moan the death of a person or feel having killed one for the real person is the soul that is never killed. He called a person's death to be like changing soiled clothes with new ones. I quote here his words as given in Gita (verse 22 of chapter 2): "Just as a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, so does the embodied soul casts off worn-out bodies, and takes on others that are new."

Krishna added that it was wrong to grieve over what is perishable. One who is born must die some day. Soul is not born it is eternal, un-manifest, unchanging, immutable and incomprehensible. It cannot be killed therefore one must not grieve for it. He is making a clear distinction between one's soul and body and that everyone is a soul and not a body as we are prone to perceive.

Devotion to God

Gita believes in God and continuity of life, death being an intermission like one in a theatre for change of sets and clothes etc. God is the creator of the universe. In Gita, Krishna advocates unwavering devotion to God. He considers achieving union with him to be the highest goal for a person. It is akin to achieving perfection for only God is perfect. A person is born; he lives his life, he goes through misery, old age and death; he is born again to new parents and the cycle goes on till (through his karmas) he achieves union with the God. After that he is not born for God is never born, he is self-created (*svayambhu*).

As per Gita, in the chain of birth, death and rebirth, a person's deeds in his life determine his future. Good deeds create credits that get him an even better home, family and ambience and bad deeds create debits that drop him to a lower level and can even relegate him to animal family. There are 84 lakhs species of living beings and to be born as a human being is a great fortune. Krishna advises us not to waste our life as a human being for it is rarest of rare happening due to good fortune.

Devotion to God requires a clutter free and calm mind for only then one can pray to him uninterrupted. Freedom in case of mind means barring all inputs to brain from the five senses that provide us knowledge inputs (*gyaanenindriya*), for only then one is free to communicate with God (soul to Super Soul and back). When the mind is free and calm the entropy* level in the brain-mind system is low; and the rate of breathing comes down and one remains composed and is at relative peace; he enjoys a superior power of discrimination.

Since a calm mind is free of emotions[6] his relative preferences and biases become dormant hence, his concentration level goes up by several notches. God is the biggest tower of strength and support (those who don't as yet accept God can choose their own support). Little wonder Krishna attached such a great importance to prayers with unwavering devotion. Soul or God consciousness and prayers are a 24/7, 365 days of the year exercise. It is not to be done as rituals on ceremonial occasions and then forgotten.

Consciousness

Consciousness is the third stage after yoga (pranayaam is a part of yoga) and meditation. It provides a capacity to discriminate the right from the wrong. A human being is the product of so many variables some intrinsic like heredity, upbringing etc and some purely circumstantial like his resources, occupation and environment etc. These create various options all the time. In making a choice we suffer from our subjectivity. Consciousness gives the vision required to see these options through untainted glasses in an objective manner. It highlights the ethical scales so that one is able to see the object in its totality and he makes the right choice. If one can do this he can certainly improve his circumstances.

What is consciousness? Spiritualists call it awareness; some scholars called it capacity for a third-party view. Let us try to understand what awareness is? We are usually involved in our actions and remain unaware of the truth as we are enamoured of the superficial. Our decisions and actions are dependent upon our subjective view which is determined by our past, present and fear of the future. We never view the issue objectively but through tainted prisms.

Suppose one could stand out of himself and view the person involved in action (that is his own self) as if he were meeting him or viewing the issue for the first time, he would be eliminating his subjectivity or ego centric vision. If one can do this then he would judge the situation or issue as it truly is and he would not be dependent on his subjective perception. Capacity to eliminate

our subjectivity is awareness or third-party view. Ancient Hindu sages enjoyed the benefit of third party view and could free themselves from any emotions or subjectivity and therefore, their responses were objective and hence, correct.

Consciousness gives birth to a wellspring of wisdom and fresh ideas. These help us see through rather than look at things. The faculty of awareness takes one on to the road to perfection. As consciousness increases, we experience happiness for we are no more influenced by petty frills, trivial gains or losses. We become fearless and our judgment improves. Consciousness comes from our dialogue with our inner voice (our soul). It is a personal experience and is non-transferable. In one sentence consciousness is the search of 'who or what I am'? Consciousness is also used to connote Cosmic Spirit or Cosmic Intelligence.

Destiny

It is a common perception that God predestines all of us; our destinies are written by

him before we are born. It is not true, even God cannot micromanage day to day happenings in the lives of a vast creation which is still growing; something new comes on the scene almost every day.

Scientists claim that as of now only 4% of the total creation is known to us; the rest 96% is still unknown. God works at the macro level. He determines the laws of Nature that keep the galaxies, universes, stars, planets and the worlds (with both animate and inanimate) in equilibrium. It is truly a delicate equilibrium. For the humankind, God gave a code of conduct for proper living, in the form of a set of spiritual tenets. The priest class of the society made religions from the same. The founders of religions and their subsequent guardians added several rites and rituals and promised many gains to those who followed their religion. The idea was to make the same attractive to the masses. This camouflaged the God-given spiritual tenets into an envelope of trivial rituals and ceremonies. It is interesting that all religions have similar fundamental dos and don'ts and believe in one God. Yet, all religions claim to be superior to other religions; and they even indulge in converting people to their own religion, some-time forcefully or through allurement.

In ancient times, the pundits (religious *gurus*) who claimed to be God's chosen representatives floated the idea of destiny. They suggested measures to improve one's circumstances by certain religious ceremonies and special

prayers to gods that included a discipline in life that they prescribed. They, of course, did this for a fee. The idea that God predestines all of us and that religious measures can improve our circumstances got fixed in the social psyche. In Gita, Krishna links everything to cause and effect; 'as you sow, so you reap' and continuity from one life to another is provided depending on the *karmic* cycle (credits and debits earned through our deeds). Hence, one's action in his life can yield results in his next life as well. Isn't it true that one who plants fruit trees, many a time, never tastes the same himself for they might reach the time of fruition after he is no more.

God is compassionate and loves his children immensely. At times when we are stuck and we pray to him, he gives us a hint of what to do. If we pick up the hint and act on it, then our problem is solved. Truly God doesn't do anything special for anyone but he makes us the instrument of his action. This falls within the purview of *karma* and *karmic* cycle. Krishna unequivocally said that our *karma* in our life determine in what kind of a family we would take birth in our next life. Hence, it is not God but our actions that determine our destiny. But our actions depend on five factors that have been described in chapter 18.13-15.

Incarnation

Gita believes in continuity of life i.e. rebirth[7]; and in incarnation of God. But the concept of incarnation is not a monopoly of Hindu scriptures. It has been talked about in Christianity and in Jewish religious books. In Islam Mohammad Saheb was God's representative through whom God gave the code of conduct for Muslims. Similarly, in other religions too the original code of conduct was given by God through his chosen representatives. In Hindu religion, it is accepted that Vedas were given by God to Lord Brahma who gave it to Ved Vyas to document it in a book form. Initially it was given to chosen sages and subsequently it became available to Brahmins who were the teachers. They gave the same to the kings and chosen people and advised them to practise their lives according to the teachings of Vedas.

Over time the knowledge of Vedas got diluted and was misunderstood. There were transgressions. Some people deliberately did not follow it for perceived material gains. In any case God had known that his code of conduct was an ideal code and some people were bound to act differently. Like a compassionate and loving father, he kept an eye on the creation with a view to help them. He raised prophets, saints and preceptors from amongst the people from time to time to preach the correct way.

However, after passage of time, decay set in the society; its equilibrium was grossly disturbed causing all round unrest. When the situation worsened further and it threatened to make the equilibrium dangerously unsteady then he incarnated himself to correct the situation and to eliminate the evil doers who were upsetting the balance. He set examples by his deeds and laid down a code of conduct all over again. Krishna says in Gita that he has done this several times depending upon the needs of his children (the creation). As per *Srimad Bhagavatam*[8] *1.3* there have already been 24 incarnations and a 25th incarnation will take place in Kaliyuga (presently over 5000 years of Kaliyuga have elapsed). His name will be Kalki and his father would be a Brahmin named Vishnuyash.

Krishna explained the above to Arjuna in chapter 4 verses 7 & 8. These verses that are amongst the most famous verses of Gita are reproduced below:

> Verse 7
>
> "Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Bharata (Arjuna), then I send forth (incarnate) Myself."
>
> Verse 8
>
> "For the protection of good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I, come into being from age to age."

The above verses make it clear that God takes to incarnation from time to time. In Mahabharata time in Dwaparyuga, Krishna was the incarnation of Lord Vishnu (who is responsible for nurturing and sustenance of the creation). Earlier in Tretayuga he incarnated as Lord Rama.

As per the division of work amongst the trinity of Gods[9] Lord Brahma does the creation under the direct supervision of God Supreme. Lord Vishnu is in charge of nurturing and sustenance of the creation; and Lord Shiva is responsible for its destruction. Since sustenance of creation is Lord Vishnu's responsibility when things go wrong and God has to personally go down to correct the situation it is Lord Vishnu who has to incarnate, none else can do it. God's administration is well defined and responsibilities are clearly earmarked.

Birth & Death

Birth and death are the two biggest events[10] in the life of everyone in the creation. These do not discriminate on the basis of space, time, geography or

religion etc; and none can control these. Death is both mysterious and in a way interesting. We dread it and try to banish any thoughts of our own death. We like to believe the same does not apply to us. Interesting! Isn't it? How right Ivern Ball was when he said: "Most of us can read the writing on the wall; we just assume it is addressed to someone else".

In the case of birth, we do not know for sure what one experiences; is it pain or relief or both? But we do know that nearly all babies cry immediately after birth? This indicates fear or pain or discomfort.

Gita treated birth and death as a natural and universal routine, both being intermediate stations in the chain of our *karmic* cycle. If we control our *karma*, we can influence our *karmic* cycle. Truly judicious use of our free-will can offer us choices not only in this life but in our next lives as well. It's a pity we never realize this fact; and ignorantly let go the opportunity to create a golden future through our deeds; simply put 'to write our own destiny'. An anecdote from Mahabharata might provide an interesting backdrop.

Yudhishter the Pandava King reputed for his learning and righteous conduct went to *Yaksha*[11] territory. *Yaksha* used the opportunity to seek some wisdom from him.

Humbly he requested him to enlighten him. He asked him: "What is the Greatest Mystery in the world?" Yudhishter replied, "So many people die in the world every day, most of us do not realize or think about our own death. Isn't the hope, that we will be living forever the greatest mystery of all?" Mankind has not changed one bit in the last over 5500 years?

Tolstoy had a troubled family life; he often thought about the mystery of death. He dealt with the same graphically. His short story "How much land does a man need?" is too well known hence I will skip the same. In his other short story "What Men Live By" an Angel was sent by God to Earth to collect some vital information about the earthlings. Her mission was to find out "What is not given to man". She travelled far and wide, met a wide cross-section of people; she lived with some of them and collected detailed information. Finally, she concluded that "The man is not given to know his own needs." Tolstoy out of his own sensitivity went a step further and explained that 'the man is also not given to know whether when the evening comes he will put on his boots for the body or slippers for his corpse'.

At the thought of our own death, we start with a shock, total denial, dismay, fear and anger; and out of sheer helplessness we become depressed and

miserable. Eventually we reconcile to a reluctant acceptance of it as a fait accompli. In fact, we are never ready or ever willing to accept it. Somehow, we always believe it to be optional for us.

Gita treated it differently; it made death look like an ordinary happening, like changing a soiled shirt with a clean one. Krishna was forthright and firm in his approach which was meant to make us fearless, confident and optimistic. He virtually dismissed death as a non-issue. Since man greatly fears death, if that fear was eliminated he could become dynamic beyond belief; virtually a daredevil. The ultimate truth that we were mortals, shocks us, it comes as a revelation? If we accept Krishna's views, some of the mystique attached to our own death will be lost but we would become fearless. In the same breath Krishna convincingly discriminated between the transient body, that becomes old and withers away like everything else and the soul (*atman*) that was eternal it never changes; there was no way it could die. He was candid when he told Arjuna; 'Why worry about or moan for the body that is transient. Just do your duty and leave the rest to God'.

Why we are born at all? Gita again makes it simple. We just carry on. Birth and death were incidents (like change of frame in a theatre) in a continuum. Gita also says that in our next life we get the parents and family as per our deeds (*karma*) in our present life. It is like the GPS that fixes coordinates and tells which road to take? Isn't it a clear hint about the value of our *karma*; what we should do to qualify for a better life? It not only gives a purpose to our present life, it promises a better future.

What a pity, we prefer to remain unmindful of our deeds and always pretend to be exceptions to all rules, we start believing we will never die. Most credibly in this case too Krishna did multi-tasking, he highlighted the merit of *karma* in determining our destiny, he also said that birth and the death were an insignificant non-issues. It was only a change of transient body whereas the eternal life force (*praan shakti*), the soul being eternal remains alive and unchanged.

An Overview of Bhagavad-Gita

All the eighteen chapters of Gita deal with God the creator, the Man (*jivatma*), the Nature (*prakriti*), and their relationship. The central theme has been the transitory nature of all material possessions including our body as against the eternal soul and the God (*atman and Paramatman*).

Krishna's emphasis was on reconciliation of orthodox Hindu religious concepts that were at times mutually incompatible and simplifying the same for easy practical application by the common man uninitiated in spirituality. It is action based, dynamic, in contrast to renunciation or ascetic cult, recommended in the scriptures (*Sankhya Yoga*). However, simplification does not imply an easy way out. An example might be helpful here.

Krishna says:

- One must control the mind and practise equanimity in every situation;
- To completely surrender to God in thoughts, speech and actions;
- To do everything in his name, for he was the real owner and enjoyer of the fruits of our actions.

It clearly implies total control over our thought process, mind and surrender of our identity. These are extremely difficult. Arjuna in fact raised the matter in respect of control of mind and asked searching questions. Krishna conceded it was difficult, but advised perseverance with disciplined practise (yoga). He agreed the process for control of the mind was slow and candidly stated that for this very reason the control over mind sometimes takes several life periods. The gist is that the entire process involves a slow stage-by-stage development, for which total conviction, commitment and faith are required.

Krishna said that peace of mind and happiness were prerequisites for any development including spiritual enlightenment. When we chase wealth, fame, authority, status and power, we actually chase the shadow, the unreal and it is a futile exercise, as none of these attributes can provide true happiness. At the very best these may provide us some conveniences and transient pleasure. It is truly the hope of a mirage.

Essentially the above discipline boils down to achieving a faith in mind over matter. However, one may be tempted to ask, what this life is for, if we do not have the foregoing? This is a very legitimate query but if we also think, who we are; what do we really want to achieve; what is the purpose or the goal of our life? Then perhaps the relevance of Gita will become quite clear. After all, we desire something for some gain. The question to ask is, do we really get that we set our sight on, or is it a mirage that we chase; and why even after getting what we were fondly after, we remain as dissatisfied, as we were, when we set course? It is difficult to understand? Interestingly Krishna was not against gaining wealth, power and position but he advised how to use the same in the service of the society. He called service of the society as the best prayer.

Let us now look at the layout of Gita:

In the first six chapters, Krishna talks about:

- The soul (a*tman*), the body or the casing for holding the soul and the subtle difference between the two;
- How to sharpen our intellect and through the same our choice? Chapters I and II deal with the same besides other issues.
- The Supreme God or the Super Soul and it's position and the relationship between soul and Super Soul ('self' and 'Self');
- The Yogas (*Sankhya* Doctrine, *Karma-yoga, Dhyaan-yoga*) and Renunciation.

In chapters 7th to 12th he talks about:

- Knowledge about the Supreme God, His Opulences, Cosmic Evolution and the relationship between the Supreme God and the Cosmos;
- Universal Form of the Supreme God (*Viraat Rupa or Vishwa Rupa*);
- Importance of Devotional Service (*Bhakti-yoga*);
- Personal God and the Absolute Truth.

Chapters 13 to 17 are very important. These deal with the world, relationship between various elements, nature of living beings (*jivas)* and their differing attitudes and behaviour.

Krishna talks about the following:

- Body, soul and Super Soul and their respective roles in Nature;
- Three Modes of Nature (*Gunas*);
- Godly and Demonic minds, their traits, preferences, behaviour, faith, and mode of prayers etc;
- Goal of our life and way to achieve salvation.

Chapter 18 is the concluding chapter, where Krishna recapitulates everything in detail and provides supplementary information and urges Arjuna to take his decision about what he wants to do (about the war). Having understood his folly he (Arjuna) agrees to follow his instructions and fight the war.

Gita is a capsule of concentrated pure wisdom. It provides a practical philosophy for achieving excellence in life. Sometimes we find Krishna

repeating himself, but a bit of reflection throws up fresh and subtle ideas. He practically covers all possible situations one might encounter in his daily life. Besides dwelling on age old Hindu belief in rebirth, continuity of life and one having to pay for his sins, he also tells how to live one's life happily.

Krishna's repeated emphasis has been on not worrying about the fruits of our actions and giving up false pride and sense of doer-ship or owner-ship etc i.e. I, Me, Mine. He states that five factors including our body are needed for any action. Since our body is just one factor, hence, the sense of doer-ship or owner-ship is misplaced and any pride due to the same is false.

A little explanation might help here.

Krishna repeatedly asks us to give up our self-sense that is ego and the use of 'I', 'Me' and 'Mine'. Yet he himself uses the same freely. Is there a contradiction? The reply is NO! Krishna is God being an incarnation; he is one and only one in his class; there is no second. There is no relativity; he is not competing with anyone. God is the true owner of everything. The humankind is in a different class with many of our kind. We compete at every stage hence, we are in two different classes; the rules applicable to his class do not apply to our class.

Use of the terms "I", 'Me' and 'Mine' not only imply ownership it also implies that others don't have what we have? Further does one really know who he is? When he uses the term 'I' does he really know to whom (body or soul) is he referring to. But when we (in plural) use the same we know we are referring to ourselves. As for 'Me' and 'Mine', when God is the real owner of everything, how can we claim ownership? At best we are temporary care takers, that too by his Grace.

The primary aim of the teachings of the Gita appears to be:

- To achieve an equilibrium and serenity in the life of individuals and social order where everyone will have the opportunity to be happy and excel in his chosen field.
- Since Krishna sets the bar high (that of achieving perfection) our potential too is automatically raised higher – that we can do it. We have to realise that we can excel in our present life and even in our future lives if we follow a certain given discipline.

- To achieve the ultimate goal of perfection while living in the world as a normal house holder, rather than seeking wisdom as an ascetic living in seclusion renouncing the world.

Our ultimate goal is to achieve supreme excellence that is perfection. Our objective for the present is to seek happiness in our daily life and therefore, a subtle effort has been made to focus on related issues. When one decides to seek union with God (perfection) he will have to widen the scope of his effort.

Krishna was well aware of the fact that spiritual development was a slow process and it demands perseverance and undistracted devotion. When he talked of the three modes of Nature (*gunas*) being the prime movers of any action that we perform and that five factors were needed for any action of which the body was just one factor with which we identify ourselves; and that the body was made of 24 elements none of which were truly under its (body's) control, he was only highlighting the number of variables one had to encounter. Yet, his objective was always to encourage people to try it even if the gains were incremental and it takes a long time.

While talking about the *gunas* in chapter 17 he described the traits of *sattvik*, *rajasik* and *tamasik* people, their habits and overall personality in minute details and how the *gunas* influence one's habits, attitude and faith. He categorised what they like to eat, their yagna or sacrifice, their austerity, penance and charity, their mental state and how they act. For those who want to advance to a better level say from *rajasik* to *sattvik* they could try to achieve the *sattvik* set of attributes and cultivate desirable habits and psyche as per those that *sattvik* people possess. Krishna virtually tells us 'do this and this and this and you will be promoted to the next level.' Could one offer a greater or more direct help?

Krishna is at times subtle in his expression or we are uninitiated to his language. That is why some verses have to be studied again and again to understand the real meaning. When he talks of the goal of achieving union with God, he knows that very few (may be, one or two in a billion) will go for it. Yet he lays so much emphasis on it. Why? He is telling us that if we go for his teachings and take to Yoga, Pranayaam and Meditation etc we can for sure achieve excellence in our life. Just to explain the point further he directs us to calm our mind (by slowing down our breathing) so that our intellect becomes sharper and we learn to make informed choices. By doing this we will eliminate the need for 'redos' and save time and energy. We will do our jobs correctly and much faster.

No over-view can do justice to the message of Gita. One can only get a glimpse of the subtle laws of the Nature. With our scientific temper we are used to gross physical laws and we miss the essence and subtleties. The spiritual knowledge (*adhyaatmic gyaan*) part is missing from our syllabus; hence, our knowledge remains incomplete. We have to develop an eye, truly a kind of faith to acquire a total vision to notice the subtlety. This demands total attention and thorough study. One promise that can be made with certainty is that in the process many issues where we may be stuck in life would be resolved; and we would look askance that why the same never occurred to us earlier.

Only the God could have said so much and clarified the same repeatedly as not to leave any doubt, in just 700 verses that are musical as well.

Chapter 1: ‘Arjuna Vishada Yoga’

A Glimpse of the Battle Field at Kurukshetra

The Kaurava and Pandava armies with their distinguished commanders face each other waiting for the battle to commence.

Arjuna requests Krishna to take his chariot in between the two armies presumably to conduct a joint recce of the two armies. Possibly his idea was to affect last minute changes in the deployment of his forces in order to gain advantage of a swift strike.

To his dismay he saw so many near and dear ones; respected elders, his teachers, relations and friends on either side ready to kill each other. The very thought of killing his relations even if they had been wrong, and grossly unjust, overwhelmed him.

He suffered an emotional turmoil and in that state of acute depression he imagined only gory scenes of bloodshed and a possible catastrophe that could wipe out the entire *Kuru* clan (both sides).

Arjuna is overawed; and in a confused mental state, compounded by a sense of helplessness he expresses to Krishna his deep anguish; and a strong perception of futility of the war.

Finally, totally drained of both mental and physical energy he cast aside his bow and arrows and drops down in the chariot lifelessly. Krishna remains a mute listener; he patiently heard and watched the most unexpected anticlimax at the last minute before the beginning of the battle.

This sets the tenor of a dialogue (in verse) between Krishna and Arjuna famously known as the ‘Celestial Song;’ and respectfully called the ‘Bhagavad-Gita’ and popularly known as Gita for short.

On the other side the de-facto Kaurava King Duryodhana was also surveying his army and talking to his commanders with a view to encourage them.

There are a total of 47 *Shlokas* (verses) in this chapter. Arjuna with 22 verses does the lion’s share of talking; King Dhritrashtra’s secretary Sanjay with 13 verses comes next; the de-facto King Duryodhana contributes 10 verses; the blind King Dhritrashtra had just one, the opening verse; and Krishna too made an insignificant contribution with just one verse (25th verse) to his credit.

Kurukshetra (literally means Kuru's territory) was an important and respected holy place of pilgrimage. Several saints and even King *Kuru* the progenitor of the entire dynasty of Kauravas and Pandavas had performed various sacred Vedic rites at this place. Hence, since ancient times, the place was considered sacred. Righteousness was an accepted virtue to be followed by all at Kurukshetra. It was both preached and practiced. In view of its known history and the fact that Krishna the upholder of *dharma* was himself present as Arjuna's charioteer at the battle field King Dhritrashtra addressed Kurukshetra as *Dharmashetra* which translates to mean the field of righteousness.

The King suffers a guilty conscience. He was greatly worried and feared the worst. He was convinced that his sons (the Kauravas) had been unjust and had usurped what rightfully belonged to Pandavas; they were sure to be defeated and killed in the war.

He was fighting a psyche that continually reminded him that Kurukshetra being a holy place could never support the unrighteous, those who practiced deception and cheating. His sons had exactly done that? Sitting in his palace at Hastinapur he was greatly perturbed and restless. He had lost his peace. In his heart he also felt guilty for he had been a party to the wrong done to Pandavas; he trembled at the thought of divine judgment against his sons.

This chapter has been uniformly called 'Despondency of Arjuna'; frankly Dhritrashtra was no less despondent and miserable. The two had widely differing reasons. Arjuna had a misplaced perception that caused his despondency; and for King Dhritrashtra it was far real; it was a call of his conscience that told him that the divine law of natural justice was about to unveil itself. He had visions of loss of his 100 sons along with the kingdom. He could see that his blind love (*moh*) for his sons, and the greed for ownership of the kingdom had triggered an entirely avoidable catastrophe and he alone was responsible for the same.

Just before the start of the battle, sage Ved Vyas, who was King Dhritrashtra's biological father, visited him at Hastinapur. He knew that he was very upset with the events leading to the war. His being blind had become a greater handicap for him now than it ever was earlier in his life. For once, he wanted to see for himself the events at the battle field; how his sons were faring against the Pandavas. He was not only restless, he was very anxious. Ved Vyas sensed his state of mind; he offered to provide him with *divya -drishty* (celestial vision) with which while staying at Hastinapur, he could see and

hear what was happening at the battle field of Kurukshetra. In fact, he could even gain the intuition to sense what was about to happen at the battle field.

True, the king wanted the vision, but he was mortally scared to have it; he felt it was best for him to remain blind at that time like he had always been. Therefore, thanking the sage he advised him to provide the *divya -drishty* to Sanjay, his secretary and charioteer. He visualised it would be very painful for him to gain the vision to see the happenings at the battle field with his own eyes. He could trust Sanjay for an honest report regarding the war. Gita opens (first verse) with King Dhritrashtra's anxious query to Sanjay as to what was happening at the battle field of Kurukshetra the *Dharmashetra*.

Sanjay was intelligent, honest and a devoted person. He was both obedient and faithful to the king; yet, he was bold enough to tell the truth and at times his own interpretation of the same. He knew the king's miserable condition best but he never minced words or doctored facts to make a situation more palatable to him.

He advised the king how Duryodhana first surveyed Pandava's forces and was perplexed by the unconventional deployment they had used. Being highly

materialistic and self centred he virtually rushed to his teacher Drona to talk to him. Strictly speaking he should have gone to Bhishma who was the commander of the Kaurava army. His aim was to boost the morale of his commanders and he wanted to convey to Drona that though Bhishma was the commander but he greatly valued his genius in respect of martial and respected his primacy on the battle field.

To his credit, he took care to go to Drona rather than calling him. Unfortunately, jealousy was his pronounced trait; and he rather clumsily started praising Pandava's mighty army and its commander Drishtadyumna (King Drupad's son and Draupadi's brother[12)]. The reason for praising Drishtadyumna had another dimension as well. Drona and Drupad were old enemies; he tried to challenge Drona's pride by praising Drupad's son. Again, thanks to his clumsy mannerism and improper choice of words, he made Drona think that he trusted Bhishma more, but was skeptical about his own commitment. Far from boosting his morale he managed to do the reverse of what he wanted to do and upset him.

It was ironical he started by praising how Drishtadyumna had intelligently deployed his forces. Unwittingly he implied that his own commanders were lacking in foresight and had not taken proper care. He then reverentially

mentioned the names of the important kings and Generals who were fighting for Pandava's side and proceeded to describe the names of distinguished kings and Generals[13] on his side.

He could have as well talked about his Generals first and then mentioned about the Pandava's. But he lacked in basic niceties. However, at this point he did say words of praise for his own commanders and finally he declared that his forces were much stronger and better equipped than Pandava's army. This was indeed a fact; Kaurava had well quipped 11divisions compared to Pandava's 7 divisions.

Duryodhana urged everyone to offer full support and protection to Bhishma who was their commander. This was a given thing? Bhishma was a great warrior highly respected and loved for his character, steadfastness, knowledge, learning and skills. He was the eldest amongst Kauravas and Pandavas combined; and was respectfully called *Pitahmah* (Grand sire). He was King Dhritrashtra's uncle and Duryodhana's grand uncle. Likewise, Dronacharya (Drona for short) was the teacher for all the young ones in the Kuru clan (both Pandavas and Kauravas taken together); he taught them martial arts. Hence, Duryodhana's behaviour and statements mentioned above were not in good taste. He displayed arrogance towards his teacher and elders who had brought him up; and also against his army who had agreed to die for his cause. How can a leader inspire people using this kind of mannerism and language he used?

Bhishma as we know was the eldest in the clan was most respected in the kingdom. Lord Parashuram (considered an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) was his *Guru*. His training made him accomplished in all aspects of governance and martial arts. He was incomparable in wisdom and none could match him on the battle field. Besides he was granted the boon of *icchamrityu* (he could choose the time of his death). He was competent enough to protect himself, yet Duryodhana chose to appeal to all to protect him? He did so, on purpose for he had taken a vow not to fight against one who was not a man. Shikhandi (Draupadi's second brother) was born as a girl; later his sex changed and he became a boy. Bhishma considered him to be a woman with whom he could not fight. Duryodhana feared that in case he came to fight against him or was used as a shield by someone in fight against him he would be vulnerable and could even be killed. Shikhandi was eventually used by Arjuna as a shield to defeat and mortally injure him.

Bhishma had overheard Duryodhana's talks with Drona and his appeal to all to ensure his safety. He ignored his demeanour instead he saw nervousness on his face and in his words; he felt the need to cheer him up and boost his confidence. He gave a loud call, like a lion's roar it reverberated all round, that triggered blowing of conch shells by the chiefs on both sides[14] and an assortment of musical instruments like kettledrums, tabors, cymbals and trumpets started playing. This created a high decibel chorus of sounds that electrified the atmosphere. The tumult due to sounds reverberating through heaven and earth and in all directions was frightening; simply heart rending. It specially pierced the hearts of Dhritrashtra's sons.

The terrifying sounds at the battle field affected everyone. Particular mention of the same affecting Dhritrashtra's sons was significant. It implied that Pandava forces were fighting for a just cause; they were full of zeal and commitment, for they had a noble mission to accomplish. To them the tumult and the air wave of the battle field was an acceptable accompaniment. On the Kauravas' side the fight was for the ego of a single person-Duryodhana. The war was thrust upon unwilling associates as a circumstantial necessity; a burdensome chore[15]. Most failed to find any virtue in it and they could not identify with the cause.

Arjuna and Krishna enter the scene for the first time in verse 14. They arrive in a majestic chariot[16] drawn by four white horses sporting saffron colour flag fluttering atop with Lord Hanuman's image in the centre as the emblem or the protecting deity. They blow their conches. The chariot was a gift to Arjuna from God *Agni* who appeared at the time of the fire that gutted the Khandava forest. It was very strong and elegant with specially crafted ornamentation and was shining majestically with brilliant light emanating that lighted up all dimensions right up to the horizon. The white horses were very powerful and elegantly dressed in sparkling white. They were very agile and could well compete with wind in speed. In fact, the 4 horses were drawn from a stable of 100 white horses gifted by a *Gandharva* (heavenly spirit; a demi-god) to Arjuna with a boon that even after any number of horses die the stable strength would remain at 100.

Arjuna speaks to Krishna from verse 21 to 23 and from verse 28 to 46.

Before Arjuna truly came on the scene Yudhishtera noticed the innovative and impenetrable formation of mammoth Kaurava army arranged by Bhishma. He expressed his doubts to Arjuna about the chances of their own victory. He was skeptical and for once uncomfortably trembling with fear. Arjuna quoted a

Vedic verse and encouraged him that in a war victory was won not only by the might but by truth, compassion, humility and virtue. He further added that victory was on Yudhishtera side; it raised his morale; all took their positions and waited.

At the battle field Krishna asked Arjuna to purify his mind and body and pray to Mother Goddess Durga before getting into the battle arena. Arjuna faithfully chanted hymns in praise of Mother Goddess and prayed to her. The Goddess was pleased and blessed him that victory would definitely honour him and that he would vanquish his enemy. Armed with her blessings and after the conches were blown by the various chiefs on either side Arjuna along with Krishna went into the battle field confidently. Arjuna requested Krishna to take the chariot in between the two armies.

Arjuna intently observed the chiefs holding posts in the Kaurava army. While passing the posts manned by Drona and Bhishma, Krishna invited his particular attention to Kaurava chiefs (verse 25).

He however, was not seeing Kaurava chiefs as his enemies. He saw all those who had assembled at the behest of evil minded Duryodhana out of loyalty, social obligation, fear or compulsion to fight against Pandavas as relations. They were seen by him as grand fathers, uncles, teachers, brothers, sons, friends; in-laws and so on. Everyone appeared to be one from his family. He feared he might even kill them in the battle.

Overcome by compassion in a morose and trembling tone he confided in Krishna that he felt totally lost. He said that in fear his hair stood on his head, his throat was dry and skin burning and he felt lifeless unable to even stand and that his famous bow Gaandiva was slipping out of his hands.

He (Arjuna) was so devoid of self-control that even in the midst of two big armies he felt lonely. He told Krishna that he saw ill omens on all sides and he was convinced that a victory or kingdom at the cost of killing near and dear kinsmen was not to be desired. One valued a victory and enjoyed it by sharing the same with his near and dear ones; his kinsmen.

Dhritrashtra's sons had been unfair to them, they had indeed cheated and even insulted them, truly they caused great hardship to them and for sure they would not hesitate to kill them in the battle, should they get any opportunity. But he still felt that it would be sinful for him to fight against them and kill them.

Even in the confused mental state of mind he said that his cousins blinded by greed, saw nothing wrong in annihilating the family and indulging in treachery, yet, that did not justify his own indulgence in the same sinful acts. He highlighted the evil effects of what happens when clans were destroyed; how the women; the future generations got corrupted destroying the established caste system (*varna*) and the entire social fabric. True wisdom demands that they must not fight to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the family.

Arjuna had correctly visualized, that the war could destroy the entire clan leaving only the old, infirm, children, widows and menial class; that would surely cause enormous hardship to everyone. The age-old traditions and customs could be lost. Even the dead would be denied a decent funeral and last rites as per the Vedic practices. Even though he knew well that Krishna was well aware of the facts and obvious possibilities, yet, he persisted with his monologue.

He ignored the fact that what applied to him (Pandavas) applied to Kauravas as well. It was they who had brought the situation to such a pass; and only they were responsible for the unfortunate *fait accompli*. Yet, they were unconcerned? He chose to remain strangely oblivious to the real facts; and resorted to churning uncomfort-able and contrasting emotions within, hoping to seek a cogent view, an acceptable answer to his doubts; a way to avoid the war. He was truly not talking to Krishna, he was indulging in loud thinking; a self-talk. His righteous mindset had granted graces to Kauravas for all their wrong doings and he was now inclined to forgive them to somehow avoid the war. Indeed, he found himself at the dead end; he was suffering a great mental block causing excruciating pain. Krishna remained a mute witness. He understood his predicament, yet, he could only pity him. It was most un-Arjuna like behaviour.

Arjuna declared that he would disarm himself and would not fight against his relations and friends (Kauravas) even if they chose to kill him. He was suffering a misplaced perception due to a sense of guilt and self-doubt that he was nursing within his mind. He thought if he dropped his arms the war could be prevented. How? As per the accepted rules of war one cannot attack an unarmed enemy. What he told Krishna was that if his friends and relations who stood before him as his enemies chose to kill him even when he was without arms, he would risk dying at their hands rather than waging a war (hoping against slightest hope that seeing him disarmed they would not kill him).

He once again reiterates that a victory at the cost of killing one's own family could never bring happiness; and could never be enjoyed. And finally overcome by emotional turmoil, filled with uncertainty and despair he felt his spirit deserting him; not knowing what to do, he cast away his bow and arrows and dropped in the chariot lifelessly.

Arjuna's dilemma truly portrays what happens to each one of us in our daily life and how we are forced to take a wrong turn. When we face a challenge, initially we work hard and prepare to meet the same squarely. At the threshold of a leap forward towards our goal we invariably get bitten by the bug called ego; emotions, greed, selfishness etc; we start having illusions about our existing state, comfort zone, ties, benefits, relationships and imaginary happiness etc. Strangely insignificant matters get magnified and pose as inflated problems, blowing the same into life and death proportion and we are tempted to cling to the perceived comfort zone of the existing even with its known deficiencies. In the process, we lose our bearings and forget our mission, the very cause of our action and the possibilities that a leap could catapult us several notches, becomes blurred and our effort appears to be not worth our while.

On the other hand, at times, we are beaten by petty selfish material gains (mostly imaginary); we create a doubting psyche and let go of great opportunities. Why? Due to lack of clarity in our vision that results from weak spiritual fabric, call it spiritual indifference or rejection. Overwhelmed by perceived illusory material gains we allow ourselves to be persuaded, and finally succumb to a compromise that we foolishly begin to prize as a sacred, virtuous act of sacrifice. Since our vision is blurred a change howsoever, decent and important with a possibility of great benefits appears unworthy and risky. We seek an escape route that could in bargain provide us an exalted status commensurate with our perceived sacrifice or supposed virtuous act.

Arjuna forgot his lineage, his heredity, the fact that he was a Pandava prince and a brother of Yudhishter (*Dharmraja*) respected for upholding righteousness at all times. It never occurred to him that Krishna's company itself was the proof of the legitimacy of their action in going to the war. He was a superior human being but under the influence of *gunas* he was acting like an ordinary man trying to escape a responsibility.

When we face the kind of predicament Arjuna faced, we need to look within and ponder; consult our inner 'self' the god within us; it never fails us. A

dialogue with our own self is possible only when we achieve a clear focus within ourselves and the power to discriminate.

For this we need control of our mind and our emotions through spirituality and practice of yoga and meditation. Arjuna's knowledge of spirituality could surely not be doubted, however, in the present case these needed to be supplemented or refreshed.

Krishna sensed his problem and his deficiency fairly soon but he remained a mute and patient listener. He wanted Arjuna to empty his heart out to the full. He spoke only in one insignificant verse (*shloka*) no 25 out of 47 verses in this chapter; and there too, he only invited his attention towards Bhishma and Drona.

Prima-facie Arjuna did speak to Krishna. However, a second reading would reveal that truly it was a monologue; he was only trying to speak to himself or he was trying to talk to his invisible God standing before him. He was unburdening his heart with statements like he was frightened, he was trembling; his limbs had become weak and were not in his control, that he was unable to hold his bow (*Gaandiva*) in his hands; that when the family is ruined, age old traditions and ancient laws are destroyed and that none is left to carry out rituals to honour the ancestors (*pitri*) etc.

He expressed all his doubts, reservations and described the ill effects and possible sins, damaging fall out of the war without ever seeking his opinion; entirely one-way discourse. He posed so many questions and also strongly suggested that there was only one solution: the war had to be prevented somehow. He himself volunteered the answer. If that was not self-talk what else could it be? Don't we have such situations in our life when we lock ourselves into a preconceived notion?

Unfortunately, most of us keep thinking and talking about our view point and fail to offer a fair hearing to the contrary options when it comes from others or from within our self. We forget that no one could ever see a complete object all by himself at the same time; something would always be out of his viewing range. A bit of patient listening helps in finding the optimum solution to any problem.

Krishna demonstrated the golden 'Art of Listening' in this chapter and he displayed supreme patience practically in all the chapters of Gita. He sensed what Arjuna suffered was not only despondency, it was spiritual dejection; a denial.

He was not ignorant; he had lost memory of what he had practised through life. After all he was not an ordinary person; he was a great prince, an evolved person and a close friend of Krishna. During Pandava's forest sojourn he had travelled far and wide including *Devaloka* and Amravati (*Indraloka*). He had interacted with many kings, scholars, sages, Gods and demi-gods like *Narada*, *Hanuman, Shiva* and *Indra* and many others. He knew very well the effort Krishna had made to broker a peace with Duryodhana with a view to avoid the war and the insult of an arrogant dismissal he (Krishna) suffered at his hands. In fact, Duryodhana had even tried to arrest him. In lapse of memory (wisdom) he had become oblivious of everything including the fact that the very presence of Krishna with him as his charioteer was not only a great honour it was a divine blessing.

What was Arjuna's problem?

Krishna concluded Arjuna needed to rekindle his spirituality to cement the fault lines that caused his psychic aberration. He needed intuitive wisdom and for that he had to regain the control over his mind.

He realized his job was clearly cut out; he had to help him achieve self-control and self-discipline. He knew that he would not be able to give his 100% unless he was clear about justification of the cause, need and choice of his actions.

Once he gained clarity of mind, achieving a point focus would become a lot easier; correct strategy and actions would follow automatically, leading to long term success. Clarity of ideas leads to decisive action, correct options start falling in places by themselves; repeated success with happiness becomes a pre-programmed routine.

From chapter 2, till the end of their dialogue in chapter 18 Krishna repeatedly talked of the elements of spirituality and patiently answered Arjuna's nagging queries; he only tried to clear his doubts so that he gained full control of his mind and the capacity to use his self-discipline to exercise his free-will judiciously. We all know he succeeded as well.

Gist of Chapter 1

The crux of Chapter 1 in one sentence: 'Wrong judgment is the cause of all the problems in life.'

Arjuna's problem is a wrong perception of the situation and not consulting Krishna before deciding not to fight the war. Why this happened? King Dhritrashtra was the main cause of his emotional turmoil.

As per the story of Mahabharata, Dhritrashtra was greatly worried when the war between Pandavas and Kauravas became inevitable. He knew that his sons and he himself, had throughout been very unfair to Pandavas. They had cheated them and they were sure to be punished by God for the same. He could see Kauravas defeat and death of all his sons on the battle field.

He himself had an inflated sense of guilt. He was trying hard to somehow avoid the war without giving Pandavas anything significant much less their rightful share of the kingdom that he had promised to them.

Before the start of the war he deputed his secretary Sanjay to visit Yudhishtera and subsequently Arjuna with a message that the war would be catastrophic and he virtually appealed to them to somehow avoid the same. He had made it clear that he was helpless in respect of his own sons hence, the appeal was to them. Sanjay pleaded with the brothers with great fervor. Both Yudhishtera and Arjuna were taken in by his presentation.

The result was that first Yudhishtera said to Krishna “Peace at all costs; the war had to be avoided”. It took Krishna and Arjuna considerable effort and persuasion to convince him.

Later just before the war Arjuna totally forgot what Yudhishtera had done earlier; and he did exactly the same at a very critical hour. However, both the brothers gave enough proof of their simplicity, humility and non-violence. They could see it was a blank appeal with nothing in return for them. Yet they agreed to forego what belonged to them. Had Dhritrashtra made even a token offer to them in return they might well have agreed to his proposal.

Chapter 2: Sankhya Philosophy and Yoga

In Chapter I, we had a monologue from Arjuna, something like a preface. He had impetuously decided not to fight the war and declared his intentions to Krishna without seeking his advice or any discussions with him. He had forgotten that before the war both Duryodhana and he had gone to Dwarka to seek Krishna's help.

Having the first option Arjuna had chosen Krishna over his vast army and other resources. Why did he do that? He valued his advice; his strategic help worth more than all his army and other resources?

Yet; he takes a vital decision even without consulting him. Isn't this typical of us? Don't we at times get swayed or overwhelmed by the spur of the moment sentiments and take a wrong hasty decision?

Krishna knew too well that Arjuna was a knowledgeable Pandava prince and a brave warrior; he had a worthy and enviable lineage. He surmised that he had suffered a temporary lapse of memory; an intellectual vacuum had put his wisdom box on the back burner. He had forgotten that exceptional situations would not allow straight rationalization and would need adjustment in structured existence.

In such cases one needed the guidance of the Spirit and he had to approach the same through his own spirit. He ignored the power of his intuition or the inspiration from his '*atman*', his spirit. He had lost the sensitivity to hear the voice of his own spirit; his spirituality had to be awakened for him to regain his wisdom.

Arjuna's doubts were superficial and could be clarified if he listened to the contrary view; but he had gone too far overboard and had lost his bearings. He was in the clutches of evil passion, virtually drowned in a pond of unreason.

One had to work on him; prepare him to hear reason with an uncluttered mind for he had to pass through the grey area (black-- grey-- white) before reaching the white band to which he truly belonged. This required challenging his present belief system and his psyche. Not easy!

Krishna felt that trying to comfort him could cause his doubts to rebound with greater vehemence. He had to patiently work on his psyche to bring him back to his original self. And there was no short cut to it.

Arjuna's perception was being defined by the war and its consequences (pure emotional reaction caused by attachment; *moh*). Krishna decided to broad base his perspective to preempt him to take a holistic and total view of life not limited by a single event.

He addressed him by his various names (just to remind him about who he was; his position) and dealt with the entire gamut of life, birth-death, soul, Super Soul (*atma* and *Parmatma*); perishable human body, family attachment, desire, relationships; material, spiritual, social needs-responsibilities and duties; real and illusory, transient and eternal, our senses and emotions, renunciation, the 24 constituents (evolutionary elements) of our body, Sankhya philosophy – *Purusa* and *Prakriti*, role of the three *gunas*, happiness-sorrow, duality, yoga, karma, teaching of Vedas, mind, intellect and Self-realisation.

His mission was to prepare him to first understand these and then seek the truth. He had to willingly act to discharge his responsibilities. It was more than a 'U' turn; it was going back to the starting point to make a fresh start.

He talked of immortality of the soul; that it could not be destroyed by any means. On the other hand, all material things in nature including the body of a person were insignificant and transient, that keep on changing, being temporary and perishable.

All those who take birth or are created had a life and must die; hence, the wise do not grieve for the living or the dead. It was a simple truth applicable to all, yet, it was too subtle and unworldly; hence, difficult to grasp.

He focused on this simple philosophy pregnant with profound knowledge in detail from verse 11 to 53. In doing so he also covered Sankhya Philosophy from verse 11 to 38.

Sankhya Philosophy referred in Gita is not the same as the Sankhya Doctrine propounded by Kapil Muni[17]. In Gita the same was meant to provide an analytical description and distinction of body and soul. His interpretation of the same is entirely theistic and Krishna finally preferred Bhakti-yoga to Kapil Muni's Gyaan-yoga.

Before we proceed with the details of the knowledge provided by the author of Gita in this chapter it would be desirable to try to briefly understand the meaning and significance of terms: 'The Sankhya Philosophy' and Yoga that incidentally make the title of this important chapter.

Sankhya is a Sanskrit word; it connotes 'to have total knowledge' that includes physical plus spiritual knowledge. It describes the nature of the *atman* and God- knowledge that leads to Self-Realisation.

Yoga implies 'to unite', to collect the positives from various faculties that we possess and merge the same into a single powerful stream. It is truly a generic term that applies to so many things.

Krishna used 'Sankhya' to mean knowledge of Vedanta, the Upnishads and Yoga

stands for concerted selfless action. Sankhya Philosophy is atheistic, theoretical and intellectual doctrine akin to *Gyaan*-yoga of Gita. It demands renunciation of desire.

It conforms to the principles of dualism (*Dvait)* in contrast to *Advait* of Shankaracharya. Yoga is integral to theism. In Sankhya, *Purusa* (Super Self) and *Prakriti* (non-self) are two constituents. *Purusa* corresponds to the unchanging one; the eternal Cosmic Spirit; and *Prakriti* to the creation, manifested world. Everything is created due to interaction between *Purusa* and *Prakriti.*

Krishna was a man of action; he was the one who always remained in the midst of supreme action. He was clear; action and more action were needed all the time for accomplishing anything. He associated Yoga with everything that is why each chapter of Gita deals with some form of yoga and is named as such.

Yoga is a practical philosophy; it provides the discipline or the technique to utilize the Sankhya's theoretical intellectual doctrine to achieve tangible goals through the application of *Buddhi, Gyaan, Karma, Bhakti, Dhyaan* and *Samta*-yoga etc. Yoga added as a suffix to a specified attribute say *Bhakti* (Devotion) makes *Bhakti*-yoga. As per Sankhya Philosophy *prakriti* including the *jiva* (mankind) come from the God (*Purusa*); Yoga provides the action plan, the method and the route map for eventually returning back to *Purusa*, the creator; God, Self, the Cosmic Spirit. This return to our original divine self is called Self-realization; the state in which *jiva* (living being) merges or becomes one with the God.

As per Gita, Yoga needs three entities; God as the *Purusa* (Super Self), individual self (*jiva*) and *Prakriti* - the latter two are subordinate to *Purusa* and have dependent existence.

Yoga referred in Gita is different from the one propounded by sage Patanjali and described by him in *Yoga-Sutras*. In fact, Patanjali's age is around 3rd century BC whereas Krishna and Gita date back to 3230 BC.

There are 72 verses in this chapter. Sanjay made three introductory remarks (verse 1 and 9-10). Arjun spoke in just 6 verses (4-8 and 54) and the rest 62 verses (2-3, 11-53, 55-72) were contributed by Krishna.

In his bewildered state Arjuna requests Krishna for his help and guidance; for once he calls him his teacher and seeks his refuge (verse 7). He frankly tells him that he needed his guidance in respect of what was correct for him. Krishna was concerned by the turn of events at the eleventh hour by his despondency, his downcast, fatigued and lifeless looks with tears in his eyes. Yet, he retained his cool and addressed him as 'Aryan'; in the next worse he called him as 'Partha'[18] and Oppressor of Foes'. He tells him that his behavior was unmanly; his faintheartedness was unbecoming of Aryan nobility to which he belonged.

Krishna was trying to awaken Arjuna's consciousness by reminding him of his lineage by calling him Aryan[19] and Partha. Repeated reminder of his descent, exalted position and responsibilities was unable to subdue his strong desperation and excessive fear of wrong doing (though entirely misplaced). His continued negativity and all his reasoning were derived from a firm belief that the war had to be avoided.

In a moment of emotional turmoil, he had taken such an important decision and worse still, he had made a virtue of it; and it had become the prime mover of his thought process. He said that both Drona and Bhishma might be fighting for their perceived gains, yet, they were his respected elders and teachers; hence, it would be unbecoming of him to fire arms at them. Any victory achieved by killing them would not be worth having and certainly not enjoyable. He was conscious of Kaurava's greed and wrong doing, but he still felt it to be wrong to kill them. Krishna called it unmanly faintheartedness on his part and appealed to him to rid himself of it and rise above it to fight. His words had no effect on him.

Arjuna raised two points: one of propriety; he was not sure if it was at all desirable to fight for regaining their kingdom; and the second was that even if they (Pandava) defeated Kaurava (he was suffering lack of confidence) and got the kingdom and riches back, they would not be able to enjoy the same with the blood of respected elders and kinfolk on their hands.

He now decided to request Krishna for his guidance to get rid of his bewilderment; the right and wrong of the war, but without waiting for his response he pronounced that such a war would not be justified even if it gave them the kingdom of the heaven and a victory could not drive his sorrow away. He went on to add that it would be preferable for him to live by begging rather than killing his elders; respected teachers and kinfolk. Finally, he declared that he would not fight.

Isn't it a fact that often we take decisions and then search for reasons to justify the same? We try to rationalize matters, and attempt to justify the contradictions.

Purely, for self-gratification we indulge in wishful thinking.

Such decisions are neither based on logic nor on any faith; little surprise, we end up in a mess. We are no saints we are simple worldly people with all the human failings of greed, lust, anger, one-upmanship etc.

Invariably we suffer spiritual deficit and lack control over our mind. Krishna's problem was that Arjuna was not an ordinary person; he was an enlightened one. He was the son of Lord Indra and Kunti; and a brother of Dharma-raj Yudhishtera.

Both the place and timing of his decision were improper. His act was one of unjustified self-indulgence caused by self-pity, unworthy of his position. Krishna felt pity and politely rebuked him, but he found little effect on him. He smiled at his uninformed and impetuous behaviour.

He was quick to understand that Arjuna had only tried to rationalize a wrong through the cloak of a supposedly pious and noble sacrifice. Hence, Krishna too resorted to rationalization of what happens in our daily life but he did so in a subtle way with truth, undeniable facts, and a lot of spiritual wisdom and entirely devoid of wishful thinking.

He told Arjuna that both birth and death were universal truth that applied to all in the creation; and it had been so since the very creation of the prakriti (inception of mankind). One who is born must die. Those he was grieving for, his elders, teachers, relations and friends (standing opposite him) and all the Pandava and even Krishna[20] himself had always been there in earlier lives, as now; and would be there in the future as well. Our soul was immortal and eternal; it stays with us all through; from infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, old age and right up to death.

At the time of death, our soul seeks a new abode (new body) and continues its eternal journey.

He talked in some detail about the immortal and eternal soul (self) and transient nature of everything else including our body (non-self) highlighting the basic difference between the two as imperishable (soul) and perishable (body). Thereafter, he dwelt on one's responsibilities and duties; and how actions (karma) influenced one's position in the society.

He explained in detail as a grandfather would do to his grandson. He said that our senses, when in contact (not necessarily voluntary) with sense objects, create a feeling of duality like pain or pleasure; hot or cold; etc.

We are definitely affected by these but the effect is temporary in nature; it comes and goes; and keeps on changing. The soul within us being a part of the Brahman or Self is unaffected by the dualities (pair of opposites), it stays the same; unchanging.

One has to learn to live with the pleasure and pain, gain and loss, good health and disease etc that we encounter and still stay the same i.e. learn to practise equanimity. When one gains this attribute to transcend dualities (called S*amta-yoga*) he i.e. his soul becomes qualified for eternal life like the Brahman (Super Self).

Imperishable Soul and Perishable Body

Arjuna had raised a delicate sentimental issue. Krishna felt his doubts had to be

cleared to enable him put his heart and soul into the task at hand. He decided to explain the nature of Brahman that pervaded everything in the nature. He said:

- The soul was real (*Sat*); everything else in nature was unreal (*Asat*). The real is always present and the unreal is non-existent (temporary). In the material world we are enamoured of the drama of life, our vision gets hampered by the flashing lights caused by various diversions. The real remains veiled by the transient unreal; the chief actor is cloaked by the stage and its decorative pieces.
- It (soul) neither takes birth nor dies. It is self-created (*swayambhu*) and self-sustaining it just goes on and on unaffected by anything. None can harm it or kill it, hence, it is a misperception to think that along with the body one could kill the soul as well.

- It cannot be hurt by any weapon, burnt by fire, wetted by water or dried by air. It remains all pervading, immutable, immovable, unchanging, un-manifest and incomprehensible.
- Just as one changes old clothes to take on new ones, so does the soul take a new body when the existing one becomes old.

Human body is transient. It had to wither away and die like everything else in the *prakriti* as per the laws of evolution. It was as good as a non-entity. Once dead the body never comes back. Yet, we identify with it and strangely get attached to it; holding on to something that was unreal and truly not there.

It is like expecting fragrance from a flower that never was? Like old machinery, the body when it becomes old and gets diseased and deteriorates and it dies like a ripened fruit falls to the earth. We are unable to identify with our soul that was the 'real me' for we don't see it; and it was hard to find.

The soul being a part of the eternal Brahman doesn't change and it doesn't die[21]. It just finds another abode; a new body. The body and soul were in two different categories.

The body gets a body and life determined by its *karmic* cycle as per the Law of *Karma*. The soul carries on, it doesn't change or age. The occasional change of body (outer cloak) is like our changing old and worn out clothes with new ones.

Hence, in a war if one kills another person his soul, the repository of his life or the life itself (spirit) is never killed. Krishna simplifies matters for Arjuna and says: 'if for the sake of argument, he refused to accept the soul to be eternal and assumed that the same was in some way linked to the body and takes birth and dies like our body then too, there was no point in moaning for something that was bound to die and separate from us; never to come back'.

Responsibilities of Kshatriya

Having touched upon the soul being immortal that could not be killed by anyone; Krishna tells Arjuna his responsibilities as a Kshatriya and a prince. He said:

- It was the good fortune of Kshatriya to engage in a battle to provide protection to his people and uphold the *dharma* (rightful cause). Victory gives him the kingdom and riches besides credit and prestige for performing his duty courageously; and death while fighting on the battle field opens the door to heaven for him. He wins either way.

- Fighting for a cause was Kshatriya's duty (*svadharma*). One, who flinches from performing his duty, incurs sin, he loses his prestige, his fair name, his honour gets sullied; he earns ill repute; and is considered a coward.
- His standing in the society is lowered and enemies utter derogatory slander, further damaging his reputation. An esteemed and brave warrior so slandered and condemned lives a life that was worse than death.

Krishna having reminded Arjuna of his duty and the possibility of the loss of his fame and the prestige of the Pandava clan, urged him to arise and resolve to do his duty treating pleasure and pain, loss and gain, defeat and victory etc. alike.

Such a person who does his duty with devotion was respected; and he does not incur any sin. He is not blamed by anyone (man or even God) for his action.

He further went to the extent of candidly expressing that we know nothing about our beginning (our life in the womb and when we are born) and what happens to us after our death; for everything remains un-manifest and hence, unseen.

We know about the part of our life in the middle when we are alive that is when we are manifest in the nature and can be seen. Hence, our knowledge is limited even about our own self; and rather than trying to know about our being, our life cycle and the unknown part of it, we lament about temporary existence and partial truth about our perceived loss and gain.

The total truth was in the Cosmic Spirit, an element of the same was within us (our spirit). We are amazed by that unknown entity the 'Self'; we marvel at him but since we do not know him and cannot visualize him hence, we remain confused.

A search for the Cosmic Spirit needs several hurdles to be cleared; it demands great patience, dedication and continued disciplined action. Rarely one perseveres to do it; but the search and seeking can lead one to Self-realization.

Krishna's advice to Arjuna was subtly nuanced. First, he talked of duty; then he dwelt on worldly sensibilities like name, fame, riches, kingdom, place in heaven; and loss of prestige, shame and sin etc. and finally he asked him to fight with an even minded approach; fight for the sake of fighting and as a

duty, without indulging in wishful thinking, or for desire fulfilment, or under any kind of internal or external pressure; and without fear of loss or defeat.

He highlighted that when one works both in thought and deed and with full faith in the eternal 'Self' all worldly attachments, gains and losses become secondary and of little value for we become aware of their transient nature.

It is significant that Krishna laid very great emphasis on his ordained duty to fight to protect his people and uphold the *dharma* being a Kshatriya. Arjuna had earlier firmly stated that it didn't matter to him if people called him a coward and all kind of names for not fighting; and that winning the kingdom was of little value as compared to the cost involved in it. His objective was to somehow avoid the war so that he is saved from killing his dear ones and respected elders. His approach was entirely one dimensional, sentiment centric. He was completely unmindful in fact he was entirely oblivious that as a Pandava prince he had duties to perform towards his people and for upholding rule of law and justice.

Krishna was trying to awaken his dormant sensibilities towards his duty; that he was not only his own man but he owed it to so many to perform his duties as well.

Yoga is the Science of Action

Till verse 38 Krishna talked of *atman* (self), *Parmatman* (Super Self or Cosmic Spirit for short 'Self' or Spirit)[22] and how it was different from our body. When one is killed only the body is killed, the *atman* being immortal is never killed for it cannot be hurt or killed in any manner whatsoever.

He tried to tell Arjuna that in case Bhishma, Drona, any of his other relations or friends get killed in the battle only their body (that was transient) would be killed and no sin would be attached to him.

Krishna had focused on his gaining discriminating knowledge called the 'yoga of knowledge'. One had to theoretically understand and cultivate the same, thereafter through practise of yoga one learns to experience the same inwardly.

Then he can build an actionable model. Renunciation of desire was at the core of it. Krishna proceeded to talk about the 'yoga of action' that gives the technique and the method of utilizing our *Buddhi* (intellect) to beneficially harness the 'yoga of knowledge' (the theory of Sankhya-Yoga given above) in our life.

As per Vedas and other Hindu scriptures our ultimate goal in life is to regain our original divine self; it being a fragment of God. It is called achieving Self-realization or union with God. Sankhya Doctrine gives the wisdom of the cosmos, how matter was created through interplay of *Purusa* (God) and *prakriti* (Nature). It explained the 24 principles[23] of *prakriti* that are involved in evolution of matter (here matter refers to our body form) from Spirit.

Of the 24 elements, *Buddhi* (intellect) was the most important. Krishna explained how the intellect (*Buddhi*-yoga) could be developed. It helps one gain single minded focus on the task, the capacity to see through it and gain the resolve to persevere with even minded-ness (equanimity).

Buddhi-yoga deals with the knowledge and practice of intellect. It helps to gain the discipline to restrain our mind from getting attached to our senses or be lured by sense objects in search of transient gains and pleasures. One had to learn to sharpen his intuitive wisdom and utilize his intellect (buddhi) to gain discriminating knowledge. The same gives the capacity to practice equanimity of mind, staying the same against pair of opposites. This is called *Samta*-yoga.

Yoga implies desire-less[24] action with equanimity of mind (*Samta*-yoga). One has to follow the spiritual path. In this even if gains are not noticeable (or delayed), one begins to gain higher level of awareness; he patiently bears with it for his consciousness keeps improving; hence, nothing is ever lost. If for some reason, one had to withdraw from the endeavour half way; there is no loss or waste of effort, as when he begins again even in the next life as he starts from where he left earlier. Krishna's aim was to enlighten Arjuna that gain and loss was a concept (mental perception) and it is relevant to action with a desire for material gain. In yoga on the spiritual path, one learns to work as a duty (desire-less action) without any anxiety for gain and hence, there can be no loss. He stressed on the fact that on the spiritual path, one learns to ignore distractions and resolves to obtain pin-pointed focus. On the other hand, when one has multiple desires, his mind keeps on wandering restlessly. His naturally multi-pronged focus makes him indecisive and irresolute; he remains confused and rest-less.

Krishna explains that one with desires (material goals) lacks concentration that is a necessity for gaining a firm resolve. Unfortunately one switches his mind from one goal to another hence, even his real goal becomes uncertain. One needs a clearly defined goal and unwavering commitment to the task to achieve success.

Holistic approach of Gita vs Sacrifices and Ritualistic Piety of Vedas

Humankind in its evolution and development was always more comfortable in following a path that progressed from the gross to the subtle and the progress was invariably slow.

The Vedas had a section called '*karmakaand*'. These gave the method of prayers to various gods and demi-gods for wish fulfillment or sense gratification. The philosophy of Vedas was perhaps based on the premise that after enjoying various kinds of material pleasures and sense gratification, humans would realize the futility of the effort for temporary and slippery gains; and they would then take to Yoga and the spiritual path. They would realise the value of permanent gain or liberation that lay in union with God called 'Self -realization'.

However, humankind was too greedy for worldly pleasures even when they knew it to be short lived. The result was downward slide and the state of the society at the time of Mahabharata was in a precarious condition of decay. Krishna[25] took birth as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. His objective was to correct the situation and to re-establish the authority of *dharma*. In Gita he deviated from Vedas and adopted a different approach. He advised Arjuna to ignore the rituals given in the '*karmakaand*' section of Vedas to propitiate particular gods to obtain specific gains and sometimes a place in the astral world. He stressed on the need to take to yoga and the spiritual path to work for liberation. With the Vedic discipline one tended to search for worldly gains and pleasures with the help of gods, he seldom tried to improve himself to attempt for the ultimate goal. Creating an environment of righteousness was necessary to lift the society to a higher level of morality for which meditation and a spiritual path[26] were necessary.

Originally there was only one Veda. Ved Vyas who was assigned the job (by Lord Bramha) of writing the same, made it into four books; these were written with an interval of time between one another. These cover practically the entire gamut of human life and the possibilities. The aim was to make man self-dependent and not to be at the mercy of Nature or even the God.

Rig Veda the first one to be written had the philosophy part. Yajur Veda and Sam Veda were derived from Rig Veda that became the mother source knowledge. Yajur Veda gave the rituals for propitiating specified gods for fulfillment of different desires. Sam Veda had the musical intonation to the ritual. In simple language one gave what was to be done (ritual and the sacrifice) and the other complimented it by how to properly do the same.

Atharva Veda gave the method to please the negative forces to obtain desired favours. It is also considered to be the mother source of Ayurveda.

The rituals and sacrifices given in Vedas lured the masses; they treated these as a short cut to desire fulfilment and even for gaining a place in heavens (the various lokas or the astral abodes of various demi-gods like Indra-loka, Chandra-loka etc).

The search for discriminating wisdom on the spiritual path which should have been the prime focus was superseded by the search for riches, power and enjoyment. In a way the language of Vedas diverted the mind from the prime objective of seeking knowledge, inner strength and intuitive wisdom to know the right from the wrong; and the right path to realization of the 'Self'.

Unfortunately, the pleasures of riches, wish fulfilment, sense gratification and the stay in astral worlds is short lived as the same dependents on the credits accrued in one's karmic account. On finishing the credits one had to revert to routine worldly toil. In short, the Vedic *karmakaand* didn't benefit the user in the long run for he got desire-infected and was misled and he left the path of yoga.

Krishna further advised Arjuna that the three modes of Nature or *gunas*[27] (sattva, rajas and tamas) described in Vedas caused dualities (pairs of opposites: profit-loss; hot-cold, happiness-sorrow etc) in our life.

The net balance of the influences of these three *gunas* determines our thoughts and actions. We should therefore try to transcend the same; establish ourselves in yoga and take to the spiritual path.

He stressed on giving up love for acquiring possessions or hankering after preserving what we had; and our desire for fruits of our actions. This needed acquiring a detached outlook and control of our greed.

He gave the example that near a river in flood where so much water is available one had no use to take water from the pond, likewise instead of being attracted by rituals for petty gains by propitiating the demi-gods and gods one should concentrate on the 'Self', God, the Brahman. There was no greater possession than possession of the 'Self'. He elaborated on this point further in later chapters as well.

Ironically the treasure chest of knowledge (Vedas) given by God for guidance of the mankind was misinterpreted and misused by the vested interests to exploit human weakness for worldly possessions and greed.

It was meant to lead the mankind on the spiritual path to the goal of 'Self-realization' but was used to gain petty pleasures. Krishna tried to correct the situation. He knew Arjuna's problem was due to emotional attachment that caused the delusion.

He stressed focusing his mind on his duty (*dharma*) abandoning all attachments and lure for the fruits of actions. He advised that this could be done only through evenness of mind (*Samta*-yoga).

Krishna clarified that seeking inspiration from one's intellect and harnessing the intuitive wisdom (*Buddhi*-yoga) was greater than mere action. He highlighted that our actions are desire driven and the fear of not gaining the desired result keeps us in turmoil, we lose our concentration that often is the cause of our failure.

Therefore, one should never worry about the fruits of his actions (for that is in no way in his hands) and stay calm and even minded, like in yoga, and concentrate on the action which is in his hands. If we reflect, seek inspiration from our intelligence (*Buddhi*-yoga) we would not bother about the results and the chances of our success would increase greatly.

Krishna calls this seeking refuge in *Buddhi*-yoga and performing desire-less action as *Samta*-yoga (with equanimity of mind). When one achieves the stage of interface with and guidance of *Buddhi*-yoga he transcends what is given in Vedas (rites and rituals) or other scriptures and anything he might get in future becomes unnecessary for he goes beyond these. The important thing is to give up attachments and anxiety for results; and focus on the task in yogic discipline for yoga is skill in action gained by an even mind.

Elaborating on the above he said, that one established in yoga seeks inspiration from his intuitive intelligence (*Buddhi*-yoga). Effectively he gets himself linked to the Cosmic Spirit or Divine intelligence through his individual spirit. The Cosmic Spirit provides energy to our individual spirit (our soul) which is the mother source of our intellect. In this state a person achieves a thinking mind; and an intuitive heart that we need for gaining supreme clarity in vision with which one can get rid of delusion caused by any sense objects.

Such a person would not need rites and rituals; he works unselfishly and gains the capacity to cast away both the good and the evil thought or happening; he is not influenced by either of these. He transcends the lure and anxiety for the fruits of his actions since he becomes detached. He awakens to the truth that

our right was limited to action (duty) only and not to its fruits. In yoga one works for the sake of work not for the results; these become collateral and cease to be the prime mover. Yet at no time one should be attached to inaction.

Distinguishing Attributes of an Evolved Person

Arjuna was indeed no ordinary person and Krishna knew that he had suffered a temporary loss of memory, his discriminating wisdom was missing. His task was to encourage him and plod him to gain back his original self, the spirit of self-enquiry. He therefore tried to patiently explain the minutest detail again and again focussing on subtle nuances. He left pointed leads to arouse his inquisitiveness.

In a way he tried to provoke his curiosity to self-assess himself; his actions, if they were on the right path. And it worked. In verse 54 he asked Krishna to describe the characteristics of a person who was well established in intuitive wisdom; who was steadfast in spirit and who had achieved supreme calm that one gains at the stage of samadhi[28]. How such a person speaks; walks and sits; conducts himself? Obviously, he was trying to find out exactly where he stood.

Krishna's objective was to arouse introspection and self-enquiry in Arjuna. He was pleased by his response (at least he was listening) and seized the opportunity.

In reply he told him in detail (from verse 55 to 72) how one could achieve stable intuitive wisdom and the ultimate stage of samadhi in yoga. Sanskrit word used for stable intuitive wisdom is '*stithapragna*'[29]. He said that achieving it demanded concerted effort; he therefore decided to dwell on possible hurdles one might encounter en-route to this goal. He deliberately kept on addressing him by the name 'Partha' or 'the son of Kunti' just to remind him of his lineage.

Arjuna had obviously not understood what Krishna had spoken earlier, for he had indeed explained in detail how one who takes the spiritual path and practices in Yoga gains a stable mind with firm belief in his intuitive wisdom (the voice of his spirit); and remains un-ruffled by the dualities caused by *gunas*.

He once again elaborates in detail the need for giving up desires and anxiety for the fruits of one's actions and attachments; and for achieving control of one's mind and senses. He emphasized, one had to learn to focus on his *atman* rather than senses and sense objects that we are prone to do.

In verse 56 he used the word *Muni* (sage) for one who achieves stable intuitive wisdom. *Muni* here doesn't imply saffron clothes clad monk but one who had gone beyond worldly attachments and desires who had renounced the world to seek identity with the Divine. He further elaborates on desire, mind (*manas*) and senses as given hereunder. He said:

- Desire should be limited to action only for the sake of action; and not for wish fulfilment or ego service. The latter gives birth to greed, jealousy, anger, lust and one-upmanship. These cause a false sense of authority that creates an unending wish to acquire wealth and material possessions.
- One never knows how much was enough as no fulfilled wish ever satisfies him; it leads to another wish and sets up an unending chain. He remains unhappy as ever before. Eventually one gets bewildered, he suffers loss of memory; his intellect deserts him; and ironically, he condemns himself to a life of perpetual unhappiness with a catalogue of unfulfilled desires. In the end he gets lost and perishes.
- One, who gives up desire and attachment of any kind, remains the same in all situations. He neither rejoices in gain nor moans a loss for he stays fixed and content in his spirit. His intuitive intelligence (voice and vision originating from the spirit) unveils to him his dormant wisdom that keeps him calm and collected. He is able to banish his passion, greed, jealousy, fear and anger. The knowledge that nothing belongs to him (lack of sense of 'mine'; ownership) makes him very strong in contentment, he believes that he cannot lose anything. This feeling creates supreme peace of mind that keeps him relaxed under all circumstances.

Earlier we listed above the 24 elements that caused the evolution of our body from the Cosmic Spirit. Our body was created by and is sustained through the interplay of these 24 elements. These include 18 sense elements; plus one set of three *gunas*; and 5 *Maha-bhuta* (earth, air, fire, water and ether).

The interplay of our senses with sense objects and with the rest of *prakriti* on one hand and with the Cosmic Spirit on the other creates our psyche and what we become.

In verse 61, Krishna told Arjuna to be firm in yoga and focus on God. He uses the term 'remain firm in yoga intent on "Me"' (here he uses 'Me' instead of

Brahman, the Supreme God indicating that he indeed was the supreme God presently an incarnation of him). He further explained:

- Our senses are very powerful. These strongly challenge our will when we take to the right path and start controlling our mind. The result is that very often even though we are unwilling we act against our own judgment. Hence, one has to always try to draw his senses away from sense objects that tempt us like a tortoise draws his limbs under its body (shell). The shell acts like its armour that provides protection.
- Like a yogi, one has to learn to remain steadfast on the spiritual path and seek inspiration from his soul to keep his senses under control. Our resolve to overcome all tempting vibes emanating from sense objects, must be both internal and external (not only superficial i.e. both at the level of body and mind. Sense objects can't affect the soul, hence, like the tortoise we have to seek its protection; and for this we need to be firmly established in Yoga.
- When we see or even think about sense objects, we develop an attachment for the same and we start longing for it. The desire to possess is born which gives rise to ego elements like greed, jealousy, pride and anger etc; and we get bewildered.

  One who is *stithapragna* stays firm in his resolve even while staying in the midst of sense objects, for he was at a higher plane, way beyond the reach of greed, jealousy, lure and urge to possess etc. He achieves an unwavering mind through purity of spirit. His steadiness is like that of an ocean where so many rivers join in but it still stays calm. His soul becomes a sea of contentment, he is able to contain the various violent streams (desires) and merge the same into one stream and he achieves a focus on the real, the Supreme God that merges in the ocean. He doesn't get overtly happy by gains; also any set back cannot cause sorrow for he remains fixed, unchanging. Through his spirit (self) he dwells in the Divine and enjoys peace.

On the other hand, one with an uncontrolled and roving mind chasing desires and sense objects loses self-control; he suffers loss of memory and concentration. He remains confused and restless. He only pampers his ego; his assets are of no use as due to numerous desires and lack of contentment he can't enjoy even what he gains; he remains very unhappy.

If we compare the two types of minds, we find that the wavering one runs after the glitter of sense objects. The disciplined mind, like the one of a sage, remains under his control and is not lured by any temptation for it knows the truth; the transient and unreal nature of the sense objects that tempt us and the spirit.

Krishna used subtle analogy of day and night to compare the two kinds of minds. The former (the roving one) stays spiritually asleep in his search for sense gratification. Under the influence of *maya* caused by the *gunas* such persons waste the day time (the working time) in sleeping over the reality. The realized person with a disciplined mind understands the reality and ignores frivolous pursuits for they can see through the night of darkness created by the *maya*. He concentrates on the Brahman in his effort to seek Self-realization. Hence, what was day for a roving mind is night for the controlled one and vice-versa.

In verse 68 Krishna addresses Arjuna as 'Mighty Armed One' by way of encouragement. The expression implies that such a skilful and powerful warrior with strong body and arms like him should be able to subjugate his desires, emotions and lust without which one could not get established in Yoga and become *stithapragna* that was necessary for a yogi. He is hinting Arjuna that the enemy was within (lack of control over our desires) while we look for him outside.

Finally, Krishna said: one who stays *stithapragna* can easily ignore the vibes of sense objects. He works for God with a disciplined mind (works for the sake of work). He doesn't worry for the fruits of his actions and like a yogi he practices renunciation of desire. While doing his work he stays established in the Divine. He gains single minded concentration; his consciousness about the Brahman expands. In case, he remains established in God at the time of his death, his spirit expands to become one with the Cosmic Spirit and thereafter he is never born again. This is one theme that finds echo practically in all chapters of Gita.

Gist of Chapter 2

The crux of Chapter 2 in one sentence: 'Correct knowledge of the problem leads to its solution.'

Ch. 2 and Ch. 18 are the two the most important chapters of Gita. The 72 verses (*shlokas*) of Ch. 2 sum up the central message of Gita covering the remaining

16 chapters. These present the essence of Krishna's philosophy for a successful and happy life. Verses 47 and 48 are the epicentre not only of chapter 2 but the entire Gita. These are the fulcrum around which the other elements of Krishna's teachings viz. Yoga, *Bhakti* (devotion), *karma* (action), knowledge, intellect, renunciation, sacrifice, austerity, equanimity, self -control and selfless action in service of man and God move like the radials.

Verse 47: "To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction."

When we do something we have a motive and a goal. We are always anxious about the result. Krishna says we must work selflessly without any anxiety for the results; he implies that work is important and one should concentrate on the same, the result is collateral on which we have no control, hence, thinking about it is a waste of our time and energy. He also says that work we must always do, as there is no room for inaction; nothing can be achieved without working for it.

Verse 48 elaborates how to do the work. Krishna's words are: "Established in yoga do thy work O Winner of Wealth (Arjuna) abandoning attachment with an even mind in success and failure for evenness of mind is called yoga."

In verse 50 he calls yoga as 'skill in action'. He further said that evenness of mind in both good and evil makes us skilled. We should concentrate on the work with unwavering focus and without any attachment to its outcome as that weakens our inner composure. This we can do if we have full faith in God.

The idea is to be even minded in both success and failure. Evenness of mind implies rising above pair of opposites caused by *gunas*. In a subtle way he tells us to gracefully accept what we get, rejoicing in success or moaning in absence of it cannot improve our lot. He is reminding us that in the roller-coaster ride of life, ups and downs are natural and one has to learn to live with it and calmly accept what comes our way.

Arjuna's despondency was Krishna's concern. He was shocked at his unmanly behaviour and he said so in as many words. Yet, he retained his calm and smiled and spoke to him in all humility, not to mock him or reprimand him, but to urge him to drive away his confusion.

Even in his condition of faint faintheartedness Krishna addresses him respectfully as 'Partha', 'Oppressor of Foes' and 'Winner of Wealth'; he even said that he had spoken words of wisdom. Arjuna had poured his deeply felt

reservations and expressed his genuine agony at having to use arms at respected elders like Bhishma and Drona. He doesn't try to counsel him or comfort him; instead he takes a holistic approach and tells him the truth. He talks about perishable body and imperishable eternal soul. He said that his grieving both for the living or the dead was uncalled for.

He simplifies the entire matter by telling him about the cycle of birth and death. One who is born must die someday but his soul remains immortal, it never dies; only the body keeps on changing like one changes worn out or dirty clothes. E verything in the creation was perishable, only the soul remains always unchanging and alive for it is not affected and can't be destroyed by any means.

He subtly tells him that he won't be able to kill Drona or Bhishma for their souls can't be killed by any means. Having talked about the cycle of birth and death he diverts his attention to assigned duty of a Kshatriya prince and the repercussions that would follow if he did not perform his assigned duty. Once again he advises him to treat pleasure and pain, victory and defeat; loss and gain alike (with an even mind); and get ready to fight. He assures that doing so he wouldn't incur any sin (verse 38).

Krishna talks about Sankhya Doctrine as 'yoga of knowledge'. Then he dwells on yoga of action and renunciation of desire. He proceeds to highlight the ultimate goal of embodied beings as union with Brahman.

He simplifies the method of prayers to God and goes to the extent of rejecting the Vedic route of reaching the Brahman through rites and rituals and prayers to gods and demi-gods. Instead he recommends a direct approach to Brahman through yoga and meditation, while always working as a common man sincerely performing his duties in a resolute manner, transcending the three *gunas*.

Being conscious of human propensity for attachment with sense objects and material gains, he repeatedly emphasises on engaging in selfless action without any anxiety for the fruits of his actions. He goes a step further in recommending harnessing his intelligence (*Buddhi*-yoga) and seeking intuitive wisdom for achieving evenness of mind and a dedicated focus on his assigned duty. He is throwing options to enable him to get rid of his body consciousness and to achieve God consciousness.

When Arjuna, inquires about the characteristics of a sage who is firmly founded in wisdom, steadfast in spirit; and settled in intelligence he catalogues

his attributes in detail. He particularly highlights his even minded, selfless and unattached approach with control of his senses.

These attributes provide purity of mind, firmness of intent, singular concentration and dedication to the task. He drops subtle hints for him to reflect on the same and try to acquire what he thought he needed to acquire. Krishna knows his delusion but he also recognises that he was an evolved being; that he had indeed suffered a set-back but he was confident that he would awaken and get back his discriminatory memory. His repeated call for self mastery, equanimity, conquering desire and lure for sense gratification, and gaining his naturally passionate demeanour is a hint about his mistaken entanglement. He further compares a disciplined mind with one that is unstable due to delusion.

Krishna is quite clear that without achieving unquestioning conviction one never gives his hundred percent. Therefore, he takes a holistic approach rather than resorting to issue based patch up disposal of a problem. Yet, he is not doctrinaire or rigid and leaves the decision to Arjuna's wisdom. Precisely, this is what is required for achieving excellence in whatever we do in our life. What we need is a patient close observation of possible fault lines followed by prompt corrective action. This is what Krishna did in Arjuna's case but without in anyway thrusting his ideas on him.

Chapter 3: '*Karma*-Yoga'

In Chapter 2, Krishna touched up on all important aspects of our life, its constituents (body and soul), duties and the art of living. He also talked about human failings and the pit falls one might encounter and how to avoid the same. In fact he goes on elaborating on various aspects of our life up to chapter 17 and answers all the queries made by Arjuna. In chapter 18, he sums up all issues discussed earlier and offers supplementary comments to further explain some of the ticklish issues.

Krishna started the process of bringing Arjuna back to his original self in chapter 2. Despite his confused state and hazy mental vision Arjuna makes a genuine effort to understand whatever he explained to him but in fairness he was not in a position to pick up the subtle hints or correctly understand the nuances that he offered in different paths to Self-realisation and he sought further detailed clarifications from him. The teacher displays Godlike patience in offering detailed explanations. Considering Arjuna's condition chapter 3 onwards he discusses various subjects that he mentioned in chapter 2 with a view to explain the subtle points raised by him.

Karma-yoga - The Role of _Karma_ (Action) on the Spiritual Path

In chapter 3 there are 43 verses; of these Arjuna spoke in only three and Krishna did the talking in 40 verses.

It opens with a query by Arjuna. He asks Krishna that while rating (in verse 2.49) he had put Buddhi-yoga superior to action (*karma*) but he still recommended selfless action to him?

It was a simple query implying that if the yoga of knowledge was better then why should one worry about karma-yoga? His point was that the two were quite different and he would rather pursue the one that was better. Also if the path of seeking wisdom was better, then why get into the hassle of action i.e. why get into the war.

Obviously, he had misunderstood Buddhi-yoga as explained by Krishna in 2.49 to mean gaining pure knowledge and wisdom without action which was not the case.

One would need knowledge (Buddhi-yoga) even while doing his normal duties. What Krishna had meant by Buddhi-yoga in chapter 2.49 was that one should

always use his intellect and follow yoga to carry out his duties without worrying about the fruits of his actions.

Arjuna frankly admits the confusion in his mind and requests him to clarify which path was most beneficial for his growth? However, there was a bit of sarcasm in his query.

In verse 1 Arjuna's choice of words is significant. He addressed Krishna as Janardana as well as Keshava. Janardana implies 1) one who had the power to grant wisdom and the capacity to accomplish a task; 2) an ideal teacher who could teach one how to overpower the demon that lies within him to enable him to proceed on the right path (on way to salvation); 3) one who can identify and locate the demon and destroy him.

Janardana is exclusively used as an address for Vishnu and Krishna. Arjuna addressed him thus as an adorable great teacher to humbly seek his guidance.

Keshava signifies 1) one who has long hair; 2) one who had the power of Bramha, Vishnu and Mahesh; the all-powerful one that is one who was in a position to create, nurture and even destroy; 3) It implies one who can destroy the demon of delusion that stands between the soul and the Soul. Arjuna was truly humble in his appeal but due to his confused mind he sounded sarcastic; probably he didn't mean it that way.

Krishna realized that Arjuna with his confused mind missed the point he had made. Here he assumed the role of both the God (he confirms his status as an incarnation) and the teacher, he said: in the beginning (implying at the time of creation) he (as the creator) had defined and given two different paths for two kinds of men.

The path of intense contemplation; inner search and seeking wisdom through one's intuition called *Gyaan*-yoga (aka Janana-yoga) for inward looking people and the path of *Karma*-yoga or action with meditative wisdom on the spiritual path i.e. devoted to selfless action for those who were actively involved with the external world; who were action oriented.

It was explained that the two paths were not mutually exclusive (one or the other) but complementary. These were chosen by the creator to suit the natural inclination of the two kinds of people. Both led to the same destination.

Krishna proceeds to further elaborate on action (*karma*); and renunciation of the world or ceasing to do any work on the path of *Gyaan*-yoga.

He said that even after achieving enlightenment (Self-realization) one was not liberated from work. Truly one becomes free of any need for work, for worldly necessities cease to be important to him. One still has to work for sustenance as a human being and nature. Yes; one, then works free of any desire or worry for fruits of his actions.

God has no necessity to work but he still works for sustenance of the creation.

In any case even on renouncing the world one cannot completely cease work as he had to perform daily routine to keep his body in good condition. He said that even thinking was a work. One could restrain use of his organs for any work but in case his mind still ponders over sense gratification (desires) his renunciation becomes incomplete and meaningless.

The core of the issue is that any worldly action (work) causes a reaction and these together create bondage; and unless one becomes free of bondage he cannot gain liberation.

So long one is alive he has to work due to the *gunas* of *prakriti*. Work produces attachment that creates bondage. Besides these, the carried forward effect of our actions performed earlier (*karmic* balance in our record) compel us to act in a particular manner.

Hence, one faces a complex situation. Krishna simplified the whole thing and said one should do his work (as a duty) using his organs but without any attachment or desire. This requires complete control over one's mind and senses. If one ceases to expect a reward for his actions the same cannot bind him or cause any attachment. He called such action to be of a superior class.

He explained that in any case one could not do without work; and action was always better than inaction, hence one must work in a manner that helps him to rise to a higher level of existence.

One can do this by working selflessly through control of his mind. Such action on spiritual path helps to unite soul to the Spirit. Selfless action is called *Karma*-yoga. It is way to seek God-union.

Work should be done as *Yagna* (Oblation)

Krishna, dwelling further on the right way of doing work said that when God created mankind, he gave him *yagna* (oblation) aka sacrifice and told him that through the same one could progress to higher and still higher levels.

Yagna[30] connotes 'Vishnu' (the God who nurtures and protects the creation). The work has to be done in the spirit of sacrifice and one had to willingly

forego selfish gains for a greater cause. It was implicit that the work has to be done for the Divine hence, it must be dedicated to him only.

In sacrifice, since we forego selfish interests there was no scope for any attachment. When an act is performed in a detached manner, as a duty (not for desire fulfilment) it becomes free from any bondage. It pleases the gods; and brings one closer to them who, then, look after him like a cow provides milk for nourishing a child. They grant his desires (even without his asking for it) and he rises to a higher level of existence.

Pleasing the gods through sacrifices and earning rewards from the same was as per the teachings of Vedas that earlier Krishna had rejected (chapter 2). However, presently he was trying to explain yagna and preparing Arjuna for an important sacrifice; desire less action and without any attachment.

Mention of pleasing the gods through sacrifice was perhaps a statement of fact as it existed. He added that whatever one gets through offering sacrifices must be first offered to God before enjoying the same. Likewise, the food that we prepare for ourselves must first be offered to God before eating it.

The subtle point here is that every-thing belonged to God (first right is his) and only he gives it to us. We must accept and acknowledge the same by making an offer to him as a way of expressing our gratitude otherwise we behave like a thief. In fact, those who don't observe this practice were considered sinners.

Further elaborating on the importance of *yagna*, Krishna said that the same was necessary for creation and sustenance of the *prakriti* and the living beings.

Yagna (sacrifice) necessitates sustained action; it promotes rain which is a must for growth of eatables (food items). Food items were needed for good health and long life that are necessary for creation and sustenance of living beings.

The underlying idea was that everything in the universe was linked to one another and interdependent. Action owed its origin to God (who inspires us) and since he was omnipresent he was there in the *yagna* all the time; in fact, he was both instrumental as well as the central core of our actions.

However, our sense of mine-ness veils the truth; and we create a grand illusion of being the doer or the owner.

In verse 15 Gita talks of Bramha who was created by Supreme God and through whom he does the creation under his personal guidance. Bramha is

one of the trinity of Bramha, Vishnu and Mahesh (the creator, the one who nurtures and the destroyer). Though, he is a prominent God but he is like any other gods and demi-god and should not be confused with the supreme God the Brahman.

Krishna had talked about three broad kinds of actions: action for selfish gains (desire fulfilment); action in the spirit of sacrifice (superior to the first one); and action without any attachment in the spirit of work for the sake of work (as a duty).

Krishna called the last one as the best action. He said that one who works without attachment with his focus on God and always remains content in him, in time transcends the need to work; he ceases to have any work to be done. He reaches the highest level of existence and his spirit becomes one with the Cosmic Spirit. He then works for the sustenance of the creation like the God does.

An interpretation attributed to Shankaracharya holds that action without attachment purifies the mind; all clutter therein is driven out and one thinks only of the work in hand and that leads to perfection. In spiritual terms he achieves salvation.

In management language for achieving excellence one needs working for the sake of work with singular focus on the task and with total dedication. Such an approach yields a success chain which gives perennial happiness.

Work for the sake of Work for achieving Excellence

Krishna explained above how to achieve perfection (excellence in management terms). The most common example that is given to explain this concept is that of King Janak the king of Mithila and father of Sita of Ramayana fame.

He has been accepted as the best administrator, yet, he was always devoted to God. There are several stories about his multi-tasking, yet, remaining focused on the God.

A very significant point Krishna raised was that a leader doesn't have to work in the right manner only for achieving the highest goal (of salvation) he must try to reach the top to set an example for others to follow as usually the common man looks up to his leader and follows him.

To drive home the point Krishna said that for him (as God) there was no work that he needed to do for his own needs for he was fulfilled in all respects, yet,

he was always busy doing work for without the same the entire creation would for sure collapse.

To counter and make up for the ignorant who works with attachment, the learned, the leaders of the society, must act without attachment by way of a candle to show the path for everyone to follow.

The advice regarding working without attachment by the learned had the scope for subjugation of those (unlearned) who worked for selfish gains or those who work in the spirit of sacrifice.

Krishna took pains to clarify that no one had a right to interfere with the belief of others, even when they thought them to be ignorant. Our belief system is created through our heredity, traditions, social conditions, the state of the society, our education and upbringing etc.

Our concept of religion and faith in rituals etc. are evolved through a set of complex factors hence there was no question of right or wrong or passing judgment even by those who may be enlightened due to their learning, circumstances and unique factors like the practice of meditation and yoga.

The simple man (unlearned) follows what he learns from his circumstances; and considers good for him. It would therefore, be incorrect to criticize him and confuse him with different practices.

Any change in one's faith must have acceptance of its need by him; it needs a great deal of patient perusal (truly self-perusal by him) and considerable learning and unlearning. Hence, it becomes a slow process and takes a long time. Any criticism of age old, deep seated belief and practices complicates matters and invites adverse reaction. It usually doesn't help either of the party.

Self-sense (Ego) & *Gunas* (modes of Nature) and Spirit

Arjuna's query was about the need for action on the spiritual path (Karma-yoga) in preference to attaining intellectual wisdom (*Buddhi*-yoga) and renunciation of the world for achieving perfection.

From verse 4 to verse 26 Krishna tried to convince him why one must under all circumstances, do his allotted work without any attachment to the results. He repeatedly asserted that the same was superior in every respect.

He proceeds to explain the roles of ego, *gunas* and the Spirit; the way these influence our actions and how to stay on the right course.

Ego, the three *Gunas* & the Spirit

In chapter 2, (page 47) we talked of 24 elements of Nature (*prakriti*) that make our body. Two of these 24, Ego (self-sense); and the three *gunas* (sattva, rajas and tamas) were very important.

These were the real drivers of our actions. The *gunas* of Nature act on our mind, all the time. Actually, our psyche is determined by the net of the forces of the three *gunas*.

When the influence of sattva is stronger than the sum of the strengths of rajas and tamas the person acquires a noble demeanour of sattva and so on.

Gunas act on everything in Nature. Interestingly, these act on our senses and on the sense objects that lure us. What we do was the result of the interplay of these forces. Hence, truly it was the constituents of prakriti that cause and accomplish all actions.

Our soul which was the real 'me' stays as a dispassionate witness most of the time. In our scriptures the role of *gunas* was called as the *Maya* of *prakriti*. In Christianity 'Holy Ghost' or 'Holy Spirit' is the equivalent of '*Maya*' of Hinduism. The *gunas a*re a product of *Maya*[31] and are controlled by it. It acts as an interface between *prakriti*, living being and the Spirit. We are under its spell all the time.

The ignorant under the influence of tamas get drunk in delusion; they get attached to the material world for petty gains. They believe themselves to be the doer of all actions. The feeling of doer-ship gives a false heightened sense of owner-ship, satisfaction, and pride to their ego; they feel one up on others.

On the other hand, a learned person knows the truth. He knows the difference between the eternal spirit; and the perishable body, that everything in the world (*prakriti*) had a transient nature and hence, he seeks inspiration from his spirit.

He works hard in yoga on the spiritual path to achieve equanimity. He is not lured by short lived ego enhancing attributes of ownership and doer-ship[32] etc these mean nothing in real terms. They are aware of the fact that when one dies his body goes alone and everything (his supposed possessions) stays where these are in their positions and do not go with him.

Krishna had earlier raised two points: one, that he indeed, was the God; second that none should interfere with another person's work. He chooses to elaborate on the same.

Perhaps his views were too radical and hence, out of sync with the mood and accepted practices of the society. Throughout Gita, he focused on Arjuna gaining total clarity in respect of issues raised by him.

He was candid that when the issues and the need for action become clear to us, our achieving the goal becomes easier. He was ready to offer every guidance and assurance to him and in return he only demanded total commitment from him.

Hence, he went even beyond the query raised by Arjuna and elaborated on the finer details of the issues on hand, with a view to eliminate any misunderstanding. Having done his best, he asked Arjuna to get up and fight. He didn't mean getting into the battle by the use of word 'fight.' What he meant was to practise the discipline taught by him in life.

A subtle parallel that emerges from the foregoing was that for gaining excellence in any job one would need total and clear understanding of the task; and unalloyed acceptance of 'why' (justification of the cause of action); 'how' (the means to be adopted) and 'when' (timing) of his action. Besides these, one needed total commitment to the cause and the discipline needed for the same.

The teacher was aware that some people were critical of him. He advised Arjuna to ignore them and not to share the knowledge of Gita with them.

At the same time, he was very categorical that, if one works in service of God and for him giving up attributes like desire and ego and follows his instructions in respect of yoga, his task gets easily done.

It is not that God does our work[33], we do it ourselves, but working with full faith, and dedicating it to him one gains clear focus and god speed. The list of 'redo' gets reduced and eventually eliminated.

Such persons eventually become free of all worldly bondage. On the other hand, those (ignorant and devoid of wisdom) who do not follow Krishna's instructions and waste their time in nit-picking and unnecessary arguments they get lost and remain condemned to bondage and suffering.

Krishna added a note of caution. He said that everyone was inclined to act as per his nature which is the complex end product of interface between his senses, the *prakriti,* his individual spirit and the result of karmic cycle from his earlier lives.

A person was most comfortable when he works according to his nature and none should interfere with the same, even if one thought he was wrong. Likewise, when working in a group, everyone must faithfully devote himself to his assigned duty even if he same was not agreeable to him.

Control of Senses (anger, lust and greed) is very important for Success

The teacher's repeated reference to control of senses; achieving desirable attributes

and discipline for success in life appeared confusing to Arjuna. He recalled the Master had said in chapter 2 that senses were very powerful. These challenge the mind every moment. In fact, in chapter 2.60 he mentioned that lust (*kaam*) and other sense attributes force the mind of a person to do their bidding. He asked him why a person was forced to do things (sin) against his judgment?

Krishna clarified that in moments of weakness a person gives in to sensual desires (craving) but it was never entirely forced on him for he invariably gives a tacit consent.

He made it clear that none could force a determined soul. Usually on such occasions the person was under the influence of 'rajas' *guna* (passion). This *guna* gives birth to not only craving but to attributes like jealousy, anger etc that are inimical to a man's progress on the right path and have to be curbed in the beginning itself.

These attributes are very powerful and are linked to one another like a family. These multiply fast and confuse us by enveloping our knowledge by protective shields. He gave the example of a mirror covered by dust, where one couldn't see a clear image; or the shield provided to an embryo in the womb or the fire that is veiled by smoke.

Hence, the elements that make the veils that cover our knowledge have to be overpowered and driven away or subjugated so that they don't raise their heads. How to do it?

The mind and intellect are two powerful faculties that can help us to contain the elements that veil our wisdom. But unfortunately, together with the other senses, these provide convenient abode for the veiling forces (these encourage and protect the very elements we need to control) thus restraining our wisdom, the power of discrimination, our memory and intuitive intellect.

The only way one could contain such powerful forces was to slay them (the enemies) in the very beginning itself. Krishna clarified; one had to go beyond

the 'self'; it implied deploying our own strength; and obtaining help from the Cosmic Spirit. This becomes clear in what he said in the 42nd verse.

In verse 42 the teacher lays down a hierarchy of forces. He projects the level of consciousness one could achieve by harnessing full support from the faculties available to him.

He said that the senses were great; but the mind was greater than them; and the intelligence (*buddhi*) was even greater than mind, but then 'he' the 'Self' was much greater than intelligence.

He clearly highlighted that one would need God's help in accomplishing anything great. I must confess that God is a subjective term and a non-believer could legitimately refuse to accept the above statement. Hence, we would limit ourselves to calling him Cosmic Self or the Creator.

These terms being vague don't arouse strong disapproval by the non-believers too. The idea is to disseminate the wisdom of Gita that prompts a spirit of self-enquiry that would benefit the reader.

He concluded by saying that the desire was the biggest enemy and the same being abstract, was difficult to catch; we need to deploy all our resources in taming the same.

The process of getting hold of, controlling and gradually easing out the devil of desires is a slow one and needs patient perseverance. In the first step one would need to ensure that our 'self' was totally detached from our ego.

This could only be done through the help of Cosmic Self, and later with its help we hammer and drive out the enemy in the form of desire. Difficult to even understand; leave aside putting the same to practise!

For a start we are not at all familiar with our own soul (self or the small Self, the individualized Self); and Krishna wants us to even harness the Super Soul (Cosmic Self). Let us first try to clearly understand the real meaning.

Knowledge has two parts; the first one is the physical part (*bhautik gyaan*); we can read it; can see it, that we have been taught and we can logically derive and prove the same. In our scriptures this knowledge was called *Vigyaan* (aka *Vijnana*).

The other part of the knowledge called spiritual (*aadhyatmik-gyaan*) pertained to our spirit. Our spirit or soul was not supposed to take part in any action or in any way be associated with any worldly matter. It was expected to be a

detached witness but it was always in a position to guide us; give us hints about which option to choose and so on.

In practice our ego is so strong that it always tries to drag the spirit on its side and involves it in its scheme. Therefore, one would have to first disentangle the soul or spirit from our ego.

In our daily search for unending wish fulfilment, we get deeply involved in worldly matters and we rarely even think about our spirit (soul) or its power. Thus, we deny ourselves the benefit of a very strong and powerful well-wisher present with us all the time.

We get information through our five knowledge senses (eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin) and five working senses (hands, legs, voice, anus and genitals). Our mind takes charge of the input feeds; it formulates a response based on the influence of *gunas* and dictates of the ego. Sometimes the mind does consult our intellect; but they seldom join hands and work together.

Krishna said that for achieving excellence in whatever we do, we need to make full use of all the resources we possess viz. all senses, mind, intellect and the spirit.

As we were not even familiar with our own spirit he suggested using the greater 'Self', the Cosmic Spirit to reach the 'self' (our soul). Thereafter, with its (Cosmic Spirit's) help we have to learn how to harness our soul which was an archive of information and inspiration that remains dormant due to our ignorance.

Gita is truly a treatise on '*Karma*-yoga'; the skill of performing right action correctly. Chapter 4 onwards Krishna develops his discourse on this theme. He unravels various material and spiritual attributes; relationships, disciplines like meditation, yoga, consciousness etc. and streams of energy that we are unaware of or don't tap; and allow the same to remain dormant by default.

i have used above the term 'excellence' in place of terms like 'perfection'; release from bondage' or 'Self-realization' that the teacher freely used in his text. The reason is rather a selfish one. We have a limited time frame and vision; Krishna being God incarnate thinks of several life cycles being small periods in the life cycle of our soul (*atman*). We want to see the results of our actions flowing in our life time for we can't see our future lives. Self-realisation to a common man, a house holder appears utopian but excellence, though difficult, appears reachable and may enthuse the readers to try to pursue on the right spiritual path in right earnest. The efforts would produce

some beneficial results that besides his happiness would create valuable *karmic* credit for him.

Gist of Chapter 3

The crux of Chapter 3 in one sentence: 'Selfless work with dedication without any worry for the results can lead one to excellence in life.'

Krishna was a teacher par excellence. Arjuna on the other hand was not only a brave warrior prince but an evolved person, a man of conviction. In this instance though he was mistakenly, convinced that the war had to be avoided at any cost. On the other hand, Krishna was clear that the war was an ethical necessity for Pandavas. Both of them were poles apart. It was a difficult situation. He knew that it was difficult to make Arjuna change his mind by straight reasoning and cold logic. His objection to war was based on deeply felt emotional attachment for his elders and teachers. Knowing that human emotions were beyond all logic Krishna preferred a holistic approach for dealing with him.

In chapter 2 he talked about the nature of various constituents of life. He covered all those factors and attributes that influence our life and how to use the same to raise us to a higher level of existence. In this regard he talked both about *Gyaan*-yoga (advancing in life through seeking knowledge) and *Karma*-yoga (raising the level of existence through disciplined action). Yet, since Arjuna was bewildered he had closed all options available to him except the one that of walking out of the war. His query as to why Krishna was pushing him into action when he could achieve the same end result through gaining knowledge was a veiled search of a way out of action which in the present case involved fighting the war with Kauravas. Arjuna was a man of action hence his query was most unlike him.

Krishna displayed utmost patience and agreed that both the paths of *Gyaan* and *Karma* yoga could take one to the same ultimate goal of God realisation (freedom from worldly bondage). He took the opportunity to propound his doctrine of action through which one could work intensely without tiring his body and with his mind remaining serene. It was in short to work selflessly for the sake of work without any worry for the results. Krishna goes on to describe the ingredients of action. Further he explains that one's desire can be his greatest enemy for it causes a great agitation in his mind and he is never at

peace. Likewise, one's feeling about himself (or selfishness) is a big block on his way to achieving excellence for it forces him to deviate from the correct path. For this reason, Krishna laid so much emphasis on selfless work.

Krishna admits that the two paths (of renunciation of the world: *Gyaan* – yoga) and of selfless action on the spiritual path (*Karma* – yoga) for achieving Self-realisation were given by him. He elaborates on the details and pitfalls of the two paths. However, he declares his preference for one's doing his allotted duties in a selfless manner (*Karma*-yoga) without anxiety for the results. He makes it clear that the same was not possible without control of mind and senses. Save for work done as a sacrifice all actions created bondage, hence, one must always dedicate all his actions to God and work for him only and in his service (as a *yagna*). He goes to the extent of suggesting that even what one eats must first be offered to God and then eaten. It can then be taken as his blessings popularly called the *prasad*.

The essence is that everything belongs to God and we get what he gives us; hence, one should give up all anxiety and the sense of doer-ship or owner-ship. It is our attachment to the world that holds us in our stride on the right path. Hence, one must surrender himself to God and work in his service and for setting an example for others (the benefit of the society). One should always focus on God and be content in him then he can achieve perfection like King Janak did.

He further simplified the matter when he said that all actions were done by the three *gunas*; hence, it was incorrect of us to claim any doer-ship. Out of attachment and craving (ego driven passion) a person acts in a sinful way, This happens because our senses exert pressure on us all the time and our mind is cluttered with so many desires and ideas that create a veil, a smoke screen and we fail to see the right from wrong. Our intelligence is God given, truly it is God; and we should seek inspiration from the same to control our mind, ego and senses. One who can do this qualifies to attain freedom from bondage.

Both the paths *Gyaan*-yoga (path of renunciation) and *Karma*-yoga (path of desire less action) can take us to our ultimate goal of Divine union in which our spirit (soul) merges with the Cosmic Spirit. Both paths are spiritual paths and demand strict discipline of yoga, pranayaam, meditation and practise over long periods. Neither of the paths is easy and there are no short cuts to the goal. Why did Krishna recommend Karma-yoga in preference to *Gyaan*-yoga to Arjuna? One reason of course as mentioned above is that Arjuna was a man of action and the path of *Karma*-yoga better suited his psyche. But it would be

wrong to assume that a person like him who was already well advanced on the spiritual path would not have been able to take to the other path. One has to look at the two paths closely and then make his decision about Krishna's possible reason for making his recommendation.

In the path of renunciation (*Gyaan*- yoga) one is by himself all the time. There are no objects to focus on; everything remains the same each day of the yogins life. He has to seek knowledge and reflect on the same. He has to first unburden his mind of all desires and ideas that normally kept him engaged. The yogin's alone-ness can change to loneliness after sometime. It can become boring and one would be prone to become lazy and a lazy person cannot gain God union for such a person rarely advances on his path, on the contrary he falls back.

In *Karma*-yoga, a yogin is involved in action; there are bound to be objects whose relative positions keep changing. One can see for himself how far he has come and this creates an incentive besides making it interesting. Of course, he too has to clear his mind of all clutter but his actions keep him focussed, involved and engaged. He achieves a sharp intellect and uses the same brilliantly in action. Through meditation he can clear the clutter, derive new energy and gain newer ideas for action. He achieves a greater degree of self-fulfilment. His progress reinforces his self- will; and with each progress he starts striving harder. With each step towards the Divine he becomes more selfless; his sense of service gets a fillip for he starts feeling that he indeed was serving the God. The entire effort becomes self-generating, self-propelling and gainful. And this urges him and eggs him on and on. Perhaps for this reason Krishna recommended the path of *Karma*-yoga to Arjuna.

Chapter 4: ‘Yoga of Divine Knowledge’

In chapter 2 the author talked about Sankhya Doctrine and Yoga and he gave a bird’s eye view of the message of Gita. In chapter 3 he dealt with Karma-yoga and explained why he preferred the same over Gyaan-yoga. His focus was on how one could achieve Self-realisation through selfless action and by taking refuge in God. In chapter 4 he talks about Brahman (God) and his nature; when and why he takes to incarnation and how he treats all in the creation; why people worship gods and demi-gods; creation of four-fold order (4 groups in the society) by him; nature of action (work) and inaction; types of sacrifices, how to obtain knowledge; praise of wisdom and the need for inculcating faith and giving up our doubting nature to obtain full value from our acquired knowledge and wisdom.

Indeed, God’s nature, his style, his designs and his incarnation are all secret and transcendental knowledge. These are not known to even those who seek God union and earnestly follow the spiritual path. Since Krishna chose to give this information to Arjuna this chapter has been variously named by authors as ‘Transcendental Knowledge’ or ‘Yoga of Divine Knowledge’, or ‘The Science of knowing God’, or ‘The way of Knowledge’. There are 42 *shlokas* (verses) in this chapter. Arjuna makes one observation in verse no. 4, rest all verses are spoken by Krishna. This chapter is considered one of the most important ones in Gita because in this Krishna spoke about why God takes incarnation and becomes a part of the manifested creation. Becoming transitory and limited from his Eternal, Unborn, Omni-present, Universal and Cosmic Form, is a come down, yet, God does take to this path? He has himself answered this question in this chapter. For this reason, the same is considered important and sacred as well.

Krishna proclaims that the knowledge of Yoga[34] was given by him to Vivasvat (aka Vivasvan), the Sun-God in ancient times who in turn gave it to Manu[35] progenitor of the human race. Manu later gave it to his son Ikshvaku who was the founder of the Solar Dynasty of Kshatriyas (Lord Ram was born in this dynasty). As a rule, this secret knowledge was transferred by the Kings to their successors; and like-wise by the royal preceptors to their successors. Over time this secret knowledge got diluted and was lost. In order to re-establish the same, he decided to give the same to Arjuna who was a close friend and was devoted to him. The point to note here is that the knowledge of yoga first came to Kshatriyas (worldly people- householders) who could be *Karma*-yogi; not to

ascetics, renunciants or the spiritual masters. The other significant issue is that Krishna chose Arjuna to disseminate the supreme secret of Gita and not a Spiritual Master.

The teacher clearly states that what he was telling him (the secret knowledge) was nothing new or original it was already there and had been lost due to lapse of a long time. He was merely re-describing the same for the benefit of the society. All great teachers before Krishna and after him including Gautama Buddha had admitted that they only tried to impart the knowledge that was there and had somehow become obsolete and then was lost. They never claimed originality to their teachings. Krishna too admits he had only dug out the secret knowledge from the heaps of obsolescence for the benefit of all.

Arjuna was not satisfied with Krishna's statement. He said that Sun God was born much before his own birth hence, how could he give him this knowledge? Arjuna was ignoring his earlier assertion that he was an incarnation of God and that he indeed was the primal God, the original creator. In reply instead of reminding him of his true position, he politely tells him that both of them (Arjuna and Krishna) had taken several births earlier and had existed earlier as well; whereas, he remembers all his previous lives he (Arjuna) had forgotten the same. Incidentally, both Jesus and Buddha claimed teaching people much before their known lives. They also were only affirming that they existed earlier as well, and remembered their earlier lives.

Krishna did not expect such a query from him and he decided to reaffirm his position unequivocally. He said: though as God he was unborn (eternal, infinite, with no beginning and no end) and he was imperishable but he establishes himself, through his own will in the *prakriti* and takes to embodiment in thecreation through his own *Maya*. When an ordinary person is born it is not his choice; the decision to be born is not his but is a process of nature (*prakriti*). As per Gita it is the consequence of one's *karmas* and *prakriti* controlled by God is the channel for the process of creation. But in case of an incarnation God chooses to accept embodiment like a common person out of his own will. He does so for specific purposes from time to time.

The above statement (verse 6) indicates that God was immanent as well as transcendent He controls the manifested creation and for the same reason, when required he becomes a part of the creation through an incarnation (*avataar*[36]). He maintains a delicate balance between all components of his creation at all times. Whenever, the critical balance between them tends to get disturbed he takes corrective action including incarnation. Using his free-will

and unlimited powers; he sets his *Maya* into action. Another way of looking at it will be to accept that God raises one of the persons in his creation with super human powers and Godly wisdom to be his incarnation. Krishna explained this in his own words as given here under.

Incarnation of God

Krishna tells Arjuna (verse 7): whenever righteousness declines and unrighteousness gains ascendency he incarnates himself to preserve the equilibrium. God has a design for the normal working of the creation. When the elements that constitute the creation viz. men, women, animals, land, sea and other constituents become selfish and act in an evil manner they threaten to upset the equilibrium or the divine plan for his creation. He as the controller of all that happens on the earth comes on the scene and takes charge to ensure restoration of proper order. His mission is not that of a fire-fighter, correcting what was seriously wrong (killing the main evil doers here and there who were the cause of the unrest) so that the system starts working again as per his design. He also has to set, an example for others to follow and to show them how to achieve their goals. He has to enlighten people about the role and importance of *dharma* and where they were likely to depart from the same and how to set them right. His chief purpose was to raise everyone to a higher level of *dharma* through his actions and his teachings so that there is growth of virtue and decline of vice due to ignorance. Historically in all religions there have been saints and prophets who taught the people a code of conduct for achieving righteousness; what should be done and what must not be done etc. They were God's representatives with assigned limited roles e.g. they taught but they rarely fought the evildoers. The prophets and saints are partially liberated people with some of God's virtues; saints comparatively have lesser number of God's virtues than prophets. But Krishna being God's expansion fought and killed evil doers.

There have been several incarnations in the history of Hindu religion. Other religions too had their Gods or his representatives coming down to earth as incarnations. Non-believers and rationalist scholars raise the question that why should anyone including the God choose to come down accepting an inferior status and go through the pain and misery of worldly suffering and death etc.? It amounts to limiting himself and accepting a lower level of existence though for a temporary period. God does what he preaches. In *Karma*-yoga chapter 3 of Gita Krishna emphasised that one should dutifully and selflessly work for the sake of work surrendering his identity to God. In taking an incarnation God is precisely doing that. He incarnates for a mission

and works to achieve his desired model; his divine plan; he is not concerned with personal gain or loss.

The question of accepting an inferior status doesn't arise with God. As mentioned earlier, another way of looking at it is that he raises one of the common persons to a higher level of virtues to perform as an incarnation. Jesus Christ was born in an ordinary family and for the first 30 years out of his life of 34 years he led the life of a commoner. The fact is that 'man' is the best creation of God. He has divine potential that gets conditioned and camouflaged by the influence of *gunas*. The one, whom God wants to raise to a higher level, he creates conditions to enable him to subdue the bad influence of *gunas*.

As for as accepting a lower position for God is concerned the truth is that he is above rank, position and classification; he is in a class of his own with none else in that class. He is absolute with no relativity hence nothing is high or low for him. He remains the same in whatever position he chooses for himself. Humans are born in his divine image; it is the *gunas* that condition him and he leans towards sense gratification. He (God) acts like a loving father and does everything to protect his children. His incarnation is for bringing back his children on the right path. It is like giving some medicine to a sick child that even ordinary people willingly do. Where is the question of God feeling uncomfortable about it?

I must add here that in none of the incarnations so far God was called 'God'. Once he chooses to come down, he does so like any another human being in the world. He however, distinguishes himself by his superior intellect, power and super human deeds. Men of wisdom recognise him as an incarnation through these distinguishing qualities. Krishna did tell Arjuna that he was the primal God, the creator; otherwise he never told anyone that he was God or an incarnation. He lived a normal life never trying to collect people to lecture them on ethics or morality. He had friends unlike Christ who had disciples. He expected others to learn from his talks and actions.

In verse 8 he unequivocally clarifies that his incarnation is for protection of the good people and destruction of the evil ones; for re-establishment of right order in the society; and that he does so from age to age. He candidly accepts that it is his duty to maintain a balance in his creation and for that he would do anything including taking birth among common folks on earth from time to time.

Krishna here points out that one who understands the truth about the divine birth (incarnation of God) qualifies to be free from all bondage and on his

death, he merges with God. The incarnation sets examples and demonstrates to all how to destroy the evil and promote virtues. Those who work selflessly for this cause and recognise the truth of why God takes birth and why he acts in a particular manner they start working for the redemption of the soul and God lifts them to be a part of him. Through God's mercy such people gain liberation (freedom from birth and death). One need not to be an ascetic or a spiritualist even a common worldly person can do it by shedding all attachments with senses and sense- objects. He has to move from body to the soul and dwell on it.

The act of God taking incarnation is not limited to Hindu religion the same finds mention in Buddhism, Christianity and Judaism as well. Gautama Buddha was speaking to his disciple Vasettha; he said: "Know Vasettha from time to time a Tathagata is born into the world, a fully enlightened one, blessed and worthy, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy with the knowledge of the worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to erring mortals, a teacher of gods and men, a blessed Buddha. …" There are mentions of Gautama having gone through several births and acquired the qualities which enabled him to discover the Truth. In Bible Jesus said: "I and my Father are one.' This implies incarnation. As per Bible even Elisha, Elijah and Peter destroyed evildoers who resisted establishment of virtuous behaviour.

The purpose of incarnation is not limited to establishing proper order in the society it is also to raise people to a higher level towards perfection. Those who give up attachments, fear, anger, conquer their passion and venture to rise above through their wisdom, who always remain engrossed in God with full faith and devotion, they stand a good chance of attaining union with God. However, different people love and pray to God in different ways as per their nature. It is God's generous nature that he accepts all in whatever way they come to him.

In Gita, Krishna recommended a direct approach to God Supreme ignoring rites, rituals, feasts, charities and prayers to gods and demi gods as given in Vedas. Every such Deity has limited power as per his specific portfolio. Pleased by sacrifices, the Deity propitiated, may grant the prayers of those who seek fruition of their desires/actions. But this is done through the grace of Supreme God. The point to note here is that the power to grant favours rests with the Supreme God who is the real owner of everything. He operates through gods and demi-gods; they are autonomous in their spheres of action.

However, the Supreme God (aka God) is pleased by whatever way of approach one might make. The same applies to different routes like *Gyaan*-yoga, *Karma*-yoga and *Bhakti*-yoga. God is ever ready to help us and accept us in his fold. The crux of the matter is that God is one (displayed in various forms including as gods and demi-gods). Similarly, Self-realisation which is the ultimate goal of all worship remains the same irrespective of the approach. Spiritually ignorant do not understand the fact that there is only one God. In fact, they do not recognize the existence of God, gods and demi-gods other than their chosen Deity.

Chaturvarnayaam System of the Society

Krishna declares that he created the fourfold* order (or four groups) in the society for efficient working of the same. These groups were based on the aptitude of individuals. It had nothing to do with heredity, caste, sex or other distinguishing factors. It was determined purely by functional needs and patterned after the influence of *gunas* (mode of nature) on the people. Those with similar *gunas* were placed in one group. In any society one needs four kinds of people viz. the rulers and the administrators (say the King and his officers), the intelligentsia, the think tank with moral authority who could guide the rulers through their wisdom and knowledge in respect of propriety of actions (say the king's consultants and teachers); the group that will implement the policies efficiently (bureaucracy); and the foot soldiers to provide support to all. Members of the group were selected as per their attributes and innate propensity.

The idea was to get the best of men for every function. Unfortunately, over time the vested interests of people in position converted this arrangement into a caste system based on birth in a family. India has suffered and is suffering greatly due to the caste system. The original idea of achieving the best efficiency has been overturned with contrary results.

Krishna named the four groups as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. We will briefly look at the characteristic of each of these groups.

Brahmin

The word Brahmin means one who knows the Brahman. They were from the intelligentsia class, scholars and the knower of Vedas. They made the first category and included men who had predominance of *sattva guna*. They were the teachers of the society. They taught Vedas, scriptures and other branches of knowledge. They served as the King's *Guru* or the Raj *Gurus*. The kings were

guided by the greatest among the Brahmins who was called *Raj Guru*. The kings however, had the authority to act independently overruling their advice.

Kshatriya

Kshatriyas were passionate, energetic, bold, risk taking, decisive and warrior type; they qualified to become the rulers and administrators. Such people had dominance of *rajasgunas* (activating type) along with *sattva* with the former dominating. They were placed in the second category and were guided by the Brahmins as far compliance to law and accepted norms as per Vedas were concerned. Brahmin no doubt wielded the moral authority but the king had the administrative power and as indicated above they could overrule his advice and take a decision as per his judgment.

Vaishya

Vaishya made the third group. They were the administration people who assisted the king in matters of raising resources, its control and distribution, agriculture, tending of cattle, commerce and law and order. They had a mix of *rajas* and shades of *tamas gunas* with *rajas guna* dominating.

Shudra

Shudra were people who were ignorant, lazy, lacking in initiative and who needed supervision. They were dominated by *tamas guna*. They made the working class and they assisted other classes.

Chaturvarnayaam system was a great idea where each member of the society worked as per his innate attributes. One does best when he works according to his innate inclination. Now if all people work as per their natural inclinations the results were bound to be the best. But the arrangement was such that anyone could move to a higher class by improving his attributes and knowledge matching the upper class. History is full of examples where a Shudra became the king or Raj *Guru*.

Ironically the Brahmins whose primary aim was to ensure propriety in actions became greedy. In order to secure the future of their children they converted the four fold grouping into a caste system based on birth in a family.

Krishna added that though he created this system for distribution of work for best results but he was himself a non-doer of any work. The God is dispassionate and unattached and he is considered to be non-doer and changeless. He remains the same even though he is in the background of all actions. Due to non-attachment and absence of desire for fruits of thework

does not create any bondage in him. He remains light and liberated; free from burden of desire, expectation and bondage.

One, who understands the unattached nature of God that remains the same all the time, learns to shed his own burden as well. Truly the ignorant (those who do not know the correct position in respect of the Supreme God and bondage etc) do work for self-purification but the wise do ordained work as a duty. They do it in order to maintain the balance in the world.

He clarified that since ancient times those who aimed at liberation performed the ordained work selflessly as their duty surrendering their identity to God. Having said this, he advises Arjuna to do his ordained work selflessly as his solemn duty (being a Kshatriya his duty was to fight the war to protect others) as was traditionally done by others since ancient times.

Krishna discriminates here self-inspired action from ego driven material action for gains. He tells Arjuna that since ancient times the seekers of freedom from birth and death performed ordained action as a duty not for any material gains, they surrendered their ego to God and considered their identity to be one with the true nature of God that remains constant in the midst of all his activities. He remains unchanging and totally unattached in all his creative activity. Similarly, the seeker of salvation has to remain fixed and unchanging, unattached to desire or emotions for any gains from his actions. One's action has to be devoid of ego or desire it has to be pure work for the sake of work. Since ancient times seekers of Truth and liberation performed such actions. He advises Arjuna to do the same.

Action and Inaction

Krishna described Yoga as skill of doing work. The skill determines the control we exercise on our actions; how we control our mind and ego? Here, he is further dissecting the word 'action' and looking at its variations.

Right Action (*Karma*)

Krishna felt that even men of wisdom get confused about right action, wrong action and inaction. As a result of lack of clarity, they go some distance on the spiritual path in seeking communion with the Spirit and then they start identifying themselves with their body and senses; and fall back. They remain bewildered about where they went wrong and what was the right action? He explains that only such actions that are undertaken with soul consciousness are right actions. The body, senses and all worldly attachments have to be divorced for these are ego generated; and all actions performed on account of

our ego take us away from Spirit. Such actions are wrong actions and must be avoided. This would be possible when our soul is the master and the body and senses are under its control. This happens only when we have meditative wisdom. When in the midst of performing action, we are still able to meditate and focus on the Spirit then only we acquire meditative wisdom.

It has to be understood that the world is full of relativities and one has to put up with so many contradictions. Our situations keep changing and what seems good with one set of parameters may go wrong when the same change. What remains fixed and unchanging is our soul and the Super Soul, the Cosmic Spirit. When we talk of any-thing for knowing its state and comparative position, self and Self alone can be our references. For our action, only when the same is inspired by our soul consciousness and is for the service of the Spirit, it is considered to be 'right action'. This is possible only when our ego is one with our soul; it has no independent existence. With the ego ceasing to be there our action becomes selfless; pure action, for the sake of action, not for any gain. Such actions help us in liberation from bondage. These are called 'right actions'.

Wrong Action (*Vikarma*)

Wrong Action is not a correct translation of the word *Vikarma*. However, several scholars have interpreted it as 'wrong action'. Gandhiji in his commentary on Gita called the same as the forbidden action (*nishidha karma*). Vinoba Bhave called it special action (*vishesh karma*).

All actions that do harm to our body, senses, mind or soul are considered wrong action. Excess of anything would amount to a wrong action. Hence, we have to judiciously calibrate our actions. Sometimes in search of supposed happiness we over indulge ourselves that causes harm. Sometimes little immediate happiness causes long term damage. These are to be avoided. Actions for desire fulfillment fall in this category.

Inaction (*Akarma)*

The yogi who performs action selflessly and is not conscious of his doing it; and he does not have the sense of ownership of the action, then he is said to be performing inaction (*akarma*). The yogi mentally withdraws himself from the processes of action and does everything for the sake of doing it (it is called *akarta bhav*). Inaction involves doing all compulsory actions without any desire. He gradually attains freedom from desire for action. God performs all actions in this way. When a yogi is sitting still, he is not at rest he is still

performing some action say he is worshipping the God or meditating. If he does action in the service of God with the aim of pleasing him he is actually performing 'inaction'. Such actions are free of any bondage.

Inaction in Action and Action in Inaction

Our mental composure gets disturbed because of our attachments. Our desires keep coming back and forth and we suffer bondage in whatever we do. Inaction is the type of action where we have complete freedom from any attachment and desires. We are dispassionate to the extent that we are not even conscious of our action. This is possible only when we are absorbed in the divine and our soul enjoys linkage with the Cosmic Spirit. If a yogi does work without any attachment he is free of bondage, and his action is truly inaction. He is truly working for God, to please him and while going through the motions he knows that it was actually the God who was working and he was merely his tool.

If a yogi appears sitting idle but he is not at rest or in a state of no action. His meditation, trying to seek and dwell in the cosmic spirit is an action but outwardly it appears to be inaction. Only his body is at rest.

Inaction in action implies soul's detachment from bodily actions; this will happen when the soul dwells in the divine. Action in inaction connotes that the yogi is aloof and working for God. He does his work with full devotion but is unmindful of its fruits; he is not worried about it. Since he is free of any desire he harnesses his inner wisdom; such a person is considered a learned one.

A yogi, who burns his desire in the fire of his devotion and wisdom, works outwardly; he is seen to be working but inwardly he remains at rest, he thinks he was doing nothing. His body works but his soul being detached from all actions dwells in the divine spirit. His bodily actions are for maintenance of his body. His actions do not create any *Karmic* score for he remains free from all desires.

Krishna clarifies that one who remains content in whatever he gets, becomes free of any bondage. He transcends dualities and enjoys total evenness of mind both in pleasure and pain for he has banished jealousy. Desires create bondage in absence of the same everything in the cosmos appears one and the same. Since we are not attracted towards something we become free of bondage. Having explained the above Krishna dwells on the core of all actions. He says: the act, the doer and what he does are all manifestations of the God.

Any action that is performed purely for God (or as a sacrifice to God) becomes free of bondage for the element of self-interest is absent.

Sacrificial Rites consume all Karmas in Spiritual Fire

Karma imply bondage created due to our work as these go in the records of our *karmic* cycle that is carried forward from life to life. The negatives have to be offset against positives earned through noble deeds and for this reason one has to be born again and again. Men perform several sacrificial rites to propitiate different gods and demi-gods. This, they do as per their innate propensities. Different types of sacrificial rites have been discussed in verses 25 – 29.

In Vedic *yagna* we have a central fire around which the yogis sit and chant Vedic mantras (*shlokas* or verses) and pour ghee and herbs in the fire. Some sweets and flowers, fruits and rice are offered by way of oblation. Brahmins who conduct the *yagna* are given fees (*dakshina*) both in cash and kind and charities are given to the poor. Community feasts are organized. Krishna rejected this ritualistic and expensive process in Gita. Instead he suggested simple direct prayers to God cutting out the frills. Here, he uses the yagna symbolically. The ordained duty of a person as per his *Varna* or classification (division as per *chaturvarnayaam* of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra) and ashram (stage of life) duly performed is considered a *yagna*. One is expected to sincerely work for accomplishing scripturally ordained *karma* (duties) e.g. Kshatriya's ordained duty is to fight for providing protection to his people; if he does this honestly it is equivalent of performing *yagna*.

The liberated person who sheds all attachments and gains control over his mind is awakened by his inner wisdom. His work is like a *yagna* and the same does not earn any *karma* (credits or debits as these are neutralized). For him the Vedic process, an offering, oblation and the central fire are all representations of God; it implies that one does not need these as he already has an element of God in him; these being elements of him in manifestation. His goal is to reach the God through his work for he can only realise him through the same. Indirectly he is saying that the work is important, it is like God, the rest, the rites, rituals and oblations etc. are disposable and can be dispensed with.

Those who follow the Vedic route, pray to various gods and demi-gods through consecrated rites, rituals with *yagna*, offerings, oblation etc. to seek their favours. Others pray to the Supreme God, the Cosmic Spirit directly without the Vedic frills; they offer their spirit (self) to the Supreme Self. Their aim

being achieving unity of their spirit with Cosmic Spirit they adopt a direct approach; their unselfish work is their *yagna*. In Gita chapter 9.25 Krishna says that those who pray to gods and demi-gods go to their *lokas* (domains) on their death. They enjoy the hospitality of their chosen deity (gods and demi-gods) based on the credits accrued to them while they were on earth, and on expiry of the same they revert to take birth on earth to carry forward the process of neutralizing their karmic balance. Those who pray to Supreme God and seek union of self with the Supreme Spirit when they are granted this union they become one with him; they do not have to revert back to earth for the Supreme God is unborn.

The sacrifices made by the devotees are of various kinds. Some offer sacrifices in the *yagna*, some offer their self in the Self, some offer their senses, some offer their hearing creating a self-constraint and similarly they offer their other senses as a sacrifice. It implies that they impose self-discipline not to enjoy sense objects by offering the same or the connected senses to a sacrificial fire where it is burnt up and these cease to exist for them. In other words, they exercise self-control not to enjoy some convenience that is available to them. We give up something of lower value in the hope getting something of much greater value. The lower impulse that we surrender (the egoistic pleasure associated with it), in search of something bigger that opens possibility of gaining much greater enjoyment, satisfaction and peace is called sacrifice.

One's 'self-control' or 'self-discipline' gives him a limited and selective capacity to do certain limited things; but he cannot do other things. As distinct from this is 'the fire of control that belongs to the Self'. This signifies the mastery of the Cosmic Spirit the Supreme God that is all powerful. One can imitate the latter only when he is Self-realised. Here the power lies with God and not with the individual who can realise it through Self-realisation. When one is awakened to the light of the Self he is able to selectively destroy (burn in the fire of wisdom) all or chosen objects of his senses or some senses themselves.

The yogi who follows the path of *Gyaan*-yoga tries to approach the Supreme God through meditation. He pictures the Supreme God within his 'self' and always concentrates on the central point between the two eye brows (*kutashtha kendra* or Christ Point). He tries to experience the life force through his mental vision focused on this central point surrendering his ego and ten senses (five senses of knowledge and five of action). The idea is to achieve merger of his self with the Supreme Spirit which cannot happen till we give up our ego and achieve freedom from our senses.

Finally, the yogi tries to reverse the flow of life force and make it upwards to the top of skull behind the brain; normally the flow is downwards from brain to navel. Paramhans Yoganand advises that the process for doing this is through *Kriya-yoga*. In *Gyaan*-yoga, with the power of knowledge alone, one faces several hurdles and rarely succeeds. He has written extensively on *Kriya-yoga* in 'Autobiography of a Yogi' and even in his commentary on Gita[37] has a detailed account on the subject.

As per Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutra* there are ten kinds of air within the body that work all the time. These could be experienced through *pranayaam*[38]. Patanjali's yoga instructs the yogi how to control the air system of the body in a manner that drives away material attachments and lure for senses and sense objects, thus, freeing us of all impurities and we achieve a pure soul. This soul is not affected by senses and their

interaction with the sense objects. In such a stage the soul is able to distinguish various airs[39] in the body and one can manipulate the same.

A practitioner of *Gyaan*-yoga gains knowledge and he offers the same in a *yagna*. This implies that he shares the same with other yogis freely. Likewise, the wealthy offer their riches and material possessions to others. Some yogis take to austerities or take vows and practice the same; some undertake severe spiritual exercises and they offer to teach the same to other folks who are uninitiated. In other words, they try to help others with their special skills. Some yogis acquire specialized knowledge and skill in the practice of *pranayaam*. They know how to manipulate the incoming breath (*prana-vayu*; the one we inhale) and the out-going breath (*apana-vayu*; the one that we exhale). They learn to mix one into the other thus effectively they neutralize these two life currents. This is the practice of *Kriya*-yoga.

In *Kriya*-yoga one learns to avoid decay of body by using pure air and conserving the same for a long time. The action of heart for cleaning and pumping air gets partially reduced. The person remains at peace; he stays composed and derives energy from distilled oxygen from the air we inhale. The process of *Kriya*-yoga creates great deal of energy in the spines. Though the breathing slows down yet by conservation of energy one can practice this yoga for a long time and his body systems do not decay. This yoga gives one the capacity to levitate and remain in one posture for a long time. Krishna makes a passing reference to *Kriya*-yoga in verse 29.

Krishna talked about yogis who practise *Kriya*-yoga of mixing of *prana-vayu* in *apana-vayu* and vice versa. This process neutralizes the twin (*prana-vayu* and

apana-vayu). *Prana-vayu* creates growth and vitality; and *apana-vayu* is full of toxins, it causes body decay. When the two are mixed there is neither growth nor decay; the body remains the same. As mentioned above there are ten types of airs, five of these are associated with *prana-vayu*. For their sustenance these five derive energy from the Cosmic Energy; the Universal *Prana- vayu*. This has been referred in Gita as five *prana-vayu* oblating in the Universal *Prana-vayu* for their existence.

The truth is that Cosmic Energy is the main source for the existence of the *prana-vayu* and *apana-vayu*. This is the first stage of linkage of our spirit with the Spirit; the yogi is awakened to the light of the Supreme or the fire of the Cosmic Energy. The teacher suggests taking light food in a regulated manner because with a heavy tummy with so many gases floating around yoga, *pranayaam* and even meditation are not possible. Those who practise *pranayaam*, particularly *Kriya*-yoga are very small eaters. Their need is meagre and they derive energy by conserving their existing pool and from the Universal *Prana-vayu.*

It must be understood that *yagna* or sacrifice is nothing but an act of giving. The fire and burning what we do not need or willingly part with, is entirely symbolic; a spiritual way of expression of our resolve to give. After all a person can only give what he possesses; a rich man can give his wealth, a learned one can give knowledge and so on. Yogis who observe austerities and practice spiritual exercises can dedicate the same to others. As a self-discipline in which one controls his senses, a yogi can give up his hearing or his speech or any other function. These acts are considered sacrifices or yagna and the process is called burning the same up in the fire of wisdom.

The yogis, who eat only consecrated food that is first offered to God and then distributed; or the food that is served only after the act of sacrifice, are considered enlightened beings and one's who are evolved on the path of Self-realisation; and God grants them union with himself. Offering sacrifices is a noble deed on the spiritual path. The sacrifices flow out from our action. These are meant to help us purify our soul and perform noble deeds in service of man and God. These nullify our negative *Karmic* score and create way for our achieving God union.

All works, done properly give us some wisdom. The culmination of all actions is not only a simple goal material or spiritual, depending on the path we choose, but there is some wisdom that we get out of it. Sacrifice of knowledge is considered greater than a material sacrifice as material gain is temporary

and can be lost but knowledge properly imbibed is a permanent asset that none can take away from us. The teacher thus highlighted the importance of sacrifice. In the end he said that those who do not perform sacrifices suffer not only in the present life but in future lives as well.

Having spoken about the importance of sacrifice the teacher talks about how wisdom helps us in elevating us to a higher spiritual level; and how *Guru* can help us progress on the right path. He advises us how to obtain wisdom from him. In Bible Jesus goes one step further, he said: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day."[1] He means that when God the Supreme Father is happy with the conduct and prayers of a devotee he sends a *Guru* to help and guide him reach his ultimate goal of God union. He implies that God speaks to us through the *Guru,* and through his words, he grants us the ultimate spiritual awakening by creating the right perception. He tells us how to shed all the bondage and become liberated.

Krishna gives Arjuna three tips in respect how one should approach the *Guru*. Like a father tells his little child, he tells Arjuna that one should humbly and reverentially approach the teacher in the spirit of self-surrender, implying (without saying so) that his life depended on his grace and patronage. The second tip he gave him was that one should ask him intelligent questions so that his genuine inquisitiveness (*jigyasan*) is felt by him and the third one was that he should earnestly approach him in the spirit of selfless service.

The devotee must clearly understand his needs. He wants to realise God within himself, but he doesn't know how to do it. He is stuck with whatever knowledge he has gathered from scriptures, his learning and discourses with others; and he is aware that the *Guru* has experienced God's presence within him and he knows the way ahead for him. The *Guru* is not impressed by simple obedience of the devotee; he looks for genuine spirit of enquiry, earnestness in his approach and the intelligence to grasp what he (the teacher) had to tell him. Once he is satisfied that the devotee was indeed a genuine one and he was intellectually ready to understand his teaching and had the capacity to reflect on the same and assimilate the same in his knowledge pool then he feels inclined to help him. The teacher gives advanced knowledge selectively and only to those who were ready to make beneficial use of the same. But he was ever willing to help a genuine and earnest devotee. He is telling Arjuna in a simple yet subtle manner that what one needs is not a

[1]*John 6.44*

knowledge he can gain from any other source, but he needs experience that only one who has experience can impart; such *Gurus* are rare and should be treated with great humility and dignity.

Importance of Wisdom

The teacher elaborated in detail how to obtain knowledge of the inner self and God through enlightened teachers who had personally known and experienced him. Now he proceeds to highlight and praise the value of wisdom. He says that one who achieves enlightenment he gains the wisdom, the awareness about the omnipresent Self. He knows that everything was a part of the Self and exists in him. Everything was his manifestation and hence, one and the same. The duality we see was superficial and entirely due to our delusion due to *Maya* and the bondage it creates; we remain confused and entangled in senses and our body ignoring the real, the real truth is the Self and individualised self in us. When a devotee receives wisdom with the guidance of *Guru* and the Grace of God his doubts are removed, he gets liberated and becomes free of all bondage and his actions do not earn any *karmic* credits.

Krishna adds a few examples to explain the foregoing clearly. He says:

- Even the worst of a sinner crosses the ocean of evil when he gains wisdom. He is pardoned by God; and he accepts him in his fold.
- As the fire turns the fuel to ashes so does the fire of wisdom burn all the evil and the *karmic* balance that had accrued to the person.
- Wisdom (here wisdom stands for God) is the purest of all on earth. Through continued practise of yoga one achieves perfection; he discovers that wisdom lies in our self.
- One who with full trust and devotion to him seeks wisdom by controlling his mind and senses ultimately gains it and he attains peace. One must know that his faith has to be pure and not a blind one. Wisdom resides in a deep corner of our self and one has to reach it through constant endeavour. One has to discriminate between intellectual knowledge (*Vigyaan*) and *Gyaan*. The former flows from our sense perception, logic, empirical knowledge and observations; and it can have an element of doubt, but the latter springs from self (*atman*) within and is absolute there can be no question of any doubt. It is evolutionary in nature, unlike knowledge it is not derived from a set of factors that are variables.

- The ignorant person has a doubting nature he keeps swinging between two ends that are different, not the same. He never achieves equilibrium for he lacks positivity of mind and confidence. He is never at peace at any time in this life or after life. He perishes under the burden of his bondages. Doubting nature never succeeds in life it remains hung.
- One with unwavering faith in God who seeks wisdom through constant practise of yoga is never bound by his actions for he becomes free of the weight of *karmas* that flow from *Maya* generated *gunas*. He is confident, with no doubts ever bothering him, for he is ruled by wisdom that flows from his inner self and it is always unchanging truth with no skepticism.

Having explained the finer details of devotion to God, faith, the role of *Gyaan* and yoga and how these destroy all doubts that keep cropping up in our mind he says that a person in search of wisdom works with unwavering devotion in the service of God and not for any personal gain. Finally, he asks Arjuna to destroy all doubts in his mind through the sword of wisdom and take to yoga to banish all ignorance and stand up to perform his duty as a *Kshatriya*[40].

Gist of Chapter 4

The crux of Chapter 4 in one sentence: 'Right Action is an act of prayer to God; it is also the secret of success in life.'

In chapter 2 (verses 2.47 & 48) Krishna laid great emphasis on desire less action where one doesn't worry about the fruits of his actions. In verse 2.61for the first time he indirectly declares himself to be the God. In chapter 3 he dwells on *karma*-yoga and why he prefers the same to *Gyaan*-yoga. He further elaborated upon selfless action, the role of *gunas* and how these create ego and desires in us that veil the truth from us. He further dwelt on control of mind and senses and the need to work in an unattached manner without which one could not control his desires and progress on the spiritual path.

In chapter 4 Krishna does not deal with any specific Yoga but he continues to further explain what he had said earlier and makes significant declarations. The first one comes in the opening verse where he says that the knowledge of Gita was originally given by him to Sun god earlier but the same got diluted and was eventually lost with lapse of time. What he was giving to Arjuna was a re-run of the same with a view to re-establish a proper code of conduct in the

society where everyone does his own work with full devotion and without interfering with other person's work.

The other declaration that he made was that he indeed was an incarnation of God. Verses 7 & 8 that deal with this declaration are perhaps most important two verses of Gita. Verse 7*: "yada yada hi dharmasya glanir …. sarijaami aham"* and verse 8: "*paritranaya sadhunaam …. yuge yuge*" are the most recited verses of Gita. In these verses he declares that 'when righteousness declines and evil doers gain ascendency the equilibrium in the society gets disturbed and I (God) takes to incarnation to protect the good and destroy the evil; and restore proper order; and this I do so from time to time'. Krishna unequivocally declares that he was the incarnation of God. Protection of the creation and nurturing the same is the function of God and he performs the latter through his expansion as Lord Vishnu. Hence, Krishna (during Mahabharata) was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

The third declaration made by Krishna was that he was the author of the fourfold order (*chaturvarnayaam)* of the society. Today Corporate Houses spend a fortune on Aptitude Testing and Aptitude and Skill Development; why? They want to have the most suitable person for every job for achieving best results with the highest efficiency. They hire experts and follow their advice to achieve excellence. They only focus on their actions the results follow. Over 5000 years back Krishna thought of *chaturvarnayaam*, yoga and taking the help of experienced *guru* for the same–best results. Self-realisation is perfection as only the 'Self' is perfect. It is much greater than excellence? For achieving something great one has to make sacrifices and practise self-denial in respect of not one but several small gains and pleasures. When it is the matter of perfection nothing could be too great a price to pay; no self-denial is big enough. Krishna explains this in detail so that nothing is missed out.

Krishna dwells on discipline one needs to master in order to achieve perfection and he also gives practical tips about how to obtain guidance of a *guru*; how to approach him, how to impress him and how to get the secret key to success viz. wisdom from him? He drives home the value of wisdom and makes it apparent that the gains that could accrue with the same would be much greater than all the pleasures and little successes one could otherwise achieve through best of efforts in his life. Add to wisdom the conviction (banishing all self-doubt), firm determinationand unwavering faith what can't be achieved? And the bonus is that if one achieves his goal all his past sins are washed out. Krishna uses the term 'fire of wisdom'; and anything washed with

it achieves purity that can't be surpassed. Corporate Houses that value excellence can learn a great deal from Krishna's philosophy.

Having explained the importance of achieving perfection and what one needs to do for the same Krishna reminds Arjuna of his duty as a Kshatriya.

Chapter 5: 'Yoga of Renunciation of Fruits of Action'

Krishna touched upon of Sankhya philosophy and Yoga (*Gyaan*-yoga) in Ch. 2. In this chapter he dwells on it in detail. In Ch. 3 he talked about selfless action (*Karma*-yoga); he candidly declared his preference for the same over seeking knowledge (*Gyaan*) and pursuit of the same *(Gyaan*-yoga) through renunciation of action as preached in Sankhya Doctrine. He discussed both *Karma*-yoga and *Gyaan*-yoga and also mentioned the difficulties one might encounter in his pursuit. He talked of the role of *gunas* and how these influenced one's psyche; and also, how one could act for best results.

In Ch. 4 he gave the Yoga of Divine Knowledge, describing the origin of the Bhagavadgita, concept of incarnation, *chaturvarnayaam* system; types of actions, *yagnas*, sense control, *Kriya*-yoga and intuitive wisdom. He especially talked of the need for total clarity, banishing all ambivalence and skepticism from our mind and developing complete self-belief in what we do besides faith in God. Hs emphasis however, remained on selfless action.

Arjuna somehow, noticed lack of consistency in Krishna's statements in respect of renunciation[41] of work and seeking knowledge (*Gyaan*-yoga); and selfless action (working without anxiety for the fruits of his actions) which he called *Karma*-yoga.

He was perhaps confused how two distinctly different paths could lead to the same destination of Self-realization; and which one the intellectual approach of Sankhya or action as per *Karma*-yoga was better.

Being action oriented and a dynamic person he was looking for a clear answer in terms of 'this or that'; he naturally wanted to go for the easier option that had greater chance of success. Therefore, he boldly sought clarification from Krishna and he candidly indicated his preference for selfless action (*Karma*-yoga). He explained that true renunciation of work was not possible as the practice of yoga was in any case required in either case and one always needs some action for sustenance of life.

Krishna, the greatest teacher and paragon of virtues that a manager should possess, was happy with Arjuna's response for he was at least listening to him; that gave him the opportunity to engage with him. He realized, he needed patience and he had to logically explain the minutest of detail to him so as to remove the last iota of doubt he might have. His goal was to create total conviction and unwavering faith in him. His mission was to uplift the entire

society; hence, he chose a broad spectrum of detailed information and knowledge so as to cover all possible situations and doubts that could arise. To his credit he proceeded slowly but surely and highlighted the subtle nuances, at times he repeated himself to make the message absolutely clear.

Chapter 5 has been variously called as 'Yoga of Renunciation of Action', 'Yoga of Inner Renunciation'; and '*Karma*-yoga – Action in Krishna Consciousness' etc.

There are 29 verses in this chapter with only the first one, belonging to Arjuna and the rest to Krishna.

Arjuna opens the dialogue with a pointed query that which of the two, *Gyaan*-yoga or *karma*-yoga, was to be preferred by him. In reply Krishna talks about both selfless *karma* and renunciation in some detail. His renunciation of work implied giving up of selfish work for material gains for the same creates *karmic* debt that one had to pay for or carry forward to be paid for even in later life. He took the same too literally and interpreted it as rejection of all work. Krishna had earlier said that one could never achieve total cessation of all works. He missed the point and hence, sought clarification.

He further explained that the two paths were not mutually exclusive. In *Gyaan*-yoga one had to concentrate on gaining wisdom and renouncing material activity; and in the *Karma*-yoga one had to perform unselfish work i.e. the right kind of work.

Of these two, he strongly felt that the latter was better. In *Karma*-yoga one had to transcend duality; give up desires and attachment to fruits of action in order to eliminate *karmic* debt. For release from bondage the *karmic* account must be at zero – zero level. Hence, one must dedicate all actions to God and work as if he was working for him and for no one else.

In essence both the approaches, one involving renunciation of work which is truly renunciation of the world (Sankhya-yoga); and unselfish action of *Karma*-yoga are the same. In both God remains the supreme goal and everything including the self, had to be subordinated. Both led to the same goal[42]. The two paths are truly complementary. In *Karma*-yoga one had to seek intuitive wisdom and work according to spiritual guidance; and in the renunciation of work (*Gyaan*-yoga), one needed knowledge (Gyaan) and the practice of yoga. One could not reach the goal of salvation by saving wisdom alone.

Krishna first explained the two Yogas and the commonality in the essence of the two approaches. He elaborates further on the same and said that when one works in yoga he learns to master his senses; and he achieves the following:

- Communion with self (*atman*) and through it with the Super Self;
- Control of his sense organs; these are not lured by sense objects, he attains purity of mind and thought and seeks guidance from the self;
- Realizes the unity of the 'self' across the board with the Super Self;
- Starts working not for any gains but for service to the society and the Self;
- Transcends all attachments, he dedicates all actions to God He remains fully aware, that, in whatever he does, it was only his senses and sense organs that work, he truly does nothing;
- Becomes like a lotus plant that stays clean even in mud but its leaves remain unspoilt and do not even get wet by water (water rolls down);
- Enjoying himself, he goes beyond his finite ego (body consciousness) and dwells only on the Eternal and the Infinite i.e. soul consciousness.

He described this by saying that one who is in yoga and does selfless work with control over his senses does not incur any sin (*karmic* debt). Such a yogi attains god vision (total clarity) and supreme peace of mind. Those who remain ego driven and are attached to the fruits of their actions never attain communion with 'self' or the Divine. They remain perpetually distressed; ignorant in darkness hankering after temporary gains that never satisfy them and make them restless.

One in communion with the Divine gets rid of body consciousness and he dwells in the soul. Unlike the body the soul is the same in everyone. When it (soul) substitutes for body or becomes a part of the same in his consciousness it becomes his 'I' or 'Me'. One has to get beyond 'I do it' or 'it belongs to me'.

One realises and accepts that everything, including his own self, being a part of God belonged to him. Hence, there was no question of one's owning or losing anything. With this awakening one never suffers mental highs and lows, whatever may happen, he remains the same. He neither rejoices on gaining something nor moans the loss of anything for he is aware of its transient nature. Being aware of being a part of the Self, he gets firmly established in equanimity and enjoys true happiness for nothing other than the Eternal matters to him.

The attribute of 'transcending the duality' and staying firm in equanimity was called '*Samta*-yoga. This is obtained only when one sheds all attachments and desires. When his heart is empty he enjoys peace and real happiness. Ravidas 15th century AD poet has beautifully described this state in one simple sentence: "Where 'I' remain, thou are not; Thou comest, 'I' am naught."

Krishna further explained that the yogi (truly yogi is one who practices yoga and works giving up all attachments and desires for fruits of his actions) and remains focused on the soul, learns to renounce both physical and mental actions (actions performed by senses, organs; and even the thoughts in the mind). His senses and organs work only for purification of the self and to sustain itself and the *prakriti*. He sheds all darkness as his ignorance gets destroyed but his inner self remains illumined and guides him on the right path. He, like a king, stays in a palace (his body is like a palace) that has nine gates[43] where he remains aloof of all the activities that are performed by his servants (senses and organs). Dedicating everything to Divine he remains supremely confident, happy and relaxed for nothing bothers him. His senses and organs get guided by the intuitive wisdom that he gains by his communion with the 'self'.

His false ego stays dormant having been replaced by positive ego due to his self-belief and faith in, and love for the Eternal Spirit. With his singular focus on the Supreme God he identifies himself with him and gains divine wisdom that washes all sins.

The yogi and the sage on gaining equanimity see everyone as one and the same under all circumstances. He is not affected by superficial differences among human beings like the form and size or Brahmin, the Shudra or in animals like the dog, cow or an elephant; to him all are the same. The differences owe their origin to duality. When we transcend it (duality) we see everyone as the same as we know that all were a part of the same Supreme Self and hence, the same.

This realisation creates awareness that the pleasure obtained through sense objects (material possessions and sense gratification) were unreal and transient and was the real cause of pain. Such a realised person (the yogi) through his equanimity seeks happiness from within. He gains clarity of vision, all his doubts get destroyed and he enjoys bliss in doing good to others and service to all. True service to fellow beings is not limited to providing physical or financial help but the same lies in awakening others to their true potential.

The subtle point to note is that a realised person who practises equanimity sees all (both animate and inanimate) in the same Divine. It is interesting that despite being a part of one undivided whole, different things and beings could still retain their independent forms, features and entirely separate existence. He is able to understand this due to his ability to see through the unique differentiating features, for he concentrates on the basic central core that remains the same. The superficial distinguishing features vanish from his vision and he sees everyone as one and the same, being a part of the Divine, like himself. Such a person learns to focus on the soul as he transcends body consciousness.

As a natural fall out of his equanimity he experiences great love and compassion for all. Without any effort on his part, he experiences an urge from within to help and extend service to everyone and he enjoys supreme bliss in doing so. Why? He transcends body consciousness, the sense of me and 'them' bothers him no more; he starts doing everything for the Divine and truly enjoys the service he renders. It is a real win-win for him, on the one hand he dwells in the Divine and on the other everything in *prakriti*, the entire world becomes a part of him and he enjoys union with the Eternal. It is simple; if one is a part of say a person 'A' then by implication 'A' too is a part of him even if it is a much greater part.

The process of evolution to such a stage starts with gaining control over the senses and the sense organs. For this, one has to overcome delusion by gaining intuitive wisdom. Gradually our ego, sense of ownership and the attributes of position, status, authority and wealth etc. start appearing flimsy, transient and lose the blinding dazzle these normally create. It is these that give rise to greed, anger, lust, one-upmanship; and other seemingly very human attributes, desires and needs.

Krishna repeatedly exhorted Arjuna to give up desires and not to worry about the

results of his actions. The practice of meditation helps banish all ideas and thoughts from our mind and clears it of all the accumulated clutter. For meditation one has to sit quietly in a secluded place and concentrate on the mid-point between the two eyebrows (called the *kutashtha kendra* or the Christ Point) and try to experience the flow of incoming and outgoing breath in our nostrils. He should then try to make the same into an even and smooth stream. This process helps in opening a dialogue with our spirit; and we start getting the feeling of oneness with the self. We realise, that God was the real

and only owner of everything and everyone in *prakriti*; and each one of us was only an extended arm of him. Hence, in all our actions, it is the God that is the driving force, the doer; we only go through the motions at his behest.

The above stage is reached when we unconditionally surrender to God and merge our limited identity[44] (that binds us to our body) with him. We start realising the truth of his being compassionate, ever loving and helping Supreme Father, one, on whom we could depend; and one, who would never fail us. The God is not an indifferent, distant boss, who only keeps ordering everyone around in an unconcerned manner but one who truly cares for us. He treats us like a child, or an intimate friend. And he does so, for each one of us without ever expecting anything in return. We only need to cultivate absolute trust in him.

In verse 17 Krishna explains the true meaning of surrender. He says: the state of oneness with Self could be experienced only when one is totally committed to God in thought, words and deeds and his devotion is unwavering and unconditional.

In such a state, one doesn't think of his own identity (ego) and his spirit achieves union with the Spirit. He transcends birth and death; he doesn't return to earth again. In Bible Jesus said the same: "Him that overcometh will make a pillar in the temple of my God; he shall go no more out."[45]

Krishna clarifies that in pursuit of truth either by *Gyaan*-yoga or *Karma*-yoga in the end we reach the last stage of Yoga called the *samadhi*. It is like *sanyaas*[46] the last of the four stages (as described in Hindu scriptures) of a person's life, where one gives up all worldly actions; all his actions are limited to those needed for sustaining his life. In ancient times during this stage people (including the Kings) retired to a forest, away from their home and family. They lived on forest produce or whatever was freely given by others without begging for the same; if on a certain day they didn't get anything they went without meals.

Sanyaas is often confused with renunciation. This is perhaps due to lack of an exact equivalent for *sanyaas* in English language. As stated above *sanyaas* being the final stage (*ashram*) in our life has a life span that depends on when the person dies; one could die even before commencement of *sanyaas*. It is a way of gaining detachment from the world; a discipline meant to prepare one for giving up his body peacefully. It is a training regimen, an internship that is self-supervised. It teaches us how to live without one's near and dear ones,

without the worldly titles, comforts, possessions and compulsions and forsaking the entire support system that we become so used to.

Let us recapitulate the foregoing. In *Gyaan*-yoga one renounces all worldly actions (*sakaam-karma*). In *Karma*-yoga one renounces the desires and fruits of his actions. Practising these yogas one reaches the junction point of *sanyaas* it makes the spring board to leap to the highest level of Self-realisation or union with the Supreme God.

Verses 27 & 28 of this chapter and verse 29 of Chapter 4 talk of *Kriya*- yoga[47]. We briefly touched upon the same in Chapter 4. This particular yoga is needed to gain an introduction to soul consciousness that is a must for progress on the path that leads to merger with the Supreme.

Krishna states that when a yogi, sitting steady clears his mind of all external ideas[48] and thoughts and he concentrates his vision at the centre point between the two brows and tries to control the flow of his inward and outward breath he achieves peace for he gradually gets rid of all his mental baggage. He realizes and accepts God as the supreme enjoyer of all penances and austerities, ever friendly and helpful to all and that he is the Lord of all lords. Such a person having shed all worldly baggage of desires, attachments and bonds becomes fit for union with God.

In verse 29 Krishna categorically reiterates that God[49] the creator of the multi-verses (*Brahmaand*) was the owner of everything and the enjoyer of all *yagnas*, austerities; and penance etc that one might offer. At all times he remains the best friend of everyone in the creation. The yogi, who accepts this fact, attains peace and becomes *Jeevanmukta*[50]. He transcends the cycle of birth and death.

Gita deals with different kind of yogas in each of its chapters besides other details pertaining to spiritual sciences and the way to advance on the path of Self-realisation which is the supreme goal of mankind. Chapter 5 doesn't specifically deal with any yoga, still it is very important because in this chapter Krishna has explained in a subtle way the fact that there could be several roads leading to the same destination but these roads finally meet at a junction where differentiation of the different approaches ends and from there on everyone has to follow one road. In subsequent chapters he has highlighted that a combination of Yogas, a hybrid approach makes the progress smoother and faster.

Gist of Chapter 5

The crux of Chapter 5 in one sentence: 'By renouncing ego one can enjoy supreme bliss'

In earlier chapters Krishna explained the merits of both *Gyaan*-yoga and *Karma*-yoga. Arjuna in his state of bewilderment about the right and wrong of the war got further confused. Though he was an evolved person, a dynamic man of action but presently he was looking for a respectable way out of the war. He was looking for a quick fix. He therefore, asks Krishna for a clear answer as to which of the two yogas was better. With this back-ground Krishna elaborates further on a deep philosophy that had baffled Arjuna. The beauty of his summation lies in its transparency and simplicity.

Krishna says that there could be multiple routes to reach the same destination and one could choose what suited him best.

In reply to Arjuna's query he said that for a commoner, a house-holder particularly a person of action (like Arjuna) who has commitments to honour *Karma*-yoga where one performs his duties unselfishly is the best. In this he had to let go of the desire for the fruits of his actions.

In Gyaan-yoga through renouncing the world and seeking solitude one does gain physical separation from his near and dear ones but his mental attachments still remain as these were not place specific and it was very difficult to shed the same. Only through yoga and meditation on God one could gradually divorce his mental longings.

For a man of action like Arjuna such a physical separation was difficult, but through yoga and meditation he could seek the will to surrender the fruits of his actions to God. One had to acquire equanimity and a sense that in whatever he does, it was not he, but his body, senses and organs were at work. Thus, he can transcend the feeling of doer-ship and ownership and gain mental renunciation of the fruits of his actions. This helps him to live within his self and dwell on it and that provides a way of introduction to his spirit (*atman*).

We all have our individual 'selves' *(atman*) within us. Strangely we are all greatly overpowered by our ego and remain entangled in the glamour of the world and we become oblivious of its (soul's) presence. A realisation of its presence in us helps us see everyone and everything as ourselves. This results when we seek soul to soul relationship and its identification of oneness with each other. The knowledge of all being one and the same, provides us

evenness of mind (equanimity) that in turn makes us humble and generous; we rise above petty dogmas, rituals and prejudices. The feeling of big and small, rich and poor and such dualities vanish. The sense of gaining anything be it wealth, position or any fulfilment of desire becomes meaning-less for even after gaining it, we still would remain the same. This helps to rid ourselves of the feeling of joy we feel and excessive display of the same on gaining something; or moaning the loss of something. We realize the transitory nature of both the situations and we learn to remain the same. In such a state of sameness the lure for fruits of our actions and any other longing melts away and we willingly surrender everything to God. An awakening dawns on us that we are an insignificant part of him. A very significant gain we make lies in our realization that all in the creation are truly a part of God.

The sense of sameness with others gives us another positive; we realize the futility of negative attributes like anger, jealousy and one-upmanship and we learn to love others and try to help them in every possible manner. In doing so, we feel, divine happiness and a sense of service to God. We realize that our body and everything that we consider as ourselves is a part of him. This creates twin gains for us. The first one is that since everything is the same being a part of the same God our sense of duality melts away; and the other is that we acquire a propensity to dwell in self and Self (God) as we enjoy supreme happiness in identifying our 'self' with him. We completely surrender our identity to him. Our mind becomes disciplined and we are able to control the same; and we start seeing the same Self in all beings and non-beings in the creation as in our individual selves.

The feeling of oneness of all in the creation with each other and with God makes it transparently clear that God is not an indifferent boss who orders us around in the creation all the time, doing and undoing our fates but a merciful, loving and caring father ready to hold our hands and lift us in his arms. When one achieves such a total oneness with others and him (God) he qualifies to unite with him.

Chapter 6: Dhyana - yoga

Dhyana is a Sanskrit word; it means to intently focus on an idea or object. It is a part of meditation. Earlier Krishna talked of *Gyaan*-yoga, *Karma*-yoga and Renunciation of the world, giving up the fruits of our actions and how both the paths of *Gyaan*-yoga and *Karma*-yoga led to the same destination.

In this chapter he further elaborates on the same and expands it to include *Dhyana*. It is a necessary tool for practising Yoga correctly and teaches us:

- How to achieve total focus on the goal;
- The correct path and means to achieve the same;
- The faculty to see through various options, paths and possible hurdles by clearing clutter from our mind that is necessary for achieving point focus on the task; and smooth progress on the right path.

One needs to learn the process of 'Meditation' and practise it regularly to achieve clarity of mind and undivided focus on the goal with complete trust in God. In this chapter Krishna freely talks of his being the God and uses the word 'Me' for God.

This chapter has been variously called '*Dhyana*-yoga', 'The True Yoga' and 'Seeking the Spirit through Yoga of Meditation' etc. Of all the Yogas discussed in Gita, *Dhyana*-yoga travelled far and wide and found acceptance in various countries. The process of meditation which is the core of this yoga was found to be extremely useful and became the basis of the local editions (called by different local names) of this yoga. In fact, Buddhism became the carrier of *Dhyana*-yoga to east especially to Thailand, Cambodia, China and Japan. Zen is a derivative of *Dhyana*-yoga. It is accepted in all the major countries of the world.

There are 47 verses in this chapter; only 5 (33-34 and 37-39) belong to Arjuna and the rest to Krishna.

Sanyaasi, Yogi, Meditation, self (atman) and Self (Paramatman):

Krishna had earlier repeatedly stated that the goal of humankind was to achieve Self-realisation. For this one had to seek the ultimate truth. Sankhya doctrine advocated the same through renunciation (sanyaas) and *Gyaan*-yoga. However, Krishna preferred the *Karma*-yoga. Both laid great emphasis on knowing the Real that was Eternal as distinct from the unreal that was both

illusionary and transitory. The illusion was caused by the modes of nature (*Gunas* of *prakriti*).

In this chapter he elaborates on the roles of Sanyaasi, Yogi, Self and self and Meditation. He also highlights the need for total faith in God (Self) and to transcend our identity comprising our body, mind and intellect that change with environment, time and place; these are all variable and perishable. After all, our body (including organs), mind and intellect change with age; these are not the same in infancy, adolescence, man-hood and old age. These also change with environment.

As against these our *atman* (spirit or self) being a part of God (Cosmic Spirit, the Self) remains unchanging, ever young, a constant and is not perishable. The teacher tells how to focus on our *atman* that was the real 'me'. In a subtle way he advises us to concentrate on the spirit (soul) rather than the matter (body). The paths differ but both a sanyaasi and a yogi seek to get out of body syndrome (lure of matter); they strive to know and seek guidance from our *atman* in order to gain their Divine self.

In chapter 5, the Teacher had briefly touched upon Sanyaas. As per Vedic scriptures there are four *ashrams*[51] (stages) in a person's life. The last stage is called *Sanyaas-ashram*. In this, one had to retire to a forest or a secluded place away from his family and the society to attain detachment from all material bonds and concentrate on inner search on a full-time basis. One has to get rid of his ego generated thoughts (*sankalpa*) for material gains and sense gratification and concentrate on prayers and knowing his own 'self' (*atman*) that is necessary for finally seeking union with Divine (Self). On entering *Sanyaas-ashram* one had to perform a sacrificial fire ceremony that was symbolic of burning all of one's material desires and one had to resolve never to hanker after any worldly gains. The sacrificial fire ceremony was supposed to be the last one after which one indulged in no other ceremony.

Renunciation of the world (*sanyaas*) and pursuit of *Gyaan*-yoga as per Sankhya doctrine is often confused with *Sanyaas-ashram* of one's life. Renunciation as per Sankhya is not age or *ashram* related; and it demands total non-attachment. *Sanyaas-ashram* too implies the same. In both cases one needed to take both physical and mental *sanyaas* i.e. one had to give up material and also the emotional bonds and the mental craving for the same.

Detachment would be of no value if one continued to nurse the longing mentally; hence, control over both body and the mind was an absolute must. In *Gyaan*-yoga a *Sanyaasi* pursues the path of seeking knowledge and

concentrates on reflecting on the same. Renunciation in his case does not imply giving up all works like daily rites, rituals and charity, offering prayers and lighting the sacrificial fire etc. These were needed for sustenance of life for inner search of intuitive wisdom and the *atman*.

A yogi on the other hand performs his mandated unselfish duties (without any desire for rewards or fruits of his actions) and also deeply meditates on the Divine. He follows yoga (disciplined work). In this statement Krishna makes it clear that renunciation (*sanyaas*)[52] and activity in yoga are one and the same.

One little clarification here might help. The yogi who follows *Karma*-yoga is supposed to meditate on the Divine to seek his inspiration and blessings and work without any expectation for a reward; his sole goal remains to seek union with him (God). When he does reach that goal he gets truly rewarded. Thus, unselfish work too can get us what we intently long for, so long we rise above the material plane and strive on the spiritual path, dedicating everything to God.

In *Gyaan*-yoga the focus is on pursuit of knowledge (*gyaan*). One has to concentrate on mastering yoga (disciplined self-less activity dedicated to God and in his service). Once the same is achieved the person enjoys peace and serenity; his progress becomes easier. In both the paths, giving up work* totally is neither required, nor desirable as the same makes one lazy; it creates hurdles that hinder smooth progress.

Krishna had mentioned earlier that the Cosmic Spirit (God) created *prakriti* and the living beings and planted in every human being an element of the Cosmic Spirit called the spirit or self (*atman*). This individualized self stays in our body but enjoys a direct linkage with the Self and derives its life energy from him.

The spirit is meant to be a dispassionate watchdog inside our body; it is not supposed to get involved in our working life in the world. However, it (self) is influenced by our ego, mind and intellect. Our ego is very powerful for it creates thoughts (*sankalpa*), desires and actions that follow. It overpowers intuitive wisdom that we can get from our spirit. To subdue the ego Krishna advised that one should earnestly pursue the path of yoga (detached selfless, disciplined work), devote himself in the service of God (Self) and through him seek introduction with self (*atman*); and seek its guidance.

The teacher makes two points: the first one is to control the mind and senses and concentrate on the path of yoga. The second is to conquer the 'self'

through ‘Self’. The second one would be possible only when we succeed in the first. When we succeed in the second, we transcend dualities (pair of opposites; hot and cold, pain and pleasure and gain and loss etc) and achieve equanimity. We start seeing the same self in everything as in us; the physical distinctions disappear and a stone, a piece of gold or even an animal appear to be the same; we develop the capacity to treat friends and foes and saints and sinners alike and with compassion. This is the stage when we (our *atman*) knock at the door of achieving union with God.

Krishna laid great emphasis on devoting ourselves to God and to work for him. The Self is the Supreme Father, the Lord and Master of all, the true owner and enjoyer of everything that is there. Self along with our individual self that remains within us all the time; but unfortunately we remain ignorant due to our likes, dislikes, desires and cravings for material worldly possessions.

Through yoga when we control these and follow the guidance of our self then the Universal Self too helps us. He, as the true and the sole master becomes the best friend of our individual self and provides the correct advice. On the other hand, if we follow the dictates of our ego (that we normally do) the same Self could be our worst enemy as well. A good example is the fraternal war between Kaurava and Pandava in Mahabharata. Krishna (Self) helped Pandava as a friend and guide as they followed the spiritual path and strived to uphold righteousness. The same Krishna became enemy of Kaurava who were materialistic and were driven mad by their ego.

Unfortunately, we remain oblivious of both our individual self and Universal Self though these are the two (in fact only one and the same) who can help us gain what we want. Self is all powerful and his love for us is great. He empowers us, gives us all the freedom and the capacity to become what we want to be. He wants us to be self-dependent therefore he gave us free-will and doesn’t interfere in our affairs. This becomes clear from verse 5 where he says, “Let man lift himself by himself ---.”

If we earnestly practise yoga, and surrender to God, through our self (*atman*) he guides us to correctly use our free-will.

Having talked about renunciation, *Gyaan*-yoga, *Karma*-yoga, self and Self Krishna talks about Meditation which is nothing but *Dhyana*-yoga. It is the process by which one can achieve pinpointed focus (*Dhyana*) on anyone; or any object. The aim is to raise the level of our consciousness and transcend the routine to be able to focus on the target and nothing else. The teacher gives a technique for meditation that was subsequently given in detail by Patanjali in

his treatise on yoga named '*Yoga- Sutra*'. The basics of the same have been listed hereunder:

- The first thing is to choose a secluded quiet place[53] as presence of human beings or any matter and noise disturb and pollute our mind, these divert our attention. One has to be alone (by himself only) but never lonely, so that he can clearly hear his inner voice that is there, but it is lost in the din.
- One should choose a seat that is comfortable, neither too low nor too high. He should sit firmly on it, with body, neck and face straight; and focus his vision on the centre point between his two eye brows at the top of the tip of his nose. This point is called the *kutashtha kendra* or Christ point (in the Bible). The idea is to prevent the eyes from wandering sideways.
- Comfortably seated with peace in mind and with nothing to disturb, one should focus his mind on God (Krishna uses 'Me' for God); he should think of him and him alone. To be able to do this, one will have to practise celibacy, for sensual feelings and desire for sex are the biggest hurdle in achieving harmony and peace of mind. Only a celibate who practises yoga regularly is able to do it constantly.
- One focuses on anything through his mind and heart combination. The mind should be cleared of all thoughts and desires; and heart should be pure. Desires for possessions and wish for sense gratification in mind and attributes of jealousy, anger and one-upmanship in heart do not allow us to achieve a singular focus on anything and we remain in the midst of a cross fire from competing objectives. Hence, we must banish all clutter from our mind-heart combine such that we become the master of these and are able to open a channel for communication with our spirit[54]. Self and self-communicate only with those who are pure and at peace.

The objective of meditation is to achieve a calm and composed mind, a pure heart; and a point focus to be able to search within. For this, one has to raise his energy level and the limits of his faculties and one has to move from material goals (gross) to invisible spiritual one (*atman*) that is subtle. One needs clarity of vision and high degree of resolution. In one sentence one has to layer by layer, raise the platform of his existence to a much higher level. Practice of yoga is a necessary starting point. Next, one can't focus in a vacuum hence, one must have an object, a target; and what can be a better one than

God. One can even focus on his *Guru* or someone he looks upto for guidance, but not a dear relation for that would allow emotions to creep in and his focus will be disturbed.

We have two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and multiple antennae that keep on feeding information to our mind all the time even when we are asleep. We have to shut these out and throw the accumulated stuff within our mind and heart; and kindle the light of the Spirit within to seek our spirit. It is both very exacting and demanding but it is do-able. We only need to push our limits beyond our perceived threshold.

Meditation has been universally accepted as a capacity enhancing and capability multiplying tool. Those who aim for excellence in any field have to use both yoga and meditation. The interesting point is that many people do it (partially) through self-inspiration even without formal study or training for it. Probably their devotion to God inspires them. The benefit that accrues (creation of positive vibes, harmony and serene peace of mind) urges us to do better and still better to achieve singular concentration and this helps us to raise our level of thinking and working.

We spend a lot of energy on frivolous matters like thinking about our past, future, our desires, our craving for possessions, wealth, position and worldly matters. True, we also spend energy on meditation but if we get out of the routine worldly matters the saving of energy is enormous and we can use that for concentration on any chosen goal or task in hand. This surplus of energy creates a calm demeanour as well; we feel happy and enjoy great confidence. The result is that without feeling any strain we obtain much better results; we maximize the returns on our effort. Meditation is all about best results with least effort.

Paramhans Yoganand in his book 'Whispers from Eternity', called meditation as 'active calmness' and sleep as 'passive calmness'. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan called it 'thoughtful stillness.' It implies that the mind remains calm and steady; yet it works dynamically while one practises meditation. One is supposed to focus on an object, say God; and breathe slowly; inhale air, hold it for some time and then exhale it slowly; while doing so he has to chant Aum, Aum …. In the process the rate of our breathing comes down. A man normally breathes 18 times per minute and when one is agitated his breathing rate goes up. Hence, to stay calm we must reduce the rate of our breathing[55].

The controlled slow breathing that one follows during meditation has a calming effect. It helps us get rid of our duality (pair of opposites) and our

objectivity and focus improve. Since we shed our biases we start gaining equanimity and become compassionate. Our sense of right and wrong usually referred as discriminating wisdom improves[56]. Let me explain this a bit. Our thoughts travel in waves. A person when he is agitated emits high frequency waves having shorter wave lengths. With meditation we become calm and our thought waves acquire higher and higher wavelengths with lower frequencies. Cosmic Spirit and our spirit (*atman*) are serenely calm (at peace always), these encompass everything in the creation and the entire space hence, their wavelength is infinite. Meditation with practise gradually brings us more in line with Cosmic Spirit.

Meditation reduces Entropy in our System

We know that God is kind, compassionate, forgiving and truly infinite. Now let usconsider a yogi who is seeking union with him (God). He has to acquire higher wavelength and lower frequency in his thought waves to be in line with him. Meditation helps in achieving the same by slowing down our breathing. We can't have infinite wave-length but gradually the same can be increased by lowering our breathing rate. The ultimate in meditation is akin to '*Samadhi*'[57] in yoga; that is a zero-entropy state.

Literally, consciousness means awareness (of right and wrong). Scientifically, Consciousness is best explained by 'Bose Einstein Condensate Theory'. According to this theory at absolute zero or – 273 degrees C one would be at zero energy state. The entropy[58] at this state is zero. In this state one enjoys serene calmness and is at perfect peace. This theory and *Samadhi* which is the last stage in yoga highlights the similarity that exists between modern sciences and Vedic concepts like Yoga and Meditation. It points to the fact that for peace of mind and calm demeanor one has to reduce entropy level in his system (his body and working environment). Scientific theories often echo established Indian belief and practices. These are considered as coincidences, but interestingly these are repetitive. Unfortunately, there are no equations or written texts our scriptures to scientifically explain the same.

The teacher proceeds to explain that for the discipline of yoga and concentration on meditation one needs to lead a balanced life. He has to avoid excesses (neither too much nor too little) in respect of his daily needs like eating and sleeping etc. Regular daily routine including relaxation is necessary for practice of yoga[59]. One must exercise restrain, control his thoughts, deeds; and concentrate on God subduing his selfish desires. He should banish all thoughts to remain composed and steady like a candle in a windless place for

then only he could hope to achieve union with God (Self)[60]. An unsteady mind that is not at peace will for sure fall apart on way.

He added that Yoga provides disconnection with suffering; he assured that through it one could achieve union with God. One can enjoy supreme delight and true bliss through meditation that could not be obtained by any desire fulfillment or sense gratification[61]. When, one intently focuses on God, he starts finding him everywhere and at all times. When one reaches this stage then he can advance on the path of union with God. Krishna cautioned it was a slow process; the benefits accrue gradually, one had to patiently persevere with his practice and wait for success[62].

Krishna has beautifully explained how a yogi (a person harmonized in yoga) advances on the spiritual path. He starts seeing the same God in everything in the entire creation, as in himself; and all abiding in him. When this happens, his faith gains greater strength and he starts believing that God was always with him and for sure protects him. The teacher affirmatively asserts in verse 30 “I am not lost to him nor is he lost to Me.” There can’t be a more forthright and positive assurance. It implies a total and unbreakable oneness. A person who achieves such a stage of equanimity (when everyone becomes one with him) he enjoys peace. He becomes fearless for he sees God with him all the time and engages himself in prayers to him. He begins to find everyone in his own image and starts treating everyone with compassion and love. If we look at it purely in a worldly way he doesn’t want to hurt anyone for then he would indeed be hurting himself. Krishna called such a person a perfect yogi.

Control of Mind

Arjuna was not convinced by the assurances given by the teacher. He raised a very pertinent question about the very premise, the foundation of his statement. He said that yoga demanded absolute control over mind in order to gain total equality and evenness of mind, where everyone and everything becomes the same despite superficial differences. The mind was strong, yet fickle; it was overpowering; and impetuous, hence, trying to control it was like controlling the wind. He clearly implied that one would not be able to subdue the restlessness of his mind and hence, he cannot achieve true evenness and peace of mind needed for yoga and oneness with God?

Krishna appreciated his reservations and agreed that it was indeed difficult to curb the restlessness of mind[63]. Yet he assured him that one could gain control over his mind if he gives up attachments and perseveres in his endeavour selflessly. He was driving home the point that in our life, our needs keep on

increasing and we become so used to comfort zones that we get attached to even small things, leave aside relations and dear ones; wealth and position. We should simplify our life and manage with the very minimum. He agreed that yoga could not be achieved without control of mind and for that one had to shed all attachments (both physical and mental). If one could do that then through his sheer perseverance he could gain control over the mind and succeed in yoga and advance on the spiritual path. He further hinted that he (Arjuna) was indeed capable of it, that he had in him the ingredients needed for success and therefore, he need not worry about the same.

Arjuna again asks him that if one has faith in self and tries hard but fails midway and gives up, he loses both ways; he doesn't achieve yoga and becomes like a wandering cloud that perishes (he loses the present, and also doesn't qualify for advancement). He would get bewildered with nothing to hold on to. He would lose the pleasures of a normal life and can't hope to gain anything in after life; his entire effort gets wasted and he falls in no man's land not knowing what to do next. What happens to him? He beseeched Krishna and said that none other than him could remove his doubts and clarify the matter to him.

As mentioned earlier Arjuna was not an ordinary person, he was a righteous person advanced on the spiritual path. Pandava were reputed for their righteous demeanour. They were men of character, honest, compassionate; and God fearing. Yet, he was not too sure of what would become of him if he failed to progress in his work in yoga as told by him.

Krishna understood his predicament and he was direct and transparently assuring in his reply. He said that an honest and sincere person, who was helpful to all, never suffers in his present life, for God knows his intent, efforts and weaknesses and what he does to overcome the same. To him there is no failure; occasionally he may have setbacks. What really matters is his intention and the sincerity of his effort. He is always duly rewarded and in his next life he takes birth in a pious and prosperous family; or in a family of yogis who were engaged in the pursuit of yoga. He is able to recall his actions and the progress he had made in yoga and on the path of union with God in his previous life. He begins from where he left in his last life and tries to advance on the spiritual path towards his goal. Thus the credit of what he had done earlier is never lost to him.

Krishna here hints at continuity of life; he talks of the imperishable *atman*. The bodies may keep changing but the *atman* continues to live till it completes a

full cycle at the end of which it merges with God and is never born again. He advises patience and reconfirms that the progress on the path of yoga and union with the Divine was slow and may take several lives. Yet, he assures that with pursuit of yoga on the spiritual path one could even go beyond the Vedic injunctions. He explained that reaching Brahman needed two steps; first one was to progress through hearing and reciting his (God's) names and deeds (*Shabdabrahman*). The other is through constant practise on the right path; after a time, one advances on the path to union with God and starts experiencing him (Brahman).

Initially one has to learn from scriptures and religious texts and practise the recommended discipline to reach God and later he becomes a part of him. The important thing is to achieve clarity of mind through gaining control over it, and then to use it as per our need rather than being dictated by it. This can be done through striving hard and persisting with the effort to achieve consciousness about the 'self' by getting over our weakness for body consciousness.

Krishna places a yogi who practices *Karma*-yoga on a pedestal higher than that of an ascetic who renounces the world and retires to forest and pursues the practice of fasts and penances. He is also greater than a scholar who tries to search for the truth through *Gyaan*-yoga (gaining knowledge); and even to one who takes the Vedic route of progress through rituals and *yagna* etc. He prefers *Karma*-yoga as he considers it to be better than the other routes to achieve the goal. Yoga here implies the path of seeking union with God. Even amongst the yogis, one who prays to God with full faith and devotion (*bhakta*) who sees his self always abiding in him (God), is very dear to God. The teacher concludes this chapter by saying that one has to be a yogi and a devotee of God and he has to work ceaselessly with full faith to reach his goal. He lays great emphasis on devotion to Supreme God (*Bhakti*-yoga).

One little clarification about *'Dhyan'* and 'Yoga' may help. '*Dhyan*' is needed to achieve clarity of vision and undivided focus on the right path and our goal and 'Yoga' gives the process to advance on that path to achieve the goal.

In this chapter Krishna tries to persuade Arjuna with facts and reinforces the same with assurances. In verse 30 he says that the yogi who sees the God (he uses the word 'Me' for God) everywhere; and everyone in him (everyone as an integral part of him) is neither lost to God nor God is lost to him. This implies that he achieves oneness with him. In verse 40 he says that an honest man with good intentions who does good to all and works in yoga (not for material

gains) never fails; he does not meet an evil end for God takes care of him. Only one who had the capacity to control every-thing now and in future would be in a position to give such assurances. Only God has that absolute authority? And Krishna is unequivocal in his assurances.

Gist of Chapter 6

The crux of Chapter 6 in one sentence: 'For achieving unity with God one has to connect with his consciousness through *Dhyana*-yoga on a daily basis.'

In this chapter Krishna has explained the subtle points about *Gyaan*-yoga and *Karma*-yoga and terms like yogi (aka yogin), meditation and sanyaasi (renunciants). Finally, he declares a yogi who is a devotee *(bhakta*) and who surrenders to God is the best of all. The important point to note is that whatever be the path one may choose in pursuit of God, he would need the practice of *Dhyana*-yoga. He further introduces the concept of *Bhakti*-yoga and his preference for the same. He has dealt with the same in detail in chapter 12.

He explains the significance of meditation and how to perform it. He repeated that yoga was nothing but disciplined action and that both yoga and meditation were necessary for progress in our evolution on the spiritual path, be it for achieving excellence in life or Self-realisation. He clarifies that renunciation does not mean giving up all works in quest of knowledge and he reiterates that one only needs to perform the right work in a disciplined manner. The attachment with the family and the world has to be given up. He says that for success in yoga and meditation one needs a balanced mind and body which is under the control of the practitioner (yogi).

Krishna takes pains to explain the prerequisites for achieving success through meditation and the practice of yoga and how to create a balanced mind under the control of the yogi. People have differing inclinations and yoga has to be as per psychic propensity for success. That is why he talked of different kinds of yoga e.g. renunciation for ascetic (recluse), *gyaan*-yoga for intellectual type, *karma*-yoga for an active and dynamic worker, *bhakti*-yoga for the devotee and so on. But none of the yogas is complete in itself that is why one needs a composite yoga. But *Dhyana*-yoga is needed by everyone, likewise devotion (*bhakti*) is needed in all types of yoga. Gita doesn't make any distinction in different kinds of yogas. But in later chapters it recommends an integrated yoga for all; and *bhakti-yoga* for house-holders.

Yoga imposes a strong discipline in respect of one's life and habits. One's efforts on the spiritual path take a long time to produce results and there is every possibility of one getting tired; and deciding to give up mid-way.

Arjuna raises a pertinent query about the mind being very fickle; he doubted if the same could be controlled and also asked what would be the fate of one who gives up his pursuit midway? Krishna understood his skepticism about possible failure and loss due to the same. He forcefully assures, that where one leaves his search on the path of spirituality in the present life, he begins from there in his next life and that he also gets congenial circumstances for the same. Thus, one stands to lose nothing even if he gives up the yogic path midway.

He assures that through control of his mind and constant practise one can prevent failure and can continue his pursuit. He said that our attachments to the world and emotional bonds create doubts and hold us from progress on the spiritual path. Hence, it is important that one should constantly strive to get over these.

When one understands and accepts that the supreme delight lies in our resting with the Cosmic Spirit and that our *atman* was an integral part of the same, he is tempted to know and cultivate it (the *atman*). Through practise of yoga and meditation one learns to accept that only self and Cosmic Self were real and everything else in the world and the *prakriti* were unreal, temporary and perishable. Hence, in dissociating ourselves from our attachments we actually make little sacrifice for a much bigger gain. With this realisation and constant practise of yoga and meditation one achieves the power to gradually wean himself away from worldly attachments and open a channel of communication with our spirit. We start taking guidance from our spirit and are no more led by our ego driven desires and mind. We learn to control these.

While explaining the foregoing Krishna cautioned Arjuna that the process of seeking God (through our spirit) was a slow one and may take a long time. It is difficult and tests our resolve, patience and will. The gains in terms of tranquillity trickle down with steady fixation of our mind on the spirit. A strong belief that nothing better can ever be gained by us and that the Spirit had the power to grant us bliss is born.

When one is harmonized with the spirit he sees everything as one and the same God in everyone; he starts accepting that nothing better was there to be gained. Krishna offers candid assurance that one who constantly persists in yoga, meditation and focuses his mind on him was very dear to him and that

he is always with him; and he protects him. Over several lives his sins are washed and he takes them in his fold.

Chapter 7: The Yoga of Knowledge & Discriminative Wisdom

Chapter 7th to 12th predominantly deal with Bhakti-yoga. In the 7th chapter Krishna talks about the nature, qualities and power of God. He once again assures that one who practises yoga and seeks discriminating wisdom from his soul (which is the higher nature of God) and takes refuge in him is released from bondage and all sins; and he eventually gains union with God.

This chapter is truly an extension of the last one. He explains subjects like *Gyaan* (knowledge about the spirit), *Vigyaan* (physical science), human nature and its propensities, elements of human body, *Maya*, power of desires and mind; and how to subdue the same. There are 30 verses in this chapter all spoken by Krishna.

Krishna sensed Arjuna's inquisitiveness to seek total clarity about his discourse. He therefore, recapitulates the same and tries to further elaborate on such items that he thinks might be difficult to understand. The starting point in his scheme is full faith in God. Addressing Arjuna, he says that if he practised yoga with his mind focused on him (God) and takes refuge in him (surrenders himself totally to him) then he would for sure know him. Here he is explicit that most yogi fail to understand the God, grope in the dark, go off the track and finally get frustrated. It is therefore, important that he focuses on him with full faith all the time so as to know him properly.

He had earlier talked about *Gyaan* (knowledge of the self) now he elaborates on the same. He explains the difference between physical science (*bhautik shashtra*) that is rational, empirical knowledge that can be seen, measured, defined and proved that we study in our schools, colleges, from books and teachers and wisdom from spiritual knowledge (*adhyaatmic gyaan*) that one gets from his *atman* (spirit). One has to open a channel to commune with his self; it responds in the form of intuition. Truly the *atman* gives us the life energy which it derives from the Cosmic Spirit. He called the first one (empirical knowledge) as '*Vigyaan*' and the latter (intuitive wisdom or spiritual knowledge) as '*Gyaan*'.

He proceeds with elaboration on the following:

- His (the God's) attributes and infinite nature;
- Nature (*prakriti*) and *Maya*;

- The nature of Mankind.

Let us first understand *Gyaan* and *Vigyaan* before we proceed further.

Krishna calls himself God the creator and frequently uses 'Me' and 'I' for him. He unequivocally emphasizes that one who practises yoga with complete faith in him and unconditionally surrenders to him can learn from him all that is there to know about the world (both *jiva* and the *prakriti*). The subtle point to note is that the total knowledge is much bigger than physical science that we see or learn or feel through our bodily sense organs. After all each sense has a limited function e.g. with eyes we can see; with ears we can hear and no more. The knowledge we gain is the sum total of all information collected by our senses; and with our intellect (*buddhi*) we make a model to perceive the same. But this model lacks the spiritual element (voice of our *atman*) which is the most significant part as it was the very basis of our being. Hence, science or physical knowledge is not the total knowledge. Just to give an example if one keeps his eyes tightly closed he would be correct in sensing that he was in a dark place which in reality will not be correct. This anomaly is due to the limitation of one's eyes (in Sanskrit it is called *maryada*). Through wisdom one can go beyond and gain total knowledge.

Wisdom gives us the spiritual eyes that enable us to see what our physical eyes cannot see. In Sanskrit the element of wisdom is called *adhyaatma* (spirituality). It begins where rational knowledge and logic end. Unfortunately, scientific fraternity, do not accept any knowledge that does not fit into their verifiable matrix as a part of science. Hence, they are denied the benefit of spiritual science (wisdom) that is based on experience (*anubhava*).

In the last 50 years scientists are somehow becoming alive to the role of spiritual sciences for gaining insight into the complex unanswered problems particularly in respect of creation of the universe, the human beings and so on. May be, to begin with, they will take it (spiritual sciences) as axioms and would later try to fit the same in their matrix and definition of science.

It is little wonder that in 2004, European Centre for Research in Particle Physics in Geneva-CERN chose to unveil a two-meter tall statue of Nataraja (Hindu God Lord Shiva depicted in the dancing pose). Many scientists have been impressed by Hindu thought in respect of subtle energy linkages that control the delicate balance between the mind-body-soul complex and the various elements in the creation (*prakriti*) including the cosmos. Gradually they are beginning to unravel parallel between Hindu thought in Vedas and scriptures and modern physics especially at the sub-atomic level. Prof. Fritjof

Capra[64] American physicist at BerkleyCalifornia has done significant work on linking Indian Philosophy and thought with modern science in the realm of particle physics and creation of the universe.

Like Prof. Capra, Prof. AR Sheldrake[65] Cell Biologist at Cambridge University was greatly interested in Hindu philosophy and did considerable work on correlating modern science with the same.

Fritjof Capra holds the view that "Science does not need mysticism and mysticism does not need science, but man needs both". Science (*Vigyaan*[66]) deals with the manifested material world (*prakriti*), the body, form and attributes of things and matter. Spirituality (*adhyaatma*) deals with the soul (spirit) through the faculty of *Gyaan*. Hence the two parts of knowledge: the science (*Vigyaan*) and spirituality (*gyaan*) compliment each other to make total knowledge. Scientists reject this idea; they do not recognize spirituality that in realty gives us the knowledge about the complete and Eternal Truth.

Krishna cautions Arjuna that out of several hundred thousands of people who try to achieve perfection only few are successful; and from amongst those scarcely one understands the whole truth about God. After all, Self-realisation or perfection are abstract goals and need continued effort with total undivided focus that is difficult in the first place and more so to sustain. Like a teacher, who gives a difficult task to his students, drops a couple of hints to them on how to tackle the same, Krishna proceeds to tell Arjuna about God (himself). In the present case the task was to achieve perfection which is the same as becoming one with God for only he is perfect. He proceeds to provide the basic features - qualities of God which get reflected in his creation.

He says that his (God's) nature has two parts which are represented in the manifested world through his *Maya*. The first part that he called the body as his 'lower nature' (*apara*) is made up of eight main elements earth, water, fire, air and ether or *akaash* (called the five great elements - *panch mahabhuta*); and mind, intellect (*buddhi*) and self-sense (ego or *ahankaar*). In Chapter 13.5 he expands these eight to 24 elements which constitute the body of a man. He called the body as the field (*kshetra*[67]). He called the other part as the 'higher nature' (*para*). It makes the soul or consciousness. He called the same as the *ksetrajna* (the owner of the *ksetra* or body).

He then proceeds to declare: that he was unborn, eternal, the very origin and the cause of birth and also the destruction of everything in the creation (*prakriti*). None was bigger or more powerful than him and everything in

creation remains attached to him like rows of gems are strung in a string. God employs his *Maya*[68] to manage his creation and *maya* has *gunas* as its tools.

In order to remove all doubts from Arjun's mind Krishna listed the core attributes of various elements in the creation and asserted that the same were due to him. He clarifies his statement with examples (verses 6 to 12) and reiterates that everything in creation was a manifestation of his energy. He said that he was the taste of water, the light of moon and sun, the holy word *Aum*[69] mentioned in the Vedas, manhood in men, the sound in space (ether), the pure fragrance of earth, life in all living beings, brightness of fire, the discipline and renunciation of an ascetic, eternal seed of all in existence (cause of creation), intelligence of the intelligent and splendour of the splendid, strength of the strong but he (God) was not a part of one's desires and passion (ego). In one sentence Krishna said that he was the essential part in everything and was eternal - the soul or *atman*. He added that he represented the correct kind of desire[70] (selfless desire without any ego). The gist of the foregoing is that everything in the creation owes its existence to him.

In Chapter 3 he had talked about the role of *gunas* and how these determine the state of our being (what we become). Now he reiterates that in every situation he (the Divine) controls everyone in *prakriti*, the *gunas* being a part of him and his overall scheme but the creation in no way determines or controls the state of his being (Divine's state). He highlights the unidirectional nature of the relationship. Here Krishna's assertion differs from the Sankhya Doctrine. In fact, he rejects the independent nature of *prakriti* as propounded by Kapil Muni. This assertion is implied in his statement in verse 12 where he says: 'whereas everything was in him but he was not in them'. The *gunas* were very powerful and only one who surrenders himself to Divine can transcend these. It is because of the *gunas* that the man gets deluded and fails to understand the true nature of God and he remains unmindful of the fact that *gunas* were created by his *Maya* and were always under his (God's) control. Unfortunately, the deluded beings lacking wisdom indulge in evil acts and they do not try to seek refuge in him.

Who Prays to God (Krishna)

As per Krishna there were four kinds of people who worship God. These are:

- Those who were in distress and need help;
- Those who were inquisitive and in search of knowledge;
- Those who seek wealth;

- Those who are men of wisdom

Krishna states that all the four types of men were dear to him; but the last one (man of wisdom) who was devoted to him and seeks union with him (God) was dearest to him. Here, when he calls the wise one, he implies that person who had gained peace and complete harmony with the world; he sees the same God in all; he transcends duality; his sole aim is union with God. He is unequivocal in his statement that all were dear to him yet, the wise was the dearest.

A little explanation about the four categories of devotees may be in order. The first one defines a normal worldly person. When one gets stuck and finds no way to gain what is dear to him he prays to God and appeals to him for he knows that he is the one who could help him. Mythology is full of stories about how a person in need prayed and how he was helped by the Deity. This is a universal truth. All religious teachers have preached that we should pray to God in good times to avoid bad times. In Hindi there is the famous couplet by Kabirdas "*Dukh mein sumiran sub karen, sukh mein karey na koi*; *jo sukh mein sumiran kaey*, *dukh kahey ko hoi*; (all pray when in bad times but none prays in good times; if one prays in good times he will not encounter bad times). There is another story from Mahabharata. Kunti (Arjuna's mother) tells Krishna that 'she always remembered God when she had a problem and prayed that she be bestowed with problems all the time so that she remembers him all the time'. This is a broad category of people who believe God had the power to grant one's wishes and they try to enjoy his generosity.

The second category of people the inquisitive ones, believe that God had an answer to every query, including the mysteries. It is not that they pray and seek answers on spiritual matters only but on any issue that they do not understand and need a teacher to enlighten them. They may not be spiritually inclined and the need may be the most mundane one, yet, God appreciates the effort to seek his guidance as the same brings them on the spiritual path; and closer to him.

The third category is the most common one where one prays for wealth; he sees that wealth was the most powerful means, the currency one could use for exchange with other facilities, positions, conveniences and status etc all worldly parameters for perceived success and happiness in life. It has nothing to do with spirituality or truth and the real aim of our life. Yet, Krishna said that even such people were dear to him.

This appears to be a contradiction? It is not really so; he believes that through prayers to God or any of his manifestations (incarnation) at a temple or to him

(God) even at home itself one may come to realise that if he had to beg why not ask for something bigger, more real say peace of mind or eventually love for God that may provide more lasting gain rather than temporary material or bodily pleasures. Krishna had earlier assured that even the worst sinners could change for better with the dawn of wisdom. He reiterates his assurance that anyone including an ordinary devotee was dear to him; he trusts them to seek wisdom and take to the right path.

The last one, the man of wisdom, need not be an ascetic or one who renounces the world. Krishna considers in this category those who work selflessly on the righteous path and whose prime aim is to seek union with God and who constantly try for the same with singular focus. They pray not for some worldly gain but for kindling the light within so that they could interact with their inner self and approach the Super Self through the self. For this they first achieve harmony between mind, body and soul through Yoga so that these work in unison towards the ultimate goal without any distraction. All the three follow the path of seeking knowledge (*Gyaan Marg*) and pray God to grant them the inner light and vision, capacity to understand and the ability to patiently peruse knowledge and the path of oneness with God.

The subtle point here is that God loves everyone as they are and he is always willing to help all to advance in their cause and pursuit. He assures all of his help and promises never to disappoint anyone. The men may widely differ in their goals and approaches, yet, they were all not only acceptable but dear to him; and he was willing to hold hands when requested; and encourage them on their respective paths. But he is candid that one who works selflessly in search of knowledge; who tries for union with God was held in highest esteem by him. He indicates that God's compassion knows no limit; like a loving father and a well-wisher he goes to any extent to protect his children, and he cautions them at every step to keep them on the right path.

He advises Arjuna that progress on spiritual path in search of union with God is slow; it takes several lives for a man of wisdom to understand the true nature of God and reach anywhere near him. There were no short-cuts as one was forced to act according to the influence of *gunas* till he transcends these. He also had to cope with his accumulated *karmas*. Besides these one needs tons of personal experience (*atmaanubhav*) to transform from a normal worldly man to a spiritual one. First one has to learn to control his ego and mind; and make it God-centric from the original body-centric demeanour only then one could understand the complexity of life and the world. Gradually one

realises the truth that Vaasudeva[71] was all that was there to know; the one in all, the rest being transient non-entity of insignificant value.

At the dawn wisdom one's devotion becomes stronger and focus singular; he realises that none had a self-dependent existence except for him. It was only God who was there in every being and non-being, and without him the rest would fall apart; minus *atman* a person becomes a body that everyone wants to dispose the same off at the earliest. Spiritual awakening takes several lives, hence, one has to first acquire complete faith, then he starts gaining knowledge and through it he seeks and gets experience; and experience then reconfirms his faith and the truth of his knowledge.

The teacher having talked about the man of wisdom now talks about the worldly man who works and prays for gain; and desire fulfilment. One, who aspires for wealth, position, status and other worldly possessions, prays to different gods and demi- gods as per Vedic injunctions. Krishna says that whatever form and whichever god one prays and performs the prescribed rites, he (the God) firms his faith in him and through him (gods and demi-gods) he acts and grants fulfilment of his desire.

The Supreme God (aka God) is the enjoyer of the fruits of all actions and giver of the same. He clarifies that fruits of one's actions or desire fulfilment give temporary and unreal happiness and he remains perennially un-satiated. He adds that those who pray to different gods[72], on their demise they go to the kingdom of such gods. Those who pray to God Supreme through selfless action gain wisdom through yoga; and with the same they obtain Self-realisation and they go to him, become one with him.

Those who are ignorant do not understand the true nature of God. They forget that he is unborn and un-manifest; they are unaware of his higher nature which is the Spirit that is ever present and unchanging while they look for his manifestation. He asserts that God is veiled by his creative power called *Maya* and is not revealed to all. It creates the *gunas*[73] that bewilder us about God's true, nature that he is unborn, unchanging and eternal. He further adds that once the realisation dawns that Supreme God was the only one who governs the material, astral and the divine worlds and he was the real owner of everything they know the truth. Such a person with his mind in harmony with God gains the real knowledge and is conscious of the same even at the time of his departure.

God does not criticise such individuals who hanker after small material gains; he knows that they were deluded and were ignorant of the truth that the

Supreme God remains un-manifested while they look for his manifestations. All prayers, sacrifices made to any god or demi-god go to him through them and it is he who grants their desires though he always remains in the background. He takes the responsibility for their actions as well; he accepts that the people do not act on their own but because of his *Maya* that creates the *gunas*.

Krishna declares that he being the God was aware of the past, present and future in respect of all beings. Except him, no one knows the same. He clarifies his statement that everyone in the creation suffers from dualities like love - hate and remains busy in settling scores all the time due to the effect of *gunas*. Those who selflessly work for gaining wisdom get over duality. They are able to subdue and eventually overcome the sins that are created in the process of desire fulfilment. They are not bewildered as they gain awareness that none had an independent existence. God governs the entire creation at all times and he was in all of us and only he had independent existence. This awakening creates an urge to get over the suffering caused by dualities (success and failure), old age and death etc. They desire for deliverance from the same and seek Self-realisation. They seek refuge at the feet of God the Absolute. Only through yoga they can achieve harmony between mind, body and soul which is necessary for progress on the spiritual path that could take them to their goal of becoming one with him.

Gist of Chapter 7

The crux of Chapter 7 in one sentence: 'We must acquire knowledge and the learning must guide us on the right path in our life.'

Krishna's aim was to drive out Arjuna's delusion caused by emotional attachment. He had to restore him to his normal self and then raise him to a higher level of evolution. Therefore, he talked about *Gyaan*-yoga, *Karma*-yoga and *Dhyaan*-yoga and now he is taking him to *Bhakti*-yoga. And what could be better than the possibility of union with God.

In the last verse of chapter 4 Krishna told Arjuna: the yogi who with full faith and with his inner self abiding in him (God) worships him, he accepts him to be in yoga. He is in perfect equilibrium with him and becomes fit to merge with him. In chapter 7 he reinforces this statement. He tells him that in case while practising yoga he surrenders himself to him (God) and seeks refuge in him then he will gain wisdom. He would gain the ultimate knowledge and there would be nothing left for him to know. After knowing God what else

remains to know? But he adds a caution that it was very difficult and slow process and only few reach that stage.

He talks about the constituents of God's lower and higher nature and some of his qualities. He says that his higher nature makes our soul and that is the common link amongst all in the creation; and between the creation and the God. He keeps the entire creation in equilibrium through the soul. His lower nature makes the Nature (*prakriti*) including the body of living beings. He was the most powerful and the wealthiest as everything belonged to him. He indeed was the essence of what there is in the creation e.g. taste in water, light of the moon and sun; manhood of man; strength of the strong, intelligence of the intelligent and so on. He also adds that he knows the past, the present and future of all beings. In one sentence he was the best in the class of everything both living and non-living; and they were all there because of him and were controlled by his *Maya* and the modes of nature. But he was not in the negative elements of all beings like desire, passion, anger and greed. Yet, he was in the positive desire, the desire to seek union with God.

The world remains deluded due to the modes of nature and because of this delusion some commit evil acts like a demon. But he is generous and when even such beings approach him in right earnest he forgives them and accepts them in his fold. There is a subtle hint here that none is permanently good and likewise none is permanently bad and that human beings have immense potential to change.

He describes the four kinds of people who worship him and their reasons for the same. He candidly accepts that he loves all the four types but he loves the man of wisdom the most as by constant practise and with unwavering faith he stands the best chance of obtaining union with him. He also tells how men of understanding and those who are deluded view him.

He accepts that it is entirely the influence of *gunas* that makes people act in a certain way and individuals were not to be blamed for their action. It is all the work of veil created by his *Maya*. All are a part of him but due to delusion and dualities they behave differently. Those who take to yoga and make a sincere effort to know the truth about him, they discover that he was the one who governs the entire creation, the various worlds, the astral regions and the divine world. Through harmony of body, mind and soul and perseverance in their efforts they realise deliverance from birth, old age, misery and death.

Chapter 8: The Yoga of the Absolute & the Cosmic Cycle

In Chapter 7 Krishna talked about some of the attributes of God. In the last two verses he said that one who with his body, mind and soul harmonized through yoga, recognizes him as the Absolute, the Eternal Truth, the Brahman (who governs the entire creation) and surrenders at his feet to seek deliverance, knows about the action to be performed by him on the spiritual path. He added that such a person remembers him at the time of his death.

In simple words one who is devoted to God and seeks refuge in him with the sole aim of achieving Self-realisation, never forgets him as he experiences his presence all the time and at the time of his death he looks up to him. Krishna claimed that he as God knew everything (past, present and future) about everyone. Arjuna as a close friend and a disciple accepted every word that Krishna said but he was not clear about many terms and details given by him. Hence, he asked seven simple questions about Brahman, action, domain of gods, domain of his creation (*prakriti*) including the Man, domain of sacrifice and how was he known by the person who achieves control over himself; over his body and senses?

The issues raised by Krishna earlier were subtle and were not easy to grasp hence, he accepted that Arjuna's queries were pertinent. He broadly answers his queries in three verses. Then he talks about other important allied matters so that he could understand the relationship between Brahman, jiva and *prakriti* clearly; and how one could attain union with the Brahman.

There are 28 verses in this chapter; the first two verses belong to Arjuna and the remaining 26 to Krishna. He takes a holistic view and covers both the un-manifested Brahman and the manifested world and how one's state of mind at the time of his demise affects his future life. He dwells on the importance of remembering God or the syllable *Aum* at the time of one's death. He talks about those who are born and have a life; he includes Bramha[74] in his list for he too has a life. He then talks about length of a day and a night in Bramha's life and its association with existence and dissolution of manifested creation. He clarified the meaning of various terms and domains raised by Arjuna:

Brahman

Brahman is a generic term; it connotes all living entities and the prakriti as well. He is the master of everything both living and non-living in the manifested creation. In mankind his marginal energy called the *atma*, or

atman provides the life force. His material energy identifies itself with the inanimate matter while his spiritual energy provides the life force to the living beings. Both *jivatma* and prakriti are referred as Brahman but never as *Parabrahman* or the Absolute for these are reserved for the primeval creator. Shankaracharya explains this by saying "*Brahman satya jagat mithya*" meaning that only the Brahman was real the rest was illusion, unreal and transient. Brahman has been used for God, mankind and *prakriti* in the creation; it includes everything from subtle to gross, from zero (*shunya*) to infinite. The word Brahma implies big in size (from root origin *brahat*); everything is integral to it. Parabrahman is absolute, indestructible and the Supreme; its essential nature is called 'Self'.

Atman

The element of Brahman present in a living being is called *atman* or *atma*. It is immutable like Brahman and is imperishable. It is independent of the body; and is in fact its master and its 24 elements. However, at times it gets conditioned by the mind-ego combine. Perhaps for this reason Vedic dictionary includes body, mind, senses and soul as the constituents of *atma*. In common parlance soul, *atma* and spirit are one and the same; it is also referred as 'self'. It being a part of Brahman derives its energy from Cosmic Energy of Brahman that is also referred as Cosmic Spirit or Super Self. Living entities are called *jivatma*. The nature (*svabhav*) of Brahman is called 'Self'.

Karma

It is the creative urge, the impulse that triggers one to act. It is the cause of our own evolution and that of the *prakriti*. Our actions are for achieving something material or spiritual. As per Vedic philosophy our *karma*, the record of our deeds (good and bad ones), get accumulated and determine our future *karma* and our lives. Hence, *karma* can be called the cause of all creations and evolution. It is believed that unlike humans, animals are not subject to individual *karma*; they are subject to group or mass *karma*. How the scholars arrived at this judgment is not clear to me. Yoganand Paramhans says in his book on Gita (Ch 8 page 716) that "Animal's life is predestined; man's is not." Tiger is ferocious and lamb is meek, their natures and traits are predetermined, they have no choice but to act as per their nature for survival. The man has choices and they have the capacity to think, discriminate and they can choose their actions.

Adhyatma

The word *adhy* means underlying; adhyatma implies underlying soul. It means study or search of soul or spirit.

Adhibhuta

Adhibhuta implies that which is mutable, subject to change; it is never fixed and is perishable. Yoganand Paramhans calls *adhibhuta* as '' that which becomes'. It includes every material thing including the body of a man.

Adhidaiva

Adhidaiva refers to astral angels the shinning bodies of gods including the *atma* the indwelling soul of a man. The word *daiva* implies a shining body, the one that glows.

Adhiyajna

One who performs *yajna* (holy rites or sacrifice). God performs *yagna* needed for creation of universes. He is thus called *Adhiyagna*. As far as mankind is concerned the beneficiary of all *yagna* is Lord Vishnu for he is the God who nurtures and protects. In fact, the term *yagna* connotes Vishnu.

Arjuna had asked about the different domains. Krishna says that the primeval God, *Parabrahman* or *Parmatma* the original creator is at the top. When one goes to him he doesn't come back as he merges with him. He has his team of gods and demi-gods who are the astral beings with their own domains (*lokas*); they remain unmanifested like Brahman and are located below his level. The unredeemed *jiva* go to this level in the interim before returning back to earth. Beneath the astral region we have the manifested creation; the man (*jiva*) and the prakriti are parts of the creation. Except for the Supreme God (*Parabrahman*) all others have a life and are perishable and mutable. God is Eternal, Immutable and Imperishable that is why he is called the Eternal Truth. He is the cause and the enjoyer of all Vedic *yagna* or sacrifices performed for propitiating astral gods.

Remembering God at the time of death - Way to Self- realisation

Krishna categorically states that one who remembers God with devotion at the time of his death goes to his domain and becomes one with him. This has been highlighted in various Upanishads and other scriptures as well. It is also said that at the time of death usually one has little control over his senses or is rarely in a state to remember the God. The only way one can achieve this is to surrender himself to him much earlier in his life and remember him all the

time. This implies that one must try and make God an integral part of his psyche to experience his presence all the time.

He explained that whatever one thinks at the time of his death he attains the same on his demise. He further simplified that whatever one may do he should always think of God and dedicate everything to him. In verse 7 Krishna uses the word '*yudha*' it translates to mean 'battle'. But it has nothing to do with the Mahabharata war; truly it refers to fighting the hurdles, illusions, the darkness one encounters in life.

Having explained what one could achieve by remembering God at the time of his death he tells how one could do the same. He says: one has to gain full control over his mind and senses and focus on God and meditate on him. He admits that God was too subtle and without any form, yet by constant practise of yoga one could develop complete faith in his being as the sole protector; one who could provide deliverance.

To achieve this faith, one has to exercise control over his senses (called the gates of the body) that are the entry points of worldly ideas and desires (*vasana*) to his mind that bind him to material gains. Next, he has to focus on the God with full life force concentrated at the midpoint between the eye brows (*kuthashta kendra*) and recite the word *Aum* or *Om*. Over a period of time with practise God becomes integral to his body and mind; he starts experiencing his presence and in time with with practise one acquires oneness with him. When such a one departs, his soul travels from his heart to and exits from a point above his brain that is the spiritual centre of his Cosmic Consciousness. He goes to the abode of God and merges with him. Since God neither takes birth nor dies hence, the person is freed from the cycle of birth and death. Bramha, gods and demi-gods, all living beings and *prakriti* in the creation have a life. They all die and after a lapse of time they are released by the Supreme God to reborn and continue the cycle as per their *Karma*.

A day in the life of Bramha

The gods and demi-gods have a different scale for measuring the divine age. One divine year is equal to 360 earth years. 12hours day time in Bramha's life is equal to 4.32 billion earth years; similarly, 12 hours night time is of equal duration. Thus, one day of 24 hours in his life is of 8.64 billion years[75]. One cycle of four yugas viz. Satyuga, Tretayuga, Dwaparyuga and Kalyuga is of 4.32 million earth years. The same (4.32 million earth years) multiplied by 2000 or 8.64 billion earth years is called a *Kalpa* in the life of Bramha. Krishna says that the manifested creation exists during the day time (4.32 billion earth

years) of Bramha's life. It gets dissolved and merges with God during the night time. The cycle of manifestation, dissolution and merger with God goes on unhindered; God remains un-manifested all the while.

Bramha has a life of 100 years* (Bramha years). After Bramha's death all the manifested creation ceases to exist, however, only the un-manifested Supreme God (*Parabrahman*) remains for he is unchanging, imperishable and that is why he is called the Eternal Truth. Krishna here talks of Supreme God (*Parabrahman*) as distinct from Brahman. Scholars interpret it to mean that the latter is the one who is involved in running the creation and the former stays put as a pure witness.

It must be clarified that Bramha is not to be confused with Brahman. Bramha is one of the trinity of three Gods (Bramha, Vishnu and Mahesh) created by the Supreme God. Bramha is in charge of creation which he does under the guidance of Brahman. Vishnu and Mahesh (Shiva) are the forms (expansions) of Brahman and are therefore eternal. Vishnu is in charge of nurturing and protection of the creation and Shiva does the annihilation. Besides the trinity there are several other gods and demi-gods who administer different portfolios like health, education, wealth, success, progeny and fame etc in respect of the creation. All the gods and demi-gods are autonomous and have their domains (*lokas*) but they derive their authority from the Supreme God. God's administration is like a government where we have one King with several ministers to help him to administer.

Krishna proceeds to talk about the nature of men. He says that there are bound to be all kinds of people in the world. Some would be average people who would lead a normal worldly life; there would be others who would be very desirous of material gains and would practise penance, fasting, prayers etc. to propitiate one particular god or the other for wish fulfilment. A small lot would go beyond material gains and would seek advancement on spiritual path. A still smaller lot would try to transcend worldly life and practise yoga and meditation etc. and persevere on the spiritual path to seek Self-realisation. Yet another lot of people would be evil people who would engage in all kinds of undesirable deeds and would try to cause problem for others. As per divine scheme everyone gets rewarded or punished according to their deeds.

The delicate balance, in the midst of seeming chaos that sustains all in the creation appears bizarre, we fail to comprehend it; and we loosely call it the destiny or the will of God. However, as per Krishna, God does not interfere in any one's life or actions; and the system of *karmic* credits and debits devised

by him works on its own. Our actions determine our destiny; and the continuity of life goes on auto pilot or through a pre-programmed computer from one life to another, on and on.

Hindu ethos right from ancient times recognises rebirth; carry forward of *karma*, (net of credits and debits) from one life to the next and this cycle goes on until one gains redemption through Self-realisation. Krishna on several occasions talked about continuity of life and rebirth. With this background he talks about the fate of jiva on demise of the body, where the same goes? He elaborates on the auspicious times and the appropriate way of reaching the ultimate goal of Self-realisation.

According to our scriptures there are 84 lakhs species or life forms (including animals) in which one could be born.

The lowest category of people, the devilish lot who are immersed in *tamasguna*, on their demise goes to a lower level of life form on the earth itself. The next ategory of people (materialistic type), take birth in lower or higher categories based on their *karma*, amongst our species on the earth. A slightly higher category that values the spiritual path but are enamoured of worldly position, wealth, and power etc, they work for and pray to propitiate gods for obtaining worldly gains and pleasures, on their death; they go to their chosen god's astral domain (*loka*) for an interim period. On the expiry of their credits they return to earth and take birth in a family as per the credits accrued to them and inclination developed by them in their previous life.

The last and the highest category: the yogis who having surrendered themselves to God concentrate on him through yoga and meditation in order to achieve Self-realisation. It takes unswerving devotion and continued prayers for a long time and perseverance to reach their goal of merger with the Brahman. On achieving the same they stay in his abode (*Brahmalok*) and are saved from birth, misery, disease, old age and death. The above details answer the seventh question of Arjuna.

Verses 23 to 26 use a great deal of symbols and metaphors. These verses are mostly misunderstood, the literal meaning is highly confusing and far from what it intends to convey.

To make matters simple let us first understand the basics. Sun represents the source of light and life energy. It is the channel for linkage with Cosmic Energy which is the prime source of life energy. The fire within the sun gives both heat and the light. Light connotes life and darkness or smoke represents

delusion or death. Light creates in us positive thoughts, optimism, love and transparency that enhance our energy levels. Darkness causes fear that creates negative feelings, it saps our energy levels; we become pessimistic, our creativity is consigned to dumps. Both are contagious.

A referral to our past will reveal how many of our fears or intensity of the same ever came out to be true, very few, yet we lost precious time and our creativity. The fear element holds us back from even trying and we start procrastinating? The crux of the matter is that light awakes us and guides us on the right path and darkness, on the other hand, puts us to sleep (not only physically but mentally) and drives us down the material lane and we start craving even for insignificant worldly gains.

Krishna talks of two paths that one could take at the time of his death, one by which he achieves the ultimate goal of unity with Brahman; and the other by which one could gain some reprieve in the interim in the astral world but he has to finally come back to earth and go through the cycle of birth and death. Here he talks of fire, light, sun, day time, bright half of moon cycle (*shukla pakchha*), night, darkness, smoke and dark half of moon cycle (*krishna pakchha*). He also talks of sun transiting north (*uttarayan*) from 14th Jan (*Makarshankranti* day) for six months; and after that sun travels south for the next six months (*dakshinayan)*. There is symbolism in these statements. The literal meaning of his statements as is mostly understood is that if a yogi dies when sun is transiting north in the day time during bright half of moon cycle he goes to God's abode; and when he dies in the night time in the dark half of moon cycle with the sun in southern sojourn he goes to astral region to the domain of his chosen deity. Smoke or cloud cover in the environment was included in darkness.

In case a yogi dies in night or in the dark half of moon cycle when sun is transiting north he has to wait for some time in the astral region till the day arrives when he is transferred to the correct path when he tries to reach God's abode. This interim period is spent by him under moon light which is cool and he is made comfortable.

Likewise, if the yogi dies in the day time in the bright half of moon cycle when the sun is transiting south there is a waiting period before one is transferred to the correct path to reach God's abode.

Another important point to note here is that in the astral region the day is of six earth months and similarly the night is also of six earth months[76]. However,

a yogi who works for unity with God through yoga, meditation, self-less service and righteous conduct goes to his abode under all circumstances.

One who works for worldly gains and prays to gods or demi gods enjoys stay in their abodes for a period depending upon his *karmic* credit and thereafter on its expiry he returns to earth. This aspect has been dealt in detail in Srimad Bhagavad Gita by Jaydayal Goyandka published by Gita Press Gorakhpur pages 350- 354.

Krishna surely did not link one's life after death with time or day or the month of year at the time of his exit. When he talked of day time or bright half of moon cycle he was referring to enlightenment, clearing one of worldly bondage due to emotions, personal attributes and worldly linkages. Darkness is synonymous with delusion, ignorance and sleep. During sun's northern sojourn the sky is clear of clouds, smog, and dust particles due to preceding rainy season and the sun is bright. What he meant was that the light within should be bright as the one obtaining outside during this period. On the other hand, when the sun transits south, the sky is full of dirt, clouds, rain and there is slush etc. on ground. This has a restraining influence and makes one dull and lazy. It promotes lust and sensual desires and one finds it difficult to dissociate himself from emotional bonds.

Swami Yoganand Paramhans talked of raising one's enlightenment level through nodal centres (*kundalini chakra*)[77]. One has to raise his spirituality by raising energy from lower to higher nodal centres through yoga, meditation, pranayaam and by concentrating on God. It is called *Kundalini*-yoga; it needs considerable practise.

A yogi, who is seeking release from the cycle of birth and death, has to take control of his life force or *praan shakti*. Ordinarily it moves top-down (from crown where *Sahasrura Chakra* the source of energy is located) towards *Muladhar Chakra* at the bottom near navel. In scientific language energy flows from brain to our sensory nerves and on to millions of cells that make us living. The yogi (*sadhak*) has to reverse this natural process through spiritual practices. He has to move life force upwards from area of darkness to light. The ultimate goal is to reach the crown where *Sahasrura Chakra* is located. For this he needs to practise *kundalini-yoga*.

The process of creating the upward flow of life energy is called arousing or awakening the *Kundalini* the bank of energy that otherwise remains dormant. It is a slow and skilled process and needs guidance and training. One feels manifestation of greater energy as he reaches higher chakras; he also

experiences the attributes of the chakra e.g. at the Anahat Chakra the person becomes fearless, compassionate, loving, sincere with greater sense of duty and commitment; he gains soul consciousness. The sixth spiritual centre (Agnya Chakra) at the midpoint between the two eye brows called the *kuthastha kendra* is the seat of our spiritual eye[78]. The spiritual eye gets reflected sun light from the Sahasrura Chakra seated at the top. It can not only see but can see through and within. The physical eyes only see the obvious, the manifested, the spiritual eyes can see beyond, the un-seen as well. It connotes bright day time light and corresponds to *Samadhi* state during meditation. In fact, daytime is the creation of spiritual eye. Krishna called the daytime that when the yogi is awake while the rest are asleep with delusion. The bright half of lunar cycle (*shukla pakchha*) signifies the awakening of yogi's consciousness and its alignment with Divine Consciousness. At another place in chapter 11.69 Krishna says that "what is night to all creatures is wakefulness to the man of wisdom".

Only when the kundalini is well established in Agnya Chakra the yogi learns to enjoy the power of spiritual eye; he can proceed further north and try to reach the Sahasrura Chakra at the top. This is the place where he begins to enjoy bliss for he gets in touch with the Supreme Consciousness. One who exits the world with his life force at the Sahasrura Chakra goes to God's abode and achieves oneness with him. The entire process, of achieving northward movement of life force (*praan shakti*) from the Muladhar Chakra, is a slow one and the progress depends on how fast one can give up all worldly connections that cause attachment and delusion.

To sum up, those whose inner light is bright like the brightest daylight, on their death, their soul goes to God's abode[79]. Those, whose inner light is dark or is full of smoke due to their delusion, their soul goes to astral world and enjoys the karmic credit accrued to them and then returns to earth for the next life.

Krishna says that understanding the above two paths is very important. One, who clearly understands the above two paths for passage of soul after death, and ensures that he does not fall in the path of smoke and darkness by getting rid of delusions is sure to go to Brahmalok. Such a person earns credits more than one would earn through study of Vedas, austerities, sacrifices and charities etc. He advises Arjuna to practise yoga all the time.

Gist of Chapter 8

The crux of Chapter 8 in one sentence: 'One should untiringly work on the right path till he achieves his goal.'

Arjuna's queries were about commonly used basic terms that were equally commonly not clearly understood. He wanted a clear understanding to be able to appreciate the relationships better. Krishna took only three verses to reply to him and then proceeded to explain the background; the role of individuals, objective of mankind and how to achieve the same. It is a natural human desire to progress in life hence, it becomes the objective of all humans.

Krishna reiterates that the sole objective of a man should be to seek union with Brahman. To make the perspective clear he talked about God's qualities and the importance of seeking union with him (achieve freedom from birth, disease, misery and death). He said that the method of doing it involves learning to control one's mind and ego, constant practise of yoga to gain a strong body and unswerving focus of his thoughts on Brahman, meditate on him and surrender himself to him with full faith. He also highlights the possible pitfalls one could encounter en-route his search for unity with Brahman e.g. the lure of material gains, short cuts suggested in the Vedic method of offering sacrifices to gods and demi gods, attachment to family and worldly position, power and wealth etc. and how these block and overpower a person's mind and prevent him from pursuing the right path.

He tells Arjuna about the imperishable, immutable, omniscient, eternal and immanent yet un-manifested nature of Brahman (God) against perishable nature of the rest of deities starting with Bramha including the *prakriti*. He highlighted that Bramha of the revered trinity of Bramha was perishable and had a life. He went to the extent of describing the length of a day in his life. While he did not advise one to not follow the Vedic route of offering sacrifice to gods and demi gods, he made it clear that he was the one who actually grants one's desires though these appear to have been granted to him by his chosen deity. He also said that they (gods and demi gods) can offer only partial and temporary relief as on expiry of his *karmic* credits one has to serve time on earth again. On the other hand, when a person comes to Brahman it is a permanent arrangement, he stays with him and he does not have to return to earth for he becomes a part of the un-manifested Supreme Energy.

Krishna greatly values what a person thinks at the time of departure from earth. He clearly states that in his next life one gains to the state he earnestly longs for at the time of his death. Therefore, if he thinks of God at the time of

his death he attains to him and there is no next life for him for he becomes one with God's Cosmic Energy. He said this can happen only if he prays to him and remembers him at all times in his working life. He clarifies that with practise of yoga one can meditate on God even while doing his work. He only needs a steady mind, unwavering devotion and the strength of yoga with which he can focus his life force on the *kuthastha kendra* where our spiritual eye is situated.

He makes yet another significant point regarding death of a person during day time, in the bright half of moon cycle during the period of sun traversing north from January 14th to July 14th (sun is in *uttarayan*). This is symbolic the same implies gaining clarity of heart and mind akin to the brightest day light, at the time of his death. If one achieves such a state and remembers Supreme God with heart and soul he is sure to be accepted by him. Further he assures that the yogi or the one who understands the truth about God, and knows the path he should adopt to reach him; and tries to reach him with full faith and devotion merits greater reward than what one would merit by study of Vedas, sacrifice, austerities and charities etc. Indirectly he is asserting the superiority of direct approach to God rather than going through the route of gods and demi-gods.

Chapter 9: The Yoga of Sovereign Knowledge & Sovereign Mystery

A good teacher's primary duty is not only to teach but also to ensure that his pupils understand what was being taught. Arjuna was a dear friend and a much-loved pupil to Krishna. He was sincere, intelligent and bold and he respected his commitment. He was fully aware of the level of Arjuna's knowledge and his present needs but as he intended the knowledge of Gita to be disseminated to common folks through him he chose to go into great details. He went into great details to ensure that even people of lesser intelligence and knowledge understood the message. He analysed his own statements repeatedly breaking the issues into its elements. Like a defoted teacher, he anticipated all possible questions that one might raise and answered the same. In this chapter there are 34 verses (*shlokas*), all were spoken by Krishna. The entire message is truly an extension of what he said in chapters 7 and 8.

Gita is all about how to control one's mind and desires; and establish a direct linkage between mind, body and soul and then with the Cosmic Consciousness. Krishna has dissected each element: the mind, body, *atman* and God and his creation (*prakriti*) including the astral world and described each in detail. In the second chapter he talks about the eternal and the transient (soul and body), the continuing cycle of birth and death, the stages of childhood, manhood, old age and death; the process of decay in nature (what is born must die). He highlighted the supremacy of action without desires for fruits of the same; senses and influence of sense objects and attributes of lust, anger and greed. He explained the difference between religion, rituals and spirituality and the need of attaining equipoise for progress on the spiritual path and the ultimate goal of oneness with the Brahman.

In third and fourth chapters Krishna talks about the paths of *Karma*-yoga and *Gyaan*-yoga and how to achieve the ultimate goal of union with Brahman. He explained the difference between *Vigyaan* (physical science) that one gains through empirical knowledge and scientific investigations; and *Gyaan* that one obtains through intuitive wisdom that is gained only through personal experience on the spiritual path. In the fifth chapter he further explains the reasons for his preference for the path of *Karma*. At the same time, he kept talking about God (Brahman), his qualities and his role; and how one could achieve oneness with him. He highlighted the need for equanimity of mind

under all circumstances. He said, one had to give up all attachments to gain the same.

In the sixth chapter he talks about *Dhyaan*-yoga; highlights the importance of meditation; and how to achieve singular focus and unswerving devotion through the same which is a must for reaching our goal. He clarifies that renunciation did not imply giving up worldly actions; it was actually giving up of desires (*iccha tyaag*) in actions. He defined yoga as disciplined action. He explains how one could be his own best friend or his own worst enemy. In the fourth to sixth chapters he touches upon the formless God and his all-pervading presence and detached demeanour.

In the 7th chapter he elaborates further on *Vigyaan* and *Gyaan* and talks about soul,

wisdom, spiritual practices and seeking knowledge about the soul (*adhyaatmik gyaan*). He highlights the infinite nature of God, finite nature of man and everything in *prakriti*; *Maya* and the modes of nature (the three *gunas*). He explains the constituents of God's nature (his higher and lower nature), 24 constituents of body, then proceeds to dwell on the four kinds of people who pray to God and their reasons for the same. All through he keeps on reminding what one must do on the spiritual path to achieve the goal of Self-realisation. He highlights the fact that it takes several lives before one acquires true wisdom and starts understanding that his salvation lay in unity with the Supreme. Krishna cautions us not to lose heart and persevere with seeking our real goal.

Arjuna listened to Krishna intently but he never hesitated to seek clarifications in case of any doubts. The eighth chapter begins with Arjuna asking seven basic questions. Krishna answers six questions quickly in two verses (verses 3 and 4); the rest of the chapter is devoted to explaining the seventh one. He states the conditions (circumstances) needed for *jivatma* (living being also used for soul) to attain unity with the Super Soul. Symbolically he talks about daylight and night time, bright half and dark half of the moon cycles and 6 months of bright light when sun goes north (*uttarayan*) and 6 months of comparative darkness when sun travels southwards (*dakshinayan*). In a subtle way he talks of developing inner light and seeking introduction with 'self' in order to gain oneness with Cosmic Spirit or Brahman. He touches upon arousing the *Kundalini* to raise the level of one's inner enlightenment.

In the 8th chapter he said that one who remembers God at the time of his demise goes to his abode and attains union with him. It looks so simple, but he adds a caveat that only one who remains devoted to him and remembers him through life remains in a state to think of him at the time of death; others are either unconscious or in great pain and discomfort or so weak that they lose their memory; still others are so attached to their senses and sense objects that they die craving for the same.

In the ninth chapter which has been called 'The Yoga of Sovereign Knowledge and Sovereign Mystery' he develops on what he said earlier especially in the seventh and eighth chapters and unveils secret wisdom that is unknown to us or we choose to remain unmindful even when we experience bits of the same. There are 34 verses in this chapter all spoken by Krishna. This indicates that Arjuna was so engrossed in the message that he didn't feel like interrupting him, lest he upsets his train of thought, and in turn flow of the sacred knowledge.

Krishna's biggest asset is his confidence and his clarity; he never dwells in grey areas. He starts by complimenting Arjuna that since he had full faith in him and he never asked frivolous questions for the sake of arguments he was once again unveiling the sublime and secret knowledge of *Vigyaan* along with G*yaan* to him. He assures that if he understands and practises the same, he would be released from the bondage of the world. His emphasis is on the fact that *Vigyaan* (knowledge of science) that one gets from teachers, through books, experiments and investigation etc was only a part of the total knowledge and for knowing the complete truth one needed intuitive wisdom through yoga, meditation and self-search. It is important to know why he calls this knowledge to be sublime and profound and why the same was secret.

The knowledge of physical sciebce is entirely gross knowledge. It can help one materially, but not spiritually as it doesn't deal with subtle (*suukhsama*) issues. For spiritual advancement, one needed the knowledge of the 'self' (*adhyaatmik gyaan*) that is obtained only through introspection, seeking the purpose of one's existence, self-search and such like abstract matters. It is subtle and hard to seek. The search would vary from person to person depending on individual's present state, attributes and level of evolution. It needs absolute faith in and unwavering devotion to God. Anything pertaining to God, his attributes and qualities and matters pertaining to soul are serene, secret and sublime and one has to deal with subtle matters at a higher level that are immanent and transcendental at the same time.

Seeking intuitive wisdom, interaction with the 'self' and Self-realisation have been variously called as sublime knowledge, king of sciences, royal knowledge, royal mystery etc. In other words, it is the ultimate knowledge one can have. Truly knowledge of science lies at the periphery of the sphere of knowledge whereas the intuitive wisdom is at the centre. Krishna categorically affirms that one who gains intuitive wisdom knows the essence of *dharma*[80]. He can get rid of threefold misery of birth, suffering and death (in some texts these are taken as disease, ignorance and unhappiness) permanently; he qualifies for unity with God and can become eternal like him. He candidly states that knowing God and gaining oneness with him will be easy if one acquires the sensitivity and capacity to interpret his own direct experience (*atmaanubhav*).

In Gita, yoga is the tool that can help bridge the gap between man and his maker i.e. from perishable to imperishable and from ephemeral or transient to eternal. Gita differs with western thought that accepts that God cannot be known; Gita accepts that God can be known through direct experience which is possible through the practise of yoga and meditation. The teacher is equally categorical in stating that those who don't understand the path of gaining intuitive wisdom and don't try for the same remain condemned to continued cycle of birth, suffering and death.

Krishna again says that God (he uses 'I' for God) remains un-manifested yet he pervades the entire universe; that everything is not only his creation but a part of him. Yet, nothing in creation can be a replica of him or can truly represent him. In fact, nothing in creation reveals even the essence of him, therefore, can't claim to be within him or a part of him. Interestingly God, the Cosmic Consciousness that is the cause of our creation and the reason of our existence; and that who is omni-present remains untouched by us to the extent that we can't see him within us or in the space. This is the mystery of his power due to his dual nature. His higher nature that constitutes our soul or the *atman* is entirely unconnected with his lower nature that constitutes the *prakriti* that includes our body as well.

He explained this by saying, that we are not in him, nor does he dwell in us (we don't realise his presence); he remains transcendental. He gives an example this further: that the air moves in the entire space but retains its independent nature; and it does not in any way affect the nature of the space (*akaash*). Similarly, our being does not in any way affect the Cosmic Consciousness (God) for unlike the creation, he has independent existence and our relationship with him is unidirectional.

As explained in Ch. 8 when a day's time (12 hours) in Bramha's life i.e. one half of a *kalp* is over, it is time for dissolution of the creation and the same retreats into its creator's womb and nothing exists except the creator, the *Parabrahman* (ref. Page 118). The prakriti goes into his lower nature and the soul into his higher nature. These are held there by him through his *Maya*. After a lapse of similar time of one half *kalp* when day arrives again he sends forth the creation through his *Maya* that restores it again. This cycle goes on and the creation comes and exits as per the laws of the nature. Krishna's statement makes it clear that since we identify ourselves with our body that is a part of *prakriti* we are controlled by it; that in turn is controlled by God through his *Maya*. Hence, we have a dependent existence and we are helpless.

The creation is controlled by God during its existence and after its dissolution. He works unattached, dispassionately aloof, but not indifferent. God does his duty (*dharma*) but he is not involved in it. He is like the captain of an aircraft that is on auto-pilot. He is the true doer but without any ego. Our ego is the outcome of our actions driven karmic cycle, it is worldly and perishable; and God is above it. Ego needs a body for its existence and that is a part of *prakriti*. He is immanent in creation, yet, not attached, he retains his Supra Cosmic Transcendental Existence. He is not a part of cosmic events; he is above the same and hence he is not governed by the laws of nature that govern the creation. This is the sublime knowledge and mystery that is called the king of science.

Three kinds of people and How they approach God

In verses 11 to 15 Krishna talks about three kinds of people. They differ because of differing relative influence of the three principles of nature (*gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) on their psyche. They can be those who practise *Bhakti*-yoga (pray to *sagun* Brahman or Personal God) or those who follow *Gyaan*-yoga and pray to formless God (*nirakaar* or *nirgun* Brahman). He talks how deluded people do not accept him to be the Supreme Lord the original creator of all beings; and Krishna as him. Why? Because, he was born and lived like a common man! Since we suffer delusion we remain bewildered, we just cannot accept that one of our kind could be God; our belief is that God has to be different, yet, we do not know what the actual difference could be. Here, he forcefully reiterates the irony that God resides in our body and we don't realise this simple truth and go to a temple[81] to pray to our chosen deity. Similarly, he resides in all beings (both inanimate and animate), we fail to see this but indulge in all kinds undesirable activities for petty (perceived) gains. This is because we only see the outward body not the God within. We never

fail to make a display of our own temple worship, yet, we are not even considerate towards the fellow devotees in the temple.

Those who have an abundance of *tamas* guna (*tamasic*) are ignorant and fiendish. Little wonder they cavil and fail to accept Krishna as God despite witnessing his super human deeds. They do not accept the existence of God because they do not go beyond the body and are totally unaware of the existence of soul which is the higher nature of God. Their actions, including their worship is superficial. Everything in their life is vain.

Those who have predominance of rajas (*rajasic*) are passionate and have great ambitions, they are blinded by the deceitful nature (*mohini prakriti*); they get attracted to power, position and authority. They nurse misplaced aspirations even when they lack in adequate knowledge; and proper judgment. They fail to spot the real and are dazzled by the transient glamour of material and virtual.

Those whose psyche is dominated by *sattva* (*sattavic*) know the imperishable nature of God. They are guided by his divine nature (*daivi prakriti*) and devote themselves to his worship and strive to gain self-awareness. Becoming aware of the unreal and transient nature of material world they seek singular focus on Divine through a disciplined life. They rise above delusionary rajas and tamas traits. Their goal is to seek God within and without; and they are devoted and constantly worship him with in a disciplined manner. They offer sacrifice of knowledge and see him everywhere as if he was the one with multiple faces with eyes in all directions.

There are others who pray to God through sacrifices or *yagna*. In this, one sits before a central fire (*Agni*) in which he pours ghee (clarified butter) and herbs while chanting Vedic mantras in praise of God to seek his protection and thank him for his kindness. Fire (*Agni*) gives energy and spreads light; it is considered auspicious and life giving, hence, a symbol of prosperity. Offering ghee, herbs, cereals, and food items to fire signifies sharing with others as fire gives energy and light to everyone without discrimination and free of charge(for this reason sun is worshipped as a god). In performing *yagna* one offers everything belonging to him including his 'self' to God. Offering our knowledge in the fire of wisdom implies accepting one's own knowledge to be insignificant and polishing the same to gain subtle *gyaan* (like gold gains its shine through fire). The devotee recognises that God is present in all directions likewise the fire with its flames spreads energy and light in all directions for

the benefit of everyone; with the same the devotee gains better connectivity and self-awareness.

Krishna proceeds to once again describe his (God's) attributes. He says that he was in everything; the rite in the rituals, in the process of *yagna* and in one's prayers for the peace and welfare of his ancestors and obeisance to them. He was in the ghee and the herbs we use; the fire, the offerings we make and the mantras we recite. Truly he was the father and the mother of all in creation and the one who nurtures them. He is the repository of all knowledge, as well as, the true object of knowledge and the method of obtaining the same, the Vedas; and the holy vibration *Aum*, the name of God.

The gist of what Krishna said is that everything in creation is due to him and a part of him. He is in all the processes and the ingredients that purify or sanctify men, their thoughts and deeds; the fire (one of the five great elements or *mahabhuta* is a part of Cosmic Energy) and even the sacred vibration *Aum* by reciting which one gets rid of all his weaknesses, delusions and even sins. He clarifies that there was no difference between God and his name (*Aum*) and truly at all times God is our goal.

Krishna reaffirms that he indeed was the God who creates, nurtures, preserves the creation during its existence and also when it ceases to exist. He was an ever present witness, the ultimate abode and the refuge of all; and a dependable dear friend. He provides everyone with energy (heat and light); sends rain or withholds the same; he is immortality and also the death. He implies that death was natural but one could attain immortality through Self-realisation.

He continues and says that he was both '*sat*' (Truth) as the un-manifested God; and '*asat* '(Untruth) as the perishable manifested creation (*prakriti*), the cosmic entity. In manifestation he was the 'being' as *jiva* (soul) and 'non-being' when creation is not manifested. The creation itself is 'becoming' for it is work in progress and everything is temporary and keeps changing.

He is presenting himself as a great paradox having everything starting with himself, the creator, the preserver and the destroyer. And that is not the end; he keeps the creation in his safe custody when it is not manifested and recreates the same for a new cycle. He does all this through his *Maya*. Besides him, the entire creation with the pairs of opposites and all attributes is a part of him. This is nothing but *advait* philosophy that Shankaracharya propagated in his teachings.

Two Different Methods of Worshipping God

In chapter 3 we touched upon God's administrative set up; we have Brahma-loka where the God (Brahman) resides, then in the astral world at a lower levels we have separate lokas (domains) for other gods and demi-gods (like Indra, Chandra, Surya etc.) who are autonomous. They administer their departments independently but they all derive their authority from the God for only he has the authority to grant any favours. The creation, the *prakriti* (both animate and inanimate) lies at a much lower level that is called the *Mrityulok*[82]. It has to be noted that there is no duality in respect of authority at any level. Krishna clarifies this matter in the light of Vedic teachings.

In the *Karmakaand* section of Vedas details have been given for performing *yagnas* (sacrifices) along with the discipline to be followed; and method to be employed for the same. The *mantras* (verses) to be recited for propitiating different gods for seeking desired favours including a place in heaven (implying stay in the astral world in the domain of the chosen god) have also been given. The gods and demi-gods deal with worldly material favours like health, wealth, position, success, power; family and children etc. The prayers even when these are granted do not ensure freedom from *karmic* cycle; one has to go through the consequences of his past deeds.

When a place in heaven (in the chosen god's astral domain or *loka*) is granted it is for a specific period depending on the *karmic* credit accrued to the person for his past deeds and on expiry of the same the person has to return to earth (*mrityulok*) to start afresh. Even a yogi who is well versed in Yoga, prays to the God with sacrifices for a place in heaven, goes to Indra-loka when their prayers are granted. They enjoy the pleasures available to gods and demi-gods but it is not release from all bondages; they serve their term there and then return to earth.

At the time of Vedas, it was perhaps assumed that after enjoying the material benefits for some time one would realise the transitory nature of the gains and would aspire for a permanent settlement which would take them towards Self-realisation. They would then concentrate on yoga, meditation with devotion to Supreme God. But as time passed and *yugas* changed this did not happen and people became more greedy and materialistic and their spiritual instincts remained dormant. In Gita (Dwapar-yuga), Krishna, with a view to change the system advises that instead of following Vedic rituals and prayers to particular god or demi-god for specific gains one should concentrate on prayers to

Supreme God and try to achieve the ultimate goal of oneness with him (God), Self-realisation. Let us see what exactly did he tell?

Krishna says that those who worshipped him with un-swaying devotion (not for any worldly gains, but pursued the path of desire-less action through yoga) he protects what they have; and gives them what they don't have. This is an unequivocal promise. He also said that when one prays to any god he actually prays to him (God) only, but not directly and not in the right way. The people do so out of ignorance; they are not aware that God was the real owner, enjoyer and giver of all that is there hence, mistakenly they limit themselves to partial gains. His words are intended to create an awakening that one gets only what he works for and asks for; and the gift depends upon the capacity of the giver. Since other gods have their limitations one gets according to the same.

Further criticizing the elaborate and expensive rituals and sacrifices as per Vedas he says that only a leaf, flower, fruit and some water was sufficient for prayers to him for he valued one's devotion and pure love, offerings and the rest was superficial that could be dispensed with. By way of elaboration he says that whatever one routinely does in his life, including what he eats or performs charity, sacrifices and austerities etc. that should be done as an offering to him with devotion and pure love.

Pure love and longing for God creates a Godly ambience around him; and all his acts including self-giving get automatically consecrated to God and even mundane routine becomes sacred. Following this approach with yoga and meditation on the spiritual path one can achieve detachment without having to renounce the world. One gets rid of all delusions and rises above duality; he achieves equipoise (*samta-yoga*); and he becomes entitled for union with God. There is nothing like good and bad, there is just one unique goal and whatever one does for reaching it should be done through total dedication and surrender to God.

He goes on to add that to him (God) everyone was alike, no one was a friend or foe; anyone who worships him with devotion and pure love gains oneness with him; he is in them and they are in him. He includes in his expression 'anyone' even a vile person, one who is humanly fragile and morally challenged and says that if such a person turns away from evil designs, achieves undivided devotion to God and prays to him then he would qualify for the same result as any other devotee. He underlines the fact that the soul is so powerful that it can take the wickedest person out from the well of

ignorance and guide him on to the righteous path; however, he has to resolve to do so and work for it. He makes a solemn promise that God is ever generous and merciful; he embraces everyone without distinction. Isn't this unworldly; remarkable would be a gross understatement?

We fail to accept Krishna's promise? We miss the assurance in fine print, that in whatever condition we may be, even at the bottom of a deep dark well, we have enough self-light within that can help us climb out to freedom. One needs courage to repent his misdeeds and make an honest and sincere effort with devotion and absolute trust in God. Our problem is that when we are spiritually weak, we lack intellect and alertness and our wayward senses overpower our judgment and we sin. Likewise, God's normal response is to be merciful; to lift everyone out from the deepest well of helpless misery. All we need is a firm resolve, pure love, unwavering devotion, undivided faith in him; unquestioning acceptance and repentence of the wrong doing (no blaming others); and a promise to his self, never to do it again. At this point God takes over and lifts us out; and places us at a higher spiritual plane.

The beauty of Krishna's assertion lies in its unambiguous forthrightness. His transparency is inspiring. Having talked about the vile person, he extends his promise to include everyone else, the lowly born, Vaishya and the women[83]. There is a bonus as he categorically promises that one who surrenders and seeks refuge in him never perishes. The unique feature of Gita's message is that it always creates a positive vibe, a ray of hope and optimism in everyone, in whatever condition one may

be, that it is worth trying to make a new beginning, or that even perfection is achievable. It opens the gate to everyone[84]; there are no untouchables!

Krishna says: a person disadvantaged due to his/her birth in a lowly family and poor circumstances sometimes unknowingly sins. He too can reverse his suffering and achieve the supreme goal. However, there are no short cuts and one has to go through the yogic process on the spiritual path to offset his past discredits. He too, can acquire the potential to achieve the same goal as a yogi. For a Brahmin, virtuous person, a saint or a royal sage, it is a lot easier as they enjoy a lead on the spiritual path due to their circumstances. Everyone has the capacity to overcome delusions if he develops his sensibility and sensitivity[85] and seeks refuge in the ever-merciful God. One only needs a firm resolve to do so.

In conclusion, he reiterates that one has to understand the mystery of Spirit, its simultaneous immanence and transcendence, through total surrender to

God. For this, one has to rise above his perceived identity and body-consciousness and he has to surrender his ego through continued practise of yoga, meditation and devotion to God. Gradually he starts feeling the proximity of Cosmic Spirit and his feeling of uniqueness that bothered him no end through life starts fading. Finally, he realises that he has no need for his own being; his spirit then becomes one with the Creator, the Cosmic Spirit. He attains the stage of perfection in which all of one's dreams and desires are fulfilled in the Self which is above desires. The need for him to return to earth for desire fulfilment vanishes for he gets comfortably ensconced in the womb of the immortal creator and he enjoys serene bliss.

It is worth noting that one doesn't necessarily have to be a yogi to attain above stage; even a house holder can achieve the same goal. He needs unwavering focus and devotion to God and has to practise meditation regularly. He has to acquire the skill to meditate even while doing his routine chores. This enables him to gain third party view, as while doing his work he mentally withdraws from the job and watches himself at work as a witness, as if, it were actually someone else working. Imagine how easy it would become for him to correct his mistakes.

Gist of Chapter 9

The crux of Chapter 9 in one sentence: 'One should always have unwavering faith in God's compassion and gratefully count his blessings.'

Chapter 9 is truly a continuation of chapter 8. Perhaps Krishna attached great importance to sovereign knowledge and its mystery and he wanted to ensure total clarity about his message. He once again highlights the mystery of God - his higher and lower natures represented by imperishable soul (*jeev*) and perishable body and *prakriti*. He touched upon *Vigyaan* - scientific knowledge that is empirical (*bhautik-gyaan*) and *Gyaan* - knowledge gained through personal experience through one's spirit (*atmaanubhav*) known as *adhyaatmik-gyaan*. The latter is too subtle and one usually fails to understand the same and gets bogged down in empirical knowledge, it being easier. He fails to recognise the true nature of God for it takes inner inspiration to understand and realise *adhyaatmik-gyaan.* The author calls these as 'Sovereign Knowledge', 'Secret Knowledge' or 'Royal Knowledge'. He had touched upon *Vigyaan* and Gyaan in chapter 3.41 and chapter 7.02. It is Krishna's unique style that he keeps on coming back to subtle issues again and again with a view to inspire inquisitiveness and clarify possible doubts. He makes it clear

that *Vigyaan* is incomplete knowledge and only with *Gyaan* it becomes complete. One could gain union with God only with the composite knowledge.

He focuses on God's superior and unique qualities that distinguish him from the rest viz. other gods (astral beings), the animate and inanimate creation and how one could achieve union with him through yoga, meditation, devotion and prayers through his life. He talks about his immanent and transcendent nature (both manifested and un-manifested presence) and highlights that everyone and everything was created by him and he was omni-present. The entire creation was his child and he loves them and looks after them both when the creation exists and when it is withdrawn after expiry of its life when he shields them within himself.

He elaborates on the two kinds of prayers and why he prefers direct approach to God rather than prayers involving sacrifices to gods and demi-gods as per the Vedic injunctions. He (God) being the real owner of all in the un-manifested and manifested world, is the one who was in a position to grant favours directly or indirectly to be administered through gods and demi-gods. God is kind and merciful to all and he extends his protecting arms to everyone at all times without discrimination. No one was a friend or a foe to him and that even evil doers, sinners are pardoned and accepted by him if one accepts and repents his wrong doing and seeks his forgiveness. But naturally one will have to do all that a yogi does on the spiritual path to seek his mercy and grant of union with him.

Chapter 10: The Yoga of Divine Manifestation

In chapters 7 to 9 Krishna talked about subtle difference between *Gyaan*, *Vigyaan* and about God's infinite attributes and opulences. He described the cycle of creation of Nature including living beings (*prakriti*), its sustenance and also its dissolution. He explained that everything in creation is temporary and had a life; only God and the soul that is an element of him is eternal and advised how one should try to achieve the ultimate goal of Self-realisation.

In this chapter he expands on the earlier discourse from a different angle. He talks in detail about God's attributes, his formless; and with form appearances (impersonal and personal form; *nirgun* or *nirakaar* and *sagun* or *sakaar roop* aka Brahman).

This chapter has been popularly called 'The discourse on *Vibhuti-yoga*'. In English translation it is called 'The Yoga of Divine Manifestation'. The word *vibhuti* implies exceptional presence, occurrence or event, something that compels attention.

It is all about God's omnipresence in *prakriti* i.e. in matter and in living beings and his power to be immanent (pervading in everything) yet, remaining transcendental and un-manifested. He repeatedly underlined his attribute of being present in every-thing but fully revealing himself in the best in the class in every species or group. It implies that everything in the manifested world was a display of his being, for its very existence was due to an element of his Cosmic Energy, but the best in the group had a superior presence of his opulences.

There are 42 verses (*shlokas*) in this chapter; only seven verses (12^{th} to 18^{th}) are spoken by Arjuna. He first expresses his reverence and devotion to Krishna and then beseeches him to tell the details about his opulences and how he manifests himself.

Clearly, he appears to be overawed by what he heard from him earlier and he seeks his indulgence to hear more of the same, hoping some of the nectar of his wisdom would stick with him. Krishna is generous enough to elaborate on his attributes for his benefit.

He opens the dialogue as an extension of what he said in Chapter 9. He, once again, talks briefly about himself and his attributes (verses 1 to 11) and after Arjuna's queries he elaborates on the same. He presents himself as the best in the class in all aspects and forms of living beings and the nature. He presents

himself as the epitome of perfection and that makes him Absolute. He repeatedly states that he was the God Supreme or *Parbrahman* (*Ishwar* or *Bhagwaan*).

Sage Parashar[86] defined six distinguishing opulences of God as: *Sampoorna Aishwarya* (total wealth - not only kingdom and riches but health, happiness and harmony); *Yash* (fame); *Shree* (another name of Goddess Laxmi who is not only a beautiful wife of Lord Vishnu but one who ensured all round competence and riches); *Dharma* (following one's duties righteously); *Gyaan ka Bhandaar* (store house of complete knowledge), *Vairagya* (renunciation of both physical and mental desires that is total nonattachment).

Krishna had all these six assets (virtues) and that is why he has been accepted as Supreme God (*Bhagwaan*). Though he was an incarnation but he was born as a common man, he lived a worldly life and he had to die as well.

In Chapter 9 he talked of Sovereign Knowledge and the Sovereign Mystery[87]. Now he elaborates on the same. Why? He candidly admits that it was a secret knowledge that he was giving to him (Arjuna) as he was a dear friend and was devoted to him; and he would benefit by the same.

This implies he considered him fit to receive the knowledge[88] and he needed to equip him with the same. He tells him that all gods, demi-gods, angels, celestial and astral beings (that are parts of his administration) were created by him i.e. they had their origin in him, yet none of them knew him in full. None understood his un-manifested origin (unborn), infinite and eternal nature for they all had their limits and life spans and were subject to *karmic* cycle. One who has an origin cannot become origin less like the creator (God). Everyone, the gods, demi-gods, astral beings, sages, who are created beings and *prakriti* without exception were governed by cosmic laws. The differentiating feature was the stage of their evolution on the spiritual path.

Paramhans Yoganand quotes the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus was God's only son. As per Christian theology he was one of the trinity (Holy Father, Holy Son and Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost) that creates and governs the world. He was sent by God to earth for a specific purpose. Though he was an incarnation of God yet, when he was being taken for crucifixion he temporarily lost his equanimity; he became deluded by body consciousness and started feeling the misery and pain and he cried out: "My God, my god, why hast Thou forsaken me?"[89] He soon realised his folly and recovered his linkage with Holy Father and became quiet, he gained his peace with himself. He realised, his crucifixion was the very purpose of his birth; and as God's representative he

had to exercise equanimity under all circumstances. The point to note here is that even Jesus had his limitations. At one place he had said: “Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit”[90]. At yet another place he said: “The Father is greater than I.”[91]

The foregoing implies that created beings cannot achieve Divine transcendence.

God’s essential nature is Spirit and infiniteness, not form and finiteness. The creation is limited by its finiteness. Yet, he adds a caveat that one who awakens to his (God’s) beginning less, unborn eternal nature and the truth of his being the Sovereign Lord, the Creator, gets over delusion of attachments, his sins are washed away and he advances on the spiritual path towards union with him.

Krishna further explains that though he, as God, creates various attributes and dualities through his *Maya*, the three principles of nature (*gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) determine the state of all beings in the creation at all times. But everything follows the law of nature (*karmic* cycle). He categorically owns total responsibility for all that happens to anyone, yet, he firmly adds a caveat that in everything the law of nature operates; nothing is done arbitrarily.

The attributes like knowledge, discriminative wisdom, total clarity, absence of delusion, patience, forgiveness, truthfulness, control of senses, pleasure or pain, peace of mind, birth, death, fear and fearlessness, non-violence (*ahimsa* – avoidance of anything that causes physical or mental pain to others), charity, equanimity, discipline, fame, infamy, contentment and other characteristics and dualities all flow from God or are withheld by him as per the *karma* of the individual.

God is responsible for both the good and bad; happiness and suffering in the world but he disburses the same fairly and uniformly. One, who knew this truth and the glory and Grace of God in manifestation, qualifies for union with him through the practise of yoga. It is quite clear here that Krishna is speaking as the primal God (*Bhagwaan* or *Ishwar*), the origin of the entire creation.

Earlier, Krishna had asserted that he was the creator of all beings, the cause of the entire creation and that everything flows from him and those who knew this truth, worship him with full faith.

Now he expands how the creation was done by him. He says that through his mind (thought or *sankalp*) he first created Bramha who was assigned the duty of creation under his guidance. Later through the same process but using

Brahma's mind (*sankalp*) he created four primeval *Maharishis* (four great sages)[92]. They were scholarly and pure; and they concentrated on studies and prayers to God and preferred to remain celibate. Hence, they did not have their progeny. God then through the same process created the *Saptmaharishis*[93] (seven great sages). The knowledge of Vedas was revealed to these sages. They were equipped with the seven principal powers of the Cosmic Energy. They became the original progenitors of divine beings. They were called '*Prajapati*'. But the creation human beings still remained to be done. Then Bramha split himself in two, a male and a female and created fourteen *Manus*. Each *Manu* rules for one *Mahayuga* (one cycle of four yugas). As per *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, the present age falls underthe seventh *Manu*[94] (son of Vivasvat - the Sun God). He is the progenitor of our race. We have completed approximately 5200 years of *Kaliyuga* which started on the day Krishna died.

Krishna felt that all that he said about the creation was heavy and confusing, hence, in the seventh verse he says that through continued practise of yoga one could understand the dynamics of his Divine Yoga through which creation and dissolution are seamlessly carried out by him. He categorically assures that one who understands his power of creation and dissolution would fully qualify for unity with him.

Krishna talked about his power of creation and dissolution, he now talks about yogis, who are fully devoted to him and surrender to him. Having overcome their worldly desires and the delusion of temporary pleasures, they feel relaxed and enjoy true contentment. They experience serene happiness in their hearts as if they had gained all there was to gain. Overflowing with love for God, they commune together and share their feelings and experiences freely. They love to talk about his multi-faceted personality, prowess and deeds.

God, on his part, out of compassion grants them intuitive wisdom. Their ignorance and the inner darkness (skepticism) goes away, they see bright light[95] within, and experience dawn, an awakening; and they gain supreme clarity and focus on God with singular concentration.

It creates a cascading effect; their love and devotion to God goes on increasing and they start experiencing linkage with the Cosmic Spirit. They gain a unique vision and clearly see the presence of same spirit in one and all.Their insecurity, anxiety and fear go away and they start experiencing immense happiness. For the first time, he highlights the value of devotion and love for

him (*Bhakti*-yoga). He indicates that through love, devotion and humble submission (*Bhakti*) to him one rids himself of his desires for worldly pleasures that emanate from ignorance and delusion. When one achieves such a stage of inner enlightenment that God stands revealed to him. Thereafter, gaining *gyaan* too becomes easier for intuitive wisdom enhances his understanding; and his intellect stands illumined (he gains *Buddhi*-yoga).

Arjuna desires to hear his Opulences and Forms directly from Krishna

Arjuna had heard all that Krishna said about himself (as God) but he longed to know more about his opulences and his prowess directly from him. He cleverly prefaces his query by saying that he knew that he was the *Parbrahman*, the Pure One, Supreme Purifier and Protector and he was without birth, first amongst gods and divine beings; he was the Eternal One who pervades the entire creation.

He adds that the divine sages and seers; the great ones like Narada, Devala, Asita, Vyasa said so but they all had their innate limitations; he felt that none, no god, no sage and no demon knew the real truth about God. Only the *Parbrahman*, the Supreme God, the origin of the entire creation, the God of all gods and other beings knows the whole truth about himself. Truly, only God knows how through manifestation he pervades the entire creation. Then he begs him to tell the detail about his forms, qualities and manifestations. It is clear that Arjuna was talking about the total creation including the divine beings, astral world, mankind and *prakriti*. He was keen to know the mystery (from his lips) of how he sustains the creation and remains a part of everything while being transcendent.

Like a good manager in search of excellence tries to double check all information including the ones given by the CEO before accepting the same Arjuna seeks his indulgence. He cleverly admits he was aware and accepted the words of various renowned sages and what he spoke to him in passing several times, yet, he wanted to hear the details directly from him once again.

Isn't it true, excellence demands one to ensure the veracity of all information before accepting the same as gospel truth? Arjuna's problem is that he is unable to reconcile *Parbrahman*, the Absolute, with his immanence in everything and in the *jiva* in the creation.

The word 'Brahman' frequently used in Gita stands for both God the creator and the creation; it implies that everything is the same. Gita does not discriminate between God and the *prakriti*. There is no duality.

Arjuna is unable to visualize the *Parbrahman* the Absolute. It is truly a spiritual concept, something that is accepted as unborn, infinite, indefinable, immutable, un-manifest, eternal yet omnipresent, omnipotent; and so on. These are abstract and incomprehensible to an embodied being. Arjuna is honest enough to frankly admit his lack of understanding and he boldly seeks to clarify the matter. He asks him if by constant meditation, the Absolute and his various aspects could be revealed to him? He beseeches him to describe in detail his opulences, powers and manifestations.

God's Forms & Manifestations

Krishna, realising his intense desire, promises to declare his various aspects and divine forms. He however, clarifies that the same were unending and that he would tell him the prominent ones only.

He said that he was present (as 'Self') in the hearts of all in the creation, in *jiva* and in *prakriti*. He was the origin of all and was present in the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the creation implying that he was at all times present with the creation. He was a necessary constant in all in the creation and at all times; and he also ensures cosmic harmony.

Thereafter, he proceeds to describe his several forms. He appreciatively calls Arjuna '*Gudakesh*' (verse 20). The word *Gudakesh* literally means one who conquerors sleep. It is symbolic, it connotes one who is always awake; one who had overcome delusion caused by *Maya* and is clear headed or enlightened. Krishna, like a good teacher who pats his pupil once in a while to create greater interest, inquisitiveness and confidence in him, complements Arjuna from time to time throughout Gita.

From verse 21 till the end of this chapter, Krishna talks of his various forms and manifestations. He had earlier said that he was always present in everything (*jiva*, animals, matter, all objects and forces) in the creation. Now he indicates that his presence was in ascending order as we move from matter to animals to *jiva*, yogis, sages and celestial beings. This means that he reveals himself to a greater degree in *jiva* than he does in animals; and still more in a sage or a yogi. It is simple; the more evolved a being is, the greater is his experience of his (God's) presence due to his own higher consciousness level.

Swami Paramhans Yogananda explains this phenomenon in his book on Gita. He says that sun distributes light uniformly without any discrimination but a crystal or a diamond appears shinning due to its own transparency and greater reflection than a dirty stone or charcoal. God, the creator is always

fair, he remains the soul of every-thing but the experience of his presence varies from object to object; and person to person depending upon their own state and qualities, attributes and the level of evolution, the pre-eminent ones get a greater share of his consciousness.

Earlier Krishna talked of yoga, meditation and inner search to experience the stillness; and hear the sound of silence emanating from within on way to discovering the ultimate truth. He then explained how he carried out the creation; described his administrative set up and how one could reach his abode and gain union with him.

Now, he talks about his forms, manifestations, how he pervades and abides in all in the creation including astral beings with his superior presence in some of them. He chooses words of symbolic and esoteric[96] relevance with subtlety. For this reason this chapter has been called 'The Discourse on Vibhuti-yoga'. Let us hear what he said and reflect on the same.

Krishna says that he was:

- Vishnu amongst the twelve sons of Aditi;
- Sun amongst all luminous bodies;
- Marichi amongst the 49 Maruts (winds); and
- Moon amongst all stars;

Sons of Aditi were called *Aditya*[97]. Though all the twelve *Adityas* were divine deities, Vishnu was the greatest and was designated the King. He declared him to be his expansion (incarnation). Likewise, he declared himself to be Sun which is the brightest amongst radiant stars that provide life giving light energy to the entire creation; Marichi the chief amongst the 49 wind gods; and Moon amongst all celestial bodies.Moon connotes motherhood of the Cosmos and Sun represents the fatherhood. Sun – Moon analogy signifies Spirit and *prakriti* which are accepted as the cause of creation. In the night sky moon is the brightest star yet, it gives cool light. Again, there is a symbolism here that one can be radiant and yet keep all the heat within and transmit a soothing feeling and experience.

Krishna says that he was:

- *Samaveda*[98] amongst the four Vedas;
- Indra amongst the gods;
- Manas (Mind) amongst all the senses; and

- Consciousness in the living beings;

The Vedas are sacred books of knowledge given directly by the Brahman through Bramha. These are considered as the ultimate treasure chest of wisdom. The teacher says that amongst the four Vedas he was '*Samaveda*'. It contains all the wisdom of *Rigveda* in its hymns that are rhythmic in metric form (in Hindi it is called *Channd*), that makes it sweet music. It is knowledge coupled with the soothing sound of music that makes it doubly interesting and facilitates intuitive perception. The recitation of its hymns has a tranquilising effect on the mind, that helps in meditative reflection on the knowledge in it.

Indra is the King of gods and demi-gods; he is all powerful administrative head of *devlokas*. A yogi who forsakes all worldly attachments and gains equanimity (one who remains the same under all circumstances), he is said to have acquired Indra like powers which is an exalted position in the *devlokas*.

The ten senses (five to gather information and five for action on the same) are coordinated and controlled by the mind that is an external entity. It is superior to all senses; it is the boss that determines what one makes of his life. It exists independent of all senses. In a dream the mind acts on its own, as if, the senses were not there. We may not perform any physical action, but we still feel as if we were acting.

Human being would become a dead body, without the atman ('self'). It provides the consciousness to discriminate between the options, the right and the wrong that our mind offers us. It helps us to gain the attribute of discrimination-choosing the right from wrong. God chose these two faculties (mind and consciousness) for his superior presence to control our existence.

Krishna says he was:

- Shankara[99] amongst 11 *Rudras*[100]
- Kubera amongst *Yakshas* and *Rakshasas*[101] (astral goblins);
- Fire (*Agni* or *Pavaka*)amongst *Vasus*[102];
- Meru amongst mountain peaks;

He declared Shankara to be his expansion.

Kubera was the king of *Yakshas* and *Rakshasas* (astral goblins). He controlled the celestial wealth.

Fire (*Agni* or *Pavaka*) purifies everything by burning the impurities hence, God chose to be in it.

Meru the sacred celestial mountain is supposed to be situated at the centre or navel of the earth. The *lokas* (domains) of various gods and demi-gods and the abode of Indra are situated on this mountain. It is believed that this mountain peak is a store house of precious stones and gems. Meru is akin to Olympus of Greek mythology. Meru finds an allegory in human body as well. It is the highest place on top of our cerebrum where the soul with an element of Super Soul stays. It is ideally situated to have a direct linkage with Cosmic Consciousness.

Krishna proceeds and tells Arjun that he was:

- Brahaspati amongst priests (*gurus*);
- Skanda (aka Kartikeya) amongst (war) generals;
- Ocean amongst water bodies;

In Indian society, right from ancient times, all families had their household priest or *guru*. They were greatly respected teacher of the family. In Hindu scriptures the position of the priest (*guru*) was considered to be even higher than that of God. The kings had their royal priests who acted as their guides and preceptors. Brahaspati is the chief priest of gods in the Indralok. Chief amongst all priests in the universe he acts as the preceptor of astral deities. His role is to advise Indra and other gods on propriety of matters. Also he intercedes with gods on behalf of men in respect of their prayers etc. He is worshipped as the god of knowledge, wisdom and success.

Skanda (another name Kartikeya) was the son of Lord Shankara and Goddess Paarvati. He was brave and a skillful commander-in-chief of the divine army.

Amongst water bodies say a well, pond or lake, river or sea Krishna calls himself the ocean. He implied that water being fluid can take any shape; its flow adjusts itself according to the situation indicating extreme flexibility and is capable of making its presence everywhere. Yet, all water bodies have their limits the ocean is like infinity and has immense power which is in keeping with God's opulence.

Krishna having talked about the great teacher Brahaspati said that he was:

- *Maharishi* Bhrigu amongst the great sages;
- *Aum* amongst vibrations and utterances;

- Silent meditation (*japa-yagna*) amongst holy ceremonies or *yagna*; and
- Himalaya amongst all immovable objects;

Maharishi Bhrigu was created by Bramha through his mind (*manas putra*). All great sages acquire intuitive wisdom through meditation and they enjoy communion with the Cosmic Spirit. They divorce all material activities and their sole goal is search of the Truth[103]. Though they remain in inactive state but have pure wisdom. Bhrigu had the unique capacity to pursue his meditative search of wisdom and truth while he continued with his normal activities. Of course, he had nothing material to gain and he acted solely on the path of God realisation. He sought wisdom through his divine activity. He continued with his meditation while he acted. Krishna was a dynamic person he was involved in action all the time that is why he said that among sages he was Bhrigu.

Aum

God made his first manifestation (expansion) through intelligent Cosmic Vibrations. The sum of all vibrations was the word *Aum* (aka Om, Omkar). In Sanskrit *Aum* is called *Shabdabrahma*. It is the origin of all sounds including astral sounds. The recitation of *Aum* helps to gain a better perception of Cosmic Consciousness. God or Brahman has two forms, first is *Shabdabrahma*[104] and the other is called *Ashabdabrahma*. In Gita *Aum* has been called as '*Ekamakshar*', meaning 'the only word'. *Akshar* means one that can't be destroyed. *Aum* was uttered by God when languages and vocabulary were yet to be discovered; everything came from *Aum*. In Bible too there is a parallel, it is said: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." ((John 1:1).

Yagna is an offering or holy ceremony. *Japa-yagna* is silent recitation of God's name repeatedly or meditation on God and reciting his name as *Aum*.

Earlier he talked of Meru peak as his preference; now he is talking of Himalaya (Mount Everest). It appears to be a contradiction. It is not really so because Meru is a movable mountain peak. As per scriptures it changes its location depending on the position of the earth. Himalaya is an immovable mountain.

Next Krishna says that he was:

- Asvattha or *Peepal* tree amongst trees (vegetation);
- Narada amongst divine seers;

- Chitraratha amongst *Gandharvas*;
- Kapil Muni amongst perfected and realised beings

Peepal is a big tree with a large and strong trunk. It has a long life. Considered sacred, it is worshipped throughout India. Several holy ceremonies are performed under this tree. It is believed that all gods stay in the various parts of the same.

Narada was the most respected preceptor of deities in the astral world. He was the most sought after and consulted great sage (*Maharishi*). He played an important role in the affairs of gods and men. In fact, he travelled to the domain of mankind from time to time and acted as an interface between men and gods.

Chitraratha was the king of *Gandharvas*[105].

Kapil Muni was a realised being; he authored Sankhya Doctrine. He is considered to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Krishna says he was:

- Uchchaihshravas[106] amongst stallions;
- Airavata[107] amongst the most powerful elephants;
- King amongst men;
- Thunderbolt (*Vajra*) amongst fire arms;
- Kamdhenu amongst cows;
- Kandarpa amongst gods of love; and
- Vasuki[108] amongst serpents;

The King is supposed to look after the welfare of the masses, guide them on the right path and protect them. Perhaps for that reason Krishna called himself King amongst men. Here too, it is emphasized that God's opulence is best revealed through the leaders and powerful beings.

Thunderbolt is the most powerful and fail-proof fire arm of Lord Indra. It was made out of the bones of sage Dadhichi and was blessed by God himself. Once fired with mantras it could not be called back till it destroyed the target.

Kamdhenu is the name of the celestial cow, 'the cow of plenty'. She too came out from the Sea of Milk at the time of legendary churning of the same for nectar. She has the power to grant wishes to gods and men. Its milk nourishes

one physically; it also creates spiritual awakening and grants wisdom. In Bible too there is a parallel when Jesus says: “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst … (it) shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”[109]

Kandarpa is another name of Kaamdeva[110] the god of love and desire. The word ‘Kaam’ literally means desire or lust and ‘deva’ connotes a god. Kaamdeva is the god assigned to oversee love in relationships and also love life for creation of the progeny. Kandarpa was his expansion who looked after love life of people for creation. As per Hindu ethos sex life was not for lust and enjoyment, it was truly a sacred act of elevation to a higher level of existence and for expansion of the family. The point to note here is that Krishna does not shy off calling himself the god of love life and sex though the same had been one of the taboo subjects in Hindu ethos and decried by sages, pundits and even by the scholars. It was considered to be a human weakness that one had to overcome. This is Krishna’s greatness that he owns up to mark his presence in the god of love; and this is what makes him the complete God.

Krishna proceeds to say that he was:

- Anant (Shesh Naga) amongst Naga serpents;
- Varun amongst water creatures;
- Aryama amongst departed ancestors; and
- Yama amongst those who maintain law and order;
- Prahlad amongst *Daitiyas* (demons)
- Time amongst those who measure;
- Lion amongst beasts; and
- Garuda amongst birds;

The word Anant signifies one that is unending or endless. The word Shesh means the remainder, what is left. Naga is a serpent of the cobra family; one with a prominent hood. God rests in Pataal-loka (the world situated at the bottom of ocean) on a bed created by Shesh Naga (name of Naga serpent) with its thousand hoods. As per scriptures during the interim period after the dissolution of the creation and before the next creation takes place the God rests on a comfortable bed created by Shesh Naga with its body; and its thousand hoods provide a canopy for his protection. The name ‘Shesh’ is symbolic, as besides the lord himself only the Anant Naga remains in existence

when everything else is dissolved and it returns back to the Creator (please refer chapter 8). Shesh Naga (Anant) is an expansion of God; and he is a constant companion with him in his incarnations as well e.g. Shesh Naga stayed with him as Lakshman, when he was born as Rama and as Balrama when he was born as Krishna.

In the last verse Krishna talked of Vasuki as the king of serpents, here he talks of Anant as the king of Nagas (also a type of serpent). There is a subtle distinction. Vasuki represents an individual; it crawls and has a somewhat spring like circular motion; like *kundalini*. It represents the microcosm, an individual living being. Anant signifies the entire creation, the macrocosm.

Varun is the king of aquatic bodies (water creatures). He is called the deity of Ocean. All the creatures within the ocean (water bodies) are governed by him.

Aryama is one of the Adityas[110]. He is the head of all ancestors (*pitris*) of the dead aka the Parent of parents. He is known as the supreme creative light in the astral world.

In every society there are authorities who keep track of all actions, good and bad and the timing etc. They reward or punish people for their actions as per the law for the same. Yama (the god of death) is the deity assigned this job in the astral world. He is the record keeper of all actions (*karma*) by everyone in the creation and he disburses rewards and punishment for *karma* as per the rule determined by God (called the law of Nature). The word yama connotes control, particularly self-control. In keeping with his name Yama exercises strict control and it is he who decides when the life is to be taken out of an individual's body. In yoga too, one has to practise yama so as to ensure that his *karma* become rewarding.

The demons or *daityas* were the children of Maharishi Kashyap and Diti[111].

Prahlad was a noble soul amongst the *daityas* (demons). He was devoted to Lord Vishnu from his childhood. He had to suffer greatly at the hands of his demon father Hrinakashyap and other demons since they were anti-god. Finally, his father was killed by Vishnu and Prahlad became the king.

In *prakriti*, time and space are two elements of measure that cause all the illusion. These two cause shapes and forms to be created; our past, present and the future are all their creation. These make the immutable, unchanging and omnipresent God appear to be changing due to illusion. Time is immutable yet, due to illusion it appears to change. As an example, let us consider a dream: in

a moment one can destroy the entire world and in the next moment he can recreate the same. Krishna chooses to be the sole 'time' for all measures.

Lion is considered to be the king of all animals. It is accepted as the ruler of the forest. Krishna by choosing to be the lion asserts his all powerful status.

Garuda is a mythological big bird of eagle family. It is in fact a divine bird that is a great enemy of serpents. It is the carrier of Lord Vishnu. It is accepted as the king of all birds. It is half bird and half man (head, beak and wings of bird but body and limbs of a man). At the time of churning of the Sea of Milk at one point it had stolen the pot of nectar. Indra had a fierce fight with it for the nectar which he recovered but not before he was mauled and in a way defeated by Garuda and his thunderbolt was smashed. Garuda descended from Maharishi Kashyap and Vinata (one of the daughters of Daksha Prajapati).

Krishna says he was:

- *Pavana* (wind) amongst all purifiers;
- Rama amongst all warriors;
- *Magar* (Alligator) amongst fish and other aquatics; and
- Ganges (*Jahanvi*) amongst rivers;
- Beginning, middle and end of all in the creation;
- Knowledge of self (*atmagyan*) amongst all the branches of science; and
- Discriminating logic or dialectic in debaters (*vada*);

God creates and sustains the creation, the vegetation, animals and the mankind. Essentially the sustenance is affected by him through breathing of air (*Pavana*). To be precise we keep alive through *prnavayu* which has oxygen in it. All the yogic exercises and pranayaam cause creation, circulation and control of flow of *prnavayu* in the body systems. It has the power to cleanse and purify; and also to discard the undesirable parts, the toxins from the system. Without clean air mankind and others in the creation can't live and God therefore, chose to be prominently present in the same it. *Pavana* can be present everywhere and it can move pretty fast.

In Indian mythology Rama has been the most revered and loved king. He was called '*maryaadapurshottama*' which implies one who always stood by *dharma* (ethical law) and righteousness. He was the greatest among men an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who himself was an expansion of Supreme God.

He had divine wisdom and was the best amongst the warriors with a range of divine weapons in his armoury; he defeated and killed several demons prominent amongst them was 'Ravana'. Yet, he was kind to everyone; in his reign all were happy. The term '*Ramraajya*' signifies an administration which was like the one of Rama where everyone was happy. He not only vanquished all external enemies but the internal ones as well. This gave him the power to stay calm and happy always. God chose him to display his powers.

Magar is believed to be a mythical creature. It was like an alligator, a big and powerful water creature sometimes compared to modern day shark. It was the vehicle of Varun the lord of oceans. It is the emblem on the flag of Kaamdeva the god of love and desire probably because like *magar* both the feeling of love and desire are very powerful and compelling. It is again a display of God's supreme power and universal presence.

Ganges (*Jahanvi aka Bhagirathi*) is the holiest of all rivers in India. It is accepted as a goddess. Mythologically it comes out of the foot (toe) of God in heaven. It is very powerful with strong currents. On earth, in order to tame its force, it was stored by Lord Shankar in his flock of hair and released by him in a controlled manner. Thus two Gods are involved in its origin. From ancient times several sages and yogi lived on its banks and meditated on God. They bathed in the river and offered oblation there through their life. Thus the water became pure and pious. Allegorically it is considered like the spine column through which life current or *pranavaayu* flows which is capable of giving us intuitive wisdom and can take us to the region of bliss at the top where our cosmic consciousness resides. Little wonder God chose Ganges as his abode.

To be in the beginning, middle and end of everything implies that everything in creation is not only due to God but is sustained by him through life at all times.

Science of 'self' (*Atmagyaan*)

In chapter 3, 4 and 9 the teacher talked about *Gyaan* and *Vigyaan*. Science of the 'self' (soul) is *Gyaan*[112]; it has been called the *Brahma-vidya* (knowledge of Brahman). Amongst all the branches of knowledge, the science of 'self' is most important. It teaches us how to recognise our spirit which is the only real part of us, aka the truth; and the cause of our life; rest all being temporary delusion. Soul derives its power or juice of life from the Cosmic Spirit; it circulates it in our body systems. It also provides us the intuitive wisdom. Self cannot be taught or known through books; it can only be known through inner

search and personal experience (*atmaanubhava*). What we study through books, teachers, in schools or colleges is physical science (*Vigyaan*). It teaches us the obvious, that we can see, measure or extrapolate. It is only a part of the knowledge. Without the knowledge of spirit or soul, we get deluded with our partial knowledge and it is a pity we never even try to know the real truth about ourselves; who we are; why are we here and what we are?

Discriminating Logic in Debaters

In Hindu scriptures three kinds of debates have been discussed. The first one is called *Alpa* which is primarily meant to establish one's own views and to destroy the contrary view. The second one is called *Vitanda*; here the aim is to somehow reject other's view. The third one is called *Vada*; here the main aim is to seek the truth (*tatvanirnaya*). The English equivalent of *Vada* is dialectic. One has to proceed logically eliminating the options one by one using the power of cognition. The first two can lead to differences because of illogical selfish approach and may even cause violence. The scriptures advise us to avoid such debates. *Vada* is meant to be an honest and sincere search of the real meaning, the truth. It is not confrontational or even an argument, it is meant to be helpful to all the parties. In the material world one is pushed by contrary pressures and interests due to our ego; we get deluded and never gain the cognitive power and the real logic. These are supposed to be godly assets and one gets it only through the grace of God. Therefore, Krishna said that he was revealed in logicians or in dialectics (*vada*).

Krishna says he was:

- 'A' the first alphabet (*A-kara* in Sanskrit);
- Dual compound in compound words (*dvandva* in Sanskrit)
- Immutable or Imperishable Time;
- All pervading, omnipresent Creator with four heads looking on all sides;
- All devouring Death;
- Origin of all that will be; and
- Fame, Prosperity, Speech, Memory, Intelligence, Firmness and Patience amongst feminine attributes;

A-kara

All languages have vowels and consonants in their alphabets; and consonants need a vowel to be added to it for its pronunciation (e.g. ca, ba, ma etc). A is the

first letter in all languages and the same is the first letter of primordial cosmic vibration *Aum*. In Sanskrit *a-kara* is the first letter and it is present in the rest of the letters. It gives meaning to others. *Aum* being the first word pronounced by God was with him from the beginning. A is the life of the language (speech) therefore God chose the same to mark his superior presence.

Compound Words

In Sanskrit grammar there are compound words where two words make one combined word. When two words combine, to make one, and the two retain their separate character and meaning they make a dual compound word (*dvandva* in Sanskrit) e.g. Hari-Om, Krishna-Radha, Rama-Krishna etc. Since dual compound is unique in maintaining the integrity of two separate entities God chose the same for his presence.

Time (*Kaal*)

Time is eternal and immutable. In Atharva Veda Time has been called to be a personification of God; it has been considered immutable and eternal. In *prakriti* it appears to be changing as it is used for measuring periods (e.g. minute, hour, day, month and so on) and it ends when the creation is dissolved. Earlier in this chapter we talked of the worldly measure of time. Here Krishna explains its true nature and the same is not to be confused with time measure. Time (*Kaal*) represents God's Eternal Consciousness.

Omnipresent Creator with four heads

God is the all powerful Supreme Father who creates; nurtures and destroys his creation at the appropriate time. Everything in creation is a part of him, hence, his presence is universal; and he is omnipresent. Everyone appears to follow a path or destiny predetermined by him. However, truly everything or all events in the world are outcome of our good and bad *karma*. God gives us the unique attribute of free- will; and we have choices through which we can act in a manner so as to influence our destiny. Hence, it is only our *karma* (and not the God) that creates our destiny.

The mention of his four heads signifies that he has the capacity to look in all directions at all times and nothing escapes his attention. Alternatively, it implies that he administers his creation through Lord Bramha who has four heads. The free will that we exercise can be fine tuned through the inspiration from our spirit which is the individualised expression of God in us.

Death and Future Birth

The cosmos or the creation is managed through the three principles of nature (*Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas Gunas*). Death is an illusory happening which is truly a transformation; a change of place and also the form of the body. We moan death due to our worldly attachment ignoring the opportunity it offers us to make a new beginning. God controls this process of transformation and he owns it up to make the same bearable for us. The fact is that it follows the law of nature according to which what is born must die someday. He also reminds us that it was only he who would be the cause of all creation at a future date. He makes it clear that he was the Supreme Omnipresent Eternal Power today and will continue to be so at all times in future; and it was up to us to synergize our consciousness with his Supreme Consciousness.

God's Seven Opulences

Krishna lists his seven opulences viz. fame (*keerti*), prosperity (*shree*), speech (*vaak*), memory (*smriti*), intelligence (*medha*), firmness (*dhriti*) and patience or forbearance (*kshama*). He called these to be feminine and divine qualities that one needs for success and happiness in life. The seven qualities mentioned above had the names of seven of the 24 daughters of Prasooti[113] and Daksh Prajapati. All the daughters were married to various gods.

Krishna proceeds to declare his superior presence in:

- Brihat-sama among hymns of *Samaveda*;
- *Gayatri mantra* among poetic meters (*chhand*);
- Marghshirsha amongst months;
- Spring or *Kusumakara* flower bearing season amongst seasons;
- Gambling of fraudsters or deceitful;
- Splendor of the splendid;
- Victory of the victor; Effort of the adventurous; and
- Goodness of the good;

Brihat-sama & *Gayatri mantra*

Earlier in this chapter Krishna chose *Samaveda* for his presence for its melodious songs, now he shows his admiration and preference for Brihat-sama (song by the name Brihat). It is a devotional song with divine melody that is sung at midnight. He rates it as the greatest song.

Like Ganges is considered to be the most sacred river, *Gayatri mantra* is the most important and powerful *mantra* among all the Vedic verses (shlokas) that follow the poetic meters (chhand). All Vedas recommend recitation of this *mantra*. It finds mention in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Maitree Upanishad* as well. It is a prayer to sun god to guide our intellect (*buddhi*) on the right path.

Marghshirsha is a month that covers parts of November and December months of English calendar (Gregorian calendar). In times of the Mahabharata, the Hindu calendar started with this month. It is the cleanest and healthiest period of the year when there is no rain, insects are absent, the atmosphere is clean, sun is bright, yet, the temperatures are moderate and weather is pleasant. Likewise, spring is the most liked season for its pleasant weather with flowers in plenty blooming all over; and a pleasing flagrance in air. It is the best time for concentration by yogis and those on the spiritual path. Krishna chose the above two periods for his expression.

Since ancient times there have been all kinds of people; good, bad and demonic etc depending upon the influence of the three *gunas* on them. There have always been cheats, thieves, fraudsters and gamblers. Gambling has been the preferred game of tricksters. Like his declared preference to mark his presence in the best of the class Krishna chooses to be prominently present in gambling. Similarly, he declares himself to be the essence of all actions e.g. splendour of the splendid, victory of the victor, the driving force in adventure and the goodness (influence of *sattva guna*) of the good people. Here, he is only highlighting the fact that he was the sole cause of everything, good or bad. Any trait, be it good, or bad is actually God's opulence that he chooses to display through the chosen person.

Krishna further says he is:

- Vaasudeva in Vrishni clan;
- Arjuna (*Dhananjay*) amongst Pandavas;
- Veda Vyasa amongst sages; and
- Usana amongst poets;
- Rod of those who have to discipline others;
- Art and wisdom of those who aspire to win;
- Silence of all matters secret; and
- Wisdom of knowers of wisdom;

Krishna of Vrishni Clan

Yadavas of Mathura were divided into several clans. The prominent ones were Vrishnis, Andhaka, Bhogas, Abhira and Kukras. Krishna belonged to Vrishni clan who were descendents of Vrishni. Krishna was the son of Vasudeva and Devki. He was called Vaasudeva (son of Vasudeva). We know that Krishna had earlier (several times) declared that he indeed was the God and here he is speaking for God. Earlier in this chapter he said that he was Vishnu amongst *Adityas* and Shankar amongst *Rudras,* now he says that he was Krishna amongst Vrishnis.

Among Pandavas, he said that he was Arjuna, who was blessed with some of his opulences. Among sages he was Veda Vyas the great *guru*. He further declares that saint poet Usana aka Shukracharya was his expression. Usana was the king of Bhargava branch of saints; he became the *guru* of demons. Besides being a learned scholar, he was well versed in the knowledge of human anatomy and could resurrect a dead to life. This skill was called *Sanjeevini Vidya*.

Rod of discipliners refers to law that determines the punishment for wrong doing like we have the constitution and the penal code that the governments, judiciary and administrative agencies follow to administer justice. In God's case the rod is the *karmic* justice which is automatic. We are punished for our wrong *karma*. There is no reprieve from the same. However, through continued good deeds one can earn credits to offset the same. In Bible too the expression 'the rod' or 'the staff' has been used as the tool God uses for punishing wrong doing.

The art and wisdom needed for victory too depend on our *karma*. If we work as per divine inspiration (wisdom) on the right path, victory always comes our way; or God rewards us with victory. Krishna says that God manifests his all conquering power in the right actions that we perform through our wisdom. It requires continued and devoted practise. This is called the divine art and science that guides us to *karma* needed for success.

Silence in respect of all secrets and wisdom of the wise both are subtle expressions of God's presence. If we want to protect some secrets we can do so only by keeping silent. Silence is the best keeper of all secrets. The moment one speaks his body language also comes into play and it gives away hints through expression of feelings and emotions. If we remain silent we protect our emotions and secrets, and the chance of divulging the secrets by mistake is eliminated. Krishna marks his special presence in silence.

One has to follow the spiritual path to gain wisdom; it gives him the discriminating power to know the difference between right and wrong, spirit and matter. This is called *tatvagyaan* (the knowledge of the core essence). He learns to differentiate between what is temporary and what is of permanent value. He is no more dazzled by the gloss of the gross world (*maya*) and he focuses on the Eternal. Krishna says that he is this wisdom or discriminating power.

Krishna further says that he was the seed of everything animate and inanimate, fixed or moving and gross or subtle and through this seed he perpetuates the creation that includes *jiva*, *prakriti* and the cosmos. Earlier in the beginning he had said that he was the beginning, the middle and the end of everything, now he says that through his presence in the form of a seed he does creation, nurturing and ensures continuity. The death of individual items is an event like many other happenings in one's life and it truly is a part of the continuity. Having explained his presence in everything in the creation and his role as the doer of all that goes on seamlessly in the complex cosmos he says that we (jiva) and the rest of the creation act as mere mediums or tools in his hands[114].

Krishna advises Arjuna that what he had narrated was only a fragment of his limitless attributes. He was merely cautioning him that like one can't count the number of grains in a desert his attributes could neither be explained by him in a short time nor understood by him. He added that he (Arjuna) could ignore the details, it is important only to understand that everything in the creation had sprung from a fragment of his Eternal Energy; and it was sufficient to sustain the same.

To sum up what he had said earlier Krishna tells him that he need not be distracted by all the details. It would suffice for him to know that the entire creation is a manifestation of his Divine Energy and that he pervades everything in all the worlds through a fragment of the same. Krishna was conscious of the fact that it was not easy for a *jiva* to grasp the details he had given. To take load off his head he tried to simplify it by saying that the entire system was his creation; he was the soul of everything. He pervades the astral world, gods, man, the *prakriti* including all living and non-living entities and that the entire cosmos maintains a delicate balance and runs seamlessly on a fragment of his energy. He highlights that he was prominently revealed in all that is great or exceptional; and in all things of beauty. However, one can experience his Divine presence and eternal bliss through Self realisation.

Krishna's mention of his superior presence in Arjuna himself; and appreciation of his level of evolution on the spiritual path, is his way of expressing his confidence in his knowledge and competence and his love for him. He then adds that he need not bother about the details for it would suffice for him to know that everything in the universe was created and managed by an infinitesimal part of his Eternal Energy. It is a subtle effort to arouse his dormant self-esteem and take him out of the balloon of darkness and delusion that had enveloped him. The interesting part is that Arjuna is still not satisfied and in the next chapter he requests him to show him his God Form (*Vishwa-Roop).*

Gist of Chapter 10

The crux of Chapter 10 in one sentence: 'One has to seek inspiration of his spirit to be able to see God in everything.'

In all the previous chapters (from chapter 2 to chapter 9) Krishna mentioned God's qualities, role and opulences in passing. He especially talked about his unique un-manifested nature and also immanence in all in the creation; types of men their propensities based on influence of *gunas* on them and how they act as per their accumulated *karmic* score, how they worship the God; and the methods of their worship including how one could determine what becomes of him in his next life. Repeatedly he talked of how one could achieve Self-realisation. He highlighted that God was unborn, infinite, imperishable, eternal and the creator of the manifested world both living and non-living components (covering the astral world with gods and demi-gods, earth and the world beneath the oceans as well).

He repeatedly laid stress on the fact that all animate and inanimate creatures were temporary with a life span; and were perishable. Only God himself was eternal. He highlighted the concept of perishable body and imperishable soul in every being; and how when one dies, the soul goes from one body to another body. In this chapter he explained the Sovereign Secret Knowledge of the Creator and how he protects all including the devils; when they exist and even when the creation gets dissolved and retires to the safe abode of his (God's) body.

The above implies that God is in a category different from the rest in the creation. He is alone with no second in his class. Krishna further explained

that God is the true cause of all that happens (both good and bad) in the creation. He owns full responsibility for the same, hence, he is both the real doer and owner of everything. The living beings (*jiva*) and *prakriti* are mere tools in his hands to be used by him as per his choice and design. He carried out the creation in stages in an orderly manner and all had to follow the same well settled law of nature. He dwelt at length how the yogi follow yoga and seek intuitive wisdom through devotion to God, detachment and by shedding worldly desires; how they seek the Truth and eventually qualify to achieve union with him.

Arjuna had intently heard what the various sages like Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyas etc had told him about Krishna the God, and also what he had himself told him; and he was convinced that Krishna indeed was the primal God. Yet, he was not satisfied, his inquisitive mind wanted to hear more and first hand from him (Krishna) about the multitude of God's opulences. He therefore, with humble submission beseeches him to narrate the same in detail. He also asked him to tell him about his various manifestations (various expansions and incarnations).

Krishna graciously agrees to tell him about God (himself) but says that the details were infinite hence he could only narrate the prominent ones. However, the beauty of his narration that follows (verses 20 to 41) covers all the various kinds of species and classes of both animate and inanimate. He talks of astral beings, sages, human beings, demons, animals, birds, aquatics, trees, rivers, airs, fires, lights, seasons, scriptures, Vedas, rhythmic verses, music and even gamblers. Interestingly he includes Rama, Krishna (himself) and even Arjuna in his narration.

The beauty of Krishna's narration is that he never gets tired of telling the details and explaining the same again and yet again. He is never short of Godly patience and he keeps on admiring Arjuna's qualities, encouraging him and expressing his trust and confidence in him. Krishna shows the way to achieve perfection that is why he covers the entire gamut of his creation. After all one can't be 97% perfect. Also, to teach one the art of achieving perfection, one, not only has to equip his pupil with information but he has to ensure that he understands it. In doing so one has to create mutual trust and confidence. Krishna does exactly the same. Isn't this excellence in management? This applies to all aspects of our activities be it spiritual or purely commercial?

Chapter 11: Krishna Reveals his Cosmic Form

Till chapter 10 Krishna made an interactive audio presentation about God and his opulences. He was supposed to be formless, a pure energy that created *jiva* and the *prakriti*. Any reference to his form was symbolic and essentially to facilitate human understanding, for embodied beings look for a form in everything.

Earlier, he had indicated his preference for *Bhakti*-yoga over *Gyaan*-yoga as the latter was too abstract and difficult to understand and practice. On Arjuna's request in chapter 11 he shows him his Cosmic Form (*Vishwa Roop* aka *Viraat Roop*). It is like a video display of how the astral world, *jiva* and *prakriti* were a dependent part of him. His form subtly represents his opulence and his prowess.

This chapter has been variously named as 'The Lord's Transfiguration', 'The Universal Form' or 'Vision of Visions; 'The Lord Reveals his Cosmic Form' etc. There are a total of 55 verses in this chapter. Arjuna first beseeches the Lord to show him his Universal Form (verses 1 to 4) then he expresses his awe on what he saw (verses14 to 31) and finally he praises him (verses 36 to 46) and expresses his feeling of pleasure and grateful satisfaction (verse 51).

Krishna shows him his God Form (verses 5 to 8); he elaborates on his opulence (verses 32 to 34) and sums up the entire matter (verses 47 to 49 and 52 to 55). In between Sanjay intervenes (verses 9 to 13; verse 35 and verse 50) to describe and narrate what he saw and heard to Dhritrashtra[115] - the blind King.

Arjuna had patiently heard as Krishna described his (Supreme God's) opulence, transcendence and immanence in the creation; and his actions in respect of creation, nurturing and finally annihilation etc in the earlier chapters especially in chapter X. Though Krishna clearly acknowledged that Arjuna could ignore the details and it was enough for him to know that he (God) manages everything with a miniscule fraction of his Eternal Cosmic Energy, yet, he was inquisitive to see his Universal Form. He respectfully begins by calling him both *Parmeshwara* and *Purshottma*; the first implies the Supreme amongst gods; God of gods; and the latter stands for 'Supreme Spirit' or the best amongst all spirits or *jivas*, an appellation for Supreme Deity. He admits having heard and understood all that he had described including the

secret sovereign wisdom yet, if he, (Krishna) thought it fit that he could behold it, then he should show him his Universal Form.

His submission was like an appeal most longingly made by a child to his father; and he wisely leaves the decision (to fulfill his request or not) to the father. Hardly ever such an appeal is turned down by a loving father.

Krishna lovingly responds and describes his Universal Form. He tells him that he (Arjuna) could see multitude (hundreds and thousands) of his multi-hued forms with his opulences. He is hinting here that if he intently observed he could see his innumerable forms at the same place in his Universal Form.

It is not a mere body of one person but his varied and numerous personalities (representing astral forms, jiva and *prakriti*) and it showed his deeds as well. Massive in itself, it includes all big and small, different kinds of beings and the matter.

It essentially shows the basic unity in everything in the creation. Isn't it true that both living and the matter are made up of the same basic particles, atoms, protons, electrons and sub-atomic particles and these follow the same laws of Nature without exception?

These have the same nature, electrical charge and properties, but these could be constituents of differing forms of animate or inanimate. All have a dependent nature deriving existence and sustenance from the same mother source the Cosmic Energy. God as Cosmic Energy is not an embodied being like a human being; it remains un-manifested. Its manifestation is through *atman* in *jiva*.

Hence, he remains both un-manifested and manifested without the body, whereas living beings need a body for their manifestation but the un-manifested soul remains hidden. Krishna, though a human being, shows his God Form out of his extreme love for Arjuna and to satisfy his desire; although, he had earlier several times orally declared to him that he indeed was the God.

Krishna does not stop with his general statement. He adds that Arjuna could see the 12 Adityas, 11 Rudras, 8 Vasus, 2 Ashwin Kumars, 49 Maruts (49 types of winds) and anything that he might not have seen before and desired to see in his Universal Form. The reference is to all kinds of astral beings and gods that one otherwise can't see. He proceeds to say that he could see the entire universe with all in the creation, both moving and unmoving in his body. Here too, he is highlighting the fact he was indeed was the source of everything; and

these enjoy an unimaginable unity and sharing within him. It was an open offer to Arjuna to see anything and everything past, present and future and all in one (God's Universal Form).

Having said this Krishna realised that he (Arjuna) could not behold all that he had offered to him through his physical eyes meant for the material world. The sheer size and the bright effulgence of his Form would be blinding and confusing to him. After all he had to move from external to internal world; physical (material) to spiritual world. He had to see within, for God was Spirit and he had to see through it a display of God's Sovereign Yogic Power (*Yoga Shakti*). He needed Divine eye or God vision which one can get only through God's grace. He had to provide him a special superior celestial vision (*Divya Drishti*) through his Yoga. Therefore, he bestows on him the same to enable him see his Yogic Power in the form of his Universal Form.

Arjuna never said so in as many words but he was keen to obtain a convincing justification for the war and see its outcome. He wanted to specifically see and know both the present and the future. Krishna sensed it; he offered him to see in his Universal Form[116] andwhatever he desired. Isn't this Godlike where giver gives one something before he asks for it?

The *Divya Drishti* that he gave him was nothing but extraordinary Yogic power that could enable him to see all in one; and know the truth that God is the origin of every-thing and all are essentially the same and a part of him. God being the only real, the Truth, rest all being temporary and dependent entities. Paramhans Yoganand called this *Divya Drishti* the supernatural spiritual eye, which is located at the *Kuthashta Kendra* situated in the centre between the two eye brows; it can be gained by arousing the *Kundalini* through Kriya Yoga.

Before I proceed further it may be desirable to recapitulate and note the changes in Arjuna's psyche and attitude since the beginning of his dialogue with Krishna in chapter 1 while Krishna, throughout displayed exceptional patience and consistency in his reply to him.

Despite repeated assertions by him that he indeed was the God, he (Arjuna) treated him on one to one (like him) basis and persisted with his nagging questions. He was truly in search of an escape route to avoid the war for he had already come to a firm conclusion that irrespective of win or loss and attendant consequences like possible loss of prestige or even death, it was a no-win game hence, not worth the effort and should be avoided.

Isn't it true that quite often when we get lost, we don't change course and take action for progress. Instead we choose to lose heart and finally give up purely on the basis of a misconstrued perception and we miss a good opportunity?

In the first chapter Arjuna fires a barrage of questions; he clearly indicated that his mind was made up. He was in essence not seeking Krishna's advice, he was loudly telling himself to withdraw from the war even at that late stage. For him, the war was an unholy act of killing near and dear ones, including respected elders and teachers, overlooking what they had done to Pandavas or they might do later?

In chapter 2 Krishna explains the correct position in detail, highlighting one's *dharma* and the consequences of giving a walkover to Kauravas.

In chapter 3 Arjuna desires a detailed exposition on *Gyaan* and *Karma* yoga and which one was better? Then he raises query on Brahman, *Adhyaatma* (spirituality) and *Karma* etc. The battle field was hardly the place for an eclecticism or discussion on basic issues and fundamentals of knowledge, creation, yoga, renunciation, God and *prakriti* and then finally about the nature of God and his role etc (chapter 10 - Krishna's *Vibhuti* Yoga)). He is no more asking questions; he has reached the stage of appealing and beseeching him. He requests him to tell him, how he could meditate upon him and pray to him? In chapter 11, he gets awestruck and reaches the point of unconditional submission. He unequivocally admits to him that he indeed was God almighty, the creator and the guardian of the entire universe. Let us see how Krishna proceeds to sort out his difficult situation created by awe mixed with great fear. But before he speaks[117] Sanjay interjects for the benefit of Dhritrashtra the blind king.

Sanjay tells the King; Krishna the lord having explained to Arjuna what all he could see in his Universal Form (*Viraat Roop*) and then reveals the same to him. It is a transfiguration of Krishna; Arjuna can see in him the entire universe and the astral world (the *deva-lokas*) with all the gods. The Universal Form has several heads and eyes that can see in all the directions all the time. His body smooth and shining bright with best divine ointments and perfumes, spreads a pleasing aroma. He wore divine robes, resplendent with ornaments and garlands; and an assortment of divine weapons. His splendor would surpass the brightness of a thousand suns. Arjuna could see all that he wanted to see within his body. It is like one in all and all in One!

Seeing the vision of visions Arjuna was wonderstruck. He was stumped by its sheer beauty, its radiance and grandeur. In reverence he stood still with

folded hands and bowed his head to pay obeisance to him. Finally, he tells him, he could see all the gods with Bramha seated on his lotus throne, Mahadeva (Shiva), various *Maharishis* (great sages), Nagas[118] and assorted exalted beings in his belly. Addressing him as the Lord of the entire creation and the God of gods he says that he could sense his infinite form on all sides with his several arms, eyes, faces, mouths and bellies but he was neither able to see the beginning, the middle nor the end. He implies, he had faces on all sides with several sets of organs. Highlighting his divine presence as distinct from worldly beings, he adds that he could see his crown, his mace and divine discuss but the effulgence and radiance like flaming fires and several suns on all sides was dazzling and incomparable.

Many a time there are occasions when we are overwhelmed by events, when things happen so fast or we see something far beyond our farthest imagination, the shock blanks our mind and we don't know how to react.

The first thing we do is to go into denial mode; we don't want to believe it; we are lost for words. When we recollect our wits a bit, we react orally (sometimes incoherently with lots of repetition), we try to convince ourselves, it was not a dream. We seek to talk to whoever may be around us but we truly talk to our self, we counsel our mind and indulge in a verbal thinking process.

When truth starts dawning on us, the verbal effort allows it to sink in and we grudgingly find mental acceptance. Arjuna was in a similar situation, he apparently starts talking to Krishna, one who had all along been a dear friend and now suddenly becomes not a god but 'the God of gods', the *Parbrahman*. He says:

- He thinks that he (Krishna) was eternal, imperishable Supreme Being, the Primal Person (*Purusa*), the original creator of all; and the guardian angel of the eternal law through which he manages the creation and is also its last resort, the ultimate resting place. He was the one who could be reached only through Self-realisation.
- He saw him as one having infinite power, yet, without a beginning, middle or the end and with innumerable arms. His face was radiant like a flaming fire that could burn the universe, with sun and moon as his two eyes.
- The God is one, but he pervades the entire space between heaven and earth (the three *lokas*) and in all the directions. Seeing his wonderful

radiant Form, all creatures in the worlds (*lokas*) get perturbed and tremble.

- A number of gods, great seers and perfected astral beings were seen entering his Universal Form with folded hands, praising him and singing profound prayers for protection. Some of them appeared to be in fear.
- 11 Rudras, 12 Adityas, 8 Vasus, 12 Sadhyas, 10 Vishveydevas, 2 Ashwani Kumars, 49 Maruts (winds), a host of *Manes*, Gandharvas, *Yaksha*, Rakshashas and Siddhas[119] are gazing at his Form in bewilderment.
- Seeing his Form with so many mouths, eyes, arms, thighs, feet, bellies and terrible tusks all the worlds including he himself tremble with fear.
- Seeing your Form blazing with many radiant colours touching the sky, with the mouths wide open and large glowing eyes, he trembles with fear and loses his balance and peace.
- O gracious one, the Lord of gods and the Refuge of the worlds, your mouths with terrible tusks appear like all devouring flames of Time (*Mahakaal*). Seeing their deathlike appearance he loses his sense of direction and peace. All the Kauravas, their allied kings, Bhishma, Drona, Karna and some chiefs from Pandava side are seen rushing into his mouths; some have their heads crushed in between his teeth.
- Like many torrents of rivers with mighty waves rush into the ocean and moths swiftly fly into the flames to their destruction, so are these heroes, the brave warriors rushing into his mouth.
- You are devouring the worlds on all sides with your flaming mouths and your scorching rays cover the entire universe with its scorching radiance.
- I salute you, O Primal Lord, the God of gods. I don't know your working. Please tell me who you are with such a terrible Form?

Now before we hear what the Supreme Lord said a bit of recap may be in order:

1. God, the Creator is one with no second; all the rest in the creation are in a different class. The astral beings and human beings are treated alike by him the only distinguishing feature is the level of one's evolution on the spiritual path. Human nature and attitudes are universal and these apply to gods and demi-gods as well. Everyone appeared to be in awe

and fearful; and everyone was praying to God for his grace and protection.

2. God is infinite and pervades the entire universe; the three lokas. All are a part of him yet, different; one but not the same.
3. God is self-dependent; the rest have all a dependent existence. Humans have a free will and can choose to graduate to a higher level of existence.

Krishna replies to Arjuna. He says:

- He indeed was Time (*Kaal*)[120] the controller and destroyer of the creation. die. Even if he (Arjuna) chose not to act (fight), all in the opposing army would still be killed. Therefore, it was in his interest to get over his delusion about the horrors of the war, and fight to gain victory, glory and the kingdom. The enemies were already slain by him; hence, he would only be an instrument (not the killer) in the war, yet the benefactor. He should therefore, shed all fears and fight; and kill the greats like Drona, Bhishma, Karna, Jayadratha and others for they were doomed and Pandavas' victory was certain.
- Krishna has raised subtle issues here. One; that God is the sole controller of creation and also the destruction of the Cosmic Manifestation is done by him; and he knows the past present and future of all in the creation, hence, it can be said that it is all ordained by him. The other matter is that the embodied being always assumes God to be ever kind, benevolent and one who has the power to grant the best and the most beautiful of the things to anyone. All, therefore, pray to him and seek his indulgence. Strangely, we don't attribute death and destruction to him; he can't be a killer so we believe! We take him to be a benefactor all the time and trust that if we approach him earnestly he never fails us.

  Arjuna was totally shocked by seeing his *Viraat Roop*; it was an unbelievable vision. In this case, for him, even seeing was not believable. In earlier chapters Krishna had said that he indeed was the real doer of everything, he was the true enjoyer of the fruits of our actions, yet, he considered it desirable to remind Arjuna of his role and man's position vis-à-vis the creator. To explain to Arjuna his correct position he told him that all the enemies were already killed by him (Krishna) and his own role was a limited one, a mere technical formality and that he would carry no guilt or debit in his karmic account.

Sanjay at this stage briefs the king. He tells him that Arjuna was flabbergasted by what he saw and heard from Krishna. He was mortally scared, trembling with fear and with folded hands he saluted him; and again he prostrated before him and he spoke to him in a faltering voice.

Arjuna tells Krishna that:

- Everyone including the perfected beings (sages who are advanced on the spiritual path), rightly feel happy in singing his praise and bow their head in salutation to him; and it is also right that the demons who see him, flee helter- skelter in fear. O God; the exalted one, you are the greatest even greater than Bramha the creator. You are infinite, the Lord of lords and the sanctuary for all in the creation, the mother source and the cause of all causes, and yet, you remain transcendental to the entire manifestation, animate, inanimate and the rest. You are the Primal Person, the knower and what was to be known (seer and the seen). You are the Infinite One, the supreme goal of all beings.

- You are *Vayu* (wind), *Yama* (Time the destroyer), *Agni* (fire), *Varuna* (the Sea-god), Moon and the Ruler and the Progenitor of all. I salute you and do so yet again, from the front, from the back and from all sides. You are the one Supreme Power. You are in everything[121] and you pervade all in the universe.

- What I spoke rashly or in jest while playing or taking meals with you alone or along with others, thinking you to be only a dear friend was out of ignorance. Please forgive me for no disrespect was intended, I did so out of love.

- I now know you are the greatest, infinite, Supreme God. O Krishna you are the Father of the worlds, both fixed and moving; and you are the most venerable teacher. You are the greatest; none in all the *lokas* (worlds) can even compare with you. You are truly the object of worship. I bow down and prostrate before you, the Adorable Lord, and seek your grace. O God please bear with me as a father[122] does to his son, a dear friend does to his friend and a lover to his beloved.

O God of all gods, the Supreme Being you showed me the Vision of visions, not seen before; I rejoiced in the same, however, since I am greatly scared and shaken due to its infinite magnitude and effulgence please be gracious enough to show me your four armed form with crown, mace, discuss[123], conch and lotus in the four hands i.e. (*Narayan Roop* or *Vishnu Roop*[124]); and then I want to see you as in your earlier two armed form.

In Gopala-tapani Upanishad (1.21) the author says that Krishna is one but he is manifested in unlimited forms and expanded incarnations.

It is clear that Arjuna is completely overwhelmed by the Lord's Universal Form[125]. He is scared; the spell of awe is such that he loses his bearings and persistently he tries to gain composure but without success. He does not know what to say; fumbles for words and incessantly repeats himself. He is suffering from an acute guilt conscience as he never realised Krishna's true self and treated him like a relation, a dear friend and a fellow king. He had been argumentative, casual and at times hurtful.

The feeling of guilt creates a sense of unworthiness in his mind. As a response he profusely apologises to him and begs of him to treat him like a son. Finally, he appeals to him to revert to his old normal form. But here too, to fully satisfy his inquisitiveness he asks him to return to his four-armed *VishnuRoop* or *Narayan Roop* before returning to his normal two-armed form as Krishna, his friend. Yet another conclusion that emerges from his actions and statements is that God is not a mysterious Divine Demon who kills, destroys and punishes only or he is just a transcendental and invisible energy that pervades the entire universe but he is a compassionate being who is capable of fatherly love and consideration.

The blessed Lord tells Arjuna:

- Only through his Divine power and his grace he could see his Divine Form that was effulgent, infinite and primal that none other than him had seen. Not only this, but none could see the same by study of Vedas, sacrifices, austerities or by giving gifts or charities or religious rites and ceremonies. Finally, he cheers him up by asking him not to be afraid instead he should get rid of his bewilderment. He then changes his form and reverts to his *Vishnu Roop*; and finally, to his ever smiling two-armed Krishna form.

By his countenance and happy demeanour Krishna completely disarmed Arjuna of all his fear. His unease was gone and he regained his pleasing composure.

Sanjay tells Dhritrashtra, the blind king, that having comforted Arjuna, Krishna graciously revealed his human form. Seeing it Arjuna was visibly relieved and he gratefully acknowledges collection of his wits and gaining back his normal self and happy demeanour by seeing his normal human form.

Krishna finally sums up his experience of seeing his Universal Form. He tells him that what he saw was not even seen by gods though all of them were always eager to see the same. A devotee, who has unswerving devotion and prays to him, can experience his presence; he can hear him and even become one with him. Whatever such a devotee does he dedicates it to him; truly he does everything for him, for God becomes the sole goal of his life. For this, one has to shed all worldly attachments and enmity[126]. In one word he has to get rid of his ego, for then only he could achieve undistracted devotion and gain the feeling of working for him.

Gita should have ended with Arjuna seeing the Vision of visions. There could be nothing more Arjuna could have seen or known. He saw the ultimate vision and heard directly from God about his opulences; and sovereign knowledge and power.

The two most important things that he learnt were that he wouldn't be the killer of his dear friends, elders and teachers if he chose to fight the war which was the origin of his emotional problem that upset him no end; and that all in the creation including the gods were miniscule and ephemeral in front of the super-giant frame and the reach of the Creator.

But the Gita continued for another seven chapters. After all, in showing his Universal Form, Krishna did what was not done by him ever before, but Arjuna was still not satisfied and continues his dialogue with him.

Why? The other issue that bothers a devotee and an analytical reader is why Krishna chose to show his Universal Form to Arjuna at all. He could have found another way of convincing him. To a lay mind, it appears unacceptable that even after seeing and accepting Krishna as God Supreme, Arjuna withholds his decision to fight the war for the next seven chapters. His queries too continue as before.

The above questions are subtle and do not have easy answers. These belong to a different world, to a much higher plane, and unless one rises to a higher plane and awakens his inner eyes, much less answering, one would fail to even understand the questions.

These pertain to God and godlike persons and only God can answer the same. However, one thing is clear that Krishna by his words and actions shattered Arjuna's stubborn belief that he knew everything and none could add to his knowledge. His inflated self-image was cut to size. His perception changed diametrically. He realised that his purpose was to focus on his duties shedding

all worldly attachments, desires for fruits of his actions; trivial animus and one-upmanship.

He had to try to tune his spirit with the Cosmic Spirit. Only when such a state of mind is achieved one could work with complete dedication and in service of God. He had seen the world with his worldly eyes and now he had to seek the vision of his spiritual eyes. And that would not be possible unless he humbly and unconditionally submitted himself to the Supreme God for his inspiration. He had to shed his ego and resort to total surrender to him (God) with unswerving devotion (*Bhakti*).

By Krishna's simple gestures, reassuring and smiling face Arjuna realised that his existence without him was unworthy and as good as a non-entity. All kin, elders, teachers, riches, kingdom, power, authority and what not, derive their value from him and he is the only One who could make everything living and worthwhile.

Didn't Krishna say that one could not see his Form by sacrifices, penances, fasting, charities, gifts, worships, rites and rituals and study of Vedas? And here he was, who saw him in his Universal Form (*Vishwa Roop*), four-armed Form (*Vishnu Roop*) and two-armed normal Krishna form, all almost at the same time. He could see these only through unflinching devotion to God and through his grace. Hence, true worth to his life was only there because he (God) had given it to him and without his grace it would be nothing. It may be worth recounting here that in the ninth chapter Krishna had unequivocally told Arjuna that whatever *yagna*, charity, offering etc. he performs he should do it as an offering to him and for him (not for his own self), as if he was working on his behalf and had no personal interest for any gains from the same. Now he knew who was the real owner and real giver.

The Universal Form had an unimaginable effect on Arjuna; and perhaps by design, Krishna willingly showed him the same. It caused him great discomfort and fear that kept him trembling; it forced him to beg of him to revert to his human form. But it really enlightened him and aroused his spirit. He could see the need to shed his ego, his I-ness and to surrender unto God. Krishna was no more a mere friend he had become God to him.

This awakened true devotion (*bhakti*) in him. The God, the un-manifested Being, Cosmic Energy, that was transcendental, yet, pervading everything, became like him but a superior all-powerful, being, that was real. His earlier God was a belief, a matter of faith (*Nirgun Brahma* or *NirakaarBrahma*) that

couldn't be seen. Through his Universal Form, Krishna introduced him to a Personal God (*Sagun Brahma* or *Sakaar Brahma*). He opened his spiritual eyes.

In the next chapter Krishna dwells on *Bhakti*-Yoga and how the same was superior to *Gyaan*-Yoga. Arjuna was not ignorant, spiritually he was an evolved person but he lost his way in human emotions (he was lacking in detachment). In chapter 11 Krishna removed the mist that had clouded his vision and for that he went to the extent of showing him his *Vishwa Roop*. Isn't God a truly benevolent, compassionate and loving Father?

Gist of Chapter 11

The crux of Chapter 11 in one sentence: 'With unwavering faith, devotion, humble submission and unconditional surrender to God one can know the Truth.'

One of the biggest mystery before mankind has been: 'how the world was created; how it exists and maintains itself in equilibrium; and is everyone truly independent and works on his own by himself'? In chapter 11 Krishna makes the man a non-entity. According to him, God is the real doer, truly the only doer and owner of the entire creation. Arjuna freely obtains a wealth of information about God's powers and opulences. Besides Krishna had earlier given him every assurance about his vanquishing the enemies at the battlefield; and he had strongly suggested to him to get rid of his illusion and fight the war for that was the only right thing for him. Yet, he was not satisfied.

As per Arjuna's own judgment the war had to be avoided at all costs. There was another problem, that Krishna unequivocally and repeatedly told him that he indeed was the God. Hence, any deviation on his part amounted to going against the will of the God. But Arjuna was not one to give in easily and he kept on looking for a way out of the war. But now he had to do so with Krishna's concurrence.

What Krishna described about God and his opulences in chapters 9 & 10 had made him (God) a mesh of riddles shrouded in enigma both within and beyond a mysterious creation. Arjuna trusted every word that he spoke, but since he strongly believed in his own judgement about the futility of the war he was confused and bewildered. He didn't know how to pursue his belief further without upsetting Krishna. Under such circumstances he requested

him to show him his Universal Form. He wanted to unravel the real truth; perhaps only that way he could sort out his mental confusion.

Krishna happily provides him the opportunity and offers him much more than he had bargained for. Everything about God turns out to be way beyond his farthest imagination. He gets awe struck and fears for his life, he could not stand the vision. He was trembling with hair standing and he virtually lost his bearings. He had never expected to see what he saw in Krishna's *Viraat Roop.* His problem was compounded because he could not truly see much; he was unable to withstand the sight. Finally, he clearly admitted to him that he was not able to bear the sight and was trembling with fear. He begs him to revert to his normal form. Once again Krishna obliged him.

We raise the question as to why did Krishna show him his Universal Form at all? It seems logical to believe that he wanted to subject Arjuna to a shock therapy. The Formless and Un-manifested (God) takes not one but multiple Forms? Arjuna is flabbergasted for he can't see him from end to end. In fact, he could hardly see a very small part of him and that too through the divine eyes kindly given by Krishna; even those were dazzled by his effulgence that was like the light from several hundreds of Suns. He was so frightened by what he saw that he was jolted and awakened, as if, thus far he was fast asleep. His reaction was to profusely apologise for having treated Krishna as an ordinary person, one of his type and a friend. For once, he had a live demonstration of power of Yoga through which the Un-manifested becomes not only visible but a bundle of miracles. All the sovereign mystery he had spoken about God and his power was before him; and he was unable to see it or even make sense of it.

Arjuna saw Bramha, all the Gods, demi-gods, Adityas, Rudras, Vasus, Ashwani Kumars and several Kings in the multiple bellies of the Universal Form. The great Kaurava Chiefs, some Pandavas and all the army of Kauravas and Pandavas and others were rushing towards his several fearful mouths like insects fly towards a flame. The entire scene was like torrents of rivers rushing towards the ocean. He was deeply scared and restless. He realised that all the great chiefs were themselves rushing towards him (the Universal Form) to their death willingly; and entirely out of their own deeds and ignorance.

To what he saw, Krishna added that they were already slain by him and his fighting them at the battle field was a mere formality, creating a mandated cause or occasion for the death of all the enemies (as if he had to merely enact the scene on the stage in a play) without any guilt accruing to him. He could

see that the victory, the kingdom, the riches and everything was there on a platter for his taking.

However, Arjuna was in no condition to understand the true intent of his words (that no one was going to be killed by him in the battle and that it is Krishna the God who had already slain them). Unable to express his feelings, he starts praising him. He was truly looking for a way to relieve the pressure and confusion he was suffering. He bows down and prostrates before him, seeks his grace and appeals to him to revert to his normal human form. Isn't it true that when we get into a jam and don't find a way to get out we pray to God and appeal to him for his mercy. Arjuna did exactly that.

Krishna, as always, was gracious and merciful. He tells him again what he had earlier told him several times. He tells: 'That one who works for him and worships him with undistracted devotion, shedding all attachments and ego without any enmity towards anyone and considers him (God) to be his goal he reaches him' (verse 55). He clearly hints that he (Arjuna) was not fighting the war because of any enmity towards Kauravas but that it was his duty (*dharma*) in the service of God. Yet another point that comes out is that we can cover our deficiencies by our love for God and singular devotion to him and by selflessly working - that is for not achieving any personal goals, but purely in his service and dedicating everything to him. This is precisely the philosophy of *Bhakti*-yoga that he explains to him at his request in chapter 12.

Chapter 12: *Bhakti* – Yoga

This chapter is essentially an extension of the discourse in the previous chapter. He talks about Personal (*Sagun* or *Saakaar*) and Impersonal (*Nirgun* or *Nirakaar*) Gods. Personal God is an embodied Being (God with a Form); and Impersonal God is Formless, an un-manifested Being or Cosmic Energy.

Gita talks of both these kind of Gods in the first six chapters. It begins with Sankhya Doctrine in the second chapter that is based on Impersonal God and the emphasis continues on the same till the sixth chapter. From seventh to eleventh chapter the emphasis is reversed with the eleventh chapter focused entirely on Personal God.

In this chapter Krishna talks about the attributes of both type of Gods and who should one pray to and how. He deals with the different approaches adopted by human beings and the nature and qualities of true devotees.

In all there are 20 verses in this chapter with the opening verse is a query by Arjuna and the rest are spoken by the Lord.

Arjuna makes a pointed query: Who should one pray to, a Personal God (like you) or to the Indestructible, Un-manifested and Eternal Spirit? He is clear that yoga was necessary for concentration on the spiritual path. He asks Krishna which process of worship enjoys better compatibility with yoga and which type of yogi will have better knowledge of Yoga[127]?

In the last chapter Krishna had shown him his Universal Form, his four-armed Form and his normal two-armed Krishna Form. All these were representations of Personal God. Arjuna was familiar with Krishna Form hence, it was appropriate for him to ascertain if worshiping such a God Form in the manner prescribed by him earlier was better than worshipping Formless Un-manifested Spirit.

Since the path to union with God needed the practice of yoga, it was pertinent to know whether the two forms were equally amenable to the yogic route. Prima-facie the query is a bit confusing as God is God; and yoga is yoga and a practice is a discipline that one must follow on the spiritual path it being only a necessary tool for achieving Self-realisation.

Perhaps, he was confused as Krishna had said earlier that *jiva* was a part of the Cosmic Spirit like the rest of *prakriti* and hence, our soul, the spirit should find easy direct linkage with the Cosmic Spirit?

Krishna replies in a decisive manner. He says that those who worship him (as Personal God) with singular devotion and unflinching faith were dear to him and they were in perfect yoga. He indicates that unless, one follows the discipline of yoga giving up all attachments and works for God, dedicating everything to him, he wouldn't be able to worship him in all earnestness and with full faith.

But, even those who worship the Impersonal (Formless), Imperishable, Unchanging, Un-manifested and transcendental God by controlling their senses, giving up ego and practising equanimity, retaining equipoise under all circumstances and work for and rejoice in the wellbeing of all, they too finally come to God. Here, besides devotion to God, he adds a very important element that is caring for and working for the welfare of all in the creation i.e. service to humanity. Krishna has laid very great emphasis on service to the society; he has called this as the best worship to God.

We have to understand that God is one. We are considering two types of people, and two forms of the same God: one with a human form; and the other Formless, Infinite, Indescribable, Indestructible, immutable, Incomprehensible, Absolute, Truth and so on. In both cases he is the creator and ruler of the universe.

Personal God (*Sagun* Brahman)

God with a form (Personal God) is an embodied Being like us. It is easier to identify with him and establish some kind of relationship while accepting him as a Divine Being as Divine Father or Divine Mother. When a devotee, approaches him step by step through yogic discipline, he becomes aware of his (God's) presence in his midst; he keeps on surrendering to him and in the process, he goes on improving in yoga. Gradually, he starts experiencing his immanence within his consciousness (soul).

This experience creates a feeling of great joy never felt before by him which augments his love and devotion to him that goes on increasing for it has a cascading effect. He starts enjoying a feeling of familiarity and oneness like one feels with his father, mother or dear ones. His devotion and prayer to God is no more one of the routine, it becomes a joyful activity. His love for God promotes detachment with the world, his ego starts fading away for everything else becomes less significant. He gets more, and still more, focused on love and devotion to him with no effort on his part. His love for him creates a feeling of Divine bliss. He starts hearing the whisper of God in his soul. Perseverance on this path leads to his union with the Super Soul. In Krishna's

words ‘he redeems him’. He no more, goes through the cycle of birth, misery and death for he becomes one with him. For ‘God’ Krishna has used the word ‘Me’.

Impersonal God (*Nirakaar* or *Nirgun Brahman*)

Formless God[128] or Spirit is Impersonal God. Worshipping the Un-manifested, Infinite and Formless God is difficult. The embodied being becomes used to dealing with forms and bodies; even in his prayers he needs something to concentrate upon. If, one somehow renounces the world and sheds his ego and desires for fruits of his actions, he is on way to becoming a devout yogi. But, he always needs an object to meditate on. One possibly cannot focus in a vacuum; it is extremely difficult to do so.

The truth is that the progress on the spiritual path, renouncing all connections with the material world shedding desires and ego etc. is very difficult. It is a slow process that needs perseverance and practise. One faces hurdles at every stage and he often gets frustrated and he is tempted to give up. On such occasions he needs a pillar of support, strong shoulders to lean on to and rest. Isn’t it necessary? One always needs to charge his drained batteries to bring his mind back to focus.

The Personal God serves him like a father he becomes a constant companion and a strong support. Krishna says, the journey becomes easier and the goal nearer when one worships a Personal God. No doubt one who pursues *Gyaan*-yoga and worships Impersonal God, he too can reach the same goal only he must tread a more arduous and lengthy path.

Having explained the two methods (*Bhakti*-yoga and *Gyaan*-yoga) of praying to God, Krishna assures Arjuna that those who unswervingly concentrate their thoughts on him dedicate their actions to him and meditate on him with full faith he releases them from the cycle of birth, suffering and death. He calls the same deliverance from ocean of death bound existence. He says that a yogi who is committed and singularly fixes his mind on God, he achieves union with him.

Krishna realised it was difficult for a worldly person to achieve a singular focus for spiritual conditions do not evolve spontaneously or in a short time and concentration on God needs our spirit to seek the Cosmic Spirit. Since our mind is not only fickle but difficult to control, it becomes extremely difficult to achieve an unwavering concentration. Therefore, he decides to offer

alternatives to suit different individuals as per their temperament and state of spiritual evolution. He advises Arjuna that:

- Just in case he was unable to steadily fix his thoughts on God as advised by him then he should practise concentration on him in order to gradually reach him. What he meant was that through yoga he should step by step work on his spirit to seek linkage with the Cosmic Spirit. The idea was to free his mind from the control of his senses.
- In case he was not able to gain success in concentration through practise of yoga then he should work in his service i.e. service of God should be upper most in his thoughts and actions. After all, if he was truly devoted to him and wished to reach him, then he would for sure like to serve him all the time. The service should be in the form of doing everything for him with full dedication (not for any personal gain).
- And in case even that was not possible i.e. he cannot singularly dedicate all his work to God then he should subdue his own self (forget about his personal identity) and work selflessly without any desire for fruits of his actions as if everything he does was not for him but for God.

Krishna knew that people in the world differ in their temperament, attitudes, habits

and needs. There are bound to be variables that determine one's psyche, therefore, there wouldn't be one solution that suited all. As they say one size can't fit all.

He therefore, opens four doors to God's house and he gives us options to choose any as per our convenience. It is important that we understand these clearly.

In the first option he advises Arjuna to have control of his mind and fix it along with his intellect (*mun aur buddhi*) exclusively on God; no scope for any wavering here. Then one door will be opened to him. He would be welcome inside the house as a permanent member. He would not be required to return back to his own world again. But being a teacher and a practitioner of Yoga, he knew that it was extremely difficult[129] for one had to acquire an absolutely pure mind, intellect and singular focus; and that needs a great deal of doing.

The second option pertains to practise on the path of yoga. In this path one has to persevere and find the most suitable way to establish his mind and intellect on God. He has to find which aspect of God (his name, quality, countenance,

deeds or action attracts him the most and compels faith in him. He should then mentally establish himself in that corner and build from there to paint the entire canvas. This demands great patience and continued practise for the mind has a nagging habit of creating doubts and one tends to become confused. One could get over this through self belief, faith in God and practice of yoga.

The third option suggests that if for some reason, one was unable to persevere in his effort to establish his mind and intellect on God then he should dedicate all his thoughts and actions to him. The element of self must be deleted from his thoughts and actions; that everything including all actions belonged to him and therefore, he had to work for him. Even while doing his routine chores, say, he wants to drink water his thought should be that God was thirsty and he had to drink water for him. This is nothing but mental dilution of the self and eventual elimination of one's ego and finally even his identity and making it a part of God. After all, union with God means becoming one with him? He has to acquire the mental state of surrender to him, seek shelter under his protection, then he would start working for him with full devotion and faith, for his own happiness will lie in his happiness.

The fourth option is easier to understand but it is difficult to practice. He says that one should give up all desires (*icchha tyaag*) and work with body, mind and intellect purely for the sake of working and reaching his goal but not for any personal gains.

Krishna was highlighting the point that the fruits of one's actions belong to God and hence, one should not think about the same. It is simple and fits into our material mindset. Don't successful corporate houses ensure that waste and non-productive activities are minimised? Worrying about what will happen, what would be the result of our action amounts to waste of time and energy. If we just do our work with our heart and soul together the results are bound to be good, perhaps even better than what we could imagine?

Krishna gives four options; why? Because men are different; their differing nature is determined by the influence of the three *Gunas.* The *Gunas* are a product of *karma* and the accumulated net credit in one's account. Different people have differing *karmic cycle* hence, the influence of *Gunas* and their natures are bound to differ.

Krishna talked of Impersonal God only in two verses (no. 4 and 5) and after that he dwelt on Personal God and *Bhakti*-yoga and gave four options to seek him and work for Self realisation. Now he analyses the relative merits of

devotion, knowledge and renunciation of desires etc. and thereafter he proceeds to mention the attitudes and qualities of devotees who are dear to him.

He had spoken about knowledge (seeking wisdom), practice of concentration, meditation and then renunciation of fruits of action (*icchha tyaag*).

Now he clarifies that wisdom is superior to practice of concentration (mechanical yoga practice); meditation is better than knowledge; and renunciation of fruits of action is even better than meditation.

His chosen order is renunciation of fruits of action, meditation, knowledge and then practise with concentration. He adds that with renunciation of fruits of actions one enjoys inner peace and happiness that are needed for advancing on the spiritual path; it promotes non-attachment to material world that helps in achieving whole hearted devotion to God.

All four paths can help us reach God but the path of devotion is the best. The subtle point here is that renunciation of fruits of action implies deleting the selfish motive and dedicating the same (fruits of action) to God.

Krishna tells Arjuna About Devotees who are dear to God

1. Those who are free from ego, are compassionate and friendly to all without any ill will towards anyone; who practise equanimity (*Samta*-yoga) under all conditions they remain the same in pleasure and pain. They are calm, patient, contented and in complete control of their mind and intellect. Firm in their determination they surrender to him. Such people are dear to God.

A little explanation here might be helpful. For practising *Samta*-yoga (equipoise under all situations) one must overcome duality. For banishing the feeling of ill will towards others, one must cultivate a firm belief that all in the creation were a part of the same God who remains present in all of them, they therefore are the same (siblings); and any ill will towards anyone adversely affects his own self. Other attributes mentioned above could be developed through the practise of yoga.

2. Those who have conquered fear, anger, agitation and joy; none in the world fears them for they don't mean any harm to anyone also none would like to harm them; and those who have renounced all expectations and have full faith in God; and they perform all their work skillfully with full confidence without any tension, fear or concern for success or failure but as a duty (*dharma*), are dear to God.

3. Those who retain their tranquility and balance under all circumstances, they are neither happy nor grieve nor are they jealous or hateful for they have no desires and remain the same (detached) in auspicious and inauspicious situations; they treat friends and foes alike; they retain equipoise in duality like honour- dishonour, heat- cold, pleasure-pain and are devoted to God. They are dear to him.

Krishna had said too many things which were not easy to achieve and practise. How can one conquer fear, anger, jealousy, joy and remain calm? How can one treat situations of fame; infamy and everyone alike all the time?

First, we must understand why such very human feelings and situations that apply universally arise? Krishna talked of *samta*-yoga; that everyone being a part of the same God has to be one and the same. If one understands and accepts it without any reservation many of the mental conflicts and triggers for various attributes can be avoided. It is true that achieving *samta*-yoga is not easy, and before one can achieve and master it, he will have to find the causes (of mental triggers) and possible antidotes for the same. We will consider some of the salient causes and solutions hereunder:

Our ego elements act as the main road block to our progress on the spiritual path. These trigger anger, jealousy, fear, lust and other unfavourable emotional elements come into play. We must conquer these to achieve *samta*-yoga.

It all begins with desire (*iccha*) to own; desire to be somebody, that somebody who is superior to others. In the material world it is quite natural and we all actively nurse desires that cause attachments, emotional imbalance and restlessness. It all leads to creation of irrational gaps in our relationships. We acquire likes and dislikes, love, hate; and jealousy. Hence, we have to give up our desires in order to control our mind. Krishna called this *icchha tyaag*[130]. Here yoga is the necessary tool for we can't control our mind without the help of Cosmic Spirit and we can approach the same only through our spirit. Only the Cosmic Spirit has the power to tell our spirit to prevail over our mind and tell it that it was chasing the wrong goal. It would not be possible without the practice of yoga. We would need unwavering devotion and surrender to God in order to seek discriminating wisdom through his grace for then only we can seek Cosmic spirit through our spirit and then appeal to the former (Spirit) to direct the latter (our spirit).

Our desire driven emotions create likes and dislikes that give birth to irrational attachments and the attribute of one-upmanship (we are superior to

others). The only recourse is God. He creates and permeates everyone and treats everyone alike[131]. He is not selective in showering his grace. Didn't he say in the previous chapters that he embraces even the sinners, and pardons them, if they repent and earnestly approach him for his forgiveness? Hence, if we sincerely seek his help by shedding our ego and purifying our thoughts[132] (mind) he extends his generous grace. Compassion and benevolence to all is a part of his opulences. He inspires us to avail of the same. We need spiritual practice to experience the same.

Krishna repeatedly highlights, that when a person on the spiritual path having cultivated faith in God considers him as the sole goal of his life, and worships him with singular focus, he accepts him. Eventually he achieves union with him.

The subtle point here is that one has to move from matter to spirit. The entire creation including our body is matter; only our soul is spirit. We have to develop a line of communication with our spirit. This would not be possible unless we give up our material attachments and selfish pursuits.

We will have to stop running after worldly gains, wealth, position, power, authority and recognition. Instead we must recognise our spirit, and accept, that all, in the creation have the same spirit hence, all are the same. Then recognition of our being 'somebody' will not matter to us, for even after becoming 'somebody' we still remain the same; the same spirit as anyone else. If we accept this truth that remains veiled due to delusions, we will seek only God's recognition (not the worldly recognition) and for that we have to meditate and worship him with devotion and unwavering focus. We have to devote ourselves in his service which is the same as serving the humanity unselfishly. Krishna assures that such a person is dear to God and he releases him from all worldly bondages.

Bhakti-yoga is nothing but the yoga of love (*prem*-yoga). Love does not accept conditions. It requires compassion, trust, devotion, faith and readiness to surrender. The lover must have patience, reverence and a willingness to seek the beloved's refuge. All this has to be unconditional and not motivated by selfish goals. Our problem is that we are obsessed with profit and loss; hence, we look at everything through the prism of what we can gain from it; we truly don't see the true object. We are more concerned with the peripherals; the grain is lost in our worry for the chaff.

Krishna explicitly indicated his preference for *Bhakti*-yoga and Personal God. His advice was to clear one's mind of trivial ego generated goals that cause

delusion and make us sceptical. He repeatedly said that one should focus on the sole goal that is God. Once, he is established in him all trivial matters and issues like friend, foe, honour and dishonour, auspicious and inauspicious, fame and infamy, dualities of heat and cold, pleasure and pain etc gradually dissolve. He doesn't stop with this advice and he tells how to reach the goal and goes to the extent of offering options.

Gita's message is indeed universal: it applies to everyone irrespective of geography, race, colour, class, caste, sex and so on, including the yogi who renounces the world in search of *Gyaan*-yoga and Impersonal God.

As mentioned above Krishna chose Arjuna for giving the message of Gita (and not a Brahmin *guru*) and made him the channel for its transfer to the masses. It is clear that the same is meant for the common man, specially the householder. Krishna is very clear that a householder can give up his desire (*icchha tyaag*) for a Personal God but it would be very difficult, if not impossible for him, to renounce[133] the world in search of Formless, Un-manifested, Infinite and Immutable Impersonal God through *Gyaan*-yoga.

Through yoga, one can make sacrifices and give up material matters and habits that are dear to him, that he is used to, for someone, who he thinks, can provide him greater happiness and a loftier goal, but not in a vacuum or for nothing? Impersonal God is like the latter.

In the nineteenth verse Krishna sums up the qualities that make one dear to him.

Here he also talks of one who has no fixed abode (*aniket*). Some scholars take it to be a literal reference to a yogi who renounces the world in search of God through *Gyaan*-yoga. But it also refers to one who is unmindful of where he lives. When one is mentally established in God through concentration, he starts living with him (God) and his worldly abode becomes irrelevant and insignificant. He is also not bothered about what he eats. He eats only to keep alive and yet, he remains very happy for he tastes bliss that no worldly food can provide. Like-wise he is not bothered by where is his abode.

Gist of Chapter 12

The crux of Chapter 12 in one sentence: 'One should always try to concentrate his mind on the God.'

God is one; Personal and Impersonal are his two forms; one can choose as per his psyche and circumstances. God does not change as per his form or lack of

it. Arjuna was knowledgeable; he knew that yoga was a necessary tool needed for worship of God and his form was secondary. His query 'which type of yogi or devotee will have a better knowledge of yoga appears flawed. It shows the confused state of his mind.

Yoga and its constituents provide a skilled way of doing the right thing. The progress on the spiritual path and devotion in worship of the God (in either form) depends on the degree of one's knowledge of yoga. One who is well versed in yoga learns to work seamlessly as all his senses and organs are well coordinated, the quality of his work is superior and he takes shorter time to accomplish the task. The same applies to his prayers. Krishna handled the issue patiently and skillfully. His approach was logical that since mankind was familiar with and was greatly influenced by a body form God with a body form (Personal God) would be easier for him to accept and worship.

Krishna says that those who worship him (as Personal God) with singular devotion and unflinching faith were dear to him as they were in perfect yoga. 'Singular devotion and unflinching faith' will not be achieved unless one controls his mind and gives up desires and he becomes completely unattached and is ready to surrender himself to God and merge his identity (ego) with him. Without mastery of yoga one cannot achieve this state where he enjoys superior pleasure in worshipping him than in anything else. In addition to above statement he said that caring for the wellbeing of all beings and rendering unconditional service (service without expectation of a return) to the society was the best form of worship to God.

Krishna (God) being compassionate and a loving father of all in the creation knew only too well that all beings were different because of the effect of their *karmic* cycle, their heredity, circumstances, upbringing and attributes created by *gunas* and that is why they behave differently. Therefore, he gave different methods of approaching him and worshipping him so that people could choose what suited them best as per their psyche. He also indicated which of the devotees were dear to him. Once again he highlighted the need for equipoise under all circumstances and giving up ego and desires (*iccha tyaag*). Yoga was necessary for achieving these attributes and for progress on the spiritual path.

The teacher unequivocally recommends *Bhakti*-yoga. He places devotion with total faith in God on a higher platform, and offers Personal God as a goal whom one can see and approach. *Bhakti* (Devotion) inspires extreme love and surrender to him and he aspires for union with him. It helps him to forget his

worldly attachments, possessions and comforts, these cease to have any meaning to him; what one eats or where he lives do not matter to him. *Bhakti* creates unconditional love for God that provides a single point focus and all his worldly goals, sense objects and gratification of the senses etc coalesce into one God who becomes the sole goal.

Chapter 13: The Yoga of the Field and Knower of the Field

In the second chapter Krishna talked about imperishable soul (aka spirit, self or *atman*) perishable body and *prakriti*. He also talked about *Paramatman* (aka Cosmic Spirit, Spirit, Self or Super Self and *Purusa*).

From Second chapter to twelfth chapter he talked about various yogas and how to achieve union of the self with the Self. In the twelfth chapter he dwelt on *Gyaan*-yoga and Formless God only in three verses and mainly focused on Personal God. Arjuna patiently heard him inquisitively and asked searching questions; perhaps he needed further clarity about the exact nature of the body (*prakriti*), spirit and Cosmic Spirit, their functions and about the nature of relationship between them.

In this chapter he seeks to know more about the relationship between body, soul and God. Having talked about Personal God in the last and earlier chapters, Krishna now talks about Formless God, soul and the nature of *prakriti* and explains the relationship between the three (body, soul and God).

There are a total of 34 verses in this chapter. All the verses belong to Krishna but for the opening query[134] by Arjuna.

God, soul, Mother Nature (*Prakriti*), Manifested nature (*prakriti*)

God (*Purusa* in Sankhya philosophy) is called *Kshetrajana* and Nature or *Prakriti* is called the *Kshetra* (Field). At the micro level soul is the *kshetrajana* and body is the field (*kshetra*). God or *Kshetrajana* is the knower of theField (*Kshetra*).

Arjuna requests Krishna to tell him about the Nature (*Prakriti*) and the God (*Purusa*) the transcendental one; and at the micro level about the body called the field (*kshetra*); and soul the *kshetrajana* (knower of the body). He also requests him to tell him about knowledge and the object of the same.

The Supreme Cosmic Spirit has dual manifestation: at the macro level as God or *Purusa* (who stays beyond manifested creation) and the other as Mother Nature or *Prakriti*. In creation, at the micro level *prakriti* is manifested as the body which is called *kshetra* and *Purusa* is the indwelling spirit (soul). It is a part of the Spirit that remains transcendental. It is known as the *kshetrajana*, the knower of the body. Arjuna's problem is his body consciousness. The same (body) comprising of 24 elements (please refer page 47) is subject to contrary

pulls. The ego, intellect (*buddhi*) and mind pull us i.e. our body towards the material world and sense gratification and soul, the inner spirit pulls us inwards to seek union with the Cosmic Spirit. This is a virtual clash of titans. Arjuna wants to know about these elements for he considers these to be powerful hurdles on the spiritual path and in achieving union of the spirit with the Cosmic Spirit.

Krishna says that body is the field (*kshetra*); and soul, a miniscule element of God, is the knower of the field (*kshetrajana*). This seemingly simple statement needs some explanation.

Brahman (Cosmic Spirit) is the Supreme Father; and Nature (*Prakriti*) is the Mother. At the macro level Brahman is the *Kshetrajana* (Knower of the Field) and *Prakriti* is the *Kshetra* (the Field). The entire creation is a product of interaction between the Supreme Father (Brahman) and Mother Nature (*Prakriti*). At micro level, nature (*prakriti*) is the field of action i.e. *kshetra*; and our soul is the knower of the field i.e. *kshetrajana*. Gita's origin was the battle field of Kurukshetra where Kaurava (evil forces) and Pandava (noble ones) fought a no holds barred war. The war created a new order, a new value scale based on the wisdom of Gita. Kurukshetra was the field (*kshetra*) and Krishna represented by Pandava (specifically Arjuna) was the knower of the field (*kshetrajana*).

At the individual level the body made of 24 elements (five great elements; earth, water, air, fire, ether or space (*akaash*); 10 senses and 5 objects of senses plus the four elements mind, ego, intellect and 3 *Gunas*) make the field (*kshetra*); and soul, the *atman* is the knower of the field (*kshetrajana*). Like the Mahabharata had various chiefs in both armies the body's chieftains are its sense elements, mind, ego, intellect and *Gunas* that fight a fierce battle with the soul which is the treasure chest of discriminative wisdom and spiritual proclivity. It is a constant fight. The wisdom of Gita gives a way to stop the same for all times.

The field is the area of activity, it is the object to be watched; and the knower of the same is a mere observer: truly it is the subject. At the Cosmic level God is pure consciousness, the light of awareness and the subject that observes. He allows Nature to act freely and doesn't interfere with the same. Likewise, the man (the body) acts on its own; its thoughts and actions are determined by the *Gunas*; the nature too plays its role in creating good or bad conditions for him. Under the influence of ego it turns materialistic. It seeks perceived happiness that is dependent on his position, possessions and sensual pleasures etc.

In yoga the same man awakens his spiritual instincts and seeks inspiration from his spirit and with practise he can become godlike. The spirit (*kshetrajana*) is open to communication and can offer hints; it can broaden the vista and sharpen the vision but one has to obtain the same through his actions. Spirit is like a coach, it tells the player the various methods, possibilities and it also suggests a course correction when needed. But on the field only the player has to play and he (the coach) remains an observer. A player's success depends on how well he understood the coach and followed his advice. The man has a twofold nature, one material and another spiritual; and he enjoys the freedom to choose. His destiny is determined by his choice and actions, not by God or his soul that indwelling element that is always available to him.

There are three types of bodies: the physical body, spiritual body and the astral body;

these are a part of the *prakriti*. Embodied man with indwelling soul is not a part of *prakriti*; it is truly a part of the Cosmic Spirit and it in fact interrupts the continuity of the *prakriti*. Here, the word 'man' truly refers to soul; though one commonly uses it for the body.

Krishna tells Arjuna that he was the *Kshetrajana* for all the fields or *kshetra* anywhere in the creation. Here he is clearly highlighting his elemental presence everywhere in the creation (his presence as individualised soul). He is talking about Impersonal or Formless God, *Gyaan*-yoga and Sankhya Doctrine. Those, who pray to a Personal God with unwavering devotion (*Bhakti*-yoga), interpret his statement to imply that besides indwelling soul, God is present in all embodied beings through a separate elemental part of himself. However, the distinction between *kshetra*[135] and *kshetrajana* is clear. *Kshetra* is limited by space and time and it is perishable. But the *Kshetrajana* is Eternal, Infinite and Imperishable. He proceeds to say that knowing the field and the truth that God (*Kshetrajana*) is the knower of all fields is true wisdom. Unless one understands and accepts this supreme truth he remains entangled in body consciousness that prompts him to material pursuits and he does not advance on the spiritual path.

Having introduced the concept of *kshetra* and *kshetrajana* he touches upon the attributes of *kshetra*, its composition, elements it is made of and its true nature and what causes it to change. He talks about *Kshetrajana*, his powers, opulences and his nature as well. He unequivocally admits to Arjuna that what he was telling him (in Gita), had already been sung by *Maharishis*, Vedas, and

in *Brahmasutras*[136] and other hymns that analyse and describe the Absolute, Brahman. By doing so he was truly honouring various earlier texts in this regard, the *Shastras*, *Smritis* and *Sutras*[137] and the hymns and those *Maharishis* who composed the same.

24 Constituents of the Body

Krishna once again explains that the body or *kshetra* is made of 24 elements of *prakriti*. These are:

Five great elements (*Panch Mahabhuta* or *Mahatatva*); Earth, Air, Water, Fire and Space (*Akaash*) or Ether;

Five senses for acquiring knowledge (*Gyaan-Indriya*): Eyes, Nose, Ears, Tongue and Skin;

Five working senses (*Karma-Indriya*): Hands, Legs, Voice, Anus and Genitals;

Five objects of senses: Desire-hate, Pleasure-pain, Total of all diverse forces; (the body is called the Aggregate), Intellect and Steadfastness or Persistence;

Four inner senses: Mind (*Manas*) that acts through five objects, smell, taste, touch, form and sound; Ego (self-sense), Intelligence (*Buddhi*) and three *Gunas*, (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas).

24 principles of creation were also given by Kapil Muni in Sankhya Doctrine. In Bible too, 24 principles have been mentioned; these were called the “twenty four elders”[138].

Amongst the 24 constituents mentioned in Gita the Un-manifested (*Mula-Prakriti* or undifferentiated Nature) is also there. A little explanation is needed here:

God first created primordial matter (*Mula-Prakriti*) which like him remains un-manifested[139]; *prakriti* the manifested creation came from *Mula-Prakriti*. ‘Un-manifested’ word used by Krishna in verse 5 does not pertain to *Kshetrajana* (God) but to *Mula-Prakriti*. It is the Field at the macro level like Brahman (God) is the knower of the Field. At the individual level (micro level), the body is the field; and soul being the elemental God is the *kshetrajana*. *Mula-Prakriti* operates through the three principles (the *Gunas*) aka the *Maya* of God. Krishna’s reference to *Mula-Prakriti* as one of the 24 constituents of the body pertains to *Gunas*. The teacher repeatedly stated that the entire manifested creation came into being through the interaction between *Kshetrajana* and *prakriti*.

These days scientists are engaged in the search of sub-atomic particles that have a very short life, say a trillionth of a microsecond or even less. Though remaining un-manifested these caused the creation of manifested matter. Higgs boson particle[140] is one such particle whose existence was proved by Large Hadron Collider at CERN Laboratories in 2013. Prof. Higgs (English physicist) had theoretically predicted the existence of this particle in 1964; he was awarded the Nobel Prize only in 2013 after its existence was confirmed by CERN Laboratories. Incidentally, Dr. Higgs benefitted from the work done by Dr. S.N. Bose[141] in the field of particle physics and quantum mechanics. Higgs boson (aka God particle) is accepted as one of the particles that are the mother source for the creation of matter.

Attributes of Wisdom

Krishna recommends twenty attributes of knowledge that are needed to achieve sage like qualities and ultimate perfection. One need not renounce the world to acquire the same; even a house holder can cultivate these attributes. These make a person sage like transparent. He remains fully content in what he gets and transcends all elements of ego that make us weak and fragile. Our ego (self-sense) creates a false sense of superiority, of being somebody, that makes us pretentious and ostentatious in search of recognition. We try to persuade others to accept us to be what we are not. We truly become a hypocrite and remain restless despite all our worldly possessions for we mostly fail in getting the desired recognition.

Krishna advises us to acquire such virtues with which universal recognition would knock at our doors without our having to even desire it, much less try for it. The virtues mentioned below are the attributes needed to acquire excellence in life. These give us wisdom that helps us to advance on the spiritual path. Even in the material world we can achieve the pinnacle of glory with these virtues.

The virtues recommended by Krishna are:

- Humility (lack of pride or status consciousness; absence of the feeling of being somebody); Integrity (absence of hypocrisy or projecting self as someone that he is not with a view to gain benefits); non-violence; patience-forgiveness; uprightness; respect and service to the teacher; purity of mind and body; steadiness and self-control (perseverance on path to achieving our goal);

- Indifference to sense objects (transcend sense gratification); absence of egotism (self-effacement); perception of pain and evils of birth, illness, old age and death (understanding the inherent truth of mortal life);
- Nonattachment; Non-identification of one's 'self' with his son, wife and home (worldly relations and possessions); maintaining equanimity under all circumstances (always treating favourables and unfavourables alike);
- Unwavering devotion to Me (God) with unalloyed discipline of yoga, preference for solitary place, avoidance of crowd of people;
- Constantly seeking knowledge of the Self (Spirit), meditative insight into the essence of knowledge of Truth (discriminating between real from unreal and transitory from eternal) is the true knowledge the rest is non-knowledge.

Humility

The teacher spoke about the above virtues in earlier chapters as well, here he has tried to collect and sum up the same. Little surprise that he chose humility as the number one virtue! Without controlling self-sense that gives rise to pride and urge for one-upmanship, one cannot control his mind and senses. The obstacles one faces in his life are indeed strong for one is naturally tempted and gets attracted to objects of senses. Humility creates a feeling of oneness with the rest in creation, the feeling of superiority dissolves and control of self-sense becomes easy. It helps us achieve control over our mind and emotions; and wins us friends and cooperation; lack of it on the other hand, creates enemies and road blocks to our progress.

The Role of a Teacher

One can learn about these virtues through studies; scriptures are indeed a rich source

of knowledge but it is the teacher (*guru*) alone who can interpret the real meaning and make us appreciate its true value and how to acquire and practise the same. One must respectfully seek his help and offer service to him. He teaches us from the books plus his own experience. The teacher has been accepted as the messenger of God for he can impart wisdom. Through awakening, we learn the value of physical hygiene and purity of mind needed for spiritual thoughts. The practice of yoga gives us patient perseverance and steadfastness.

Forgiveness

Another attribute that Krishna highlighted was forgiveness, it appears easy but it is difficult to practise. No matter, what one does, there would always be some who would nurse a grudge or a jealousy and be inimical. Forgiveness comes into play on such occasions.

Let us consider the alternative. If we don't ignore and forgive we give rise to a very natural reaction of anger within us. It gnaws our heart and wears us down we become restless, our nerves are stressed and our BP goes up that puts further pressure on the heart. It weakens our immune system, causes insomnia and we waste energy in pondering over trivial issues that causes tension; and we become lethargic. We lose concentration, our effectiveness goes down. To save ourselves from these entirely avoidable, yet, natural side effects, we have to persevere to make peace by being large hearted and forgiving, sometimes by adding an extra 'sorry' where none was needed. It all boils down to diluting one's ego to humour someone else's inflated ego.

Self-Control & Steadiness

Self-control and steadiness are two important attributes for success in anything we do in life. Self-control is essentially sense control. We will consider just one sense, the tongue. How many problems we create due to our speech (a loose tongue)? Tongue also helps us enjoy the taste of what we eat. Again, how many problems we create due to over-eating? More people die due to overeating than under eating or starvation. Steadiness implies having a firm resolve and capacity to boldly face odds. Is there anyone who doesn't have to face awkward situations in life? Only the ones who stand firm and face squarely succeed. It is the attribute of steadiness that gives us the courage and makes us fearless.

Non-Attachment

Non-identification with one's near and dear ones does not imply renunciation. We are bound to love them, we must do so and serve them as well, but we have to do it in the spirit of service, as if we were serving the God in them. We have to raise our level from the body to the spirit; then worldly attachments fade away.

Egotism

Most of the negative attributes owe their origin to our egotism; it causes conceit and desire to own. Even ordinary and natural events become the cause of pain and stress to us. If we control the same we gain the realisation that in life, birth, suffering, pain and death are all natural and universal and not

exceptional to us, then we learn to take the same in stride. This can save us a great deal of stress and suffering. As a natural fall out, we gain equanimity under all circumstances and stay relaxed even when things don't go our way.

Identification of 'self' with 'Self'

Finally, Krishna says that one needs to identify himself with God and see him in everyone all the time. Through yoga one learns to recognise that God, the Spirit was the real one and the only Truth. One needs continued and unwavering devotion to him. Solitude helps in achieving the same; a mass of crowd always attracts attention and disturbs concentration and the focus is lost, hence, one should avoid the same when he has to concentrate on something.

Eternal Brahman

Krishna emphasises that Eternal Brahman, the one who is beginning less, is neither existent nor non-existent; He is unique in being beyond beginning and end, has no attributes; he is entirely self-dependent thus defies any classification; he is in a class of his own with no second.

In the created world none is entirely independent as one always needs help from others, yet, one usually fails to appreciate this fact. Spiritual scholars call God to be beyond any nomenclature like '*sat*'[142] or '*asat*'. One, who is born, has a beginning and he becomes existent, and when he dies he becomes non-existent. Brahman is not born, hence, he is not existent, but he is present as the soul in all beings, hence, he can be said to be existent.

Gyaan is understood as the knowledge of attributes or moral virtues but it remains incomplete unless it is regularly practised in yogic discipline. Only by regular practise can one develop discriminative wisdom to know the Brahman, the real One from the perishable and transient unreal (*prakriti*). One who gains this knowledge (*gyaan*) qualifies for union with God; he becomes eternal.

God - The Knower of the Field (*Kshetrajana*)

Krishna, so far talked about three basic issues: knower (*gyaata*); knowledge (*gyaan*); and what is worth knowing (*gyeya*). In the context of *kshetrajana* and *kshetra* the knower (*gyaata*) is the soul; and understanding of the relationship between *kshetrajana* and *kshetra* is knowledge (*gyaan*). When the division between knower and knowledge vanishes, we reach Brahman the only one that is worth knowing. Hence, only God is worth knowing; he is the knower

and true knowledge as well. But before we talk about what he tells Arjuna, we should understand a few basic concepts. These have been mentioned hereunder:

Sankhya recognises *Purusa* (Brahman) and *Prakriti* as two distinct entities. Gita treats these as one and the same. Brahman and *prakriti* are one, *prakriti* being the inferior nature of Brahman and soul is his superior nature.

Un-manifested *Prakriti or Mula Prakriti* gets manifested as *prakriti* through his *Maya* or the three *gunas*. The manifested *prakriti* is the creation; it is the outcome of interaction between *Prakriti* and the *gunas*. Its constituents are earth, water, fire, air, ether and other elements totaling 24 that make the human body.

Mahabharata makes a distinction between God (Brahman) and *Parmatman* aka *Parbrahman*. God or Self when it is associated with the *Maya* it is *Kshetrajana*, he is the Brahman. *Paramatman*, the Supreme Self is entirely independent with no association, a pure witness. However, Gita makes no such distinction.

God (Self) is pure Cosmic Consciousness. He is transcendent and unattached, yet, he is all pervading, being the life force (soul) within individual beings in the creation; soul is a part of the Self but not the same. Our soul, though it is spiritual, but being surrounded by material world it gets conditioned by so many diverse elements of the Cosmos and is influenced by the same. Being enveloped by the body it is limited by it. But the Self has no limitations; it is omni-present, omnipotent, omniscient and infinite etc. For the soul the body is the field but in case of Self, Cosmos is the Field. We will now see the majestic qualities and paradoxes[143] about God that Krishna unveils to us. He talks about Formless, Impersonal Brahman like free-flowing energy present everywhere, that is why he is called pure Consciousness.

Krishna describes the paradoxes:

- He has no eyes but he sees everything and in all directions; likewise, without ears he can hear all; he has heads and faces on all sides. He dwells in all the beings, and all elements of the creation. Without any sense organs he can sense everything; unattached he supports all and independent of *gunas* (three principles of nature) he enjoys everything.

  Little surprise he being pure consciousness and present everywhere he enjoys the resources (organs) of all in the creation. He is not only the true enjoyer of all that happens to anyone in the world but he also goes

through their agony for everyone has a dependent existence and he is at the core of all. Since the *gunas* have no effect on him he is independent.

- He is without and within all beings; he is near yet, far; he is unmoving yet, moving; he is too subtle to be known to anyone; he is immutable (can't be divided) but has independent presence in all beings; he is unattached but supports and manages the creation, sustenance, extinction; and recreation of all. He is the light in all lights and is never in darkness. He is knowledge, the object of knowledge; and the ultimate goal of knowledge; and he is situated in the hearts of all. One who understands this truth qualifies to unite with him and become one with him.

The paradoxes stem from his unattached transcendent yet, all pervading nature and attributes of being infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. These make him undivided among things that are divided. His all-pervading presence is a source of enlightenment (if one experiences the same) to all, that is why he is said to be light of all lights; he is not affected by day or night and light or darkness are immaterial in respect of him for his own luminosity is far greater.

Besides absence of light darkness refers to ignorance; and one who is the knower of all that can be known, he can't be ignorant. Krishna makes an unequivocal promise that one who can understand this truth becomes fit to join him on a permanent basis; he becomes Self. One can't become like him for he is only a part of him and there can't be a Self No. 2. Multiplicity of power centers leads to a certain disaster.

Spirit and Nature

Krishna, so far explained the concepts of *Kshetrajana*, *kshetra*, knowledge, knower of the knowledge and the object of knowledge. He also forcefully said that one who understands these becomes fit to be one with Brahman. The seeker, who through his *Gyaan* (knowledge) or *Dhyaan* (meditation) or *Bhakti* (devotion) or a combination of these, learns to recognise the indwelling spirit in us and establishes a dialogue with it, attains supreme peace and perfect equanimity that is the divine nature needed for union with Brahman.

It is interesting to note that we never even try to seek an introduction with our soul that stays within us. It is a case of so near yet, so far? Perhaps for this reason Krishna says that one who understands the spirit qualifies for union with Brahman.

The teacher repeats that *Purusa*[144] (Spirit or Brahman) and *Prakriti* are both beginning-less. There is no ambiguity in it for the latter is a part of the former. The material manifestation is a product of interaction between *Prakriti* and the three *gunas* (*Maya*). Interestingly the *gunas* too come from *Prakriti* itself. The individual soul is a miniature part of the Brahman (*Purusa*), hence, it is eternal and beginning-less. Likewise, human body is a mini part of the *Prakriti*. The *prakriti* keeps on changing all the time that is why it is called 'becoming' and soul is an unchanging constant; it is called 'being'.

Purusa is *Kshetrajana* and *Prakriti* is *Kshetra* (field). At the micro level *Purusa* refers to the *jiva,* the individual soul. *Paramatman's* (Supreme God's) reflection in the human body is through the Cosmic Intelligence that is placed at the *Kutashta Kendra* (Christ Centre) situated between the two eyes; it acts as a pure witness. The soul is influenced by the body and its elements like mind, and ego etc; it is affected by pleasure and pain that the body and mind experience hence, it gets conditioned (stained) and limited by the same.

It is clear that Nature or *Prakriti* is the cause of creation of human body and it also determines its activities. It creates the sense organs that are the instruments of activities and experiences. The mind interprets the experiences as joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain that one enjoys. Hence, the soul though acting through the mind that is one of the instruments of the body is the cause of all duality; it is both the cause and the real enjoyer of the same.

The actions of the body are caused by the influence of *gunas* on it. The body acts as per sattva, rajas and tamas *gunas* or a mix of the same; and the soul tastes the fruits of the same. Thus, the soul is indirectly affected by the *gunas*. *O*n death such a soul (conditioned one) travels to a new body and it parks itself as per the compatibility with the new body. The extent of conditioning of the soul determines the birth in next life in a noble or evil family.

One, who understands the true relationship between *Purusa* (*Kshetrajana*) and *Prakriti* along with the three *gunas*, irrespective of whether or not he acts as per the ordained path given in scriptures, qualifies to achieve Self-realisation or union with Brahman. He gains freedom from birth and death. He could achieve emancipation by the scriptural route as well or by yogic discipline that leads to *samadhi*.

Three Methods of achieving Self-realisation

The three paths for achieving Self-realisation were discussed by Krishna in detail earlier. Now he is repeating the same. These are: 1) the path of

meditation (*Dhyaan*-yoga); seeking inner awakening through self-search. 2) The path of *Gyaan*-yoga (Sankhya Doctrine), obtaining discriminative wisdom through seeking knowledge or *gyaan*. 3) The *Karma*-yoga - one does right actions (selfless action) and dedicates both the action and the fruits of the same to Brahman forgetting his own self, he works for God.

There is a fourth category where the people are either ignorant or cannot fully detach themselves from their activities. They could approach a teacher, *guru* and under his guidance worship God with unwavering devotion. They listen to him with undivided attention and follow his counsel and the ethical codes faithfully and devote every-thing to the service of God. They too achieve emancipation.

Knowing the Roles of *Kshetrajana* and *kshetra* (Purusa and *Prakriti*)

Recapitulating the concepts of field and knower of the Field (*prakriti* and *Purusa*) Krishna emphasizes that the manifested creation (both inanimate and animate) are born out of interaction between God and Nature (Self and non-Self). Human body is a part of *prakriti*, it is perishable but the *kshetrajana* is imperishable and eternal. If one understands this subtle truth all his confusion about body consciousness can be banished. The other subtle point is that God is present in all including matters that are all perishable but he himself is eternal.

Two things emerge from the foregoing: the first is that all in the creation are made of the same elements; the difference is only in form and not in the essence. The second one is that when everything perishes, the creation ceases to exist but God is still there to protect us and ensure our safety in the interim and safe passage back when the new creation takes place (evolutionary cycle). One who understands the presence of God in everything and his omnipresence, he transcends body consciousness and his ego ceases to influence him; and reaches the supreme goal of unity with God.

One, who understands that all actions are done by *prakriti* and the atman is non-doer, a mere witness like unpolluted, clean sky present everywhere that remains calm and provides a dependable cover to all, truly he knows the truth. When he sees that everything, including all beings evolve from the same source (Brahman) and spread all over in the creation. He sees that the source is an unchanging constant and it is the nature of *prakriti* to keep evolving. One, who understands this truth attains to Brahman, he attains eternity like him. The beauty is that God, the all-pervading and the indwelling one is an unchanging constant that remains unaffected by all that goes on around him

in the creation. Nothing touches him and like the sky it remains serene and is not tainted in anyway.

Brahman is like the sun, that is constant and it illuminates everything without discrimination. He does so for the entire field (*prakriti*) that keeps on changing. To see this and to realise, the distinction between the Field and the Knower of the Field, our physical eyes are not good enough and one needs the eye of wisdom that remains latent and dormant. It can be awakened through yoga and devotion. When that special vision is achieved the unchanging constant, the Brahman too can be seen and one can become one with him.

Krishna's message in this chapter is subtle. It is universal, and it applies to all situations in life. For a moment, let us leave the spiritual side of achieving union with Brahman and look at it purely for material progress and success in life. Why we fail in achieving our goal? We fail because we are unable to identify our goal clearly; our vision is limited by a wish to succeed which becomes the prime driver. We don't use our resources properly; we remain confused and lack clarity, commitment and focus. We don't do our home-work adequately. We focus on materials, tools, technology, logistics, marketing and profits only. While worrying about our own family and the need to succeed we ignore relationships; we forget the need to acquire the right attitude, the software part, which should be the starting point. Despite resources and technical competence we fail as we become too selfish, machine like and arrogant; and we remain unmindful of an important and necessary element.

Krishna spent a lot of time explaining the relationship between *Kshetrajana* and *kshetra* and the goal of life. He highlighted what we need to target in life and how to go about it. He gave 20 cardinal attitudinal virtues (attributes) that could help us achieve perfection. Perhaps for material success in life which being a smaller goal, all the 20 virtues would not be needed. Attributes like humility, modesty, steadfastness, non-violence and absence of egotism etc are meant to make us better human beings naturally deserving respect and cooperation from all. Add to this equanimity, and working with total commitment for the sake of work without worrying about the results (*Karma*-yoga), as if, the fruits of our action belonged to someone else. These make us stronger, more confident and better focused; we get more time because we eliminate a great deal of avoidable ego problems. The end result: we achieve vastly superior results.

Krishna's message is both holistic and wholesome; it is a fail proof strategy for achieving excellence. Unfortunately, such basic elements are not taught even

in the best of Management Institutions. Aggressiveness and forceful assertion of one's point of view (even if it was wrong) is lauded these days; it is taken to be a projection of one's ambition and quality of leadership needed for success. These can never lead one to achieving excellence and the success if ever achieved is short lived. We must know that there is no short cut to excellence in life. If we follow the cardinal virtues given by Krishna in this chapter we would for sure achieve ever increasing success, and eventual excellence.

Krishna has explained how God works. One can become godlike by following the 20 cardinal virtues and enjoy happiness and more happiness and eventual bliss. The most important point to underscore is that he has talked about a Form less God with no hands, eyes, ears, legs, no face, no mouth and no anything. Yet, he sees every-thing, hears everything and so on. He deploys the resources of all his representatives (both being and non-being) in the creation. We can also do the same if we could build a team and relationship that all willingly and happily work with us as if they were doing an important personal job!

Gist of Chapter 13

The crux of Chapter 13 in one sentence: 'One gains real happiness in life, when he detaches himself from worldly pleasures and seeks union with God.'

This is a very important chapter in Gita. In this, Krishna spells out the secret of success and happiness in life; how one could evolve on the spiritual path and how he could achieve perfection.

He first elaborates on the qualities and roles of God and Nature (*prakriti*); that one's soul or spirit is a miniscule part of God and the body is a part of *prakriti*. The first one (soul) is eternal and the other the *prakriti* (body) is transient and perishable. Interestingly, soul is not the doer of any action it is only a pure witness while our body (*prakriti*) is the doer. But our mind and ego combine are very powerful, these influence the soul, and at times even succeed in corrupting it, making it what is known as a conditioned soul. The 24 constituents of the body are all elements of the *prakriti*. It is the *prakriti* that is the doer of all actions; the body only acts as a tool.

Krishna introduces the concept of *Kshetra* (Field) and *Kshetrajana* (Knower of the Field). *Kshetrajana* (God) is both manifested and Un-manifested and he is

both Knowledge and object of knowledge. He tells how the two function and how one

can use knowledge for his evolution and eventual perfection or Self-realisation.

He gave 20 elements of attributes which are often called as virtues. Some of these are inborn and others need to be cultivated and nurtured. Krishna talks of humility, integrity or modesty, non-violence, forgiveness, respect for teacher, steadiness of mind, self-control, non- attachment etc. and above all faith in, and unflinching devotion to God.

He places humility as the top virtue that we unfortunately mistake as meekness. It is really one's most powerful tool for it constantly prompts us, not to put up a show of superiority or lose our temper for it can disarm the fiercest enemy and convert him into a friend. Krishna once again highlights the need for continued practise of yoga and meditation along with these virtues for obtaining best results in a short time.

These attributes enjoy a degree of linkage with each other and developing one helps in acquiring others e.g. humility promotes modesty and helps in acquiring a non-violent demeanour. The first requirement is to have total faith and unwavering devotion to God and then if one acquires say the first five attributes, gradually he can acquire many more through practise of yoga and meditation. He can then steadily advance on the spiritual path. These attributes awaken us to the opulences and power of God. Knowing God, his deeds and powers and having singular faith in him gives us immense pleasure; and it introduces us to the eternal Truth. This knowledge makes us strong and more determined; it helps us in achieving our goal.

The above attributes will equally be helpful in achieving material goals; and we can try for gaining excellence in whatever we do in our life. If we practise yoga and meditation then with these attributes we can for sure achieve excellence. We hanker after small successes here and there, and remain worried for fear of failure. Krishna gives us a fail proof method of achieving excellence.

Krishna says that one who truly understands the opulences and nature of God gains eternal life. Then he describes his incomprehensible characteristics e.g. he sees without eyes, hears without ears, about his many eyes, hands, legs, bellies and faces on all sides. He is without and within and one in all. He has the benefit of all senses without having any of the senses, unattached, yet,

compassionate and ever merciful. Obviously, one can't imagine such contradictions much less understand him.

Krishna doesn't leave us guessing with the problem; he appreciates our predicament. He says (verse 25) that if one is ignorant of these and even the path of yoga he can still achieve the ultimate goal of salvation by worshiping God with unwavering devotion; and even by intently hearing the prayers of others. One method is for the *Gyaan*-yogi that is through search of knowledge. The other is for the lowest, ignorant and ordinary person through total faith and devotion to God i.e. through *Bhakti*.

There is a subtle message in it: God uniformly cares for all and those who try to reach him, he makes it easier for them and he is ever ready to hold hands.

In verse 33 Krishna unequivocally asserts that he takes care of all just like the sun illumines everything and all beings without discrimination. He adds a promise that if one sees (and understands) the difference between the field (creation) and knower of the field (God) through his eyes of wisdom he is sure to achieve Self-realisation.

Chapter 14: Transcending Gunas for Union with God

In chapter 13 the author talked about Brahman, soul, *prakriti* and the relationship between them; the origin and creation of *prakriti*, lack of form for Brahman, his nature and how he works. He also talked about how everything comes from *prakriti* through its interaction with *Maya* or the three *Gunas* (modes of nature) called Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. He highlighted the influence of *gunas* on mind and ego of a person. He dwelt on the concept of *Purusa*, *Kshetrajana*, *Kshetra* at Universal level and *kshetrajana* and *kshetra* at the micro level (at the level of *prakriti*).

Krishna mentions in passing how our actions caused by the *gunas* determine the kind of family (good or evil) we take birth in our next life; and how these through the channel of our ego and mind even prevail upon our soul and condition the same by worldly desires. He advised Arjuna, what one should do to transcend the *gunas*.

In this chapter Krishna talks in greater detail about the three *gunas* and how these mould the psyche and characteristics of a person and how one could conquer the influence of the same (*gunas*) and act according to his intellect and wisdom to take the right path and progress towards the goal of perfection or Self-realisation.

Of the 27 verses in this chapter only one (verse no. 21) was spoken by Arjuna when he asked Krishna the characteristics of one who had risen above the *gunas*.

In the last verse of chapter 13 Krishna said: that one, who, with his superior eye of wisdom perceives the difference between the field (*kshetra*) and the knower of the field (*kshetrajana*) understands how he could get release from the clutches of *prakriti* (material world) and he becomes fit for union with God. In the opening two verses of this chapter he says that a person who is realised e.g. a sage who knows the relationship between field and the knower of the field and vanquishes his desires and anxiety for the fruits of his actions, rises above the lure of worldly gains for he knows these to be temporary. When one gains this wisdom, worldly bonds, attachments, delusion for gains, positions and possessions are consumed in the fire of Cosmic Consciousness and he becomes one with the Spirit. He rises above the cycle of birth and death and even the cosmic dissolution does not affect him in anyway. Knowing this wisdom several sages had achieved freedom from cycle of birth and death.

Krishna promises to declare this wisdom to Arjuna:

The Process of Creation

Krishna calls *Mahat Brahma*[145] to be his (God's) womb; and that the first creation was *Mula Prakriti* the Great Nature. He says that he plants the seed of creation in the *Mahat Brahma*. This seed is nothing but a part of his Cosmic Consciousness. He makes it clear that he is both the Father and the Mother of creation as the Great Nature is a part of him. It also becomes clear that God alone can't affect creation; he needs to interact with the Great Nature for the same. It is the union of *Kshetrajana* and *Kshetra* that produces the manifested creation. Thus, a human being is both Divine (Self) and Nature (Not-Self). He can't be created by any of these alone, though in truth Nature too is a part of the Divine. It implies that through Nature the Formless acquires a form; and in a way the Infinite seemingly gains finitude. Self (God) and Not-Self (Prakriti) are distinct but for creation they join hands to manifest as a combined unit in the form of embodied being, matter and animals with a soul (God) and body (nature).

Brahman and the Great Nature are the primal parents of all human beings and matter, both in animate and inanimate forms. However, this role was transferred by the Un-manifested Nature (*Mula Prakriti*) to manifested nature (*prakriti*) for expansion of the creation and the *prakriti* acted as multiple wombs of various sizes and forms. In Christianity it is believed that Adam and Eve were the progenitors, the original parents of our race i.e. human beings.

Krishna makes it clear that whatsoever be the womb, and whatever form it may produce the great Brahma is the real womb and Supreme Father, Brahman provides the seed for impregnation. He creates the idea and the blue print of what to create (human beings, animals, matter or vegetation etc), where and when and he works through his creation. Thus, for every event in the world, there is a master blue print, a grand design with God.

In Greek philosophy, Socrates and Plato considered the manifested creation and ideas to be two distinct entities, one was gross that could be seen and experienced and the other was subtle and unseen. This made it difficult to co-relate the two and understand their relationship and how one got displayed into the other. In Gita both are the prerogative of one entity, the Brahman, whose subtle ideas are implemented by him in the creation through his *Maya* (three *gunas*). He further plants himself in the form of soul in everything for a spot check.

The Three *Gunas* (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas)

The word *guna* has two meanings. It means quality and it also stands for the strands of a rope. Nature uses a rope having three strands to bind our ego with the material world. The interesting part is that even the good quality or the best strand also binds us. The strand can be made of steel or silver or even gold but it will do exactly the same job; it will do the binding. One may do it softly and the other tightly. All the three strands are constituents of *Maya* whose primary job is to create delusion it can entangle one in wrong ideas and actions. The irony is that one's actions don't ever satisfy him for even if he gets what he desires, the happiness is short lived; and he soon reverts to his restless state desiring something bigger or better. Only when one transcends the *gunas*[146] he becomes immune to their influence and tastes contentment.*Gunas* are so powerful that at times these influence the soul as well.

The soul though eternal and imperishable but it is embodied; and the body is in any case affected by the *gunas* all the time. A part of the *gunas'* forces spill over to impinge the soul. It starts identifying itself with the modes or principles of nature the *gunas*. Such a soul is called a conditioned soul.

The three *gunas* act independently on the mind and ego of a *jiva* (living being). One has to contend with three different forces, each affecting him in its own way and with differing intensity. At the micro level (dealing with individuals) when the degree of sattva is dominant with the other two having marginal influence the person is said to be of *sattvik* nature. One acquires a *rajasik* nature when rajas *guna* is dominant; and *tamasik* nature when tamas *guna* is dominant and other two are weak. The mother source of the three *gunas*[147] is the same viz. *Maya*; but their attributes differ widely. Let us look at the characteristics of the three *gunas*.

Sattvik

It is the highest of the three *gunas*. In English the word for sattva is 'goodness'. It makes a person compassionate, gentle and well meaning, it urges him to perform good deeds, grants him happiness and both internal and external enlightenment. It creates a pleasant and glowing appearance with visible positive energy. Those who meet such a person feel happy and assured even without his uttering a word. It helps in acquiring intellectual knowledge. His knowledge comes from his intellect *(buddhi*) which is a part of *prakriti;* it is different from wisdom, the intuitive inspiration or consciousness that

emanates from soul. One attains wisdom only when he is able to surmount the *gunas*. Sattva alone cannot ensure one's release from bondage.

One does good deeds under the influence of sattva *guna* but his ego projects it to be his quality or asset. One feels happy, but he remains conscious of his good doing, his sense of doer-ship; his 'I' ness; the feeling of 'I have done it' makes him selfish and small. In short sattva creates 'good ego'. For release from the bondage one must work selflessly as a duty, as a service not as a favour or for self-promotion; it is not a trade-off. By sattva *guna* happiness can be gained but no bliss; and one continues in his cycle of birth and death for he keeps on seeking to fulfill his un-satiated desires.

Rajasik

The English equivalent of rajas is 'passionate'. It arouses passion and a craving for doer-ship and ownership; the person develops attachment. Krishna says that rajas *guna* is created by desire and attachment; and in turn it creates a cascading chain of desires and attachments. It gets into an unending cycle like a plant comes from a seed and then ends up giving seeds for more plants. It makes one active but with an inflated ego and an unquenchable thirst for owning more and still more. His material entanglement and desires keep on going up that makes him restless. He may acquire knowledge but lacks wisdom; the sense of service is weak for everything becomes a business for him. The person attaches great value to wealth, position, fame and recognition, all attributes that cause bondage. Such a person cannot attain release from the cycle of birth and death; his unfulfilled desires keep calling him back. Only one who performs all his activities selflessly and as a duty in the service of God can gain Self-realisation.

Tamasik

The English word for tamas is 'dullness'. It originates from ignorance. It is the worst display of *Maya*. It makes one lazy, inert and indolent with wrong ideas; the person lacks the basics of spirituality and divine realisation. He indulges in oversleeping and never thinks, much less try to pray to God. He becomes casual. The pity is that he avoids even those actions that could provide him material prosperity. A misplaced ego and search for perceived comfort makes his consciousness limited by his body like that of an animal. An animal's prime target is his food, likewise one under the dominant influence of tamas *guna* remains focused on search of food. His chief priority is his body and hence, he is always involved in satiating his bodily needs; his food and sensual requirements.

Dr. Gunwant Shah in his commentary on Gita titled 'Krishna ka Jeevan Sangeet' has explained the three *gunas* with the following example:

Three persons are walking in a garden. One with dominant sattva appreciates the flowers and enjoys the fragrance from a distance; he never puts his nose to the petals for the fragrance. He respects the flower's identity.

One with dominant rajas *guna* would attach his nose to flower petals to smell it; he may touch it and may even pluck it. He is greatly attracted by it.

One with dominant tamas *guna* would for sure pluck it and smell it from close. He wants to own it and is ignorant of the fact that in no time it will wither away.

The gist of the foregoing is that the three *gunas* are present in all beings in differing degrees and the dominant *guna* determines their nature. Sattva dominant people are virtuous; they always try to help others in everyway. Their noble actions give them inner light, contentment and happiness. They gain knowledge and stay relaxed due to inner peace and contentment.

All *gunas* bind us to the world and one cannot achieve Self-realisation through these. For achieving the same one needs to work selflessly, without any attachment and follow the spiritual path in yogic discipline.

One with dominant sattva *guna* enjoys an advantage, all the gates of his body (senses and organs) experience the light of his knowledge and act nobly. He experiences self-consciousness that illumines his mind; his senses become sharp and sensitive with higher energy level. This is the surest sign of ascendency of sattva in him. Such a person stands a good chance of taking to spiritual path and rising upwards. Hence, sattva is signified by presence of inner illumination and knowledge in a person and he aspires to rise to a higher level.

One, dominated by rajas *guna* is actively involved in worldly activities; he is energetic and remains restless. He gets attached to his work and develops desires which are his prime movers. The preponderance of desire causes greed, higher activity level and restlessness. The person derives pleasure from these; his attachment and craving keep on going up and these usually block his chances of rising to a higher level. They mostly stay in the middle region unless a streak of sattva creeps in and enlightens them to selfless work on the spiritual path and creates an urge in them to rise to a higher level.

A saving grace is that though they are egoistic and restless, their strong motivation to do something to achieve name and fame etc, triggers a learning process and in a few cases the same can lift them to target a higher goal; they may start working like one under sattva *guna*. Unless one who is under rajas *guna* is really stupid he does not slip down and starts working like one in tamas *guna.* This is due to his pronounced inclination to do something and rise in society.

Those under tamas *guna*, because of their ignorance and lazy disposition, they do not make use of their free-will to improve their position. Due to their inherent negative qualities they develop sensual angularities and they nurse a false sense of pride even in their inactive, negative and indolent state or in seeking sensual pleasures.

Tamas is manifested by darkness (ignorance), delusion, lack of knowledge, dullness, indiscipline, casualness (irresponsibility) and laziness. Under the influence of tamas *guna* one avoids work, thus he denies himself of the possibility of gaining knowledge through personal experience. He indulges in excesses of the wrong kind and uses his energy indiscriminately for purposes that are not beneficial to him. He seldom rises to a higher level; in fact, he usually goes further down.

The gist is that while those in rajas remain in the middle region. Those in tamas are mostly condemned to the lowest rung because of lack of actions and wrong actions but those in sattva have a chance to overcome the influence of rajas and tamas on them and further improve their position.

For advancing to the level of Self-realisation one has to go beyond sattva and achieve the state of transcendence to *gunas* or *trigunateeta*.

Our *Gunas* affect our Future Lives as Well

Krishna now talks how *gunas* affect our next life. We must understand that like our earth (called *mrityuloka*[148]) there are other worlds (heaven, hell, *pataal* loka below the oceans and intermediate astral worlds or *lokas* that are inhabited by different categories of gods and spirits). One's stay in a particular world or loka depends on his accumulated *karma*. Similarly there are grades of people under the influence of each of the *guna:* In *sattvik* category there could be good people, saintly people, and saintly plus those who are on way to Self-realisation. Likewise, *rajasik* and *tamasik* people too have categories. The accumulated *Karma* and the category in which one falls determine where one

would go after his death and the time he would spend there. This cycle goes on till one transcends *gunas* and attains Self-realisation.

Krishna says that if one meets his death when sattva is his dominant *guna* he goes to

the loka of pure angels or heaven. After enjoying good time there he returns to earth and takes birth in a noble family and continues his good work.

When, one under the influence of rajas *guna* dies he takes birth in some loka or on the earth itself where passionate beings have opportunity for active engagement and progress. Likewise, when one dies while under tamas *guna*, he takes birth in still lower regions say in families of base human beings or amongst animals on earth or in other lokas full of demons and depraved beings who are violent and cause suffering to others.

The foregoing gives the concept of heaven, astral worlds, hell and earth. Interestingly our *karma* driven by the *gunas* determine what we make of our present life and our future lives. Hence, our fate is a product of our actions which is triggered by our free-will, but the origin or the mother source is the *guna*.

When the embodied soul knows the true role of *gunas* (the modes of nature) and rises above the same, it achieves freedom from birth and death; it merges with Brahman i.e. it achieves Self-realisation. The point to note here is that the modes are a product of nature (*prakriti*). When the sage or the seer realises that it is the modes and modes alone that cause all the bondages and also realises what lies beyond the modes, he achieves Self-realisation.

Characteristics of One who Transcends *Gunas*

In Hindu scriptures, one who transcends the modes of nature has been called *Jeevanmukta*[149]. It implies that one becomes totally free from the normal life that is birth, suffering and death while he is alive on earth. Arjuna requests Krishna to tell him the characteristics of one who transcends the *gunas* and becomes *jeevanmukta*; about his life and how he achieves the same? Arjuna was looking for distinguishing attributes of one who becomes *jeevanmukta* while still living in the world. It was unimaginable to him. It is a significant query. Arjuna was not an ordinary person. He was not only a relation and an old friend of Krishna but his disciple as well. Krishna was his guru, but he did not know that he was way advanced on the spiritual path and an enlightened soul. He knew that God's extent of communion with a being depends on his degree of advancement in yoga and devotion.

To some, God speaks in words through his intuition; to others he speaks not vocally but through his thoughts, to still others he may appear as a vision and communicate directly or through his feelings; in some cases he may appear as a light or in words in ether and so on. Arjuna wants to know how a living man who is free and without attachment to the world, experiences the divine presence; and how it shows on his countenance and in his action.

Krishna replies that an ordinary person reacts to the world with love, hate, greed, anger, attraction and repulsion etc. because of attachments and delusion due to dualities. He is governed by his mind and senses, unmindful of the influence of modes of nature. But a true yogi on the path of *jeevanmukta* remains the same in all situations. He looks within and enjoys a relaxed happiness of his spirit. He remains tha same; relaxed, for he is without any prejudice, nothing agitates him i.e. he retains his tranquility. He observes the events and the situations in his life in an unattached way and therefore, nothing bothers him.

He adds that one who becomes *jeevanmukta* stays unperturbed under all situations for he knows that it was none other than the modes that were at work and these do not bother him. To him light, darkness, activity and inactivity appear to be a part of mutation of nature, a mere delusion. Being unattached he does not entangle himself with these. Since he stays aloof, he neither longs for these nor abhors the same. He rises above worldly happenings, the dualities; he ceases to be a common being.

To such a being pain and pleasure, a piece of clod, stone, and a piece of gold, blame and praise, pleasant and unpleasant are all alike, merely a perception caused by the modes of nature. He is firm in his belief and equanimity and therefore, remains the same in honour and dishonour; none is his friend and none a foe. His actions are pure, desire less and dedicated to the service of God.

Having described the characteristics of a *jeevanmukta* being, Krishna tells how he reaches that stage. Here he talks of *bhakti*-yoga and unwavering devotion to Personal God. He says that “He who serves Me with unwavering devotion and love transcends the three modes and qualifies for union with Brahman” (ref. 14.26). He is talking of personal God and he implies that such a person is so deeply involved in devotion and love for God that he has no time to think about himself or anything else, he becomes completely selfless and hence, becomes fit for liberation from the cycle of birth and death. By using the word ‘Me’ for God he once again highlights his being the incarnation of Supreme

God or Brahman. He also indicates that through unwavering worship of personal God one can achieve union with formless, Impersonal Brahman.

In the concluding verse (verse 27) he says that he is the abode, the very foundation of the Eternal, Imperishable and Infinite Brahman. Here, his reference is to himself, Krishna the embodied being is a manifestation of Brahman. He is the soul of a living being which is akin to and is a part of him (Brahman). The original abode of the soul is the un-manifested Brahman. He makes a forceful assertion that he as Krishna, the personal God is the same as Brahman.

Verses 26 and 27 are exactly what Jesus said in Bible: “Before Abraham was, I am.” John 8.58; and, “I and my Father are one.” John 10.30

Vedas, other Hindu scriptures and Gita treat all humans (*jiva*) as divine beings and exhort that their main goal is to seek the Divine. Only when they transcend the *gunas* they can attain freedom from the trauma of birth, suffering, decay and death. One can achieve peak performance in his vocation if he controls and subdues the *gunas*.

The ancient Indian system of teaching (*Guru – Shishya parampara*) focused on inculcating a discipline, a learning process to develop finer aspects of life through control of *gunas*. Great emphasis was laid on ethics, aesthetics and a concerted and wide exposure to spiritual science, history, literature, culture, music and fine arts. The teaching system evolved a self-learning process that was time bound and encouraged inter action between teacher and the disciple. The duration could differ and some disciples were given extended time to bring them up to a desired level. But in every case the disciples had to evolve through self-learning. Another reason for limiting the time of disciple’s stay at the *guru’s ashram* was to ensure that they did not inculcate the weaknesses of the *guru* as well.

The system of fourfold division (*chaturvarnayaam* division of society into Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra - chapter 4.13) of society was quality based. It was not a caste based system on the basis of birth. It was a division of work in order to harness the best out of each member of the society depending on his special traits as per the influence of *gunas*. An effort was made to help individuals to control their *gunas* and graduate to a higher level. Just to give an example, the Kings had a royal preceptor (*raaj guru*) who advised them on all important matters so that the spirit of service and well being of the society was promoted. The *gurus*, including the *raaj- guru* were Brahmin who had sattva dominant attributes. The Kings were Kshatriyas who were under the

influence rajas-*guna*. They focused on inculcating a spirit of service and fair play in the King's actions.

The Kings were prompted by the *raaj guru* to advance towards sattva *guna*. It was systemic process that one followed and he gained without making a conscious effort. The intent was to make the right path the routine pathway. Any deviation was initially pointed by the *guru* and later the King's evolved awareness guided them. It was a subtle but a holistic approach to arouse his consciousness and to make him sensitive and alive to a sense of service.

Conquering the modes of nature (*gunas*) and transcendingthe same is a difficult process. It involves a constant struggle till one learns to acquire a third-party view (*saakshi bhav*) and starts behaving like a witness even while being a player. It is like swimming in sea with huge waves. Imagine one hitting the peak with the wave and falling in the trough before climbing to the peak again like in a swing; and to do so repeatedly. It must be awe inspiring and exhausting experience with perpetual fear of drowning in the sea. Now if one understands that whether he is at the crest or in the pit he remains on top of the wave, and that the waves merely do a routine, and that these do so continuously and every day, then the element of fear starts fading away.

Life is exactly like the waves with highs and lows. We have to make ourselves the master and not the servant that unfortunately we normally choose to become. Through practise of yoga and meditation we can overpower the *gunas* and can become the original self, what we are born as, a divine being.

Gist of Chapter 14

The crux of Chapter 14 in one sentence: 'Just ensure you choose the right path then do what suits you best with absolute trust in God; always remember you are unique and strive to stay as such.'

Krishna had said that the manifested creation was a product of God (*Purusa*) and *prakriti*; and that God used his *Maya* the agency that controls the *Gunas*, for creation. God was the Father and *prakriti* the Mother. Now he says that God was both the Father and Mother because *prakriti* too was created by him and was a part of him. He introduces the concept of *Mula Prakriti* and called it *Mahat Brahma* the Great Nature. It is actually the Un-manifested *Prakrit*i from which the manifested *prakriti* flows.

The seed for creation is planted by Brahman in the womb of *prakriti*. What and in what form, (male, female, human, animal, plant and tree, or inanimate) and where and when, to create is solely decided by Brahman as per his ideas and grand design; *prakriti* has no role in it. This means that God works as per his blue print and entirely at his pleasure.

However, in everything in the creation, he plants a miniscule element of himself as *atman* or soul. Thus, for the sake of creation (for our sake), God, the infinite and formless becomes finite and takes a form; and remains embodied and hence, he is limited by the body and stays within the same. But despite this miniscule presence God retains his characteristic of being eternal. Hence, on the death of an individual the body that embodied him dies, but the soul doesn't die, it just moves out. But due to the effect of *gunas* on him plus his *karmic* balance the soul changes a bit, it carries with it five senses for acquiring knowledge and mind from his previous life.

We know our mind is full of millions of ideas that his senses keep feeding depending on how he lives his life. The residual balance of his ideas (after his death) decides where (in which body) the soul will park itself. If the residue is spiritual and noble with elements of 20 attributes given by Krishna in chapter 13 and the mind is dominated by *sattvik guna* it gets a spiritual body and environment so that it could proceed further on the chosen spiritual path.

There is a common perception that God determines our destiny; what we do and what we don't; our success and failure is entirely controlled by him and in fact, it is written by him even before our birth. Brahmin community from ancient times has propagated this belief with a view to promote themselves. Their importance in the society and earnings depended on it as they performed various *yagna* and prayers to different gods to get over hurdles faced by common folk in desire fulfillment. As per Gita it is our *karma* that determine our destiny.

In this chapter Krishna makes it clear that God follows a system which operates on auto pilot; it is the *karma* and *gunas* that determine one's fate. God gives equal opportunities to all and offers subtle hints; those who have trust in him, follow a disciplined life and cultivate desirable attributes and *sattvik guna* pick up these hints and succeed in life. But *gunas* alone cannot help us achieve success in our ultimate goal of life i.e. union with God; we need *karma* done in a disciplined and selfless manner for gaining success and the ultimate goal of Self-realisation.

A disciplined life includes practise of yoga, pranayaam, meditation, cultivation of desirable attributes and faith in God. These are necessary for success in any field. In the material world we can achieve excellence by following this approach. But for achieving Self-realisation or union with God besides the above one needs the capacity to transcend *gunas* to eliminate their adverse effect. Achieving equanimity is very important for going beyond *gunas* and for achieving what in spiritual terminology is called becoming *jeevanmukta*. King Janak is an example that most scholars mention in this regard. He was a king, a house holder in the true sense, yet, he was above the world, unattached to worldly happenings; and he was singularly devoted in prayers to God all the time. *Jeevanmukta* implies that one is in the world performing all his duties yet, not getting involved in it. He tries to do his best without worrying about the results and surrenders himself to God.

In this chapter Krishna has highlighted that one must clearly understand the role and importance of *gunas* by acquiring discriminating wisdom and do everything to counter their influence by constantly trying to uplift their performance through achieving equanimity of mind (remaining the same in success or failure, honour or dishonour and other pairs of opposites); and with complete faith in God and service to him with unwavering devotion (*Bhakti*-yoga*)*.

Chapter 15: The Yoga of the Supreme Being

In chapter 13 Krishna talked about the field (*kshetra*) and the knower of the field (*kshetrajana*), Un-manifested Brahman, Un-manifested *Prakriti*, soul, prakriti; 24 constituents of the body, 20 principle attributes for success in life and for achieving release from the cycle of birth and death; the three modes of nature (*gunas*) and the nature of Brahman.

In chapter 14 he further explained the three *gunas*, how these influence human actions, their lives and the afterlife; categorization of people in Sattva, Rajas and Tamas as per their dominant *guna* and their characteristics; how to rise above the *gunas* and become *trigunateeta* and achieve *jeevanmukta*. Towards the conclusion he exhorts that unalloyed devotion to Personal Brahman (*Bhakti*-yoga) was the way to achieve release from the cycle of birth and death. He highlighted that through devotion to Personal Brahman one can achieve union with Impersonal Brahman.

In chapter 15 he describes the state of the world and its linkage with *Parbrahman* the primal creator. There are twenty verses in this chapter all from Krishna.

The Cosmic Tree

Krishna says that the wise who are knowledgeable about the Brahman, Veda and *prakriti* talk about an eternal ashvattha tree (Peepal tree) with its roots above and branches down (inverted tree). At the same time some branches look upwards as well. Its leaves are the Vedic hymns. The inverted tree analogy is used to explain the influence of *prakriti* on human consciousness and his senses; and his entanglement with the material world. The tree describes the working of elements of *prakriti* on human beings. This 'Tree of Life' covers the creation in all the *lokas*; it exists on the Cosmic Scale. It finds mention not only in Hindu scriptures but in scriptures of many ancient civilizations of the world; and in Bible as well. This tree symbolizes human body, mind and senses and depicts how these are influenced by the *gunas* of *prakriti* and its linkage to Supreme Consciousness that is *Parbrahman*.

'Ashvattha' in common parlance is called Peepal tree in India. It is a large tree having a long life. It has several branches most spreading upwards and some downwards, with several boughs and twigs; and large number of leaves that act as the sensory organs (of the tree), that nourish the entire tree. Its leaves have been called here as Vedic hymns as a metaphor. Vedic hymns are

repositories of knowledge, which if understood and followed can raise one to a higher plane through the spiritual nectar these offer. The knowledge these offer can even lead one to immortality. The green leaves act as a channel for nourishment that the tree obtains from the environment, air, and sun light etc that not only protect it but ensure its growth as well. Peepal tree is believed to be a divine tree created by the primal God (*Parbrahman*), hence, it is considered to be sacred; and is worshipped.

In chapter 10.26 Krishna had honoured ashvattha (Peepal) tree by naming it as his expansion. The roots of trees on earth in nature go down, contrary to this it has been said here that the roots of the ashvattha tree are upwards; it indicates that its mother source (earth) lies in the creator. Bramha the first creation of God forms the base of the trunk from which its branches come out and expand; it represents the *prakriti*, earth, *jiva* (life) and other elements, all parts of the *prakriti*. On one hand the inverted tree represents the entire creation both animate and inanimate and on the other it is a metaphor for human body with its organs, senses, arteries and veins that facilitate smooth flow of life force.

It is a paradox to call ashvattha tree as eternal. In fact, the word ashvattha connotes that which would not be there the following day (tomorrow). It is symbolic of the world that changes every moment, hence, it cannot be eternal. There is a catch here. The world keeps on changing, yet, it stays alive and on the whole it remains the same. Why? A change is not the end, it is a renewal. This is a universal truth; everything keeps changing all the time; the leaves, the branches and even the tree itself decay and fall and create room for new ones. Even though death is perceived as an end but in fact it is truly a part of a continuing process that is eternal. It is the limitation of our perception; our keenness to see what is near and immediate, that makes things look different from what these actually are.

The description of branches going up and down is again symbolic. It is a display of action of *gunas*, the modes of nature. On earth, it is the earth itself that binds the tree to its roots that is the bondage of the world. The lower branches and those looking down are those that the modes of nature rajas and tamas influence to keep entangled in the web of the material world (*samsara*). Those branches that look up try to break free (under influence of sattva) and rise towards the creator above. It is all a play of the modes of nature. In case of the inverted tree referred above the order is a mirror image; those towards the roots above are in sattva *guna* that try to break free. Those involved in actions of desire fulfillment come down and expand down-wards towards the

material world. The tree connotes everything the *purusa*, *prakriti*, *gunas* and the 24 elements of the body (ref. chapter 2 and 7) and the entire creation.

Unfortunately, human beings suffer delusion and are unable to understand the real tree (the ultimate aim of life), where it begins and where it ends. If we cut this firmly rooted tree with the sword of knowledge and detachment, then by selfless action and devotion to God we can gain union with him that is the real source from which every-thing emanates and spreads forth. He creates, sustains and finally causes its dissolution, its withdrawal to un-manifested form. The delusion due to *gunas* keeps us entangled in a mesh that blinds us to this truth. We have to find a way to shed this delusion and free ourselves from the mesh and seek refuge in the Brahman.

In Bible Jesus talks about the ignorant human beings who are deluded and remain attached to the material world[150].

Krishna tells one who can get out of this mesh can obtain release from the cycle of birth and death, the continuing cycle of back and forth movement. He says that only those who have no pride and stay unattached and manage to get over desires (of worldly gains) can achieve equanimity (become free from dualities and stay the same in pleasure and pain). They are always devoted to Brahman and can obtain release from worldly bonds. They gain union with Brahman and become eternal like him. They go to his abode and stay there. His abode is self-illumined and there is no need for light from sun, moon or from fire. It has to be understood that on dissolution there is no sun, moon or fire anyway. The Un-manifested Brahman stays in his self-lit abode; and one who reaches there never returns. This thought has been elaborated in many Upanishads. In fact, it is said that the light in creation is a borrowed one from Brahman's unseen light, on dissolution of the creation the same is withdrawn creating all round darkness.

Manifestation of Spirit as Individual Soul

Krishna says that our *atman*, the soul is a miniscule part or expansion of Brahman, the Supreme Spirit. A fragment of him (Brahman) becomes a soul in the world of beings. It takes six senses (five senses for gathering knowledge plus the mind) from *prakriti* for interaction with the world. This statement raises two questions.

Can the Immutable Brahman be broken into fragments? And why does the soul need six senses when earlier in chapter 13.14 he categorically said that

Brahman has no senses of his own and he uses the senses of the living beings and thus has multiple senses and organs?

The answer is that employing his *Maya* (the *gunas* of *prakriti*), he manifests himself in individual embodied beings and the six senses are the tools for interface with both the animate and inanimate in the world that is full of relativity. The Spirit chooses to be broken into fragments, no, the soul is a miniscule expansion of the Spirit.

Brahman is Absolute, there is no second to him and hence there is no relativity. The material world is relative and everyone and everything is a unique product of its accumulated *karma*; it has a dependent existence and senses are needed for discrimination. Brahman is self-dependent, omniscient consciousness; hence, he needs no senses or sense organs. The 24 elements of body are affected by the *gunas* and that cause delusion in living beings; it makes them finite, whereas, Brahman remains Infinite. The delusion prompts individual *jiva* to misuse the free-will or choice granted to him by the creator. It becomes conditioned by the mind and ego and it partially compromises its own independence but it still remains eternal and an elemental fragment of the Spirit.

The *jiva* has both worldly existence and cosmic wandering after the body dies. At the time of death, the *jiva* goes out taking with it the subtle body (the five senses and mind referred above) and retains these during its sojourn in the astral world, on earth and other cosmic regions. These senses move with him like perfume wafts in air wherever it goes. Employing the subtle body, the *jiva* enjoys whatever objects of senses it comes across.

Unfortunately, the deluded worldly being remains ignorant for he lacks discipline; his vision is limited to surface appearances. He fails to see the indwelling soul for he lacks the spiritual eye to see within. He is condemned to continue in the cycle of birth, suffering and death. The yogi, the sage on the other hand becomes disciplined and practises yoga and meditation; he develops the spiritual eye and sees God in his soul and seeks his grace. His only goal is to seek union with the Supreme. He is not only devoted to him but he learns and loves to see him everywhere and ultimately gains release from bondage of birth and death.

Krishna asserts that everything in creation is due to him (God). In fact, the entire creation is a display of his effulgence, omnipotence and omnipresence. The light from sun, moon and the fire are nothing but his cosmic energy. The light is created by the vibration of atoms and sub-atomic particles that derive

energy from vibrations of divine energy that emanates from Cosmic Consciousness. This Cosmic Energy enters the earth and permeates all living beings, animals, plants and even inanimate matter. It provides the life force to *jiva*. Herbs and plants are nourished through the watery moon that controls the presence and flow of water. The truth is that all in creation, solid, liquid, gases, plants, animals, *jiva* and even inanimate matter[151] are alive due to the presence of God's Cosmic Energy.

God's fiery power enters the body of living beings and it provides the life force. It works in conjunction with our breaths (inhaling and exhaling process), *praan vaayu* and *apaan vaayu*. It helps us digest the four kinds of foods (eaten by chewing, by sucking, by licking and by swallowing). Our fiery power (*praan vayu*) takes the oxygen from air and activates the process of digestion and creation of blood; and through *apaan vaayu* it throws out the toxins generated in the process of digestion. The system works on an auto-pilot (self-generating and self-regulating) through the fiery power, but it requires a discipline to be exercised. It derives energy from nature - air and light etc. the moment one becomes greedy and indulgent in his habits the system gets upset; the rhythmic process gets disturbed and we get ailments. We have to then take corrective actions like medicines etc. If that doesn't work then we have to go to a doctor like we appeal to God, pray to him with devotion and faith. The yogis practise the discipline of yoga and pranayaam regularly that besides giving them peace, focus and concentration keeps them healthy and fit.

Krishna adds that he (God) was situated all over the body but he was especially present in the heart of all beings for he prefers a pure heart. He provides or denies memory and knowledge (*gyaan*). Hence, he is not only the life force, the very cause of life, but is present in mind, ego and all senses and in the heart and that sharpens one's feelings and sensitivity.

Krishna called these attributes as memory that provides us perception and cognition. The gist is that God is the essence of all knowledge and our sensitivity and emotions flow from him. He is the source of all knowledge including that in our scriptures like Vedas, Upanishads and Vedanta. God is truly the author of the knowledge in all our texts. All Vedic literature describes the opulences and celebrates the glory of God. These provide direction to know him and can guide us on path to Self-realisation. He clearly states that he can be known through the study of Vedas.

Once again, he highlights the theme of two kinds of beings in the creation: the perishable body (*ksara*) and imperishable soul (*aksara*). This particular theme

runs through the entire Gita. In the seventh chapter he used the terms *para* and *apara*; in eighth chapter he called these as *adhibhuta* and *adhyatma*; and in the thirteenth chapter he used the terms *kshetra* and *kshetrajana*. In this chapter he called these as the tree of life (perishable) and *jiva*; and he explains these as two kinds of *Purusha.*

Throughout Gita he talks of imperishable soul and perishable *prakriti* as distinct and yet the same; one comes from the other. Now he adds a third dimension and says that in addition to these two, there is that highest Being, the Super Soul aka *Paramatman*, *Parmeshwar*, *Purshottama* or simply *Ishwar* who enters the three *lokas*, space (*akaash*), earth (*prithvi*) where the entire creation stays (including all the universes called *Brahmaand*); and under water universe called *pataal loka* to nurse all elements in his creation. He (Super Soul) is the ruler of the two kinds of *Purusha*; one is truly imperishable and is there when the entire creation is dissolved. Here, he makes a clear distinction between soul, *atman* that he earlier called as *aksara* and Super Soul or *Paramatman*.

Individual soul or embodied being though imperishable has a limited existence; it draws to itself five senses plus mind and moves from one body to another; and at times it is influenced by our mind and ego and to that extent its self-dependence is diluted. Being an expansion of Brahman, it becomes different from him. On dissolution of the creation it withdraws into him.

Thus, Krishna asserts that there is *prakriti* and there is *jiva*, the soul or the being; and above these, there is the Controller in Chief the Super Soul. This is the message of Veda and other scriptures. One, who understands this truth, knows the omniscient, omnipresent, Immutable Supreme Person. He worships him with total devotion and surrender and eventually qualifies to become one with him. He sees his effulgence all round and within himself. He acquires the wisdom to discriminate the real from the unreal. Neither the Super Soul nor its fragment, the individual souls present themselves in our field of vision like other matters, hence, we can't see them.

The only way we can know them (Super Soul and soul) is through experience. When we arouse our spiritual eye and rise above our own self, then only we can see them; and then we see them everywhere. For this, one has to gain liberation from delusion and seek discriminative wisdom. How can we do it? We have to withdraw our mind from sense objects (the material world); we would then be able to control our ego and finally we have to look within and concentrate on the self. In Christianity it is said that 'the kingdom of God is

within you'. This is a metaphorical statement; it implies that everything else is unreal, ephemeral and of no value. The intuitive wisdom we get from the self within can help us seek the Super Self.

Dr, Gunawant Shah has beautifully explained this in his commentary on Gita titled 'Krishna ka Jeevan Sangeet' (page 332). He says that in normal life when we ride a scooter we are unmindful of the spark plug that keeps it running. We much less care, wherefrom the spark comes? It is only when it stops we discover the presence of carbon on the spark plug; if we clean the same, it starts running again. The spark plug is like our soul, unfortunately we can't see it. Rarely, we think about the source of the spark; we take it as given, a part of the deal. Why? It requires intense search and sustained hard work to understand it. We have to develop mental compatibility with the plug and the spark. We have to make ourselves compatible and work with whatever we are dealing with; in the present case it is a two-wheeler scooter. It is the same with soul and Super Soul. Dr. Gunwant Shah mentions the following anecdote to explain the situation further.

> "Two friends were sitting in a hotel room chit chatting. One of them asks the other, why haven't you married so far?
>
> The other friend replied that he was looking for a perfect partner; but he was yet to meet one. He said: he met a beautiful girl in Paris with strikingly attractive eyes and he really liked her.
>
> Then what happened?
>
> She turned out to be very proud of herself and lacked even elementary kindness; she was almost ruthless.
>
> The first friend expressed regret and said; surely there must have been other girls?
>
> Yes! I met a girl in New York, who too was beautiful, clever, understanding and generous. She was a perfect match!
>
> Then what happened?
>
> She didn't accept my proposal.
>
> Why?
>
> She was looking for a perfect match!"

The gist is that the Super Soul, soul and *prakriti* make and manage the entire creation and maintain a delicate balance. They have a perfect match all the

time. In Bible too the trinity consists of the Holy Father, the Holy Son and the Holy Ghost and they manage the entire creation. Jesus made several statements like 'The father is greater than me' and 'Thy will be done'. We have to strive to fit into his scheme of things; that is his will; and we only have the choice of our actions. We fail because we desire God to fit into our will even when we know, it is wrong.

The last three verses of this chapter are very important. Krishna calls Arjuna as sinless (*anagha*). It implies that he had achieved discriminating wisdom; he was beyond the reach of *gunas*; and material world had no value in his eyes, hence, he was free from any delusion. If the yogi could become like Arjuna by giving up all worldly attachments and renders devotional service to Supreme God then he qualifies for becoming *jeevanmukta* (free from life and fit for union with the God).

Krishna is very candid, he calls himself *Purshottma* (the Perfect Being, the One who cannot be surpassed[152]). He also says that Vedas given by him are a repository of mysterious, subtle and absolute knowledge through which one could know him (Supreme God). And one who knows him as the Perfect Being, achieves divine wisdom; he fulfills all his duties and he has nothing more to achieve in life, therefore, he has no need to take birth again.

He repeatedly tells Arjuna that he (Krishna) indeed was the Supreme Being, the Primal God and that his Krishna form was only an incarnation for fulfilling a divine purpose. Besides this, he analyses every issue thread bare so as to leave no doubt in Arjuna's mind. He wants him to have total conviction in whatever he tells him. He knew being a wise person he (Arjuna) would not act unless he was fully convinced of the need and purpose of his action, even if, God asked him to do so. Excellence in life or any field demands such a conviction and commitment.

Gist of Chapter 15

The crux of Chapter 15 in one sentence: 'Reaching God is priority no.1 in one's life; and one should awaken himself to his presence with him at all times.'

In earlier chapters, Krishna talked about God the creator, *jiva*, and the *prakriti*, and the relationship between these and how to achieve our ultimate goal of union with God and gaining freedom from the cycle of birth, suffering and death. He explained these through different linkages.

In chapter 13 he talked about *kshetrajana* and *kshetra.* In chapter 15 for the first time he touched upon Un-manifested *Prakriti* and dwelt at length upon manifested *prakriti* and *gunas*; and how these affect one's psyche, personality, actions and even his future lives; and how one must transcend *gunas* to progress on the spiritual path and eventually achieve Self-realisation. Since our memory is short and limited by our life span, he described death as an event in the midst of continuity in which the *atman* the soul continues its journey taking the subtle body comprising of five senses and mind from our previous life. In chapter 15 he continues with his explanation of the relationship between, God, *jiva* and *prakriti* using the allegory of an inverted ashvattha (Peepal) tree.

The inverted Cosmic Tree portrays the relationship between the creator Brahman, *jiva* and *prakriti*. Why inverted tree? Because it is believed that God lives in heaven which is up and above. He is the origin and everything emanates from him hence, the roots of the Cosmic Tree (that represents the creation) have to go up and hence, it becomes inverted. The branches going up and down, is a symbolism. It shows how the creation actually exists. Those with *sattvik guna* are inclined towards God, hence, some branches go up; but most of these go sideways and down under the influence of *rajasik* and *taamsik gunas* because of their entanglement with the world.

It is our delusion and deep attachment to the material world that keeps some branches going down and away from God. The entire creation derives its life energy through roots from its mother source, the Brahman. Its sustenance is done through sun, moon and air. One can cut the lower branches that connote its entanglement in the web of the world through the sword of knowledge. The same can be obtained through a disciplined life, shedding delusional elements like pride, greed, anger, jealousy etc. We can then acquire equanimity that provides the capacity to transcend dualities; and we can even change course and go up towards the base (root of the tree) which is the foundation where our mother source resides.

Krishna, having broadly talked about the relationships, explains that all beings have a soul which is a fraction of the Cosmic Soul or Self. It is not that the Immutable God breaks into small fragments; truly each soul is an expansion of him (as it is said one in many). Shankaracharya explains this by the space in a closed jar or a house being a part of universal space. In the world of sense objects when the soul exits it wanders through the worlds- *lokas*. It takes five senses for gathering knowledge plus a mind (called the subtle body) from his

previous life for interaction with the rest and to that extent it differs from the Cosmic Self.

The Supreme God called *Purshottama* or *Ishwar* is the Eternal Lord and the master of all the worlds. He resides in the hearts of all beings and he creates memory and knowledge or the lack of it. He provides the living force and arranges digestion of four type foods that we eat. He sustains the world through sun (light and heat), moon (water and herbs for plants) and air etc. Those who are deluded get entangled in the web of world- *samsara*; they do not know the Supreme God and cannot distinguish between imperishable *jiva* and perishable *prakriti*- (the body). On the other hand, the sages who acquire intuitive wisdom know the distinction between perishable and imperishable and they also know the Supreme God and his opulences. Through practise of yoga and meditation and constant and unwavering devotion to God they become *jeevanmukta* and qualify to go to his abode; and become one with him.

Krishna's repeated emphasis on perishable and imperishable and goal of life etc is to create an existential awakening in Arjuna's mind about who he is; what is the reason of his being there at the battle field and what is the goal of his life?

Chapter 16: The Nature of Divine and Demonic Beings

In chapter 13 Krishna gave 20 attributes of wisdom. He said that one could attain sage like qualities if he imbibed and practiced the same and he could eventually achieve perfection in life.

In chapter 14 he talked about the process of creation and God's role in it; how the *gunas* affected one's mindset and his behaviour; and how one could achieve Self-realisation by transcending the *gunas* (the three modes of nature).

In chapter 15 he described the 'Tree of Life'; the linkage between *prakriti* (material world), soul and the Super Soul. He dwelt on the distinction between a soul and the Super Soul; and how the former could become one with the latter by acquiring compatibility with it through spiritual discipline. He said that the 'Tree of Life' (the inverted tree) had some of its roots going up (towards God) and some going down (due to attachments with sense objects). This was his way of describing two kinds of people: those with divine qualities rise above to attain unity with God and the other suffer delusion due to rajas and tamas *gunas* andget lured by sense gratification.

In this chapter he deals with two kinds of beings: those with divine nature (who have *sattvik* qualities) who strive to become one with God and those with demonic nature, they get deep into sense enjoyment and are deluded by the lure of material world. As a result of which they condemn themselves to downhill slide and suffering.

Those with divine nature rise above and strive for perfection whereas those having demonic nature descend to lower levels. This is a continuing process and goes from one life to the next one; it becomes a natural trait like the flow of water[153]. Interestingly Krishna repeatedly assured in earlier chapters that both kinds of people can graduate to higher levels if they followed the discipline recommended by him.

Human beings are a product of accumulated heredity over generations. However, all human beings are gifted with free-will and choice of *karma*. With the practice of yoga and meditation one can counter the influence of *gunas* and he can even change his course. Indeed it is difficult and it demands strict discipline. In this chapter Krishna deals with subtle details in this regard.

There are 24 verses in this chapter all spoken by Krishna.

Vedas, our scriptures and mythology, are full of stories about fight between those who had divine nature (*devas*), and those who had demonic nature (*asuras*). Symbolically these describe fights between good and evil forces. In Ramayana, Rama represents *devas* and Ravana the *asuras*. In Mahabharata Pandavas were righteous kind and they followed the *dharma* and justice. Kauravas were highly egoistic; they wanted the kingdom (that belonged to Pandavas) and power at all costs, they were of demonic nature and nothing was too low for them in order to achieve their goal. The fight between the two kinds of human beings (divine and demonic) was perhaps God's way or nature's recipe for maintaining a balance in the creation.

Those in between the two types (good and evil beings), remained sandwiched and invariably suffered. The reason for this classification is the fact that human beings like to remain true to their type and it becomes a natural trait in their character. In the present times too, it holds true, there are good people; and there are the opposite. Krishna discusses the qualities of the two kinds of human beings in this chapter.

Those having Divine Nature

Krishna tells Arjuna some ennobling qualities that contribute to achieving *sattvik* mode of nature (*guna*). We will briefly discuss the same hereunder:

Fearlessness

It gives one the capacity to face challenges. In any walk of life, one encounters obstacles, there are speed breakers that he must surmount and come up trumps to gain progress. One needs self-belief and a determination, to face such road blocks boldly and succeed. These attributes come from faith. Faith creates a feeling of security, that he is protected on all fronts.

But protected by whom?

Everyone is alone in life; societal protection available is only marginal, partial and limited. Self-belief requires intuitive wisdom and our soul is the mother source of that. Krishna earlier said that the soul gets its juice from God, the Super Self. Hence, one has to learn to experience the all-pervading protecting hand of God, his love, mercy and grace and he must seek the same. When one is awakened to this truth he becomes supremely confident, nothing bothers him for he sees God in everything and he (God) always protects him.

On the contrary fear flows from lack of trust in one's soul which is the agency God uses to provide us intuitive wisdom. One, who is beaten by ego, becomes

restless and sceptical. He becomes nervous for everyone appears to be his enemy.

Why this happens?

Because of fear one loses consciousness about the indomitable nature of his soul, the elemental God within him. He starts ignoring his inner voice. Absolute faith in God gives an unshakeable self-belief and one gains courage; and he learns to take the obstacles as a part of the process of progress. He concentrates on ways to get over the same; and advance towards his goal.

Krishna chooses fearlessness as the first attribute as he had chosen humility as the first virtue in chapter 13 for gaining success, excellence and perfection. Why? It is the bed rock that one needs for a solid foundation for spiritual edifice. Without fearless-ness one cannot progress on the spiritual path.

Only a fearless person can choose to be non-violent. Gandhiji could practise *ahimsa* as he was fearless. A coward has no option he runs away. Out of fear, at times, he is forced to be violent. Similarly, non-violence is not a choice, he does so out of fear. One tells lies out of fear for he is too scared to tell the truth. A fearless person can tell the truth for he is not afraid of facing the consequences. Fearlessness is a powerful attribute in shaping one's character and personality.

Purity of Mind and Heart

Here, Krishna talks of inner purity which includes purity of thought, word, means to be used and action. Only one who has transparent purity of heart; one who is pure from within, can have purity of mind.

Hindu scriptures lay great emphasis on purity of body, mind and wealth (*tun, mun aur dhan sey shudh*). Wealth is not limited to money, it includes means, resources, knowledge and all that one can possess. It boils down to purity of character that one acquires when he rises above the pair of opposites and is in a position to practise equanimity.

How to achieve the same one has to know his weaknesses, the blunt edges in his demeanour and he must remove the same one by one and keep polishing such that the dirt is kept away.

Perseverance or Steadfastness in pursuit of Spiritual Knowledge

Here, Krishna refers to gaining unwavering concentration on seeking wisdom; and practise of yoga. Everyone starts with scriptural advice in search of his individual self; and God. The next stage is to achieve a determination to stay

focused and gain intuitive wisdom in order to open a channel of communication with his inner self in pursuit of his goal. He would necessarily need the practice of yoga without which both gaining concentration and wisdom would be difficult.

Charity

Charity is a conscious and judicious act of sharing what we have; it can be anything, money, knowledge, one's possessions and time etc. It is important to note that charity must be a selfless act of giving with a view to help someone and for service to the society. However, one must choose the receiver of his help and the timing of the same judiciously. Sometimes instant help is needed, if the same is delayed it becomes of little value. Similarly, if we give money to someone who uses it for buying liquor or arms then instead of a help it may become a curse.

Hence, it is important to choose the beneficiary of our help and its timing with care. Help of any kind, if, given with the hope of gaining some return is neither charity nor help; it is an investment, a bargain for a possible benefit at a future date. Charity must be generous and selfless. One must remember that an act of real help creates *karmic* credit that may yield greater reward than any material gain or return help.

An act of selfless sharing gives immense happiness and peace; it dilutes one's ego and the sense of ownership that constantly bothers us. It awakens one to the presence of God within others like his own soul. This promotes a feeling of love, oneness, and a natural bond besides giving us great satisfaction. Charity should be considered a duty and not an obligation on others. Swami Vivekananda used to say that one should consider himself lucky that there was someone whom he could give something rather than standing on a pedestal distributing gratis.

Self Control (Dum)

Self control is restraint of senses; truly it is sense control. Our senses are sharp and sensitive. These tempt us through the objects of senses that work on our mind viz. by seeing, hearing, taste, smelling and touch. Excitement makes us lose our balance, it adversely affects our judgment. Entanglement in sense objects drives us away from our soul, the only real part of us. The worst part is that it has a cascading effect; one act of sense gratification leads to another; and unknowingly we start slipping deeper and deeper into the abyss of misjudgment. This impairs our capacity to acquire true knowledge and

wisdom as we start ignoring our soul and the instincts that guide us on the right path. Hence, we must consciously try to exercise self-control.

***Yagna* or Sacrifice**

Yagnas are religious rites recommended in the Vedas and our various scriptures for purification of our mind, thoughts and actions to keep us on the spiritual path. It is an act of oblation to God and surrender to him. Truly it is an appeal to him for his grace on the path of union with him. It is meant to burn our evil desires that keep us entangled in the material world. Physically it entails pouring ghee (clarified butter) in the holy fire and chanting mantras that have been given in the Vedas.

A yogi who is advanced on the spiritual path tries to calm his mind and get over restlessness. This he does by gaining happiness by remembering God, his glory, omnipotence, all pervading immanence, his grace and mercy. In the ceremonial fire his restlessness evaporates. He achieves calm and enjoys serene happiness that help him to unwaveringly focus his thoughts on God.

Both self-control and sacrifice are particularly useful for house holders who have to lead a worldly life, care for their families and attend to social obligations.

Study of Scriptures (*Svaadhyaya*)

In Vedic culture the life of a person was divided into four stages (*chaturashram- Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha* and *Sanyaas*).

Study of scriptures and *yagna* were recommended for the four stages. Study gives us knowledge if it is done with full concentration and one tries to understand the true meaning.

Similarly, *yagna* help in purification of mind and the body. The true purpose is to practise what we learn and experience in our spiritual life, otherwise we are left scratching the surface. *Yagna* unveil to us great ideas and virtuous conduct that we need to implement in our life by removing our weaknesses and ego.

Books must lead for self-study (*svaadhyaya*) to guide us to our inner self; then only one advances on the right path. Churning of ideas is a must for latching on to the correct ones despite contrary pulls, pressures and circumstances that are a necessary part of everyone's life. Self-study is the tool available to everyone for removing our innate sharp edges and polishing our lives.

Self-Discipline and Uprightness

Self-discipline or self-restraint (*dama*) is essentially sense control. Our senses are constantly lured by sense objects; we become blind to what is really good for us and remain deluded by and entangled in cheap pleasures that are short lived, and of no real value to us.

These create desires that make us restless and it is a pity these are never satiated. One must therefore control his senses through practise of yoga that conditions our mind to withstand dualities due to *gunas* and our body to vagaries of nature.

Yoga and meditation stop agitation in the mind that causes restlessness; and the mind becomes calm. In Sanskrit it is called *tapas*; it opens the door to superior inner joy. Fasting, austerity, sacrifice, penance and celibacy etc have been recommended for achieving self-control. These are all tools for achieving contentment and inner peace. These have their merits and indeed help us, but are not our goal which is to gain self-control and tranquility and finally to achieve Self-realisation.

For tapas one needs cultivating the attribute of forbearance, a capacity to withstand pressure of intense desire. Like we clean the dirt and impurities from a metal bar by heating it on fire, in *tapas* we subject our senses to a fire of discipline and restraint. One, who succeeds, becomes strong courageous and straightforward; these attributes are needed for following the path of righteousness that is the *dharma*.

Non-violence (*Ahimsa*)

Ahimsa is the tool that Gandhiji employed during our freedom struggle. He truly practised it; and his success made it known across the world. Non-violence has been extolled as a great virtue in all religions.

In 'The Ten Commandments' too one of the important injunctions is 'Thou shall not kill'. *Ahimsa* is not limited to killing or causing physical injury to any creature in the world; it also implies not causing any injury to others in thoughts, words or through deeds (*mun, vachan and karma*).

It is true that out of necessity we kill plants and animals for our food. That is needed for survival and has been an accepted practice since ancient times. Killing in war is also considered legitimate for self-defense and for upholding fair play, justice and greater good of greatest numbers. However, in our daily life we gain more by non-violence than by resorting to violence.

Truth

Truth is the very foundation of existence of the world. It is the highest ideal of our life. One succeeds or fails depending on whether or not he follows the truth.

A man or a society that is built on lack of truth is bound to fail. God is called the Absolute Truth and in following the truth we align ourselves with God and rise to a higher level.

Gandhiji said that truth is God (*satya hi Ishwar hai*). It stands the scrutiny of time and remains eternally valid (*shashvat*). The scriptures also state that truth must be spoken in a manner that doesn't hurt others.

It is said, that one who is on the spiritual path must practise truth in thoughts, speech and in action. Yet, it is our duty to be judicious in choosing our words while speaking the truth, otherwise the truth can harm everyone, the one to whom it is addressed and the one who speaks the same.

Unpleasant truth (*apriya satya*) should be discreetly left unsaid. True the world admires an honest and truthful person; everyone trusts him and likes to depend on him but his truth must create a healing touch as well.

Freedom from Anger

Anger makes us lose our equilibrium, it impairs our judgment and we start acting on impulse without proper thought and we create entirely avoidable problems and lose our peace. We often use our precious time and energy to say or do things that do us harm; and leave us dissatisfied and restless. It doesn't solve any problem, it only complicates matters. Hence, prudence demands that we must always try to control our anger.

Why do we become angry?

When our desire is not fulfilled we become angry. Desire is a mere desire; a wish to be someone or own something. At times it can be irrational: we may desire to own something for which we are not ready and cannot handle the same.

Some desires are bound to remain unfulfilled and that makes us unhappy. The only way we can control this natural happening is to control our desires.

While Gita recognises that our desire is at the core of all actions it lays emphasis on selfless action. At the same time, often the teacher or a yogi, one who meditates and practises yoga makes a display of anger to drive home a point or to deter a misguided person or one who is evil minded or a persistent defaulter, but he always returns to his normal self in no time. He doesn't nurse

ill will or hatred towards anyone including those who are inimical to him. He counsels them; and often displays his anger not to harm them but to win them over. This is however, possible only if the person enjoys complete control over both his desire and anger.

Renunciation:

Here renunciation does not mean leaving the family and the world and living in isolation in the hills and praying to God.

Renunciation implies giving up the ego and desires (*ichha tyag*). It applies to a saint and a house holder alike. It means working for the sake of work, for service to the society and in the name of God and for him only without worrying about the fruits of his actions.

God is truly the biggest Renunciant for he needs nothing for himself yet he selflessly works for his creation at all times. For this reason, it is said that on the path of Self-realisation one must always work selflessly, it is a godly act. Essentially it implies giving up smaller gain or pleasure for achieving a greater gain or a greater pleasure, for himself or for the society even if the same comes at a later date.

Tranquility or Peace of Mind (*Shanti*):

The world keeps on changing every moment so does the mind of a man. It is constantly at work. It is never at rest for it is entangled in all round dualities. How can it be at peace if it keeps on vibrating like a tuning fork?

Yet, the soul (*atma*) is always at peace; it is not disturbed by external changes; every-thing remains the same to it: success, failure and for that matter all dualities are immaterial to it. It gives a clear hint that for gaining peace, one needs to stay the same physically and mentally (*tun aur mun say*) irrespective of the circumstances.

It wouldn't be wrong to accept that peace is truly an exclusive divine virtue which is hard to achieve for a man. In Hindu philosophy *Om Shanti; Shanti; Shanti;* has been a powerful expression of a wish and blessing.

Om is God and *Shanti* is that illusive peace. In order to keep the body in good shape one needs discipline, control over what he eats and how much; and practise of yoga and pranayaam (exercises).

To keep the mind in control and in equilibrium one needs to stay satisfied with what he gets. This requires an interaction with our spirit, inner consciousness which is always at peace. If one can achieve these, he can gain peace of mind;

one would then stay the same even in the midst of a cacophony of loud music that makes no sense to him. It sounds like utopia; it indeed is, for it is a divine virtue. Therefore, only one who is on the spiritual path in search of Self-realisation can achieve the same.

Unfortunately, most of us mistake peace to be absence of disturbance or absence of lack of peace; it is not correct for the latter may be incidental as it is dependent on changing circumstances.

Meditation on God helps in gaining peace of mind.

Absence of Fault Finding

What does one do when he indulges in finding fault in others?

He has to concentrate on them and spend energy and time on finding their weak points. This time and energy he could well use in improving his own performance. His basic premise is that he is superior to others and assumes that he is not only capable and superior but entitled to make a quality judgment on others.

Is this true?

This is seldom the case for we are prone to over assess our own self and under assess others; don't we reserve all grace marks for our own self? Calumny, back biting slanderous statements, and indulging in whispering against others are acts of self-aggrandizement. One assumes for himself a higher position by disparaging others; it invariably leads to their own downfall. Such persons are never respected by the society. In 'Ramcharitmanas' the great legend about the life of Lord Rama, Tulsidas the author, calls back biting as the biggest sin. In Bible too Jesus quotes parables to explain the futility of being judgmental about others; he cautions against indulging in

criticism of others[154].

Greatness lies in being large hearted and forgiving rather than passing judgment and criticizing. When one does so he insults the God within the other person; and ignores the God within his own self for we are all the creations of the same God.

Compassion

Compassion is a great virtue. It makes us living beings otherwise we would become like a dead body or a stone. God is kind and generous and he is ever overflowing with love for all in the creation. Naturally he expects us to be kind

and considerate to all. We must place ourselves in other's shoes, feel their suffering and try to help them in every manner for then only we can progress on the spiritual path.

Krishna said on many occasions that service to society was the best form of worship. An act of kindness, helping one in need is the greatest service and source of satisfaction and happiness to us. Compassion provides us this attribute.

Freedom from Covetousness and Greed

Covetousness is an advanced stage of greed, when we are tempted to possess something owned by someone else.

In the material world we are surrounded by so many things that attract us; these lure us and create a desire to possess the same. This desire is endless and we are never satisfied. When we see something with someone else we are tempted to have the same. Even if one has a newer model of something that we possess, our first reaction is to have the same, if not, a later model of the same.

We don't even wait to see whether we really need it or could use it beneficially. It requires control of mind to get over our greed. In 'Ramayana' (the life story of Lord Rama) the seeds of a legendary war were sown by the greed of Sita (Lord Rama's wife) to possess the golden skin of a deer. She was in a forest wandering from place to place and living in makeshift thatched houses. She truly had no need for the deer skin. In fact, to carry the same in their forest sojourn would have been a burden, yet she had an intense desire to possess it and she virtually forced her husband, Lord Rama to go after the deer. The rest is too well known.

Likewise, in Mahabharata war, the covetousness of Kaurava King Duryodhana to own the kingdom that belonged to Yudhishtera (Pandavas) led to a war that truly changed the history of India.

Gentleness

Gentleness is a part of Ahimsa. It is an attribute of superior patience not to hurt anybody by one's thoughts, speech and deeds (*mun, vachan and karma*). It is the quality of equanimity that makes one kind to everyone including an evil person who is inimical to him.

God is ever gentle to all, even to those who are non-believers and criticize him. He even goes to the extent of giving them signals about possible pitfalls.

Likewise, a gentle person exercises great patience and restraint to ignore other's wrong doing and even tries to help them. Such a person is respected by most of the people; they seek his help without hesitation as they are sure of his kindness. God too likes them, and they receive his grace in abundance.

Modesty

Modesty implies lack of pride; a capacity to say sorry for a chance mistake. Such a person tries to correct himself and takes care not to commit the same mistake again.

Immodest people have a false pride; even when they know their mistake they remain complacent. They feel ashamed to accept it. Saying 'sorry' appears to be belittling themselves. They never enjoy the respect of others; even their subordinates do not respect them. They nurse a false sense of superiority, an entitlement to be accepted to be correct all the time.

This is a universal human failing. Even yogis suffer this weakness; they start considering themselves to be greater than others, way ahead of them on the spiritual path; hence, beyond common mistakes. One who seeks Self-realisation has to get rid of this shortcoming otherwise his learning process gets impaired and advance on the spiritual path is hindered, and it slows down.

The attribute of modesty, makes a person, extra sensitive to his own mistakes that gives him the courage to acknowledge and apologize for the same. It is an ennobling virtue that is based on one's respect for truthfulness. It makes one fearless and courageous, that are much needed virtues for greater success and happiness in life and for advancement to a higher spiritual level.

Steadiness (Absence of Restlessness)

As mentioned above, desires create anxiety, scepticism, a doubting nature and fickleness of mind. We tend to become restless when we encounter hurdles and impatient when our wish is not fulfilled. Instead of trying to achieve focus on the task and patiently work harder to sort out matters our mind throws in new desires which add to the confusion.

Steadiness is a quality that creates an urge to self search. It gives extra strength and self-belief that helps us moderate our temper, wishful -thinking and actions, and it prompts us to change directions as needed.

Usually due to an intense desire to reach the goal fast we set unrealistic targets and take to unrealistic speed; we soon start failing; this creates both

nervousness and restlessness and in the process, we lose time, energy and waste resources.

In driving a car, we start in the first gear and then gradually change gears to achieve higher and higher speed; like the car we have to start slowly and steadily gain pace. Interestingly the optimum (most efficient) speed is always much lower than the peak speed we like to drive. At the optimum speed we reach the goal in good time and save on fuel and our own energy as well.

This is not a great science, it is just becoming aware that the destination does not become nearer just because we want to reach their unrealistically fast. This is what steadiness is about. It is the capacity to moderate ourselves in time.

Vigour (*Tejas*)

Vigour or vitality is a product of divine radiance that creates both fearlessness and boldness. It comes from our intellect, knowledge and self-confidence. In Vedas and other scriptures there are several verses (*mantras*) where one prays to God to bestow glow (*tejas*) to our knowledge. Vigour includes physical, mental and emotional boldness that enables one to make the optimum use of his knowledge. It is created by self-belief that is based on our inner (spiritual) strength. It is a divine gift that flows from faith in God.

Forgiveness and Fortitude

Forgiveness is an attribute that gives us the courage not to punish or harm one who insults or causes harm to us. It comes from belief in God and his fair play. Often it is misunderstood as a weakness; truly it portrays strength of one's character.

Interestingly, it offers the forgiver time and chance for suitable corrective action in good time. The corrective response is not spurred by spirit of retribution; it is one of pity and kindness to the person concerned. It awakens a realisation of wrong doing and a feeling of remorse in him. It is a great quality that comes from courage and patience and needs some practise.

When Godse shot Gandhiji before he breathed his last he raised his hand in forgiveness. It was a natural action that bore the imprint of his long sacrifice and selfless life. His face was peaceful without a trace of bitterness.

Likewise, when Jesus was being taken for crucifixion in a moment of weakness he did say 'Father why hast thou forsaken Me' but he soon recovered and uttered 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do.'

However, if a strong man hits a weak, frail bodied person and he runs away and shouts back forgiveness, it is not to be considered as forgiveness for it is an escape from a difficult and unequal situation. He has no option but to ensure his personal safety and his shouting back forgiveness is a part of his escape.

Fortitude on the other hand, is an attribute or capacity to remain firm on one's path despite hurdles. It gives the courage and patience to bear any wrong done to him, an insult and even a misfortune. These occurrences try to deflect one from his chosen path and goal; it could be a material goal or a spiritual one. It requires spiritual strength to stay firm and devoted on the chosen path despite road blocks. It requires great patience and moral character that can only come from within; no external source can provide the same. Its mother source is the power to forgive others and one's own self. It enhances one's self confidence and makes life sweet and smooth. It helps make one spiritually stronger.

Purity

Purity is a simple word with compound meaning. It implies cleansing of the body, mind and intellect.

Every morning we routinely clean our eyes, mouth, wash our face and comb our hair before we do anything else. In India, traditionally we also take bath and sit for prayers and only after doing the same we get into the routine of life. This is attaining physical cleanliness or purity.

Mental purity implies getting rid of ego, inflated desires, jealousy, greed and craving that cause restlessness.

Intellectual purity connotes seeking wisdom that creates a channel for dialogue with our inner self.

These (cleansing of body, mind and intellect) together make a temple of our life that is calm, composed and at peace; it becomes a place where God could come and rest. Like the God's idol sits in a temple that is cleaned 3-4 times every day, he (God) visits one who cleanses all the dirt and negativity from his body, mind and thoughts.

Freedom from Malice (Non-hatred)

In Sanskrit this attribute is called *adroh*. It means absence of enmity or anger to react in kind against one who is inimical to us; absence of malice even against one who is a self-professed enemy.

God is loving and kind to everyone; he nurses no grudge even against the demons, the evil. He sees his own presence in everyone and condones mistakes as acts of *gunas* that are taken care by our *karma*.

In the same way, when we react against one who is a sinner and tries to harm us we lose sight of subtle presence of the same loving God in him who is the source of our own life.

Our enemy intends to cheat, act treacherously against us; if we do the same in response, we become evil like him?

We can protect our interest without having to stoop to other's level. Our problem is that we suffer from a sense of superiority and our instant, impetuous response is 'how dare he …'; which is wrong. We need to pause and think coolly and then act with fortitude as our guide. It is possible, only if, we control our mind and seek the advice from our spirit. With practise it can become an instant process. One must remember that everyone in creation has both good and evil attributes and it is one's choice that determines what he makes of his life. One must constantly try to make the right choice. In this our inner voice can help us.

Absence of Excessive Pride

All of us have a mixed bag of qualities, some good, and some not so good and some

positively undesirable. Unfortunately, nearly all have an element of ego (*aham*) i. e. pride about our family, personality, beauty, intellect, education and position etc.

We get into problems when our pride makes us conceited. It makes us look others down. Ironically, our pride increases with our material success and we become spiritually poorer. One, who wishes to progress on the spiritual path in search of peace, happiness and eventual Self-realisation has to be careful about excessive pride. He should make deliberate effort to be polite, kind and generous to others.

In chapter 18.13 - 16 Krishna talks about five factors that we use in performing any actions. Truly all our actions are a product of the Nature.

In these five factors the fifth one is divine grace; one can call it luck. We may do everything right but we would still fail if divine grace is not with us. We get in life what God gives us, for he is the real giver and the real doer. He chooses us as tools to accomplish a job purely out of his love for us. He could as well

choose someone else for the same? Hence, our pride is misplaced and excessive pride is worse.

Krishna is said to be the complete God, for he had all the sixteen qualities that one could possess (*solah kala sampanna*). He had no pride. He (God) has no need for anything yet, he goes about doing his work, creation, management of creation and dissolution of the same; and he treats everyone alike.

And what do we do; a little success makes us lose our balance, we go on a bragging expedition using all the adjectives we know of? This is contrary to divine attributes. Hence, we must carefully by design shun excessive pride. It does us no good and it is said that pride falls before the actual fall of the man.

In the first three verses of this chapter Krishna talks about twenty-six virtues or attributes (listed above) that one must possess to advance on the spiritual path and to achieve Self-realisation which is union with God.

However, union with God is a long process, it sometime takes several lives. But one must focus on these attributes and try to gradually imbibe the same in his nature to achieve real progress with peace and happiness in life both on the material and spiritual fronts.

Characteristics of those with Demonic Attributes

In earlier chapters Krishna explained that our *karma* determine what we make of ourselves even in our subsequent lives. Some people who accumulate negative *karma* take birth (in next life) in lowly or in family of sinners who have an evil mind. They misuse their wealth, position and power and cause harm to others. They damage their own cause and create further bad *karma*.

As per Gita people are divided in two groups, those with divine attributes and those with demonic attributes. In truth it is not a black and white distinction. Most of the people lie in the grey area; those with greater element of good *(sattvik guna*) lean towards spirituality and they acquire dominant divine attributes; and the same applies to those with *taamsik* nature, they gain dominant demonic attributes.

Unfortunately, one remains unaware of his wrong doings as he considers these to be

necessary for his progress in life and hence, fully justified. The prime driver is wish fulfilment and success, the cost and negative consequences do not figure in their frame. After talking in detail about the divine attributes, Krishna

dwells on the demonic attributes (*asuri prakriti*). These have been briefly discussed below:

Vanity or Ostentatious Nature

Vanity or vainglorious pride, it comes from an inflated sense of self-importance. It leads one to indulge in ostentation, self-praise and bragging. Such persons live in a fantasy world of make believe; they are self-centred and hypocritical and as a result they become harsh and even cruel for they cannot see beyond themselves. When a contrary view is presented, even if it is a well-meaning advice, it invites displeasure from them and some-times violent response. They unintentionally hurt others and create more enemies than friends. After all vain glory is misplaced, unfounded sense of greatness; it is unreal that results in damaging consequences.

Arrogance

Arrogance comes from excessive pride which is also the cause of vanity.

Anger, Uncivil and Cruel Behaviour

These are all ego elements being consequences of excessive and undeserved expectations in respect of wish fulfilment, a false perception of self-importance and of deserving wealth, position and intellect.

All demonic attributes flow from ignorance caused by negative **karma** credits accumulated by a person from current and previous lives. An ignorant person is usually impatient, he refuses to critically analyse his actions for any flaws. He believes, only he had the monopoly to being right. On the other hand, a person on the spiritual path becomes self-critical; he stays calm and thoughtful all the time and tries to remain focused on his goal of self-improvement and even changes his course.

Krishna repeats himself and says that there are two kinds of people in the world; the divine and the demonic. In earlier chapters the people were classified on the basis of three *gunas*; the *sattvik* (pious and spiritual), *rajasik* (passionate and worldly) and *taamsik* (ignorant, indifferent and lazy). The truth is that people are neither totally good nor totally evil; the proportion of different *gunas* determines their inclination. They either lean towards being good and righteous or take the contrary path and are more inclined towards being evil; demonic. For this reason, Krishna makes a two-some classification. There are always many in the inbetween zone.

Having elaborated on both the good and the evil attributes Krishna wants to put Arjuna's mind at rest. Hence, he assured him that he enjoyed divine endowments by birth. He gives a clear indication that he had good accumulated *karma* and that he was on the divine path. Having thus assured him, Krishna proceeds to further elaborate on the traits of those with demonic nature.

Before we look at specific demonic attributes as described by Krishna, we must know why one acquires evil attributes. One who rarely looks within and seeks the guidance of his spirit usually tends to take to materialism, sense gratification that trait goes on increasing and eventually he acquires demonic attributes. He gets so enamoured of the glamour of the external world, wealth, possessions, power and what people think of him, that he never pauses to sit back and reflect on what he was missing in life. It never dawns on him why despite all his wealth and possessions he always remains insecure and restless; why he rarely had a full night's sleep? He fails to think what in the end happened to Ravana, Kamsa and Duryodhana; and in the present times what was the fate of Hitler and Mussolini? They were rich and powerful and commanded vast armies? Their ego perpetually dictated to them and they like obedient slaves followed its commands.

Such people try for wish fulfilment and lust for sensual pleasures by any means and that becomes the goal of life. They never feel the need for God or guidance from their spirit; they believe that they had all the powers that could be had and unknowingly they go on distancing themselves from the truth of life.

Some of the points about demonic traits highlighted by Krishna are:

- They are unaware of what is right; and what must be avoided. They lack decent conduct, purity of mind and are rarely truthful.
- They do not recognise the world to have an orderly existence as per a natural law and that it was created sequentially through cause and effect. In their view there is no order, no master, no God; things just happen on their own, the creation is a product of sexual passion and the world runs on the desires of men.
- They lack in intellect and they do not accept causal existence hence, they want to force issues and do not shy of committing atrocities. Due to erroneous beliefs and unaware of the consequences of their actions, they turn destructive for the world through their wrong actions. Blinded by

their delusion, they act as enemies of the settled order and unknowingly destroy peace and harmony.

- Entangled in never ending insatiable desires, they become conceited, hypocritical, insolent and arrogant. With their misplaced and evil ideas (due to the influence of *taamsik guna*) their motivations become impure.
- They are obsessed with gratification of sensual and material desires and consider it to be the main goal of life, they believe in 'eat, drink and be merry' at all times and always remain dissatisfied.
- Because of innumerable wishes, hopes and expectations they are usually over-powered by anger and passion. They always strive to amass wealth with dishonest means as they consider it to be a necessary resource for their sense gratification.
- They always think in terms of 'today I have gained this; tomorrow I will acquire that and so on'. 'I have vanquished this enemy today; I will kill another tomorrow. I am the lord, the ruler, most successful, strongest and happiest person.'
- They consider themselves to be born in a noble family, well bred, superior and incomparable. Lacking in wisdom they brag, they give charity, perform sacrifices and rejoice in the same ostentatiously. It becomes a display of their position and authority and lacks sanctity.
- Due to delusion they have bewildering thoughts and a wavering mind that lacks focus and with their obsession for sensual pleasures they descend down to hell.
- Their vanity, pride due to their wealth and display of the same, makes them stubborn and arrogant; and they perform sacrifices ignoring methods and processes laid down in the scriptures.
- Due to above attributes of inflated ego, pride for wealth, arrogance, power, malicious and lascivious nature they do not recognise the presence of God within themselves and in other beings in the creation.

Those with predominantly demonic nature not only suffer in their present lives, they create negative *karmic* score that makes them suffer in their future lives as well. Due to their cruel and hateful actions they condemn themselves to take to the womb of demonic beings for their next birth.

The words used by Krishna are that he hurls them into the wombs of bestial and demonic beings. He implies that by the law of nature (that we attribute to

God and destiny), he is condemned by *karma* to take birth in an evil family in his next life.

In fact, God wants to uplift everyone to a higher level; he is too kind and fair to every-one. He gives freedom of choice to all beings and has therefore, devised a transparent mechanism of *karma*; 'as you sow, so you reap'. It is an automatic process. The *gunas* were created by him as a part of perpetual evolutionary process. But he does caution everyone from time to time to improve their *karma* to move up on the *guna* scale towards *sattvik*. Demonic beings, the *asuras*, mad in their lust and in seeking greater power and authority, remain forgetful of the spiritual path; and they do not understand the gain from achieving union with God. They go from bad to worse; they go downhill from life to life and suffer.

Unfortunately, people of *taamsik* nature acquire demonic propensities and remain ignorant of the privilege of choices they enjoy. Blinded by passions they never think of their follies; and create a deep sink ahead of them. Their main problem is that they do not believe in God's majesty; they can't think anyone over them or more powerful than them. They descend deeper and deeper, not realising they were inviting a bleak and still bleaker future in hell; they are unmindful that they could even lose their place in the human species and incarnate as an animal in their next life.

Ravana was a learned scholar, he was devoted to Lord Shiva who gave him so many boons that he misused. He had one lakh sons and 1.25 lakhs grandsons; his abode, Lanka was made of gold; he had an aero plane (*pushpak vimaan*) as well; even gods feared him, but what happened in the end! There was none to even cremate his body. His body lay bare on the battle field.

The Three Gateways to Hell

Having talked about the attributes and propensities that make a person act in a demonic manner the teacher sums up and says that lust (*kaam*), anger (*krodh*) and greed (*lobh*) were the three elements that lead one to hell.

These three make one totally blind to his soul. Driven by his desires, he starts acting

on spur of the moment ignoring propriety or a reference to accepted code of conduct. Throughout Gita, Krishna talked about the negative influence of these three human attributes. Now he calls these as the three gates to hell that one must abandon. The *Taamsik* qualities take one to spiritual oblivion. He forgets

the divine privilege of free choice he enjoys, and he chooses to negate God's merciful endowment to him.

True, we act under the influence of *gunas* that create debits and credits in our *karma* account but we can always change the position by judicious exercise of our free-will.

Desires cause greed and that causes anger. One under the influence of *sattvik guna* controls his urgings as he seeks the guidance of his spirit. One under *rajasik guna* at times is able to subdue his desires or he moderates the same; but one under *taamsik guna* ignores his spirit and the lure of sense gratification overpowers him.

At times one needs and he prays for divine intervention but one under the influence of *taamsik guna* ignores the very existence of soul or God. In Mahabharata Kauravas led by Duryodhana were under the influence of these three attributes and the result was the extinction of their dynasty.

Throughout Gita, Krishna exhorted that the ultimate goal of a person[155] is to achieve unity with God. Our scriptures: Vedas, Vedantas and Upanishads etc gave a code of conduct for seamless progress on the spiritual path and for achieving our goal.

Yogis practise yoga and meditation. They follow the spiritual path and try to practise self-control. With inspiration from their soul they learn to control of their ego, mind and senses. But a house holder, though born as a spirit loses his spirit consciousness as due to the gloss of the material world he ignores spirituality and gets tempted by the lure of sense gratification and falls into a mesh created by lust, anger and greed.

Such people who are oblivious of scriptural injunctions fall into the trap laid by the above attributes. The result: they never progress on the right path and they condemn themselves to a life of suffering. They never gain peace and happiness in their lives and drive themselves away from the goal of gaining oneness with God.

The above three attributes cause agitation in the mind and the tranquillity is lost; one suffers perpetual unrest as his unfulfilled desires breed a feeling of inadequacy. One loses balance and develops a craving for new bigger desires that are unachievable; and this sows further discontent and sorrow. When one's desires remain unfulfilled he resorts to short cuts and illegal means; he even takes to crime and that compound his misery for he gets into greater

troubles. The teacher lays great emphasis on getting rid of these three attributes without which one cannot gain happiness.

How to gain Happiness

As per our scriptures the state of one's happiness = desires fulfilled / total number of his desires.

Hence, if we find obstacles in fulfilling our desires the only way to improve our happiness level is to reduce the number of desires. Unfortunately for every desire that is fulfilled several others keep cropping up and the pursuit becomes a wild goose chase, and lack of success causes restlessness and frustration.

How should one deal with this very human urge?

One should harness his intellect and try to gain a clear focus on his goal. The moment a desire crops up one should ask his own self if the same would help him reach his goal faster, in case the reply is in the negative he should abandon the desire.

When one is spiritually conscious two things happen, the material desires start fading away and he gains better control of his mind. The result is that desirable desires get fulfilled, and undesirable ones fade away or are put by him on the back burner; and he stays content. This contentment creates peace of mind and happiness.

It must be clearly understood that triple elements of lust, greed and anger are very powerful. These require careful and patient handling; the only antidote is to arouse one's spiritual consciousness.

The other way to gain happiness is to turn inwards and take one's mind away from material pursuits. It is indeed difficult for house holders and especially those who are under the spell of *taamsik guna.* One who practises yoga and meditation can train himself to do so. Normally one looks for happiness to emanate from external objects i.e. objects of desire. Such happiness is dependent on right combination of external factors that are a set of variables that keep changing. One aims to hit the bull's eye within a stack of changing variables. That is not all; both his senses and external elements suffer from duality. Extremely difficult; for one has to cope with too many unstable variables; he mostly misses the target and that causes him frustration.

On the other hand, for gaining peace and happiness by arousing one's spirit one has to deal only with his inner self and nothing external is required i.e.

there are no variables. He depends solely on his own efforts, he is not dependent on any external variables and their cooperation; and the duality is limited to his own senses.

What does one get from his spirit?

It teaches him how to fine tune his attributes and gain the art of discrimination. When one evolves through inner search he attains a higher plane of existence and true happiness. Both evolution and happiness come from within and not from external sources. Those under the influence of *taamsik guna* fail to understand this simple truth and hence, they never even attempt the same.

Krishna recommends that one should follow scriptural injunctions in respect of what one should do and the recommended method of doing the same. He must avoid what one should not do. It is difficult, for life is not a onetime event it comprises a process chain that can only be developed with the help of one's spirit. One needs to evolve a system with a great deal of patience so that he is able to keep such strong attributes as lust, anger and greed in check.

Gist of Chapter 16

The crux of Chapter 16 in one sentence: 'One should always try to be good and of service to others.'

In this chapter Krishna has described a set of qualities acquiring and practising the same can make one godly. These are called divine qualities. Amongst such godly beings, those on the spiritual path who have unwavering focus and devotion and surrender to God and they gain Self-realisation.

He has also described a set of traits and practices that make a person demonic. The moot point is that it is within a person's power, it is in his capacity to use his senses, his faculties to become what he chooses to become, divine or demonic. Though the *karmic* score and *gunas* do create a lead or a handicap right at the starting point but one can use his free-will to augment or neutralize the *karmic* score and the effect of *gunas* by consciously treading the right path in measured steps as recommended in the scriptures. All qualities, divine or demonic are attributes that determine our attitude in life. Krishna's goal in Gita is to encourage people to follow the right path and perform the right action in the right way. In chapter 13 he talked in detail about attributes

for achieving excellence and even perfection and about *gunas*' influence. In chapter 16 he talks about divine and demonic qualities to enlighten us of the possibilities and how to achieve *sattvik* mindset. He keeps on prompting the reader to follow scripturally mandated discipline and right *karma* in a detached manner.

A person is never at complete rest or in a state of non-action. When he is doing no physical work, he may be occupied in mental work. A person has two goals, one is material advancement which includes emotional well-being; and the other is spiritual advancement. The first produces tangible results but the latter is subtle, it involves discovery of the self and Super Self.

The results or the fruits of material success indeed give us pleasure and a feeling of achievement but at the same time it causes attachment; it creates further desires, and it becomes an endless chain. For spiritual development one needs to be detached hence, both the goals (emotional advancement and spiritual development) can't be pursued simultaneously. Most of the time, we are not aware of the correct situation due to lack guidance and fail in both as the attitudinal requirements for the two goals differ widely. For success in any field we need right attitude and right action.

In chapter 13 Krishna gave 20 virtues including such ones as choice of solitude and knowing the ultimate in knowledge (absolute Truth) and non-knowledge (the worldly knowledge), here he expands on the same and gives 26 attributes that shape our attitude. Likewise, he gives an exhaustive list of demonic traits. It is for the person to figure out where he stands; what he is doing and what he must not do. After all the three gates to hell viz. lust, anger and greed are such elements that can be seen, felt and corrected.

A reference to scriptures and the help of a teacher (*guru*) always comes in handy. The next thing is faith in God and devotion to him it always provides us fair hints as to where we were going wrong for he creates an innate fail-proof sensor. We need to harness the same.

Our *gunas* play an important role. We have to understand their working and try to raise our ethical standards. Except for those who are bitten by severe *taamsik* bug the rest can certainly improve their discretion. Consultations with those who are better placed and knowledgeable (*guru*) should be freely practised.

Krishna unravels a set of parameters and asks Arjuna to evaluate himself on those. It was a subtle way of telling him that his emotional entanglement was a

petty hurdle, not becoming for a person like him who was an evolved being. At the same time through him he provides guidance to all how to advance in life. He tells how all can gain right upto Self-realisation if they follow the correct spiritual path. Surely, he doesn't offer a short cut. One needs to persevere on the right path and constantly and critically evaluate himself in respect of needed mindset.

Chapter 17: The Yoga of Three kinds of Faith

In chapter 16 Krishna first talked about scripturally ordained 26 virtues which constitute divine nature that is needed for advancement on the spiritual path. He then described qualities that make one of demonic nature. Such a person self - inflicts misery and suffering on himself that ruin his present life and future lives as well. Towards the end of the chapter he calls lust, anger and greed as the three sure gates to hell. He candidly states that people with such attributes ostentatiously perform religious rites, rituals and sacrifices without following the scriptures and ignoring the rules and methods laid down for the same. The result is that they do not derive benefits and happiness that one should get from the same. They lack respect for the scriptures and ignore the same and they don't accord sanctity to pious actions and the processes. The result is that the entire effort is wasted; it becomes an act of show and self-aggrandizement. Perhaps for this reason in the last two verses of chapter 16 the teacher highlights the importance of following the scriptures and to act according to their injunctions.

Arjuna was well advanced on the spiritual path. He was a true yogi, a man who despite being a worldly person had aroused his spirit and was an evolved being. True he suffered an emotional entanglement at an inappropriate time but he had the courage of conviction to frankly seek clarifications when he had doubts.

In this chapter (chapter 17) he opens the dialogue with a pointed query. He requests Krishna to tell him about faith and the consequences of neglecting scriptural injunctions. Krishna elaborates on the kinds of faith and he also tells him what one should eat; types of sacrifices, penances, renunciation and charities etc.

There are 28 verses in this chapter; the first one is Arjuna's query, the rest belong to Krishna.

Arjuna asks the position of one who does not follow the scriptures but performs sacrifices with devotion. In which category (*sattvik, rajasik* or *taamsik*) would he be considered? It is a very pertinent yet subtle issue for one can sincerely try to follow the scriptural sacrifices etc with faith but without knowing of the scriptural guidance.

To put the same query in a different way he wanted to know if one's nature or faith was solely dependent on and derived from scriptures or his character,

discipline and devotion could mould the same? In chapter 16 the teacher strongly advised that one must follow the scriptures in conduct of his life, *yagna*, rituals, rites, sacrifices and charity etc. and he was critical of those who were negligent in respect of the same. Here the query is about those who are ignorant of scriptures but otherwise earnest and devoted.

Three kinds of Faith

Krishna is direct and forthright, he says the faith of a person is of three kinds in line with the *gunas.* It could either be *sattvik* (good) or *rajasik* (passionate) or *taamsik* (dull, ignorant). One's faith follows his nature; and nature is as per his faith; and finally, a person is a product of his faith. One's faith and nature are inseparable units totally interdependent on one another. Those who are born with or acquire virtuous attributes and follow the scriptures acquire divine nature. Those with negative propensities (discussed in ch. 16) acquire demonic nature; they become like a demon.

One's faith is not a simple belief, it is obtained when one follows the spiritual path; and intensely focuses on chosen ideals. It is the realisation of what is good for him. One knows it when he follows the spiritual path. His understanding transcends the mind and originates from spirit (Consciousness). When we are inclined towards a wrong road our consciousness cautions us about the outcome. This direction of spirit becomes our faith. Man is a product of his faith; he acts in accordance with the same.

A person can be *sattvik*, *rajasik* or *taamsik* depending on his nature and spirituality. Study of scriptures and following its teachings depends on one's nature. One's devotion and worship is in accordance with his faith. Those with *sattvik* propensity worship the God; those with *rajasik* bent of mind worship gads and demigods, they pray for grant of their wishes; and those with *taamsik* propensity worship ghosts and spirits[156] (*pretas* or the spirits of the dead).

The gist of the foregoing is that one's life depends on his nature. All beings have a mix of three *gunas* but one of these becomes predominant and that determines his real nature. It depends on the stage of his evolution; and his nature reflects the level of his evolution. It is an existential truth that happens on its own mostly without one's knowledge. A yogi (with *sattvik* propensities) through his meditation in search of Self-realisation gets to know this fact and he tries to advance on the spiritual path by augmenting his divine attributes and eliminating his negative propensities.

Krishna having given a description of those who have faith proceeds to talk about those who do not have faith, and also do not follow the scriptures. But they perform sacrifices, *yagnas* and terrible austerities without following spiritual injunctions. This they do out of ignorance or passion and under the influence of ego and false pride. They even torture their bodies. In truth they subject the God within them to suffering for they do not recognise him. Some grow long hair, pierce their bodies with sharp needles or undertake long fasts. Such acts create hallucinations, blurring of vision, trembling of body; it affects their mental faculty and they consider themselves to be in communion with spirits. Such beings are of demonic nature.

Depending upon one's nature (*sattvik, rajasik* or *taamsik*) one acquires taste for different kinds of food, sacrifices, austerities and charities etc.

Three kinds of Food

Our food is our source of energy, both physical and mental. We stay alive due to the energy within us; and food is the primary source of it. Depending on the inherent quality (*guna*) of what we eat our own qualities are developed. Nutrition experts evaluate the properties of various food items and assess their suitability for individuals before recommending the same to them. Different food items affect our body system differently. Some items may suit some individuals but not others. Different food items create different properties (*gunas*).

The basic truth is that food items too come from the same source as our body, the *prakriti*, the nature that is created and controlled by the same God. Krishna expounds that these too follow the same system of *gunas* that govern humankind viz. *sattvik*, *rajasik* and *taamsik*.

Sattvik food items create righteous (good) vibrations in our mind and body and we acquire *sattvik* propensities in our nature. It implies that people who have *sattvik* nature like to eat *sattvik* food items.

Likewise, those with *rajasik* nature like to eat food items that create passion and other *rajasik* qualities.

Those who are of *taamsik* nature prefer food items to nurture their inherent inclinations. This is an odd case where like attracts like. The teacher has briefly categorized what the three kinds of human beings naturally like to eat.

Krishna says that good people who have *sattvik* nature like fresh, soft, sweet and nourishing food that promote longevity, vitality, strength, health and

cheerfulness. They consider the meal to be a *yagna*. They start with a prayer, a thanks-giving to God before eating. They eat slowly relishing every bit of it and do not talk while eating. Endowed with spiritual inclination, the meals become a part of the spiritual process and they (those who eat) concentrate on the same.

Rajasik foods are those that enhance passion in the body, mind and senses. Hot, spicy, salty food items with a lot of fat, a strong flavour that often creates a burning sensation fall in this category. Non-vegetarian foods that stimulate passion come in this category. These excite our senses but often cause diseases, yet, these are agreeable to a *rajasik* palate.

Those of *taamsik* nature are ignorant, dull and uncaring. They lack sense of hygiene and usually eat stale, leftovers and putrid food that is invariably tasteless and even injurious to our health, yet, agreeable to them. Chemically treated and packaged items that lie in the refrigerator for long, fall in this category.

Three kinds of Spiritual Practices (Sacrifice or *Yagna*)[157]

People endowed with *sattvik* virtues follow scriptural injunctions. They worship God with total devotion, not for any rewards or gains, but for achieving union with him. The sacrifice (*yagna*) is doing the right thing and since they do not expect a reward, they become both bold and fearless and never worry about the results of their actions or any suffering caused by it.

People with *sattvik* nature dedicate everything to God. They endeavour to serve the society for they see the same God in everyone. They become bold and fearless. Gandhiji and Socrates did what they thought was correct; they were always ready for the consequences. They would fall in this category.

People with *rajasik* propensities worship demi-gods for rewards, temporal gains with a view to enhance their worldly status. They are always concerned with acclamation and approval of their fellow beings. Their actions are primarily meant for projection and display of their own position and authority.

People with *taamsik* nature perform sacrifices without following scripturally ordained practices, rites and rituals. They do not offer food to guests, charity to poor or even pay any professional fees to the presiding priests. Many of the *taamsik* people take to evil practices like worship of the devils, sorcery, black magic and other mysterious acts of display which has nothing to do with religion or spirituality or purification of the self.

The practice of paying fees to Brahmins was meant to take care of the priest class, so that they could devote themselves to spiritual matters and study of scriptures. Like-wise, offering food to relations and friends was meant to promote societal harmony and charity was for helping the poor.

Austerity of Body, Speech and Mind

Austerity or Penance (*Tapas*) implies practicing a disciplined life conscientiously with the object of purifying one's body, thought, speech and his actions. The objective is to achieve physical and mental harmony with the soul needed for developing soul consciousness. It is a process for acquiring spiritual awakening. Paramhans Yoganand's *guru* Swami Sri Yukteshwar called it "Learn to behave." In his opinion, it was necessary and true learning, for one who aspires to tread on the spiritual path.

There are three kinds of austerities, pertaining to body, speech and mind. In penance of the body one has to worship gods, teachers, Brahmins[158] and men of wisdom. One has to acquire and practise purity, uprightness, contentment and nonviolence. It needs a strong discipline and meditative wisdom for that links one to his inner self the God within. Penance of the body keeps the body in balance.

Penance of the speech is a very important virtue. Speech is a powerful faculty. One needs to control it and he has to be careful not to utter anything hurtful, yet, be truthful. The speech should be pleasing to others and beneficial to all. Study and regular recitation of Vedic hymns is a must for practising penance of the speech.

The teacher implies that he who studies Vedas and recites Vedic hymns, acquires

meditative wisdom and that helps him commune with God. The dialogue with his inner self teaches him the faculty of correct speech.

The third austerity is that of mind. It is attained when one achieves both internal and external tranquility. The state of inner peace can be achieved only when one is able to control his senses and emotions. Mind's natural quality is restlessness. It is always active for it receives signals from all the senses all the time. To calm the mind is difficult except through the practice of meditation. In meditation one has to focus his mind on one point; usually God is the preferred object. Mind as per its nature keeps on wandering and one has to constantly try to bring it back to the chosen target.

Tranquility of mind requires quiet surroundings and a strong will. Through practise one becomes calm and contended from within, and he learns to ignore disturbing matters. The state of real calmness gives him a feeling of ecstasy. It is called the state of serenity of mind. One who achieves such a state is not bothered by ego elements and the emotions get subdued. One starts with external quietude (he chooses a quiet corner where people are not around and there are no noises) and through concentration on self within, he attains internal tranquility, a state of low entropy and high energy; he feels relaxed and happy.

The factors that help in achieving a calm and contented mind are purity, a gentle demeanour and silence (*maun*). One with an agitated mind tends to talk usually in a loud voice; it is his way of relieving internal pressure. For this reason, it is strongly recommended to observe silence.

One who practises the above three penances and concentrates on his work with full faith and without any expectation of rewards acquires *sattvik* nature and progresses on the spiritual path.

Those who are of a *rajasik* nature practise penance for show with the expectation of rewards, gaining status, position and respect in the society. They do it out of their passionate nature. Unfortunately, they gain little by it and whatever they gain is temporary. It doesn't give them a feeling of happiness for it is not satisfying and their restlessness continues. They lack spiritual merit. However, in some cases, over a period of time, the restlessness of their mind creates an awakening to change and practise penance like the way one of *sattvik* nature does. They realise that the show element of their actions did not add any value to them. They tend to become gentle and in time take to a spiritual path.

Those of *taamsik* nature are ignorant, dull and lazy. They perform penances in an obstinate and evil way by torturing their body and injuring others. Their penances include witchcraft and sorcery. Invariably they do so for causing hurt to others or for taking revenge. In the process they do immense harm to themselves and also earn debits in their *karma* account that they suffer later. The intention to hurt others eventually boomerangs on the doer of evil deeds.

Three kinds of Gifts

A person can give only that he possesses. One of *sattvik* nature gives a gift to a deserving person, at the right time and without any hope for a favour or a return gift. Anything given with the intent of obtaining something in return is

a business, a bargain. It cannot be *sattvik*. A *sattvik* gift can be of three kinds. It can be physical or material; mental and spiritual. Material gift can be in the form of physical help or monetary help; giving someone food or helping him get a better carrier option. The third one is the best form of material help for it helps him to stand on his own and progress in life. It is a long-term help and the beneficiary may also similarly help others and create a help chain.

In case of mental gift; one can teach an intellectually weak or ignorant person; or he can arrange for better education to a deserving intelligent person. In both cases one helps a fellow being to become a better person. The beneficiary could likewise help others and thus a chain for societal improvement can be set up.

When one helps a person spiritually he gradually gives up his greed, anger and other ego elements; he gets rid of material delusions. If one is inclined towards spirituality, help with knowledge and wisdom from one who is spiritually advanced and experienced can help him rise to a higher level. It does the beneficiary lasting good.

The important thing to note is that one never becomes poorer by giving to others. In truth he serves the God within within himself and also within the one who receives the help. And God always compensates the giver many fold. Hence, one only becomes richer by giving and best of all he enjoys great contentment and happiness.

A person of *rajasik* nature gives a gift with the hope of recompense at a later date or for gaining prestige by making a show of gift. Such a person usually gives anything reluctantly and in a restrained manner; he keeps on calculating his own gain. This kind of gift is called a *rajasik* gift for it is influenced by one's desire for material gain. In this case too, the gift can be material, mental or spiritual type, depending on the giver's spiritual advancement. Frankly it is a selfish act tainted by his desire of gain. Unlike in the case of *sattvik* gift, the compensation or rewards that the giver receives at the hands of God is tainted too and in truth he may end up being a loser.

A *taamsik* gift is one which is given by a person of *taamsik* nature. Usually it is given to an evil person, at a wrong place and at the wrong time. Invariably it is used for hurting or insulting the beneficiary. It is given grudgingly and with contempt; and it does no good to either the beneficiary or the giver.

The point to note here is that God gives to everyone benevolently and without any hope of a return. He does not discriminate and treats all in his creation

without any grudge or favour. Naturally one who follows his example and gives unconditionally and unselfishly becomes dear to him.

Aum, Tat, Sat

Aum, *Tat*, *Sat* is the most revered expression or name of Brahman from the Vedic times. The un-manifested God is called the Absolute; *Paramatma*; *Parabrahman*. When he does creation, he is called Brahman or *Aum*, *Tat*, *Sat*. Hence, *Aum*, *Tat*, *Sat* is the threefold symbol or name of God. Some ancient scholars used the nomenclature *Sat, Tat, Aum*. In Bible the name used for divine creative force, or the Creator (Brahman) is a trilogy of Father (*Sat*), Son (*Tat*) and the Holy Ghost (*Aum*).

Aum was the first cosmic vibration created by God; the first word spoken by him. It is

a very sacred expression and chanting it with devotion is considered as a prayer to God. It is called *Shabdabrahman* which means God designated in a word form, or one-word name of God. There is a parallel in Bible where it is said: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God …"[2]. This word in Bible stands for the Holy Ghost.

The word *Tat* means 'that' which is beyond. It connotes the creation and in it there is universal presence of God. In Bible it stands for the Son: Jesus. He came to earth and became a part of the creation. In a living being the central point between the two eye brows is considered to be the seat of Christ or the Christ Centre; *Kutashta Kendra*.

The word *Sat* literally means the truth. God is called the 'Absolute Truth'. Truth is eternal and changeless. Hence, *Sat* stands for God or Brahman the Father in Bible. The truth is that God is not a Being, he is in everything in the creation; he marks his presence through '*Tat* and *Aum*' or through Christ the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Jiva, the living being has all the three, *Aum*, *Tat* and *Sat* in him. Paramhans Yoganand has beautifully described this in his book on Gita and I quote: "His body is the result of *Aum* or the vibratory forces. *Tat* the Christ Intelligence exists in his omniscient spiritual eye between the eye brows. This Intelligence, individualized as his soul, is a reflection of Cosmic Consciousness or *Sat* residing in the thousand-petaled lotus in the brain." (Please refer Vol. II page 1007)

[2] *John 1:1.3*

God created Brahmins, Vedas and sacrificial rites in the beginning. Brahmins were the knowers of God and the soul; *Sat* element of God. The Vedas had the wisdom of the Spirit; these are the *Tat* element, the soul's intuitive intelligence.

The sacrificial rites (*yagnas*) that sustain the creation constitute the *Aum* element. It empowers and gives it the wisdom to perform its divine mandated duties for existence. One who wants to reach *Sat* has to follow the route of *Aum* and *Tat*. All sacrifices, *yagnas*, the holy rites described in the Vedas and the scriptures and the auspicious acts of giving gifts and austerities start with the utterance of sacred word *Aum*. It (*Aum*) uplifts one's awakening and his spirits; and guides him on the spiritual path to Self-realisation.

Likewise, those who selflessly perform, charity, penance and other pious acts, with-out any hope of rewards and purely for achieving salvation start with the word *Tat*.

Sat being the designation of God represents all that is good, like spiritual actions and unwavering devotion to God. All actions connected with sacrifice, charity and steadfastness in pious actions are also called *Sat*. But all such pious actions must be performed with full faith (*shraddha*) in him; it demands total surrender to God.

If, one performs, all the above actions carelessly without following the scriptural injunctions and without full faith in their actions and in God, the same is called '*asat*'. It does him no good in this life or the next one. His actions (*karma*) don't create any credit. Krishna is highlighting here, the need for attaining purity of body, mind and total commitment to the cause; and that one must always strive with full faith in God.

Gist of Chapter 17

The crux of Chapter 17 in one sentence: 'Our success lies in choosing and devoting ourselves to what is right rather than acquiring wealth, power and gratification of our senses.'

Krishna says that one is truly a product of his nature and nature is dependent upon the combined forces of *gunas* on him i.e. the net of the force of *sattvik*, *rajasik* and *taamsik* elements on him.

Faith comes from one's knowledge and intense analysis of right and wrong as per scriptural injunctions. Our faith and nature are interdependent but not inter-changeable. One works according to his faith (well considered understanding about the correctness of any issue), and his actions are determined by his nature, the *gunas*.

Gunas determine what we expect from our actions. A person under the influence of *sattvik guna* expects his actions to help him attain greater love and devotion to God for his aim is to advance on the spiritual path towards union with him.

One under the spell of *rajasik guna* expects to gain wealth, position, power and recognition of the world from his actions.

One of *taamsik* nature wants longer hours of sleep and he expects material and sensual pleasures from his actions or even from the lack of actions by him. He is not concerned if, in the process he hurts or harms others. He is always concerned about taking revenge for a perceived (not real) harm done to him.

The *gunas* are so powerfully interwoven in a person's psyche that he is rarely able to rise above their influence. Irrespective of the situation and the goal to be achieved his faith and the nature of his actions and the consequences of the same are always as per his *gunas*.

One's faith is of three kinds in line with the three *gunas*. As a result, his habits are always moulded as per his dominant *guna*. This makes all his actions to be of three kinds. Strangely one's food habits change as per his *gunas*. Likewise, one's spiritual practices like *yagna*, austerities and even gifts are of three kinds, not only in intent, but these are administered differently in three different ways.

Krishna makes a subtle hint to Arjuna that his objection to the war was the result of an emotional turmoil, not his considered thinking but a spur of the moment loss of memory. He is in a way encouraging him to apply his mind afresh and try to transcend the influence of *gunas*.

In the concluding part Krishna talks of *Aum*, *Tat*, *Sat* the threefold name of God indicating that everything in the creation is nothing but a representation of God.

Chapter 18: Conclusion: Yoga of Attaining Release by Renunciation

The first chapter of Gita sets the broad frame for issues to be discussed. The second chapter is a synopsis of Gita; Krishna covers practically all the subjects that are discussed in the subsequent chapters. In second to sixth chapters the emphasis is on service to God. It was highlighted that selfless service to our fellow beings was truly service to God. The teacher covers *karma*-yoga, *gyaan*-yoga and renunciation in these chapters but the focus remains on selfless devotion to God in whatever we do.

In the sixth to twelfth chapters the teacher talks about God and his opulences, his relationship with the creation, the process of cosmic evolution and the discreet difference between the Creator and the creation. In the eleventh chapter Krishna shows Arjuna his Universal Form and his power as the Creator. In the twelfth chapter he talks about *Bhakti*-yoga and explains why he considered it to be more suited to us (humankind).

From thirteenth to seventeenth chapters Krishna discusses knowledge, object of the knowledge, the knower, the subtle difference between body and soul (material nature and transcendental nature), three modes of nature or the *gunas* and their characteristics; then he talks about godlike and demonic minds, their propensities and how these influence one's nature and habits, what one likes to eat and how he conducts his life. He keeps on highlighting how one could achieve perfection.

In the concluding chapter 18 which is the biggest chapter Krishna recapitulates what he had said before and further elaborates on the same. There are 78 verses in this chapter. The first one is a query by Arjuna followed by 70 verses (verse 2 to 71) by Krishna in which he pointedly explains the complete spectrum of issues with a view to remove any doubts that Arjuna could possibly still be having.

In verse no. 72 he asks Arjuna if he understood what all he had said and if his doubts were dispelled? In verse 73 Arjuna unequivocally admits that all his misgivings were removed and that he was ready to fight the war for upholding righteousness. The last five verses (verses 74 to 78) are spoken by Sanjay who explains to Dhritrashtra the blind King, what he saw and heard of the discourse between Krishna and Arjuna.

The irony is that Sanjay, though he was the secretary to the King, was full of superlative praise and reverence for Krishna. He generously appreciates Pandavas who were the enemies of Kauravas (Dhritrashtra's sons). He even added that victory and glory would surely crown Pandavas for they were on the side of righteousness.

The core issue throughout Gita has been to know one's 'self', and that all, whether animate or inanimate in the creation had a reflection of God in them; that the life is the most precious possession one could ever have and its sole purpose should be to transcend the *gunas* and attain a spiritually higher level and seek Self-realisation. The true teaching of Gita starts in the 11th verse of chapter 2 and ends in 71st verse of chapter 18. The entire narrative is universal in nature and covers all aspects of human existence from creation to extinction. It also includes how one could gain perfection in life. It unveils the key to achieving excellence in the material world. It equally applies to everyone irrespective of space, time, geography, sex, race, caste, creed and position in the society.

At the start of Gita, Arjuna was despondent, completely lost in delusion. The teacher takes him through a gamut of situations and different types of learning, attaining knowledge both the *gyaan* (knowledge of the spirit through personal experience - *atmaanubhav*) and *Vigyaan* (physical sciences that can be seen, measured and experimentally proved), and then to the need for absolute faith in God, the Creator.

In the last chapter he talks of attaining supreme bliss, *Moksha* (Self-realisation), a state when nothing is left to be acquired; nothing remains to be done and all desires are satiated and the person remains perfectly relaxed and happy all the time.

Finally, he tells Arjuna that he had told him everything and that it was now up to him to decide his action entirely out of his own volition. In truth he had spiritually lifted him from the bottom of a deep well to the top of Himalaya through his perseverance and repeated explanations. He created a deep impact on his psyche and created an unflinching faith in his mind, and he (Arjuna) happily rose from his sulking demeanour and shedding his reluctance he gladly accepted to act as per his direction. At no time, Krishna tried to impose his will or in any way coerce him.

Arjuna begins by addressing him as the mighty armed One, the killer of most powerful demon Keshi and *Hrishikesha* (one who has his senses under control all the time i.e. one who possesses mental serenity), implying that he was most

powerful and knowledgeable and he was also in a position to answer his query. Then he earnestly beseeches him to explain to him the difference between renounced order of life (*sanyasa*) and relinquishment (*tyaag*). His query is not a simple one as both *sanyasa* and *tyaag* involve renunciation. He wants to know clearly that of the two renunciations which one was superior.

As per the accepted four stages of life, *sanyasa*, the life of renounced order was the last stage. It was called the *sanyasa ashram*. In this, one was supposed to retire to a secluded lonely place away from the world to lead a non-worldly life; and spend time in prayers. It was the time to reflect on his past life and seek forgiveness from God for any omissions by chanting his name and offering prayers to him with total devotion. He had no other action to perform; nothing to be done to fulfil any worldly desires etc. It amounts to abandoning all desire driven actions without which the act of *sanyasa* (renunciation) would be meaningless.

Most people stay confused about renunciation and relinquishing desires (*tyaag*). The main problem is that we can seek seclusion of a forest, that is a physical separation but the mind still keeps at work, travelling back and forth because it is not bound by space or time. *Sanyasa* demands renunciation of all actions; but *tyaag* demands renunciation of desire for fruits of actions which can still be there in *sanyasa ashram*. Arjuna is seeking clarity in this regard.

The teacher sees no harm in action by a renunciant. In verses 4 and 5 of chapter 3 it was clearly explained by him that none can ever live in a state of no action; even in renunciation (*sanyasa*) one had to perform essential actions. Now he clarifies that true renunciation (*sanyasa*) means giving up desire driven actions; and relinquishment (*tyaag*) means giving up fruits of actions. It implies doing work selflessly for the sake of work in total surrender to God. Selfish desires and anxiety for the fruits of action do not help us anyway but we have no control over the same. This, one can do, only if he gets over the sense of and pride of being the doer.

For this reason, earlier in chapter 3 dealing with *Karma*-yoga the teacher had laid so much emphasis on *nishkaam karma*. This is possible only when one understands that God is the real knower of all that can be known and doer of all actions and that he himself was only an agent chosen by him. This, one can do only when he learns to identify himself with God by surrendering his personal identity and ego.

Some scholars while talking of renunciation hold the view that one should give up all actions as evil, while others declare that pious actions like helping

others, sacrifice, penance and giving gifts that are called obligatory actions, must not be given up.

Krishna upholds the later view and exhorts that these must be performed for these act as the purifier of the being. However, he insists that these too must be done selflessly and there should be no attachment or desire for the fruits of the same. In verse 1 chapter 6 Krishna said that a true *sanyaasi* (renunciant) does good actions in service of mankind and meditative actions in seeking Self-realisation but always without any desire for fruits of his actions.

Some scholars advocate the view that those who pursue *Gyaan*-yoga, the path of knowledge must give up all actions; but Krishna's assertion in this regard does not bear this out. After all, *Gyaan*-yogi too needs to rid himself of identification with the body or body consciousness as that is the cause of ego and desires for fruits of his actions. For this reason, one has to condition his mind through meditative actions where he seeks to dissolve himself (his soul) in the Spirit. True he soon returns back to his normal thinking self. The essence is to get rid of material attachments and identification with the body. This necessitates repeated meditation over long periods.

Yagna with a central fire, austerity, charity and penance etc. have now become a ritual but the original idea was to purify one's body, mind and actions through these; charity and giving gifts were meant to cultivate the habit of helping the poor and serving fellow beings, truly it is serving the God in them.

Renunciation of obligatory actions and duties due to delusion of a false sense of withdrawal from the world is nothing but laziness; and *taamsik* self-deception. This is called *taamsik* renunciation.

Relinquishing normal worldly actions like doing a job for wages or some return, or for fear of failure or problems, is called *rajasik* renunciation. It is a non-spiritual act; it does not merit any credit for the same.

On the contrary, one who performs his dutiful activities, that must be done, but renounces superfluous ego serving material actions, earns credit and becomes entitled to due rewards. Dutiful actions (that one must do) when performed without any expectations of a return or lure of fruits of the same by giving up all attachments, is called *sattvik* renunciation. Such a renunciant remains even minded in all kinds of actions; he neither abhors unpleasant ones nor rejoices in good ones. He calmly performs all dutiful actions as divine actions by shedding all material bondage and surrendering everything to God.

This makes him aware of his real relationship with him and achieves Self-realisation.

Krishna admits that it is practically not possible for humankind to abandon all actions. He however, said that if, one gives up wish for fruits of his actions and attachments with the same, he is considered to be a true relinquisher (a *tyagi*). He adds that one who has not relinquished fruits of his actions he becomes entitled to three kinds of rewards for the same: good, mixed and unpleasant after his death depending upon the kind of his actions. On the other hand, a relinquisher doesn't gain any of these on his death; he, having relinquished, has no need for the same (any fruits or rewards) anyway.

Our actions become the seeds for further actions (good, evil or mixed) at a later date, even in our subsequent lives. Truly our actions create *karma* credits or debits that we can even carry forward when we die. After spending time (depending on the credits earned) in the astral world, we return back to earth and continue our work as per our *karmic* balance. The entire system works on auto-pilot with no interference from anyone. A *sattvik* renunciant can however, reach his highest destination and achieve union with God and enjoy supreme bliss in serene environment. He is not required to return back to earth for he has no unfulfilled desire and no work that is undone.

The teacher explains above the destiny of those who are body conscious and work for sense gratification and for fruits of their actions and also of those who attain Spirit consciousness; they work for God and they accept that everything belongs to him; he is the real doer; and they are mere tools for his actions.

Krishna having explained renunciation, its kinds, and what we gain from the same, proceeds to explain the cause of actions, elements of actions, knowledge and the role of nature; and how we can achieve liberation from the same.

The Cause of Action and how to Achieve Liberation

Krishna says there are five root causes or elements that are needed for any action to be performed. These have been described in the Sankhya Doctrine[159] and in Vedanta as well. Sankhya stands for *Gyaan*, true knowledge - knowing what is at the core of all issues (*tatva gyaan*). Essentially it propounds *Gyaan*-yoga that accepts duality of *Purusa* (Supreme God) and *Prakriti*.

Karma-yoga of Gita, accepts *advait* where God is everything, the *Prakriti* is his manifestation and depends on him for its existence. He is infinite, omnipresent and omnipotent and he being the real doer does everything. In Sankhya

Philosophy *atman*, the individualised God does nothing; it is *akarta*, a mere witness and all actions are done by nature. As per this philosophy, renunciation of all actions is necessary for real experience of one's soul (*atmaanubhava*) and for that he must first know his soul. Krishna, without rejecting Sankhya Philosophy, talks of selfless action (working for the sake of work without worrying about its results). The basic premise is that the God is the real doer, hence, the rewards too should belong to him and our worrying about it is meaningless.

Five Elements needed for Action

1st Element: The human body (*adhisthana*) is the seat of all actions. It is the first element or cause of any action; without the body no action, physical, mental, emotional not even spiritual one, can be accomplished.

2nd Element: The second agent of action is the ego (self-sense or I-ness). It acts like a king and dictates to the mind; and senses. Truly, after the body, ego is the starting point of any action. Nothing can be accomplished without the presence of ego. It assumes the role of pseudo-soul. It has been called the *karta* the doer. Truly the soul is a mere witness, it doesn't do anything, at the same time no action can start without it (soul) being there to witness it. If, there is no soul, there is no *jiva* and therefore, no action. Hence, soul is also taken to be the cause of action along with the ego.

3rd Element: The third element of action is a set of various instruments that are used. These are the five senses that help us in acquiring knowledge (*Gyaan-Indriya*)[160]: Eyes, Nose, Ears, Tongue and Skin and five working senses (*Karma-Indriya*): Hands, Legs, Voice, Anus and Genitals; and the mind that coordinates between the senses, and the intelligence that triggers the mind and guides it. These twelve elements (ten senses, the mind and intelligence) are the tools for any action.

4th Element: The above twelve instruments or faculties cause various functions within the body mechanisms like life currents, blood flow, metabolizing breathing and voluntary actions of organs etc. that actuate vital subtle inner functions and cause various endeavours (*cheshta*). These endeavours constitute the fourth factor that causes us to perform any action. Some scholars hold the view that the twelve faculties act on the soul that causes subtle actions within the body mechanism. This approach is a purely spiritual one whereas, the other one is more rational.

5th Element: The fifth element or factor of action is the most important and subtle one. In common parlance we call it destiny or providence; Krishna called it *daivam*. This again is a spiritualistic approach that burdens God to determine actions of all beings and the various groups or systems in the creation. Gita holds the view that it is the accumulated effect of our *karma* (balance in *karmic* account) that causes us to function in a particular way; it creates what is known as free-will. In verse 14 it has been called as the invisible silent deity that exercises a decisive influence on all actions both in the present and in future. This compulsive force is indeterminate; it is popularly called destiny or luck or the will of God, on which we have no control. The fact is that it is self-created 'destiny', it can only be based on our earlier *karma*, it remains unnoticed for we have no way of experiencing it or seeing it, that is why Krishna called it *daivam* the invisible silent deity.

Let us consider a simple parallel from our life. An orchard owner grows all kinds of plants both early maturing and long maturing ones. Quite often he doesn't see or taste the fruits of the latter category of plants (due to his death), but the truth is that it was he who caused the plant to come into existence, grow and bear the fruits. Similarly, we have no way of looking into and rating or making a value judgment on our own actions specially the ones performed in the previous lives. These remain unseen but affect our later lives as some of the results spill over to the next life.

The substance of the foregoing is that without the five factors referred above no action, good or bad, can be performed. The teacher exhorts that those of perverse mind, though oblivious of the genesis of actions, (the various elements required and their contributions), still claim ownership of actions and achievements. Since, we identify ourselves with the body which is only one of the five factors; we can at best be one fifth owner or doer of any action.

Let us go a bit deeper for the sake of knowing the real truth. We identify us with our body. The body has 24 constituents (as described in chapter 13) including the five great elements (*panch mahabhuta* or *mahatatva*); earth, air, water, fire and space (a*kaash*) or ether the claim of ownership or doer-ship by our body alone falls flat. The five great elements make the body and not otherwise. Hence, all these elements are a party to any action, and since the body does not own or even control these, how can one, claim even one fifth portion of doer-ship of any action.

If we were the real owners we should be able to carry these with us when we die. Gita repeatedly states that God is the real owner of everything in the

creation and he is the real doer of all actions; we are mere instruments that he chooses through his grace.

In the last paragraph Krishna describes the psyche of an egocentric person; and explains why his perception about doer-ship of any action becomes flawed. Now he talks about one on a higher spiritual plane (say a yogi), who follows the scriptural discipline. He tries to subdue his ego, banish his sense of I-ness and acquires clarity in thought through his intelligence, and works unselfishly for the sake of work as a duty (*dharma*).

How is a yogi able to do it? He carries no material or emotional baggage. He acts as an instrument of God and recognises him as the real doer. Being an agent of God for any action itself becomes a great honour to him that could not be matched by any reward or recognition. However, it is not easy and at times even sages advanced on the spiritual path hesitate and falter.

In Gita, Arjuna himself was a ready example. In chapter 11, on seeing Krishna's Universal Form he was bewildered and fumbles; he asks him, 'who he was'? Krishna replies to him (in 11.32) that he was 'Time', '*Kala*' that determines the time of events including death of all in the creation. Then he proceeds to say that he had slain all in the enemy lines (Kauravas) at the battle field and that he (Arjuna) had only to get up and fight the war as his instrument and be victorious to enjoy the kingdom and glory. Krishna implies that in reality he was not required to kill anyone on the battle field as all had already been killed by him hence, his guilt was misplaced. However, even a person of his calibre did not understand the truth, even when he had the assurance from Krishna (God) himself that Pandava's victory had been underwritten by him. He waited till the end of this chapter (18.72) to become ready to fight to fight the war.

Krishna adds that one who has no selfish motive in his actions and works for God, he achieves enlightenment. He never does anything wrong or with an evil intent with a view to harm anyone. In scriptures there are numerous stories of saints or righteous beings cursing evil doers and even killing them. Their actions were inspired by their inner urge to uphold goodness. They were not incited by malice or intent to harm anybody. Hence, they were not considered guilty or punished for their actions. They did not earn any debit in their *karmic* account. The one who was cursed or killed by them were treated as such by them due to their adverse *karmic* records.

Krishna categorically states that one who acts righteously, even if he kills anyone, he is not held guilty and doesn't earn any *karmic* debit. He maintains

that it is not the action, but the spirit of the same that is important. However, this is no license to harm or kill anyone with impunity. One will have to be a yogi, an enlightened one on the spiritual path, and acts without malice or evil intent to deserve such merit.

Krishna talked of five factors for performing any action. Now he explains the same differently and condenses the five factors into three elements that are needed for any action. These are the knower that decides what he wants to do (ego); knowledge or the instruments to use to achieve the goal (body with senses) and the the object to be achieved (the known). These three elements combine to cause the action. He elaborates that these three elements are the agent for any action, the instruments he uses for the activity to achieve the desired goal. These three change according to the mode of nature of the person (*gunas*) and are therefore of three kinds.

Three kinds of Knowledge, Actions & Doers

Knowledge

The knowledge, through which one sees the same Eternal Spirit in everything; gross or subtle, living or non-living in the creation is called *sattvik* knowledge. They know that God remains undivided in things divided by different forms, place, time etc. Such a person is in the mode of 'goodness' and tries to advance on the spiritual path.

When one sees multiplicity of beings or Spirits in different creatures due to their different forms, his knowledge is called the *rajasik* knowledge. He is of passionate nature. His selfish interests prejudice his ideas and his actions are motivated by the urge for material gains. His concept of God gets distorted due to duality; he thinks of his God, my God and other's God. He forgets that God is one, infinite and immutable.

The third kind of knowledge is of *taamsik* quality. When one is possessed of *taamsik* knowledge he is delusioned and has a single point focus on gratification of his senses. He does not care for real, unreal and the cause and effect of his action. He is engaged in trivial matters and being lazy, he chooses the one that is easiest, yet, he expects it to deliver great benefits and happiness. He neither wants to think nor works with devotion but aspires big. Such a person is in the mode of 'dullness' (*taamsik*).

Actions or Works

Krishna now explains the relationship between the differing natures of actions

performed under the influence of sattva, rajas and tamas *gunas*.The work can be of *sattvik*, *rajasik* or *taamsik* nature. These depend on the mode (*guna*) of the person performing the same e.g. if the person is of *sattvik* nature his actions and the work performed by him will be in the same mode of nature i.e. *sattvik*.

The work that is ordained duty and is done selflessly without any attachment love or hate; and without the lure for fruits of actions is of *sattvik* quality or in 'goodness'. People, under the influence *sattvik guna* are aware of the scriptural discipline and mandate in respect of one's duty (*dharma*). Knowing the truth about the eternal God they work with full faith and devotion to him, and are not swayed by selfish interest.

The work motivated by selfish desires and done for gratification of senses are of passionate nature or of *rajasik* quality. In them the self-sense (ego) prevails upon their mind to undertake such actions. Most often one's consciousness is alive and prompts him to the right course but unfortunately one ignores the same and goes through severe strain to perform such actions in the hope of gains and perceived happiness. The strain is caused by a feeling of guilt of sacrificing something of much greater value for gaining something of insignificant value. One does this due to influence of passion. It is called a work of *rajasik* quality.

In both *sattvik* and *rajasik* nature of works one may be required to perform unpleasant actions or make sacrifices but one of *sattvik* nature acts consciously with pleasure for he works selflessly, there is no burden on him for he works as a duty and does not suffer a sense of sacrifice. On the other hand, one of *rajasik* nature carries a great load, he always thinks of the sacrifice that is forced upon him due to his work.

Taamsik quality of work is done without any thought for consequences. It is done out of selfish shortsightedness, ignorance, laziness and inflated greed. In this nature one acts on the spur of the moment. Usually he tends to become violent without any valid reason, incited by mindless emotions he loses control and remains unmindful of the consequences of his actions. He pays for it with serious loss and awkward situations and he repents all the time blaming others for his losses and failure.

Doer

Doers are also of three kinds. They act according to the mode of their nature and they too are of *sattvik*, *rajasik* and *taamsik* nature.

***Sattvik* Doer**

One who gets rid of his ego and body consciousness; remains unattached to sense objects, he performs his work willingly, happily with zeal and considers it as his divine ordained duty. He follows the spiritual path and retains equanimity under all circumstances he is called a *sattvik* doer. He is unexcited in success or failure; he believes God is the real doer and himself his instrument for action. His sole desire is to please God and serve him by his actions. He distinguishes between temporal, short term happiness and bliss and works for the latter.

***Rajasik* Doer**

Rajasik doer is one who is passionate, deeply attached and restlessly looks for fruits of his action; he is greedy, impure in thought and deed, having a materialistic mindset that is easily moved by success and failure. Such a person is under the influence of rajas *guna*; he always works for material pelf, power and pleasures, remains restless, does not meditate or think about the propriety of his actions but blindly pursues his search for pleasures. He can be harsh and ruthless in his pursuit of wealth. Passionate people who have a streak of *sattva* in them can work to gain a balanced approach and they can even advance to the spiritual path.

***Taamsik* Doer**

A *taamsik* doer is one who is under the influence of *tamas guna*. He is ignorant, lazy, unstable with an agitating and restless mind, arrogant, vulgar, a person of very weak conscience or no conscience, obstinate and unscrupulous. He lacks intellect and is uncultured in behaviour, indolent, malicious and lacking in humility. He is prone to procrastination for he lacks focus and he keeps on changing his stance. He is usually unsociable, disrespectful, highly self-centered and lacks any enthusiasm. He works leisurely and is never happy. He is full of depressing negativity that is infectious.

Three kinds of Understanding, Fortitude & Happiness

Understanding

The word understanding stands for one's intelligence (*Buddhi*). Again, based on mode of nature (*guna*) of the person his understanding can be of three kinds.

***Sattvik* Understanding**

A person in the nature of goodness, has *sattvik* understanding; he knows the difference between dutiful actions (*dharma*) that must be done and undutiful ones (non-actions) that should not be done. Dutiful actions do not create fear, bondage or attachment. It frees the soul of the influence of bondage and helps one on the spiritual path. His superior intelligence creates intuitive wisdom that arouses his consciousness he overcomes his frailties and becomes fearless and calm. As a result, the usual doubting nature makes way for courage and composure and he achieves a pointed focus. Being a detached person, he knows that God was the real doer of all that happens in the world, and this gives him great confidence and he rarely needs a 'redo' for he seldom makes a mistake.

Work that must not be done (non-action) creates attachments, fear and anxiety making one skeptic and he lacks clarity. Material pursuits bind a person, he becomes afraid of failure and due to his doubting nature, he is always short of confidence and lacks focus, his mind becomes fickle and he fails to concentrate on the job. One must discriminate between action and non-action to be able to make a correct choice.

***Rajasik* Understanding**

A person in the mode of passion (*rajasik*), is unable to discriminate between correct action, that one is duty bound to perform (dutiful action) and undutiful ones (called non-action). Truly he lacks the understanding and acts in a mechanical way. Devoid of the benefit of intuitive wisdom, he remains confused and considers himself to be the doer. His materialistic goal and approach creates restless urgency to gain what he wants and this makes him stumble into failure. He suffers pain, insecurity, distrust and a feeling of helplessness and loses his calm and his progress slows down. Such understanding is of *rajasik* kind. It is due to his pronounced *rajasik guna*. Those who have, or acquire even a streak of *sattvik guna* along with their *rajasik guna* can improve their understanding and make better progress. In some cases, they rise to *sattvik* level.

***Taamsik* Understanding**

Taamsik understanding is one in which a person remains enveloped in darkness, he is unable to see the right and wrong in his actions. He mistakes the wrong action and thinks it to be the right one. Such understanding creates perverted ideas, an indolent nature and one is unable to pursue even a simple materialistic goal due to ignorance, a confused and an obstinate mind. His intrinsic urge is for evil actions. Total lack of spirituality creates an ambience

of gloom and delusion in him. This makes him unpredictable, unreasonable and even cruel.

Fortitude

Fortitude[163] is steadiness, a capacity to stay firm and stoically face all odds in one's path. This attribute is again of three kinds; *sattvik, rajasik* and *taamsik* based on the predominant *guna* of the person.

***Sattvik* Fortitude**

It is a great quality. It requires one to have control over his mind and senses. The unwavering fortitude through which one is able to concentrate his mind and acquires a single point focus on his task is said to be of the nature of 'goodness' (*sattvik*). One's ego (also called pseudo-soul) virtually overpowers him to run after sense objects ignoring his inner voice; it takes him away from soul; and from God. His mind keeps wavering and focus becomes difficult, he is unable to see the finer points, the subtle nuances in an object or in a situation. *Sattvik* steadiness (fortitude) is the quality that gives us the vision to see what our ego prevents us from seeing. It neutralizes our ego effectively and makes it to unite with our real soul, the spirit. Yoga and meditation help us gain this attribute.

***Rajasik* Fortitude**

Rajasik fortitude follows *rajasik* intelligence. When a person is firm in his duty but he does it for wealth, position, pleasure or for lure of fruits of his actions and sense gratification he is said to possess *rajasik* fortitude. His passionate nature directs his resolve towards temporal pelf and pleasures and his religiosity lacks devotion and surrender to God, it is more of external display.

***Taamsik* Fortitude**

Taamsik intelligence makes one's fortitude *taamsik*. The foolish, ignorant, deluded person groping in dark is unable to control his laziness, his weakness for over sleep, perpetually despondent demeanour and conceit. His fortitude is full of negativity for he lacks thinking due to his habit of over sleeping he is hardly ever awake. He suffers constant gloom and pursues evil designs. He seldom has any control over his body or mind and his actions become indiscriminate that harm him and others who come in contact with him. Such fortitude is of *taamsik* nature.

Happiness

Happiness too, is of three kinds like all other attributes.

Before we discuss these, we must understand a few salient points raised by Krishna (in verse 36). He calls Arjuna as the best among the descendents of Bharata[161], enlightened and advanced on the path of Self-realisation by cultivating and also practising hard the virtuous attributes discussed above. He assures him that with his superior intellect and practise of yoga, he had gained the capacity to win over all kinds of sufferings: physical, mental and spiritual. He is encouraging him with full throated appreciation of his pedigree, he then talks how one could achieve bliss (he calls it transcendent happiness) in life. First one has to know what happiness is?

One achieves true happiness when he gets rid of all sufferings and works for supreme happiness that is divine bliss; he transcends all senses (senses do not affect him any more) and succeeds in gaining unity with his inner self or soul which is a part of Super Soul (God). Human sufferings can be physical, mental or spiritual. Physical suffering pertains to bodily diseases (due to nature or environment) or accidents etc. Mental suffering comes from negative balance in our *karmic* account (one can get a partial set off through good deeds but that may take time). Spiritual suffering is experienced when on the spiritual path one is unable to achieve progress towards his goal and he remains unaware where he was falling short in his efforts. Mental and spiritual sufferings can create side effects by way physical suffering as well.

Krishna says that one can achieve freedom from all sufferings and pain through constant practise of Yoga and meditation. These enable him to rid himself of the lure of sense objects (he transcends senses). He learns to stay steady on the spiritual path and pursues the goal of union with God. Physical suffering can be removed through disciplined life with yoga, pranayaam etc. Krishna said that through the science of Yoga one can get over all the sufferings and proceed on the path of Self-realisation.

***Sattvik* Happiness**

Krishna says: when one gains the perception that the goal of Self-realisation is at the root of true happiness and he works for it he is said to pursue *sattvik* happiness. However, he cautions that one is bound to face strong challenge from his senses at every step for these are very powerful. These test our determination. Initially one starts finding the effort for gaining happiness to be a wild goose chase; virtually like taking poison. He faces a difficult choice; on one hand are the worldly pleasures that could be gained easily, on the other, he encounters an uncertain future. This requires great patience, hard

work and the discipline of yoga is a necessary tool. These for sure lead one to success and in the end it becomes like gaining heavenly nectar.

Sattvik happiness is gained when one on the spiritual path is awakened to soul consciousness and achieves discriminative wisdom.

***Rajasik* Happiness**

Happiness that is obtained through the contact of senses with material objects is called *rajasik* happiness. One who is lured by worldly pleasures due to passion always thinks of these as nectar. He doesn't realise that the pleasures obtained through these are short lived and never satisfying, one remains discontented and in the end, he finds that the perceived nectar is actually poison. One of the collaterals of *rajasik* happiness is that it urges one to indulge in excesses to gain greater happiness and that creates not only problems but discontentment for him. The end result is that he is unable to enjoy what happiness he may have already gained.

***Taamsik* Happiness**

A person of the nature of *tamas guna* seeks happiness in evil actions. *Tamas guna* results from evil *karma* that makes one deluded, ignorant and lazy. He over sleeps and is hardly ever awake. Since he doesn't like to work, he looks for short cuts, easy way to get rich and enjoy life; and he resorts to evil actions. Such a person is like a drug addict who does everything undesirable to be able to live and to somehow obtain drugs. His unstable state unfortunately is his sense of happiness. This kind of happiness is called *taamsik.*

One's Duties are determined by his Nature

One's duties are truly divine determined. God created nature (*prakriti*) and through the same the entire creation was effected. The deities in the astral world; living beings and non-living on earth and everywhere were all created by nature and are subject to the same laws which are primarily managed through the three modes (*gunas*). Since nature was an agency chosen by God for carrying out the creation, in truth the creation was by the God who determined everyone's duties as well, but he credited nature (*Maya* and its tools, the three *gunas)* for administering the same. Both astral deities and men are governed by *Maya* and its three modes[162]. At the same time, God gifted both astral deities and men the benefit of free choice aka free-will. Those who use this gift correctly, and practise yoga, in due time God grants them union with himself, and they are spared the cycle of birth, suffering and death, they are never born again.

After creation of men God made natural attributes based fourfold classification of men to manage the affairs of the world. The distribution of work to the four groups was as per specific aptitudes needed for efficient working of the group's allotted functions. The important point to note is that the classification had nothing to do with heredity; it was entirely quality-aptitude based. A person who possessed special skills (aptitude), a particular faculty was accordingly placed in the appropriate class or group. It was a liberal classification and there was scope for one in a particular class to graduate to another class in case he acquired the qualities required for that class. We will first see this classification and then briefly discuss their features.

Fourfold Division of Work – *Chaturvarnayaam*

Krishna had earlier explained that all human beings in the creation had all the ingredients of good and bad, bravery, dynamic, hardworking, indolence and cowardice etc. in different measures.

The different qualities and skills become prominent under the influence of different modes (*gunas*) and therefore, everyone cannot do all the things with equal efficiency at the same time. Different people have different inborn qualities and aptitudes depending upon their *karmic* record. To take advantage of this difference and for efficient working, Krishna classified the society in four groups.

Scholars, who were well versed in Vedas and other scriptures that gave them wisdom and moral guidance were assigned by him to work as Spiritual Masters (preceptors-*gurus*) with a view to ensure proper working of the society. Then he thought of kings, the rulers and the administrators who could raise resources to govern and ensure happiness and security to the entire populace. After that, he thought of the support staff comprising of two groups, one to look after trade, agriculture, finance and other allied functions necessary for day to day sustenance of the society; and lastly the service class, the foot soldiers to provide support to all. These classes were distinct and entirely skill based for choosing the right man for every function. These groups were named by him as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. (Please refer page 73-74 Chapter4)

This arrangement was purely functional, a clear division of duties with a view to avoid confusion, and provide checks and balances. It had nothing to do with heredity or the caste. It was based on the premise that everyone was skilled in some field; he could do better than others in his own vocation but he was not equipped to do other functions equally well. It was a way of choosing the best

person for every job so that the society worked optimally for maximum benefit to all sections of the society. It was not a question of providing identical opportunity but equal opportunity to all to excel for obtaining full value of one's special skill and capacity. The beauty of the system was that all were socially equal.

Krishna has explained this idea throughout Gita. The beauty of the system was that no one had absolute authority. The Brahmins were placed at a higher pedestal than the ruling class of Kshatriyas but they had no direct authority to govern. Kshatriyas, even the king had to obtain moral sanction of the Brahmins who were *gurus* and Vaishyas too worked under their supervision. Likewise, the Shudras had to work under the guidance of Vaishyas. There was no ambiguity about responsibilities and if everyone did his assigned duty to the best of his capability the results were bound to be excellent. At the same time everyone had scope for improving his position. No one was constrained to lead the life of a class or caste because of his birth. The point was explained earlier when the teacher talked about *karmic cycle*; you reap what you sow; one's deed determining his future and even his next life. Let us consider a few examples to understand this point.

Vishvamitra the renowned Vedic scholar and sage was the son of a Kshatriya king named Gadhi. Similarly, Lord Parushrama, who was a great sage and who has been accepted as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, was a Kshatriya who had killed the demon Sahashtrabahu. He was the grand-nephew of sage Vishvamitra. This proves that Kshatriyas could graduate to the class of Brahmins.

Chandragupta the founder of the Mauraya Dynasty was a Shudra who was picked by the great Brahmin teacher Chanakya. Imagine, Ashoka the great was a grandson of Chandragupta he too was a Shudra by birth but became one of the greatest kings in Indian history. He later became a respected Buddhist preacher.

Balmiki the great scholar sage was a robber and murderer; he too was a Shudra. As the most learned sage he was considered amongst the best in the Brahmin class.

The restriction imposed by Krishna in Gita was that one could not simultaneously be involved in more than one discipline. In fact, he specifically warned that even if one does his work imperfectly he should persist with the same rather than doing the work of others. He further categorically assures that if one pursues his inborn skill (natural gift) and devotes himself to his

duty and worships God can achieve highest success and perfection. For example, if a Shudra who by virtue of his *guna* was lazy, body - conscious, materialistic, mad after sensual pleasures and wanted everything without having to toil for it, aspires to rise to the higher class of say Vaishyas he will have to approach a qualified teacher and devotedly follow his guidance. He had to patiently pursue the path advised by him. No doubt, it is not easy, one has to determinedly persevere and put up with contingent hardships.

The important point that most of us miss is that our heredity, birth in a particular family and our circumstances are a product of our accumulated *karma*. But we have the opportunity to choose the path and actions needed for improving our situation. We can't change our parents and we also can't change our past *karma* but we can still better our circumstances by our present deeds. We have to first accept that it is not our parents, our family, the society or God who is responsible for what we are or we get, but ourselves. We bequeathed ourselves our present destiny in the past by our deeds and we can change it and get a better present and future by our deeds. This recognition, faith in God, and willingness to work hard to evolve ourselves can make us transcend all class barriers and reach the top and even achieve union with God.

In verse 41 Krishna talks of *chaturvarnayaam* (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra), he uses the Sanskrit word *svabhava*[163]; this implies our in-born nature as per the predominant *guna*. But the *gunas* are not our original nature which is godly, as we are the children of God. *Gunas* are our acquired nature, the second nature as per our *karma* and through *karma* we can change the same. When Krishna says that one should stick to his own duty (as per his inborn traits) and persist with it, even if it is done imperfectly and not try to change over to other's duty, he implies that one has to first learn to do his own duty correctly for which he is gifted, before he could think of doing other's duty, for which he lacks the innate skill. It is about accepting responsibility and practicing perseverance, there is no short cut to quick returns. The process is slow; those who persevere on the *yogic* path with devotion surely achieve commensurate rewards including Self- realisation or God union.

Krishna is recapitulating all he had said earlier. He explained the division of work; how one should do his own work with devotion. Now he talks about perfection which is the same as God-realisation; and then he talks about how the practice of yoga helps in achieving our ultimate goal; union with God, the Brahman.

Achieving Perfection

When an embodied being realises the truth about his inner self, the soul, and accepts that he was one with it i.e. he is the soul (the higher nature of God) not the body (God's lower nature) he then reaches the state where all actions cease; he becomes action-less and he works selflessly. For this to happen he has to become totally detached. His body, his family and the world just happen to be there as a part of a grand scheme of God, he is in them but always out of them; and he should have no attachment with them. He does his work, without hoping for or caring about the fruits of his actions, his actions are not for any gain but in the service of God. His duty is to dedicate himself and his actions to him.

The very thought of one being the soul and not the body banishes his self-sense; he becomes calm and happy irrespective of his circumstances; nothing bothers him for he has conquered the lower nature that constitutes the body. This is the first stage of Self-realisation where one achieves freedom from desire (*kaam*) and all worldly attributes like greed, lust, jealousy, anger, position, wealth, pain and pleasure etc. do not affect him and he succeeds in banishing desire and his self-sense (ego) that are prime movers for sense gratification. This is true renunciation (*tyaag*).

The stage of 'freedom from desire' grants one the action-less state as explained above. Gradually through practise of yoga one transcends the three *gunas*, his *karmic* balance at this point reaches zero (through his deeds and set off earned by him) and he achieves union with Brahman and enjoys supreme bliss. He gets to know and becomes a part of the Infinite, Imperishable and the Absolute Truth.

The foregoing is an account of how a householder can become a *karma*-yogi and achieve Self-realisation while leading a worldly life. This is *Karma*-yoga (earlier dealt in detail in chapter 3) where a yogi rises to the highest level by renouncing his ego, desires and fruits of action or *tyaag* through practice of yoga and by pursuing the spiritual path. Here, one does not renounce the world and retires to a secluded place in a forest away from his family and society, but lives a normal worldly life and carries on with his usual activities.

Krishna now talks of the other stream of *Gyaan*-yoga and *Dhyaan*-yoga (verses 53 to 55) that he earlier discussed in chapter 2 and Chapter 6. In these one has to renounce his family, society and the world; he ceases all activity; he lives frugally, eating little, sleeping on a mat, living the life of a hermit with bare needs for sustaining life. Renunciation of the world in this way is called

vairaagya. One has to spend his time in yoga, meditation and prayers in search of God realisation. Finally, he has to practise the last discipline of *samadhi* as given in the eightfold yoga (*ashtaangyoga*).

Both the methods of *Gyaan*-yoga and *Dhyaan*-yoga for achieving God union are subtle but difficult as compared to the other two: *Karma*-yoga or *Bhakti*-yoga. However, the practice of yoga is a must irrespective of the stream i.e. *Gyaan*-yoga, *Karma*-yoga or *Bhakti*-yoga. Yoga is necessary for banishing one's desire and ego. Without this one cannot work with singular focus and shed attachments to the material world.

In *Gyaan*-yoga the yogi has to give up all works besides the desire (*kaam*). One should first achieve total separation from the world in order to achieve an uncontaminated physical and mental state. There should be no pollution of any kind; no sound, presence of anyone or anything that could cause any kind of physical or emotional entanglement. One has to retire to a secluded place in the hills or forest where nature is the only company with clear sun light and clean fresh air. One has to eat little[164] simple light food, so that he maintains a light, distress free body.

Most of our bodily problems owe their origin to over eating tasty food. With a body that is not fit, focusing the mind becomes difficult and meditation is not possible. A distressed body cannot have mental peace. Meditation requires continued pointed focus on God that is not possible without the mind being at rest. In one sentence one has to practise austerity of body, speech and mind. To keep our body fit we have to moderate our food and its intake. We have to trust that nature provides considerable energy to our body through sun light and air.

When a yogi having achieved external peace (by choosing a secluded place and surroundings), and internal peace (by renouncing his ego, sense of 'me' and 'mine', attachments and moderating his food), meditates on God he learns to control the flow of his life force through his spinal column and its centres or *chakras* (aka *kundalini*). Normally the life force (*prana vaayu*) travels from the top centre near the brain through the spinal channel to coccygeal centre called the *muladharachakra* near the navel. There is a mesh of nerves that carry the life force to the various parts of the body that branch off from the seven spinal centres.

In the state of *samadhi* the yogi starts moving the life force in the reverse direction from bottom (*muladharachakra*) to top. The process is one of controlled breathing and holding the breath within for long periods. The idea

is to completely shed body consciousness and focus in a vacuum on God. This takes considerable practise. When the yogi is completely focused on God, he starts experiencing himself as a part of him and at an appropriate time the life force escapes from the top and it becomes a part of the Cosmic Energy and he gains unity with God.

The yogi who meditates and through it, gets into *samadhi*, learns to moderate and eventually control the flow of life force in spinal channel and through the same he attains total tranquillity and he stays at peace within himself. He transcends the feelings and desires for he achieves complete equanimity. In such a blissful state he gets completely engrossed in Brahman. He starts experiencing the original divine presence (that he had at birth) within him once again. In time, this sublime experience creates the knowledge of presence of Brahman within him. He starts recalling and then experiencing his nature and opulences and soon he takes the path to union with him. The moot point is that this act of union is not a transformation of a form (embodied being) into a state of nothingness (for Brahman has no form), it is a complete surrender of one's being through unwavering devotion and unconditional surrender. It is simply a union of embodied spirit with the Cosmic Spirit.

Krishna addresses Arjuna's Problem

The above was a general statement of the processes applicable to all yogis who wish to achieve union with Brahman. Now Krishna addresses Arjuna's particular problem (from verse 56 to 71) and tells what is relevant to him in *karma* yoga for he was not a renunciant in *vairaagya* for *Dhyaan*-yoga. One can clearly see the subtle way he employs to educate him using his inexhaustible patience and persuasive skill. At no point he interferes with his freedom of choice or in any way indoctrinates him. He attempts awakening his (Arjuna's) dormant wisdom, his faculty of discrimination (that had gone missing), leaving him free to decide what he thinks was good for him; his course of action.

God gives similar freedom to everyone, all the time. He only prompts us to the right direction and leaves us free to follow the same. We have the option to not follow his advice as well and that is what we mostly do. Most often, in rush for a quick gain or craving for sense gratification, we get overpowered by our ego and ignore his subtle hint. Only an evolved person, who achieves the power of discrimination can subdue his ego and control his mind. He takes his cue and follows the right path. Arjuna indeed was an enlightened being who was suffering emotional delusion.

Krishna says that a *karma*-yogi selflessly performs his duties as a service to God. While doing his work he considers himself to be a mere tool in the hands of God, accepting him to be the real doer. Such a person receives his benevolent grace and qualifies for release from his body. He achieves union with him on fulfilling all conditions required for the same. A true yogi seeks guidance of his *guru* in order to gain unwavering focus and he meditates on God as his Supreme Goal. While he is absorbed in God, he experiences his presence in his midst as if, he is attached to him. Strangely he discovers that his work gets done without him laboring or worrying for the same? It is so only due to his unflinching faith in God and belief that he (God) was the real doer.

Krishna is driving home two points in a subtle way: one is achieving total faith in God and unconditional surrender to him; the second is complete absence of ego, self -sense and conceit and his 'me' and 'mine' must evaporate to be replaced by 'Him'. At the same time, he sounds a cautionary note. He says: if he follows his advice, and remains steadfast on his inner instincts all impediments will melt away, but in case he does not heed his advice, and chooses to toe his ego he was sure to self-destruct. Short cuts and half measures don't work.

Having dwelt on the foregoing in a candid manner, he says that in case he (Arjuna) decides against performing his duty, which in this case was fighting the war, he wouldn't rest in peace because his *gunas* will for sure prevail and thrust him in the battle. He makes it clear that one acts as per his innate nature which is a product of his *gunas*. He being a *Kshatriya* his innate nature was passionate that will force him to jump into the battle field. His reluctance to fight was due to his false attachments.

The innate urge comes from the mode of one's nature (*gunas*) that is too powerful and rules supreme. He analyzes both options, fighting the war and not fighting it and lays bare the possibilities and consequences. He tells him in a subtle manner that a *Kshatriya* fights a battle not because he thinks or he wants to fight, but because he carries forward his fighting genes from his *karma* (including those from his previous lives) that make his real nature; and compel him to fight to uphold righteousness.

Cosmic evolution is a continuing process and everything in the creation keeps evolving. If a person keeps his evolution in tune with cosmic evolution he accepts the guidance of his spirit that gets the juice from the Cosmic Spirit, he takes the path to enlightenment and succeeds in life. But if he allows his body

consciousness (that is God's lower nature) to dictate to him, he would remain entangled in petty issues that would delude him and deny him the chance to know the truth.

True evolution of a person lies in total faith in God and unconditional surrender to him; he must always do his bidding[165]. In Arjuna's case, God incarnate himself laid the facts bare before him and asks him to make the choice. He is indirectly telling him that his emotional attachment and the mistaken belief that he had to fight with his dear ones, his kinsmen was an illusion. In any case his spirit; his inner instincts would compel him to do his rightful duty for upholding the rule of law and fair play, which in this case demanded his fighting the war. The fight was not for gaining a kingdom, but for upholding the cause of righteousness. As a Pandava he had not only to protect the people but he also had to set a worthy example before all to follow including his colleagues and friends so that the society as a whole respects the value of righteousness.

Krishna had so far talked about the role of God and his relationship with all the living beings and the entire creation. He candidly stated that God was at the core of every-thing in the creation. While he himself remains un-manifested, he is present in all beings and guides them to the right path all the time. Yet, he is generous enough to grant them full freedom of choice. He also candidly talked about the consequences of not heeding his promptings. Now he elaborates further on the same with a view to make it easier to grasp.

He categorically states that God resides in the heart of all in the creation and every-thing vibrates rhythmically as per his vibration. The entire evolution is due to him and he sustains it. He maintains a delicate balance in the creation through his *Maya*. He states this, in so many words, that situated in the heart of all beings he acts as the prime mover of a machine on which the being is mounted, who just moves with it involuntarily. His entire approach is that of a father explaining an issue to a child repeatedly, in a manner he can't miss to grasp.

He now proceeds to assure Arjuna that if he seeks his protection, his shelter with all

eagerness and sincerity, he would for sure receive his grace and obtain supreme peace. He is hinting here that usually everyone guided by his ego gets entangled in senses and its objects, and he forgets the main goal. It is not the God, it is the nature that rules; it holds him in its clutches and keeps him deluded. If, he remembers to run free from this stranglehold and beseeches

him for his grace, he would find him (God) waiting to lovingly take him into his arms.

Krishna, the supreme *guru* of Yoga lovingly explained to Arjuna the way to Self-realisation through various paths. He tells him that what he had revealed to him is the most secret wisdom that is reserved for enlightened beings. Since he was dear to him, he gave him the secret knowledge as the same would do him good. It is the true science of yoga, the true wisdom that can be grasped only through intuitive wisdom. It is not knowledge gained by sheer study and thinking about it i.e. *Vigyaan*. It is gained by experiencing the thought. It requires developing one's intuitive faculty that one can obtain only when he learns to identify with the soul and not with the body. One has to perceive the truth and then try to understand how God acts and how he inspires us to do the right thing without ever interfering in our actions. He is not indifferent; he genuinely wants everyone to use his own free will and choose his way of approaching him. He cajoles; guides and patiently persuades and at times he even woos us but he never imposes his will or coerces us to act in a particular way.

Having explained the details he tells Arjuna that incase he now knew how things happen and how the law of Nature operates, then he should consider the facts and the knowledge he had imparted and use his discretion to choose his course of action (whether to fight the war or not).

The subtle message in this divine discourse is that God immensely loves all his children and genuinely wants everyone to come back home to stay with him, but having made the *prakriti* and *Maya* he allows them a free hand to run things in their way. Likewise, he grants all the beings full freedom to use their free will and choose when to come back home to him. This was his way of maintaining a balance between nature and man; both have their freedoms and opportunities.

Like a loving father he (God) immensely loves all his children and therefore, he keeps on giving us subtle hints for the right course and like our worldly father holds our hands when as young children we start faltering during learning to walk he too extends a helping hand. But unlike our fathers, despite his great love, he remains dispassionate and unattached; therefore, he never interferes even when the loved one takes a wrong turn. We including some scholars mix it up with predestination, call it destiny. The truth is different; it is the *gunas* and how we use our free will that determines our destiny.

Krishna had lovingly expressed his concern about all the beings (his children) and how he loves them, but he felt the need to reinforce his earlier assertions. Hence, he forcefully reassures Arjuna that he was very dear to him and if he unwaveringly devotes his mind to him; prostrates before him in surrender and resigns himself to him in sacrifice (*yagna*) he would for sure achieve the highest goal of union with him. Earlier he had expressed his love and support, now he makes a solemn promise of granting union with himself.

A little explanation here would be pertinent. Here, the word sacrifice stands for mental sacrifice through burning our ego and desires in the fire of meditation. His promise is not an exception for Arjuna it is valid for all those who follow his doctrine. God is revealing his pristine nature, his love and care; and how anxiously he waits for our return to him to obtain our original self. All we have to do is to open our heart, clean it of all dirt, devote ourselves and make a trustful appeal to him to grant us his refuge. It has to be like the unconditional love of Radha. This will become possible only when the awakening dawns on us that God the Cosmic Spirit is not only the origin of our being but stays with us (in our soul) all the time. He never leaves us alone. This is the ultimate Truth and our supreme goal.

He felt that Arjuna like all his fellow beings was bound by his duties towards others. He had rites and rituals to perform and worldly commitments to meet, hence, he was constrained and could not devote himself single mindedly to one issue or one person only, even the God. The same was true for all including renunciants as well.

Krishna accepts that those who truly wish to devote themselves single mindedly to God and meditate on him get disturbed and grieve when they are unable to perform their other duties (*dharma*). He therefore, proceeds to further assure him that if, he leaves all other perceived duties and came to him, earnestly seeking his shelter he would graciously accept him and also grant him remission for non-performance of his duties (*dharma*).

Though the God runs his creation as per fixed laws and expects everyone to follow the same and perform their duties as per their nature and station in life, but he is generous enough to allow those who seek his shelter to transcend the same. Though, he did make this exception in case one is not able to attend to his *dharma* (mandated duties) if he was completely devoted to prayers to God and was fully absorbed in the same but in all other cases the law of nature rules supreme, one earns *karma* as per his actions.

Krishna, God incarnate, is a teacher par excellence and he is a loving father too. He immediately understood the need to hold Arjuna's hands considering his limitations and constraints in view of his delusional state caused by emotional bonds. Therefore, he unequivocally tells him that all are his (God's) creation and derive their power and sustenance from him; they exist at his pleasure. He can call them back any time he wants, hence, worldly matters or perceived *dharmas* would anyway remain undone (unfinished) if he calls them back. His assertion is direct and candid, he says: "Forsake all other *dharmas*, remember Me alone …"[166] The highest duty for all beings is to unreservedly devote themselves to God and know that he can lift us to our utmost perfection, the final refuge in him. Similarly, in Bible Jesus assures his disciples that whatever, they leave for his sake or for the gospel's sake would be compensated a hundredfold[167].

Sacred Knowledge of Gita and Its Rewards

Krishna having given him all the information Arjuna needed for self-appraisal of his duties and importance of righteous conduct, he now talks about the sanctity and secrecy of the spiritual doctrine in the discourse of Gita. He said that knowledge imparted by him should not be shared with one who is materialistic, entangled in sense gratification, lacks self-control and is selfish; and does not like to serve others. In other words, a person who is body centric, does not respect the majesty of God; one who is unaware of his soul and the presence of God in it, would never understand the meaning and sanctity of the message and would malign it. He will only condemn him (God) for all the ills of the world. Such people never own any responsibility for their wrong actions and blame others including God for their miseries.

On the other hand, those who are spiritually inclined and are devoted to God, who are seekers of the soul and divine grace and strive to attain Self-realisation would greatly benefit by this sacred sovereign knowledge. One, who with full faith and utmost devotion disseminates this knowledge to devout worthy seekers, who wish to achieve liberation from all worldly bonds, is dear to him, and he would surely achieve unity with Me (God).

Krishna adds that he values judicious spread of divine knowledge of Gita as a priceless service to him and one who faithfully renders the same is dearest to him. The subtle point is that those who are engrossed in devotion and meditation on God, in seeking his divine grace through intuitive wisdom, experience personal peace and calmness, but they may be so involved in their divine experience that they might unintentionally miss sharing their

knowledge with those who are similarly devoted but are in need of guidance. Their imparting the sacred knowledge and sharing their experience would help them immensely and it would not only be a great service to them but to God as well.

Krishna once again highlights the need to love others and be of service to them[168]. He has repeatedly called service to humanity as the best prayer and service to him (God). God is complete in all respects; he has no need and no suffering of any kind, hence, he doesn't need our service. There is nothing we can do for him that he needs, except our love that he values greatly. He is dispassionate, unattached, and non-interfering yet, he loves all his children immensely. If any of us, his children suffers, he (God within us) suffers too. Therefore, any service to a needy person is a service to God as well for it will reduce his suffering too.

One who is on the spiritual path faces several hurdles, physical, mental, spiritual and

emotional; he becomes restless and at times helpless, he looks for help and support: someone to hold hands. When a realised person helps someone on the spiritual path with his self-knowledge and intuitive experience (*atma-gyaan* and *atma-anubhava)* he extends a life line to a yogi lost on the high road to Self- realisation. In effect he helps and guides him to realise his inherent divine nature. He helps one dear to God and brings him close to him. For this reason, he, the ever-merciful God of all gods, values it highly as the best service to him.

There is another reason, why while on the path to Self-realisation one must mentor others who are similarly inclined. In our seeking union with the Supreme God, our 'self', a positive ego is involved, as we act entirely and only for ourselves; hence, our effort is not entirely selfless. Truly our ego wants to achieve something, though not material, yet, exclusively for itself. No yogi, no saint can be fully Self-realised and liberated till he becomes selfless and works only for God. When one works for Self-realisation the element of his 'self' becomes supreme and his effort or work ceases to be selfless? This is easily done, if he helps by mentoring a few others on way to their goal of realising their inherent divine self in which God creates us that sadly we soil with contamination by the material world (*mrityu-lok*).

In verses 70 and 71 Krishna candidly sums up the importance and sanctity of the discourse between him and Arjuna in Gita. He drives home the power of his holy utterances. It has to be remembered that his (God's) first vocal

vibration was *Aum* that has been considered as God in words (*Shabdabrahman*); and chanting of the same with devotion is one of the best of prayers. It might be recalled that all the Vedic verses (*shlokas*) start with the word *Aum*. Such is the greatness of what the Lord utters and Arjuna was the beneficiary of a whole lot of verses uttered by him. Through his grace, the mankind that is all of us benefitted by the same via Arjuna and are benefitting even now.

Krishna further states that one, who studies Gita and reflects on his holy dialogue with Arjuna with his intuitive wisdom, he in effect worships God by sacrifice (*yagna*) of his knowledge. He would for sure acquire meditative knowledge he would further gain intuitive wisdom and experience of the self. It implies that he devotes his mind, heart and soul single pointedly in worship of and surrender to him (God).

Sacrifice of knowledge involves burning all sins caused by our senses and our ego, in the fire of intuitive wisdom. The intuitive wisdom comes from soul awakening that is arousing our dormant inherent divine nature through communion with our soul. The message of Gita inspires us to achieve single pointed focus; our faith and devotion improves and our body consciousness starts receding. Sacrifice of knowledge purifies our thinking and improves our discrimination without which soul consciousness will not start awakening. The message of Gita prompts us, then encourages us and finally awakens us on the right path to our supreme goal.

He once again highlights the power and sanctity of the message of Gita. He says that the benefit of the sacred message of Gita is not limited to one who studies it, but hearing the same also benefits one who is on the spiritual path and is devoted to God. It implies, that one who has achieved equanimity and strives for sense control by practising yoga and meditation and is desirous of Self-realisation benefits if he hears and follows the doctrine espoused by the great teacher in Gita. His actions become selfless and he earns credit for the same. Eventually he qualifies to achieve perfection and he goes to God's abode that is reserved for the virtuous yogis. He will take longer than one who studies and follows the doctrine of Gita, but he would benefit for sure.

Having explained the importance of the sanctity of the message of Gita he finally asks Arjuna, that he had heard the words of wisdom with devotion that he shared with him, whether his delusion about the futility of the war was removed. In a subtle way he tells him that his mind was focused on identification with his body therefore, he was suffering delusion driven by his

ego, sense of ownership and emotional bonds. Now having achieved soul-consciousness he must have become wiser and he must be seeing the matter with his intuitive perception and his delusion and the mistake in his vision must have gone?

Arjuna was an evolved being he was not bound to the material world in the manner of a common man. Being a human being, he had faltered in his judgment and was suffering great misery. He was indeed an evolved being but he was not fully liberated and Self-realised, and he erred like a common man. Appreciating his situation Krishna was full of empathy and he never tried to criticise him but took care not to leave even an iota of doubt in his mind. His aim was not to find fault with him but to restore his wisdom and intuitive conviction.

It is important to note that though Krishna was God incarnate but in Mahabharata he was Arjuna's friend and charioteer and he honoured his superior position. Jesus too, being human had faltered similarly when he was being taken for crucifixion. In a moment of weakness he had said: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."[169] He soon realised his mistake; he remembered his own earlier statements when he had said: "Father thy will be done."[170] On other occasions he had also said "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit;" and "The Father is greater than I." He was overwhelmed by his mistake and he reverentially bowed his head in prayers and happily marched towards the Cross.

Arjuna had indeed carefully heard and understood every word that the teacher had said. He lost no time to accept that through his grace, his doubts were dispelled and he had got back his memory (discriminative wisdom), his soul consciousness was re-established and he was ready to act according to his instructions. He had fully accepted him not only as God incarnate but his most revered teacher and mentor. He was no more his friend.

It is interesting to note that Krishna had on many occasions spoken in earlier chapters that he indeed was the God, the creator and even showed him his *'Vishwa Roop'* in chapter 11, yet, Arjuna never hesitated, he continued to seek clarifications to remove all his doubts. Krishna on his part, like a loving father, never lost patience and in fact gave him a lot more information than what he sought through his queries. Truly Arjuna saw a new dawn with light all over; he realised that he was mistaken in believing that he was the one who had to fight the war while the truth was that he was only carrying out the will of God. He was a mere instrument in the hands of God and that he must do his bidding

to carry out his purpose. He realised that we were all born as per his (God's) grand design to serve his ends and not our ends. In Bible too Jesus had said: "I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me." With these words Jesus was merely surrendering his identity, he had realised that he had no independent existence and that it was the God (in his case the Holy Father) who had sent him on a specific mission. Arjuna realised he was not the doer, but by the grace of God he was his chosen tool. The rest was unreal, a figment of his imagination running wild.

The discourse between Krishna and Arjuna ends at verse no. 73 when he candidly accepted that he was under delusion and through his grace he had got back his wisdom and that he would carry out his instructions and would fight the war.

The last five verses in this last chapter (Verse 74 to 78) are Sanjay's[171] commentary on what he had and seen and heard through his special telescopic vision and hearing aid (*divya drishti*) given to him by his *guru* Veda Vyas to enable him to narrate the happenings at the battle field of *Kurukshetra* to the blind King who was very anxious to know the same.

Sanjay starts by telling the King that he heard the wonderful dialogue between Vaasudeva (Krishna) and the noble soul of Arjuna and that it was an over-whelming experience; he was thrilled with joy to the extent that his hair on the body and head remained standing. His statement was reverential to both Krishna and Arjuna and his expression was full of awe and grateful admiration for them. He was being simply honest and impartial yet, it clearly displayed where his sympathy lay. He well knew that Krishna and Arjuna were fighting against King Dhritrashtra's sons and that he was blindly in love with them. He was anxious to hear about his sons' deeds and not about their enemy's greatness. Sanjay on the contrary, described the great thrill he enjoyed hearing their sacred and wondrous dialogue not because he wanted to hurt the King but he just could not restrain himself due to the thrill he was enjoying and he described his wonderful experience repeatedly.

Sanjay said that such was the influence of their expression and the content of their exchange that he was experiencing divine pleasure and could not let go of the same. He was unable to hide his great respect and affection for them and virtually refused to be politically correct. He didn't want to be disrespectful to the King but his state of mind and heart compelled him to be totally honest and truthful; and say only what he saw and felt. Alas truth is nearly always hurtful!

He goes on to express his grateful thanks to Ved Vyas for granting him the faculty of *divya drishti* that enabled him to see the awe inspiring wondrous form (Universal Form or *Vishwa Roop*) of the Lord and hear the sovereign secret of yoga from the very mouth of the Supreme Teacher of Yoga. He was awe struck by the revelation he had received. It was a pristine and blissful experience; something that was not only from what he saw and heard but as if the pleasure was emanating from within his own self (through his intuition). He kept recalling his vision and experience time and again. Krishna had shown his colossal form and explained his opulences in chapter 11 and he (Arjuna) had described it as 'the Manifested, the Un-manifested and That Beyond'. That august presence of the Lord and associated feeling of bliss was exhilarating and the same had become integral to him; and he was trying hard to retain it longer.

Finally, with full conviction he said that wherever there is Krishna the supreme Lord of Yoga; and wherever there is Partha[172] (Arjuna) the supreme archer and his devotee, there would definitely be success, victory, attainment of power, fortune and morality. He makes it clear that the lord was with Arjuna though he was only as his charioteer. But Arjuna himself was an enlightened soul, a devoted yogi and a righteous person. True, initially he was overcome by delusion, and therefore, he was lacking discrimnation and was vacillating but he had the character and self-control to realise his mistake and accept the same. Finally, the call of his duty and sense of justice prevailed and his judgment was restored. He gratefully accepts his mistake; it was truly Krishna's gift to him. He therefore, humbly bowed his head before Krishna in total submission and unhesitatingly promised to follow his guidance.

The central message of Gita highlights the need of a person is to unite high thought and just action. The teacher labours on defining high thought (through intuitive wisdom) and just action by *karma*-yoga, where one has to divorce his self-interest and work for the sake of working in the service of the society. Krishna likens it to service to God and the best form of worship to him.

The lure of better life through noble actions, and the possibility of attaining salvation and union with God create an element of intrinsic self-interest (of achieving the highest goal for a man). It is entirely individual. It doesn't concern or harm anyone else, yet it creates a self interest and one ceases to be selfless. For this reason, the teacher emphasised the need for a yogi to mentor others on the same path. This is a pay back for that little self-interest that creeps in our advancement to the supreme goal. Here the teacher pays to his pupil for teaching him, a reverse *guru dakshina*. Krishna makes it clear that

nothing comes for free in life; and we must honestly and willingly pay for what we desire.

Gist of Chapter 18

The crux of Chapter 18 in one sentence: 'A human being's greatest achievement is to get rid of body consciousness and gain soul consciousness and he must always strive for the same.'

The concluding part of any discourse, particularly one dealing with philosophy of life and emotional matters usually is the sum of all that was said earlier. Not in Gita; here it is the sum plus more; truly much more. At times, ordinary men like us somehow form an opinion or conception (not necessarily rational) about certain matters, and cling to the same, as if it were the last word on the subject uttered by God. Strangely, Arjuna only tried to prove that, though he was from a respected enlightened royal family but he was still an ordinary man. His lineage however gave him a conviction and a capacity to stick to his decision but his stubborn determination in this case was truly an obstacle. Krishna had to make him see the light, the right and wrong of his actions. He patiently and untiringly stuck to the task till he (Arjuna) was convinced that his very basic premise was flawed. He proved to him that the fratricidal war between Kaurava and Pandava was not for a kingdom and riches as far as Pandava were concerned and that his emotional turmoil at having to fight respected elders like Bhishma and Drona with the possibility of killing them was misplaced.

The chapter opens with Arjuna making a request to Krishna to explain to him the true meaning of renunciation (*sanyasa*) and relinquishment (*tyaag*). Krishna had talked about these earlier but once again he patiently explains the same. He further dwells upon the classification of men based on *gunas*. He explains action, how to perform the same and what should not be done. Thereafter, he talks about five factors that were necessary for accomplishing any action. Our body was one of the five factors and the same (the body) had 24 constituents. Through this detailed analysis he established that no action was in reality performed by any person but it is the *gunas* that really make him work that too in a particular way. Since his body is only one of the five factors required for action, hence, his claim for doer-ship of any action was incorrect; at best it could only be one fifth of the effort or doer-ship.

He explained that the acions were of three kinds as per the mode of one's nature i.e. the *gunas*. Similarly one's psyche, knowledge, understanding, work, steadiness, and his sense of doer-ship and happiness are of three kinds as per the *gunas* i.e. *sattvik*, *rajasik* or *taamsik*. Based on the *guna* of a person his mind works and actions are performed. Truly, it was the *gunas* that made the attributes and traits of a person. Taking advantage of the role of *gunas* Krishna created *chaturvarnayaam* system, a classification of the society into Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudras. He described the unique characteristics of people as per this classification. He dwells on the need to transcend the *gunas* through one's intuitive wisdom and devotion. He goes to the extent of giving the details of the process of meditation and worship.

Krishna makes a non-stop effort to bring Arjuna round to realise his duty (*dharma*) as a Kshatriya prince and he should as a yogi, that he was, try to attain perfection and union with Brahman. He tells him to do his work while always seeking refuge in him (God) by surrendering himself to him. He tells him to unwaveringly focus his thought on him steadfastly, and assures him that if, he was able to do the same he would receive his grace and would experience serene peace. He adds that being a Kshatriya (passionate person), he is naturally inclined to fight for upholding righteousness and he will be forced to do so by his nature (*gunas*), even if, he chooses not to fight.

He adds that he should focus his mind on him, surrender to him and prostrate before him, then for sure, he (Krishna) would grant him his benign grace that would help him succeed. He adds that one who teaches the supreme knowledge (of Gita) to others (who were faltering on the spiritual path) was very dear to him. For with their help they too would achieve Self-realisation. This was truly like a reverse *dakshina* where the teacher pays to his disciple to be able to teach him; normally it is the other way round.

To summarise the above Krishna first talks about renunciation (*sanyaas*) and relinquishment (*tyaag*). Then he talks about action and its kinds and elements needed for any action, attributes of one's personality and its kinds as per *gunas*; the fourfold classification of society and the fact that one performs actions as per his *gunas.* He tells about the need to meditate and focus on God and to transcend the *gunas* he should surrender himself and his actions to him. He highlights the role of *gunas* in everything repeatedly and that through devotion and surrender to God one can always attain the goal of union with him. His aim was to awaken him to his duties (*dharma*) and apprise him of his current position so that out of his own volition he gets over his delusion and

adopts the right course. Arjuna does the same and agrees to do as per his advice. He rises and declares that he would fight the war.

Hence, Krishna, directed his focus on three important issues given below:

- Since all actions are driven and controlled by *gunas* he would not be responsible for killing the respected elders like Bhishma and Drona just in case that happens in the war.
- Being a Kshatriya prince he was of a naturally passionate nature, fighting for a righteous cause was a must for him and he had no option of not fighting.
- His goal in life was to uphold righteousness, surrender himself to God, worship him with singular devotion and seek to attain union with him. This was something, he would never be able to achieve, unless he rises above petty delusional emotional issues and concentrates on his inner self and intuitive wisdom and seeks its guidance to perform his duty correctly.

Finally, Sanjay's description of happenings on the battle field to King Dhritrashtra is most revealing. He was his secretary and a part of Kaurava's establishment, yet, he is full of reverence and praise for Krishna and Arjuna. He even declares that victory will honour Pandavas for they were on the side of righteousness.

Annex 1: The Story of Mahabharata

The word 'Mahabharata'[173] has two meanings. It is the name of a great legend narrating the story of Kuru Dynasty, and also the name of the fraternal war between Kauravas and Pandavas. The legend written by Ved Vyas was accorded the sanctity of the fifth Veda. It was said by one of the learned sages that if something isn't written in 'Mahabharata' then it was not worth knowing.

Earlier in Tretayuga we had Lord Rama. Learned scholar and sage Baalmiki (aka Valmiki) wrote the other great legend Ramayana describing the life and times of Rama.

Historically study and teaching of Vedas, other sacred scriptures; performing *yagnas* and religious ceremonies were the sole preserve of Brahmins, the priest class. Women and Shudras were barred from reading sacred texts and attending religious ceremonies. In Tretayuga a Shudra by the name Shambook was performing Vedic studies and *yagnas* that were barred to Shudras. This was objected by the Brahmin priests of King Rama's court. They approached him and strongly protested. He considered the matter in the light of the norms prevailing then and the advice of his priests (*raaj- gurus*) and he decided to punish him and he actually killed him. This act of Lord Rama has been considered as a blot on his character.

Matters became much worse in Dwaparyuga that followed Tretayuga. Krishna was unhappy with the above belief system. Ved Vyas too considered it derogatory and insulting to the women folk and the Shudras. Hence, he decided to write his book Mahabharata in the form of a story book. Thus, his book came out of the purview of religious sacred texts and everyone could read it. He went a step further and included in it the essence of the four Vedas and other scriptures so that everyone including the Shudras could know the gist of the texts that they were barred from reading. Gita is a part of Mahabharata. It is the spiritual nectar of the legend. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi called Gita as the pocket book of Vedas.

Mahabharata thus became a record of knowledge of Vedas and other ancient texts and of the events pertaining mainly to Kuru dynasty (approx. 4000 BC to 2900 BC). It was by design a conscious effort on the part of Ved Vyas to empower the Shudras and women with the knowledge that was erroneously denied to them.

Mahabharata is in the form of a long lyrical poem. It has 18 *parvas* (chapters or books); with close to 220000 lines of verse. It comprises a conglomeration of various interconnected stories and legends of Vedic origin. Bhagavad-Gita (Gita for short) is a part of Bhishma-parva of the book. Gita has 700 verses (*shlokas*) spread over 18 chapters. The verses are musical in tenor and pregnant with Vedic wisdom. It is concise and perhaps the best treatise on Hindu Thought and practical philosophy for purposeful living. *Mahabharata* war took place in 3138 BC. It lasted for 18 days. It finds mention in the notes of Chinese travellers and Buddhist's texts of 4th century BC. *Mahabhashya*[174] by Patanjali (2nd - 3rd century BC) has given in detail the prevailing condition of the contemporary society with a historical perspective. It mentions the various events of the period. It talks of Vaasudeva[175] cult.

There are various inscriptions dating to 2nd century BC that mention names of Krishna, Yashoda, Balarama, Vasudeva etc. Max Muller the renowned German Indologist wrote about the Mahabharata: "The epic character of the story has throughout been changed and almost obliterated by didactic tendencies of the latest editors who were clearly Brahmans brought up in the strict school of the laws of Manu." It may have taken a couple of centuries to compile the books and that makes 'Ved Vyas' a title rather than one person. Some English scholars asserted that the book was compiled in the 6th century BC; while others were inclined to believe the date to be the 1st century BC.

The fraternal war between Kauravas and Pandavas was fought at *Kurukshetra* a town in the state of Haryana about 150 km north of Delhi. It was the biggest war fought on Indian soil that changed the course of history of the country. That is why the war was called by the name *Mahabharata.*

Kuru Dynasty

Chronologically Indian history plus mythology is studied in two parts. The ancient one pertains to Raja Harish Chandra *(Satyuga)* and Lord Rama (*Tretayuga*). They are not only ancient but could be mythological figures. But Rama made such an impact on the Indian ethos that he became a household name integral to Hindu psyche. In fact, Hindu psyche minus Rama would be like a corpse. Since such a deep impact cannot be made by a mere hero of a story, Rama comes out as a living person who did indeed walk the earth in flesh and blood like any of us.

The other part starts with King Dushyanta (*Dwaparyuga*). Kalidas the legendry poet and playwright made King Dushyant and wife Shakuntala immortal through his book "*Abhigyaan Shakuntalam*" written about 200 to 400 BC[176]. It

describes the love story of King Dushyant and the most beautiful Shakuntala, daughter of sage Vishwamitra and dancing Divine Angel Menaka. Skipping Dushyanta's ancestors we take him as the progenitor of Kuru dynasty.

Incidentally there was a separate lineage parallel to Dushyanta's family line. This stream was the Yadava Dynasty. Krishna belonged to Vrishni clan of the same.

Kurus and Yadavas were contemporary and had common forefathers.

King Bharata was the son of King Dushyanta. He became very powerful and ruled over a vast territory. The name of India as '*Bharatvarsha*' owes its origin to him. King Kuru was Bharata's grandson. Dhritrashtra, Pandu and Vidur were Kuru's great grandsons. Dhritrashtra was the eldest but he was blind since birth. Vidur was born to a maid servant (*daasi putra*). Since both a blind person and maid's son could not become the king, Pandu though younger was crowned King to the Bharata throne.

Like in all royal dynasties there were twists in the tale of Kuru dynasty which I am skipping, however, I must explain the position of Bhishma in the chain. Kuru's grandson Santavana (son of Santanu) better known as Bhishma (also written as Bheeshma) should have become the king but he surrendered his right to the Bharata throne in favour of his nephews (Dhritrashtra, Pandu and Vidur). He also took a vow not to marry in life so that his sons could not make a claim for the throne. Pandu became the king but he died young. Dhritrashtra though blind became a caretaker king till Pandu's eldest son Yudhishter came of age. As per the law when Yudhishter became adult Dhritrashtra had to hand over the rein to him; he had made a solemn promise to that effect as well. However, he failed to honour this promise and that eventually became the cause of the *Mahabharata* war.

The family tree was something like the one given below:

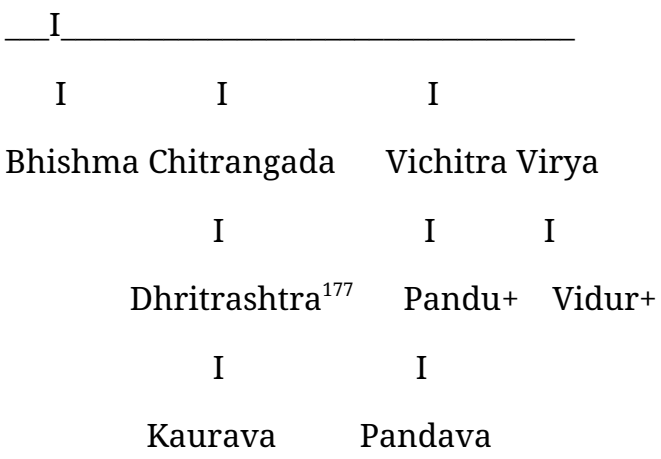
Dushyanta

Bharata

Hastin

Kuru

Santanu



Dhritrashtra had 100 sons by his wife Gandhari (something like surrogacy was employed); Duryodhana was the eldest son. He also had another son called Yuyutsu by a house maid. Dhritrashtra's sons were called the Kaurava. Pandu had five sons called Pandava (Yudhishter, Bheem, Arjuna, Nakul and Sahdeva).

Dhritrashtra's wife Gandhari was from Kandhar then known as Gandhar, now in Afghanistan. When she learnt that her husband to be was blind, she covered her eyes with a cloth band and took a vow to stay blind through life, like her husband. She opened her eye band after the war when she went to the battle field and saw her sons lying dead. Earlier also she had removed the eye band once to bless her eldest son Duryodhana[178]. Her blessing that would have made Duryodhana stone like and un-killable. But the same was thwarted due to a clever trick by Krishna leaving a weak spot in his thighs.

Pandu had two wives: 1. Kunti (aka Pritha or Pratha) daughter of King Sura (who was the father of Vasudeva and grand father of Krishna) was adopted by King Kuntibhoja that is why she got the name Kunti; 2. Madri was sister of king of Madra. Kunti gave birth to Yudhishter, Bheem and Arjuna; Madri gave birth to twins Nakul and Sahdeva. Kunti also had another son by the name Karna who was born before her marriage to Pandu. To avoid the shame of pre-marital birth she had set him sail on a make shift raft in river Yamuna. But he survived and was brought up by Adhiratha who was Dhritrashtra's charioteer.

Karna was brave, courageous and generous like Pandava princes right from his childhood. But he was never given his due by Drona and others as he was supposedly a charioteer's son. Later he became a great friend of Duryodhana who made him the king of Anga Desh[179]. In *Mahabharata* war he fought from Kaurava's side.

After the death of Pandu both the Pandava and Kaurava stayed at the same palace and were brought up by Bhishma under the stewardship of Drona (aka Dronacharya) who was the royal preceptor; and an expert in martial arts.

The Pandavas were righteous and observed high morals. Yudhishter, the eldest amongst Pandava was called Dharmaraj (embodiment of righteousness) due to his truthful and noble character. Bheem was mighty and daring, huge in size with great strength. He had a big appetite hence he was called Vrikodara which means 'Wolf-belly'. Arjuna was skillful, brave, chivalrous and dynamic he was an ace archer and an expert in martial arts. He was the hero amongst the entire clan. He was greatly loved by his elders, teachers and the people due to his bravery and generous deeds. Nakul and Sahdeva too were brave and capable but the first three were prominent in the entire story.

The Kaurava by contrast were men of low morals, highly malicious, jealous and were always scheming against their cousins. Pandava were the darling of Guru Drona, Bhishma and the elders of the palace. Duryodhana the eldest amongst the Kauravas was crooked, treacherous and an evil character. He was always plotting to score over Pandavas by any means, mostly foul. He once tried to kill Bheem by poisoning his milk but failed; Bheem survived.

Duryodhana wanted to become the king but knew very well that Yudhishter was the rightful owner of the throne. King Dhritrashtra was not only physically blind but his extreme love for Duryodhana and his other sons made him mentally dim as well. He allowed Kaurava to get away with their unscrupulous and immoral deeds.

Duryodhana knew that Kaurava were no match to Pandava's skills and strength and hence, he was always up to one trick or the other. His maternal uncle Shakuni was a crooked and mean person; he was skilled in cheating and deceit. Unfortunately, he was Duryodhana's guide and patron. The King condoned all their wrong doings and remained totally blind and even mute.

Cause of *Mahabharata*

When Yudhishter became a major Dhritrashtra played a clever trick. Instead of himself retiring and making him the King he installed him as the first prince and declared him heir to the throne in a public ceremony with himself remaining the non- executive King. Yudhishter started administering the kingdom. He consulted elders like Bhishma Pitamah (grand sire), Vidur and Dronacharya. Since he was very humble and accorded due respect to everyone he endeared himself to all. His noble demeanour, compassion, and transparent

justice were great assets. Kaurava naturally were very upset and were up to dirty tricks all the time, they tried to some-how dethrone him, and install Duryodhana as the King.

Duryodhana attempts to kill Pandavas

Duryodhana along with Shakuni made a grand plan to kill the Pandava. He got a palace made out of lac (highly inflammable material) in Varanavata forest at some distance from Hastinapur. With the knowledge and permission of Dhritrashtra, Duryodhana invited the Pandavas and their mother Kunti to stay in the new palace. In fact, Dhritrashtra told Yudhishter that he needed a break and recommended Varanavata forest palace as a good resting place. He said he could come back after enjoying there for some time. Though Yudhishter was skeptical about the suggestion but he decided to go there to be away from Hastinapur for some time for a change.

Duryodhana's plan was to set the palace on fire in the night. Since the palace was made of inflammable material it would have got reduced to ashes (with Pandavas inside) in no time, without any evidence left behind. Uncle Vidur got to know of this plan. When Pandava left for Varanavata forest, in the nick of time, he quietly informed Yudhishter of the plan. At the forest palace, before night fall, they slipped out and went to a nearby forest and decided to stay away in disguise for some time. In Hastinapur, the capitol, it was declared that Pandavas and their mother Kunti were burnt in an accidental fire at the palace in Varnavata. After a ceremonial mourning, King Dhritrashtra appointed Duryodhana as the administrator of Hastinapur in place of Yudhishter. He in fact became the de-facto ruler.

Killing of Hidimba, Bheem Marries Hidimbi and Birth of Ghatotkacha

Pandava were now moving in the forest suffering the hardships associated with it. One night they were resting under a tree. While others fell asleep Bheem was standing guard. Nearby on a massive tree there was a huge demon (*Rakshasa*) by the name Hidimba who lived there with his sister Hidimbi. He got the scent of human flesh and was happy, he thought of having a good meal of them. He woke his sister and asked her to find out from where the scent of human flesh was coming so that he could kill them and then both of them could have a grand meal. Hidimbi came down from the tree and moved around. She soon saw the Pandava brothers and Kunti sleeping under a tree with Bheem alert at their feet, wide awake standing guard. She was impressed by his strong body and handsome glowing face. He was looking in all

directions. She felt that he was the right man to be her husband. She ignored her brother's orders and decided to try to entice him.

As a *Rakshasi* (demoness), Hidimbi had the power to take any form. Instantly she became an *apsara* (celestial angel) and approached him. She asked him who they were and what they were doing in the dark dense forest? Bheem was a bit confused seeing a beautiful young lady with ornaments and decorated with flowers at that time of night in the forest. First he thought she was the Deity of the forest or some Divine Angel on a mission. Before he could reply, she said that the forest belonged to his man eating *Rakshasa* brother Hidimba and she had in fact come to kill them to make a good meal for the two of them. But she had changed her mind for she was smitten by his charming appearance and powerful body and she had come to beg of him to take her as his wife. She promised to save all of them from her brother as well. She said that she could change her form and had the capacity to fly all of them to a safe place in the mountain. She asked him to awaken his brothers and mother.

Hidimba was angry at the delay in Hidimbi's return; and by now he had become very hungry as well. He came down the tree and started walking in the direction from which the scent of human flesh was coming.

Hidimbi feared his brother might come any moment and she appealed to Bheem again to wake up others so that she could leave with them. Bheem confident of his power refused to do so. In the mean time, Hidimba's huge giant like frame appeared approaching them. He had heard Hidimbi talking to Bheem and sensed his sister was down with lust and didn't care one bit for the prestige of his race. He decided to kill her along with the humans. He raised a roar and ran towards his sister but Bheem came between them and said that how he dared to awaken his sleeping brothers and mother or harm the innocent lady. A fight broke between Bheem and Hidimba. Both of them were extremely powerful and they made a good match. Bheem no doubt had the upper hand. His mother and brothers woke up due to loud noises made by both of them during their fight.

The Pandava brothers were impressed by Hidimbi's beauty and they started polite conversation with her. On the other side, urged by Arjuna, Bheem was pounding her *Rakshasa* brother mercilessly, but he was trying hard to resist his attack. Arjuna cautioned Bheem that after day break his power may double and he must finish him quickly. Bheem collected all his power and pounced on him ferociously. A fierce fight ensued. Finally, with his power and skill he

prevailed over Hidimba who could not stop a fatal blow on his chest and he collapsed.

Hidimbi explained her proposal to Kunti who consulted with Yudhishter and finally agreed to Bheem taking her as his wife. As promised, Hidimbi soon assumed a large form and taking all of them on her back she flew to a mountain region where she arranged nice cottages with arrangement for food etc. Pandava rested there and moved around in the mountain. She took Bheem with her to various places where they sported in the mountain and forests etc. Bheem told her that as soon as a son was born to her they will leave for they had important problems to sort out. Hidimbi agreed to his proposal and said whenever they needed her they just had to take her name and she would instantly be at their service.

To the utter surprise of Pandava and Kunti Hidimbi's son Ghatotkacha was born after only seven months. Strangely after birth he became a young man and touched the feet of Kunti and all the Pandava. Though a *Rakshasa* but he was virtuous and quick learning and in no time under the guidance of Pandava he became proficient in weaponry.

The time had arrived for Pandava to bid good bye to Hidimbi and Ghatotkacha. They asked to be dropped at a convenient point in the forest so that they could move ahead. While parting Ghatotkacha told them that whenever they needed him he will come on their first call. Later he fought in the *Mahabharata* war from their side.

Bheem kills Demon Baka

Pandava and Kunti matted their hair and took tree barks for garments; and they moved around as ascetics. In their spare time they studied the Vedas and other scriptures that they had brought with them. They were not comfortable with their plight and were worried. One day when they were sitting around the sacred fire and were performing yagna Vyasdev (aka Ved Vyas) came to meet them; he advised them not to worry. He instructed them to go to a nearby village and stay there for some time. He said that soon things would be better and Yudhishter would become the King again. He took them to the house of a Brahmin friend in the village and settled them there. They were happy, so were their hosts and they had a good time together.

One day the Brahmin was down with a long face and there was sound of crying by his wife from inside the house. He was greatly upset but would not utter a word. On persistent enquiry by Kunti the Brahmin told her that there

was a demon by the name Baka who lived in the mountain nearby. The village people had an agreement with him that everyday one person had to go to him for his food. This was done to halt his indiscriminate killing of the village folk. That day was his turn. He was worried for his family and young children. Kunti asked him not to worry and sought his permission to depute one of her sons instead of him. Brahmin was hesitant as they were his guests and what face would he show to Vyasdev if he happened to come around. However, Kunti persuaded him and deputed Bheem to go and attend to Baka demon. To cut the long story short, Bheem went and killed the demon; he brought his corpse with him and deposited it at the village gate and returned to Brahmin's house safe and sound. The entire village was relieved and wondered who had the power to kill him? Bheem or any of his brothers did not utter a single word.

Arjuna weds Draupadi

After a few days Kunti called Yudhishter and said that they had lived there for quite a few months and that it was time for them to leave. Yudhishter agreed and said that it was only right lest Kaurava's spies might find them. They thanked the Brahmin and his family, took their leave and left.

They reached the side of river Ganges and moved along with the same. At the night they rested on the sand. Soon a Ghandharva named Angaraparana appeared and challenged them that the night belonged to them and anyone else could not use the river bed. Arjuna accepted the challenge and there was an exchange of arrows and missiles in which Arjuna defeated him squarely. The Gandharva came to Arjuna and apologised to him. He asked him to teach him how to use the Agneyastra with which he had defeated him. In return he offered to present to him four white steeds that were extremely gifted. Arjuna politely refused saying he will ask for the same when he needed them but he taught him the skill needed to use Agneyastra.

Arjuna said they were in need of a sage who could be their preceptor. The Gandharva gave him tips about the way to Sage Dhaumya's *ashram* that was nearby. The next morning Pandava left for Dhaumya's *ashram*. They reached the *ashram* easily; it was by the side of the river Ganges itself. There were many other sages who too could guide them. They fell at the feet of sage Dhaumya and introduced themselves as sons of King Pandu. They sought his shelter and requested him to be their preceptor. He blessed them and assured all help.

After a few days Sage Dhaumya was leaving for Panchala to attend King Drupada's daughter Draupadi's *swayamvar*[180]. He asked Pandava to accompany him. After a few days travel they reached Kampilya the capitol of Panchala. Sage Dhaumya was respectfully received by King Drupada. Yudhishter introduced themselves as *bramhacharis* (celibates). Since they had come with sage Dhaumya they were taken as Brahmins who were his disciples.

King Drupada had made lavish arrangements for the *swayamvar* and wedding of his daughter Draupadi. There was a large stadium in which arrangements were made for seating the competitor kings, princes and other guests like the Brahmin priests. In the middle of the central park the King had mounted a tall pole on top of which there was a moving ring from which a fish was hung inverted (head downwards). At the bottom was a plate like a big soup plate filled with oil. The competitor for the *swayamvar* had to look down to see the image of the fish in the oil and with his face down, he had to pierce its eye with a single arrow fired from his bow. Whoever succeeded would win Draupadi's hand and would marry her.

On the day of competition several kings participated but none could pierce the eye of the fish with a single arrow. Karna King of Anga and a close friend of Duryodhana went to take his turn but he was disqualified by Draupadi as he was the son of a charioteer. The day was coming to an end without anyone being able to pierce the eye of the fish. King Drupada was becoming very nervous. Dhaumya asked Yudhishter to send one his brothers to take a shot. He directed Arjuna to go and try to pierce the eye of the fish with a single arrow. Arjuna went there and took no time to successfully pierce the eye of the fish with his arrow. All the assembled kings were surprised and they started making enquiries. Some of them asked him how he could do it when others failed. He in all modesty politely said: that he saw only the eyes of the fish.

Arjuna was declared the winner and Draupadi came and garlanded him. None had till then noticed that he had not come as a king for the competition. King Drupada who was earlier worried was relieved and was very happy. The formal wedding ceremony was to be performed the next day. That day Draupadi had to visit Arjuna's mother. But Duryodhana shouted that Drupada had insulted the kings by marrying his daughter to one who was not even a king and probably not even a Kshatriya.

A large number of other kings lead by Shishupal decided to attack Drupada and punish him. Pandava heard this from a distance and Yudhishter asked

Bheem and Arjuna to go and protect him. They had to put up a brave fight to keep the attackers in check.

Krishna and Balarama had come but they did not participate. Krishna recognised the Pandava and he intervened. He told the kings that even if the winner was a Brahmin he had won the match fairly and it does no credit to the losers to fight with the host. They should gracefully accept the result; congratulate King Drupada and thank him for the hospitality he extended to them and they should go back to their kingdoms. Arjuna and Bheem had already put the attackers on the back foot and to save their faces they agreed to follow Krishna's advice and return to their respective places.

When Pandava returned to their abode and reported to their mother Kunti how Arjuna won where all others failed, she, without even hearing the entire statement said that all the brothers must share the prize equally. To honour her mistakenly pronounced wish Draupadi became a consort to all the five brothers.

Krishna in nearby Mathura knew of Pandava's hide out. He along with Balarama visited them to pay respects to their aunt Kunti and also to bless Arjuna and Draupadi on their wedding. In consultation with Krishna, Balarama and the King Pandava decided to come out of disguise and return to Hastinapur[181] and ask Dhritrashtra for their kingdom.

Dhritrashtra came under tremedous pressure from Bhishma, Drona, Vidur and others to gracefully reinstall Yudhishter as the King. The blind King again played a trick, he agreed to give Pandava a part of the kingdom but he gave the remaining bigger half with Hastinapur as the capitol to his son Duryodhana. Indraprastha (present day Delhi) became Yudhishter's capitol. He re-established himself in no time. Even today, the remnants of the Pandava's fort at Delhi are a tourist spot. The unique design, architecture and masonry speak volumes about the skill and technology used in the construction of the fort.

Yudhishter soon made his kingdom prosperous once again. The people were happy and contented with all their needs fulfilled. Because of his righteousness nature and transparent fair play, he became very popular and Pandava's prestige increased enormously. Gradually they endeared the nearby States and who gladly accepted Yudhishter as the head of their States as well. Duryodhana on the other hand was arrogant. He was feared due to his power but was disliked.

Arjuna's Pilgrimage

Draupadi was the wife of five husbands. To avoid any misunderstanding the five brothers agreed to divide time with Draupadi. It was agreed that when Draupadi was with one brother none of the other brothers will disturb them and if anyone came in their chamber he will have to go to forest exile for a period of one year. Once when Draupadi was with Yudhishter, a Brahmin came crying that robbers were looting his wealth and he needed immediate help. Arjuna heard his cry but his weapons were lying in Yudhishter's chamber and he was with Draupadi at that time. He hesitated a moment but decided to go to his chamber. He knocked, took his permission and went straight to pick up his weapons and ran out. Soon he overpowered the robbers and recovered Brahmin's wealth. The robbers ran away and he came back.

Yudhishter was very pleased and he welcomed him but Arjuna insisted that as per the agreement he will have to leave for forest immediately. Yudhishter and other brothers tried to persuade him but he would not change his mind. He said that virtue must be honoured under all circumstances and it was therefore, his duty to go for forest exile for one year and he left.

Arjuna first went north and followed the river Ganges. Then he went east and from there he went south and then north- west because he had decided to meet Krishna towards the end of the period of exile. By the side of Ganges there were several hermitages where sages lived. He engaged with them in discussing spiritual matters. One evening he went for a bath in the river before joining the sages for the evening prayers. Soon he found someone caught hold of his feet firmly and pulled him in the river and he was mystically transported to a celestial palace. He was comfortably seated in a big, well furnished room. A sacred fire was burning at a corner of the room. He sat down before the fire to dry his clothes and started his evening prayers, chanting *mantras* and pouring ghee in the fire. He was absolutely fearless and he had no worry. The new place didn't bother him.

Just when he was finishing his rituals a beautiful girl like an angel appeared before him and introduced herself as Naga princess Ulupi. From her appearance Arjuna could make out she belonged to the Naga race. He knew Nagas could transport humans over long distances in a short time. Ulupi glanced at him lovingly and smiled. He returned the smile and said she was very bold and he appreciated her beauty. She said she was hit by cupid as she saw him enter the Ganges. Indeed, he had a godlike charming face and body. She frankly admitted she wanted to marry him. Arjuna thought it over and

finally agreed but he made it clear he had to go immediately. They exchanged garlands and solemnized the marriage. She said that she would come to him when he is again settled in his kingdom. The following morning, she brought him back through the same river Ganges and before leaving she blessed him that he would be invincible in water and none of the aquatics would do any harm to him. She waved at him and dived in the river and was gone.

Arjuna moved along with the ascetics towards Himalayas. He visited several sages, hermitages and places of pilgrimage to augment his knowledge and piety. Then he descended and travelled east. He reached Manipur and visited King Chitravahana in his capitol city of Manalur. The king invited him to stay with him for some time. He came in contact with his beautiful daughter Chitrangada. He was attracted by her beauty and decided to marry her. He approached the king for her hand. The king said he would be happy to marry his daughter to him on one condition that their son when born would stay with him and eventually succeed him as he had no male heir. Arjuna was anyway in no position to take her (Chitrangada) with him and he gladly agreed to his proposal. After staying for some time when Chitrangada conceived he decided to leave for his onward journey. He took their leave and promising her that he would come again to take her with him to Indraprastha he left. He travelled south-wards along the coast.

Arjuna again visited several ascetics and sages and places of pilgrimage on his way. He finally reached down south. There he released five *apsaras* (celestial dancing girls) from a lake who were cursed to become crocodiles and could be restored to their original self only by him. From there he travelled across the country to the western coast and reached Prabhasa near Dwarka. Arjuna wanted to spend some time with Krishna before returning to Indraprastha on completion of his exile. He had heard a lot about the beauty and competence of Subhadra who was Krishna's cousin and sister of Balarama. He had to discuss several matters with him and especially about Subhadra in view of declared intention of Balarama to marry her to Duryodhana who was a great friend of his.

When Krishna learnt of his arrival he came to meet him at the gate of Dwarka. Arjuna told him about his pilgrimages and visits to several sages and about Ulupi and Chitrangada. Finally, he declared his love for Subhadra and his intention to take her as his wife. Krishna knew Balarama's desire to marry Shubhadra to Duryodhana hence, he advised him to hide his identity when he enters Dwarka. He, therefore, entered Dwarka as a monk. Soon he was invited by Balarama to his palace for a meal; there he had a chance to see Subhadra.

Balarama arranged for his stay in a suitable place near the palace and Krishna visited him there to exchange ideas. To cut the long story short Krishna arranged for his eloping with Subhadra out of Dwarka. Only after he had gone a long distance away from Dwarka it became known that it was Arjuna who had taken her with him.

Balarama and some ministers decided to chase him and attack him but Krishna prevailed upon them to give up the idea for he was not only too clever but too powerful as well. Then Balarama decided to accept him as his brother-in-law and sent several loads of gifts and wealth. Both Balarama and Krishna with a team of their ministers then went to Indraprastha. They were ceremoniously received by Pandava. They presented valuable jewels, diamonds and gold ornaments etc to Yudhishter. Krishna gave bridal gifts for Subhadra to Arjuna. Yudhishter too was generous with gifts for Balarama and Krishna and made all of them comfortable. They decided to stay at Indraprastha for some time.

Burning of Khandava Forest

After spending some time together at Indraprastha, Krishna and Arjuna went to stay at a cottage on the banks of river Yamuna near Khandava forest. One day when they were sitting on a bench by the side of the river a Brahmin approached them and requested their help. Subsequently he disclosed that he was god *Agni* (Fire God). He wanted to burn down Khandava forest for some herbs that he urgently needed. But he was unable to do so as Takshaka the Naga king stayed in the forest and Indra his friend protects him by sending down rains to extinguish the fire.

Arjuna in consultation with Krishna consented to help him. He told Agni god that he needed a very fast chariot, a number of expert steeds, celestial weapons, a powerful bow and two quivers with unlimited supply of arrows. Agni arranged all these in no time and presented the famous Gandiva bow to him. Arjuna asked him to set the forest on fire and said he was ready to do the needful. Arjuna negated all efforts made by Indra with his powerful arrows and other missiles. A long battle ensued with Indra's forces; it was eventually won by Arjuna. Indra came down and blessed Arjuna and offered to give him a boon; he asked for his special celestial weapons. Indra agreed to give the same him the same but at a later date. Incidentally Naga king Takshaka was not in the forest at that time and was saved.

Maya the architect of *assura* (demons) king Vrishaparva stayed in the forest, he came out and sought protection from Arjuna who saved him. He offered to

do anything for Arjuna that he politely turned down as it appeared to be a recompense for the protection he had provided to him. However, he asked him to do something for Krishna. Krishna thought a bit and then asked him to make a special assembly hall for Yudhishter. They went to meet Yudhishter. Maya explained his design and sought his approval. He presented an exremely powerful club to Bheem and a beautiful conch named 'Devadatta' to Arjuna. On getting Yudhishter's approval he went away for collecting his tools and implements that he had kept in a cave on a mountain; and for arranging artisans and workers. Krishna returned to Dwarka.

The Celestial Hall

Maya deployed 8000 *Rakshasas* and highly skilled artisans to make the Royal assembly hall. When the building was about to be ready he invited great sages and consulted them for an auspicious date for entering the new hall (*grihapravesh)*. Pandava ceremoniously entered the new building in the company of priests and his several guests. He performed a *yagna*; and distributed charities.

The great sage Narada happened to come there. He gave a long talk to Pandava on the art of governance of a kingdom and advised Yudhishter to perform *Rajasuya Yagna*[182] at the earliest. In this *Yagna* the performing king declares himself as the Emperor (Supreme King or King of kings) and anyone not accepting him so had to challenge him. Only on defeating the challenger one could perform this sacrifice. Narada Rishi greatly complimented Yudhishter for making spacious halls for each of the gods. He blessed Pandava and took leave of them with a promise to come again.

Killing of King Jarasandh

Yudhishter was anxious to meet Krishna to discuss with him about the *Rajasuya Yagna.* He wanted to honour him by declaring him as the chief person on the occasion of the *Yagna*. Priest Dhaumya agreed with him and recommended that he should request Krishna to visit Indraprastha at an early date. He was worried about King Jarasandh of Magadh who had become very powerful and was a terror for other kings adjoining his kingdom. He was sure that he would not accept him as the King of kings. He had to be defeated for the success of *Rajasuya Yagna*.

At Dwarka Krishna was approached by one of the kings whose kingdom was taken over by Jarasandh. He somehow managed to escape to come to him for his help. When Krishna was at Mathura he had defeated Jarasandh several

times but he knew him to be a tough customer. He hated Krishna for having killed Kamsa the King of Mathura who was his own (Krishna's) maternal uncle. Kamsa was Jarasandh's son-in-law and he had to avenge his death.

While Krishna was talking to the king who had come to seek his help Sage Narada entered his chamber. Krishna enquired about Pandava's welfare. Narada told him about Yudhishter's desire to perform *Rajasuya Yagna*. Krishna was very happy to know about it. As for Jarasandh, Sage Narada advised him that he had amassed a large army and had become very powerful. He could be defeated only in hand to hand fight and only Bheem would be able to do it but he would need his guidance. The Yadu clan at Mathura were also fed up with Jarasandh and wanted him eliminated. Hence, all of his ministers at Dwarka suggested to Krishna that he should immediately go to Indraprastha and take care of Jarasandh in conjunction with the Pandava. Krishna left for Indraprastha along with his family and a small army.

At Indraprastha the matter of Jarasandh was raised by Yudhishter. Krishna said that Bheem, Arjuna and he himself will go to Magadh for a hand to hand combat between Bheem and Jarasandh. They would go in disguise as Brahmins. Bheem would request him for a hand to hand combat with him. Jarasandh was an expert and very fond of hand to hand combat. Being very confident of winning the same he would easily accede to a Brahmin's request.

One secret, that only Krishna knew was that Jarasandh was born in two pieces length-wise, and a *Rakshasi* named Jara had joined the pieces together to make him in one piece, his body was weak along the joint and it could be torn apart vertically from the middle if the joint was hit.

The combat between Bheem and Jarasandh continued for 28 days without any result. That day Krishna pulled a trick and hinted Bheem to pull him apart from the middle which he did. Jarasandh was killed but before he died he recognised Krishna and said that he defeated him by deceit. The three of them met Jarasandh's son and asked him to release all the kings he had kept captive which he did.

With Jarasandh out of the way they returned to Indraprastha. Yudhishter was very pleased and he congratulated his brothers and profusely thanked Krishna for his help for he knew that without tha same Jarasandh could not be easily defeated.

Rajasuya Yagna

Yudhishter sent four armies with his four brothers to conquer whoever resisted his *Rajasuya Yagna*; his becoming King of kings. Arjuna went north, Bheem took to east, Sahadeva went south and Nakul went west. They encountered little resistance but some kings, tribal kingdoms and others who were forest dwellers did put up some resistance. Finally, they surrendered and accepted Yudhishter's Emperorship. Most of them gave gifts, gold and vast treasures. Some of them with their armies joined the brothers and came to Indraprastha with them. They were warmly welcomed by Yudhishter and were comfortably settled in several palaces.

Incidentally in east Bheem defeated Karna in Anga Desh.

Kings from all over the country arrived for the *Rajasuya Yagna*. They were all well looked after and comfortably settled in palaces that were constructed for the purpose. Likewise Brahmins and sages were honourably received and housed in several houses built for them. Vyasdeva (Ved-vyas) was appointed the chief priest; he took several renowned sages in his team. Yudhishter requested Bhishma to take charge of all management connected with the Sacrifice. At the auspicious time the *yagna* with chanting of *mantras* started. After several days Yudhishter was crowned the Emperor. Vyasdeva then asked him to appoint the most important and respected person as the chief person whom he would worship and offer *arghya* (pouring of ceremonial holy water, normally it is offered to gods) and seek his blessings. A Godlike person had to be chosen for this purpose. Yudhishter consulted Bhishma who suggested the name of Krishna. His name was announced to the gathering.

Krishna was indeed the most respected person in the gathering and his selection was widely welcomed by the Kings and Brahmins. However, Sishupal, a cousin of Krishna and his supporters objected to his name. He was jealous of him since childhood. He hated him for having eloped with Rukmani whom he was supposed to marry. He said he was not even a king as he chose his grandfather Ugrasen to be the formal King at Mathura and later at Dwarka. He called him a cowherd and other derogatory names. The elders present in the gathering tried their best to persuade him and spoke highly of Krishna and his qualities. But that upset him still more and he loosely called him an impotent and all kinds of dirty names and challenged the gathering with a war. At that point Krishna fired his Disc (*Chakra Sudarshan*) that sheared his throat in no time. Yudhishter ordered his brothers to arrange for his cremation with due honour and ceremony.

The *Rajasuya Yagna* was gracefully completed. All the Brahmins and kings were offered generous gifts by Pandava brothers and respectfully seen off to their respective places. At Yudhishter's request only Krishna with his wives stayed back for a few days at Indraprastha.

Duryodhana was greatly bewildered by the design and craftsmanship of the new hall made by Yudhishter where everything was celestial and mysterious. He stayed back for a few days. The next day he was looking around the building. He reached a place where there was a pond but it appeared like a continuity of the floor. He walked into it and fell in the pond fully dressed. Pandava family, and Krishna's family were standing on the balcony above. All the ladies and Bheem particularly laughed aloud. Yudhishter smiled but immediately became composed. He immediately arranged a fresh set of clothes and quietly sent the same to him. Duryodhana was embarrassed and fuming with anger. He was all the time thinking that, to be the emperor was his right that Yudhishter had stolen from him.

There was yet another unpleasant incident. In his unsteady state Duryodhana banged his head with a door which he thought was open but it actually was closed. He had similar other experiences where he made a laughing stock of himself. His maternal uncle Shakuni was with him. He told him it was time they returned to Hastinapur. He went to Yudhishter and took his leave and they left.

First Game of Dice

Duryodhana was miserable with these developments. He failed to burn the Pandava and Kunti their mother in the palace made of lac; and now Yudhishter became the Emperor; and to cap it all he made a silly ass of himself and was disgraced in public. It had become unbearable for him, and the smouldering embers of the original fire in his heart got further aggravated. His mind was tirelessly at work to somehow unseat Yudhishter and himself become the unchallenged monarch.

Yudhishter with all his qualities had one weakness; that of playing dice. Shakuni was an expert cheat in gambling; particularly in the game of dice he was a sharper and knew how to load and manipulate the dice. Duryodhana along with Shakuni decided to take advantage of his weakness. With the help of Shakuni and the blessings of the blind King, he proposed a game of dice and invited the Pandava to Hastinapur. It was also accepted by Yudhishter that Shakuni was to play on behalf of the Kaurava. The Pandava came to Hastinapur for the game.

Yudhishter lost everything: his kingdom, his brothers and himself, one by one. Finally he offered his consort Draupadi as the stake and lost her too. Duryodhana was up in his seat with excitement at his victory though it was entirely due to Shakuni's cunning and cheating with his loaded dice. He ordered his younger brother Dushshashana to bring Draupadi to the chamber. Draupadi resisted and said that Yudhishter having lost himself was no more the king and hence, he could not offer her as the stake. However, intoxicated with success and mad with jealousy and the desire to finish Pandava, Duryodhana thundered that she be brought there by pulling her hair and stripped naked in presence of everyone. Draupadi appealed to King Dhritrashtra, Queen Gandhari, Grandsire Bhishma, but none came to her rescue. All of them feined helplessness, they only appealed to Duryodhana who was unrelenting.

Karna and Duryodhana were very angry, rude and curt in their behaviour. Draupadi had indeed insulted Duryodhana and she had objected to Karna's participation at the time of her *swayamvar* and they were both hell bent to avenge their insults and were adamant. None including Bhishma, Drona and Vidur could over rule them and King Dhritrashtra kept quiet. Only Vikarna (aka Yuyuthsu) Kaurava's step brother made a strong speech and told the King as well as Duryodhana that their action was most unbecoming of their position. But Duryodhana and his cronies shouted him down. The story is long and I must seek excuse as I skip the same.

However, the salient point is that Dushshashana dragged Draupadi holding her long hair to the chamber and he started pulling her saari[183] to disrobe her. Seeing this Bheem vowed to avenge the insult by tearing open Dushshashana's chest in a battle field and drinking his blood which he later did.

Duryodhana went a step further, he asked Draupadi to sit on his lap. Bheem once again vowed to break his thigh, which later he did and it became the cause of his death. Strangely all this happened in the presence of the blind King, Queen Gandhari and other elders who remained mute witnesses.

The King, though blind, but he could see the gross injustice done to Draupadi. He feared that chaste Draupadi's curse would ruin Kaurava; and their kingdom was destined to doom. Out of guilt and fear, and partly to atone for the gross misdeed done by his sons he invited Draupadi to his chamber and offered to grant her three boons. With the first boon she asked for release of Yudhishter, then she asked for the freedom of other Pandavas with their weapons and then she stopped. When the blind King insisted on the third

boon, she said the Pandava would need no further help. The guilty King, out of fear, decided to restore Yudhishter to his throne.

Second Game of Dice and Forest Sojourn of Pandava

After Pandava left the palace Duryodhana persuaded the Dhritrashtra for a return game of Dice. The King sent a messenger to call Pandava back. Yudhishter once again accepted the invitation to play. The condition was that whoever, lost would have to spend 12 years in forest with his family plus an additional one year in hiding; and in case they were discovered in the 13th year they would have to repeat the forest exile of 12 + 1 years.

Once again, thanks to Shakuni's cunning tricks and manipulations Yudhishter lost. Now he had no option but to go to forest for twelve years plus one year of secret exile.

Duryodhana's action was most unfair. He won by deceit. But Pandava decided to go into forest for the agreed period. When they were leaving for forest, they came to take leave of the elders of the family, and to seek their blessings. The blind King, in the presence of all told Yudhishter that when he came back on successful completion of thirteen years tenure, he would have his kingdom restored to him. He nominated Duryodhana to govern his kingdom as well in the interim period. Yudhishter agreed to this arrangement. The understanding was that Duryodhana was to be a trustee, a care-taker administrator, in the interim period. Thus Duryodhana became the ruler of both the kingdoms. However, later when they returned, he disowned everything, and his father the King kept helplessly quiet. The result: Pandava had nothing they could call their own. This caused the *Mahabharata* war. Before that we will briefly consider how they spent the period of their exile.

Pandava went into the forest and moved towards the north. They travelled by the side of the rivers to keep in contact with ascetic and sages. They spent most of the time discussing Vedas and scriptures with them. They, thus had good company and spent their time beneficially. Luckily they had the benefit of Vedvyas's advice who visited them from time to time. In the forests they had to brave predatory animals and demons. They first encountered *Rakshasa* Kirmira who was a devil. He had created problems not only for common men and sages but for celestials as well. Bheem killed him in no time. He was profusely thanked and blessed by sages who were in constant fear of .

Krishna, when he heard about Pandava's forest exile decided to visit them along with Subhadra and her son Abhimanyu. He also requested King

Drupada to depute his sons Drishtadyumna and Shikhandi to join him in the forest. They all spent some time together with Pandava to boost their morale and assured all help. Krishna engaged them with Vedas, scriptures and historical stories. The idea was to make life bearable for them.

Arjuna goes to Astral Kingdoms

Vyasdeva had asked Yudhishter to send Arjuna to Divine regions to learn their martial skills and about their weapon systems; missiles etc. He was waiting for an appropriate time. Now he felt that the time had come. Hence, one day Yudhishter told Arjuna that 4 divisions of science of arms were known to Bhishma, Drona, Kripacharya, Karna and Ashwathama. They got this from divine intervention. It was time he went to astral world and learnt the same from Indra and other gods. Indra had earlier promised to give him his arms and other powerful missiles etc. It was time to obtain the same and learn how to use the same. Thereafter, he initiated him with mantras that Vyasdev had given him. He told him to remember the same as with these he could seek audience with divine beings. He quickly learnt whatever the elder brother taught him and then without losing any time he sought his leave and left for Himalayas to get into the astral regions.

Arjuna continued with his worship and austerities on his way to Himalaya and thereafter. On reaching the astral regions one day he met a frail Brahmin. He had some discussions with him and then he asked him to leave his weapons there as in that region there was no need for any weapons and these were not allowed. Arjuna politely refused, and said till he avenged the insult his brothers and family suffered at the hands of Duryodhana and they got back the Indraprastha throne he could only acquire more weapons and there was no way of giving up what he had. Hearing this, the Brahmin vanished and in his place Lord Indra was standing. He said, he was pleased with him. Arjuna immediately beseeched him for his weapons. He said what was the hurry? He must spend some time in his palace and rest as he was tired. In any case he had to teach him quite a few things including how to use his weapons.

Indra advised him that he must first propitiate Lord Shiva and obtain his Pashupat *ashtra* before he could get his weapons. Arjuna said he must go and search him first and only after that he could rest in Indraloka. Indra then vanished in thin air; Arjuna sat down for his prayers and austerities. He moved around in search of Lord Shiva.

After a few days one day he saw a wild boar and fired an arrow. He saw a hunter at a distance who too fired a few arrows. The two set of arrows struck

the boar at the same time. The boar was a demon that came into his form before he died. The hunter claimed that he killed the boar first. Arjuna contested this and a fight ensued in which the hunter had the upper hand. Arjuna was downcast with his defeat. He saw a *Shivlinga* nearby. He went there, sat down and started praying. He ollected some flowers and poured the same on the *linga*. When he turned his face, he saw that the flowers were actually falling on the hunter's head. He realised that hunter was none other than Lord Shiva himself. He fell at his feet and apologised. Shiva embraced him and said he was only testing him. He was very pleased with him and as a reward he gave him his powerful weapon Pashupat *ashtra* and also taught him how to use the same. After telling Arjuna important things about how to use various other arms in a war Shiva left, leaving him thinking deeply.

Arjuna proceeded towards Amravati (capitol of Indraloka). On way he met Varun who gladly gave him his weapon called *Nagapash*. Then he met Yamraaja who too was pleased with him and gave him his powerful weapons and taught him the mantras to use the same. They all guided him and told him the best way to reach Indraloka. At Indraloka he was warmly received and escorted to Indra's palace. There he enjoyed the best of riches and good life for five years. Indra spent considerable time teaching him state craft and about weapon systems; how to use the same etc. Then he gave him a great lot of his powerful weapons.

One day, Arjuna expressed his desire to return to his brothers. Indra consented and fixed a suitable date for his departure. Indra in the interim deputed the most beautiful *Apsara* (celestial angel) Urvashi to look after him. Urvashi fell for Arjuna and started luring him. Arjuna knew that she was the consort of his ancestor Pururava and hence, like a mother to him. Hence, he ignored her advances. She became very angry with him and cursed him that in the thirteenth year of their exile he would become impotent and a eunuch and would earn his living by dancing.

Arjuna was very upset he went to Indra and narrated what had happened. Indra was Arjuna's biological father; he was naturally greatly attached to him. Now having seen him from close he was very proud of him as well. He told him: "Son, after one year you would become a normal man and that the curse would only benefit you when you would be in hiding in the 13th year." After receiving his blessings, he left with a large contingent of armed men and arms provided by Indra. He was told he would meet his brothers at a certain place in the Himalayas.

Yudhishter, his brothers and Draupadi followed a strict regimen to keep them in good shape. The brothers practised the use of arms as well. They visited various places of pilgrimages and regularly worshipped and discussed important matters between themselves and with Brahmins and sages they met on the way. Sage Lomasa had just returned from Indraloka, where he had met Arjuna along with Indra. He informed Yudhishter the likely spot in Himalaya where he would meet him. They followed the sage's guidance; and along with him they proceeded towards the appointed place. On the way they encountered several *Rakshasas* whom the brothers killed. Bheem had summoned his son Ghatotkacha to help carry them and Draupadi in the hilly regions and to fight with *Rakshasas*. On the way Bheem had a chance encounter with Hanuman (of Ramayana fame) who was his sibling as both were biological sons of *Pavan* god (god of the Winds). Thereafter, they trespassed into the territory of Kuber the king of god's treasury. They had a fight with Kuber's men called *Yakshas.* Later, when Kuber learnt their identity he welcomed them. He told them that they would meet Arjuna there itself. He arranged for their stay. They enjoyed his lavish hospitality, yet, they were anxious about Arjuna's return.

After some time Arjuna arrived in Indra's chariot accompanied by a contingent of attendants and loads of arms etc. The Pandavas were again united. They lived happily at Kuber's palace for four years and after that they decided to move down towards the plains to find a suitable place for their incognito stay for one year. They stayed at various ashrams. Krishna, Ved vyas, Narada and other sages visited them and advised them on spiritual matters.

They stayed at Dwaitavana on the bank of a canal. It was a heavily forested area with large meadows and greenery. The area belonged to the *Gandharvas* who lived on the other bank of the canal. They were comfortable at Kuber's palace. At Dwaitavana life had become difficult for them but they had no option. They had to move on for they had already entered the twelfth year of exile and the thought of finding a suitable hiding place for the thirteenth year bothered them no end.

Pandavas defeat the *Gandharvas*

The news of Pandava's camping at Dwaitavana reached Hastinapur. Duryodhana decided to visit the place in royal splendour with a large army. His real intent was to mock at Pandava and display his wealth. He declared to the king that he was going for hunting and for the head count of the cattle

from his stable that usually grazed in the area. He camped on the other side of the canal. Soon the *Gandharvas*' army appeared there and challenged Kaurava. A big fight ensued. First Karna fought for them. He was cornered and ran away to save his life. Later one by one all Kaurava were taken prisoners and were shifted to another place through aerial route. Some of the Kaurava soldiers went to Pandava staying on the other side and narrated the story to Yudhishter who deputed his brothers to go and challenge *Gandharvas* and obtain release of Duryodhana and his men. Arjuna and Bheem succeeded in obtaining their release. Cutting the story short Kaurava with their defeated army returned to Hastinapur in disgrace.

Sage Durvasa's Visit

Sage Durvasa was reputed to be very short tempered person. In no time he cursed one who annoyed him. Once, he visited Hastinapur along with 10000 disciples, in the evening. He said they were hungry and asked for food for all. Being an odd time, it was difficult but Duryodhana moved heaven and earth and fed them well. The sage was pleased and offered to grant him a boon. Duryodhana thought that he had everything and was confused. But soon his wicked mind told him to ask the sage to visit Pandava at Dwaitavana. He thought they would not be able to look after the sage and he would surely curse them.

The sage reached Pandava when they had finished their meals and even the utensils were cleaned. As expected the sage asked for food for himself and his 10000 disciples. Yudhishter went to Draupadi and told her about the sage's desire. Draupadi didn't know what to do. She neither had enough ration nor the resources to cook for 10000 people in a short time. She threw her hands up and prayed to Krishna for his help. Krishna in Dwarka heard her earnest appeal. He rushed out; and with his yogic power appeared before her. With tears flowing down her eyes, she narrated the story. Krishna asked where the sages were at that time. She informed they had gone for a bath in the canal and would be coming any moment. Krishna used his mystical powers and sage Durvasa and his disciples started feeling as if they had over eaten. They had become lazy and they never came back. After resting on the bank of the canal for some time they left.

Jayadratha Kidnaps Draupadi

One day, Pandava had gone out for hunting. Draupadi and a maid were at their cottage. Some Brahmins were praying nearby. Jayadratha king of Sindhu with several generals and a big army was passing that way. Seeing Draupadi

he was bowled over by her beauty. He came to her and tried to lure her with his power and riches; he asked her to come with him. She scolded him. But he over-powered her and dragged her to his chariot and took her along with him.

After some time when Pandava returned the Brahmins who lived nearby told them what had happened. Yudhishter asked Arjuna and Bheem to go after Jayadratha and teach him a lesson and get Draupadi released, but not to kill him. Jayadratha was Dussala's husband. Dussala was king Dhritrashtra's daughter hence their cousin. After a long chase they found Jayadratha's entourage. They challenged them, a battle followed between two brothers and Jayadratha's men. Finally, they were defeated and Draupadi was freed. They also brought Jayadratha with them to Yudhishter. After severely reprimanding him Yudhishter made him apologise to Draupadi and let him go. His brothers and Draupadi were very unhappy with the light punishment given to Jayadratha. This incident caused considerable bitterness with both sides swearing to take revenge that happened at the battle of *Mahabharata*.

Pandava trespass into *Yaksha* Territory – The Pond of Death

When there was one month left for twelve years of exile to be over Pandava left Dwaitavana in search of their hiding place for the thirteenth year. On the way a Brahmin approached Yudhishter and said that a deer had run away with all the implements needed for performing an urgent sacrifice and requested him to chase the deer and obtain the needed implements. They all tried to chase the deer in the direction pointed by the Brahmin. But they could not get the deer. Tired and exhausted they rested under a banyan tree. They were very thirsty. Yudhishter asked Nakul to go and get some water. Nakul searched and located a pond but before he could drink and take some water for the brothers a voice asked him to answer his questions before drinking water as the pond belonged to him. Nakul was so thirsty that he ignored the voice and drank some water. Instantly he dropped dead by the side of the pond.

Yudhishter was worried for Nakul; and he asked Sahdeva to go and look for him. He too met the same fate. Then Arjuna and Bheem did likewise and dropped dead. Then Yudhishter came himself and saw his brothers lying dead. He heard the same voice and patiently requested for the questions he had to answer. One by one he answered all his ten questions correctly. The voice said he was a *Yaksha* and he was very pleased and therefore, he would raise one of his brothers to life as per his choice. Whom do you want? Yudhishter asked for Nakul. The *Yaksha* looked surprised; he said: Arjuna or Bheem would better

serve his needs then why did he ask for Nakul. Yudhishter said he had two mothers Kunti and Madri. Bheem, Arjuna and he himself were the sons of Kunti and Nakul and Sahadeva were the sons of Madri. When he returns he would like a fair representation of sons between the two mothers. The *Yaksha* was very happy and soon one by one all the brothers became alive.

Yudhishter was not satisfied. He asked the *Yaksha* who was he? Then a divine being appeared before him and said he was Dharamraja. He was his father and that he was very pleased with his conduct and would grant him boons as per his choice.

Yudhishter said the Brahmin who had come to him should not lose the credit that would have accrued to him by the sacrifice that he could not perform. Dharamraja said that he was the deer and he would return all the implements to him and he would gain all the credit. Then he asked him to ask him for any other boon.

Yudhishter quietly thought for some time then said that in the thirteenth year when they live incognito no one should recognise them. Dharamraja said they would be living in the city of Virata in the thirteenth year and none would recognise them. He returned to him Brahmins implements and told him to ask for another boon.

Yudhishter replied that he saw him with his own eyes it was the biggest boon but to honour him he will request him for a last boon. 'O my Lord, please grant me the capacity to overcome avarice and anger and that his mind should always be inclined towards helping others and towards charity, asceticism and truth'.

Dharmaraja said you already have these qualities in you but he would reaffirm the same. Saying this he vanished.

The Pandava returned to their hermitage and gave the implements to the Brahmin who was waiting for them.

Pandavas reach Matsya Kingdom

The period of twelve years was just to expire and Pandava were very anxious to go into hiding. They knew that Duryodhana must have deputed hundreds of spies. Yudhishter after consulting his brothers and considering various options decided that they should go to Matsya that was King Virata's kingdom and that all of them should seek employment at his palace.

Yudhishter dispensed with all the attendants and associates who were accompanying them. Most of them were sent to Krishna at Dwarka. Likewise Rishi Dhaumya who remained with them throughout was sent to King Drupada's kingdom along with all other Brahmins. Their own movement was kept secret and none knew the same.

Having sent everyone away they moved towards the capitol of Matsya. On their way at a convenient spot they rested. There, Yudhishter discussed with his brothers and Draupadi how they would present themselves to King Virata and his officers and conduct their affairs for the next one year. One common thread they chose was that they were all to be Brahmins who had worked in the kingdom of King Yudhishter. Then they collected all their arms into a bundle and concealed the same in a cloth and kept it on top of a tall tree in a manner it couldn't be easily seen from below. The tree happened to be a huge one in a deserted area near the cremation ground on the outskirts of the city. If one happened to notice, it would be taken to be a dead body deliberately kept at a high point for astrological reasons.

Pandava camped in a grassy patch outside the city. Yudhishter was the first one to enter. He went straight to the king and introduced himself as a Brahmin named Kanka who had fallen on bad times and needed help. He said that he used to advise King Yudhishter in the game of Dice at Indraprastha. He left it for him to understand that his bad times were linked to King Yudhishter's bad times and that he was close to him and played the game of Dice with him. King Virata was impressed with his personality and took him to be his counsellor. He allotted him a decent apartment near his palace and ensured he was well looked after.

The following day Bheem dressed like a cook approached the King and sought employment. He too introduced himself as a Brahmin named Vallabha who had at one time worked as a cook in the royal kitchen of King Yudhishter. He was passed on to one of his ministers who talked to him and fixed him in the royal kitchen as the chief cook. He too was comfortably settled. Besides being a cook Bheem introduced himself as a champion wrestler.

Draupadi was the next to enter the city. Dressed in modest and soiled clothes with loose hair she looked like one who had genuinely fallen on bad times. The passer bys asked her what she wanted and where she was going? She said she was a Sairindhri (one who attended on queens in royal palaces) and was in search of a job. They took her to the royal palace where the queen was greatly impressed with her beauty and her story. She asked her about what all she did

earlier for she herself looked like a queen. She said she was not a queen but she had served Satyabhama Krishna's wife and Draupadi who was King Yudhishter's consort. She gave her name as Malini.

The Queen was worried and feared that her beauty would attract the male members of the palace. But on her explanation that she had five powerful *Gandharva* husbands and the stories she narrated about them and the assurances she gave, she appointed her as an exclusive maid and placed her in the inner chambers which were out of bounds for male members of the household.

Two days after Draupadi entered the royal household Sahdeva entered the palace dressed like a cowherd. He too managed to reach the king and attracted his attention. Virata had 100000 cows and he was looking for a capable person to look after them. Sahdeva's credential of having tended cows at Indraprastha was a good reference. He appointed him as the head keeper of the cows. He was to look after the cows and supply milk and milk products to the royal households and to the ministers in the capitol city.

Arjuna as per Urvashi's curse had become like a eunuch. He dressed himself in a colourful saari with fluffy upper garments. He had ornaments like bracelets to cover his strong hands and arms, necklace, ear ring, nose ring and ornaments for the feet as well. He followed Sahdeva and managed audience with the king. He introduced himself as a music and dance teacher and gave his name as Brihanala. The king was a bit confused because of his body and royal presence, but when he told him that he was a dance teacher in the court of King Yudhishter he took him at his word, and appointed him to teach his daughter Uttara. He was assigned a house in the women's quarters. Urvashi's curse came in handy and he mingled well with the women.

Nakula was the last one to enter the city of Virata. With the help of passer bys he managed to reach the royal stable and started playing with horses like an expert horse trainer. The king happened to come there and was impressed with him. He introduced himself as a Brahmin by the name Granthika who had worked as the keeper of King Yudhishter's horses at Indraprastha. The king appointed him as well and arranged for his residence etc.

Gradually the five brothers and Draupadi started meeting each other occasionally and they communicated through a sign language that they developed. Yudhishter played with the king and won considerable wealth from him. Bheem excelled in his work and entertained the people with his

skill as a wrestler as well. The other two brothers and Draupadi too did very well in their respective jobs.

When everything was going well for them one untoward incident happened. Kichaka the commander of Virata's army and brother of the Queen saw Draupadi. He was simply enamoured of her beauty. One day he misbehaved with her. Draupadi warned him but he was so mad with lust that he continued to treat her shabbily like an object for enjoyment. To cut the long story short Bheem killed him. Somehow it was not known to anyone that Bheem was his killer.

Pandava were now about to complete the thirteenth year and so far no one had recognised them. Duryodhana had let loose a large force of spies but they could not locate them. However, they informed him of Kichaka's death and weakening of Virata's defenses. With all his faults Kichaka was a brave general and commanded his forces well. No one ever thought of attacking Virata while he was alive. With his death Duryodhana instantly thought of attacking Matsya. He was trying to get as many kingdoms in his fold as possible. He immediately ordered his forces to attack Matsya at the earliest. All the elders like Bhishma, Drona, Kripacharya and Kaurava brothers and Karna finalised their strategy and attacked Virata. A fierce battle ensued in which Virata forces suffered great losses and lost a prince as well. Then the eldest prince who was in command sought the help of Pandava brothers as well. They put up a brave fight and kept Duryodhana's forces in check.

Gradually, the Pandava brothers who were not supposed to be fighters took over the fight and they played a decisive role. Arjuna while being the charioteer of the prince Bhuminjaya did most of the fighting. This surprised the prince no end and he made anxious enquiries about his past. The thirteenth month was over the previous day. Hence, Arjuna had no hesitation in revealing his identity to him. He took him to the tree where they had kept the weapons and obtained the same and then revealed his identity in confidence. Using his own weapons he fought ferociously and threw Kaurava on the back foot. Their forces started retreating and soon the war was over.

The next day the king had called all to celebrate their victory. To every one's surprise Yudhishter, his brothers and Draupadi came to his court in their normal dresses and Yudhishter declared his identity to King Virata. He was very happy and offered his entire kingdom and treasury to Yudhishter. Arjuna said they only needed his help not his kingdom. The king then proposed to marry his daughter to Arjuna. Arjuna said that he treated Uttara like his own

daughter and hence, he could not marry her but to reassure him he offered to take her as his daughter-in-law.

Virata sent messages to various kings and associates informing them about Pandava's presence in his kingdom and invited them to the marriage of his daughter Uttara with Arjuna- Subhadra's son Abhimanyu. The guests arrived sooner than he had expected. The marriage was solemenised at an early date in presence of a galaxy of kings. None came from Hastinapur.

The entire assembly of kings at Virata's court was anxious to ensure that Yudhishter got back his kingdom early. They decided to send emissaries to find out what King Dhritrashtra thought of doing. A group of Brahmins were sent to Hastinapur to counsel King Dhritrashtra and persuade him to return what belonged to Pandavas. They reminded him of his own public promise. The King kept quiet but Duryodhana left them in no doubt that he didn't intend giving them anything. The Brahmins returned back empty handed.

Soon Sanjay, King Dhritrashtra's secretary arrived at Virata and gave a message from Dhritrashtra that was vague and promised nothing except that peace was in every-one's interest. It virtually implied Pandava's accepting Duryodhana as the king and living as his other subjects. There was no talk of return of Yudhishter's wealth and kingdom. Obviously, none could accept such a proposition.

Finally, it was decided to request Krishna to go to Hastinapur and try to broker a peace such that the war could be avoided. Krishna went there but Duryodhana, against the advice of Bhishma, Drona, Vidur and even his own father, was very rude and arrogant and he refused to give even five villages to Pandavas. He treated Krishna shabbily and virtually insulted him; he even tried to arrest him but through a clever trick by Satyaki who was acting as his charioteer Krishna returned safely to Virata. Thereafter, he returned to Dwarka to prepare his own forces and be ready for a long absence from Dwarka as the war between Pandava and Kaurava was imminent in which he was sure to play an important role.

There was considerable turmoil at Hastinapur due to the manner in which Duryodhana was behaving and the way he had treated Krishna. Bhishma, Vidur and Drona repeatedly asked Dhritrashtra to keep his publicly announced promise and give what belonged to Pandava. The King expressed his helplessness and Duryodhana rejected any such suggestions. Everyone thought, and openly told the king that he was inviting ruin and in fact complete destruction of both the families. On the other hand, Duryodhana was

over confident because of his large army and the prowess of Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Jayadratha and his brothers and himself. He was visualising himself as *Chakravarty Samraat* (Emperor).

At Virata, Yudhishter thought of the catastrophe the war could cause. He was trying to find some way to avoid the war. Bheem on the other hand was restlessly waiting for the war for he had to avenge Draupadi's insult and redemption of his own vow to kill Dushshashana and Duryodhana. Finally, Yudhishter found there was no option for him but to go to war.

Duryodhana and Arjuna go to Dwarka

Both Duryodhana and Arjuna approached Krishna at Dwarka for his help. Krishna offered himself to one side; and his army and resources to the other side. He also declared that he would not take to arms or fight; and would only serve as a charioteer cum advisor. Greedy that he was, Duryodhana wanted his army and his resources. Arjuna was looking forward to have his friend Krishna as his advisor. As chance would have it Arjuna got Krishna and Duryodhana his army. Balarama remained neutral and remained with Krishna through the war. But his sympathies were with Kaurava. Krishna was aware of the same. There was a reason for his liking for Duryodhana. Balarama's daughter was married to his son. Earlier he was keen to marry his sister Subhadra to Duryodhana but she eloped with Arjuna with Krishna's blessings.

Had Krishna decided to fight along with Arjuna, Balarama would have definitely fought from the other side and the two brothers would have been pitched against each other. Krishna anticipated it and cleverly avoided the awkward situation.

The Composition of Pandava and Kaurava Forces

Pandava's Side

Pandava could hurriedly assemble a force of 7 Divisions[184] that was not well equipped. It was a makeshift conglomerate as they were in forest and away from active life for a long time. Their strength was only about 55% of Kaurava's well oiled and equipped fighting fit army of 11 divisions. They had with them Krishna, five Pandava brothers, 16 years old Abhimanyu (Arjuna's son), Ghatotakach (Bheem and Hidimba's son), who was like a giant demon and five sons of Draupadi one from each of the Pandava (called Draupadeyas).

They also had on their side:

King Drupada, the father-in-law of Arjuna and his two brother-in-laws Drishta-dumyuna and Shikhandi (Draupadi's brothers);

King Virata, father-in-law of Abhimanyu; His kingdom was known as Matsya. It was west of Indraprastha. Kurukshetra, where the war was fought was in his kingdom;

Yuyudhana (aka Satyaki**)** from Yadava clan of Mathura; he had moved with Krishna from Mathura to Dwarka. He was a very brave and competent warrior. At times he served as his charioteer along with Daruk;

Dhrishtketu; the king of Cedis and brother-in-law of Nakul,

King of Kashi; present day Banaras or Varanasi;

Cekitana; a chieftain, who had an alliance with the Pandava;

Purujit and Kuntibhoja; they were two brothers; the latter had no children; he had adoptedKunti (aka Pritha or Pratha);

Saibya; he was the king of the Shibi tribe.

Yudhamanyu and Uttammauja; they were two associate chieftains;

Yuyutsu[185]: Half brother of Duryodhana, he fought for Pandava. Yuyutsu was very upset with the behaviour of Duryodhana. He had tried to persuade his brothers to be reasonable with Draupadi and Pandava but they virtually insulted him; in disgust, he decided to fight from the side of Pandava.

Pandavas had in all 17 generals on their side, all very committed. They were fighting for a righteous cause and were willing to sacrifice everything for the same. They were not only brave but superior in strategy, planning and execution.

While preparations for the war were on Yudhishter was bitten by his conscience at the thought of total annihilation that he could visualise. He was shattered and said: "No war, Peace at all costs". Krishna advised him that peace at the cost of righteousness could not be true peace. At best it could be a stop gap, makeshift, patch work of no peace. Both Arjuna and Krishna made great efforts to convince him that the fight was truly for the cause of peace. It was a fight to uphold virtue and justice against the evil of covetousness, arrogance of power; and unrighteousness. It took them considerable time to correct his perception of the situation.

Kaurava's Side

Duryodhana and his 99 brothers & Bhishma their grandfather (*Pitamah*);

Jayadrath; Kaurava's sister Dussala's husband;

Sons and in-laws of Kaurava Brothers;

King of Gandhar: Gandhari's father and Shakuni her brother;

Karna; King of Ang Desh and Pandava's eldest brother;

Dronacharya (Drona was his name plus Acharya means the teacher or *Guru*);

Ashwathama; Drona's son;

Kripacharya; Drona's Brother-in-law, he was the king of Pancalas

Saumadatti; the King of Bhikas**;**

Besides the above there were many other kings of small kingdoms near Hastinapur who were practically forced to fight for Kaurava;

Krishna's army with Krit Varma and other chiefs as was agreed by him when Duryodhana and Arjuna visited him at Dwarka.

Dhritrashtra was greatly worried he had a bite of his conscience but for a selfish reason. He could see Pandava winning hands down in spite of superior Kaurava forces. He felt that Pandava with their righteousness and commitment were invincible. He briefed his personal secretary Sanjay to go to Arjuna, and talk to him about the possible destruction that would result as a consequence of the war, that it would finish the entire Kuru dynasty. The aim was to demoralise and brainwash him that the war was fraught with catastrophic consequences and the same was well worth avoiding. Arjuna bit the bug hurled at him through Sanjay. The scheme nearly worked as we will see later. Earlier he had tried the same trick on Yudhishter when he was nearly taken in and he said: 'No war; Peace at all costs.'

<u>Salient Events of the War</u>

At Kurukshetra both Duryodhana and Arjuna were surveying the deployment of the two armies. Duryodhana was impressed by the strength of his forces with the presence of such greats as Bhishma, Drona, Karna and Jayadrath etc. He tried to inspire them with a pep talk and the promise of a golden future. But in his heart, he was skeptical due to the unjust nature of the war.

He had a lingering suspicion that Drona, Bhishma and many others on his side lacked conviction for the cause of the war. They were on his side purely for reasons of propriety having been the subjects or long-time associates of the

king. Some of the kings were there out of fear of Duryodhana but their sympathies were else-where. He could sense an ominous feeling of helplessness amongst the seniors. Unfortunately, he made some indiscreet remarks about propriety and loyalty etc and managed to upset Drona. His reaction confirmed his apprehension.

Arjuna too was uneasy in his mind but the reasons were quite different. He was glum faced and withdrawn. He dropped his bow and arrow and was sulking in his chariot. He was emotion-tortured by the message from Dhritrashtra. Krishna had sensed his problem but reserved his counsel till he expressed his doubts about the need for the war and the likely devastation that was imminent.

A dialogue ensued between Arjuna and Krishna when he asked Krishna several searching questions about the need of the war. Krishna was convinced about the propriety of the war. He displayed super-human patience and used all his knowledge and skill. He presented his views logically and forcefully and he exercised great patience. His objective was to persuade him and create conviction in his mind about the need for the war without in anyway forcing his own opinion. He wanted him to be absolutely clear in his mind as to why there was no option for him but to go to war.

The entire dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna was compiled by Ved Vyas and given the name Bhagavada-Gita for short Gita. *Bhagavada* means 'words spoken by God'. Gita is something that originates from *geet* (a song). Gita is in verse form and is highly musical as well.

Deaths of Drona, Bhishma, Duryodhana, Jayadratha, Karna and Abhimanyu

Scholars have considered the manner of killing of the above six invincible warriors as controversial. Krishna's role has been criticised in respect of their deaths. Therefore it is pertinent to comment on the same.

Drona was so well versed in martial arts that none could defeat him much less kill him. Ashwathama, was his only son whom he loved immensely. On the battle field there was an elephant that had the same name 'Ashwathama'. Krishna arranged the killing of the elephant and the word went around that Ashwathama was killed. When Drona heard the news, he was heartbroken. In the midst of din of the war he tried to verify the news and asked Yudhishter as he was known for telling the truth. While Yudhishter was replying Krishna blew his conch shell aloud. Drona could not hear him clearly and mistook that

his son Ashwathama was killed. Thereafter, he did not fight; he dropped his arms and was killed by Drishtadyumna (Draupadi's brother).

Bhishma was another person who had no chinks in his armour. He had vowed that he would never fight against a woman or one who was not a man. Shikhandi, King Drupada's younger son was believed to be a doubtful male. During war with Bhishma, Krishna advised Arjuna to use Shikhandi as a shield. Seeing him, Bhishma did not fight and Arjuna pierced his entire body with his arrows. There are other stories; one pertains to Amba's curse that I have skipped.

Bhishma had the boon of death by self-wish. He lived for 58 days after being mortally wounded and his body had rested on a bed of arrows. Mahabharata has illuminating discourses while he was on the bed of arrows in extreme agony. His discussions with Krishna and Yudhishter are a testimony to the depth of his knowledge and his magnanimity. He held no grudge against either Krishna or Arjuna and regretted having been a mute witness to Duryodhana's atrocities.

Abhimanyu, though only sixteen, was a gallant warrior. He was cruelly killed by a deceit in which several very powerful Generals like Drona, Karna, Jayadrath and several others encircled him in a ring (called *chakra vyuh*) where he had to fight all of them alone. While he knew how to enter the ring formation he did not know how to come out of the same. He fought gallantly but was most brutally killed. Jayadratha kept on pounding him with his mace even after his death. Arjuna greatly upset vowed to kill Jayadratha before sunset the next day which he did with the help of Krishna.

Arjuna in fact was to go for the *chakra vyuh* for he was best equipped for it but Krishna did not want to risk him, therefore, he engaged him elsewhere; and his son Abhimanyu had to go instead of him. In a battle, death is a distinct possibility and to win the war one has to deploy the resources most optimally keeping in view the long-term needs of the same. The criticism centres on Abhimanyu's tender age and is mostly sentimental. Don't hard realities of life transcend sentiments?

Jayadratha: On the 14th day of the war Arjuna was vow-bound to kill Jayadratha before the sun set. In case he failed to do so he was to burn himself on a pyre of wood. Jayadratha skillfully played hide and seek with him. Approaching sun set worried Krishna. He used his mystic knowledge to create artificial clouds that covered the sun. Jayadratha thought the day was over. As the war was not fought after sunset he came out laughing and mocking at

Arjuna, hoping that as per the vow he could not kill him any more and to fulfill his vow he had to burn himself on a pyre of wood. Just then Krishna removed the cloud cover and bright sun showed once again. Krishna asked a gloomy faced and sunken Arjuna to kill him which he did.

Karna was perhaps the bravest warrior amongst all Pandava and Kaurava included. He had a *Brahmaastra*, fail proof javelin which could kill anyone but it could be used only once. He also had a chest guard (*kavach*) and an ear ring (*kundal*), both given by sun god who was his biological father. He could not be defeated or killed so long he had these with him. Throughout the story he comes out as the most unfortunate person who was insulted and ignored on several occasions for no fault of his. Since he was raised by a charioteer he was taken to be not a Kshatriya but a shudra (low caste) and treated as such. He was actually the eldest of Kunti's sons who was discarded as he was born before her marriage. He was the son of sun god.

Duryodhana gave Karna respectability by making him the king of Ang-Desh. He hated Pandava. Even after he knew that he was actually the eldest brother of Pandava, his hatred did not diminish. Like his brother Yudhishter had a weakness for playing dice, Karna's weakness was giving charity. He never turned down one who asked him for anything.

Indra disguised as a Brahmin came and asked for his chest guard and Kunti his mother came and confessed to his being her son by sun god and asked for his ear ring (*kundal*). He gave away these to Indra and Kunti without hesitation. But he soon knew that Krishna was instrumental in making him lose these to protect Arjuna. Still he collected his guts and fought gallantly. Unfortunately, one day he was forced to fight Ghatotakach; though he killed him, but he had to use his *Brahmaastra* that he had reserved for Arjuna. Thus, he lost his fail-proof arm as well.The next day he had to fight with Arjuna. Though he gallantly but was killed by him as he had none of the protective gears.

Duryodhana's body was blessed by the God and was made steel like that could not be injured by any arrow, sword, mace or any missile. He was an ace mace (club) player. Both he and Bheem were trained by Balarama in the art of wielding the mace. The nature always creates one weakness in everyone. As mentioned above he too had a weak spot in his thighs that was not blessed by God and was vulnerable.

On the 18th day of the war (last day), he found that all his Generals were killed and only a scattering of the soldiers that remained were in total disarray. He

came out and fought for some time, but after that he ran and jumped into a pond and went inside the water. He had the capacity to stay under water without raising his head for a long time. Bheem saw his head and pulled him by the locks of his hair and he was eventually killed by him

His 11 divisions lasted just 17 days and were gone; he now found himself helpless. Out side the pond he was challenged to a mace contest. He fought gallantly trying his best to protect his weak spot in the thighs. Krishna by his eyes pointed to his thighs. Bheem sensed the weak spot and hit him there; he broke his thighs. He fell and collapsed in a pool of blood. . Thus he avenged Draupadi's insult; she was brought to the chamber pulling her hair after the game of dice. Draupadi's hair was later cleaned with his blood.

As mentioned above Balarama had a soft corner for Duryodhana in spite of his evil actions. Duryodhana's son, who was his son-in-law was also killed. Seeing Bheem hit him, Balarama jumped at Bheem with his plough and said that hitting below the waist was not permitted in a match with mace. He was angry as Bheem had done a wrong thing and merited punishment. Krishna intervened and stopped him. He told him that Duryodhana followed no rules; he did only wrong things; he was an evil character. In fact, depending upon his convenience he made the rules and such a person could only be dealt by his own rules and methods.

On the 18th day the war ended with the death of Duryodhana.

Killing of Drishtadyumna & five sons of Draupadi after the War was over

Ashwathama was very angry with Pandava for killing his father Drona by deceit. He vowed to kill them. On the 18th day, late in the night[186] along with Krit Varma from Krishna's army, he stole into a tent where five men were sleeping with a sixth person at some distance. He thought them to be the five Pandava. He crushed the heads of all the six not realising that he had actually killed the five sons of Draupadi (one from each of the Pandava) and Drishtadyumna (Draupadi's brother) and he ran away. When he had gone some distance in search of safety he fired his *Brahmaastra* to kill Abhimanyu's yet to be born son, in Uttara's womb, the only successor of the Pandava Dynasty, as he wanted to completely finish the Pandava clan. He soon realised his mistake and was sorry. He suffered a guilty conscience but kept running for his life.

He was caught by Arjuna but he was forgiven (not killed) by Yudhishter being the son of his *guru* and a Brahmin. With a heavy heart and biting conscience

he profusely apologised but Krishna insisted that some punishment had to be given. A sparkling gem embedded in his forehead was taken away by Krishna leaving the wound oozing. Further he cursed him that the wound would never heal and he would suffer the pain through a long life of several thousand years and that he would keep roaming on the earth. Faithful Hindus to this day believe, he is still alive and is in the Himalayas.

It is indeed true that Krishna was the brain behind the killing of all the Kaurava Generals and that the strategy adopted in some cases was less than fair. But the rules of war are different from peace time rules; and it is all about exploiting the kinks in the enemy's armour. It is about finding the gaps, the weak spots and striking at the right time. Bhishma, Drona and Karna were virtually invincible; therefore, strategy suiting specific need was necessary. In any case Kaurava made the rules that suited them and did the meanest of things.

When Duryodhana was indulging in all his mean acts and cheating on Pandava, when he insulted Draupadi in presence of so many, Bhishma and Drona and other respected elders should have intervened and stopped him. They did nothing of the kind, and meekly surrendered to his whims. They were under no compulsion to endorse his grossly immoral actions. Later they agreed to fight from his side when they could have remained neutral as Vidur did? Their actions were unbecoming of their exalted status. Had they taken up the matter with the King Dhritrashtra forcefully and threatened to leave him, perhaps he could overrule his sons. They didn't cover themselves in glory by their actions. Perhaps they were confused but since they fought from his side they became a party to his wrong doings? Therefore, they deserved to be treated by the same logic that was used by Krishna at the time of Duryodhana's killing.

Consequences of *Mahabharata*

The biggest irony of *Mahabharata* was that Dhritrashtra was blind and could not see any good thing of life but sitting in his palace he could practically see the entire war and the killing of each every of the Kaurava stalwart. This was made possible by Sanjay his secretary, who was blessed by his teacher, Ved Vyas, with a telescopic vision and hearing irrespective of the distance[187]. Sanjay could see and hear all that happened at Kurukshetra and he faithfully described everything to him including the gruesome killings of his sons. The worst was that he added his own comments and feelings that favoured the Pandava. The King was hapless; there was nothing he could do. Even his own

secretary condemned the unjust behaviour of his sons. He, in fact, did not hide his happiness at the imminent victory of Pandava.

The war lasted only 18 days. It was Pandava's strong conviction and better strategy, planning, and commitment to the goal that caused total annihilation of Kaurava despite their better strength and resources. However, it was a typical ending to a fratricidal war in which there are no winners.

On Pandava's side the five brothers, Draupadi and Kunti survived along with Krishna and Balarama. On Kaurava's side Dhritrashtra, Gandhari, Vidur, Ashwathama, Kripacharya and Krit-Varma survived. The war created a ghastly scene of all round death and destruction. All the able-bodied men were killed leaving behind an army of wailing widows, old parents, sick and injured, old workers in the palace and young children who all needed help, with none there to help them. Parikshit, Abhimanyu's yet to be born son in Uttara's womb was saved by Krishna by his *Sudarshan Chakra* (all powerful discuss that he had on his finger). When Pandavas retired Parikshit ascended the Bharata throne.

Yudhishter again got the Bharata throne at Hastinapur and started working for the wellbeing of the people and in time built a prosperous kingdom through his practise of righteousness and justice for all. However, he was emotionally shattered and remained greatly disturbed due to the events that caused a catastrophe of immense magnitude. He considered the victory to be worse than a defeat. He reluctantly went to war in the first place, and the victory had an element of deceit and deception. To him it was nothing short of moral decadence and the entire event appeared to be a theatre of the absurd with no winners.

Dhritrashtra and Gandhari were shattered by the killing of their sons and the total loss (both material and moral). They were particularly sorry for Duryodhana and never forgave Pandava and Krishna. They ignored the wrong doings of their sons. There was regular exchange of unpleasant words between them and Pandava; in particular with Bheem. They were particularly upset with Krishna, whom they held responsible for the killing of their sons. Gandhari went to the extent of cursing Krishna with extinction of Yadava dynasty that he gracefully accepted and promised to honour her wish.

After sometime, Dhritrashtra, Gandhari, Vidur and Kunti (mother of Pandava) retired to a forest and became hermits. They later died in a forest fire. Dhritrashtra and Gandhari's forest life, a brief two years, was worse than hell; it took away more than the 150 years they lived owning a kingdom.

Krishna and Balarama returned to Dwarka.

After about 25 years Krishna felt that his own clan was taking advantage of his prowess and had acquired all the wrong attributes that get associated with wealth and prosperity. He decided that they were no better than Kaurava. The other wing of the Yadava dynasty that had stayed behind at Mathura too degenerated into men of low character with endless quarrels. He decided that the time had arrived for proving Gandhari's curse right and for a new beginning of Yadava dynasty. He ensured the complete annihilation of his own clan both at Dwarka and Mathura with only Vajra, Aniurddha's infant son (Krishna's great grandson) surviving besides the old and infirm, women and children. Two years after the annihilation of his clan Krishna was mistakenly killed by a hunter named Jara who mistook him to be a deer.

Pandava's March to Heaven

After the death of Krishna, Pandava suffered a bout of unbearable sorrow and remorse; living became a burden for them. Yudhishter decided that it was time to begin their new innings. They felt that since they had practised a life of righteousness they deserved a place in Heaven. Handing over the reign of the kingdom to Parikshit the five brothers and Draupadi started a long march towards Himalayas on way to Heaven. A stray dog[188] from Hastinapur joined them in their march.

One by one, the Pandavas started falling due to the sins committed by them. The first to go was Draupadi. Though she was the consort of five brothers but she loved Arjuna more than others. The next to fall was Sahdeva who thought no end of himself. Nakul followed him due to his pride in being the most beautiful person. Arjun was next to fall due to his belief that none could match his martial skills (he had forgotten that he was defeated by Kurkut, a lowly demon king when he was on way to Hastinapur from Dwarka along with the members of Yadava clan and other residents of Dwarka after his death). Bheem was last to fall, as he used to curse his enemy when he fought with them. Only Yudhishter and the dog remained till the end.

At the gate to Heaven Yudhishter stood with the dog. The gateman told him he had instructions to let him in but not the dog. He protested but knew there was nothing the gateman could do. He finally told him to tell his Master that he would not enter the gate without the faithful dog that stuck with him from Hastinapur and bravely suffered all the odds on way, when even his wife and brothers left his company.

The gateman looked upwards and promptly said he had received orders to let him in. Inside, he expected his dear ones, wife and brothers, to be there. Instead he found Kaurava, Duryodhana and others, who were unrighteous and mean in their actions and had given him no end of problems. He told the protocol escort if that was heaven he would prefer hell. In the next hall that was presumed to be hell he found all his dear ones. He gladly joined them.

The Master of Heaven personally came to greet him and welcome him. He told him that what he saw was unreal and there indeed was no other chamber. The dog was no more there, in his place stood *Dharmaraaja* behind him. He then greeted Yudhishter and said he had followed the *dharma* throughout his life and for that reason the Master agreed to condone the sins of his brothers and wife as well, so that they could be with him. Indeed, they would be in heaven. Yudhishter bowed in reverence and said the Master indeed was compassionate and magnanimous.

Yudhishter's journey from Hastinapur is grandeur personified.

The story of Mahabharata is like an encyclopedia. There are stories about the advent and life and deeds of all the characters and they were all interrelated. It is a treatise on human behaviour. There could hardly be a situation in our life for which we could not find inspiration from the legend.

I have tried to bring out the salient features of the story of Mahabharata as per my limited knowledge and subjectivity. I trust the knowledgeable readers will forgive any omissions. Mahabharata is a cluster of books and stories in which the narration is interlinked in content between the books.

Some of Krishna's Names

Names	Reason/Meaning
Keshav	Killer of demon Kesi, One with luxurious curly dark hair
Madhusudan	Killer of demon Madhu
Madhav	Harbinger of spring; Husband of the Goddess of fortune
Murari	Killer of demon Mura
Mukund	Giver of liberation; one who can grant *moksha*
Hrishikesha	Lord of Senses, One with thick growth of hair

Gopal	One who looks after the cows; cowherd
Shyam Sundar	Shyam means light bluish shade; Sundar means beautiful Krishna had a light bluish complexion; Shyam and Shyam Sundar are his names meaning the Charming one
Ghanshyam	Ghan means cloud; Light bluish like the cloud;
Govinda	Giver of all pleasures; As per Reg Veda: It means one who regained the earth; the finder of the cows; it also implies one who can be known only through the knowledge of Vedas
Chakradhar	One who wields the Sudarshan Chakra, the sharp revolving disc that he used to sport on his index finger
Achyut	The infallible one
Mohan	One who compels attention and admiration;
Narottam	Nar means male jiva, Uttam means great or superior; it means great amongst men;
Purshottam	Purusha means male jiva and Uttam is great; it implies great amongst men; Purusha is used to connote the God as well
Vaasudeva	The Deity of Vrishni clan; Krishna had Godlike qualities, Vrishni his kinsmen called him Vaasudeva; it also implies son of Vasudeva; Vasu is derived from root word Vasudha that means earth and Deva means God, hence, Vassudeva stands for the Lord of the earth;
Devkinandan	Devki's son; Nandan means the son; Devki was Krishna's mother;

Nand Kishore name	Nand Lal aka Nand Baba was Krishna's foster father; the implies one who was dear to Nand or Nand's child;
Yashoda Nandan	Son of Yashoda; Yashoda was Krishna's foster mother;
Govardhandhari on	One who held Goverdhan hillock; Krishna raised the hillock his little finger and kept it there for seven days to protect the people from incessant rain.
Giridhari	Gir denotes a mountain and Dhari is one who holds it;
Kanhiya and Kanha	Pet names of Krishna
Gopi Vallabh and Gopinath	The Lord of Gopis; the girls of the Braj were called Gopis;
Parthasarthy	One who was the charioteer of Partha aka Arjuna
Bansidhar and Murali Manohar	Both the words Bansi and Murali connote a flute; Bansidhar means one who held the flute on his lips; played on flute: Manohar means melodious; one who wins the heart; Murli Manohar connotes one who wins the heart through the melody of his flute;
Radhe Shyam	Krishna of Radha;
Radha Raman	Lord of Radha;
Brajnath	Lord of Braj; Mathura, Gokul, Vrindavan area are called Braj
Bihari and Braj Bihari	One who wanders in Braj; Braj is the name of area near Mathura
Banke Bihari	Pet name due to Krishna's wandering in Braj
Janaardan	Benefactor of all human beings, liberator of men

Arjuna's other names and their meanings

Gudakesa	Gudaka is sleep. Gudakesa means one who conquers sleep
Partha	Son of Pratha or Pritha
Bharata	Descendent of King Bharat
Kaunteya	Son of Kunti
Parantapa	Scorcher of foes
Savyasachi	One who can use both his hands equally effectively; Arjuna could do this. He could hold his Bow in either hand and fire the arrows equally effectively;

Annex 2: Ever Smiling Krishna

Krishna of *Mahabharata* was a man in flesh and blood like us. In Hindu ethos, he is the most revered God. He is credited with perfection in all the sixteen possible arts or skills that one can possess (*Solah Kala Sampann*). He had an enchanting personality that compelled both admiration and devotion. In *Mahabharata* he was the most dynamic character and the hero. I am more comfortable treating him as a man rather than God, for then I can identify with him better. Stories of his life and deeds greatly influenced me into accepting him as an incarnation, but I can't write an objective critique if I treated him as anyone other than our kind; and certainly not the God.

We begin with Krishna the man.

Personality of Krishna

A unique feature about his personality that rings a bell was his ever-smiling face. It appears that practically nothing upset him. He was too intelligent, his taking the call, analysis and sizing up the situation, all in one go, was in a flash of lightening. He always seemed to have enough lead to plan his strategy. His wisdom gave him time to reserve his response for an appropriate opportunity. He instantly decided to leave Mathura for Dwarka without the slightest rancour.

His immense empathy, magnanimity and forbearance helped him to control his temper and stay smiling.

The other gifted feature of his personality was his detached and aloof demeanor. Yet, he managed to connect fast and offer a proper response at the right time. These attributes gave him a capacity to take matters in his stride and do his duty (*karma*) in a decisive manner. He responded with well considered decisive action and never had to react. There was no re-do in his case.

He was a spiritual master. He practiced all the attributes that he talked about. He had no malice; no vengeance. He truly performed pure *karma* for he was always at peace with himself and never bothered about the results of his actions. There was no element of fear and no question of favour or any injustice in his actions. He managed to retain his one to one relationship, even when the adversary knew him to be the cause of his own loss, injury or failure. His dialogue with Bhishma *Pitamah* when he was in extreme agony lying on a bed of arrows is a candid testimony of the trust he commanded in

his relationships. Though he was truly the cause of his suffering and he knew it as well, yet, it was Bhishma who was apologetic.

His knowledge of law of nature, human behaviour and propriety were great assets that lent conviction and credence to his thought and action. Little surprise, he likened the life to a stage play, where, when one act was over it was curtains; and there was no point in looking back or guessing the next act. With ease he explained to Arjuna that death was only an intermission or even less than that, just like changing soiled clothes.

There is no way we can know the God; much less the complete God. Irrespective of

whether Krishna was an incarnation of God or not, a reading of his life story makes one accept that he was a super-human being. From his childhood he faced extremely difficult situations that a prince would normally not encounter, but he not only faced the same boldly and squarely but managed these in a manner that made it look easy.

He went through the process of upbringing like any other child of his town. He studied at the *ashram* of his two teachers (*gurus*) Sandipani and Ghora Angirasa. He evolved from a child prodigy to a multifaceted persona with a strong body, clear snd fearless mind, knowledge, courage, and skills beyond human comprehension. His intellect, vision and capacity to dissect situations into its elements, focus on the relevant only, and his commitment to the task helped him achieve such goals that appeared like a miracle. His detached approach made him unworldly, a super human while he always remained like one of the neighbourhood boys.

His guts and capacity to help others coupled with the uniqueness of his detached behaviour made him a crusader. He lived like a common man, freely mixing with one and all but always working for social causes with no ostensible personal interest. Pure *karma* for societal uplift, for the benefit of all, made him a much sought after and loved leader. His prowess was discernible in his actions; he himself never talked about the same. He taught through his actions, never as a preacher and he had no need for expressions like “Didn’t I tell you”?

His psyche was conditioned by an uncluttered mind, conviction for achievement of the goal and pure selfless action. Since he worked against well entrenched social norms, beliefs and vested interests, he created several enemies as well, whom he had to encounter through his life but he was always

at perfect peace with himself. He was always relaxed and that gave him un-creased countenance and a permanent smile. His unceasing actions with single point focus for uplift and development of the society were the purpose of his life. Always fighting like a crusader, and yet at peace appeared to be a dichotomy in his life. This enigma made him an enchanting and much loved personality that compelled unqualified admiration. The perverse could hate him but they could never ignore him.

Myths about his Character and Integrity

In every society, superstitions, beliefs and rituals become accepted norms with age. Hindus too had their quota of these that had a crippling effect. In fact, these caused the decay of the society. The legitimacy of rituals was largely due to their origin in *Karmakand* section of Vedas. Brahmins, the priest class, conducted the rituals and had to be paid a fee for the same. The ceremonies needed fasting, prayers, *yagnas* and other functions like charity and community feasts etc. that the poor could not afford, yet, they performed these out of greed and fear created by the peers and the priests. Brahmins were the beneficiaries and they not only perpetuated they augmented the system. They confused the masses to exploit human weaknesses and fear in order to enhance their affluence and influence.

The rituals misled the masses from real to the virtual. The expenses involved caused a great deal of misery to the poor. It created a feeling of helplessness and that caused considerable societal unrest. Respected scholars were usually orthodox and they took Vedas to be the God's words. Anything against the same was considered blasphemy hence, they too did not oppose the rituals. Krishna however, strongly condemned the same. In the process, he jolted the societal psyche and created influential critics for he threatened their influence and prestige by his revolutionary ideas. They therefore, not only opposed him but went further even to denigrate him for his unorthodox ideas and methods with a view to create doubts about the same.

Besides Brahmins and scholars, elders of the society who were weighted down by customs and traditions became skeptical. They condemned his radical ideas and unconventional methods like stopping the annual *sacrifice* and *yagna* to please Lord Indra and similar ceremonies; and offerings to various gods which was cumbersome and very expensive. The Brahmins lost no opportunity to instigate the masses against his crusade for spread of spirituality and his down-playing of entrenched beliefs and rituals.

Both the scholars and Brahmins of his period were very powerful. In order to tame Krishna they picked on some aspects of his life to denigrate him. Besides the rituals the society had two distinct divisions the Shaivyas and Vaishnavas[189]. Their conflict provided a convenient lever. The Shaivyas started believing that he was augmenting the influence of Vaishnavas, their nemesis and hence, he had to be opposed.

In present times, some seminar friendly pseudo intellectuals, claiming to be standard bearers of progressive movements, reforms and modernism, for purely populist and sometimes commercial and political reasons have used language and illogic to mock at him and criticise him. To be polite and say the least, this does no credit either to them or to the age old Hindu Philosophy. The pity is that by criticising him who was widely accepted as a complete God, they claim credit for being revolutionaries but in truth they criticise a fellow revolutionary of his period? Despite such critics the *ISKCON* movement became an international success because Krishna's magnetic personality inspired compulsive admiration.

We will discuss some of these issues which have been raised from time to time and we have tried to bring out the facts in the true perspective.

Played with women through *Raas Leela* and he had 16000 Wives

Raas Leela

Krishna with the help of Radha started the practice of *Raas Leela*, a community dance, jointly performed by women and men of all classes and ages at Gokul that later spread to Mathura, Vrindavan and adjoining areas. There were two reasons for the introduction of *Raas Leela*. The first one was that the position of women in the society was very low. They were segregated and confined to their homes and hearths. They had no role in community activities. The Brahmins did not allow them to study Vedas, other scriptures or participate in *yagnas* and religious ceremonies. It was a back door method of emancipation of the women folk. Playing and dancing together not only improved the social interaction, connectivity and free discourse, it created a new value scale for the community that accepted the girls and women folk as equals.

Radha was a dynamic lady; the leader amongst the women folk at Gokul. She was about 12 years elder to Krishna and was his aunt (*mami*) in relation. She was very fond of him since his infancy. He used her resourcefulness to start *Raas Leela* which became a popular community activity. All the people of the

town including men, women, children, young and old participated in *Raas Leela*. Even now, at the time of *Janamashtmi* (Krishna's birthday) it is still performed in Mathura region.

The second reason for *Raas Leela* was that when Kansa, the King of Mathura, ordered all milk and milk products (from Gokul and nearby towns) to be sent to Mathura, the elders agreed to comply. Krishna (ten years old then) objected but he was overruled by them. The elders were afraid of Kansa's atrocities and it was considered a price they had to pay for buying peace with him. This action deprived the local children of milk and its products which was their staple diet.

Krishna, Balarama and their friends decided to challenge Kansa. Krishna thought of seeking the help of women folk for they could start a whispering compaign in each household. He did that through *Raas Leela*. Radha's leadership helped him in the matter. Finally, due to their pressure the supply of milk and milk products to Mathura was stopped. Hence, *Raas Leela* could not have been caused by lust or any other reason perceived by the critics.

It is true that Krishna was much loved by all including women of Vrindavan and Gokul. Both the girls and boys were very fond of his pranks and playing on the flute and dance etc., but more than that, they were in awe due to his super human feats.

Krishna left Gokul for Mathura when he was 10 - 11 years old. What kind of a lust could one associate at that age except in the minds of the perverse?

His 16000 Wives

Krishna in fact had 16,118 queens. As per recorded history and legends, in earlier times kings had a number of queens. However, 16,000 is a very large number. There is a story about how he got so many queens. In fact, he had 18 queens, two principal queens Rukmani and Satyabhama and sixteen other queens.

A demon king by the name Bhomasur used to attack Mathura at will and was a nuisance for the Yadavas and nearby small states. Kansa had kept him at bay but after his death he again started troubling Mathura. Krishna, took over the reins after Kansa's death and had to deal with him.

Krishna had to face a fierce attack by him. He drove him back to his kingdom and killed him. He freed all the prisoners including the kings who were imprisoned by him. He found that Bhomasur had captured and forcibly kept

16,100 young girls belonging to various kingdoms (all relatives of kings who were defeated by him). The girls, when freed, faced the problem of rejection by their families out of shame. They did not have a place to go as no one would have married them. Krishna therefore, married them all and made them his queens. Apparently, this was not done out of any lust but was done by way of setting an example. It was his way of enlightening a perverted mindset that rejected a girl who was raped or forcibly captured by an evil character. In fact, in India even in the 21st century such a mindset is prevalent.

There are stories about how nicely Krishna treated all his queens. I will have to skip the same. In one sentence the practice of Yoga was his tool. In the twentieth century Lahiri Mahashay of Varanasi and various other practitioners of yoga demonstrated that through yoga one could be present at multiple places at the same time. Krishna must have employed similar yogic tools to look after his queens.

He divided the Society by his concept of *Chaturvarnayaam* System

Krishna introduced the *Chaturvarnayaam* system in the society with a view to distribute the work on a qualitative basis. He did not divide the society on the basis of one's birth. He has been very categorical in stating that even a Shudra (low caste), if he does all those things that a Brahmin is expected to do, was entitled to the same treatment as a Brahmin. It was akin to modern day Aptitude testing and skill development; right man for every job.

The beauty of the human race lies in its variety. The same applies to Nature as well, but we will confine ourselves to the former. It is an accepted fact that everyone can perform some tasks much better than other tasks and other people. Today we lay much emphasis on specialisation? Each person is unique, not only in appearance and thumb impressions and finger prints, but from within as well. One makes a brilliant R&D scholar; another makes an equally brilliant salesman or sportsman. These skills are not interchangeable, hence, the need for study of skills and aptitude becomes very important for proper placement and training of personnel for optimum results. The *Chaturvarnayaam* system was an effort to select the most suitable person for every job for best efficiency.

In *Chaturvarnayaam* system he made a fourfold classification of the society. These were: 1. Brahmins: spiritual people with high intellect to act as moral guides and teachers (*gurus*) for the society so that everyone conducted his life as per Vedic wisdom; 2. Kshatriya: people who were generous, intelligent, energetic, dynamic, resourceful, full of determination and courage and with a

flair for leadership who could act as the rulers; 3. Vaishya: Men who were clever, patient, persuasive, good at managing businesses, accounts, resources and administrative support team; 4. Shudra: Those who were lazy, ignorant, deficient in initiative and avoided hard work and needed supervision. They made the foot soldiers and they assisted the other three categories.

There was no regimentation in above categories and distribution of work. Anyone from one category could graduate to higher categories; where he was accorded the same position and respect that a member in that category commanded. There are a number of examples of Kshatriyas and even Shudras becoming saints and *gurus* and were given exalted positions.

Vishwamitra and his grand-nephew Parushram were Kshatriya. Vishwamitra was the son of King Gadhi. His grand-nephew Parushram (who killed Sahashtrabahu a demon) was believed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Both enjoyed great respect that venerable Brahmin sages of their time commanded. It was for this reason that when Vishwamitra asked King Dashrath, to send his sons Rama and Lakshman with him to his *ashram* to provide security to him and other sages against the demons who bothered them, much against his wish he could not refuse him.

Baalmeeki (aka Vaalmiki) was a Shudra and a robber. He became a great Sanskrit scholar and much revered sage. He wrote 'Ramayana', the original Sanskrit legend describing the story of Lord Rama. How many critics of *Varnayaam* system know that Chandragupta Mauraya and Ashoka the great were from Shudra category? The legendry Brahmin *Guru* Chanakya aka Kautilya (author of '*Arthshashtra'*) chose Chandragupta as a child prodigy and trained him to become a great King?

The entire Gita is based upon the premise of oneness of the society, that no one is big, no one is small; and everyone carries the same infinitesimal element of God within; and was therefore equal and the same. One, who sees the same God in all individuals as within himself, becomes an evolved person. On reading Gita, none, except the perverse could charge him for dividing the society.

He was a Coward who ran away from the Battle field and was called *Runchor*[190]

Jarasandh having been defeated by Krishna 17 times was fuming furious. He had vowed to imprison him and kill him. He had to avenge the killing of Kansa who was married to two of his daughters. He struck a deal with Kaalyavan[191],

who was of Greek origin whose ancestors had settled in Punjab, to attack Mathura jointly. Kaalyavan had to attack from the west and he himself, from the east. He thought that Krishna with depleted resources will not be able to withstand the onslaught and would be defeated. His plan was to bring him to his palace at Magadh to insult him and then kill him in presence of his daughters.

When the attack took place Mathura was ill prepared. It was surrounded from all sides. King Ugrasen (Krishna's maternal grand father) held a meeting of senior Yadava chiefs to discuss the situation. One Yadava chief by the name Vikadru said that Jarasandh's enmity was with Krishna and incase he left Mathura, he would certainly go after him and would spare Mathura. Krishna was present in the meeting. He bowed his head in agreement and he discreetly followed this strategy.

The next day when Krishna came out for the battle, Jarasandh ordered his forces to encircle him, but he dodged them and slipped out along with Balarama and a few selected people and marched south. Jarasandh chased him but he had vanished in the forest. After chasing him for some distance Jarasandh withdrew. But Kaalyavan pursued him and he was eventually killed by Krishna. At a later date Jarasandh was also killed by Bheem through a clever strategy devised by Krishna.

As was anticipated by Yadavas of Mathura, when Jarasandha did not find Krishna, he went back without disturbing them.

Krishna reached Dwarka and set up his kingdom there. In no time the same became a much bigger and prosperous kingdom than the one he had left behind at Mathura. Several Yadava chiefs from Mathura migrated to Dwarka. They apologised and were given respectable positions in his kingdom. Later he invited his grandfather Ugrasen to be the King at Dwarka and he too moved to Dwarka from Mathura.

Some critics in their wisdom or due to lack of it called him a coward for running away from the battle field and used the sobriquet *Runchor* for him. For Krishna it was a tactical withdrawal, a part of his strategy to beat Jarasandh. He never attached his prestige to petty issues. His goal was to save Mathura from the attackers and he achieved the same. There was no point in showing bravery with half fed, ill equipped, unwilling army and polity. He was not bothered about what some people thought of him; he knew none ever wins an argument with the ignorant. The goal was supreme and he achieved the same without causing any bloodshed.

Vikadru and other Yadava chiefs, who wanted him to leave Mathura, owed their positions to Krishna, for he had appointed them to their positions after he killed Kansa and he managed the affairs of the Mathura kingdom. Ugrasen, his maternal grandfather was the original king who was displaced and imprisioned by his son Kansa. Out of respect for him he re-established him as the king but managed the administration on his behalf. Later he did the same at Dwarka and made him (Ugrasen) the king. To his credit he held no grudge against any of the Yadava chiefs and infact he appointed some of them in his Dwarka administration.

He arranged the killing of Kaurava's Stalwarts by deceit

We have already narrated the killing of Kaurava and their prominent associates in Annexure I; hence there would be little purpose in recounting the same. Truly he was instrumental in the killing of several Kaurava's invincible Generals who could not be defeated much less killed by Pandava on their own. To advise Pandava was Krishna's duty that he performed it faithfully and his strategy helped them.

Historicity & Age of Krishna

Based upon the study of astronomical data given in the Hindu texts, various scholars have worked out the following data in respect of the life of Krishna:

- Krishna was born at the midnight of July 19/20, 3228 BC. It was the eighth day of the dark half of the month of *Shravan* as per Hindu calendar.
- He lived at Gokul till the age of 3 years.
- From the age of 3 to 6 years he was at Vrindavan.
- From age 6 to 10 years he was at Nandgram.
- From age 11 to 28 years he lived at Mathura.
- From age of 28, he lived at Dwarka till his death at the age of 126 years.
- The battle of *Kurukshetra* (*Mahabharata*) was fought in 3138 BC. He was then 90 years old.
- He left his human body on February 18, 3102 BC.

ChaandogyaUpanishad mentions Krishna as a pupil of Ghora Angirasa and his teachings find echo in Gita. Patanjali (3rd century BC) in his *Mahabhashya* called Him Vaasudev Bhagavat. Magasthenes in his records mentions about

the two great cities of Mathura and Krsnapura. Similarly, Buddhist texts dating to 4th century BC mention about Vaasudeva[192] cult. Several foreign travellers have recorded that Krishna was worshipped as the God of the Gods.

There are various inscriptions on stones found in ruins of temples and other buildings that mention names of Krishna and others like brother Baldeva (another name of Balarama), Radha, Yashoda, Nanda, Devki and Vasudev. Hence, there is sufficient recorded material to establish the historicity of Krishna, his parentage, relations and even location of Mathura as his place. Incidentally, these recordings are exactly in line with the details given in various Hindu texts.

How Krishna became God

I have already used so many adjectives for Krishna and I do not wish to make the list longer. In Hindu scriptures the list of his qualities are endless and he is known by several names. I have tried to treat Krishna as a man in spite of his being accepted as an incarnation. I feel probably we can learn something from our kind that we fail to learn from gods and prophets? Anyway let us consider some of his uncommon deeds that made him Godlike. After all no one knows what God is like; none has seen him and it is all a matter of faith.

Krishna was a person of extraordinary intellect and knowledge. From very early age he used to talk to his kinsmen known as *Satvata* about matters of spirituality and code of righteous conduct that was called *Bhagvata* (literally meaning 'the words of God')[193]. His kinsmen started calling him as *Bhagvaan* (a.k.a. *Bhagwaan*) or the Supreme God. He was called Vaasudev Bhagavat by Patanjali. This was the beginning of his being considered as an incarnation of God by his kinsmen.

The fact is that he was considered to be a superhuman right from his childhood.

Anything that confounds rational human thinking becomes a miracle. If one performs such acts repeatedly in public and none has any doubts about the act then the person performing the same is considered superhuman or godlike. Some of the miracles performed by Krishna as per scriptures are listed below:

- Before he was even 3 years old he killed Putna, Sakatasura and Trinivarta demons.

- Between 3-6 years of age: He killed demons Bakasura, Aghasura, Dhenuka, Keshi, Byoma, Aristha and Balarama killed Pralamba another demon.
- Between 7-10 years of age: He lifted Govardhan hillock on a single finger and kept it there for 7 days, till Lord Indra who was pouring incessant rain stopped his mischief and he came down and apologised to him.
- Lord Brahma who tried to test Krishna's power was taught a lesson and had to apologise to him
- At the wrestling match arranged by Kansa at Mathura, Krishna then 11, first killed a powerful Elephant[194] then he killed demon wrestler Mustika; next he killed Kansa; and Balarama killed his eight brothers.

He killed so many other demons and did miracles. *Srimad Bhagavatam* lists several of his deeds. I have mentioned only a few of these. The issue at hand is one of incarnation; and Krishna's actions were way beyond normal human deeds.

Our biggest problem is that we easily get attracted by trivialities, like how can God be born as a normal human being; why anyone who is God should submit to birth like ordinary human being and go through all the worldly suffering and death etc.?

What God can do or does, is his business; we know nothing about him, yet we persist with conjectures and skepticism. Our problem is that we refuse to accept that there can be things beyond our comprehension and start trying to measure one's actions as per our scale, a foot rule, which is irrelevant for measuring cosmic distances where even light year appears to be a very small unit.

A plausible explanation for the above dilemma is that, at times, all that the creator does, is to raise one of us to a higher level for a cause and he starts looking God-like. His objective is to maintain a balance in his creation. Whenever, he finds the same to be going out of control, he takes suitable visible action. Krishna never claimed himself to be God or his incarnation except to Arjuna whom he showed his *Viraat Roop* and stated that he indeed was the God and gave enough evidence of the same. Academically, one can think that being God, he could surely find another way of creating conviction in the mind of Arjuna instead of showing his *Viraat Roop*. But he did so? Perhaps he wanted to create greater love and devotion for God in his mind.

May be his purpose of showing his *Viraat Roop* to Arjuna was different and much deeper, which we with our limitations can't figure out? After all we are like bacteria cells or nano-elements in the total creation. Can such an element, ever believe that a man could lift a weight of even 10 kgs. But he can lift much more?

The spinoff of his *Viraat Roop* and his talks about the opulence of the creator and his powers was that besides Arjuna, Dhritrashtra also knew this truth through Sanjay who was blessed with *Divya Drishti*[195]. Gandhari took advantage of the same. After the war she went to the battle field and cried on seeing her sons and others from Kauravas' side lying dead. It was a ghastly scene and she was disconsolate. Krishna went to console her. She charged him for having brought misery to her and shouted at him. She cursed him saying that like he had annihilated the Kaurava clan the Yadava clan too will be totally annihilated. Krishna bowed his head in acceptance; but he did recount all the evil deeds of her sons. She heard him patiently but said that since, he himself was the God, he was the one who poisoned their intellect and was responsible for their evil deeds hence, it was all his doing. His sons did nothing.

Krishna's mission was to uplift the society spiritually. He provided the knowledge and the required tools and gave them a code of conduct. Like a *Guru* (teacher) he talked of ethical value scale, righteous conduct and salvation, in Gita. 'Salvation' was perhaps thrown in as a bonus. The emphasis was on selfless *karma* and service to the society, control of senses, giving up false pride and sense of doer-ship and surrender of desire and anxiety for the results of one's actions.

In a subtle manner he described the *karma* as the seed for genesis of one's destiny. In fact, he made it simple by telling us to forget about everything else but to concentrate just upon selfless action. Perhaps he chose to talk to Arjuna the details about himself and his powers to remind the humankind of their own miniscule, pinhead like existence on the Atlas of creation. Yet, instead of doing what we ought to do, we worry no end with conjectures about that we know nothing about, like a blind man in a dark room, searching for a needle in a hay stack. He made it clear that God was nothing but selfless *karma* and service to the society.

Even if we ignore all his other deeds and power, including his *Viraat-Roop*, what he talked in Gita is the nectar of pure wisdom that an army of scholars have been trying to decipher for 5000 years, yet, none can claim to have fully

understood its true meaning. It is way beyond the elasticity of stretched human imagination. And this makes Krishna the God.

We all, sometime or the other try to thrust our ideas and will on others: on our relations and even on our children but not Krishna. Like our inner spirit he only advised Arjuna and left him to take his decision. Even extremely loving parents are not so magnanimous to grant absolutely unfettered freedom to their own children. Only the God can do it. This aptly defines the God. Doesn't Krishna stand the test?

According to Hindu texts there are six distinguishing qualities of God. These are *Sampoorna Aishwarya* (Total Wealth that includes not only kingdom and riches but health, happiness and harmony); *Yash* (Fame); *Shree* (Shree is another name of goddess Luxmi; it connotes not only a beautiful wife but all-round competence and riches); *Dharma* (doing one's duties righteously); *Vairagya* (total non-attachment as distinct from renunciation); *Gyaan ka Bhandaar* (store house of total knowledge). Krishna was endowed with all these six assets and that makes him the God.

Krishna said that God was Eternal, Shapeless, Formless, Omni Present, Pure Energy i.e. Impersonal God; yet he favoured *Bhakti*-yoga and unswerving devotion to a Personal God. Isn't this a contradiction? No!

Throughout Gita, Krishna talked of *Gyaan*-yoga (seeking Truth through knowledge)

and *Nirgun Brahman* (Impersonal God). All his adjectives and description lead one to believe that God was nothing but pure energy. But when it came to giving a final advice to Arjuna he advised him to follow *Bhakti*-yoga and devotion to *Sagun Brahman* (Personal God[196]) or God with a form like a human being. This is indeed baffling but he explained the matter. He was criticised for contradictions and duplicity. Interestingly, he always anticipated the reactions and gave convincing reasoning for his stand. Let us consider an example to understand this.

Krishna told Arjuna that the knowledge of Vedas was given by him to Brahma which he later told to the Sun God. In Gita he asked him to ignore the flowery language of Vedas and all the rituals recommended in the same. Isn't this a contradiction? Most managers in a Corporate House insist upon pursuing their ideas even when these do not yield the desired results? Not Krishna; he went to the extent of suggesting discarding the rituals given in Vedas. From this it becomes clear that he didn't nurse any false prestige and was willing to adjust

to the changed circumstances. The need of the time differed from the one, when the knowledge of Vedas was earlier given by him. He was bold enough to accept the ground realities and he made a strategic correction. Was there any contradiction in his statement?

He said that both *Gyaan*-yoga and *Bhakti*-yoga led to the same destination. The rituals were an avoidable diversion that could be dispensed with. Ritual dwarfed the essence of the message of spirituality and created ego, lust and greed in the society.

As regards Impersonal and Personal Gods the former is pure knowledge; entirely study and cold reasoning based. The latter, needs identification with a body and personal experience. Krishna accepted that giving up attachment to one's body and his identification with the same is not easy. One is always comfortable in dealing with a form like his own. One is uneasy in dealing with an abstract thing in a vacuum where he can't see or visualise anything. It creates a feeling of loneliness that is depressing. Therefore, initially true devotion would be possible only if one deals with a form like a human being. This leads to the concept of Personal God. Once a person achieves an intimate identification with his God he starts experiencing his presence all the time; and with practise over time the need for a form vanishes.

Krishna frequently used the words: God, Yoga, Devotion, and Surrender. He said that God was nothing but Yoga; and Yoga was a discipline, a skilled *karma.* Devotion is giving up external attachments and achieving focus on selfless service. Surrender is giving up the anxiety for the results of one's actions. These need intense inner search. One is a slave to his own identity and ego. Surrender needs diluting one's identity and gradually getting rid of the same. Not easy! One is attached to his own self and he believes that if his identity is lost then there is nothing left to work for.

Krishna said that we all cling to an imaginary and ephemeral identity. One, who does selfless work forgetting identification with the body, he can discover his true identity as the *atman* (soul). This needs great patience. He described it in various ways but he implied that ego generated actions) should be replaced by *dharma* for success in life.

Karma is selfless action and *dharma* is selfless action for rendering service. Devotion is unconditional selfless service to all beings with total detachment i.e. not for any gain. Hence, God and everything associated with him boils down to selfless service.

Krishna's exhortations like "surrender unto Me" or "take refuge in Me" are all meant to be an offer of a pillar of support. One who tries to give up his identity and focuses on pure action would easily get frustrated and lose his way. He would surely need a support to rest his shoulders sometime or the other. It is for this reason he offers himself to be our pillar of support. One, who perseves in his pursuit (of selfless action), learns to become his own support. He then does not need an external pillar of support. This explains how pure *karma* is our true God. It gives us the self-belief to stand on our own.

A house-holder who leads a worldly life and has a family to look after, cannot easily take to Impersonal God for that needs concentrated attention for long hours and a degree of renunciation. He can't easily give up the attachment with his near and dear ones and his deep-seated concept of God and incarnations. This would need giving up the age old hereditary belief system. Even if someone tries, it will be a very slow and frustrating process. It was therefore, best for him to practise *Bhakti*-yoga and devotion to *Sagun Brahman*. Those who follow his advice sincerely, they gradually realise his true intent and start advancing on the path of self-dependence.

Krishna's multi-faceted life and thought defy description. What I have presented is only a keyhole view. ISKCON library or Ram Krishna Mission can provide books about his life. But for a detailed knowledge one has to study *Srimad Bhagavatam* and Gita and unquestioningly reflect upon the same.

Similarity in the Messages of Gita & Bible: (Krishna and Jesus)

Jesus like Krishna is another historical figure[197] who inspires admiration and love. In his case his crucifixion became a unique factor that compels a sense of gratitude, love and devotion. It was a supreme sacrifice for a noble cause (doing good to the society). His resurrection was a miracle that added to his glory.

Krishna and Jesus were 3200 years apart but in terms of history they could be considered to be contemporary. As would be natural they had some differences in their personalities and lives. We would consider some of the dissimilarities before we look into the similarities.

The first discordant note is in respect of their ages. Whereas, Krishna lived to a decent 126 years (born 3228 BC died 3102 BC), Jesus was crucified when he was only 33 (born 4 BC died 30 AD). His resurrection was unique with no parallel in history. A distinct difference in their approaches is that, whereas Jesus preached after he was baptized; Krishna never preached for the sake of

preaching, he relied upon practising a dynamic and righteous life to set examples for others to follow. Jesus had his disciples; Krishna had his friends and close associates to disseminate his ideas. Jesus allowed his enemies to crucify him. Krishna killed or defeated his enemies and died due to an accident.

Jesus was a human being like Krishna and us all. In Bible it has been repeatedly mentioned that he was the only son of the Holy Father. He himself mentioned this on several occasions, yet, he behaved like a common man. His suffering and painful crucifixion was indeed a supreme price he paid for the forgiveness of the sinners. Whatever else may have been Holy Father's reasons it demonstrates his extreme love for his creation on the earth that he chose to sacrifice his only son for the sins of the human beings.

In Christian theology Jesus has been accepted as one of the Trinity including Holy Father and Holy Spirit[198] who create and govern the creation. Jesus was an accepted incarnation of God and I seek the forgiveness of believers, for treating him like a common man as I did in case of Krishna. Unlike Krishna, who had an ever smiling face Jesus had a sombre countenance, full of pathos. I have yet to see a smiling portrait of him; I would, though, much love to see one. However, there are striking similarities in their personalities, lives and teachings. We would consider some of these as we progress.

Birth & Early Childhood

We begin with their names. Isn't it a bit strange coincidence that their names were similar? Christ[199] is often pronounced as Krisht or Chris and Krishna as Krish or Crish. One was a Yahudah or Yahudi and the other was a Yadava or Yadu.

Both were born under difficult circumstances. Jesus was born in a manger. King Herod of Palestine had an advance warning that a child was about to take birth who would kill him. He therefore, started killing all the new born. Likewise, Kansa too had a warning that the eighth child of his sister Devki and brother-in-law Vasudev would kill him. He therefore, imprisoned them and started killing all their children as soon as they were born.

Both Krishna and Jesus had to be rescued. Krishna was taken by his father Vasudev, in a basket from Mathura prison to his friend Nand Baba's place at Gokul in a dark and raining monsoon night and his new born girl was brought back to Mathura as a substitute child to be killed by Kansa.

Christ had to be taken to Goshen in Egypt. At the time of his birth a massacre took place in Bethlehem and Jerusalem (11 miles apart) and it was a great problem to sneak him out.

Krishna returned to Mathura when he was about 11 years old. Christ returned to Nazareth when he was about seven. However, Herod had died when Jesus was just over one year old. He was succeeded by his son Archelaus who was soon deposed by the Romans who unleashed a reign of terror.

Christ joined the family trade of carpentry. In his early years he did not perform any miracles. In fact, little is known about his early life. He was looked down by the rich with contempt. As the story goes once they tried to throw him down from a cliff. He had to leave the town of Nazareth twice.

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist at the age of 30 in the River Jordan. As he came out of water an angel appeared and announced that he was the son of God who sent him with a mission. He immediately went into wilderness where he was chased by beasts and Satan. He fasted, meditated and prayed for forty days. That made him the supreme spiritual master and thereafter he conquered the people with his radical ideas, thoughts and deeds. Unlike Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon and others he neither had money, power, position, arms or an army.

Krishna, on the other hand, overawed the people by his superhuman feats and miracles right from his infancy. Since he was from a Royal family (Nand Baba was the king of Gokul), he enjoyed respect.

Their Ideas about Existing Social Beliefs

On Righteousness

They were born at a time when righteousness was on decline in their lands. Both were radical in their approach with revolutionary ideas about righteousness. In Gita, Krishna laid emphasis on righteous conduct, humility, modesty, simplicity, non-violence and giving up the idea of ownership etc.

Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptize him with the following words: “It is becoming for us to fulfill all righteousness”.

In Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

On Rituals

Krishna was clear that the pursuit of rituals was the cause of much of the ills of the society. He believed, that rituals created intellectual ineptitude for these changed the entire perspective; and an element of insecurity developed that created fanaticism. Those who followed the rituals (the *Karmakaand* of Veda), lose the spirit, their own instinct and initiative; and their fanaticism turns into fatalism.

People with a mindset leaning towards fanaticism, are usually mistaken to have an offensive mindset. On the contrary, they have a purely defensive and mechanical behaviour usually devoid of purpose and they lack self-belief. No one ever gained by it (fanaticism) and none was likely to benefit from it in future. It only sows the seeds of self-destruction.

Jesus shared his views and criticised the existing entrenched practices that followed the literal text rather than the spirit. He felt that these were promoted by the priest class to advance their own primacy. Religion was reduced to orthodox ceremonies, rituals, fasting and literally following the Sabbath etc. Jesus had said that "Sabbath was made for Man and not the Man for Sabbath."

Jesus in fact lost his life at the hands of orthodox priest class who feared his increasing power and influence over the people. They anticipated a threat to their authority from him.

Both of Krishna and Jesus laid great emphasis upon cleansing the mind and the heart and realisation of the 'self'. Both targeted to raise the society to a higher level of existence by getting rid of their greed, jealousy, anger and selfishness. They had a purpose, a mission in life that most of us lack.

On Family Attachment

Krishna was clear about the primacy of one's duties (*dharma*). He considered *dharma* to be the very basis of one's birth and existence. This comes out clear in his last dialogue with Radha before he left for Mathura. He said that he would never return to Vrindavan area and told her that their relationship had reached a full stop. Radha was morose; he consoled her and told her that both of them had to move on in life and perform their respective duties (*dharma*). In all his relationships including with his parents, he could discriminate between his emotions and duty. He remained unattached and aloof all the time. Though he greatly loved Radha but after he left for Mathura he never met her again in his life.

Likewise, Jesus said: “Who is my mother? And who is my brethren?” “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

On Money and Rich

A rich man went to Jesus and said that he had followed all the commandments. Jesus replied to him, “Yet you lack though one thing: sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven.” Jesus saw that the rich man was sorrowful and very uncomfortable. He said: “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God? For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich to enter the kingdom of the God.”

Jesus was a saint, he felt that the rich were arrogant; they were unfair and exploited the poor. He therefore, condemned the rich and went a step further in criticising wealth creation for the same caused greed.

Krishna was a prince and a worldly man. He was aware of the need of hierarchal order in the society. He believed one’s position in the society and his wealth etc were the result of his deeds and accumulated *karma*. He therefore, focused on how to utilise the wealth and resources for the benefit of the society. He dwelt on the fact that wealth, position and worldly possessions were transitory and could be lost as fast as these were gained. He highlighted that wealth created desire and greed that caused restlessness; it had no relationship with happiness. Happiness was not a product and it couldn’t be bought with money. He felt it was a resource that one achieves through his accumulated *karma* and it should be used to help the needy. At the same time he accepted that the rich and those who were in position served as a role model in the society and inspired others to follow them.

On Seeing Everyone with One Eye

Both Krishna and Jesus strongly commended compassion and equanimity as great virtues. Krishna attached great value to treating everyone alike, without any discrimination. He unequivocally said that all in the creation had a miniscule part of the same creator and therefore, all were one and the same, hence, one should treat all as he would like to be treated.

When Jesus said, “love thy neighbour” he meant that we should treat everyone with the same love and respect that we reserve for ourselves or expect from others.

Krishna talked of universal brotherhood "*sarva bhuta hitey ratah*" (to work for the welfare of all) or "*loksangraha*" (to collect all in the world).

Both Krishna and Jesus talked of oneness of the humanity and maintained that service to and welfare of all in the creation was the prime duty of every individual.

On Non-Violence

Both preached non-violence and compassion. Krishna expanded the concept of violence to include denial of independence of thought and action. But at the same time, they felt that fighting for the cause of righteousness and justice was a supreme act, a duty and the same was not violence. Krishna tried his best to prevent *Mahabharata* but once it became a necessity to uphold righteousness and the rule of law and justice, he gave his all to it. On the other hand, Jesus in the war in heaven chases *Satan* to Hell and destroys him ('Harrowing of Hell').

On Release from Bondage

Jesus said: "If you continue in my word; then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." He promised riches in heaven.

Krishna was more forthright and positive; he gave the way that assuredly released one from worldly bondage. The subtle fact that emerges is that both of them viewed worldly existence, the life that we normally live as a bondage, and release from it as the ultimate aim of the human being.

Power of Miracle

Krishna performed so many acts that were miracle like. Some of these have been listed above. However, his emphasis was on being human and a common man. He was from a royal family and normally he would be expected to be reserved, distant or aloof and on a higher pedestal. But he freely mixed with everyone, danced, sang, played on his flute and participated in community functions. Through his involvement and indulgence with the society he wanted to convey the message that all could raise themselves to a higher level.

Jesus too performed many miracles. The Bible is full of stories about his healing the sick and the disabled by his gaze or mere touch. He even raised a dead man (Lazarus) from his grave four days after his death. His resurrection was the greatest miracle of all times.

One of Jesus' disciples had cut the ear of a servant of the high priest; Jesus restored

the same. It appears in the text as: “And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said suffer you thus far; and he touched the ear and healed him.”

On Revelation As God

Jesus on many occasions claimed he was the son of the Holy Father and he displayed his divine powers to the masses. We quote: “Six days later Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, and led them up a high mountain, where they were alone. As they looked on, a change came over Jesus, his face shone like Sun, his clothes became shinning white and Moses and Elijah were talking to him. Peter spoke up and said to Jesus, Master, how good it is that we are here; if you wish we will make three booths for you.” Thereafter there was a blinding bright cloud and an announcement from the Heaven that Jesus indeed was the son of the Holy Father.

When they opened their eyes they saw only Jesus standing there. His disciples just did not know what had happened and out of fear they did not know what to say? Peter somehow summoned his courage and his wits, and he fumbled a few words mentioned above searching to make some sense that he had lost.

Krishna revealed his Divine Form (*Viraat Roop*) to Arjuna. He talked about the opulence and power of God. He also gave a glimpse of the same to Duryodhana who instead of bowing to him tried to arrest him.

On Dissemination of Divine Message

Krishna advised Arjuna to be discreet in giving the message of Gita to people. In fact, he categorised those on whom the same was not to be wasted. Jesus too advised his disciples to exercise caution in spreading his message. Jesus said: “Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn to attack you.”

Both had a number of critics, who for their vested interests wanted to discredit them and undo whatever good they wanted to do for the society.

On Prayers and Service to Society

Krishna made it abundantly clear that selfless action and service to society was not only one’s duty but the best prayer. Both Krishna and Jesus said that service to the society with humble submission and charity without expectation of any return should be the goal of our life. Jesus said: “Not everyone that calls ‘Christ’ Lord, but he, that does the will of the Father, shall enter into the

kingdom of Heaven" and the will of the Father as demonstrated by him was to uplift the society through service.

On Yoga

Krishna extensively talked about Yoga. As per Gita, yoga rovides, one the capacity to perform *karma* skilfully. Yoganand Paramhans has written that the science of yoga, pranayaam and meditation give the knowledge to control the mind and helps in arousing one's consciousness. With practise we learn the relationship between the soul and the body. These facts were known to Jesus and his disciples; and there is enough evidence to surmise they practised the same. Jesus, St. John and St. Paul had the power to switch life currents like a trained exponent of *Kriyayoga*. However, unlike Gita, there is no direct mention of yoga in Bible though similar practices and experiences have been described.

Yogic exercises particularly Kriyayoga give one the capacity to levitate for long periods. Yoganand[200] narrated several stories about his contemporary Swamis (monks) who could levitate and maintain themselves in a state of *Samadhi*[201] for long periods. He has also mentioned about a yogi's capacity to be concurrently present at different places at the same time. However, I must admit, I have not found such references in the Bible.

Swami Kriyananda, an American disciple of Yoganand settled in India near Delhi, has mentioned several references akin to Meditation and Samadhi in Bible. In his book 'The New Path: My Life with Paramhans Yoganand' he wrote; "St. Simeon felt that a man who has attained the final degree of perfection is dead; and yet not dead, but infinitely more alive in God. He is inactive and at rest, as one who has come to the end of all actions of his own. He is without thought, as he becomes one with Him who is above all thought."

Of St. Simeon's experience of Samadhi, his disciple Nicetas Stathos wrote that once, while offering a prayer to God he was drawn into intimate converse with him and he had a vision: "Behold, the atmosphere began to shine with his soul …Quite outside himself, as he gazed with his whole soul at this light that appeared to him, it increased bit by bit and he felt himself taken, with his whole body away from the things of earth." There were several other similar references that I have skipped.

The processes of levitation, walking above ground in air, on water and on fire are all possible through yoga. Bible mentions about Jesus walking on water. When Peter questioned him, he said that he too could do the same, if he had

absolute faith. Peter walked a few steps but started falling and cried for help; Jesus held his hands and protected him*. At another place Jesus presented himself to his disciples in a closed room where the entry was locked and guarded; and no one saw him enter the room.

On Re-birth

Krishna talked of continuity of life and re-birth in detail. According to him the *atman* (soul) is immortal and the cycle of life goes on, with only the bodies keep changing till one achieves Self-realisation or enlightenment when the soul (*atman*) gets merged with Super-Soul (*Paramatman*). There is no direct mention of this in the Bible. However, there are a number of stories in both the Old and New Testaments pertaining to eternal life and rebirth. In John's Book of Gospel there is mention of the significance of Incarnation. He also distinguished between body and spirit. In his book Jesus said, "That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." He also said, "God is spirit; and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." At another place Jesus said, "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail …"

One unique thing about Jesus is that he was aware of his limitations; he recognised the grace and love of the Supreme Father. He always submitted himself entirely unto Him. Jesus said, "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

At another place he said, "The Father is greater than I."

Jesus was a human being with all his emotions that he mostly kept under control. However, when he was being taken for crucifixion in a moment of weakness he identified himself with his body; he lost his sense of who he was, and the mission of his life, and cried out "My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me?" But he soon realised his folly and became peaceful.

Quite frankly, I am not knowledgeable enough to talk about the Holy Koran. However, the Arabic word Islam means 'peace and surrender to the God'. Little, that I have read, the basic teaching of Islam is the same as that of Gita or Bible.

Truly, all religious sects have more or less the same basic tenets. It is superstitions, the rituals and stories narrated by the priests and religious leaders with a view to make their own religion appear superior to other religions that have created all the confusion and animosity. For this reason, it is necessary that we free ourselves from the shackles of rites and rituals and

focus on the basics, that is the very core of the religion. These core values truly are the tenets of spirituality which are the same for all religions.

With my limitations and subjectivity, whatever little I have understood of Gita and Bible and about the lives and deeds of Krishna and Jesus I feel that any comparison between them is irrelevant. God is one, and the same; hence, his teachings have to be the same. All religions accept that there is only one God and he is supreme with no second. Those whom we consider as incarnations are his representatives sent by him for a specific mission. They are bound to differ depending upon the geography, time and the circumstances of the particular society and their mission. Can anyone say with certainty, what is the religion of God?

All religions are manmade and have their subjective deficiencies. Scientists ignore the spirituality part of the religions created by the society. They deal with objects that they can visualise, measure, experiment with and prove. While God and spirituality are not objects, these are subjects.

Note*: Most of the quotes about Bible in this chapter have been taken from Mathews' Book, though the books of Mark, John and Luke too have contributed. We have extensively used Bible published by Readers Digest.*

Annex 3: Inspiration & Acknowledgement

Acknowledging help is the most difficult task for a variety of reasons. In my case the problem becomes more difficult. So many have helped me over a period of time; I am bound to miss out, not some, but many of them. However, I have a duty, that I must perform to the best of my ability and with due apologies to those whom I fail to mention in first person.

My parents introduced me to Krishna the God. My father's gift of the first Gita in Hindi ('Srimad Bhagavad-Gita' by Mr. Jaydayal Goyandka published by Gita Press, Gorakhpur, UP) in the year 1956, when I was a student of B.Sc., did not impress me one bit. I however, I must gratefully concede that it inspired a spirit of enquiry that helped me a great deal in later life. Initially, I got confused and decided it could wait for a later date. Perhaps it was my way of persuading me then that i could even do without reading the book. But I must admit I was always awkwardly influenced by my parent's faith; it bothered me no end. Their faith often infected me and now I can hardly thank them enough for their gift which I didn't appreciate enough then.

I must confess, initially I took Krishna's words in Gita literally and missed the context and the point he was making, to drive home the message to Arjuna. With my conditioned and one-dimensional mind (due to my science, engineering and marketing back-ground), I took his assertions as self-aggrandizement. It never occurred to me that he had no need for it. It took me considerable time but mercifully I could shed my scepticism at a later date.

I would ever be grateful to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada for showing me the light. He introduced me to Krishna, the God, through his book 'Bhagavad-Gita As It Is'. I however, kept on looking for Krishna the man. The struggle continued for a long time.

I was a very studious student and a committed professional engineer. Truly, I was a workaholic with a propensity for trying to achieve perfection in whatever I did. Needless to admit, I mostly failed; but in the process, I reached a level much higher than what could otherwise be doubtfully achieved by me even under the best of circumstances. True, this propensity caused me no end of problems. Then events placed me on the wrong end of destiny. I must confess, on several occasions I greatly benefited from the message of Gita. As a result of this my respect for the book started increasing and I began reading it as a reference text almost routinely.

Here, I must make, yet, another confession; it helped me even in my professional life. Yes; I have a regret; I started reading it rather late in life; and a greater regret is that I didn't do it out of interest or respect for it or because my parents virtually worshipped it like God, I did it, when I felt it might help me sort my problems out.

In India in eighties and nineties the employment scene was by no means rosy. Later part of eighties was a testing time for me. I resigned my job of 30 years with a MNC on a point of principle without arranging an alternative employment. I then realised that young professionals were almost perpetually at the razor's edge, unable to cope with the pressure. Premature burn out was common place. I felt that something had to be done to face the situation boldly; and I wanted to be a part of the solution. The problem was what to do? I decided to write a book based on Gita that would inculcate a discipline and would enable one to gain fortitude.

I realised that one needed a holistic approach, where one could practise the same as a part of his routine. This became the gensis of my essay. I started with intense study. With, considerable thought, continued search, several transformations and revisions 'Bhagavad-Gita And You' started becoming a reality. I sincerely believe it would be of great help to all, particularly to younger generation for success in life with the bonus of happiness that we otherwise keep chasing through life, without much success.

It was under such circumstances I read 'Bhagavad-Gita As it Is' by His Holiness A.C. Bhaktivedanta. In the preface he had written that one couldn't understand the true message of Gita unless he accepted Krishna as 'the' God. Initially with reluctance and later as an axiom, I did it. It surely helped me in reading his book. Gradually events in my life firmed my belief and faith in Gita. I accepted Krishna as an incarnation of God; yet, kept looking for the 'man' in him.

Dr.S. Radha Krishnan's book 'The Bhagavadgita' had philosophy written all over every page. The first book had a deep *Vaishnava*[202] flavour and this one was a dispassionate scholarly interpretation and commentary. The knowledge of both the authors though differing in approach, made a deep impression on me. The first one expressed uninhibited extreme devotion. The other book was an academician's commentary with a deliberate attempt not to mix the message with his reverence for Krishna; it needed a great deal of concentration and repeated reading and reflection.

My original belief in Gita being a religious book was displaced. I accepted it to be a treasure chest of wisdom, spirituality and a discipline. It went to the

extent of criticising the age old established concepts of religion. In fact, it came out to be a management encyclopedia. It taught how to challenge entrenched beliefs and practices. The best about the book is that it raises issues and gives possible solutions.

Paramhans Yoganand's book on Gita though philosophical had a fresh, modern and rational approach. He came out to be both a learned scholar, and a staunch devotee. His frequent references to ancient philosophers of the world, science, Bible along with stories from mythologies and metaphysics imparted a universal flavour to his book and perhaps made it more acceptable even to a rational mind. Gita portrayed spiritual awakening as light and life; and ignorance as darkness and death. With inspiration from this idea, he treated its message like a theatre play with intense beams of lights and shadows on different planes (ideas and characters) highlighting the true meaning. It is a skillfully nuanced interpretation.

His (Yoganand's) autobiography first published in New York in 1946 is highly thought provoking. It shows the expanse and the depth of his knowledge; and the fact about how little we know of our own capabilities and inner power. He came out as a man of strong conviction and determination like Swami Vivekananda.

Srimad Bhagavad-Gita by Mr. Jaydayal Goyandka published by Gita Press, Gorakhpur, UP is like an encylopedia and a reference book of Hindu scriptures. It explains the message of Gita in great detail with references to various Upanishads, Puranas and other books connected with Hindu ethos. It is indeed a treasury of knowledge. The singular devotion of the author to Krishna is very apparent. It is a scholarly treatise that would be very usefull for research work.

Sri Aurobindo's "Essays on the Gita" is a very lucid exposition; his transparent intellect, clarity of thought and devotion are too strong and almost compulsive, to need any effort of portrayal. His determination to do what suited him best is out of the pages of Gita. It needed great character for him to change his vocations till he found his real goal.

Swami Chinmayanand is another scholar who greatly appealed to my sensibility.His knowledge backed by gifted communication skill is very thought provoking.

His simple statement, '*Everyone in life suffers the Arjuna disease at one time or another and needs the Krishna cure*' could not be a more forthright assertion of

a universal truth. Most Hindu religious scholars and *Gurus* make the mistake of mixing facts with religion and make the entire matter unbelievable hodge-podge more akin to a fiction. Swami Vivekananda called it 'text torturing'. Chinmayanand Swami appeared to be candid and focussed on facts and the truth.

Shrimad Bhagavatam[203] deals with the life stories of Krishna; it is interesting but the language is different from one in vogue presently. Besides, it appears like more of a fiction. It takes some doing to understand and accept the same.

There is a treasure chest of commentaries on Gita, Vedanta, various legends and short stories[204] on the life of Krishna. Some of these that I read influenced me and were of a great help. Both *ISKCON* and Ram Krishna Mission have done a great job in propagation of Hindu thought. *ISKCON* was founded by Swami Bhaktivedanta and Ram Krishna Mission by Swami Vivekananda. Both these organizations have international presence. *ISKCON* spread Krishna consciousness worldwide. Both the organizations have a rich collection of books in their libraries and they market the same at cheap prices. Discussions with the Swamijis at their temples are very informative and revealing in respect of their discipline and dedication. I must admit I benefitted from their resources.

'Padam Shri' Dr. Gunwant Shah, one of the renowned scholars of Gujarati literature has several books to his credit. In his commentary on Gita by the name 'Krishna ka Jeevan Sangeet' he has employed a very logical approach. He has quoted scientists, philosophers and learned scholars. His approach is rational that appeals to a modern mind that looks for reasons and logic in everything; it presents mysticism and even God's power in a more acceptable way. He has tried to marry spirituality (*aadhyamik gyaan*) with science (*bhautik gyaan*) and modernism. His book is a good guide for one who wants to pursue yoga and spirituality. His treatment of Gita is very different from those of other authors. I found it to be interesting and thought provoking. I have quoted from his book in my essay.

I have quoted Swami Vivekananda, Paramhans Yogananda, Swami Bhaktivedanta and Dr.S. Radha Krishnan in my essay several times. Besides them, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi Rajneesh, Ramana Maharishi too made a significant contribution to my knowledge through their books and audios. i found their writings and audios illuminating.

Swami Ranganathananda of Ram Krishna Mission, Swami Kriyananda (an American disciple of Paramhans Yogananda), Swami Parthasarthi, Ms. Jaya

Row and others further strengthened my faith. With focus on Krishna's life and deeds I regularly followed their articles and discourses on Gita in print or on TV. I have benefited from the articles on spirituality in the print media and particularly the 'Speaking Tree' columns of The Times of India. The authors of the above-mentioned articles and TV presenters have helped me and have contributed to my essay in no small measure. I shall ever remain grateful to them. I regret, I am unable to name them individually.

Imagine Swami Vivekananda travelling through the length and breadth of India mostly on foot with a sling bag with some books, a few under garments, a blanket on his shoulders and a staff with not a penny in his pocket, living entirely on charity[205]. All he had was his wisdom, will and faith; that he demonstrated remarkably at the Chicago 'World Parliament of Religions' (1893). Can there be a better display of monumental faith, conviction and self-will? If this does not inspire us; nothing ever will?

Mr. DM Mansharamani (retired Chief Engineer PWD) has written a great deal on Upanishads and has collated modern scientific theories including Einstein's Relativity Theory with the knowledge given in Vedas and Upanishads. At 91 years he was still fit and continuing with his writing work. I had the good fortune of reading some of his work and I am very grateful to him for the knowledge and the inspiration that I have received from him.

The above scholars made a profound impression on me and awakened me to the supreme personality of Krishna. I started noticing a subtle difference in the meaning of different verses of Gita that earlier appeared like a repetition. My sensibilities were tickled and sharpened, and soon I was convinced about his un-fathomable wisdom and realised the futility of attempting to measure it with our peripheral knowledge scale. Thereafter, Krishna himself became my prime mover. I must add here that I also read and benefited from books on Bhagavad-gita by Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and many others.

I must add here that my late father, a regular and an avid reader of Gita told me so many things about the philosophy of Gita decades before I started reading the book. He tried to make a scientific (non-religious) presentation to me. He was the first person who advised me, that Gita had to be read like a course text book in order to understand its true meaning. To my loss, I did not appreciate enough the meaning of his words then. Can I ever, now apologise to him and say, 'thank you father'? I wish I had attempted doing so when he was around.

My mother was my role model. She made the greatest contribution to creating my spiritual psyche and I learnt a great deal from her. To say thank you mother now will hurt her. All I can say is that I have tried every day of my life to be worthy of my parents. God Bless their souls.

In my professional life my superiors, colleagues, customers, foreign suppliers and collaborators and clients, vendors, dealers, salesmen and even workers in the factories and on the project sites and even my critics taught me a lot about human mind and behaviour that came in handy in my life and while writing this essay. My sincere and grateful thanks are due to them for the real-life knowledge and live demonstration of the same. I must accept that I could possibly never grasp the real human psyche by mere reading of several books.

Strangely some of the help I received was entirely incidental (Divine help) like meeting the right person at the right time and by chance, who of his own volition extended a helping hand. Krishna called this the fifth factor; '*daivya*' in chapter XVIII. Usually we call it destiny. All I can say is that I had a firsthand experience of the same and I greatly benefitted. I am mentioning hereunder a few of the examples to explain this point.

Dr.S.L.Mathur a Homeopath and a teacher by profession stayed in our colony at 'Raheja Estates' Mumbai -66. Though he was 94 years of age he was in good health to the extent that he did 10 to 12 KM of walking and also performed yoga exercises every day. We met in the evenings at our club. The topic of discussion with him was mostly on Gita as he was very knowledgeable and greatly interested in the same. He gave me useful inputs. His suggestions helped me immensely. I wish him a long life and thank him from the core of my heart.

The other elderly person who too lived in the neighbourhood was Prof. Shanti Swaroop 92, an eminent scholar of Indian History, Painting, Arts and Crafts, and Architecture with several books to his credit. He was visually challenged. I met him by chance as one evening I helped him while he was walking in front of his building. We became great friends and I started helping him in his daily walks; he became a great source of information, inspiration and guidance to me. He told me so many stories and personal experiences and we occasionaly discussed my script that I read to him. He was a great help and I had the benefit of his guidance and blessings.

Likewise, another neighbour friend, a young girl Ms. Rashmi Sachdeva gave useful suggestions and extended help by way of proof reading of the manuscripts. My heartfelt thanks are due to her.

My heartfelt thanks are due to my brother-in-law Dr. Sunil Deepak who works for W.H.O and lives in Italy and my son Anshuman at Dubai (who assisted him) in editing the text of my essay. I knew that Sunil had a flair for writing both in Hindi and English but I did not know that he had special knowledge and skill in respect of editing of texts for publication. During a chance meeting about two years ago he himself offered to help me. He was god sent to me for I was looking for someone to edit the text of my essay. I thank him and of course God for this good turn.

My elder son Avijit helped me in writing this essay especially in respect of the computer and lay out etc. from time to time. Parul my daughter-in-law (a NID Ahmedabad graduate) now at Dubai gave me useful tips about the cover design. She introduced me to Mr. Santesh Rao who is a professional designer with considerable experience in the Ad field. Now he has his own Ad Agency at Dubai. He enjoys a great reputation in the field of designs and content writing. I sincerely thank him for his patience in preparing several cover designs and modifications in the same as per discussions with us.

My wife Dr. Manju Kishore and some of her colleagues at the Delhi University helped me with vital inputs. I would particularly name Dr.Kanan Jhingan who helped me with her incisive knowledge inputs and analysis while we were neighbours at staff flats at Delhi University. My wife helped me with books from University Library besides offering suggestions and encouragement at all times.

Saying mere ‘thank you’ to scholars who have been masters in their subjects; to my mentors, my several associates, relations and well-wishers would grossly undervalue and dilute their contribution and my sense of gratitude I sincerely feel. Yet, in all humility, I must record my most grateful appreciation for the good fortune their knowledge and in some cases their company bestowed on me. Strangely, as already mentioned, some of the help I received was entirely incidental (Divine help) like meeting the right person at the right time by chance and who of his own volition extended a helping hand.

Gita is about ‘The Truth’; and my truth is that I can’t ever thank enough the persons I mentioned above and several others. They so generously, yet, unknowingly, inspired me, and created in me self-belief and faith that has been of immense help to me. I suffer a sense of guilt that I am unable to mention the names of so many others who I benefited me.

***

Notes & References

[1] *Ved Vyas was the greatest Indian Guru. He wrote the Vedas, Mahabharata, Vedanta Sutra, Srimad Bhagavatam and a number of other legends describing religion, spirituality, history and mythology. The beauty of his style is that except for the Vedas he wrote mostly in the form of several short stories that were interconnected.*

[2] *I recommend that before reading Gita one must read Mahabharata to know the back ground for a better understanding. A brief story of Mahabharata given in Annex 1 would come in handy.*

[3] *Gyaan-yoga is the path of seeking Self-realisation through renouncing the world, family and all relations and retiring to a secluded place in a forest or mountain in order to get rid of all attachments and routine actions. The yogi concentrates on acquiring knowledge and wisdom through his intelligence by analytical study and meditation. The idea was to be with God all the time for seeking him was the ultimate goal. All the disturbances had to be eliminated. In Karma-yoga one has to do his duty, even a house holder could seek union with God through selfless action that involves performing his duties (dharma).*

[4] *Our soul (atma in Hindi and atman in Sanskrit) is also addressed as 'self'. It stays in our body. It is the only part of us that enjoys supreme happiness or bliss all the time as the same is a part of God or Super Soul. We are oblivious of its existence and we have to awaken ourselves to know it and seek its guidance. It is only through the same we can achieve peace and happiness.*

[5] *Yoga has eight steps and is called Ashtanga yoga. It is a comprehensive system; the eight steps are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayaam, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. Most yoga gurus teach Asana which are bodily postures and exercises. These help us to achieve a fit and flexible body. Similarly, Pranayaam are breathing exercises that keep our systems well lubricated, active and disease free. Yoga is a generic term it embraces other attributes that form the core of Gita. Samadhi is the ultimate stage leading to Nirvana aka Self-realisation;*

[6] *Entropy means degree of disorder or randomness in any system. If a person is agitated his entropy level becomes high. He is unable to concentrate; actual energy available to him for action is reduced as a great deal of it is lost in sustaining his fast breathing in the agitated state. Entropy increases with temperature due to increase in disorderliness of molecules in our brain. We have 100 billion Neurons in our brain. Our sense organs - eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin (touch) feed 100 million pieces of information to our brain every moment, maximum number (about 70%) of it through our vision. That is why when we concentrate on something, we usuallyas a reflex action, shut our eyes. In the state of agitation, these make changes in the biology of the body and cause secretion of different hormones that determine our responses and actions. When we are calm our responses are balanced and we are happy; when we are agitated we act in haste and regret later.*

[7] *Most religions talk of heaven and hell, few about rebirth. Though there are stray references about incarnations. Interestingly in Egyptian mythology there is mention of Osiris as the God of rebirth.*

[8] *Srimad Bhagavatam is also known as Bhagavata Purana. It deals with the life of God personified by transcendental form of Lord Vishnu. Written by Ved Vyas it deals with the life of Krishna who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.*

[9] *The trinity of Hindu Gods is Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh (Shiva). Brahma was created by God Supreme from his navel and Vishnu and Shiva were his expansions. Brahma has a life but Vishnu and Shiva being God's own expansions are eternal like him.*

[10] *In Sanskrit such important and universal events are called Sanskaar.*

[11] *Yakshas are learned and powerful attendants of Kuber who is the controller of Divine wealth.*

[12] *Drishtadyumna was strategically made the commander of Pandavas' forces so that Arjuna and Bheem could move around and attend to specific needs.*

[13] *The story of Mahabharata war' (Annex 1) gives the names of those who fought in the war on either side.*

[14] *Bhishma was not impressed by Duryodhana, he was visibly unhappy but he keeps his cool. To him loyalty to authority counted far more than personal unhappiness. His roar was to restore his own confidence and that of others on his side.*

[15] *As we proceed we will discover that Gita is about creating the psyche of individuals and team mindset and an ambience conducive to achieving success, happiness and eventual excellence.*

[16] *The chariot scene with Krishna has been described in Hindu scriptures to portray our daily life and actions. The chariot is our body (physical vehicle), the steeds are our senses, the control is exercised by the reins-our mind but the charioteer is our atman (soul) that is the true guiding spirit. This guiding spirit in case of Arjuna (in Mahabharata) was Krishna. In our case the 'self' that is an element of 'Super Self' (God) is the guiding spirit.*

[17] *Lord Kapil (Kapil Muni) was the son of Devhuti (the daughter of Manu the first progenitor of mankind). He propounded the philosophy known as 'Sankhya Philosophy'. It is similar to Gyaan yoga except it is atheistic whereas yoga is theistic. It recognizes the dualism between Purusa (Self) and Prakriti (non-Self or phenomenal realm of matter or everything in creation; popularly called Nature)). Jiva or soul is a part of Purusa (the Cosmic Self) that is bonded to prakriti through desire; our body being a part of the prakriti. All jivas in prakriti share the same elemental purusa. Moksha is emancipation of the bounded soul. Sankhya philosophy is based upon Vedic thoughts but it does not talk of God or what happens after Moksha. Kapil Muni and his Sankhya philosophy hold an important place in Indian thought especially in respect of evolution of prakriti including mankind. He talks of independence of prakriti from Purusa. In Gita Krishna said;" among perfected beings I am the sage Kapil (Gita Chapter 10.26). However, Gita considers prakriti to be a part of Purusa; it has a dependent existence. It is both created and destroyed by Purusa (God). In Sankhya Philosophy Purusa (Brahman) and prakriti are two independent entities; not in Gita.*

[18] *Partha means son of Pritha aka Kunti, Arjuna's mother. She was Krishna's aunt, his father Vasudeva's younger sister. The word 'Pritha' connotes 'to separate' or 'to renounce'. As the story goes her father King Shura had given her to his childless cousin and friend King Kuntibhoja for adoption. Pritha willingly accepted to go to Kuntibhoja's kingdom renouncing*

her original household (she made a sacrifice and displayed the power of renunciation). She lived up to her name 'Pritha' as she gladly accepted to separate from her own parents. Later on she was called 'Kunti'. Calling Arjuna 'Partha' was just to remind him that he was the son of a strong willed and sacrificing mother. Renowned for his courage and bravery he was called 'Oppressor of Foes.'

[19] *Aryan is derived from Sanskrit word 'Arya' which connotes one who is noble, courageous, polite, straight forward with excellent behaviour. Those who followed the teachings and culture of Vedas were called Aryans. Bharat or India was called 'Aryavrata'; the abode of Aryans. Our English rulers however, maintained that Aryans came to India from north may be Mongolia or some other country in the region. Their description of Aryans laid emphasis on physical aspects, complexion and other sharp bodily features like nose, eyes and ears etc.; they highlighted the aspect of ethnicity rather than their character and intellect. They could not accept Aryans to be of Indian origin for then their self-proclaimed burden of civilizing Indians lost all substance.*

[20] *Krishna included himself in the list along with other mortals is not understood. As an incarnation of God he was not subject to the same rule and cycle of birth and death as applicable to all others in the prakriti. As we understand he had taken birth for a specific cause and when that was done there was no question of continuing or taking birth again. By the same logic his being there along with others in a prior birth is not understood. Perhaps he used the expressions for the sake of emphasis. Also in any case he had not declared himself to be God or his incarnation as yet; and he talked to Arjuna as a friend. To his credit Krishna remained a friend to him through life.*

[21] *Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in his book 'The Bhagavadgita' has quoted Socrates (Greek History or Mythology 5th century BCE) in respect of the soul being eternal and unknown to us. I quote from his book: when Crito asks, "In what way shall we bury you, Socrates?" Socrates answers, "In any way you like, but first, you must catch me, the real me. Be of good cheer, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with that whatever is usual and what you think best."*

[22] *Atman is the Sanskrit equivalent for atma (Hindi). Parmatma is derived from Param + atma, it means most superior or supreme atma (soul). It stands for Supreme God. Our 'self' implies our individual atma. As per our scriptures every living being has an individual atma or self called jivatma (living being or custodian of life or praan). The atma is under pressure from our ego and desires and at times it gets influenced by it. The atma moves to a new body at the time of death, along with the mind (manas) and the ego, self-sense (ahamkaar). The mind (manas) and ego carry forward the karma of previous lives and create continuity for it has to settle accounts as per karmic balance. On Self-realization the self gets merged with the Cosmic Spirit and the continuity is broken for it does not take birth again.*

[23] *The 24 principles or elements that come into play in evolution of matter from Spirit are:*

The five great elements: (Maha-bhuta) earth, air, water, fire and ether;

The five senses for acquiring knowledge: eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin;

The five working senses: hands, legs, voice, anus and genitals;

The five objects of senses: desire-hate, pleasure-pain, total of all diverse forces on the body called aggregate intelligence and steadfastness or persistence;

The four inner senses - the mind (manas) it acts through five objects, smell, taste, touch, form and sound, The ego (self-sense), the intelligence (Buddhi); and the three gunas; these are called: sattava, rajas and tamas. Gunas *are the three principles of Nature.*

[24] *Prima-facie desire is the prime mover of any action. Krishna said that after one had done the basics and got down to work he should concentrate on the task. In our anxiety to gain material benefits fast, we keep worrying about the same. We waste a lot of our energy and time that could be better used for achieving the goal. In spiritual path of desire-less action the targeted results become an automatic end product, a corollary for which one need not worry. This approach was needed for achieving a success chain; popularly called the excellence. It was all about creating a conviction and single minded total focus. The attribute of equanimity is a powerful tool. It teaches us to stay calm and unperturbed. It makes every situation routine; and makes everything appear like a passing cloud, that come and go. Krishna suggested meditation to achieve the same. The method and details of the same would unfold in later chapters.*

[25] *As per references in several ancient texts like the Vishnu Puran, Samhitas and Upnishads and in Srimad Bhagavatam it is believed that Krishna was the name of the primal God or the Creator. In this regard i quote Gopal Tapani Upanishad 1.3: "Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead"; and in 1.21 of the same Upanishad it is said: "That one Krishna is Supreme God and He is worship-able." God established an administrative set up to look after the comforts of his creation (shrishti) including prakriti or the Nature. It was an elaborate democratic set up with separate demi-gods to look after various functions like health, wealth, property, education, arts, music, specialized skills, success, welfare, fame and progeny etc. He first created Bramha then a team of learned scholar saints. Brahma under God's direct supervision created the prakriti. Maya was the agency created to deal with the creation including human beings. It links one to another in Nature and everyone to God. It (Maya) is akin to Holy Ghost in Christianity.Primal God Krishna retained creation under his control, with Bramha to assist him. He took the name and form of Vishnu to look after the protection of creation with a number of demi-gods to assist him. He took the name and form of Shiva or Rudra to recycle the parts of creation on completion of their life popularly called death or destruction in case of matter. Along with Shiva was created the element of time called 'Kaal' under the control of a demi-god called Dharmaraja. He kept records of the events in the life of every single item in the creation and he reported to Shiva. Dharmaraja was the biological father of Yudhishtera eldest among the Pandavas.*

When the elements of his creation did not follow the rules of existence as ordained by God the situation deteriorated upsetting the equilibrium. Vishnu the protector had to intervene by sending some learned scholar or apostle to bring the system back to normalcy. At times when it became necessary he himself had to intervene by taking birth amongst his creation (incarnation) to correct the situation and set an example afresh as a reminder of the code of conduct. Such incarnation of Vishnu was called an 'avataar'. Avataar is a Sanskrit word meaning 'descent', also used in Hindi for a God like person believed to be Divinity in a common person. It derives from' ava' meaning "down" and' tri' meaning "to pass". Krishna was an incarnation of Vishnu in Mahabharata times. Why did he take the same name as the primal God in this incarnation is not

clear to me? i could not locate any specific reason for the same in my studies. Scriptures have defined the attributes of an incarnation that i have skipped.

Throughout Gita, Krishna has said that he was the Supreme God, the original creator. He has himself listed various opulences and power of the God. However, leaving aside the non-believers even to a rational mind it is somewhat difficult to accept the same. The same problem is there in case of Jesus. He too, claimed to possess the power of the God. The only difference was that he was the only son of the God, the Supreme Father. However, to understand the Gita, accepting Krishna to be the Supreme God is a prerequisite; therefore, we take it as an axiom. In my case i tried my best to treat him as a human being, one like us but i must admit i have failed so far. i accept him as a God for the sheer magnitude and multiplicity of his powers and virtues. From a management view point i take him as the best manager ever born.

[26] *In chapter 13 Krishna has given 20 virtues to be pursued on the spiritual path for success in life.*

[27] *Chapter 14 deals with the three modes of Nature (Gunas) and how these affect human psyche. One was always under the influence of the gunas. The respective strength of these in the mix determines the psyche of a person. When sattva is predominant the person is honest, helping, generous and righteous by nature. The gunas cause dualities in our life. Through practice of yoga one can transcend the dualities.*

[28] *As per Hindu scriptures samadhi is the last stage of human life when after renouncing the world (sanyasa) one leads a secluded life and concentrates on self reflection and prayers. The idea is to become free of all attachments and seek peace. Samadhi is also the last stage of the eight stages of Yoga described in 'Yoga-Sutra' by Sage Patanjali (3rd century BCE). The word samadhi connotes ecstasy. It is meant to be the stage of blissful consciousness and one's imminent union with the Cosmic Spirit; the ultimate goal of our existence.*

[29] *Stithapragna connotes one who is steadfast in whatever he does; his faith in supreme God is absolute; he has no selfish interest, he thinks God works through his senses. He covets nothing; he has only everything to gain and nothing to lose. He has no attachment or any revulsion. He is unconcerned and remains firmly undisturbed for he has no ego and no jealousy. He believes whatever was being done was for God, and by him, while he goes through the motions, hence, there was no question of any doer-ship or ownership.*

[30] *In Yajur-Veda various kinds of Yagna have been described for attaining different goals. These involve following a prescribed discipline, chanting of mantras, giving charities and leading a pious life for certain periods.*

In Yagna holy fire is lighted around which those taking part are seated. Yagna has a broad meaning and any resolve for a noble cause that is pursued with determination following the right way (selflessly) is also called a yagna. The fire is symbolic implying casting away our undesirable instincts and burning the same in the fire.

Likewise offering food or anything to gods is also symbolic. It is a way of first expressing our gratefulness to God and accepting the thing offered as a blessing (prasad).

After all God doesn't eat or take anything; whatever we offer to him comes back to us with his blessings. This is done in the spirit of surrender and is meant to remind us of our true position.

[31] *Shankaracharya called Maya as delusion. In Advaita philosophy, he called it mithya. It is dependent on Brahman. It is there because of our ignorance. If one could control the effect of gunas, maya would cease to exist for it is truly unreal. The only Truth, the Real, the Absolute is Brahman.*

[32] *The feeling of ownership and doer-ship has been discussed in detail in later chapters. In chapter18 verses 13 to 16 it has been explained how any action is performed; what elements are instrumental in it. It has been clearly explained why one cannot claim sole ownership of any action.*

[33] *This concept defines what was called 'self-surrender' to God. It is an attitude of total detachment from worldly matters and the results of our action; leaving everything to God and working as if it was for him only in total surrender to God. The same improves concentration on details; and one never tires. The end result is that we make fewer mistakes, if any, and we spot and correct the same fast. Our working becomes seamless and speed goes up several times and we vastly improve both the quality and quantity. If we do something whether for ourselves or for God, in the end God doesn't take anything, it stays with us only. But working in this spirit of dedication to him, we become totally detached. We treat the end product with greater respect and accord higher value. Without owning the same we genuinely enjoy the same.*

[34] *Yoga here refers to Raja-yoga the Royal yoga which is akin to Karma-yoga. It is the science of union of the self with Brahman. Here the word yoga stands for the knowledge of Gita as that gives the capacity to gain union with God. Krishna tells Arjuna that in ancient times he gave the knowledge of Gita to Sun-God and the same knowledge he was giving to him. Krishna implicitly raised Arjuna to the level of Gods.*

[35] *Manu was name of the first person who was born on earth. He was a great exponent of dharma. He wrote the famous 'Manu Samhita' which is the rule book or code for conduct of life.*

[36] *Avataar is a Sanskrit word. It means to descend. In Hindu scriptures the word avataar signifies God taking human form in blood and flesh like anyone else.*

[37] *Please refer 'The Bhagavad Gita' by Paramhans Yoganand pages 490 – 507.*

[38] *Pranayaam is made of two words prana meaning life and ayaam stands for control hence pranayaam is actually control of life and not control of breath. Prana also implies energy or force. Kriya-yoga teaches one a process for controlling our life force or energy within.*

[39] *Vayu stands for air. The senses are stimulated by prana-yayu. Apana-vayu moves downwards and Vyana-vayu can act to expand or shrink; Samana-vayu helps in adjusting equilibrium in the system; Udana-vayu moves upwards. The yogi has to achieve a balance in which the flow upwards remains and the others are subdued. This is done through control of breathing and manipulating other streams of air.*

[40] *In chapter 2 verse 32 Krishna asks Arjuna to faithfully perform his ordained duty as a Kshatriya that is to stand up and fight. He does the same in this chapter in verse 4.42 in a subtle manner.*

[41] *Renunciation implies freedom from all attachments. It is a bit tricky for if we take literal meaning even love for God is an attachment. Renunciation refers to worldly objects and attachments. Only through yoga and meditation one could achieve true renunciation.*

[42] *Our ultimate goal is to know the Truth (Self realization or reach the God). Both paths (Gyaan-yoga of Sankhya and Karma-yoga) could take us to our goal. But a mix of these would reach us faster. Upanishads and other scriptures have dealt with the ultimate truth and have described it in various ways, calling it as smaller than the smallest particle called Anu (atom); and bigger than the biggest, the infinite creation. Hence, the ultimate truth embraces both the subtle (micro) and the gross (macro). The subtle needs very detailed and intimate pursuit of knowledge employing the intuition created by the spirit which is obtained through Gyaan-yoga. The gross, the multi-verses (the Brahmaand) follows the law of karma, the cause and effect, that extends from one life to another which amounts to covering from zero to infinity and beyond; it could be best handled through dynamic action in yoga which is called the Karma-yoga.*

[43] *The nine gates are symbolic. These are two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth and two organs of excretion and procreation.*

[44] *French philosopher Simone Weil called this to decelerate ourselves and our egos. In line with the philosophy of Ramanna Maharishi, she said that 'God in a startling image had created the universe and then effaced himself from it, surrendering it to its own momentum and gravity.' What she implied was that God created everything in his own mirror image but then struck himself out of it; and gave everyone the freedom to act independently*.

[45] *Revelation 3.12*

[46] *Dr. Gunwant Shah in his book 'Krishna ka Jeevan Sangeet' has dealt with sanyaas in a very analytical manner and has clarified how Gyaan-yoga and Karma-yoga were essentially not different and led to the same destination of Self-realisation. In his commentary on Gita he has given Chapter 5 the title of "Karma Marg ki parisamapaty Sanyaas mein' (Karma-yoga ends in Sanyaas). Sanyaas has been described by him on pages 95 to 107 in Hindi Edition-1997.*

[47] *Paramhans Yogananda has dealt with Kriya-yoga in some detail in his commentary on Bhagavad-Gita (Vol. I pages 569 – 578).*

[48] *In Bible it has been repeatedly mentioned that one must clear his heart of all matters for only then can God enter the same. In "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence he writes and I quote: "I know that, for the right practice of it, the heart must be empty of all else because God wills to possess the heart alone and as He cannot possess it alone unless it is empty of else, so He cannot work in it what He would unless it is left vacant for Him."*

[49] *Krishna once again highlights the fact that he indeed was an avataar of the Supreme God and the Creator of all in the creation by addressing God as 'Me'.*

[50] *Jeevanmukta literally means freedom from life that implies transcending all dualities and worldly bondages that hold us back from progress on the spiritual path, while still living in the world.*

[51] *As per Hindu scriptures tThe four ashrams are: first was called Brahmyacharya-ashram; in this one had to lead a disciplined life and study the Vedas and other scriptures at the feet of his preceptor. He was required to practise celibacy, attend on the Guru humbly and follow his teachings with devotion and lead a disciplined life. This was supposed to be the foundation stage meant to acquire a strong body and sound mind. The second ashram was called Grihastha-ashram. In this one was a house-holder, a married man looking after his family and attending to the society. He was required to perform his duties as mandated by his Varna e.g. a Brahmin was required to teach Vedas, scriptures and provide guidance in respect of spiritual matters. The third ashram was called Vanaprastha-ashram. Literally it means preparing to go to or departure for forest. Having lived his worldly life, one was finally required to retire to a secluded place in a forest, away from the society. Vanaprastha-ashram was a cooling off period when one was expected to gradually detach himself from the near and dear ones and the society. One had to wear simple clothes particularly saffron coloured ones; and lead a simple disciplined life of meditation, concentrating on religious matters and reflection on the same. His duties were limited to those necessary for sustenance.*

Sanyaas-ashram was fourth and the last stage. In this, one had to devote himself to prayers to God, self-search, seeking control of his mind and organs to get rid of his ego; and to completely withdraw himself from all worldly bondages. He was supposed to lead the life of a religious mendicant who was free to wander about freely with no worldly commitments that make the life routine bound; and free of all care. One had to learn to become self-dependent and devote himself to the Deity. To satiate his hunger, he had to go from door to door to seek alms (but never to beg). Briefly stating one had to completely renounce selfish interest and work according to a strict discipline.

[52] *There is a popular perception that Sanyaas implies giving up all work. I may mention here that Paramhans Yoganand sought a clarification from his Guru Swami Sri Yukteshwar who advised him saying: "Remember he who rejects the usual worldly duties can justify himself by assuming some kind of responsibility for a much larger family." He implied thathe could mentor others on the spiritual path and do hand holding for those in need. (Reference 'God talks with Arjuna – The Bhagavad Gita' Vol. II page 591 by Paramhans Yoganand)*

[53] *In Mahabharata time people used to retire to forest or hills in a remote area for meditation. They used to sit on a make shift platform, covered it with grass and with deer skin. The idea was to have a quiet place and a firm seat so that they were comfortable and their attention was not diverted and they were able to concentrate on the chosen object say the God. Standing and lying postures are not desirable for meditation as one might fall after some time or fall asleep.*

[54] *In both Bible and Greek philosophy there is similar mention about cleaning the heart and the mind and seeking inspiration from one's spirit. Statements like the "spirit of the man is the candle of the Lord" or "Thou when thou prayest enter into thy closet and shut the door." At one place Jesus tells a rich man, who claimed to be following all the commandments, to give all his possessions to the poor and promised him much more of everything in the Kingdom of*

heaven. He was very sorry and reluctant then Jesus said that a camel could pass through a needle's eye but a rich man could not enter the Kingdom of God.

In Greek philosophy, particularly in talks between Plato and Socrates there is repeated mention of spirit being immortal; and the importance of knowing it and seeking guidance from it.

[55] *When we are agitated our breathing rate goes up; our BP, BS levels also go up, causing chemical changes in our system. These use a lot of energy and cause a great deal of harm including reducing our life span. Monkeys normally breathe 24-25 times per minute and get easily agitated; their life span is about 15- 20 years. In contrast snakes and tortoises breathe only 3-5 times a min. and they live for 300 to 500 years.*

[56] *In Hindu mythology there is frequent mention of discriminating wisdom called 'neer xcheer vivek'. This is possessed by Hansa (a bird of Swan family) a celestial bird that lives in Himalaya. It has the divine faculty to separate water from milk; and it drinks only milk. The word neer stands for water and xcheer for milk. Consciousness is akin to this. Some scholars called it as the state of awareness where one has control over all his faculties. Meditation helps us improve our awareness level and hence our judgment.*

[57] *Samadhi is a state of ecstasy in which a yogi can live for several years. Through yoga and meditation one gains a capacity to enter into a trance state; it amounts to a state of suspended animation. In this he remains alive but is unaffected by common needs and worldly dualities. Sometimes there is a cessation of vital signs for long periods but subsequently he comes back to life. Paramhans Yoganand has quoted a number of such happenings in his 'Autobiography of a Yogi' and also in his book 'God talks with Arjun - The Bhagavad Gita' Vol. II pages 617 t0 620. I am quoting two incidents mentioned by him.*

In the first one an estate called 'Bhukailash' (heaven on earth) was established by Maharaja J N Ghoshal at Kidderpore near Calcutta in the year 1782. One of the princes ordered a pond to be dug in the year 1850. During the digging bodies of seven sadhus (sages) were found. They were apparently not alive but looked fresh and in a perfect state of preservation as if a live person was in trance. The bodies were shifted to the palace where geologists, doctors and experts testified that they must have entered the ground about two hundred years ago. They first tried to awaken the sages using hot towels, oil massage etc that failed. The prince was not impressed he ordered that hot pokers be pierced in their flesh. The seemingly inanimate sadhus got up with a startlemiracle in his certificate at the time of delivery. The publisher of his autobiography in later editions included this certificate in the book along with his comments.

The other incident was quoted from a book titled 'Thirty-five Years in the East' written by Dr. John Martin Honigberger who was the physician to Maharaja Ranjit Singh (King of Punjab) at Lahore in India. He wrote about the feats of one Sadhu Haridas. His narrative was based upon eye witness accounts painstakingly collected by him. In 1837 under the auspices of the Maharaja a controlled experiment was conducted in the presence of experts, doctors and several high dignitaries of the court which was witnessed by many English officials as well. Sadhu Haridas was buried underground where he stayed for forty days. In presence of dignitaries he was taken out after 40 days when he was found to be in sound health. The same Sadhu Haridas in an earlier experiment conducted in the court of Raja Dhyan Singh at Jammu (Kashmir) stayed buried

under-ground for four months. Dr. Honigberger mentions in his book another similar happening dating back to the period of Guru Arjun Dev some 250 years earlier where a yogi fakir's tomb was dug out and he was found in a sitting posture. On revival he came back to life and said that he was buried over a hundred years ago and narrated several stories of earlier period and his circumstances. Dr. Honigberger could not reject the events and went to the extent of suggesting that it was not possible to fix a period for which the vital functions of a yogi could be suspended.

Even in case of Paramhans Yoganand who died due to cardiac arrest at a function (in California USA on 7th March 1952) that was attended by high dignitaries including Ambassadors; his body was kept in a mortuary for 20 days and was found to be as fresh at the time of delivery for cremation on 27th March 1952, as it was when the same was brought to the mortuary on 7th March 1952. The happening was so mysterious that the mortuary director wrote the same as a

[58] *Entropy means degree of disorder or randomness in any system. When a person is agitated his entropy level becomes high. He is unable to concentrate; actual energy available to him for action is reduced, for a great deal of it is lost in sustaining our fast breathing in the agitated state. Entropy increases with temperature as the disorderliness of molecules in our brain increases. We have 100 billion Neurons in our brain. Our sense organs - eyes, nose, ears, tongue, skin (touch) feed 100 million bits of info to our brain every moment, most of it, is through vision. That is why when we concentrate on something instictively we shut our eyes. Entropy or random disorderly molecules inside the brain make changes in the biology of the body through secretion of different hormones that determine our actions and responses. When we are calm our responses are balanced, otherwise we react in haste and create problems. Yoga-pranayaam and meditation help maintain our blood pleasure, blood sugar and other body parameters at optimum levels; we remain disease free, enjoy peace and stay relaxed. It provides clarity of thought and vision and we enjoy a longer life.*

[59] *Perfect balance implies having predominance of 'Satvik" gunas with 'Rajsik' and 'Tamsik' gunas subdued.*

[60] *It has to be understood that Krishna was God's incarnation and he was addressing Arjuna who was an evolved person. Naturally his benchmark had to be the highest; hence, he talked of Self-realisation that is the same as union with God. In later chapters he has explained that very few can indeed persevere to reach that level but the discipline of yoga and meditation keep improving our performance and lead us on path to achieving excellence in life. Krishna on several occasions stated that one becomes what he wants to become, if his intent is unwavering and he sticks on the spiritual path with full faith in his self. Dhyan-yoga makes us fearless; we gradually gain equanimity (sumdrishti), the sense of 'me' and 'they' starts vanishing and we enjoy serene happiness in what we do; we do not falter and achieve what we want. Truly we become aware of and learn to use both our physical and spiritual resources.*

[61] *Sense gratification is limited to a particular sense organ or organs; say we admire a beautiful face or an object then primarily the eyes are satisfied and partly we derive pleasure in our heart as well. In case of wish for wealth creation, our success gives us pleasure and we feel happy in mind. But unfortunately, it is incomplete and never satisfying. Success in yoga on the spiritual path creates a sense of happiness that envelopes our entire being with serenity*

[62] *The process of achieving mindlessness needed for controlling desires and urge for sense gratification especially sensual needs can't be rushed through and one needs considerable patience in respect of these. One has to persist with his efforts step by step with full faith. There is no short cut to it. One has to be aware that a psychic change can't be achieved by applying a brake to our entrenched habits. One has to slowly change his attitude; that for sure is demanding and tests our resolve. Dr. Gunwant Shah has dealt with this aspect beautifully in his book 'Krishna Ka Jeevan Sangeet' (pages 118 to 128)*

[63] *Krishna cleverly addresses Arjuna using the adjective 'mahabaho' (the great armed one who could envelope anything) implying that he for sure could tackle the problem. Arjuna too, while addressing him in verse 38 uses the same adjective.*

[64] *Prof Capra has written several books, the chief amongst these are: 'The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism'; 'The Turning Point'; 'Uncommon Wisdom' and 'The Hidden Connections'. In the Tao of Physics he has drawn a parallel between Vedic philosophy - Hindu thought and particle physics, matter and its creation. Based on his experiments around 1972 he tried to establish a linkage between Hindu mythology, scriptures and modern science. In 'The Tau of Physics" he wrote that "Every subatomic particle not only does an energy dance, but is also an energy dance; a pulsating process of creation and destruction without end. To the modern physicists, then, Shiva's dance has to be the dance of subatomic matter." Natraja's statue in dancing pose represents both the creation and destruction cycles. Prof. Capra writes of his extended discussions with Heisenberg about his ideas on Indian mysticism and science and claims to have shown him the manuscript of his book (The Tau of Physics). Heisenberg concurred with his ideas and also advised him that when he was working on quantum theory he had gone to India on a lecture tour where Rabindra Nath Tagore was his host. He had detailed discussions with him on Hindu philosophy and mysticism which impressed him a great deal and he realized that all that he was working on in quantum theory was a whole lot similar to Indian thought. Even Neil Bohr after his visit to China and discussions with the philosophers there held the same view about Indian thought.*

[65] *Prof. Alfred Rupert Sheldrake was a biologist at Cambridge. He was associated with International Crops Research Institute for Semi- Arid Tropics at Clare. He propounded the idea of 'morphic resonance' (memory being inherent in everything) across nature and all living systems. He found support in Hindu philosophy, transcendental meditation and mysticism. To pursue his interest he moved to International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) at Hyderabad. He studied Hindu scriptures, thought and mysticism in respect of life and growth (especially plant physiology) and also pursued his interest in 'morphic resonance 'that involved mysterious telepathy-type interconnection between organisms and collective memories within species. He wrote several papers and books, main amongst these being 'A New science of Life'. His association with ICRISAT lasted for over 11-12 years (1974 to 1986). He later settled back at Cambridge and is associated with several academic institutions. He was academic director of the Holistic Learning and Thinking Program (up to 2012).*

[66] *Science (Vigyaan) deals with the gross elements in nature (apra prakriti) and Gyaan deals with the subtle element (para prakriti). The former is non-living whereas the latter is living. Science is based upon proof and spirituality (adhyaatma) relies on experience, its target being*

the Eternal Truth. Krishna tries to explain both parts of knowledge and says that if one could understand these there would be nothing more to know.

[67] *Krishna explained that when the un-manifested gets manifested it is made up of his two natures the lower one and higher one. The higher one becomes the individualized soul that is within the body that is formed by his lower nature. Body is made of 24 elements (please refer Chapter 2 page 47). The 24 elements interact with the material world and gather information. The Cosmic Spirit, the God (called Purusa in Sankhya Philosophy) interacts with these 24 elements through our soul.*

The elements that make our senses get knowledge (Gyaan) and create consciousness. The 24 elements act on the body and determine its nature. Interaction between these creates desires, happiness, misery, anger, hatred, love and other attributes.
Mind, false ego and intelligence acting on the body create conviction and consciousness and these determine its state, growth and decay. Usually it is the ego that creates the sense of ownership in our mind and gives birth to the sense of I, Me and Mine that determine our attributes and actions. By the knowledge obtained through inner inspiration from the soul (which is a part of the Super Soul) one gets enlightened and can use these 24 elements to take pre-emptive action to counter the effects of the three Gunas and subdue the ego.

[68] *Maya (aka Yogmaya) creates inter play between Man, his senses, sense organs and prakriti. It also determines the characteristics or qualities of humankind aka the Gunas (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). The Gunas in common parlance are attributed to Nature and are called the Maya of the Nature (prakriti). These Gunas are also known as the three principles or Modes of the Nature. The most important function of Maya is to act as the interface between man and God. Maya is closely linked to Supreme God and is controlled by Him. Maya literally means 'that it is not'; it appears in all ancient scriptures by different names. In Old Testament it was called the 'Satan'. In Greek Testament it was known as 'Diabolus or Devil'. In Bible Jesus Christ gave a detailed account of Maya calling it a 'Devil', a murderer and liar. Maya diverts the attention of mankind from spiritual to material, from real to unreal, from truth to untruth. It is like a veil that curtains the formless consciousness of the Absolute from the cosmic creation. The aim of the Man is to transcend it and reach his goal with the tool of Yoga.*

[69] *Aum is said to be the first word spoken by God after he made the creation. It is considered to be very pious word and is accepted to be the oral (in word) representation of the Eternal God. Reciting the word 'Aum' is considered to be the most powerful prayer.*

[70] *Ego includes two types of desires: selfless one like our love for God and desire to become one with him; and selfish desires that give birth to passion, greed, anger and lust etc, blur our vision and adversely affect our judgment. Any wish inspired by our inner spirit is sattvik and is selfless, it is governed by the tenets of spirituality; it has no material content that could lure us towards unreal and illusory pleasures and gains that are unreal. Such a desire inspired by our soul is pure and desirable.*

[71] *Vaasudeva is the name of Krishna; it means the son of Vasudeva. The same stands for God. Krishna now does not distinguish between him and the primal God.*

[72] *In Chapter 3 Krishna briefly mentioned about the democratic set up God had for managing his creation with several gods and demi-gods who administer different departments e.g. the sun god manages the success of every individual in the creation. Vedas describe the method of prayers to individual gods and the process to be followed for propitiating his blessings. These gods were autonomous but limited to their own assignment. Worldly people desiring the fruits of their actions pray to those gods. Those who target the higher goal of Self realisation and work selflessly, pray to Supreme God, the Brahman. All the gods though autonomous in their own domains derive their authority from the Supreme God and work under him. The ultimate authority to grant the desires was vested in him and he disburses the same through the gods and demi-gods. Dr. Radhakrishnan has explained this beautifully. He says that whatever be the surface soil, it derives the juice of its life from the depth of its bottom. Though the surface reflects its nature in substance the true juice, the energy part that is the cause of its existence comes from the core.*

[73] *Paramhans Yogananda has mentioned an interesting story to explain the delusion a person suffers; and how God was beyond dualities and remains the same in all situations; how he accepts and loves all kinds of people including the sinners and is ever willing to help them. The story is like this:*

Narada the divine sage went to Lord Vishnu and suggested an unusual demonstration to be given by him. He said that did the Lord ever realise the potency of delusion he creates in the minds of the people? Perhaps he would understand it better if he subjected himself to a similar situation. Vishnu ever ready to satisfy everyone asked him to precisely tell him what he expected him to do.

Narada said that with the delusion caused by him in the minds of people how could they get over the worldly attachments. It would be a great idea if the Lord entered the body of a mother pig and experienced what it takes her to care for her several piglets. The Lord agreed to subject himself to the experience suggested by him. He told Narada that in case he did not come out of her stomach after six months then he would have to release him from there. He gave him a mantra and said that after six months he should chant the same and pierce the body of the pig and then he would come out. Saying this, the Lord disappeared. Narada kept watching.

To cut the long story short he did not come out for nine months, then Narada got worried he started chanting the mantra. Soon the pig appeared and he pierced her stomach as told by the Lord. The pig died but the Lord appeared before him in good health and quite cheerful; and said it was indeed very nice to feed the little piglets. He added that howsoever, difficult the delusion be, even the biggest of sinners if they came to him seeking his refuge he would purify them and liberate their soul. The crux of the matter is that God stayed there longer than the stipulated six-month period and remained happy; and he also said even after causing all the delusion he wasever willing to help his creation and protect them. (Ref.'The Bhagavad Gita – Royal Science of God Realisation' by Paramhans Yogananda Vol. II page 687)

[74] *Bramha is the name of the chief of god's created by the Supreme God or Brahman for administering the creation. Brahma's role is that of creation of all beings; he does this under the direct supervision of Supreme God. Brahman or Brahma is supra-cosmic God; he is also called Parabrahman, Parmatma, Ishwar, Absolute Truth, Parampurusha and the primeval God the original creator. He is immutable, imperishable and eternal. All other gods and demi-*

gods also called as 'personal gods' are cosmic gods and have a life and a specific role e.g. Indra is the administrative head of gods and Bramha is the creator of all beings. Brahman himself as Vishnu nurtures the creation and as Shiva he carries out the annihilation of all in the creation. Brahman was known by the name Krishna. This is not to be confused with the Krishna of Mahabharata times who was an incarnation (avatar) of Vishnu. Perhaps as an avatar as Krishna he got this name because he had a dark complexion.

[75] *As per Hindu scriptures, life of the world has been divided into 4 ages called yugas. These are Satyuga also called Krityuga, Tretayuga, Dwaparyuga and Kalyuga. The period of each age (Yuga) is preceded by a 10% twilight period called sandhya and followed by another 10% twilight period called sandhyaansa. Their ages and linkage with Bramha's life has been detailed below.*

Satyuga	*4000 Divine years*		
Sandhya	400	*"Sandhyaansa*	*400* "
Total	*4800*	"	*x 360 = 1728000 earth years*
Tretayuga	*3000*	"	
Sandhya	*300*	"	
Sandhyaansa	*300*	"	
Total	*3600*	"	*x 360 = 1296000* "
Dwaparyuga	*2000*	"	
Sandhya	*200*	"	
Sandhyaansa	*200*	"	
Total	*2400*	"	*x 360 = 864000* "
Kalyuga	*1000*	"	
Sandhya	*100*	"	
Sandhyaansa	*100*	"	
Total	*1200*	"	*x 360 = 432000* "

Total life of 4 yugas is 4.32 million earth years. This period is called Mahayuga or Manwantara. 2000 Mahayugas i.e. 8.64 billion earth years is called a Kalp; a day of 24 hrs in the life of Brahma.

This chronological age system was recorded some times between the age of Rig-veda and Mahabharata. It is not mentioned in the Vedas but was well established at the time of Mahabharata. (Please refer 'A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology & Religion' by John Dowson pages 381-82)

** Bramha's life is 100 Bramha years or 3.1104 trillion earth years.*

[76] *1 divine year = 360 earth years; hence 1 divine month = 30 earth year; hence 1 divine day = 1 earth* year, *hence 12hrs day time = 6 months of earth.*

[77] *We derive energy from God; from Divine Energy aka Cosmic Energy. 70% of the energy comes to us as vital energy (praan shakti) or active energy that provides the life force; and 30% is the non-active energy that goes to our nodal centres or kundalini Chakra. These are in a serpent like coil form that stores the energy. It remains dormant till the kundalini is awakened through spiritual practices, yoga, meditation etc. Once awakened or activated it becomes a channel for transfer of energy. There are seven kundalini chakras, nodal centres that link us with the cosmos. Each chakra is the repository of attributes that we need for life; and for progress in it. The chakras starting from bottom end and travelling upwards are: 1. Lowest is called the Muladhar Chakra located at thebottom of the spinal column. It represents the Earth. It gives the attribute of innocence and wisdom. Energy travels in the spinal column through Shushmna-nadi the central channel with Pinglanadi at the right of central channel and Idanadi on the left of central channel. Besides these there are thousands of sub-channels that distribute energy.*

2. Swadhi sthana Chakra: It represents 'fire' provides creativity and spiritual knowledge.

3. Manipura Chakra (*aka Nabhi Chakra*)*: Near pancreas, it represents water; one experiences presence of God (Divine Consciousness); enjoys greater happiness and relaxation and becomes highly sensitive to duties.*

4. Anahat Chakra: At the solar plexus in the stomach pit; represents 'air', provides attributes of love, courage, fearlessness and strict sense of discipline and duty; one becomes conscious about the soul.

5. Vishuddha Chakra or Shuddhi Chakra: At the throat; feeling of unity with God, represents 'ether'; it provides coordination between thought and speech, communication becomes better and effective.

6. Ajina Chakra or Agnya Chakra located between two brows at Kuthashta Kendra; represents 'light', it provides oneness with God, gives calm demeanor, control over temper, focused mind and judgment, we become forgiving and use our mind effectively.

7. Sahasrura Chakra: At the crown near brain, it is the place where God resides. When we give up our identity we become a part of him. It represents all the five elements of the cosmos and our merger with the same. It enjoys direct linkage with the Parabrahman and his Cosmic Energy.

[78] *Jesus said: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of the life." Jesus was talking about the spiritual eye. Bible John 8.12 Jesus said: "The light of the body is the eye (spiritual eye); if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil (due to delusion), thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If thereforethe light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Bible Mathew 6:22-23*

There have been numerous references in Bible and other texts pertaining to Christian religion about the power of spiritual eye. Please refer "The Bhagavad Gita' by Paramhans Yoganand Vol. II pages 740-744.

[79] *I have written above that the time or the calendar month of one's death does not influence the fate of one's soul after his death; the same was entirely dependent on his karmic credits, his*

deeds and efforts on the spiritual path. My contention is based upon the learned commentary on Gita by Paramhans Yoganand, Srimad Bhagavad- Gita by Jaydayal Goyandka – Gita Press Gorakhpur, Dr. Gunawant Shah's book "Krishna ka Jeevan Sangeet" and a few others. However, it has been explained that Deities have their own time and period of working (some work when the sun is in the northern circuit- uttarayan and others when it is in the southern circuit- dakhshinayan, likewise during daytime and nighttime. In case one dies when his presiding deity is available his soul finds a smooth passage to its designated place, otherwise it has to go through a waiting period. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in his "Bhagavad-Gita As It Is" says that if one dies during daylight in the bright half of moon period, when the sun is in its northern circuit the desired Deities are available to ensure smooth passage of the soul to Brahmalok for unity with God, provided of course the person is otherwise ready or qualified for the same. Perhaps for this reason Bhishma Pitamah who had a boon of ichcha mritu (he could choose the time of his death) decided to wait for 58 days on the bed of arrows to allow sun to enter its northern circuit before he took his last breath and ensured his praan-shakti's exit through the crown.

[80] *Dharma, a Sanskrit word means to uphold or support. It is the Divine mandated discipline for humankind to evolve itself on the righteous path as per the teachings of our scriptures and Vedanta. Popularly it implies the attributes one must acquire for true success in life. It is taken to be the duty of a person. It leads to svadharma which is an individual's dharma. Svadharma is entirely personal; it is not supposed to in anyway interfere with one's pursuits but it determines the means to the goal. Mistakenly it is confused with one's religion; truly it equally applies to all religions. It is nothing but a set of principles for conduct of one's life. The basic principles of religions constitute what is known as Dharma. It has nothing to do with any rites and rituals.*

Satya Sai Baba said "Dharma is the foundation for the welfare of humanity; it is the truth that is stable for all time. Confronted by dharma anyone, however, powerful would be cut to size. Therefore, the most vital thing is dharma… And, how are you to decide in any particular case, what is dharma and what is not, I shall tell you …And that which does not inflict pain on you and on others, and that which gives you joy and to others too, that is right; that is dharma." Dharma gives supreme intrinsic strength that leads to ultimate success and it protects us all the time. Manu said, "Dharmo rakshati rakshitah." It means if one protects his Dharma it protects him in turn.

In our ancient spiritual texts four purusharthas or goals have been prescribed for a man. These are Dharma, Artha, Kaam and Moksha. Moksha means gaining oneness with God. Artha popularly connotes wealth; and Kaam is wrongly interpreted as lust or sensual craving but it truly means desire that is the prime mover of what we do in life. Hence, lust or desire, and wealth creation are okay so long it is done the right way that is dharma is followed. In fact dharma is the starting point. If the first three are followed properly the ultimate result is bound to be Moksha.

[81] *Ramkrishna Paramhans once told a disciple that initially image worship was needed to come closer to Divine. It was truly a means to reach our deity, our God. It helps us gain better connectivity and focus on God. Through practise we start experiencing his presence with us all the time, we start seeing him in everything; our love and longing for him goes on increasing. At this point, image - worship in a temple becomes unnecessary for the entire*

ambience becomes Godly.

[82] *Mrityulok is the region in which like birth the death is a certainty and it applies to everyone and everything. In astral world gods and demi-gods too have definite life spans. In these regions everything follows mutation. In Brahma-loka there is no death as God is Eternal and immutable.*

[83] *The message of Gita is for universal benefit; all are included without any distinction of colour, caste, race, gender, profession or geography. Whereas, in Vedas and other scriptures low castes (Shudras) and women were barred from study of Vedas and participation in religious functions, Gita not only sanctions universal participation, it welcomes everyone in the fold. It challenges contemporary well entrenched social discriminations on the basis of race, caste, creed and gender etc, and lays emphasis on spiritual values and love for one and all.*

[84] *Gita's message being universal, anyone and everyone, without distinction can enjoy the benefit should he follow the discipline it recommends. Discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, colour, race and sex etc. has been prevalent in all societies and religions since ancient times. It is present today not only in India but all over the world. Dr. S.Radhakrishnan in his book on Gita says and i quote: "The ancient Greeks looked upon foreigners as barbarians. The Roman general Ountilian Varus said of the inhabitants of Germania: "It is true, they are men, but except the voice and limbs of the body they have nothing of human beings in them.*

The French philosopher Montesquieu (1689-1755), said of the Negros: "One cannot well imagine that God who is so wise should have put a soul, moreover an immortal soul, into an entirely black body. It is impossible to think that these people are human beings." This feeling may be, to a lesser extent, exists even in the 21st century. Only 75 years ago Hitler thought the Jews to be of impure blood; and looked upon them as pollutants for the society. His hatred was so deep that the only solution, he thought, was to rid the world of Jewish race. Incidentally Hitler had his early education and upbringing in a Jewish Infirmary financed by a Jew. And Hitler was not alone to hold such views.

[85] *Sensibility comes from intellect, knowledge that one can acquire through Vigyaan. Sensitivity needs empathy-compassion that comes from subtle Gyaan. It needs interaction with our inner self.*

[86] *Sage Parashar was the father of the great scholar Ved Vyas who authored the four Vedas, Mahabharata, Srimad Bhagavatam and Vedanta Sutras etc. He has been considered as the greatest teacher.*

[87] *The King (Sovereign) being the head of the kingdom was privy to most important knowledge and secrets that none other knew. In fact only he had the authority to share the same with anyone else. The message Krishna was giving was as important as a royal secret that is why Krishna used the adjective 'sovereign'.*

[88] *Krishna had earlier said that the knowledge of Gita was to be given to those who did not cavil. Similarly, Jesus too advised in Bible to exercise caution in spreading his message. He said: "Do not give dog what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn to attack you." (Reader's Digest Bible (2005 Reprint) page 667)*

[89] *Ref. Mathew 27:46*

[90] *Ref. Reader's Digest Bible (2005 Reprint) page 753*

[91] *Ref. Reader's Digest Bible (2005 Reprint) page 776*

[92] *Four primeval sages were Sanaka (ancient), Sanandana (ever blissful), Sanatana (everlasting or eternal) and Sanat-kumara (ever youthful). They represent God's ever blissful, ever youthful demeanour that is unchanging and eternal.*

[93] *As per Mahabharata the names of the seven great sages were Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya and Vasishtha. They were mind born sons of Bramha. In Satapatha Brahmana the names mentioned are: Gautama, Bharadwaj, Vishwamitra, Jamadagni, Vasishtha, Kashyap and Atri.*

[94] *Manu was the name of the first human being created in the world. Manu comes from the root word 'man', it means 'to think' and it stands for 'The man'. Each Manu had a life of one Maha-yuga 4320000 years (one cycle of four yugas- ref. Chapter VIII). The names of fourteen Manus were Svayambhuva, Svarochisha, Auttami, Tamasa, Raivata, Chakshusha, Savarni, Vaivasvata, Daksha-savarni, Brahma-savarni, Dharma-savarni, Rudra-savarni, Rauchya or Deva-savarni, and Bhautya or Indra-savarni. (Please refer Paramhans Yogananda's Bhagavad Gita Vol. II, page 773 and Gita Press "Shrimad Bhagavadgita by Jaydayal Goenka pages 407 - 410 and 'A classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology & Religion by John Dowson page 199 for details.)*

[95] *Darkness stands for ignorance and bright light connotes inspired wisdom. It implies guidance of inner spirit.*

[96] *Esoteric implies something that is meant for restricted knowledgeable audience. Obviously he anticipates that what he was about to say could not be understood by all.*

[97] *Aditya is a generic term. It is the name of Sun God. In Vedic times there were seven Adityas. Later the number was increased to twelve. Most of them bear the various names of Sun God and are believed to represent twelve months of the year. All Adityas are full of light hence, they are called the 'Effulgent Beings'.*

[98] *The word Sama is from word 'Saman' that implies calming or tranquilising. The knowledge comes not from the texts but from how well we can internalize the same. The musical tenor creates a rare soothing effect that helps us to perceive the deeper significance of the message in the verse.*

[99] *Shankara means a 'well wisher' or the 'auspicious' one. He is believed to be the creative character of Shiva. Shankara is one amongst the trinity of Gods (Bramha, Vishnu and Mahesh). Mahesh is another name of Shankara. Shiva is in charge of destruction of creation. Shankara is believed to be kind hearted and easy to please. In mythological stories several problems and wars were caused by boons granted by him to demons.*

[100] *As per Vishnu Purana, Rudra was created by Bramha through his mind. At his orders and under his direction he changed into 11 Rudras. Elsewhere as per other Puranas 11 Rudras were the sons of sage Kashyap and his wife Surabhi. Shankara was their chief. Rudra name implies one who howls or roars and is terrible. Some Rudras are fair and good-natured others are dark, evil and furious. In Yajur Veda, Rudra was called Mahadeva which is a title*

reserved for Shankara. Under the supervision of Shankara the 10 Rudras act as 10 vital Pranas (intelligent life forces) in a human body where Shankara himself is situated in the heart or manas.

[101] *Both Yakshas and Rakshasas are from the goblin and demi-goblin family. Not all of them are evil but many of them have negative influence and undo the benefaction extended by the gods for good work one does. Yakshas are attendants to Kubera the god of wealth and riches. They are usually inoffensive. They are highly skilled and intelligent but avaricious and sometimes become evil and dishonest forces in the family of spirits.*

[102] *Vasus are eight intelligent, radiant and essential life giving deities. They attend on Lord Indra and were greatly respected. In Vedas they were considered personification of natural phenomena or elements viz. Apa (water), Dhara (earth), Anila (wind), Anala (fire), Prabhasa (dawn), Pratyusha (light), Soma (moon) and Dhruva (pole star). Of these Anala or Agni is brightest, life giving and purifying, hence, it is considered to be the chief of Vasus. It is said to be the mouth of God.*

[103] *God creates; sustains and governs the creation from sub-atomic particles to galaxies through a set of laws. These are known as the Truth. Here the law and the law maker is the same with no second. Hence, the expression Truth stands for God. Gandhiji used to say that atheists may deny the God but they cannot deny the truth. It was his way of saying that in the end everyone believes in God in one form or the other. In case of humans Dharma which is nothing but a set of universally acceptable ethical laws is the truth.*

[104] *Shabda is Sanskrit equivalent of English word 'word'; addition of 'a' as a prefix means' without it'. It is like prefix 'un' in English e.g. 'worthy' and 'unworthy'. Shabdabrahma means Brahman in the form of a word.*

[105] *Gandharvas are most attractive beings (demi-gods). They attend on the gods. They are performing artists for the entertainment of gods. They sing, dance and enact dramas (all are considered parts of Sangeet Vidya or the science of music). The science of music was invented by Bharata Muni.*

Chitrarath was the king of Gandharvas. He had the most charming personality with a radiant face. The word Chitrarath literally means the shinning bright chariot. Chitra comes from the word chit that connotes intellect or buddhi. Chitra implies attaining a fixed consciousness of wisdom. Chitrarath means attaining supreme concentration on the chariot of wisdom.

Please refer Yoganand Paramhans' 'The Bhagavad- Gita' Vol. II pages 789-791.

[106] *Uchchaihshravas was the name of the king of horses. It was also the name of one of the horses of the sun god. Horse has great force of its own, it supports and carries the tremendous force of the rider and therefore, it is considered a symbol of power and dynamism. The word Uchchaihshravas also connotes flow of life force upwards from the base of spine; from kundalini to the top of the brain, to the centre of bliss. Normally, the flow of life force is down-wards from the brain; it connects the mind to senses and through these it creates entanglement with the rest of the world. Through Kriya-yoga one can awaken the Kundalini and reverse this process; the life current starts flowing upwards that disentangles the mind from worldly delusions and takes one to the state of relaxation and happiness and finally to*

bliss - Godly experience. The word Uchchaihshravas is made of two words, uchachais which means upwards and shravas connotes a rushing stream.

[107] *Elephant is considered powerful but a sober animal. Its memory and power of recognition are phenomenal. It symbolizes wisdom; it normally remains quiet unlike smaller animals but when it is provoked it becomes furious, demon like. Airavata was the king of elephants. The name Airavata is derived from the word 'Iravat' signifying 'produce from water'. Airavat is Lord Indra's elephant.*

Usually demons always fought with the gods. Demons were devil like and ungodly. The gods and demons were constantly at war. However, as per legends once both gods and demons combined to churn the Sea of Milk in search of nectar. 14 items came from the sea including nectar and poison. Poison was drunk by Shiva. A fight ensued between gods and demons for the nectar that eventually gods got but not before a part was taken away by demons Rahu and Ketu and bird Garuda which is the carrier of Lord Vishnu. The horse Uchchaihshravas and elephant Airavata also came out from the sea. At places it is mentioned that both of these sprang from the nectar; they were accorded an exalted position.

[108] *Vasuki is the name of king of serpents.*

[109] *John 4:14*

[110] *Kaamdeva was god of love like 'Cupid' of Roman mythology and 'Eros' of Greek mythology.*

[111] *Adityas were the sons of Aditi and Maharishi Kashyap as given in the beginning of this chapter. They became the gods. Daityas (demons) were the sons of Diti and Kashyap. They were always fighting with gods. Diti was the antithesis of Aditi.*

[112] *Science of self is something that bothered practically all ancient civilizations. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in his book on Bhagavadgita quotes Plato on page 266 which I am reproducing here. Plato observes: "The possession of the science as a whole, if it does not include the best, will in some few cases aid but more often harm the owner." Alcibiades, II, 144 D. Plato was talking about the science of the self.*

[113] *Prasooti was the daughter of Manu, the first person created by God on earth. Some scholars have said that he was a self-evolved being, but Krishna, as mentioned above, called the 14 Manus to be sons of Bramha.*

[114] *In Bhagavad-Gita by Jaydayal Goenka published by Gita Press Gorakhpur UP (page 438) the author has narrated a story from Ken Upanishad to explain how God (Brahman) displays his opulences through his creation. i am quoting the same here to explain the point: Once, by the grace of (Brahman) the gods killed a fierce demon who had created great problems for them. After killing him the celebrations were endless. The gods including King Indra virtually went mad while bragging their skill and power because of which the demon was killed. Brahman was worried due to their excessive pride and ego. He decided to teach them a lesson. He presented himself as the most charming Yaksha in their midst. The gods including Indra were greatly impressed but none recognised him. Indra asked Fire god to find out who the Yaksha was? Agni went to him but he was so much dazzled by his effulgence that he could not open his mouth but the Yaksha asked for his introduction. Agni in his bloated pride described his powers; that he could completely burn and destroy anything in the universe. Yaksha picked*

up a handful of dry grass and threw the same before him and asked him to burn the same. He tried his best but could do nothing. He returned to Indra and said that the Yaksha was a powerful alien and that he couldn't find who he was. Indra was worried for his throne.

He then deputed Wind God Marichi to secretly find out the details about the Yaksha. He too fared like Agni. He was overawed, couldn't speak a word and then Yaksha asked him for his introduction. Marichi described his great powers eloquently that he could just fly anything away with his one gust. The Yaksha placed a few straw pieces before him and again he could do nothing. He too reported his helplessness to Indra. Then Indra though worried, but full of pride with his powers came himself, and right before his eyes the Yaksha just vanished. Indra was looking at the sky searching for him when he saw Mother Goddess Paarvati (Lord Shankar's consort) walking across. He prayed to her to advise who the Yaksha was? Mother Goddess advised him that Yaksha was none other than Brahman himself who was worried at the pride of all the gods including yourself and that it was he who had fought and killed the demon through his team of gods using them as the medium. It is he who chooses to display his opulences through different people at different times. Indra was sorry and profusely apologized to her and through her to Brahman.

[115] *Veda Vyas the learned sage had offered to bless the blind Kaurava King Dhritrashtra with celestial telescopic vision (divya drishti) to enable him see for himself and hear what happened at the Mahabharata battle at Kurukshetra while staying at his palace in Hastinapur (something like a modern day TV). Though, the king was anxious to know firsthand and see the scenes of the battle but he was scared and could not sum up the courage to accept the offer. Knowing his predicament the sage offered to give the special vision to his disciple Sanjay who was working as his secretary. That is how Sanjay got the special vision which he used to describe the battle and give a running commentary on the same to the King. It would be clear from this chapter that none, no sage; no god had seen God's Universal Form before. In fact Krishna had first shown the same to Duryodhana when he was trying to broker a peace agreement between Pandavas and Kauravas before the war but he tried to arrest him (Krishna); and its importance was lost on him. Next Arjuna saw it and Sanjay too had the benefit of seeing it. Dhritrashtra only heard of the same from Sanjay. Later he mentioned the details to his queen Gandhari as well.*

[116] *Dr. S. Radha Krishnan in his book 'The Bhagavadgita' has called the seeing of God's Universal Form as a spiritual experience unlike a legend or history (pages 270-271). He mentions similar experiences like 'The Transfiguration of Jesus', 'the vision of Saul on the Damascus Road', 'Constantine's vision of the cross bearing the motto "In this sign we conquer", 'Joan of Arc's vision'. Arjuna had a similar experience. Only one, who is spiritually evolved and is a righteous person can get such an experience.*

Jesus' transfiguration has been mentioned in Mark ix, 2-8.

Saint Hildegard (1098 – 1180 AD) reports a vision in which she saw a "fair human form' who declared his identity in words reminiscent of the Gita's description. "I am that supreme and fiery force that sends forth all the sparks of life. Death hath no part in me, yet, do I allot it, wherefore I am girt about with wisdom as with wings. I am that living and fiery essence of the divine substance that glows in the beauty of fields. I shine in the water, I burn in the sun and the moon and the stars. Mine is that mysterious force of the invisible wind. I sustain the breath of all living. I breathe in the verdure and in the flowers, and when the waters flow like

living things, it is I. I formed those columns that support the whole earth.....All these live because I am in them and am their life. I am wisdom. Mine is the blast of the thundered word by which all things are made. I permeate all things that they may not die. I am life." Quoted in 'Studies in the history and Method of Science' edited by Charles Singer (1919) page 33.

[117] *Sanjay is at Hastinapur with the king in his palace and Arjuna is at the battlefield in Kurukshetra. The author (Krishna) brings in Sanjay here to enable Dhritrashtra to have a peep into the theatre of action; he knew that he was more anxious, worried and fearful than Arjuna.*

[118] *Nagas are a tribe akin to serpent species. Vishnu lies on the coil of Vasuki snake in the lower region beneath the oceans called the Pataal-loka.*

[119] *Here the author has covered different kinds of gods and demi-gods. Adityas, Rudras, Vasus and Maruts are four kinds of gods the others mentioned here are demi-gods who assist them. Some of these were mentioned in chapter 10. Sadhyas were the sons of Lord Dharma and wife Sandhya who was the daughter of Daksha Prajapati. Likewise, 10 Vishveydevas were sons of Lord Dharma and wife Vishrava who was another daughter of Daksha Prajapati. The two Ashwani Kumars were the sons of Sun God; they were the physicians in the heaven. In Mahabharata they have been mentioned to be the biological fathers of Pandava brothers Nakul and Sahdeva. Siddhas are perfected beings. (Also, please refer chapter 10)*

[120] *Time (Kaal) is the controller and destroyer of the world. He undertakes an unceasing process of creation and destruction while maintaining a delicate balance in the world. God takes full responsibility for all that happens to the creation both good and bad. His scheme is such that the various elements in the creation act (not the God). Human beings can use their free- will to generate a cause and effect equation that determines their fate and it also affects fates of others in the creation i.e. the combined destiny. Gita recognises the Supreme God as the disburser of both good and bad, unlike other faiths where God does the good and Satan does the evil. He acts through Maya, the three Gunas that cause our karma. He has gods and demi-gods as departmental heads. He gives a hint to Arjuna that action had already been afoot for the death of a large number of people and that he was a mere medium; and irrespective of his action of fighting or not fighting, Kauravas and many others were bound to perish. Probably for this reason they appeared rushinginto his bellies like firefly flies into the fire. Krishna's hints at the mandated death of Kauravas irrespective of Arjuna's action, indicates certain predestination that truly makes him (Arjuna) a helpless non-entity. This makes free-will, following the spiritual path in yoga, karma-yoga and gyaan-yoga etc that he dwelt on in earlier chapters irrelevant? It is really not so. God doesn't do what humans should do themselves. If he tried that, he (God) would not be able to do his own job.*

Even a Corporate House can't run efficiently and grow if it did not practise sufficient delegation. The Boss has to choose a proper team, define the duties and responsibilities and provide necessary tools, training and guidance from time to time; and then allow others to perform. In Gita Krishna's emphasis has been on achieving perfection (ultimate stage of excellence) for which he showed the path and even promised his help through our atman, the instinct, inspiration what we call the sixth sense. He even confirmed that he takes avatar from time to time to correct the situation. Those who were wise follow his guidance and try to shed their ego and advance on the spiritual path selflessly. When Krishna told Arjuna that all the

Kauravas and the rest had been killed by him; that he only had to become the instrument of victory by fighting the war he was conveying two messages. One, that Arjuna was really not killing anybody and his emotions for elders and reservations regarding the correctness or otherwise of the war was misplaced. The second one was that the accumulated karma of all those who were slated to be killed were such that even if he wished he could not save them. The entire scheme of karmic cycle, continuity of life and rebirth etc is based upon cause and effect; predetermination of the result by God would turn it upside down. It will then be akin to effect and cause? However, it is also true that the element of destiny is not a purely fictional concept. It has an important role that Krishna talks about in chapter 18.13–15.

[121] *The truth of the Supreme God being the Creator of all and that he dwells in everyone all the time is a constant refrain in Gita and in all Hindu scriptures. It has been said and believed that he lives everywhere, within, without, above and below and all round everyone. Truly there is no place, where he is not present.*

[122] *In Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas, father enjoys the position of God. It is often said that God is as kind as a father is to his son. In Bible too God has been mentioned as the Holy Father. The concept of God as father was at the core of Jesus' discourses. This concept finds frequent mention in the Old Testament as well.*

[123] *Four armed Form of Krishna is called Vishnu Roop or Narayan Roop. Krishna of Mahabharata times is considered an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who holds discus (Sudarshan chakra), mace, conch (name-Punchjanya) and lotus in his four hands. Krishna's discus (Sudarshan chakra) is a fast moving disc which is difficult to see. The significant thing to note here is that Krishna had taken a vow not to take any arms in his hands or fight on the behalf of Arjuna in the war. Here he breaks his vow to satisfy Arjuna's inquisitiveness. This shows to what extent God goes to protect his devotee.*

[124] *Krishna first showed his four armed form (Vishnu Roop) to his parents Devki and Vasudeva. He later changed to a child in his two armed human form. The second such occurrence was when as a child he showed the entire universe in his mouth to his foster mother Yashoda at Gokul.*

[125] *In Bible, both in Old Testament and New Testament there are several such incidents of vision of God and unbelievable mysterious events causing fear and awe.*

[126] *One who becomes detached and is devoted to God with unswerving focus will have nothing to gain for his own self and hence, nothing other than Supreme Deity will matter to him. Everyone would become his friend and he would nurse no animosity towards anybody. Such a devotee would become a yogi and will achieve a point focus.*

[127] *Yoga is a multi-step and multi-stage process. As one progresses in it, one realises the essential unity of jiva* (*living being*) *with soul (atman) and Cosmic Spirit represented by the Impersonal God. The former (soul) descends from the latter (the Cosmic Spirit) that pervades everything. The jiva, essentially the soul, remains incomplete as it is only a fragmental part of Cosmic Spirit or Super Soul and its sole aim has to be to achieve union with the Super Soul. It hankers for this union but it is the mind and ego that block its passage. Yoga gives the discipline to control the mind, the ego and the attachments. One, who realises the transcendental nature of God and the duality due to his immanence in the creation, seeks*

unity with him through devotion and worship is well versed in yoga. It helps us achieve unity between ego, body and spirit; otherwise the spirit is subjugated by our ego and the body consciousness dominates and it blocks our progress on the spiritual path.

[128] *In Avadhutagita by Dattatreya he poses a question to himself: "How can I bow to Him who is formless, un-differentiated, blissful and indestructible, who has through Himself and by Himself and in Himself filled up everything." He is simply saying that God is the goal, the object one wants to achieve; and if the object itself is missing then the very purpose is lost.*

[129] *There is a story that pertains to most venerated Persian Sufi poet Rabia-AL- Basri which i reproduce below. Rabia was a devout lady who spent most of her time in prayers. The story is like this: A moulvi (Muslim priest) was saying his namaaz (prayers). The rule is that no one should pass in front of one saying his namaaz. Rabia happened to be there. She was mentally absorbed and unmindful of him or his prayers; she crossed in front of him. After some time she came back by the same way. The moulvi stopped her and reprimanded her asking her that did she not know that he was saying his prayers and as per convention none is allowed to walk in front of one praying to Allah? Rabia politely apologized to him and said: she was so engrossed in the thought of her beloved that she did not see him at all. Then she added that she failed to understand that if he was absorbed in his prayers how could he see her?*

[130] *Desire creates attachment and a wrong sense of ownership which is difficult to give up. To control the same one would need divine help and for that he needs devotion and total surrender to God. There is a story about Emperor Ashoka that is often quoted in this regard. It is like this: Ashoka was very restless after Kalinga conquest; he was very unhappy. At that time he embraced Buddhism. He was administered monkhood by Buddha's disciple Upgupta. Still he was unhappy. After several years, he confided in Upgupta; he told his problem that even after giving up his kingdom and wealth and becoming a monk, he was unhappy. The teacher said: his renunciation of worldly belongings was incomplete though he thought he had given up everything. Ashoka immediately replied that he had really nothing left with him. Upgupta replied that his feeling that he had given up everything was still there. His sense of ownership and sacrifice of his belongings was the cause of his restless-ness. The day he gives up that and starts thinking it never belonged to him, he would be at peace.*

The subtle point is that all our worldly possessions do not belong to us. These are given to us by God who is the real owner. How can one give up something that does not belong to him? This is what Krishna said when he advised Arjuna that he had no right to the fruits of his action. His only duty was to perform action.

[131] *In Bible Jesus says: "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good; and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." He never deprives anyone of his bounty irrespective of their deeds; and provides a level field to all; thereafter, it is up to the individuals to make the best of his kindness.*

[132] *Ego elements make our mind and heart impure; we become unfit to receive God's grace. Therefore, we have to clear our mind and heart of such elements. In Bible it is said that one should clear his heart and make place for him for then only the Lord can enter the same.*

There is another anecdote that is often quoted: A king called the royal musician and expressed his desire to learn music and become like him. The musician was first confused and feared the worst, then he collected his wits and told him that for sure he could do it, but there was one condition he must fulfill. The king readily agreed. The musician said that he would have to ignore, throw out any sound other than his music instantly, for if the same becomes impure he would not be able to learn the same. The king never learned music.

[133] *Renunciation has multiple meanings. In case of a yogi it implies leaving the world and retiring to a secluded place, a forest, away from family and worldly attachments so that he could devote himself in search of the Un-manifested God through knowledge. In case of house holders, renunciation means giving up the desire (iccha tyaag). It is the desires that disturb him and he is unable to focus on God.*

[134] *Most of the scholars maintain that Gita has in all 700 verses (shlokas). In these 700 shlokas the opening query by Arjuna in this chapter is not counted. If we include the same the number of verses in Gita would be 701.Several scholars do not include this query in their writings; they treat chapter 13 as a continuation of the last chapter and the same opens with Krishna's explanation of the nature of body, soul and God. Those who do include Arjuna's query treat it as a preface and do not include the same as the first verse i.e. it is not included in the number count of verses. Including the same there would be 35 verses in this chapter and 701 verses in Gita.*

[135] *Modern day physicists, psychologists and scientists dealing with life sciences have propounded their own field theories. Einstein's field theory of gravity and Planck's quantum field theory dealing with atomic and sub atomic particles, electromagnetic radiations and space have similarities with the characteristics of kshetra as given in Vedas, Upanishads and Gita. Psychologist Curt Luis talked of a field theory and created the concept of Life-Space. Rupert Sheldrake working on life sciences gave his theory of Morphic Resonance and Morphogenetic Field. Fritjof Capra noted physicist admitted having derived inspiration from Vedic concepts in his book 'The Tao of Physics'.*

[136] *Brahmasutras are hymns expressing aphorism to Brahman.*

[137] *The Shashtras, Smritis, Sutras and Upanishads etc are all spiritual texts and hymns; these are a part of Hindu scriptures. These were written by separate groups of Rishis (Sages) who were learned Spiritual Masters and had evolved on the path of Self-realisation. They had personal experience to talk with authority. Vedas however, were told by Brahma to Maharishi Ved-Vyas.*

[138] *Revelation 4:4*

[139] *Scientists have now concluded that the universe is indeed much bigger than what is known to us. In fact, 96% of its constituents are still not known to us. Only 4% is known and the same is affected by unknown matter and energy. They are now trying to know the unknown matter and energy that they call dark matter and dark energy. This may well be un-manifested creation or the Mula Prakriti of Vedic texts.*

[140] *Higgs boson particle is one of the 17 particles in the Standard Model of physics. Boson is the name of a group of particles that are responsible for all the physical forces except gravity.*

[141] *Dr. S N Bose had collaborated with Einstein in formulating the theories of 'Bose-Einstein Statistics' and 'Bose-Einstein Condensate'. He also worked with Max Planck on particle physics. Bosons are the class of particles that follow Bose-Einstein Statistics. Prof. Paul Dirac who did pioneering work on Black Holes in physics gave the name 'boson' after Dr. S. N. Bose's name.*

[142] *Sat' literally means real. Anyone or anything can be true, only, if it can be verified or proved. But the beginning less and Eternal Brahman can't be verified for he is the cause of everything and none can reach him. Yes! One can achieve union with him and become a part of him but cannot reach him for a check and return back from there. No! 'Asat' means unreal; something which is not true or has no existence (one who has no astitva). This is not true for Brahman for he exists in all beings; truly he is the cause of their living. For this reason it is said that God is beyond the standard nomenclature of 'sat' and 'asat'. However, traditionally Brahman has been accepted as the only truth or 'sat'. This belief is based upon the truth that whatever is there, manifested or un-manifested, 'sat' and 'asat' it is Brahman and Brahman alone. Krishna said so in as many words in the ninth verse of chapter 9.*

[143] *Terms or attributes that are commonly used for Self are: without and within; unmoving and moving; immutable yet present in all beings; unattached yet the cause of birth, nurturing and extinction of creation and so on and on.*

[144] *Purusa has been variously described in Hindu scriptures. In Rig-Veda Purusa is described as a being who was sacrificed by the gods and that sacrifice created life forms including human beings. In Upanishads Purusa has been treated as an abstract essence of Self, the Brahman that is infinite, eternal, Immutable, without form but all pervasive. It has been mentioned along with Prakriti but it is subject to cause and effect and hence, it (Prakriti) keeps changing. Purusa is not subject to cause and effect hence it is unchanging and eternal. It is present everywhere and is the cause of changes in the Prakriti. In Bhagavata Purana, Purusa has been described as the first form of Supreme Lord Narayan (Narayan is a Personal God) which caused everything in the creation. Purusa is popularly accepted as another name for Cosmic Spirit, Brahman or Self.*

[145] *The Sanskrit word Mahat is derived from root mah which means great or exalted. Brahman or Brahma is derived from brih which stands for 'to enlarge' or 'to expand'. The word Mahat Brahma connotes the Mula Prakriti or the Great Nature (un-manifested Prakriti). Here the word Brahma stands for Prakriti.*

[146] *Sanskrit word for transcending or going beyond the three gunas is 'trigunateeta'.*

[147] *At the macro level even the cosmos is run under the influence of the three gunas. As per Hindu scriptures the creation is jointly managed by a trinity of three Gods viz. Bramha, Vishnu and Mahesh (Shiva). Bramha is in charge of creation, Vishnu takes care of nurturing and sustenance and Shiva is responsible for dissolution. Together they maintain the cycle of birth, life and death in the universe. It is accepted that Bramha is passionately active in his creative activities because of rajas guna that is most dominant in him. Sattva is dominant in Vishnu, he is compassionate and takes gentle care of everyone; and tamas is the ruling guna of Shiva who is responsible for decay and death including final dissolution of the creation.*

[148] *Mrityu means death. Mrityuloka stands for the loka or the world where death is a certainty. Our earth is one such mrityuloka. There are other lokas in the astral regions.*

[149] *Jeevan means life and mukta stands for 'to be free'. Krishna had first talked about one who becomes jeevanmukta in chapter 2 and chapter 12. In chapter 2.54 Arjuna almost made the same query. Krishna used the word sthitaprajna (ref. 2.55) to describe a yogi who tries to achieve the state of jeevanmukta. In chapter 12 he talks of such a person as a true devotee (ref. 12.13–16).*

[150] *Jesus said: "they, seeing see not; and hearing they hear not; neither do they understand". Mathew 13.13*

[151] *Christian mystic Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1180 AD) saw a vision of a fair human form who made almost exactly similar statements (Godlike) explaining how he creates, sustains and dissolves the creation how he provides the life force to one and all.*

The significant point is that God is present in everything including seemingly dead matter e.g. a stone, a diamond or a metal piece. Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose who was a great scientist and the founder of the Bose Institute at Calcutta demonstrated that the line dividing living being,(jiva) and nonliving matter is so thin that the boundary between these cannot be fixed with certainty. In 1899 he conducted an experiment in which the movements of molecules in a metal piece and tissues of a living animal were plotted and in each case a curve was obtained. Unexpectedly the two curves were strikingly similar. This indicated that the response of molecules of live tissue and those in a piece of matter closely resembled. Sir Bose's findings created quite a wave in the Royal Society at London. The entire scientific fraternity was overwhelmed by his findings and he was invited to London. Bose in his address to the Society after demonstrating his experiments maintained that a common thread existed in all living and nonliving in the creation. He credited the Vedantic teachings and the writings of ancient Indian scholars and said that his experiments had only confirmed what was well known to our ancestors several millenniums ago.

Paramhans Yoganand has beautifully described his discussions with Sir J C Bose, about his experiments and presentations to Royal Society and responses of the great scientists of his time. Kindly refer pages 942 to 945 of Paramhans Yoganand's "The Bhagavad Gita" for a detailed account of the same. In "Autobiography of a Yogi" by the same author (Paramhans Yoganand), he has included a chapter on his meeting with Sir JC Bose and about his work.

[152] *He describes himself as higher than the Imperishable; that he was Parabrahman the Primal God or Ishwar and candidly states that one, who understands this fact that he calls most secret sacred doctrine, and worships him with complete devotion surely comes to his abode.*

[153] *Abraham Maslow's 'The Theory of Human Motivation' explains how one acts in a particular manner almost instinctively. This is because we naturally acquire certain traits over time and these become a part of us and start acting as the prime mover.*

[154] *Jesus says: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how thou say to thy brother 'let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."Mathew 7.1-5.*

Similarly, when people were about to stone adulteress, Jesus said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Naturally none dared to cast a stone at her. John 8.7

[155] *In Hindu ethos human species is considered to be the highest amongst 84 lakhs species in the creation. One is born into our species after accumulating great numbers of karmic credits in several lives. One from our species who rises above through his spirituality, righteousness and good deeds gradually goes to the realm of gods and can eventually achieve the ultimate target of union with Supreme God (Parmatma). However, it is a slow process and demands perseverance.*

[156] *In Hindu philosophy it is believed that when one dies his soul floats in space (astral world) for some time before it finds its rightful place. This floating soul of those with unfulfilled desires remains suspended and is called the spirit or preta or pitri. Those who are good and virtuous (sattvik) go to God; those who are rajasik and worship gods or demigods go to them; and those who are demonic become ghosts aka spirits. Depending on their accumulated karmic credits, they spend time in their respective places and then return to earth to learn further lessons. This state of soul is called spirit; it can be good or bad depending upon its deeds in previous life.*

[157] *Sacrifice or yagna as per Vedas are sanctifying ceremonies performed symbolically with a central holy fire around which priests and others sit and chant Vedic mantras. They perform religious rites and rituals. On completion of the ceremony food is offered to the presiding priests (Brahmins), guests and the poor. The priests are offered gifts and dakshina (fees); and poor are given charities. Gita considers performance of noble deeds, using one's wealth for righteous cause without fearing for any suffering as a sacrifice. Yagna is a generic term.*

[158] *Brahmins are called twice born (dwij). One birth pertains to his physical birth and the other occurs when he acquires wisdom and god knowledge. Brahmins were expected to be Spiritual Masters.*

[159] *Please refer chapter 2 and chapter 3. In chapter 2 (verse 39) Krishna talks about Sankhya Doctrine and in chapter 3 he talks about Karma-yoga. He explained the relationship between the two. In Gita, Krishna is focused on Vedanta though the same was earlier discussed in Sankhya which has been called the highest wisdom. For eliminating any confusion one has to understand that in the present text Sankhya stands for Vedanta. Sankhya talks of Gyaan-yoga and renunciation of all actions and Vedanta teaches Yoga; selfless action. Krishna called the same karma-yoga. Both routes can eventually lead the yogi to Self-realisation.*

[160] *Please refer page 47 (Chapter 2) pages 181 and 182 (Chapter 13) for the 24 elements that constitute the human body.*

[161] *Krishna actually addresses Arjuna as 'Stubborn Bull of Realisation', one who gains self enlightenment through stubborn hard practise on the ordained path with constant inner fortitude. The reference to bull is metaphorical, it implies stubbornly going round and round on a fixed path blind folded without getting bored or tired. In case of bull it is external constancy, in his case it is inner fortitude and constancy. Reminding him of being a descendent of Bharata is his way of telling him of his pedigree and hence, his responsibility.*

[162] *In Bible the job of Maya is assigned to Holy Ghost who is one of the Trinity of Gods.*

[163] *Svabhava is divine self expression. It is the natural instinct of a person that defines his mindset and his attributes. God is the origin of it and we should not only accept it but respect it as well. It does not mean that God determines something and thrusts on others. Prakriti, its gunas work on auto -pilot according to a programme, the law of Nature that is set by God. Hence, Svabhava justifiably becomes God's expression.*

[164] *In Bible Jesus said "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Jesus means here that God's Cosmic Energy is a big source of energy for our needs. Mathew 4.4*

[165] *The concept of total surrender to God for success in life and after life is an accepted doctrine, in all religions. In Christianity St. Francis de Sales always said the prayer: 'Yes Father! Yes and always yes.' What he meant is that the will of God is supreme and we cannot question the same. Our salvation lay in accepting the same unconditionally.*

[166] *Please refer verse 66. Dharma is a Sanskrit word it means 'to hold'. Sanatan Dharma held Vedic Indians together. The Divine Law is a mechanism that sustains the universe and everything in it in equilibrium. It can be called Cosmic Dharma. Everyone in creation has his share of dharma that they all must perform to keep the world going. Any default earns them negative karma credit or one earns a sin for it. Krishna says that the same would be waived in case one follows his instructions with devotion. The word Sanatan stands for one that remains the same always.*

[167] *In Christian theology the word gospel is frequently used. It is the exact equivalent of Bhagavada meaning the words spoken by God. Gospel is derived from old English which implies god plus spel (tell). Hence gospel was meant to be a message from God or a preceptor sent by him. (Mark 10.29-30).*

[168] *In Bible Jesus said to his disciples: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'. Ref. RD's Bible (2005) page 681*

[169] *Please refer RD's Bible (2005 Reprint) page 694 (Mathew)*

[170] *Please refer RD's Bible (2005 Reprint) page 750 (Luke)*

[171] *Sanjay was King Dhritrashtra's secretary and charioteer.*

[172] *Partha means son of Pritha. Pritha was another name of Kunti his mother.*

[173] *We have used Mahabharata in italics for the war and* Mahabharata *for the book. Maha means great and Bharata stands for the land that formed the kingdom of King Bharata.*

[174] *Mahabhashya (The Great Commentary) was written by Patanjali about 150 BCE. Patanjali was one of the greatest Sanskrit grammarians. He wrote Yoga Sutra on Yoga and Pranayaam.*

[175] *Vaasudeva means son of Vasudeva; it is another name of Krishna. He is addressed by several other names all linked to the deeds he performed or his relationships or his special features and attributes.*

[176] *Kalidas was in the court of King Vikramaditya of Ujjaini. However, there were two Vikramadityas - one in 1st century BC and earlier Harsha Vikramaditya in the 6th century BC. Scholars differ about Kalidas' period. A majority believe that he wrote his books Abhigyaan Shakuntalam, Kumar-Sambhava and Raghuvansh (all well-known poems) in the 3rd century BC. Perhaps Kalidas was a title and there were more than one Kalidas and their period lies between 3rd century BC and 6th century AD.*

[177] *Dhritrashtra, Pandu and Vidur were biological sons of Ved Vyas. I have skipped the story as also the reason for Bhishma surrendering his claim to Bharata throne and his right to marry.*

[178] *Gandhari had the power to make one injury free (the body stone hard) if she saw his body bare (naked). She asked Duryodhana to come to her after taking out his clothes. Krishna was standing when he was taking out his clothes to go to her. He asked him to tie a cloth round his waist to cover his private parts for it didn't look proper for him to go naked even to her mother. Thus that part of his body that was covered by cloth did not benefit from her boon and remained weak. Later Bheem hit his weak spot by his mace and broke it and he could kill him.*

[179] *Ang Desh included present day Orissa, parts of Bihar and Bengal.*

[180] *Swayamvar was a function in which a princess chose her husband to be. Her father (the King) invited other suitor kings and princes to an open competition where one who fulfilled the conditions set by the King was offered the hand of the princess and a wedding was performed.*

[181] *Hastinapur town is even now there about 85 km north of Delhi. The name still continues to be the same.*

[182] *Rajsu-yagna was a challenge thrown by a powerful king to accept him as the monarch. Those who accepted the challenge had to fight with him for their independence; other kingdoms were merged with the challenger's kingdom. The kings however, were allowed to retain the freedom to administer their areas after the merger and remained autonomous.*

[183] *When Dushshashana was pulling her saari she kept crying but no one came to her help. Finally she threw her hands up and called Krishna and beseeched him to help her. Krishna was in Dwarka yet, he heard her cry and by a mystic power he came in the hall unseen by anyone and her saari became so long that Dushshashana collapsed tired and failed to disrobe her.*

[184] *As per Srimad Bhagavatam chapter 1 .(viii) each Division of the force comprised of 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 109,350 foot soldiers and 65,600 horse borne soldiers. The Pandavas had seven Divisions against eleven Divisions of the Kauravas.*

[185] *Yuyutsu was Dhritrashtra's son through a maid. He was the only one who took a stand against Duryodhana when he tried to insult Draupadi. He decided to fight from the side of Pandava.*

When Pandava retired Yudhishter anointed Abhimanyu and Uttara's son Parikshit as the King to the 'Bharata Throne' and established Yuyutsu as his right hand man at Indraprastha, presumably he was beholden to him for his help against his own brothers.

[186] *As per the rules of the war fighting was done in the day time only and stopped at sun set. In fact the members of the two sides were free to meet each other after the sun set. Ashwathama's action in attacking a Pandava tent at mid night was therefore, not in keeping with the rules.*

[187] *Scholars interpret this text to imply that India had something like a television arrangement even at the time of Mahabharata 5000 years back.*

[188] *The legend has it that Dharmaraaja the king of Justice and Fair-Play at the Heaven had disguised himself as a dog for a final test of Yudhishter before he could be admitted to Heaven*

[189] *The rivalry between Vaishnavas (worshippers of Vishnu) and Shaivyas (worshippers of Shiva) and other sub-sects has always been there and it continues even now. This is akin to Churches amongst Christians, sects amongst various faiths of Muslims and Jews. These must be there in other religious faiths as well. In Muslims the fight between Sunnis and Shias, Bohras, Khojas, Agha Khan's sect, Ismailies and Ahmadias is a good example.*

[190] *One who runs away from the battle field showing his back is called 'Runchor'.*

[191] *Yavan is a Sanskrit word that stands for Greece, Kaal stands for very strong, ferocious and giant like, a demon; it also stands for time. Seeking the help of a very powerful king of Greek origin shows that India's relations with Greece are age old. Kaalyavan's family had earlier migrated to western India where they settled down. They formed a small kingdom and ruled.*

[192] *Son of Vasudev would be called Vaasudev as per Sanskrit tradition.*

[193] *In Christian theology the word gospel is frequently used. It is the exact equivalent of Bhagavata. Gospel is derived from old English which implies god plus spel (tale). Hence gospel was meant to be a message from God or a preceptor sent by him.*

[194] *An Elephant named Kubalayapeera at Kansa's stable was made to drink lots of wine. When he was inebriated and in great rage he was thrown before Krishna, to kill him. But Krishna made mincemeat of him.*

[195] *Divya Drishti means exceptional, clear distance vision. Dhritrashtra's secretary Sanjay was blessed with the same. Sitting at Hastinapur palace he could see and hear all that was happening at the battle field of Kurukshetra. He saw Krishna's Viraat Roop and described the same to the blind king who mentioned it to his queen Gandhari. It must have been something like a television. And if the same was invented by Ved Vyas he must have been gifted with a very fertile brain.*

[196] *We tend to identify God with one who has a body like us. Personal God or Sagun Brahman is a God who has a human form. Nirgun Brahman is a God without a body. It is the Supreme Self or Super Spirit that pervades the entire creation like energy that can't be seen.*

[197] *If we want to understand what Krishna and Jesus said and did we will have to forget about academic matters like their genuineness, whether they were at all there. We have to take them as real and treat them like one of us and study their lives, their ideas and actions. Let us forget the halo around their faces, instead try to find out how it came about and how it still goes on increasing.*

[198] *Holy Spirit aka Holy Ghost is equivalent of Maya in Gita.*

[199] *Christ is a title that got associated with Jesus' name and he became Jesus Christ. However, later the word Christ became his name. The devout lovingly address him as Jesus. Some Scholars trace Jesus' ancestry to King Solomon and David establishing his royal lineage.*

[200] *Yoganand Paramhans spent a long time in America. Besides Gita, Vedas and Vedanta he was the most knowledgeable (after Swami Vivekananda) in respect of the teachings of Bible. He had great following and was much respected all over the western world. His approach was more rational as he viewed all spiritual matters through the prism of science and has commented extensively on the teachings of Bible.*

[201] *Samadhi is the final stage of Yoga. A successful practitioner of this yoga qualifies to become Jeevanmukta (free of body); while alive he gives up the body syndrome and rises above it. After his death he is not born to take a new body. He achieves oneness with God, the Cosmic Energy.*

[202] *Those who worshipped Lord Vishnu or his incarnations were called Vaishnav. Krishna was one such incarnation. Swami Bhaktivedanta was himself a Vaishnava.*

[203] *Shrimad-Bhagavatam is a highly respected Hindu treatise by Sage Ved Vyas dealing with the life story of Krishna.*

[204] *Dinkar Joshi a Gujarati scholar has written some 70 books several of these deal with Krishna's life. I read some Hindi translations of his books. He has skillfully dealt with subtle points in the character of Krishna. i benefitted by his books and am grateful to him. A book by the name "Shyam phir ek baar tum mil jatey!" portrays Radha's immense love and longing for him and Krishna's portrayal of need for one's total commitment to his duty (dharma) rising above all worldly bonds and emotions. It softly touches one's sensibilities, whether he is a believer or otherwise.*

[205] *At several places Swamiji enjoyed the hospitality of rulers of princely states who were overwhelmed by his intellect. In fact his clothes, headgear and passage for his visit to Chicago were provided by the Maharaja of Khetri State. In America and elsewhere abroad he lived on funds provided by his audiences and admirers. Belurmath that became the head quarters of Ram Krishna Mission, founded by him, and its several establishments were financed through donations and charities a great deal of which came from foreigners.*