

# Bhajagovindam or Moha Mudgara of Adi Shankaracharya

A Layman's Commentary

This layman's commentary on Bhajagovindam is made so that those who have not read the great work of the most revered Jagat Guru Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada would be prompted to do so and study it with the help of an authoritative commentary.

Prayer:

“Om  
Sthaapakaaya cha dharmasya  
sarva dharma swaroopine  
Avataara varishthaya  
Ramakrishnaayate namah”

("I bow to Sri Ramakrishna, the most Supreme among all Incarnations of God, who established Dharma (religion) and who is the embodiment of all dharmas")

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Let us start with what the great Rajaji (C.Rajagopalachari) said about Bhajagovindam:

## RAJAJI'S INTRODUCTION

*“Adi Sankaracharya wrote a number of Vedantic works for imparting knowledge of the Self and the Universal Spirit. He also composed a number of hymns to foster Bhakti in the hearts of men. One of these hymns is the famous Bhajagovindam. The way of devotion is not different from the way of knowledge or Jnana. When intelligence matures and lodges securely in the mind, it becomes wisdom. When wisdom is integrated with life, and issues out in action, it becomes Bhakti. Knowledge, when it becomes fully mature, is Bhakti. If it does not get transformed into Bhakti, such knowledge is useless tinsel. To believe that Jnana and Bhakti, knowledge and devotion, are different from each other, is ignorance.*

*If Shri Adi Sankara himself who drank the ocean of Jnana as easily as one picks water from the palm of one's hand, sang in his later years hymns to develop devotion, it is enough to show that Jnana and Bhakti are one and the same. Sri Sankara has packed into the Bhajagovindam song the substance of all Vedanta, and set the oneness of Jnana and Bhakti to melodious music.”*

## INTRODUCTION

Sri Sankara

Sri Adi Sankaracharya composed this wonderful song in simple Sanskrit. Sri Sankara's lifetime is estimated to be 788-820 A.D. Some evidences suggest he was born in Kerala, (a southwestern state of India). Sri Sankara was not only a saint, but also a poet of high ranking, a brilliant Sanskrit scholar, and philosopher, also. He established a number of religious institutions which are functioning even today.

Sri Sankara, the great prophet who propounded the Advaita (Non Dualistic) philosophy, lived only for about 32 years and hence could work only for about 20 years. But the work he had done in such a short span of life was colossal. He reformed and rejuvenated the Hindu faith, which was suffering due to the influence of misinterpreted Buddhism and internal fights among its petty leaders and groups.

His other works were: Commentary on the Prasthanas Trayam (consisting of Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita), Viveka Choodamani, Panchadashi, Atma Bodham, Soundaryalahari, many stotras (prayers), songs, prose, etc.

Christopher Isherwood wrote about him "... As prophet and as thinker, Sankara stands among the greatest figures in the history of the world. He is primarily, the unrivalled propounder of Advaita Vedanta, the non-dualistic aspect of the Vedic teachings. By means of his remarkable clearness, his supreme wisdom, and his profound spirituality, he has so stamped himself upon Vedanta that it has remained the paragon of Indian Philosophy, and has given solace to the sorrowful hearts of a large segment of mankind."

## Bhajan song

The Bhajagovindam has a grand depth of philosophy and poetic beauty to bind itself to the sadhaka's heart. Among the poetical works of Sri Sankara, Bhajagovindam is one of the smallest in volume, but easily could be ranked one of the foremost. Though it is a bhajan song, it is considered as a "prakarana grantha", a primer to major works.

C.Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) has remarked that this simple song contains all Vedanta Sara, the essence of Vedanta. It is no wonder that the song is very popular all over India and is often recited in Bhajans and other satsanga. This is set to melodious music suitable for singing in chorus. Bhajan is an important part of devotional exercises for the Hindu mind. Music itself is said to elevate the mind to freedom. So, what if it is on God Himself? The sweetness of a well-sung Bhajan will not fail to elevate even a dull mind to higher realms. The idea is to forget one's little self. Music, rhythm and where possible, accompaniments of instruments play a good role. A dull song may not appeal to many.

## Practical guide

What is the difference between other bhajan songs and Bhajagovindam? There are several types of Bhajan songs: chanting Lord's myriad names, his glories, stories, experiences of great seers, etc. Though it is written in the style of a Bhajan, Bhajagovindam is much more than that. It is a philosophical treatise: Here the subject is our own Self; The ironies of life, the vanity of life; the transient nature of life's pleasures and pursuits form the subject of this unique gem among songs. In a very compact form, Sri Sankara presents a practical guide on how to live; how to get rid of lust and greed, how to attain God realization. That is why this is also called 'Moha mudgaram' (remover of delusion). Gita is the prominent parallel to this. Bhagavan Sri Krishna in His sweet, musical words gently persuades Arjuna to the right path. Essentially the same method is followed by the great Acharya here. He even urges sadhakas to study the Gita. In fact, Bhajagovindam should serve as an abridged version of the Gita, which should inspire sadhakas to the serious study of the latter.

## Jnana Bhakti Samanvaya

Though it may sound simple, the Acharya has nicely condensed in the song all practical aspects of Vedanta philosophy. Important principles of Jnana (knowledge) and Bhakti (devotion) are presented to the common man. It is said that the Acharya, who drank the ocean of knowledge and is considered a Jnani of highest order, became obsessed with devotion in his later years. If an exalted saint like Sankara has admitted the importance of Bhakti, that is enough to show that Jnana and Bhakti is one and the same and to think they are different from each other is ignorance, as Rajaji says. The pinnacle of jnana is Bhakti and the highest point of bhakti is Jnana.

### The Message

The message of Bhajagovindam impresses upon the human mind the transient nature of life, the hollowness of material possessions and the necessity of calling on God. Throughout the verses, the same tone is repeated. The Acharya does not only deplore the philosophy of materialism, but also suggests ways to tide over the difficulties and establish oneself in God consciousness. He presents a carefully drawn plan of action for the householders and sanyasins alike to achieve the highest ambition in life: that is, God - realization. The four-lane path of Bhakti- Jnana-Karma-Raja yogas is illuminated by the Acharya in his inimitable way.

### Composition

The first sloka is considered the 'pallavi'. The pallavi and the next 12 padas are considered composed by the Acharya himself. This part is hence called "Dwadasha Manjarika Stotram"(a bouquet of 12 flowers). Inspired by what they heard from their Guru, the disciples composed one sloka (verse) each, totaling 14. This part is called the "Chaturdasha Manjarika Stotram"(a bouquet of 14 flowers). The Guru was pleased with the disciples and blessed them composing 4 more slokas. Hence the Bhajagovindam consists of total 31 slokas. Since more than 1000 years have passed, it is difficult to attribute slokas to their respective authors. Scholars differ in their opinion. Hence I give the following names of some of the disciples, without attempting to mention which was their composition: Padmapada, Trotakacharya, Hastamalaka, Subodhacharya, Sureshwaracharya, Nithyananda, Nithyanaatha, Anandagiri, Yogananda, Bharativamsha, Vartikakara, Surendra, Sumatir, Medhatithira and Bharatidasa.

### The Kashi Yatra

The Acharya is believed to have composed the Bhajagovindam during his famous Kashi Yatra (pilgrimage to Kashi, Benares). The fourteen disciples are said to have accompanied him. The story goes that when he was walking along the streets of Kashi, he was pained to observe an elderly man trying hard to learn Sanskrit grammar. At his advanced age, the remaining valuable little time of his life should have been used for calling on God (Govinda), instead of wasting on learning a language. This prompted Sri Sankara to burst out this composition, a sort of rebuke to foolish way of living. The Acharya urges the man to turn towards God and sing His glory instead of trying to learn a language. A censure is implied when the Acharya calls the man a fool (Moodhamathe). It may be added here that the tone of Bhajagovindam is not at all soft, but somewhat striking, in spite of its exotic poetic beauty and perfection of composition. This is no wonder, because such a treatment is required to wake up man from his slumber. A milder approach would delay the matter. The matter is urgent, as the Acharya explains in the next verse, for, when the hour of death approaches without any forewarning, the hard-learned verses of grammar are not going to save the poor soul. Hence the song rightly starts without any preamble:

Bhajagovindam Bhajagovindam,

Govindam bhaja moodhamate!

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## Verse 1

Bhaja govindaM bhaja govindaM  
govindaM bhaja muuDhamate .  
saMpraapte sannihite kaale  
nahi nahi rakshati DukR^iJN karaNe

(Note: The Sanskrit text is written here in ITRANS format. Readers are advised to use Devanagari text, if available.)

(Bhaja = worship; govindaM = Govinda; (a name of Maha Vishnu, God); muuDhamate = OH fool; saMpraapte = (when you have) reached / obtained; sannihite = presence / nearness of; kaale = Time (Kala, Time, the great destroyer, Lord of Death, Yama); nahi = No; rakshati = protects; DukR^iJN karaNe = a formula of grammar (from Panini's book)

(bhajagovindaM bhajagovindaM govindaM bhaja muuDhamate . = Worship Govinda, Worship only Govinda, oh fool! sannihite kaale saMpraapte = when the time (for death) comes near; DukR^iJNkaraNe nahi nahi rakshati = the rules of grammar won't save (you). )

Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, oh fool! When the hour of death approaches, the formula of grammar will not save you.

Sri Sankara warns us that at the hour of death, "dukrin karane" (a formula from Panini's book of grammar) will not help us. By "dukrin karane", not only the rules of grammar are meant, but also the whole of physical knowledge. He urges us to close down the book of material knowledge such as art, science, etc. and turn the mind toward God.

Further, "dukrinj karane" means "useless knowledge". He does not condemn all knowledge, but merely states that such knowledge will not be useful for God – realization, in case that is what you aim for. Well, if you have not taken it in your agenda, the material knowledge may be useful to you - for a livelihood or for satisfying curiosity, for example; but the fact remains that the best of physical knowledge serves no purpose for a spiritual aspirant, though the story of the man who is still immersed in worldly pursuits, is different. One whose mind is set on God realization will find all other knowledge quite useless: may it be mathematics, grammar, history or atomic science. Because it doesn't accompany him beyond the point of this life. When the doors of death are suddenly opened, knowledge of God alone helps. Nothing else. So, what is knowledge? Knowledge is that which helps to realize God. The rest is ignorance. Hence Sri Sankara asks firmly to discard useless pursuits and set the mind to God.

The above can be summarized with the following words of the great Swami Vivekananda:

*"Spiritual knowledge is the only thing that can destroy our miseries for ever; any other knowledge satisfies wants only for a time. It is only with knowledge of the spirit that the faculty of want is annihilated for ever."* (Karma Yoga).

*"He lives in vain who does not utilize the human birth which is very rare to obtain, for the attainment of Divinity"* - Sri Ramakrishna.

*“ Knowledge pertaining to Iswara is the real knowledge. Branches of arts and sciences, logic, grammar – learning such as these usually confuse the understanding instead of clarifying it. Sacred books often function as shackles that prevent freethinking. All learning is good if it can ever guide man Godward”*

- Sri Ramakrishna.

Material science or knowledge indeed is great, but it is only a part of the Infinite knowledge of the Self. For the man who wants to have the full knowledge which will solve ALL his problems, the limited knowledge of physical science is not critical. (Readers can learn more on this in Raja Yoga by Swami Vivekananda).

There are many people who believe in God, but consider it not necessary to follow the religious path now. There is time, they say, till the old age. They could do all this in the retired life. After retirement from occupation or active life, people have little to do and religion could be pursued as a hobby. Till the hour of death, there is time. Good idea! But this may not work well always. Death may not wait till the old age. Moreover, the body and mind will be weak during old age and it may not be easy to carry out sadhanas, even if one wishes to do so.

Further, such people find solace in the famous sloka of Gita

*Anta kale cha mameva smaranmuktua kalevaram  
Yah prayati sa madbhavam yaati nasty atra samshaya*  
(Bhagavad Gita sloka 5, Chapter 8).

Swami Chidbhavananda comments:

*“The essence of the sum total of the entire thoughts and feelings that have been taking place in the mind of man during the span of his life, stands condensed into a single state of mind at the time of his departure from the body. To effect the thought of Lord at the last moment is therefore well nigh impossible. Preparation for it has to go on all through the life.”*

Moreover, some commentators like Sri Sankara say, the ‘cha’ in the sloka after ‘anta kale’ is very important. It means, “thought of the Lord, ALSO at the time of death” (during the whole life and also at the time of death, “poorvamapi anta kale cha”). The next sloka of Gita explains what happens to the departing soul if it thinks of something else. Lord cannot be reached with the thought of something else. So it is essential to start following the path of God as soon as possible.

The desire to know the meaning of our existence should come from one’s own self. The rest will follow.

Now, what is “Bhaja”? It is not the mechanical repetition of Lord’s name without the presence of mind. Some people do it as a mere religious ritual or observance. The Bhajan of Lord should come from the bottom of one’s heart. It should be true love and devotion to Him; Calling on Him in that spirit is what is meant by “Bhaja Govindam”.

It may not be a coincidence that Sri Sankara chose to name God by the word ‘Govinda’: His Guru’s name was Govindacharya.

## Verse 2

mUDha jahiihi dhanaagama tR^ishhNaaM  
kuru sadbuddhiM manasi vitR^ishhNaam.h .  
yallabhase nijakarmopaattaM  
vittaM tena vinodaya chittam.h

(mUDha = Oh fool!; jahiihi = jahi + iha, leave / give up + here (in this world); dhana = wealth; agama = coming / arrival; tR^ishhNaaM = thirst / desire; kuru = do; act; sadbuddhiM = sat.h + buddhiM, good + awareness (loosely speaking: mind); manasi = in the mind; vitR^ishhNaaM = a state without desires; yallabhase = yat.h + labhase, whatever + (you) obtain; nijakarma = nija + karma, one's + duty (normal work); upaattaM = obtained; vittaM = wealth; tena = by that; with that; vinodaya = divert / recreate (be happy); chittaM = mind.)

(mUDha dhanaagama tR^ishhNaaM jahiihi = Oh fool, give up here the thirst to amass wealth; manasi vitR^ishhNaaM sadbuddhiM kuru = Getting rid of desire, fill (your) mind with good thoughts (on God); nija karmopaattam yad vittaM labhase = the wealth that is obtained as a result of one's own karma; tena chittaM vinodaya = with that, entertain your mind.)

Oh fool! Give up now the thirst to amass wealth; Getting rid of vain desires, fill the mind with good and holy thoughts; Entertain it with the wealth you acquire by fair means.

Again Sri Sankara calls a man 'fool': This time he addresses the man who is yearning for money! Money itself is not bad. But the 'thrushna', the relentless thirst for money could be a poison. Such a man could be easily called a fool! There is no harm in earning whatever money is obtained by doing honest work as per one's dharma. But one shouldn't be greedy. I believe, this is applicable to sadhakas as well as men of the world.

It is an everyday affair: Killings for money, robbery, corruption and numerous financial crimes. The reason is the insatiable thirst for money. Man thinks that without money he cannot lead a reasonable life. This is true also. But when he finds his own means are limited, he tries to grab others' property; if this is not easy, he even tries violent means. Sometimes he also ends up in trouble, along with his victim. Human mind refuses to set a limit for requirement of wealth. The shocking fact is that crimes are often committed not by poor people, but by well-to-do men who are not satisfied with their present position!

The word 'dhana' here not only means money, but also all other human pursuits for enjoyment and collection of wealth. The important thing is to isolate our mind from material possession. The materials of enjoyment are neither good nor bad. But we should not attach ourselves to them. This is the secret. The Acharya here doesn't condemn money or wealth. Neither does he differ with our fair means of acquiring it. What is objectionable is the greed. There is no end to greed, if we give it a free hand. Very few people are satisfied with what they get. No amount will satisfy them. So, for having a balanced mind and a peaceful life, there has to be a line marking the limit. Sri Sankara nicely sets it here: Obtain your lot by fair means by doing your legitimate duties; but do not fall for greed. Be happy with whatever you attain through your limited and fair means and lead a contented life. This is the message. The mind which is isolated from greed should be filled with good thought; i.e, turned towards God. Mind being always in a restless state, needs something to entertain itself. Good thoughts and love of God should fill the vacuum created by lack of greed for material enjoyments. Wealth thus acquired without greed, through fair and legitimate means and meant for distribution to the needy, is good.

*"Going after wealth in such a case is not bad, because that wealth is for distribution. The householder is the centre of life and society. It is a worship for him to acquire and spend wealth nobly, for the householder who struggles to become rich by good means and for good purposes is doing practically the same thing for the attainment of salvation as the anchorite does in his cell when he is praying."*

- Swami Vivekananda (Karma

Yoga).

### Verse 3

naariistanabhara naabhiideshaM  
dR^ishhTvaa maagaa mohaavesham.h .  
etanmaaMsavasaadi vikaaraM  
manasi vichintaya vaaraM vaaram.h

(naarii = woman; stana = breasts; bhara =full; naabhiideshaM = nAbhl + deshaM, navel + region; dR^ishhTvaa = having seen; maagaa = mA + gaa, Don't + go; mohaavesham = infatuated state (moha + AveshaM - seizure); etan.h = this; maa.nsavasaadi = mAmsa+ vasa + Adi, flesh, fat, etc. vikaaraM = appearance (generally, grotesque / ugly); manasi = in the mind; vichintaya = think well; vaaraM = again; vaaram = and again)

(naariistanabhara naabhiideshaM dR^ishhTvaa = Seeing the full breasts and the navel area of women; mohaavesham maagaa = don't lust after; etat maamsa vasaadi vikaaraM = these are mere derivatives of flesh, fat and the like; vaaraM vaaraM manasi vichintaya = think (this) again and again.)

Don't get excited with desire seeing the full breasts and navel area of women.  
Think of them again and again as mere flesh, fat and the like.

After tackling the issue of limiting the greed for wealth, Sri Sankara now turns his attention to the issue of sex. Don't be carried away by the sight of full breasts and the belly of a beautiful woman! Think of it again and again as mere flesh, fat and the like covered in skin. A very difficult advice indeed! This perhaps would not be accepted by the worldly minded people. But this advice is for sadhakas.

Beauty is but skin deep. The Acharya points to this fact. If the sadhaka is stuck with such diverting things, his progress will be stalled. So the caution. The mental picture of such beautiful objects as mere combination of flesh, fat and other undesirable matter (for the sadhaka), will slowly develop a vairagya (renunciation) in the sadhaka's mind. The reality behind many attractive things in life will often be shocking. This shock is necessary to develop 'vairagya' to cross the river of 'maya'. But it is not easy. Lust is not easy to give up, because it is our animal nature. Hence the thought as explained has to be reinforced again and again (vaaram, vaaram).

Sri Sankara has often been criticized for writing this verse; the sanyasi discusses explicit sexual details, they accuse. But sex is part and parcel of life. It is a basic instinct of man, who is after all an animal. There is no escape from this fact. Closing our eyes on it will not help. Sexual urge is quite natural and it is hence very difficult to control it. The sadhaka needs solid advice to tackle the problem. Hence Sri Sankara boldly attacks the subject and suggests solution also.

It should be remembered that the Acharya doesn't condemn either dhana or sexual urge. Objects are neither ugly nor beautiful; But the mind colours them as such; the trouble starts there. Sadhaka's mind has to be free from attachment to such things. He or she should see the truth and then turn their mind to the Real.

The sadhaka's life is not an easy one. He has to conquer the thirst for unlimited wealth and also his insatiable urge for the opposite sex. It may sound very demanding. True; but to realize a higher truth and to reach a state of infinite pleasure in the discovery of the Self, this sacrifice is necessary. The Acharya only tries to help the situation by offering practical suggestions. (Readers who desire to know more why sexual feelings are to be controlled by the sadhaka, please refer Raja Yoga by Swami Vivekananda.)

Though the Acharya addresses men here, by explaining about female anatomy, the advice is,

needless to say, for women also to think twice on attraction for men. The Acharyas were certainly not biased against women.

Sri Ramakrishna often advised his devotees to slowly get rid of “kamini kanchana”. The idea is the same. These two create the biggest obstacles for the sadhaka who wants to progress on the spiritual path. Hence all saints have cautioned them on these.

Sri Sankara, in these two slokas merely repeats the message of earlier seers.

## Verse 4

naliniidalagata jalamatitaralaM  
tadvajjiivitamatishayachapalam.h .  
viddhi vyaadhyabhimaanagrastaM  
lokaM shokahataM cha samastam.h

(naliniidalagata = nalini + dala + gata = lotus + petal + reached / gone; jalaM = water (drop); atitaralaM = ati + taralam, very + unstable; tadvat.h = like that; jiivitaM = life; atishaya = wonderful; chapalaM = fickle-minded; viddhi = know for sure; vyaadhi = disease; abhimaana = egoism; grastaM = having been caught / seized; lokaM = world; people; shokahataM = attacked (hata) by grief (shoka); cha = and; samastaM = entire.)

(naliniidalagata jalamatitaralaM = The water drop trapped in a lotus petal is susceptible; tadvat.h = likewise; jiivitaM atishaya chapalaM = life is also wonderful and uncertain; samastaM lokaM, vyaadhyabhimaanagrastaM shokahataM cha viddhi = know that the whole world is seized by diseases and pride and devastated by grief)

Life is uncertain and unstable as a drop of water trapped in a lotus petal; Know that it is prone to various maladies like diseases and egoism and the entire worldly life of man is mostly grief-stricken.

The great poet in Sri Sankara here compares life with a drop of water trembling on a lotus petal. It is so uncertain and unstable. The water drop trapped on a lotus petal is shaky and may fall any time. Our life is no different. It may come to end anytime. Death comes without any forewarning. Man should understand this truth and turn his attention to God, Sat- Chid – Ananda (Existence – Knowledge –Bliss).

Life is not only unstable, but it is infected with the maladies like diseases and pride. Pride or egoism is also considered a disease here. “Jnana and mukti cannot be had as long as egoism persists. Birth and death also do not come to an end to him who is given to egoism.”, says Sri Ramakrishna. Hence it is really sorrowful. There is more pain here than pleasure. More troubles than fun. This is the nature of life.

There must also be a hidden meaning to this sloka. Lotus grows in water. Hence the water drop which falls into the water again joins its original source; i.e, water. If we think of the infinite Brahman as water and the Jeevatma as the water drop, the matter is clear. From Brahman we come. We remain in the lotus petal of life for a short while and then again merge in our original state. While in this apparent state of isolation from the original place, like the water drop trapped in the lotus petal, our life is full of uncertainties. Slightest wind will mean the downfall of the drop. In life also, slightest mishap can mean disaster. Hence the Acharya urges us to turn to God.

## Verse 5

yaavadvittopaaarjana shaktaH  
staavannija parivaaro raktaH .  
pashchaajjiivati jarjara dehe  
vaartaaM ko.api na pR^ichchhati gehe

(yaavat.h = so long as; vitta = wealth; upaarjana = earning / acquiring; shaktaH = capable of; taavannija = tAvat.h + nija, till then + one's; parivaaraH = family; raktaH = attached; pashchaat.h = later; jiivati = while living (without earning); jarjara = old / digested (by disease etc); dehe = in the body; vaartaaM = enquiry / inquiry; ko.api = kaH + api, whosoever; even one; na = not; pR^ichchhati = inquires / asks / minds; gehe = in the house.)

(yaavadvittopaaarjana shaktaH= as long as one is capable of earning money; taavannija parivaaro raktaH . = up to that time one's family members will be affectionate; pashchaat.h, jarjara dehe jiivati = Afterwards, when (he) lives with an infirm body; gehe ko.api vaartaaM na pR^ichchhati = nobody in the home enquires (his) welfare.)

As long as one is fit and capable of making money, he gets the affection of his family members. Afterwards, when he is old and sick, nobody even bothers to enquire his welfare.

Those who are madly after money should pause for a moment and consider what is likely to happen to them in the later stage of their life! They struggle all their lives to earn as much as possible, to get more power and position, not always through fair means, perhaps cheating others, perhaps committing crimes. However, all this should come to an end. A stage will come when a doctor will not be able to continue his profession, neither a singer to sing. All our physical, intellectual and mental abilities will deplete as we advance in age. There is no escape from this fact. As soon as we are incapable of earning anymore, people distance from us. A very bitter fact, indeed; but true: As long as we earn, family, relatives, friends, etc. are there with us giving us all affection. When we are old or incapable of earning wealth, all those who surrounded desert us. Son or daughter, brother or sister, mother or father: all care more for the person who earns money. The respect commanded is directly proportional to the money he has.

Man, or any animal for that matter, is basically selfish. All this behaviour alleged is a direct result of selfishness. An elderly man (or woman) who has passed his prime and lost potential to earn is not paid attention; Nobody consults him. This is the way of the world. The Acharya urges us to understand this truth and hence keep the mind clear of expectations and attachments. For, these are bound to bring misery, sooner or later. At the end of life, when the body is weak and sick, nobody may even come to say a few kind words.

## Verse 6

yaavatpavano nivasati dehe  
taavat pR^ichchhati kushalaM gehe .  
gatavati vaayau dehaapaaye  
bhaaryaa bibhyati tasminkaaye

(yaavat.h = so long as; pavanaH = air / breath; nivasati = lives / dwells; dehe = in the body; taavat.h = till then; pR^ichchhati = asks / inquires; kushalaM = welfare; gehe = in the house; gatavati = while gone; vaayau = air (life-breath); dehaapaaye = when life departs the body; bhaaryaa = wife; bibhyati = is afraid; fears; tasminkaaye = tasmin.h + kaye, that body.)

(yaavat.h dehe pavanaH nivasati = As long as breath (prana) resides in the body; taavat.h gehe kushalaM pR^ichchhati = Till that time (people) enquire the welfare; dehaapaaye, vaayau gatavati = when the body falls with the departure of breath; tasmin kaaye bharyaa bibhyati = (even one's) wife is afraid of that body)

When one is alive, his family members enquire kindly about his welfare . When the soul departs and the body falls, even one's wife is afraid of the corpse.

Even wife is afraid of her husband's dead body, the body which gave her pleasure and pain in life; which shared her joys and sorrows: Lo! Now that is past; It is now a lifeless lump: a dead body! This is also a sour fact. As long as the breath of life is there, people come and surround. The departure of prana (jeeva) changes the whole scene. People want to get rid of the dead body as soon as possible. We should understand that the body is useful only to this extent. It is the best instrument we have to make the best out of life: to realize God. But if we think that it is everlasting and give too much attention to mend it, that is a fruitless exercise.

It is to be remembered that the body is undergoing change always. The pretty baby soon grows into a handsome youth. Youth has soon to give way to old age and its accompaniments of disease and weakness and the inevitable end. The body has no value without its master, the soul. It is like the empty cage from which the bird has flown away. Without soul, it is just a corpse, which repels everybody. The Acharya reminds us these harsh realities of life and urges us to give up the yearning for mundane things. Knowing the limitations of the body will help us keep a healthy attitude in life and turn the mind to everlasting principles, rather than concentrating on daily affairs.

## Verse 7

Baalastaavat kriiDaasaktaH  
TaruNastaavat taruNiisaktaH .  
vR^iddhastavaachchintaasaktaH  
parame brahmaNi ko.api na saktaH

(baalaH = childhood; taavat.h = till then; kriiDaa = play; saktaH = attached / engrossed / absorbed; taruNaH = adolescent; young man; taavat.h = till then; taruNii = young woman; saktaH = attached / engrossed; vR^iddhaH = old man; taavat.h = till then; chintaa = worry; saktaH = attached / engrossed / absorbed; parame = in the lofty; high; supreme; brahmaNi = (in) Brahman ; God; ko.api = whosoever (nobody); na = not; saktaH = attached / absorbed; engrossed.)

(Baalastaavat kriiDaasaktaH= as a child, (one is) absorbed in play; TaruNastaavat taruNiisaktaH . = as young man, engrossed in girls; vR^iddhastavaachchintaasaktaH = as old man, immersed in anxious thoughts; parame brahmaNi ko.api na saktaH = (Alas!) nobody is attracted to the Para Brahman!)

As a child, one is absorbed in play. As a young man, attached to women; As an old man, one is lost in worrying thoughts; Alas! no one is attracted to the Supreme Brahman, God.

The philosopher in Sri Sankara portrays the truth about man's journey of life and laments that everybody is immersed in worldly pursuits, but none is interested in realising God. As a child, he is immersed in play and games without a worry of the world. The play in childhood gives way to lust in his youth. His sole aim now is to attract the opposite sex and enjoy their company. As he gets older, he understands his folly a little, but not much. He is a worried man now; but the worry

is not about God realization: his worries are mostly on his past life, his relatives, his sons and perhaps their children. Life is spent like this in vain, without any purpose. Alas! He finds no time to contemplate on God and thus fulfill his life's mission. He refuses to believe there is anything beyond this mundane existence and keeps himself busy with meaningless worldly activities. He thinks that all he sees here is the everlasting thing and whole-heartedly devotes his time to it. When the messengers of death suddenly force him, it is perhaps with a heavy heart that he leaves this world reluctantly.

Man spends most of his time in 'kamini kanchana', wealth and woman and forgets his aim. Most people do not even know that there is an aim. People are so busy in their day- to- day affairs, too engrossed in keeping their position in society, that there is no question of even remembering God. Some realize this only at a time when it is too late. We forget that life is of five minutes and the sooner we search for God, the better it is.

*"Very few understand that the aim of human life is to see God"*  
- Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 8

kaate kaantaa kaste putraH  
saMsaaro.ayamatiiva vichitraH .  
kasya tvaM kaH kuta aayaataH  
tattvaM chintaya tadiha bhraataH

(kaate = kA + te, who + your; kaantaa = wife; kaste = kaH + te, who + your; putraH = son; sa.nsaaraH = world / family; ayaM = this; atiiva = great / big / very much; vichitraH = wonderful / mysterious; kasya = whose; tvaM = you; kaH = who; kutaH = from where; aayaataH = have come; tattvaM = truth / nature; chintaya = think well / consider; tadiha = tat.h + iha, that + here; bhraataH = brother.)

(kaate kaantaa = who is your wife? kaH te putraH = who is your son; ayaM sa.nsaaraH atiiva vichitraH = this world is very strange; tvaM kasya = whose are you? (tvam) kaH = who are (you)?; (tvam) kutaH aayaataH = from where (you) came? bhraataH tat tattvaM iha chintaya = Hey brother, think of this truth here.)

Who is your wife ? Who is your son ? Strange is the (way of the) world;  
Of whom are you ? From where have you come ? Brother, now ponder  
over these truths.

The realistic view on life's situation may not be to our liking; but it will give clarity of thought necessary for a true sadhaka. The Acharyas seldom despise earthly relation of husband and wife, father and son, etc. The scriptures assert the sanctity of such relationships that form the moral foundation of society. But a sadhaka should be keener and contemplate more. We must wonder who we really are. Before my birth, who I was, where I was ? Who was my wife before our marriage ? A daughter of somebody. One fine morning she entered my life. Like this, I have no clue who were my sons or daughters. After death, all these relationships come to an end, whether we like it or not; whether we accept it or not. Yet people foolishly think all this is permanent. Strange indeed are the ways of the world. The more we brood on the transient nature of all these things, the more we will come closer to truth, which will be a good beginning for spiritual life.

Spiritual aspirants should not misunderstand that family life is the end and aim of life. All earthly relations will come to an end, sooner or later. Hence we should understand that God alone is our

true relative: he alone is our mother, our father, our relative, our friend. Sri Sarada Devi says, "Do your duty to wife and children; but give your love only to God".

The wife of this life may not be that of the next one; The same is the case with other relatives. The Upanishads tell the story of a husband and wife whose only son died. They were so grieved that they approached a holy man and pleaded with him to resurrect the dead son. The holy man tried to convince that it is a futile task. The son, anyway has to die at a later date; It doesn't make any difference even if he gets another span of life. However, the attachment on the son was too much, and the sorrowful parents did not accept any excuses. At last, the holy man had to apply his supernatural powers and wake up the boy from the dark realms of death. Responding to the holy ministrations, the boy opened his eyes and looked around. The holy man asked him: "Aren't you happy to come back to life? Don't you recognize your parents? Here is your mother crying for your coming back; Here is your father waiting for you to open your eyes...." The boy looked puzzled and asked the holy man: "I cannot understand anything. Which father are you talking about? Which mother? Sometimes I was a son, sometimes father, I was mother, I was husband. Now I don't know about which parents you are talking about. Leave me alone; let me go back from where I came". This story precisely tells us the facts of life, though harsh.

*"These earthly ties are transitory. Today they seem to be the be-all and end-all of life, and tomorrow they vanish. Your real tie is with God."*

- Sri Sarada Devi.

## Verse 9

satsa<sup>N</sup>gatve nissa<sup>N</sup>gatvaM  
nissa<sup>N</sup>gatve nirmohatvam.h .  
nirmohatve nishchalatattvaM  
nishchalatattve jiivanmuktiH

(satsa<sup>N</sup>gatve = in good company; nissa<sup>N</sup>gatvaM = non-attachment / detachment; nirmohatvaM = non-infatuated state / clearheadedness; nishchalatattvaM = tranquility / imperturbability; jiivanmuktiH = salvation + freedom from bondage of birth.)

(satsa<sup>N</sup>gatve nissa<sup>N</sup>gatvaM = Through satsanga (company of good and holy people), non-attachment (is achieved); nissa<sup>N</sup>gatve nirmohatvam.h = by non-attachment, non-infatuated state; nirmohatve nishchalatattvaM = through non-infatuated state, tranquility; nishchalatattve jiivanmuktiH = from tranquility, freedom from bondage of birth.)

From the company of good and holy people, one develops a state of non-attachment; from this comes freedom from delusion; This leads to a state of tranquility of mind, which enables one to attain freedom.

Sri Sankara here gives us a ladder to climb up to the level of salvation. The first step is satsanga: the company of holy people, saints, good men and women. This is the basis of all further steps. Very few people are self-made. Even most spiritual giants had teachers, gurus. In modern times, Sri Ramakrishna had several teachers, who initiated Him to various spiritual disciplines followed by them. Prominent among them was Sri Tota Puri, who initiated Him to sanyasa. The flow of knowledge is from the guru to disciples. This has been the method of transmission of this knowledge through generations, through centuries.

It is a well-known fact that good character is developed from the company of good people and

degradation is likely to follow the company of the wicked. Hence the sadhakas desirous of God realization should attempt to keep only the company of really good people; if available, men who have seen God. Satsanga helps them know which is real and which is transitory; which leads to God and which leads away. Equipped thus with true knowledge, the aspirant slowly develops non-attachment to things of the world. The Gita lays great stress on non-attachment; It is termed Anasakti Yoga. This attitude of renunciation of worldly pleasures and charms is required for further progress. The sadhaka who is non-attached slowly gets free from delusion. The Maya of the world fails to mislead such a sadhaka. When he meditates on the Lord with the mind thus purified, he is sure to reach a state of tranquility. The tranquil mind soon realizes Truth. The Yogi now attains freedom. Freedom from the chain of birth and death; freedom from ignorance, misery, transitory nature of the world. This was the aim of his sadhana.

The ladder thus shown by Sri Sankara is similar to the one given in the Gita: In Gita, Sri Krishna shows a ladder which goes down – to degradation:

*“Dhyaayato vishayaan pumsah sangasteshuupajayate  
Sangaat samjaayate kamah kamat krodhobhijayate  
Krodhaat bhavati sammohah sammohaat smruti vibhramah  
Smrutibhramshaat buddhi naasho buddhinaashaat pranashyati.”*  
- (Bhagavat Gita Chapter 2, slokas 62 and 63)

*“Brooding on the objects of senses, man develops attachment to them; from attachment comes desire; from desire anger sprouts forth.  
From anger proceeds delusion; from delusion, confused memory; from confused memory the ruin of reason; due to the ruin of reason he perishes.”*

*He who is dead as it were when alive, that is to say, as desire-less as a corpse, becomes competent for Brahma-jnanam”*  
-Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 10

vayasigate kaH kaamavikaaraH  
shushhke niire kaH kaasaaraH .  
kshiiNevitte kaH parivaaraH  
GYaate tattve kaH saMsaaraH

(vayasigate = vayasi + gate, when age has advanced / gone; kaH = who / what use (in the sense of kva?(where)); kaamavikaaraH = sensual / sexual feeling; shushhke = in the drying up of; niire = water; ka = what (use) is the; kaasaaraH = lake; kshiiNe = spent-up / weakened state of; vitte = wealth; kaH = what (use) for; parivaaraH = family (is there?); GYaate = in the realized state; tattve = truth; kaH = what (use) is;  
sa.nsaaraH = world / family bond.)

(vayasigate = when advanced in age; kaH kaamavikaaraH = what is (the use of) sensual feelings ? ; shushhke niire = when dry; ka kaasaaraH = what (use) is a lake ?; kshiiNe vitte = when wealth is depleted; kaH parivaaraH = what (use) is the family ? GYaate tattve = known the Truth; kaH sa.nsaaraH = what (use) is worldly life ?)

What good is lust when youth has fled away? What is the use of a lake that has dried up ? Where are the relatives when wealth is gone ? Where is samsaara,

## the worldly life, when the Truth is known ?

Without the cause, the effect has no existence. Sri Sankara presents this fact here with four examples. There is no place for carnal feelings as we advance in age; The lake is no lake if the water in it dries up; There are no relatives if we run out of wealth. In the same manner, there is no samsara (worldly life) for the person who has understood the Eternal Principle.

The cause of sexual feelings is youth. Health and vigour gradually shrink as we age. The body loses the earlier potential to perform. There is no escape from this transformation. Lake, once dried up, is no longer called by that name. Relatives, family members, all of them surround a person only when he has money. As soon as his wealth is gone, the people desert him or may even try to harm if possible. People surrounded him only due to his wealth and position, unconsciously hoping for a share of his fortune. When the person is no longer giving them this hope, people find no use for his company and go after somebody else.

As soon as we know the cause of our Existence, the delusion of the world goes away from our eyes. The world holds no charm for the person who has experienced the principle of spirituality: God alone is Truth and the world is a delusion; He is the eternal principle behind the ever-changing world drama.

The driving force in life is the worldly desire. When a sadhaka succeeds in curtailing this, when he is able to dry out the lake of desires, where is the Samsara for him ? The material world and its attractions fail to charm the aspirant: he has found more durable thing. When the darkness of ignorance vanishes with the light of Knowledge of the Self, mundane things won't interest his mind.

*"What remains in the man from whose mind lust and greed are entirely eliminated? The Bliss of Brahman beams in him"*  
-Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 11

maa kuru dhana jana yauvana garvaM  
harati nimeshhaat kaalaH sarvam.h .  
maayaamayamidamakhilaM buddhvaa  
brahmapadaM tvaM pravisha viditvaa

(maa = do not; kuru = do / act; dhana = wealth; jana = people; yauvana = youth; garvaM = arrogance / haughtiness; harati = takes away / steals away; nimeshhaat.h = in the twinkling of the eye; kaalaH = Time; sarvaM = all; maayaa = delusion; mayaM = full of / completely filled; idaM = this; akhilaM = whole / entire; buddhvaa = having convinced; brahmapadaM = the state / position of Brahma / God-realized state; tvaM = you; pravisha = enter; viditvaa = having known / realized.)

(dhana jana yauvana garvaM maa kuru = do not boast of wealth, youth and friends (because); kaalaH nimeshhaat.h sarvaM harati = In a moment Time steals everything; idaM akhilaM maayaa mayaM = all this is just delusion (Maya); buddhva = having convinced; tvaM brahmapadaM viditvaa, pravisha = know the Brahman and enter into It and merge in It.)

Do not take pride in wealth, friends, and youth. Time takes away all of these in a minute; give them up having known that all these things are nothing but delusion, and enter the state of God realization and merge in Brahman.

The false sense of security provided by youth, wealth, one's relatives, friends and other worldly possessions often make a man proud and egoistic. Such people are so arrogant because of their wealth or influence in the society that they refuse to believe there will be a change to this status later. They do not hesitate to insult others and harm innocent people. With money power, they build a fortress of strength around them. Unfortunately, there is a very powerful army who can break into this seemingly impenetrable citadel: the all-destroying Time. It stealthily comes and steals away all this in a moment.

Sri Sankara cautions against this wrong attitude of man, which causes a lot of avoidable misery later for him and those around him. For him, he will soon understand that the great destroyer Time changes the whole situation overnight. Youth is not everlasting. Neither is wealth. It doesn't take long for a poor man to get rich or a rich man to reduce to rags. Wealth doesn't remain constant with anybody. Money can be lost in many ways: misfortune, theft, cheating, quarrels, ill-health, etc. With money gone, relatives and friends desert. Most relatives and friends surround us only for our money, hoping to enjoy a little of the good fortune. If the purse is empty, no friend or relative will stay with us for long. Fortune and misfortune come and go. What we experience is not permanent.

The transitory nature of the world and its pleasures should awaken us from our slumber. We must apply our intelligence and know that these things are in essence just illusions (Maya). "What is Maya? It is none other than the desire that obstructs the spiritual growth of an aspirant", says Sri Ramakrishna.

Our goal should be to know the Supreme principle Brahman and to merge our little consciousness in It. The Atman, which resides inside us is the true and everlasting principle.

## Verse 12

dinayaaminyau saayaM praataH  
shishiravasantau punaraayaataH .  
kaalaH kriiDati gachchhatyaayuH  
tadapi na muJNchatyaashaavaayuH

(dinayaaminyau = dina + yAminI, day + night; saayaM = evening; praataH = morning; shishira = winter; vasantau = (and) Spring season; punaH = again; aayaataH = have arrived; kaalaH = Time; kriiDati = plays; gachchhati = goes (away); aayuH = lifespan / age; tadapi = tat.h + api, then even; na = not; muJNchati = releases; aashaa = desire; vaayuH = air (meaning craze) (the wind of desire does not let off its hold.)

(dinayaaminyau = day and night; saayaM praataH = evening and morning; shishiravasantau = winter and spring; punaraayaataH = come again (and again); kaalaH kriiDati = Time plays; aayuH gachchhati = lifespan goes away (wasted); tadapi = yet; aashaa vaayuH muJNchati = the wind of desire is not released.)

Day and night, dawn and dusk, spring and winter, come and go again and again;  
Time plays and life goes in vain; Yet the fire of desire doesn't quench.

The wheel of Time is always rotating. Days and nights; mornings and evenings; spring and winter; months and years roll by. With this great rotation, our lifetime also flies. It is as if Time plays like a small child unmindful of what happens around. In spite of advancing in age, we do not make an effort to get out of the clutches of desire.

Man is so engrossed in his daily routine that the passage of time is hardly noticed. The flight of days into nights, dawn into dusk and winter into spring is rarely observed. The worldly man is so preoccupied to wonder how Time goes away and he is not any nearer to realising Truth. The chain of desire has bound him and there is no escape. Unless he releases himself from this bondage, there is no freedom for him. Unfortunately, he too busy for that.

In spite of rapid passing of time, man fails to look inward and try to improve himself. He blames fate, God's wish or past karma instead of admitting his own failure: the real culprit is his own selfish mind which refuses to abandon the desire to enjoy things of the world.

## Verse 13

kaate kaantaa dhana gatachintaa  
vaatula kiM tava naasti niyantaa .  
trijagati sajjanasangatirekaa  
bhavati bhavaarNavataraNe naukaa

(kaate = kA + te, who + your; kaantaa = wife; dhana = wealth; gatachintaa = thinking of; vaatula = hey fool immersed in sensual pleasures!; kim = Isn't it? ; tava = your; naasti = na + asti, not there; niyantaa = controller; trijagati = in the (legendary) three worlds (Bhooloka, The Earth; Bhuvraloka; Swarloka, the Heaven); sajjana = good people; sa.ngatirekaa = sa.ngatiH + ekA, company + (only) one (way); bhavati = becomes; bhavaarNava = bhava + arNava, birth & death + ocean; taraNe = in crossing; naukaa = boat / ship.)

(kaate kaantaa = who is your wife ? (kaa) dhana gatachintaa = why you are worried about money ? vaatula = hey fool! tava niyantaa naasti kim ? = don't you have a controller ? trijagati = in the three worlds; sajjana sa.ngati ekA = satsanga alone; bhavaarNava taraNe naukaa bhavati = becomes the boat to cross the ocean of samsara (worldly life of birth and death).)

Oh fool! Who is your wife ? Why are you so worried about wealth ? Do you think you have nobody above to guide you ? In all the three worlds, satsanga is the only thing which acts as the boat to cross the samsara (the worldly life of birth and death).

People behave as if there is no higher power above them. Most of the time, man is worried about "kamini kanchana", woman and wealth. This takes away almost all of their energy. Worrying about such things will not help anything. The mind which attaches itself to money and lust will be weakened in no time. It will fail when faced with critical problems. The weak cannot survive in the world. "This is the great fact: strength is life, weakness is death. Strength is felicity; life eternal, immortal; weakness is constant strain and misery: weakness is death.", says Swami Vivekananda (Lecture on Work and its Secret).

When the mind constantly dwells on things such as one's wife's beauty and ways to increase wealth, this develops into attachment. It soon forms a habit. It is extremely difficult to change habits. In this age of consumerism, men and women are constantly lured into forming habits from which they have no hope of escape: TV channels, serial episodes, newspapers, magazines, cinemas - even radios do this trick. All this external influence binds us to the world. All time and creative energy is diverted to negative and counter-productive aspects. People forget that there is some higher power above them that controls their destiny. What is the way out ? The Acharya prescribes a unique remedy here: Satsanga. Keep the company of the good, the holy, the people who are traveling along the path to God, the realized souls: there is no other way - even in

the three (legendary) worlds (Bhooloka, Bhuvārloka, Swārloka).

We have to conquer base desires with the help of holy ones. Negative thoughts have to be erased by positive ones. This is the way. “The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits; all the bad habits that have left their impressions are to be controlled by good habits.”, says Swami Vivekananda (Raja Yoga). Not only at the start of his sadhana, but also throughout its entire course, satsanga leads the way for the sincere sadhaka. Hence “sajjana sanga” serves as the only boat which helps us cross the ocean of samsara, the worldly life, the bondage of birth and death.

“Mind is the main factor in you. As is your mind, so are you. It may be compared to a washed white cloth which is capable of taking any dye dipped in. When you have learnt a new language you cannot help uttering a few words from it in your conversation. Contact with the undesirables contaminates the mind. Holy company on the other hand elevates it”.

*“Lust and greed have immersed people in sin. If you behold women as the embodiments of the Divine Mother, you will escape from the snares of lust and its aftermath, misery.”*

- Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 14

jaTilaH muNDii luJNchhitakeshaH  
kaashhaayaambara bahukR^itaveshhaH .  
pashyannapi cha na pashyati muuDhaH  
udaranimittaM bahukR^itaveshhaH

(jaTilaH = with knotted hair; muNDii = shaven head; luJNchhita kesha = hair cut here and there; kaashhaaya = saffron; ambara = cloth; bahukR^ita = variously done / made-up; veshhaH = make-ups / garbs / roles; pashyannapi = even after seeing; chana = cha + na, and + not; pashyati = sees; muuDhaH = the fool; udaranimittaM = for the sake of the belly / for satisfying hunger / living; bahukR^ita veshhaH = various make-ups / roles.)

(jaTilaH = (one is) with knotted hair; muNDii = (another) with shaved head; luJNchhitakesha = (yet another) with plucked hair; kaashhaaya ambara bahukR^ita veshhaH = (yet another) dressed in saffron cloth; (in this manner) in various disguises; muuDhaH = fool; pashyannapi = even though he “sees”; na pashyati cha = (really) he doesn’t “see”; udaranimittaM bahukR^itaveshhaH = all this make-up is just for the sake of the belly)

One is with knotted hair, another with shaven head; there are others with plucked hair and wearing saffron cloth; The fools variously disguised in this manner “see”, but in reality, don’t “see”; All this is just a pretension for easy livelihood.

In the previous sloka, the Acharya said that ‘satsanga’, the company of the good and holy alone will help us out of the worldly bondage. But beware! There are fake ones; don’t get duped by them. There are wolves clothed as sheep! Many people wear the garb of religion only for the sake of livelihood, because it is easy and respected. They dress up variously: matted locks or shaven head; hair plucked here and there. These men, though clad in saffron symbolizing renunciation, dress variously in order to fool real devotees. Innocent men and women are easily attracted to such fake monks who exhibit great show of devotion and sometimes powers also. This tactics to dupe unsuspecting public was invented long back. Sita was kidnapped by the demon (Rakshasa) Ravana, who came to her wearing the guise of a sanyasi. It is clear this was

the case at the time of Sri Sankara also. Such people make a mockery of religion and harm it immensely. Hence the Acharya ridicules them rather severely and condemns this as a mere ploy to satisfy hunger.

There are fakes in all walks of life; religion is not an exception. However, their presence in religious domain can be especially harmful. They can do severe injury to individual aspirants, the community as a whole and pave way to the distortion of religious ideas. The situation is all the more complicated because such people are not entirely 'blind' to truth. They 'see' the truth, but pretend they don't, thus deceiving themselves as well as others. When real devotees bow to them, when the holy scriptures are recited, when they are forced to give elaborate lectures on life and spirituality, they should be conscious of the truth. Yes, then they 'see' the truth (pashyannapi); but they fail to live a life which they preach. They do not practice the lofty spiritual principles which they advocate. They don't see the real truth (na pashyati): because, they have shut their eyes to it. The quest for easy livelihood and other interests take precedence.

Some of them perhaps started earnestly with good intentions, but went astray later. Some willingly dressed themselves to make a ridicule of religion. In their hearts they should be feeling the guilt; but for the sake of an easy livelihood and for many other evil purposes, they adhere to their ill-conceived ways. The Acharya here warns sadhakas to beware of such counterfeits.

The fake monks thus guised during Sri Sankara's lifetime were doing this for a livelihood; but today the number of people who pretend to be great externally and do all sorts of mischief behind the scenes is growing alarmingly. In India, the crime is much more organised today and has spread into many critical walks of life: administratin, politics, social work, service, etc. With great care, they make a show of sincerity for the casuse and offer lengthy lip-service. The real aim of making money, misusing one's position and enjoying the spoils of this dirty game, is hidden.

## Verse 15

aN^gaM galitaM palitaM muNDaM  
dashanavihiinaM jaataM tuNDam.h .  
vR^iddho yaati gR^ihitvaa daNDaM  
tadapi na muJNchatyaashaapiNDam.h

(aN^gaM = limb(s); galitaM = weakened; palitaM = ripened (gray); muNDaM = head;  
dashanavihiinaM = dashana + vihInaM, teeth + bereft; jaataM = having become; tuNDaM = jaws /  
mouth; vR^iddhaH = the old man; yaati = goes; gR^ihitvaa = holding the; daNDaM = (walking)  
stick; tadapi = then even; na = not; muJNchati = lets go / releases / gives up; aashaapiNDaM =  
AshA + pindaM, desire + lump (piNDaM also means rice-ball given; as oblation for the dead)

(aN^gaM galitaM = with weak body; palitaM muNDaM = with gray head; dashanavihiinaM jaataM  
tuNDaM = with jaws having no teeth; daNDaM gR^ihitvaa yaati = walks holding a stick; tadapi =  
even then; aashaapiNDaM na muJNchati = the bundle of desires is not given up.)

The body is old and worn; head is gray; teeth have gone; he walks holding a stick; yet he hasn't abandoned the bundle of desires.

Will advancing age calm down the rampant fire of desire ? Will white hair, teehless mouth and an infirm body ensure the presence of an elevated mind ? Will man ever learn a lesson with the passage of time ? Look at this piteous portrait of an old man. He has passed well his prime; the body is now weak and not much useful; hair has turned white; There is no teeth left. To walk, he needs the support of a stick. We may think he must have reached a stage in which desire towards sense objects no longer bother him and his mind is above such mundane matters. But

the truth is something else. In spite of his age and inability, the poor man is carrying something on his back: A huge unsightly bundle of desires! He is unable to get rid of them. The body must have failed him; but the wretched mind which kept all those filthy things intact tortures the ailing body. The situation is really pathetic: The mind wants and the body cannot! Even if objects of desire are available, the body is not in a condition to enjoy them. It is comparable to prison life: The prisoner wishes to meet his near and dear, but has no means! This old man is also a prisoner in his own body. It is as if the desires reached youth as the body ripened to old age.

The delusive power of Maya is immense. The desire to enjoy sense pleasures is very powerful and doesn't recede easily, even with age. Only solution is to cultivate good habits during younger days. This old man didn't attempt to have a check on his habits and bridle his desires. Now it is too late. As he totters towards the grave, his mind is constantly afflicting the body.

This sloka emphasizes the importance of developing attitude of non-attachment in the youth, before it is too late.

*"However long a stone may remain immersed in a river, it does not allow even a small particle of water to percolate into it. Even so the man steeped in worldliness does not permit any ethical or spiritual feelings gain access to his heart"*

Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 16

agre vahniH pR^ishhThebhaanuH  
raatrau chubukasamarpitajaanuH .  
karatalabhikshastarutalavaasaH  
tadapi na muJNchatyaashaapaashaH

(agre = in front of / ahead; vahniH = fire; pR^ishhThe bhaanuH = pRishhThe + bhaanuH, behind (the) Sun; raatrau = in the night; chubuka samarpita jaanu = face dedicated to (huddled up between) the knees; karatala bhikshaa = alms in the palms; tarutala vaasaH = living under the tree; tadapi = then even; na = not; muJNchati = releases / lets go; aashaa = desire; paashaH = rope / ties.)

(agre vahniH = fire is in the front; pR^ishhThe bhaanuH = the Sun is at the back; raatrau = at night; chubukasamarpitajaanuH = (sits with) chin between the knees; karatalabhiksha = (accepts) alms in (his) palms; tarutala vaasaH = lives under a tree; tadapi = yet; aashaa paashaH na muJNchati = the rope of desires doesn't release (him).)

There is fire in front of him and the Sun at the back; at night, he crutches with his chin between his knees; he lives under a tree and has only his hands to receive alms. Alas, in spite of all this, he is not released from the rope of desire, which has bound him.

We met (in the previous sloka) the old man carrying his bundle of desires. If this is the plight of householders, what about sanyasins ? Here is a sanyasi who has renounced everything and is leading a rough and hard life of recluse. He has no money, no worldly possessions, no essential comforts of life even. There is no warm clothing for winter. So when fire is lit, he goes and sits in front of it. At other times, the poor man has only the Sun to give him warmth: He perhaps sits with his back turned to the Sun. At night there is no sunshine and no fire available: so he keeps himself warm by crutching with his chin between his knees. There is no utensil to take bhiksha

(alms), so he takes it in his palms. He has no place to live and hence rests under a tree. The man doubtless, is on the right course: Anybody may take him to be a true Yogi; But is it so ? A closer look at him reveals something else: in spite of all these externals, he hasn't been able to renounce a vital thing: his desires. He is not free from the grasp of his desires, which are hidden deep in his mind; The rope of desire has tightly bound him. This, alas, makes null and void all his efforts! He perhaps, could not keep a check on this tremendous weakness of his. All the external preparations he painstakingly made are of not much use with the glaring internal defect which he is retaining. It seems this 'yogi' has to improve himself or wait for a better time to fulfill his dream of God realization.

It brings to light the very important factor: Renunciation is not annihilating the senses (indriyas); it is eliminating the attachment to them. There is no doubt that renouncing the sense enjoyments is a way to keep out their influence on the mind; but the aim should be to eliminate the desire to enjoy, thereby freeing our minds from the attachment to the sense objects. If we try to renounce without this knowledge, we will end up like this sanyasi in the above example.

Without the proper cleansing of the mind stuff and control of the senses, sadhana may not bear fruit; renunciation may be premature; sanyasa may be only a mockery. Moreover, there is the risk that he may travel in the opposite direction and ruin whatever good works he did earlier. Hence it is true that internal renunciation must precede the external one.

*"All water leaks away even if there be a minute hole in a water pot. In that manner, even if there be a trace of earthly attachment in the mind of a sadhaka, all his spiritual practices come to naught"*

- Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 17

kurute gaN^gaasaagaragamanaM  
vrataparipaalanamathavaa daanam.h .  
GYaanavihinaH sarvamatena  
bhajati na muktiM janmashatena

(kurute = one resorts to; gaN^gaasaagara = the (river) Ganga (or) the Sea; gamanaM = going; vrata = austerities; paripaalanaM = observance; athavaa = or else; daanaM = charity; GYaanavihinaH = (but) bereft of knowledge of the Self; sarvamatena = according to all schools of thought / unanimously; muktiM = salvation / freedom; na = not; bhajati = attains; janma = birth(s); shatena = with a hundred.)

(gaN^gaasaagaragamanaM kurute = going (on pilgrimage) to the confluence of river Ganga and the Sea; vrata paripaalanaM athavaa daanaM (kurute) = (or) observing Vratas or giving away money in charity; GyaanavihinaH = one who has no knowledge (experience of communion of Jeevatma and Brahman); sarvamatena = according to all schools of thought; janmashatena = even at the end of hundred births (lives); muktiM na bhajati = do not obtain liberation.)

One may go on pilgrimage to the river Ganga or the ocean; may observe fasts or give away wealth in charity. However, one will not attain liberation without the knowledge of Atman, even after a hundred births. This is the opinion of all schools of thought.

What do the householders do to gain liberation from samsara ? Ritualistic worship, pilgrimage to

holy places or temples, 'vratas' and charity. Ritualistic worship is an integral part of any religion. Hinduism is no exception. Worshipping God in various forms according to one's chosen way is an accepted practice. This is called 'Karma Kanda' in Hinduism and is a primary step of sadhana.

Pilgrimage is a popular mode of worship. People, especially householders, visit holy shrines and temples, often at far off places. The banks of the river Ganga and seashores are considered holy by Hindus. Many pilgrimage centres such as Kashi (Varanasi) and Rishikesh are situated at the banks of Ganga. There is even a belief that if one dies in Kashi, the Lord Viswanath (Shiva) Himself liberates the soul. The confluence of Ganga with sea (at Bay of Bengal) is also considered a sacred place. Many temples are located on the seashore, such as Rameswaram and Kanyakumari. Pilgrimage to the river Ganga and such temples as Rameswaram is considered a holy act.

Apart from such pilgrimages, many devotees keep 'vratas' (religious austerities / observances for a limited time such as a day involving vegetarian diet or fasting, etc. with chanting of God's name). Observing vratas helps sadhaka to appreciate lofty principles of religion and discipline his body and mind. It further helps him to adhere to his decisions and thus reinforce the will-power. A properly performed vrata assists him to purify his mind and prepare it for higher sadhanas and disciplines.

As a part of such disciplines, devotees perform daanam (charity) also: It is a pious act. Daanam is the distribution of a portion of one's wealth to others. It should be wisely used for good purposes and given to deserving people only. For example: for the care of orphan children, old people, sick or poor people and animals.

All these above acts, no doubt, help the devotee progress in his path. But, the Acharya cautions, all these acts are not to be considered as the goal of spirituality, they are just steps leading to a higher truth. These are milestones on the path, not the destination itself. The end is reached only by Atma Jnana, the knowledge of the Self, by experiencing the oneness of the individual self and the Universal Self. It is foolish to think that liberation of the soul will follow such acts, however pious or purifying they might be. With these practices alone, man will not reach freedom or liberation even after a hundred births, the Acharya warns, declares. Knowledge has to be acquired and whatever is learnt is to be practiced by severe sadhana; The Reality has to be experienced by meditation. The Scriptures say so. There is no short-cut, the Acharya asserts, this being the opinion of all saints and prophets.

We must bear in mind that the real path to spirituality is a somewhat difficult one. It requires a thorough understanding of the underlying principles and a patient practice of what is learnt. Sacrifice of comforts and wealth and complete self-abnegation is necessary. Without all these, mere externals are not likely to enable the soul to reach the other shore of samsara.

However, there is always a popular tendency to follow the path of least resistance, the easy one. It is easy to worship an idol of Sri Krishna than to follow His teachings, the Gita. It is easy to read Ramayana than to follow Sri Rama's character of 'samabhavana' (equilibrium of mind). The message of Upanishads and Gita is forgotten and elaborate 'karma kanda' is followed. It is easy to fall prey to this brand of religion by visiting temples, keeping certain vratas, etc. and believing that this is the end and aim of religion. Masses are often misled by the followers of Karma Kanda. Hence the Acharya's concern. It is a matter of concern that such people seldom change their ways in spite of pilgrimages and charities. Their outlook on life hardly changes. The followers do this for their whole life and shudder at the slightest mention of renunciation. Some people who practice this even do not hesitate to harm others; their selfishness and pride remain with them intact always. We cannot say that the practices are wrong; They should serve as path, not as destination. This is the message given by all saints. Religion is not a mere ritual. It is knowing, being and becoming. The aim of religion is to change our complete personality and outlook on life; to see God in us and in everything else; to see Narayana in every Nara and to serve him. Mere externals will not enable us to achieve this state. A complete internal transformation is

required.

*"Each soul is potentially divine.*

*The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.*

*Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy – by one, or more, or all of these – and be free.*

*This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details."*

- Swami Vivekananda (Raja Yoga).

## Verse 18

sura ma.ndira taru muula nivaasaH  
shayyaa bhuutalamajinaM vaasaH .  
sarva parigraha bhoga tyaagaH  
kasya sukhaM na karoti viraagaH

(sura = gods; ma.ndira = temple; taru = tree; muula = root; nivaasaH = living; shayyaa = bed; bhuutalam = surface of the earth; ajinaM = deer skin; vaasaH = dress; sarva = all; parigraha = attachment; bhoga = enjoyable things / worldly pleasures; tyaaga = sacrificing / abandonment; kasya = whose; sukhaM = happiness; na = not; karoti = does; viraagaH = Non-attachment / desirelessness.)

(sura ma.ndira taru muula nivaasaH = (he) lives at the root of a tree at temple premises; bhuutalam shayyaa = the bed is the bare ground; ajinaM vaasaH = deer skin is the dress; sarva parigraha bhoga tyaagaH = (he has) given up all desire of possession and enjoyment of pleasures; then; viraagaH = (with) this kind of renunciation; kasya sukhaM na karoti = who won't be happy ?)

He lives under a tree at the temple premises; his bed is the bare ground and dress is deerskin; he has given up all desires of worldly possession and enjoyment of earthly pleasures; Who won't be happy living with this kind of renunciation?

Here is a picture of a true sanyasi who has given up all his possessions. He lives at the root of a tree outside a temple; His bed is the lap of Mother earth herself. His dress is a mere deer skin. He has renounced all pleasures: both physically and mentally. The Acharya rightly wonders why such a great man shouldn't be happy! Yes, the real happiness is for him. He has no possession, no hoarded wealth which a thief may take away and thus steal his peace of mind. His wealth is 'Ram rattan' (the jewel of the name Rama), which a thief cannot steal (Bhakta Meera).

His wants are limited and primary: no costly dress for him; no luxuries. The sleep on bare ground is indeed refreshing! His whole soul is immersed in the thought of God and he never craves or cares for physical possessions and comforts. So, there is no question of disappointment for him. Such a course will slowly and surely lead one to God-realization.

Who is happy in this world ? The rich man ? The King who has everything in his command ? Everybody thinks that somebody else is happier than him. Everybody is dissatisfied with his present position or wealth and wish to have more. So the person who has renounced this craze for pleasure alone can have peace of mind. He alone can proclaim to the world: "I enjoy!". His happiness is not dependent on the external world. He has found out the mine of happiness which is within his own being. As the Gita says, he "is satisfied in the Self by the Self" (aatmanyeva

atmanaa tushthah ).

## Verse 19

Yogaratovaa bhogaratovaa  
saN^garatovaa saN^gaviihinaH .  
yasya brahmaNi ramate chittaM  
nandati nandati nandatyeva

(yogarataH = engaged in yoga; vaa = or; bhogarataH = indulging in worldly pleasures; saN^garataH = indulging in (good) company; saN^gaviihinaH = bereft of company; yasya = whose; brahmaNi = in Brahman (God); ramate = delights; chittaM = mind (here soul); nandati = revels; nandatyeva = nandati + eva, revels alone / revels indeed.)

(yogarataH vaa = (one) may be immersed in Yoga; bhogarataH vaa = (or) may be indulging in worldly pleasures; saN^garataH vaa = (or) may be engaged in (good) company; saN^gaviihinaH (vaa) = (or) bereft of company; yasya chittaM brahmaNi ramate = whose mind delights in Brahman (God); nandati nandati nandati eva = he, only he, really enjoys.)

One may be immersed in Yoga or indulged in worldly pleasures; at times he may be in the company of others and at other times he may be alone. But he, he alone experiences bliss whose mind delights in Brahman.

This sloka continues with the experience of the Yogi described in the previous one. When the mental and physical renunciation was complete and the sadhana has borne fruit, the realization of Atman is the end.

He has abandoned all the desires of the heart. Giving up lust, greed and anger and free from the delusion created by them, his mind is unattached to the objects of the world. He is not carried away with happiness or lost in worries. His trained mind now behaves with equanimity in happiness or sorrow, gain or loss, victory or defeat. He doesn't crave for pleasures, and is free from fondness and fear; virtue and vice, attraction and aversion. Thus controlling his senses, his wisdom is now constant. Like a tortoise its limbs, he can withdraw the senses from sense-objects at will. Transcending the three gunas (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas), his mind is firmly established in a state of equilibrium. The controlled mind is focused on the Supreme Lord.

As a result of the new vision, he is now devoid of longing and freed from all desires. No vulgar thoughts crop up in his mind. In tranquility, all his sorrow is destroyed. The feeling of "I" and "mine" has disappeared. He is satisfied in the Self by the Self. His whole vision of the world has undergone transformation. The Brahma Jnani recognizes God in all and sets himself to the service of all. "Then the glory of the soul, undisturbed by the distractions of the mind, or motions of the body, will shine in its full effulgence; and the Yogi will find himself as he is and as he always was, the essence of knowledge, the immortal, the all-pervading.... Then will all sorrows cease, all miseries vanish; the seeds for actions will be burnt, and the soul will be free for ever", says Swami Vivekananda (Raja Yoga). The Muni is thus established in Peace. This Bliss is the true pleasure; he and he alone enjoys it. Nothing in the sense world can be compared to this.

Sometimes he is all alone (sanga viheena); sometimes in meditation (yogarah), enjoying the Bliss of Atman, sometimes he engages himself in the service of others (sangarah) to guide them to true spirituality.

This Brahma Jnani, the soul who has realized Brahman, has no restrictions whatsoever. Even the Scriptures do not impose any on him. He is free to do what he likes. He may be immersed in meditation, may be in apparent worldly pursuits, may be alone or in the company of others. Yet, since his mind is firmly established in the knowledge of Atman, all the real joy, real Bliss, is his, his alone.

The society gives some special powers to persons who are fit for that purpose. By virtue of his learning, a surgeon has the authority to operate on the body of his patient. Even if the surgery fails and the patient dies, the doctor is not held responsible for that. If on the other hand, an ordinary man attempts to apply his knife on another, it will be considered as a crime. A judge has the authority to order a convict to be hanged. This power is given to him knowing well that he will use his sense of justice impartially. A soldier at the border has the authority to kill an enemy. This is not considered as a murder. In the same way, the Brahma Jnani has been bestowed with some privileges. Scriptures do this because his experience of Atman will make him a selfless person. He will have no motive for self-gratification. He has nothing to gain from the external world; he has no need of it. He will be incapable of acting against the welfare of the society. Hence this freedom to him. Having realized Brahman, he has become Brahman. The knowledge of his inner nature has given him an insight that all others are also part and parcel of the same Universal Divinity as himself. There is no difference between you and me.

*“Poisonous snakes fatally hurt people. But snake charmer handles them as if they are no creatures of consequence. More than that, he has quite a few of them coil, creep and writhe about his body. The senses, likewise, are undependable and treacherous too, in the case of the ordinary man. But they are ever tame and subservient to the knower of Atman.”*

- Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 20

bhagavad.h giitaa kiJNchidadhiitaa  
gaN^gaa jalalava kaNikaapiitaa .  
sakR^idapi yena muraari samarchaa  
kriyate tasya yamena na charchaa

(bhagavad.h = God's; giitaa = song (here the scripture Bhagavad Gita); kiJNchit.h = a little; adhiitaa = studied; gaN^gaa = river Ganga; jala lava = water drop; kaNikaa piitaa = drunk; sakR^idapi = once even; yena = by whom; muraari = the enemy of `Muraa' (Lord Krishna); samarchaa = well worshipped; kriyate = is done; tasya = his; yamena = by Yama, the Lord of Death; na = not; charchaa = discussion)

(bhagavad.h giitaa kiJNchidadhiitaa = (has) studied at least a portion of the Bhagavad Gita; gaN^gaa jalalava kaNikaapiitaa . = (or) drunk at least a drop of the water of Ganga; sakR^idapi muraari samarchaa yena kriyate = who did worship well Murari (Krishna, God) at least once; tasya yamena charcha na = Yama has nothing to say about him.)

Yama, the King of death has nothing much to talk about one who has understood at least a little of the Bhagavad Gita, drank a drop of water from the holy Ganga, and at least once in his life worshipped the Lord Murari (Sri Krishna).

The powerful Lord of Death Yama prefers to keep a studied silence on those devotees who have read a little of the Gita, has a bit of knowledge of Atman or worshipped God sincerely once!

The Gita gives us the knowledge of Yogas, the paths to realize God. The Karma Yoga, which details the philosophy of non-attachment (called Anasakti yoga) is the core of its teaching. A sincere seeker who reads the Gita will surely be free from the delusions of life and soon start his sadhana. Even a little of such divine knowledge is enough to kindle in him the urge for realizing Sat-Chid-Ananda (Existence–Knowledge–Bliss–Absolute), and it will not be long before the sure track leads him beyond the cycle of birth and death.

After explaining the ideal of Self-Knowledge to Arjuna, Sri Krishna urges him to start practicing this and break through the bonds of karma. He further says,

*“Swalpam apy asya dharmasya traayate mahato bhayaat”* (Gita Chapter 2, sloka 40)

*“The practice of even a little of this dharma protects one from great fear”.*

What is that “little portion of Gita which keeps Yama away” ? Sri Ramakrishna explains it rightly here:

*“All that can be learned by going through the whole of the Gita can be as well accomplished by repeating “Gita”, “Gita”, - Gita-gi-ta-gita, ten times; it virtually comes to be “Ta-gi” “Ta-gi” – a modification of “Tyagi”, “Tyagi”, which means one who has given up the world both outwardly and from the mind.”*

The river Ganga has been considered sacred by the Hindus from time immemorial. The water of Ganga is often used for ritualistic purification. For a devotee of relatively lower understanding, drinking the water of Ganga, having a bath in the river, etc. are holy acts. However, for sadhakas who are advanced in understanding and traveling on the path of knowledge (Jnana), such symbols hold no much charm. (Refer sloka 17 also). Hence the Acharya must have meant something higher. Legend has it that Akasha Ganga was brought from heaven to Earth by the illustrious king Bhageeratha after a lot of struggle; Its water is pure Knowledge. Hence, drinking a drop of water of Ganga means drinking a little from the river of divine knowledge, the knowledge of the Self: the knowledge compassionately given to Bhageeratha by Shiva. That alone will keep Yama disinterested in us.

A person who has worshipped Murari (Sri Krishna) at least once in his life also need not worry about the arrival of Yama. A name's sake ritual is not meant here: A sadhaka, who, from the bottom of his heart calls on God, yearns for His vision, and who conducts the archana (worship) with the offering of his own life: Such a sadhaka doesn't hold much charm for Yama! It may be significant that the Lord is described here as Murari, the destroyer of the demon (asura) Mura. This powerful demon was a symbol of egoism. Worshipping the destroyer of this arrogant asura, we are attempting to kill pride or egoism, which is the biggest (often the last) obstacle in our spiritual progress.

In short, to escape from the cycle of birth and death, one should first learn the spiritual principles from books such as Gita, struggle to attain this knowledge like the legendary Bhageeratha, and offer the Lord one's own life in His worship.

Death brings about transformation of the body, mind and intellect. The soul conditioned by the three is subject to the laws of death. The sadhaka, by virtue of his spiritual practices, tries to break the chain of samsara. This enables him to come out of the cycle of transformation called birth and death. Having reached a state of 'Eternal Witness' of the Universe he goes to a level above the transformation. He is not worried about death. Hence even Yama is not empowered to approach him.

The Acharya here urges the sadhaka to study at least some thing from the Gita, obtain divine knowledge, and worship the Lord wholeheartedly.

## Verse 21

punarapi jananaM punarapi maraNaM  
punarapi jananii jaThare shayanam.h .  
iha saMsaare bahudustaare  
kR^ipayaa.apaare paahi muraare

(punarapi = punaH + api, again and again; jananaM = birth; maraNaM = death; jananii = mother; jaThare = in the stomach (womb); shayanaM = lying / sleeping; iha = in this world / here; sa.nsaare = family / world; bahudustaare = fordable with great difficulty; kR^ipayaa.apaare = out of boundless compassion; paahi = protect; muraare = Oh Muraa's enemy!(Sri Krishna).

(punarapi jananaM = to be born again; punarapi maraNaM = to die again; punaH api jananii jaThare shayanam.h = to lie again in the mother's womb; alas! ; bahudustaare iha saMsaare = me, who is struggling in this samsara, ocean of worldly life, which is difficult to cross; muraare, kR^ipayaa. apaare paahi = help to the other shore with your compassion, oh Murari!)

There is birth again and there is death, too. Alas! Again I have to lie in the mother's womb! I am struggling in this ocean of worldly life of birth and death, which is very difficult to cross; Oh! Lord Krishna, with your compassion help me to the other shore.

Time is mercilessly whirling us in the great wheel of birth and death. We are born and dying again and again. The constricted, unpleasant life in mother's womb is also repeating. The Acharya sincerely prays to Murari (the enemy of the egoistic demon Mura), for us to take to the other shore of life.

Death is sure for what is born and birth is sure for what is dead. The Gita says:

*“Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrutyuh  
Dhruvam janma mrutasya cha”* -(Gita, Chapter2, sloka 27)

*“Death is certain of that which is born; birth is certain of that which is dead.”*

After ten months of sitting in an odd posture, a baby comes out of its mother's womb. The baby grows into a child, plays and sleeps without knowing anything about the world. The child attains puberty and enters youth: a new world opens up now. He is soon addicted to the opposite sex. As he grows a little older, money takes more priority. At last, when he really reaches old age of physical inability and sickness, he is lost in thoughts: about himself and his close relatives. At no point of time he gives serious thought on how to cross this ocean of birth and death, samsara. But death doesn't wait for anything. It grabs him one fine morning.

Death is a change of outfit. When the old cloth is worn out, we wear a new one. In the same way, when the old body is no longer fit as a seat to the soul, it crumbles and the soul seeks a new one. It is said that desire is the guiding factor. It is carried with us at the time of death. The bag of unfulfilled desires prompts another birth suitable to experience them. However, instead of ending the matter with finishing the old karmas, we, out of ignorance and foolishness, create new karmas and desires. The power of Maya colours the samsara and we see delusive beauty in the world which is really not there. This creates new links in the chain of birth and death. The cycle of birth and death thus continues.

It is only with the mercy of the Supreme Lord Murari (Sri Krishna) we can hope to come out of this

vicious cycle. So we must leave aside worthless pursuits and set aside our valuable time to realize Truth.

*“When we take one stride towards the Lord, He takes ten strides towards us”*  
- Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 22

rathyaa charpaTa virachita kanthaH  
puNyaapuNya vivarjita panthaH .  
yogii yoganiyojita chittaH  
ramate baalonmattavadeva

(rathyaa = from roadside; charpaTa = torn / tattered cloth; virachita = created; kanthaH = dress; puNya apuNya = virtues and sins; vivarjita = without / having abandoned; panthaH = wayfarer; yogii = the man seeking union with God; yoganiyojita = controlled by yoga; chittaH = mind; ramate = delights; baalonmattavadeva = like a child or a mad man.)

(rathyaa charpaTa virachita kanthaH = having worn dress stitched of rags collected from the road; puNyaapuNya vivarjita panthaH . = treading a path beyond both virtue and sin; yoganiyojita chittaH = whose mind is engaged in Yoga; the mind is in communion with the Eternal Truth; yogii = Yogi, holy man; baalonmattavadeva = enjoys (the experience of Atman) like a child or mad person.)

The Yogi who wears cloth stitched of pieces collected from the road, a wayfarer treading a path beyond virtue and sin, whose mind is in communion with the Supreme Principle, enjoys like a child or an insane person.

What happens to the sanyasi when he reaches his destination ? It is difficult to distinguish him! He has changed a lot: Look at his appearance, he wears a sort of fanciful cloth made of rags discarded by others. He behaves somewhat like a boy or a lunatic. It will be hard for other people to gauge the mental state of this recluse because he lives in his own world. He is free from pride and egoism. He uses his body as a vehicle to carry his realized soul and roams the world at his free will. He is no more a slave of his body, no more bound by egoism, by senses or by mind.

The man who has realized the Self (Atman) is immersed most of the time in the glory of Brahman. The Scriptures often compare him with a boy, a lunatic or ghost. This comparison is given to exemplify his attitude towards the external world; He is neither boy nor mad nor ghost. He is compared to a boy or child because he is innocent. Children are happy one minute and angry the next minute. They do not keep hard feelings for a long time. Whatever their feelings are, these are exhibited instantly. The Yogi also may become angry. But it is only for the time being. He forgets it the next moment. The child and the Yogi live only in the present.

A lunatic, though he lives in the world, is entirely in his own dream world, which is difficult for others to envisage. A Yogi too, lives entirely in his own world like a lunatic. He has only the present reality before him. He neither regrets about the past nor worries about the future. He is happily immersed in the Superconscious state, which others may fail to comprehend. The external appearance of madness will then be observed, though his mind cannot be compared to a mad man's. The region where it dwells cannot be observed by ordinary senses. Though his feet is on the Earth, his mind is in the other world where there is no room for sin or virtue, pain or pleasure, happiness or sorrow, anger or hatred, egoism or lust.

The Yogi knows no fear. Day or night, forest or desert, city or village, all is same to him. He travels alone like a ghost. Hence people respect him, but are a little afraid of him. But he doesn't fear anybody. Hence he is compared to a ghost.

The soul who realized Brahman traverses a path beyond virtues and sin, good or bad, happiness or sorrow. He is beyond the trigunas – satva, rajas and tamas. He is ever established in Ananda, Bliss. The experiences of duality are significant only as long as one lives in the gross world. The person who has attained his goal is beyond their influence. Even Vedas do not enforce any boundaries on him.

The Yogi, whose mind is established in Brahman, is convinced about his mission in life; hence he is no more a slave to his body. His soul is liberated even when the body is living. So he doesn't take excessive care of the body, but doesn't neglect it, either. Essential care like food and clothing is required. He meets these minimum requirements without taxing the community in which he lives. Even for his primary needs, he doesn't bother others. He is there to give, give knowledge and serve others. Taking is only to the minimum. This is the significance of wearing the cloth made of discarded pieces by other members of the society. Becoming a burden to the society is not to his liking. Upholding great principles of selflessness and service, the Yogi gives immeasurable wealth to the society. He is not given to laziness, but launches himself to the service of others. His remaining life itself is for the welfare of others. Hence he is called 'Mahatma' (great soul). This was the grand principle on which our great nation was found. India was proudly called the Land of Seers, tyagis and Mahatmans. But today, this has given way to a selfish culture. Each man for himself. India is forgetting the lofty ideals given to her by her great ancestors. Now, instead of giving anything to the society, people try to take the maximum. People fight for their rights and are silent about duties!

*"For the man who sees from the peak of a hill, the tall trees, the grass, the ups and downs and everything on the plains below seem alike. The Brahma-Jnani likewise sees divinity alone in everything. He makes no distinction between the good and the bad and between the superior and the inferior".*

- Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 23

kastvaM ko.ahaM kuta aayaataH  
kaa me jananii ko me taataH .  
iti paribhaavaya sarvamasaaaram.h  
vishvaM tyaktvaa svapna vichaaram.h

(kaH = who (are); tvaM = you; kaH = who(am); ahaM = I; kutaH = whence; aayaataH = has come; kaa = who; me = my; jananii = mother; kaH = who; me = my; taataH = father; iti = thus; paribhaavaya = deem well / visualize; sarvaM = the entire; asaaraM = worthless / without essence; vishvaM = world; tyaktvaa = having abandoned / sacrificed; svapna = dream; vichaaraM = consideration / thinking.)

(tvaM kaH = who are you? ahaM kaH = who am I ? kutaH aayaataH = from where (I) came ? me jananii kaa = who is my mother ? me taataH kaH = who is my father? iti = thus; svapna vichaaram.h asaaraM vishvaM sarvaM tyaktvaa = giving up the dream like, imaginary and worthless experiences of the world; paribhaavaya = visualize)

Who are you ? Who am I ? From where I came ? Who is my mother ? Who is my father ? Deliberate thus, understand that all these experiences of the world are

worthless and imaginary like a dream and discard them.

Man is aptly called a social animal. Mother, father, son daughter, brother, sister – these relationships are the foundation of family life. Our life is interdependent in the society. This is the fabric of human society. Interpersonal relationship is the basis of human nature itself. As such, to have a healthy relation with others, I should have a correct understanding of myself. In the absence of such an understanding, or worse, with a wrong understanding, the relation with others will be biased and often treacherous.

In this journey of life, we should cultivate a healthy relationship with others. For this, knowledge about ourselves will be the greatest tool. Without this essential tool, we are likely to behave like intoxicated or lunatic persons. The snake of egoism is constantly biting us and injecting its poison. This has weakened our mind and coloured it with lust and anger. The confusion thus created by the world has reduced us to the state of Arjuna in the Kurukshetra, fearful to face the army of Duryodhana. To see the truth about ourselves, the right approach is that of introspection. The Acharya recommends it here.

If we don't know the real nature of a thing, it is likely to mislead us. Our imagination will give the world myriad colours, some of them fearful. We may not see the real and see only the unreal. To know what is real, looking into our own inner self is required. Try to figure out what is our origin. Make liberal use of the discriminative faculty.

“ From where I came? Who am I ? To where I am going ? Who are my parents ?” Thus we shall ponder over our life and find answers. Is this worldly life the end of all these things ? Will the life end after my death or will it continue with the soul ? This kind of introspection will enable us to clear the misunderstanding about our existence and allow us to see the reality. But the problem with us is that we are too engrossed in the world and its charms that there is hardly any time or inclination for such elevating thoughts.

The Acharya urges to renounce “vishvam”. This word signifies all our worldly experiences with the body, mind and intellect. Cast off them knowing well that these are worthless and delusive like a dream. It is true that all these experiences bound by our body, senses, mind and intellect will come to an end. Hence they are not real; they are delusive – like the experience in a dream.

Abandoning the craving for sense satisfaction, the mind should be turned inwards and slowly to Atman. We will slowly get convinced that the wonderful world of “nama rupa” (name and forms) was a delusion (Maya) and we will see the Reality.

## Verse 24

tvayi mayi chaanyatraiko vishhNuH  
vyarthaM kupyasi mayyasahishhNuH .  
bhava samachittaH sarvatra tvaM  
vaaJNchhasyachiraadyadi vishhNutvam.h

(tvayi = in you; mayi = in me; chaanyatraika = cha + anyatra + ekaH = and + in any other place + only one; vishhNuH = the Lord Maha Vishnu; vyarthaM = in vain ; for nothing; purposeless; kupyasi = you get angry; mayyasahishhNu = mayi + asahishhNuH, in me + intolerant; bhava = become; samachittaH = equal-minded / equanimity; sarvatra = everywhere; tvaM = you; vaaJNchhasi = you desire; achiraad.h = without delay / in no time; yadi = if; vishhNutvaM = the quality of Vishnu / state of Brahman / god-realization)

(tvayi mayi cha = in you and in me; anyatra = elsewhere; ekaH vishhNuH = is the same Vishnu (the same God is present); asahishhNuH = impatient; mayi vyarthaM kupyasi = you are angry with me for nothing; achiraad.h = without delay; vishhNutvaM vaaJNchhasi yadi = if you want to attain Vishnu (God) or Godliness; tvaM sarvatra samachittaH bhava = you be equal minded always.)

You are impatient and angry with me for nothing; Know that the same Vishnu is present in you, me and everyone else. If you are desirous of attaining God soon, cultivate equanimity always.

Do you want to reach the presence of God quickly ? If yes, here is a short-cut: give up intolerance, give up anger and practice equanimity. See the same Divinity in all as it is in you. Sri Sankara proclaims to the world the truth which was experienced by our seers since centuries: "The same God dwells in you, me and everyone else."

"It is Narayana who has become the all. Man is Narayana; all creatures are Narayana; the Rishi is Narayana, the wicked man is Narayana; whatever is, is Narayana. Narayana sports in multiforms, displaying His glory in all these forms".

*"Beholding diversity is born of delusion; beholding unity is born of enlightenment"*  
- Sri Ramakrishna.

There is no room for "bheda bahava", differentiation. When the same God resides in you and me, why this impatience ? Why this anger ? If you want to attain to Godliness (Vishnutvam), better cultivate equanimity. Anger and impatience will not lead you to Vishnu.

Seeking variety and novelty is human nature. Even in religion, people are delighted if new theories are presented. This satisfies the craze for novelty. Repeating the same thing is not tolerated well. But in religion, some repetition is unavoidable. Truth is only one and there cannot be many new ideas. Here, it seems that the disciple got a little weary and was bored with what he had been hearing. Occasionally, there arises some intolerance towards the Guru! The keen Guru sensed it and hence remarked thus. Guru often has to repeat his teaching to his eager disciples. If they understood it at the first instance, they would have already left the scene! Doubts will arise in the aspirant's heart as long as the feeling of duality is present. The smart Guru corrects the disciple by repeating the teachings. There is no use in getting impatient about this. If the aspirant wants to get the experience of Realization, equanimity is to be kept. The Guru moreover encourages the disciple that Vishnutvam is his birth right, he needn't be disappointed; it will come to him one day, only he should be patient.

Religion is not for intellectual entertainment; Whatever is learnt is to be practiced to gain first hand knowledge. Even if you read about sugar ten times, you cannot experience its sweetness. Sugar tastes sweet only when you eat it. Spiritual experience will not come with mere scholarship. Each one of us has to practice it. Through the discipline of mind alone we can hope to reach the goal. For this, equanimity and self-control is essential. Be ready to face everything in life; Loss or gain; pain or pleasure; happiness or sorrow: face all this with the same spirit with calm composure. Because of attachment, we react to various situations in life – likes or dislikes; All this takes away peace of mind. So, to attain equanimity, attachment will have to be removed. Satsanga is a way to achieve this;

The Gita says

*yogasthah kuru karmani sangam tyaktvaa dhananjaya  
siddhy asiddhyoh samo bhootvaa samatvam yoga uchyate*  
-(Gita, Chaper 2, sloka 48)

*“Perform action, Oh Dhanajaya, being fixed in yoga, renouncing attachments, and even-minded in success and failure; equilibrium is verily yoga”.*

Swami Chidbhavananda comments:

*“The nature of the mind is to be elated in success and dejected in failure. But by remaining unperturbed by either, the mind gains in clarity and firmness. It is like the surface of water that has become placid and fit to reflect objects clearly. This even – mindedness is equilibrium. He is a Yogi who keeps the mind in this poised state under all circumstances. Spiritual growth is possible to him only who keeps the mind ever poised.”*

If the mind reaches this stage, realization is not far away. The aspirant gets liberated even while in this body. This is what is meant by “Vishnutvam”.

## Verse 25

shatrau mitre putre bandhau  
maa kuru yatnaM vighrahasandhau .  
sarvasminnapi pashyaatmaanaM  
sarvatrotsR^ija bhedaaGYaanam.h

(Shatrau = in (towards) the enemy; mitre = in (towards) the friend; putre = in (towards) the son; bandhau = in (towards) relatives; maa = don't; kuru = do; yatnaM = effort; vighraha sandhau = for war (dissension) or peace-making; sarvasminnapi = in all beings; pashya atmaanaM = see your own Self; sarvatra = everywhere; utsR^ija = give up; bhedaa GYaanam = difference / otherness / duality)

(shatrau mitre putre bandhau = towards enemy, friend, son or relative; vighrahasandhau .yatnaM maa kuru = don't go for quarrel or peace; sarvasminnapi atmaanaM pashya = see Atman in everyone, everything; sarvatra bhedaaGYaanam.h utsR^ija = always eliminate the attitude of differentiation.)

Do not waste your effort to win the love or to fight against friend or foe, children or relatives. See your own Self, Atman in all beings and give up the impression of difference.

A mother doesn't hate her child because she considers it as a part of her own body, her own being. Even if a doctor advises, we are reluctant to remove a part of the body which is wounded or diseased. I do not punish my teeth when it bites the tongue in error; both are parts of my own body. So how can I hate the teeth for causing pain ? But I get offended the moment somebody else causes the slightest discomfort: because it is somebody else, not me. I can only pardon myself, not others.

Our vision of diversity in the world causes all friction and unpleasant situations. But as soon as we begin to see the Unity in this apparent diversity, feeling of difference disappears. There is no quarrel then with others. The Acharya says: Don't go for war or peace with your friend or enemy, children or relatives; it is a wasted effort. The wise course is to see Brahman in you and everyone else and give up the outlook of differences.

The entire universe is derived from the same principle: God or Brahman. Like the same flame in different lamps, the same Atman is shining in us all. When we know that the same principle Brahman is pervading everywhere, present in all living beings, all men and women who live in the

world, there is no more differentiation. There is nothing here but God. See the Oneness and love all. Irrespective of our different outward appearance, we are children of the same Divinity. Then whom I will love ? Whom I will hate ? Whom I will quarrel with ? Whom I will make peace with ? The Acharya advises us to know this secret and hence keep our peace of mind as well as peace of the Universe. Unnecessary quarrels and shows of affection will be wasted effort; Our effort should be used for God–realisation, not for trivials.

With the negative feelings like hatred, anger, selfishness, one can neither attain peace of mind nor attempt to make progress in sadhana. The Acharya urges the aspirant to do away with them and turn his mind to the Unity of Godhood. I am my own enemy and my own friend. As long as mind is attached to the external happenings, I will be conditioned by the world and its activities. But when I detach myself from these, I am unaffected: Love or hatred, profit or loss, victory or defeat is the same to me. There is no need of quarrel or peace with others then.

## Verse 26

kaamaM krodhaM lobhaM mohaM  
tyaktvaa.atmaanaM pashyati so.aham.h .  
aatmaGYaana vihiinaa muuDhaaH  
te pachyante narakaniguuDhaaH

(kaamaM = lust; krodhaM = anger; lobhaM = greed; mohaM = infatuation; tyaktvaa.atmaanaM = having abandoned, one's own self; pashyati = see; so.aham = "I am that"; aatma GYaana = knowledge of (Atman) Self; vihiinaa = bereft; muuDhaa = fools; te = they; pachyante = are cooked; naraka = in the hell; niguuDhaa = cast in)

(kaamaM krodhaM lobhaM mohaM tyaktvaa = having given up lust, anger, greed and infatuation; atmaanaM so.aham = that Atman as 'I am that' ; pashyati = sees; aatmaGYaana vihiinaa muuDhaaH = those without the knowledge of Atman are fools; narakaniguuDhaaH te pachyante = they suffer in hell.)

Having given up lust, anger, greed and obsession, one experiences that he is indeed the Atman; Those who have no knowledge of Atman are fools and they suffer in the hell.

'The three thieves lust, anger and greed are ever present in us, waiting for a chance to steal the diamond of knowledge. So, be alert, beware!' (Sri Sankara). With these neagtive qualities in him, a sadhaka cannot make much headway in spiritual practices. As long as the mind is stained with the dirt of these, Atman will not reflect on the mirror of mind. As a first step, the sadhaka should renounce these dubious qualities and turn his attention inward. It is not possible to realize the inner Self and enjoy the resultant peace and Bliss without controlling the outward senses which agitate the mind and create incessant surges. The realization thus obtained after a lot of struggle is not comparable to the regular experiences brought by the senses.

We have only conditioned knowledge of objects. We observe them as separate from our own entity. Subject (me) and the object are different. The knowledge of Atman is something different altogether. I see the Atman in me. I cannot see Atman (Self) different from my being. Here, the subject and object are one and the same. So, this experience is a conviction that 'I am that' (soham = sa + aham = I am that). It is like regaining something which was THOUGHT TO BE lost. Or recollecting something forgotten. I had forgotten my real nature. Now I found it. I found that 'I am that, Soham; I am Shiva, Shivoham'.

The people who have no such knowledge really suffer as if they live in hell. They are at the mercy of their senses which torture them constantly. There is no clear understanding of life or its mission. They foolishly think that life is only for the enjoyment of the senses. They let loose all neagive feelings like greed, anger, lust and jealousy. Soon they are overpowered by them and the outcome will be misery. Deluded thus, their vision of life will be impaired and wisdom defunct. The unfortunate souls live in a virtual hell created by their own mind.

The Achrya urges the devotee to annihilate the evils of lust, anger and greed and convince himself 'Shivoham' ( I am Siva ). The sadhaka, who refuses to believe he is anything else than Shiva, realizes that he is the eternal Atman, the eternal witness, who neither came nor went.

*"The man given to envy, anger and timidity never grows in spiritual stature."*

*"People who live in localities infested with venomous creatures should always be alert and mindful of the danger. Even so, people intent on spiritual growth should guard themselves against indulgent senses tainted with lust and greed".*

- Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna describes how to overcome desire and anger:

*"When can desire and hatred, the enemies of man be destroyed ? These propensities of the mind prove themselves enemies when directed to worldly affairs. They become allies when directed Godward. Desires for worldly things must be converted into the desire for God. Let man be annoyed with God and angry with Him for not revealing Himself. Desire and anger cannot be totally destroyed, but they can be transmuted; then they become harmless."*

## Verse 27

geyaM giitaa naama sahasraM  
dhyeyaM shriipati ruupamajasram.h .  
neyaM sajjana saN^ge chittaM  
deyaM diinajanaaya cha vittam.h

(geyaM = is to be sung; giitaa = (The Bhagavad) Gita; naama = name (of the Lord); sahasraM = thousand; dhyeyaM = is to be meditated; shriipati = Shri – Maha Lakshmi; Pati – consort; Hence Maha Vishnu (God ); ruupaM = form / image; ajasraM = always; neyaM = is to be lead / taken; sajjana = good (holy) people; saN^ge = in the company; chittaM = mind; deyaM = is to be given; diina janaaya = to the poor (and humble) people; cha = and; vittaM = wealth.)

(Gita naama sahasraM geyaM = the Bhagavad Gita and the Vishnu Sahasranama are to be recited; ajasraM shriipati ruupaM dhyeyaM = Shri Pati's form is to be meditated on always; chittaM sajjana saN^ge neyaM = Mind is to be led to the company of good people; vittaM diinajanaaya deyaM cha = and wealth is to be given to the poor and needy.)

Study regularly the Bhagavad Gita and chant the Lord's thousand glories. Always meditate on the form of God; Take delight in the company of good and holy people. Donate your wealth to the poor and the needy.

Here are four do's for the sadhaka:

1. Study the Bhagavad Gita and chant the Lord's glories.
2. Practice meditation as much as possible.

3. Keep the company of holy people.
4. Donate your wealth among the poor and weak.

The Bhagavad Gita is the essence of Veda - Vedanta. Hence it is called an Upanishad in its own right. In fact, it is more than an Upanishad. It is the essence of all Upanishads. It is the condensed, simplified form of all Upanishads bestowed by the Lord for the benefit of not-so-learned men. Gita forms the basis of all spiritual principles. If Upanishads are cows, Gita is their milk affectionately given to the world by the divine cowherd Sri Krishna. Karma- Bhakti – Jnana – Raja yogas, the four-lane path leading to God realization is explained clearly in it. It is a practical guide on life which gives insight to the aspirant as to what is right. This will help alter his view on life and turn his mind towards God. Hence a serious study of Gita is essential for any sadhaka who starts his spiritual practices.

Equipped thus with the intellectual knowledge, the sadhaka must practice what he learnt. Contemplation on the Lord and his myriad glories is a right step. The Vishnu Sahasranama proclaims thousand glories of the Lord. Sadhaka can entertain his mind with such pure things.

The mind thus purified will be fit for the meditation on the Lord Shri Pati (Shri is Maha Lakshmi, Pati is her consort, Maha Vishnu, God). Mere book knowledge will not be sufficient. Meditation on God's form alone will lead him to realization. Religion is for practicing, not just for intellectual entertainment. The best form for meditation is that of the Ishta Deva, one's own chosen Ideal such as Maha Vishnu.

There is a danger for the sadhaka. It may not be possible to meditate always. Company of the wicked or improper people can jeopardize his efforts and can bring ruin to whatever he did so far. Hence it is very important that the sadhaka keeps the company of only good and holy people who are interested in religious matters and spiritual practices. Satsanga keeps the tempo of the spiritual pursuits and helps the sadhaka to keep himself alert always.

The above practices will surely lead a sadhaka to his goal, provided he is unselfish and willing to help others: the poor, the sick, the needy, the lowly. The wealth he has acquired is for this purpose. It is to be donated to the people who are incapable of supporting themselves. If, on the contrary, the sadhaka clings to his money, shutting his eyes on the sufferings of others, his sadhana will remain largely incomplete. It should be added that monetary help is to be given only to people who are in real need of it. Doing service to men and animals, old people and orphan children, sick and the meek is really a path to God realization as much as anything else. The sadhaka should see the same Divinity that is within him in all living beings and worship It through service. Without this concept, if he only worships an idol of wood or metal, he cannot be called a real devotee. Swami Vivekananda has thus praised this 'Narayana seva through Nara seva':

*"The householder by digging tanks, by planting trees on the roadsides, by establishing rest houses for men and animals, by making roads and building bridges, goes towards the same goal as the greatest Yogi".*

- Swami Vivekananda (Karma Yoga).

What should be our attitude while we engage in charity? Swami Vivekananda says:

*"Why should we do good to the world? Apparently to help the world, but really to help ourselves. .. This world was not made that you or I should come and help it... The desire to do good is the highest motive power we have, if we know all the time that it is a privilege to help others. Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say, "Here, my poor man," but be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by making a gift to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect."*

## Verse 28

sukhataH kriyate raamaabhogaH  
pashchaadd hanta shariire rogaH .  
yadyapi loke maraNaM sharaNaM  
tadapi na muJNchati paapaacharaNam.h

(sukhataH = for happiness; kriyate = is done; raamaabhoga = sensual pleasures; pashchaadd = later on (in the end); hanta = alas! shariire = in the body; roga = disease; yadyapi = even; though; loke = in the world; maraNaM = death; sharaNaM = resort / surrender; tadapi = even then; na = not; muJNchati = releases / gives up; paapaacharaNaM = papa + AcharaNaM, sin-practising.)

(sukhataH = for the sake of happiness (for ease); raamaabhoga kriyate = (man) immerses in sense pleasures; hanta = alas!; pashchaad shariire roga = afterwards (as a result of) body gets diseased; yadyapi loke maraNa sharaNaM = though the end of this worldly life is death,; tadapi = even then; paapaacharaNaM na muJNchati = (man) doesn't abandon his sinful ways.)

Man follows the easy path and plunges into sensual pleasures. Afterwards, body gets diseased. In spite of the knowledge that this leads only to death, man refuses to give up his sinful ways.

This is a human weakness: We follow the path of least resistance. Going the way led by the senses and enjoying life is very easy. No much effort is required; no training needed; The fall down is easy. The gravity is there to assist. Climbing uphill is difficult. Unbridled, the cart drawn by horses run down the steep hill. Curbing them, however is not easy. Man immerses in sensual pleasures and forgets the real purpose of being here.

Addiction to alcoholism, smoking, drugs...The list is long. The result of this reckless life is disease and death. No doubt, death is certain for all that is born; This was known always. Yet we do not make an effort to know if there is something beyond it. Forgetting one's goal for the sake of satisfying the senses will be a regrettable course of action. Sri Sankara here sympathizes with such people who have missed the vital point in life.

*“Sense pleasures are like itching eczema. There is pleasure in violently scratching it; but the disease gets aggravated thereby. By yielding to sense pleasures mind gets more entangled in them.”*

*“The earth – bound people do not learn a lesson even when overcome with acute pain, disappointments, failures and misfortunes in life. They are like the camels which go on biting off thorny shrubs unmindful of the bleeding caused to their lips.”*

*“Time and again man gets humiliated because of his being victim to lust and greed. Still he is unable to recoil from them and give his thought to God.”*

– Sri Ramakrishna.

## Verse 29

arthamanarthaM bhaavaya nityaM  
naastitataH sukhaleshaH satyam.h .

putraadapi dhana bhaajaaM bhiitiH  
sarvatraishhaa vihitaa riitiH

(arthaM = wealth; anarthaM = purposeless / in vain / danger-productive; bhaavaya = deem / consider / visualise; nityaM = daily / always; na = not; asti = is; tataH = from that; sukha leshaH = even a little happiness; satyaM = Truth; putraadapi = even from the son; dhana = wealth; bhaajaaM = acquiring people; bhiitiH = fear; sarvatra = everywhere; eshaa = this; vihitaa = wealth; riitiH = procedure / practice / custom.)

(arthaM anarthaM (iti) nityaM bhaavaya = Remember always that wealth (could be a cause of) disaster; tataH sukhaleshaH na asti (iti) satyaM = the truth is that (one) cannot get even a little happiness from that; dhana bhaajaaM putraadapi bhiitiH = the people who are after money (rich) fear even their sons; sarvatra eshaa riitiH vihitaa = everywhere, this is the way of wealth.)

Bear in mind always that wealth could mean disaster. The truth is that one cannot derive even a little happiness from it. Men who are after money fear even their sons; everywhere this is the way of wealth.

Sri Sankara here gives a sound advice good for householders and other sadhakas. Know that money will mean more misery than pleasure. The truth is, money cannot buy happiness; In money matters, man doesn't trust even his offsprings. Strange it may seem, but this is the way of the world.

The Acharya, though not a man of the world, nevertheless understood its ways precisely. This is for the benefit of the disciples and devotees. Money often makes a man arrogant. There is no end to the greed for wealth. The man who gets a thousand will hope for ten thousand. The one who gets ten thousand will hope for a lakh... No end to desire, no end to greed. Will more money ensure more pleasure and peace of mind? Chances are little. The more a man gets, the more greedy he becomes; No one is satisfied with what he gets. He is jealous of those who have more; Dissatisfied mind is the breeding ground of crimes: at home, in society also. The rich man sometimes doesn't trust even his children on monetary matters. He is doubtful on others and their intentions. Sleep is lost; Rivalries start; Quarrels ensue; Even murders result. All for money. Can a sadhaka live with this situation?

No amount of money will satisfy us. We have to satisfy ourselves by what we legitimately earn by hard work. We should impress ourselves that it is a misconception that money brings happiness. There is nothing wrong if we work hard and earn money; we may use it for good purposes. But we shouldn't become a slave of money. The earlier we understand the truth about the world and its ways, the better it is for us: To help say farewell to ignorant ways.

## Verse 30

praaNaayaamaM pratyahaaraM  
nityaanitya vivekavichaaram.h .  
jaapyasameta samaadhividhaanaM  
kurvavadhaanaM mahadavadhaanam.h

(PraaNaayaamaM = a spiritual practice which controls Prana, the vital force, a part of the Raja Yoga discipline; pratyahaaraM = the step in RajaYoga after this; nityaM = always / daily / certain; anitya = uncertain / temporary / ephemeral / transient; viveka = discrimination; vichaaram = thought / considered conclusion / opinion; jaapya sameta = with chanting of the names of the

Lord; samaadhi vidhaanaM = in the state of trance; kurvavadhaanaM = pay attention; mahadavadhaanaM = great care, attention)

(praaNaayaamaM pratyahaaraM = Pranayama and Pratyahara; nityaanitya vivekavichaaram.h . = Discrimination as to which is eternal and which is transient and fixing the mind on the lasting; jaapyasameta samaadhividhaanaM = Samadhi (or Dhyana, meditation) along with Japa; AvadhaanaM mahadavadhaanaM kuru = to be performed with care, extreme care.)

**Perform Pranayama and Pratyahara; discriminate between real and unreal and fix the mind on the Real; Make japa while meditating; perform all these with extreme care and steadfastness.**

Sri Sankara had advised us the external sadhanas in previous slokas. These were the study of Bhagavad Gita, chanting of God's names and His worship, Satsanga (keeping company of good people); Daanam (charity) and giving up the thirst for wealth. Here he urges us to start practicing internal sadhanas. The mind cleaned of lust and quest for wealth is indeed fit for mediation. Hence this advice.

The internal sadhanas prescribed are 1) Pranayama, the control of the vital Prana which presides over the body; 2) Pratyahara, the withdrawal of mind from sense objects; 3) Discriminating between the real and unreal; 4) Japa, the repetition of God's name or mantra (a holy formula) advised by one's Guru; 5) Meditation and Samadhi.

Pranayama is a spiritual practice, which is a part of Raja Yoga. Swami Vivekananda says:

“Pranayama is not, as many think, something about breath; breath indeed has very little to do with it, if anything. Breathing is only one of the many exercises through which we get to the real Pranayama. Pranayama means the control of Prana.”

“It is the Prana that is manifesting as the actions of the body, as the nerve currents, as thought force. From thought down to the lowest force, everything is but the manifestation of Prana. The sum total of all forces in the universe, mental or physical, when resolved back to their original state, is called Prana”.

“The Prana which is working this mind and body is the nearest to us of all the Prana in this universe. ...If we can succeed in controlling that little wave, then alone we can hope to control the whole of Prana. The Yogi who has done this gains perfection.”

“The next step is Pratyahara... He who has succeeded in attaching or detaching his mind to or from the centres at will has succeeded in Pratyahara, which means, “gathering towards”, checking the outgoing powers of the mind, freeing it from the thralldom of the senses... This controlling of the mind, and not allowing it to join itself to the centres, is Pratyahara.” Mind has a natural tendency to look outwards; towards the senses. With practice, this should be checked and mind should be detached from the senses at will.

The sadhaka should discriminate on the things of the world and find for himself what is lasting and what is transitory. He should train his mind to discard the fleeting objects and fix his mind only on the real. Without this, Pranayama will be meaningless. If one lives a worldly life with all its defects and practices Pranayama, he cannot make much progress; Moreover, it could lead him to serious trouble.

The mind thus purified by Pranayama and Pratyahara is fit for the meditation. The sadhaka should engage himself in meditation and japa, (repetition of the Holy Manthra advised by one's Guru). This will lead him to Samadhi, the superconscious state. “All the different steps in Yoga are indented to bring us scientifically to the superconscious state, or Samadhi.”, says Swami

Vivekananda.

The Acharya gives the steps of Raja Yoga, which are to be practiced at a pace suited to individual temperament with extreme care and preferably under the guidance of an experienced teacher. There shouldn't be any hurry to get quick result. Control of the senses is recommended, not forceful annihilation. Patience and perseverance is required; Years of practice may be required. For more information on this subject, readers are advised to read Raja Yoga by Swami Vivekananda.

## Verse 31

gurucharaNaambuja nirbhara bhakataH  
saMsaaraadachiraadbhava muktaH .  
sendriyamaanasa niyamaadevaM  
drakshyasi nija hR^idayasthaM devam.h

(gurucharaNa ambuja = the Lotus Feet of the Guru,(divine teacher); nirbhara = dependent; bhakataH = devotee; sa.nsaaraat.h = from the world; achiraad bhava = in no time from the cycle of birth & death; muktaH = released; sendriyamaanasa = sa + indriya + mAnasa, with senses and mind; niyamaad evam = control alone (niyam + At.h + eva); drakshyasi = you will see; nija = one's own; hR^idayasthaM = heart stationed; devaM = God)

(gurucharaNaambuja nirbhara bhakataH = Oh disciple who is very much devoted to your Guru's Lotus Feet! Sendriyamaanasa niyamaat = by regulating the senses and the mind; achiraad sa.nsaaraat.h muktaH bhava = may you be liberated from the bondage of worldly life and cycle of birth and death without delay; evam = thus; nija hR^idayasthaM devaM drakshyasi = you will see, (realize) God who is dwelling in your own heart.)

Oh! disciple who is very much devoted to your Guru's Lotus Feet! May thou be before long liberated from the Samsara of birth and death. Through the disciplined senses and mind alone you will see God who abides in your own heart.

In this concluding sloka of Bhajagovindam, Sri Sankara blesses his beloved disciples. The compassionate blessing is not only for his disciples, but also for the entire community of spiritual aspirants.

The word 'guru' is a combination of two words: 'gu' and 'ru'. 'Gu' means darkness and 'ru' means its removal. Guru is called so, because he removes darkness and gives light, spiritual light, in this case. By following his Guru earnestly, the disciple progresses fast in his spiritual pursuit. The intense devotion the disciple has on the Lotus Feet of his Guru is a great asset. Hindu tradition attaches great reverence to the spiritual teacher, guru. The realized Guru is revered equal to God Himself:

## Conclusion

This wonderful song composed by Sri Sankara has everything in it. To the lover of music, it gives divine music to which even children get attracted. To the admirer of poetry, it gives rhythm and beauty. To the seeker of Truth, it shows the way. To the householder, to the sanyasin, or to the man of the world, it serves as a practical guide. May we reach the state of 'Shivoham' with its help!

