

BHAGAVADGITA

English translation of Sri Ramanuja's Sanskrit Commentary - Swami

Adidevananda

Chapter 6

RO

6.1 The Lord said -- He who, without depending on such fruits of works as heaven, etc., performs them, reflecting, 'The performance of works alone is my duty (Karya). Works themselves are my sole aim, because they are a form of worship of the Supreme Person who is our Friend in every way. There is nothing other than Him to be gained by them' --- such a person is a Sannyasin, i.e., one devoted to Jnana Yoga, and also a Karma Yogin, i.e., one devoted to Karma Yoga. He is intent on both these, which is the means for attaining Yoga, which is of the nature of the vision of the self. 'And not he who maintains no sacred fires and performs no works,' i.e., not he who is disinclined to perform the enjoined works such as sacrifices, etc., nor he who is devoted to mere knowledge. The meaning is that such a person is devoted only to knowledge, whereas a person who is devoted to Karma Yoga has both knowledge and works. Now Sri Krsna teaches that there is an element of knowledge in the Karma Yoga as defined above.

6.2 Know Karma Yoga only to be that which they call as Sannyasa i.e., as Jnana Yoga or knowledge of the real nature of the self. Sri Krsna substantiates this by the words, 'For no one whose delusive identification of the body with the self is not abandoned, becomes a true Karma Yogin.' 'One whose delusion is abandoned is one by whom the

delusion of identifying the self with Prakrti (body), which is in reality distinct from the self, is not rejected by the contemplation of the real nature of the self. One who is not of this kind is one whose delusion is not abandoned. One who is not of this kind cannot become a Karma Yogin of the type described here. It has already been said: 'He whose every undertaking is free from desire for fruits and delusive identification of the body with the self ...' (4.19). Sri Krsna now teaches that by Karma Yoga alone one succeeds in Yoga without the risk of fall.

6.3 Karma Yoga is said to be the means for an aspirant for release who 'seeks to climb the heights of Yoga,' i.e., the vision of the self. For the same person, when he has climbed the 'heights of Yoga,' i.e., when he is established in Yoga --- tranquility, i.e., freedom from actions is said to be the means. A man should perform actions until he has attained release (Moksa) in the form of the vision of the self. Full release comes only with the fall of the body. The 'vision of the self' referred to here is called Moksa by courtesy. When does not become established in Yoga? Sri Krsna replies:

6.4 When this Yogin, because of his natural disposition to the experience of the self, loses attachment, i.e., gets detached from sense-objects, i.e., things other than the self, and actions associated with them --- then he has abandoned all desires and is said to have climbed the heights of Yoga. Therefore, for one wishing to climb to Yoga, but is still disposed to the experience of the sense-objects, Karma Yoga consisting

of the practice of detachment to these objects, becomes the cause for success in Yoga. Therefore one who wishes to climb to Yoga must perform Karma Yoga consisting in the practice of detachment from sense-objects. Sri Krsna further elucidates the same:

6.5 By the self (Atman), i.e., by the mind, which is unattached to sense-objects, one should raise the self. One should not allow the self to sink by a mind which is of the contrary kind. 'For the self alone,' i.e., the mind alone is the friend of the self; and it alone is the foe of the self. [The figure of speech here is of Samsara as the ocean in which the individual self is like an object with liability to sink. What causes its sinking is the lingering attachments of the mind to some objects, though in the discipline of Jnana Yoga one may keep aloof from such objects. A mind with such attachments is the foe and without them, the friend.]

6.6 A person whose mind is conquered by himself in relation to sense-objects, has that mind as his friend. In the case of one whose mind is not conquered in this way, his own mind, like an enemy, remains hostile. The meaning is that it acts, against his attainment of supreme beatitude. It has been stated by Bhagavan Parasara also: 'The mind of man is the cause both of his bondage and his release. Its addiction to sense objects is the cause of his bondage; its separation from sense objects is the means of one's release' (V. P., 6.7.28). The proper condition for the beginning of Yoga is now taught:

6.7 Of him whose self is conquered, i.e., whose mind is conquered, whose mind is free from fluctuations and who is very calm, 'the great self' becomes well secured, i.e., exceedingly well secured in connection with heat and cold, pleasure and pain, and honour and dishonour. Here the individual self (Pratyagatman) is called 'the great self' (Paramatman), as the context justifies this only. It can also be called 'great', because it is at a higher stage relatively to previous successive stages. Or the word may be construed as follows: The self is secured greatly --- Atma parma samahitah. [In any case it should not be taken as the Supreme Being].

6.8 That Karma Yogin whose mind is content with the knowledge of the self and the knowledge of the difference, i.e., whose mind is content with the knowledge concerning the real nature of the self as well as with the knowledge of the difference of its nature from Prakrti; 'who is established in the self' (Kutasthah), i.e., who remains as the self which is of the uniform nature of knowledge in all stages of evolution as men, gods etc. whose senses are therefore subdued; and to whom 'earth, stone and gold are of equal value' because of his lack of interest in any material objects of enjoyment on account of his intense earnestness to know the real nature of the self as different from Prakrti --- he, that Karma Yogi, is called integrated i.e., fit for the practice of Yoga which is of the nature of the vision of the self. And also.

6.9 'Well-wishers' (Suhrt) are those who wish one well, regardless of differences in age. 'Friends' (Mitra) are well-wishers of equal age. 'Foes' (Ari) are those who wish ill to one because of some particular cause. 'The indifferent' (Udasina) are those devoid of both friendship and hostility because of the absence of causes for both; 'neutrals' (Madhyastha) are those who are by their very nature incapable of both friendship and hostility. 'The hateful' are those who wish ill to one even from birth. 'Relations' are those who bear goodwill from birth. 'The good' are those devoted to virtue. 'The sinful' are those given to sin. Because of the self being the only end of Yoga, and because of there being no gain and no opposition from well-wishers, friends, etc., he who could regard them all with an equal eye as selves, excels in respect of fitness for the practice of Yoga.

6.10 The Yogin who is steady in the practice of Karma Yoga, should 'constantly', i.e., daily when practising Yoga, fix his mind to the practice of Yoga, i.e., make himself engaged in the vision of the self. He must remain in a 'solitary place,' i.e., a place devoid of crowd and noise. And even there he must be 'all alone,' i.e., must not have a second person with him. He should 'control his thought and mind,' i.e., he should control the activities of thinking. He must be free from 'desire', i.e., he should not depend on anything except the self and be without the 'sense of possession,' without the idea of mineness with regard to anything other than the self.

6.11 - 6.12 'In a clean spot,' i.e., in a spot pure in itself, not owned or controlled by impure persons and untouched by impure things; having 'established a firm seat,' a seat made of wood or similar material, which is neither too high nor too low; which is covered with cloth, deer-skin and Kusa grass in the reverse order; seated on it in a way which promotes the serenity of mind; having the mind concentrated on Yoga; and holding the activities of the mind and senses in check in all ways --- he should practise 'Yoga', i.e., practise the vision of the self for 'the purification of the self,' i.e., to end his bondage.

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6.13 - 6.14 Keeping the trunk, head and neck erect and motionless; well seated in order to be steady; looking not in any direction but gazing at the tip of the nose; serene, i.e., holding the mind extremely peaceful; fearless; firm in the vow of celibacy; holding the mind in check; and fixing his thoughts on Me --- he should sit in Yoga, i.e., remain concentrated

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6.15 'Ever applying his mind on Me,' i.e., the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Person and the holy and auspicious object of meditation, 'the Yogin of controlled mind,' i.e., one having his mind steady because of his being purified in mind through contact with Me, comes to the peace which abides in Me, which is of the highest degree of beatitude. That means he comes to the peace which is the supreme end of beatitude which abides in Me. For the person who commences Yoga of the self, Sri Krsna, after thus teaching how the mind should be fixed on the Lord, who is the holy and auspicious object of meditation, proceeds in order to effect the purification of the mind, to speak of the other side of Yoga:

6.16 Over-eating and excessive fasting are opposed to Yoga. So also are excessive recreation and non-recreation, too much of sleep and too much of vigil. So too, are overwork and idleness.

6.17 The 'yoga which destroys all sorrows,' i.e., unties bondages, is successfully practised by him who is temperate in eating and recreation, temperate in exertion, and temperate in sleep and vigil.

6.18 When the mind which usually goes after sense enjoyments, abandons such desires and 'rests on the self alone,' i.e., becomes well-settled on account of discerning unsurpassable good in the self alone and rests there alone steadily, without movement --- then, being 'free of yearning for all desires,' one is said to be integrated. He is said to be fit for Yoga.

6.19 As a lamp does not flicker in a windless place, i.e., does not move, but remains steady with its illumination --- this is the simile used to illustrate the nature of the self of the Yogin who has subdued his mind, who has got rid of all other kinds of mental activity and who is practising Yoga concerning the self. The meaning is that the self remains with its steadily illumining light of knowledge because all other activities of the mind have ceased, just as a lamp kept in a windless place has an unflickering flame.

6.20 - 6.23 Where, through the practice of Yoga, the mind, which is subdued everywhere by such practice, 'rejoices', i.e., rejoices in surpassing felicity; and where, perceiving through Yoga 'the self (Atman)' by 'the mind (Atman)' one is delighted by the self and indifferent to all other objects; and where, through Yoga, one 'knows', i.e., experiences

that infinite happiness which can be grasped only by the 'intellect' contemplating on the self, but is beyond the grasp of the senses; where, remaining in that Yoga, one does not 'swerve from that state,' because of the overwhelming happiness that state confers; having gained which, he desires for it alone, even when he is awakened from Yoga, and does not hold anything else as a gain; where one is not moved even by 'the heaviest sorrow' caused by any bereavement like that of a virtuous son - -- let him know that disunion from all union with pain, i.e., which forms the opposite of union with pain, is called by the term Yoga. This Yoga must be practised with the determination of its nature as such from the beginning with a mind free from despondency, i.e., with zestful exaltation.

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6.24 - 6.25 There are two kinds of desires: 1) those born of contact between the senses and objects like heat, cold etc.; 2) those generated by our mind (will) like that for sons, land etc. Of these, the latter type of desires are by their own nature relinquishable. Relinquishing all these by the mind through contemplation on their lack of association with the self; having relinquished the ideas of pleasure and pain in respect of unavoidable desires resulting from contract; restraining all the senses on

all sides, i.e., from contact with all their objects --- one should think of nothing else, i.e., other than the self. Little by little 'with the help of intellect controlled by firm resolution,' i.e., by the power of discrimination, one should think of nothing else, having fixed the mind on the self.

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6.26 Wherever the mind, on account of its fickle and unsteady nature, wanders, because of its proclivity to sense-objects, he should, subduing the mind everywhere with effort, bring it under control in order to remain in the self alone by contemplating on the incomparable bliss therein.

6.27 Supreme happiness, which is of the nature of experience of the self in its essential nature comes to this Yogin whose 'mind is at peace,' i.e., whose mind does not swerve from the self, whose mind abides in the self; whose impurities are thereby completely burnt away; whose Rajas is thereby 'wholly annulled,' i.e., in whom the quality of Rajas is destroyed; and who has thus become the Brahman, i.e., who remains steady in his essential nature as the Atman. 'Hi' (for) is added to indicate reason. The meaning is this: 'On account of the nature of the self which has the form of supreme bliss.'

6.28 Thus, in the above --- said manner, devoting himself to the Yoga of the self and by that means expelling all old impurities, the Yogin attains 'perfect', i.e., boundless felicity at all times easily, without stress and strain. The felicity is born of the contact with the Brahman (Atman), meaning the joy of experience of the Brahman. Now Sri Krsna says that the mature stage of Yoga consists of four degrees, as stated in the succeeding verses from 29th to 32nd.

6.29 (i) On account of the similarity between one self and other selves when They are separated from Prakrti (i.e., the body), all selves are by Themselves only of the nature of knowledge. Inequalities pertain only to Prakrti or the bodies they are embodied in. One whose mind is fixed in Yoga has the experience of the sameness of the nature of all the selves as centres of intelligence, the perceived difference being caused only by the body. When separated from the body all are alike because of their

being forms of centres of intelligence. An enlightened Yogin therefore sees himself as abiding in all beings and all beings abiding in his self in the sense that he sees the similarity of the selves in himself and in every being. When one self is visualised, all selves become visualised, because of the similarity of all selves. This is supported by the statements: 'He sees sameness everywhere' (6.29). The same is again referred to in, 'This Yoga of equality which has been declared by you' (6.33), and the statement 'The Brahman when uncontaminated is the same everywhere' (5.19).

6.30 (ii) He who, having reached the highest stage of maturity, views similarity of nature with Me, i.e., sees similarity of all selves to Myself when They are freed from good and evil and when they remain in Their own essence, as declared in the Sruti, 'Stainless he attains supreme degree of equality' (Mun. U., 3.1.3); and 'sees Me in all selves and sees all selves in Me.' That is, on viewing one of Them (selves), one views another also to be the same, because of their similarity to one another. To him who perceives the nature of his own self, I am not lost on account of My similarity to him i.e., I do not become invisible to him. He (the Yogin) viewing his own self as similar to Me, always remains within My sight when I am viewing Myself, because of similarity of his self with Me. Sri Krsna describes a still more mature steps (of Yoga):

6.31 (iii) The Yogin who, fixed in the state of Yoga in oneness because he has the same form of uncontracted knowledge (as Myself), worships

Me steadfastly by renouncing the differences of the Prakṛti (i.e., of the body) --- then that Yogin, even while coming out of Yoga, howsoever he may live, views Me only, when viewing his own self and all other beings. The meaning is that he views his similarity to Myself in his own self and in the self of all beings. Now Śrī Kṛṣṇa proceeds to speak of the maturest stage beyond this:

6.32 (iv) He who --- because of the similarity between his own self and other selves, as they are all constituted similarly of uncontracted knowledge in their essential being --- views the pleasures in the form of the birth of a son and the sorrows in the form of the death of a son of his own and of others, as equal, on the ground of their equal unrelatedness to such pleasures and pains to him. Viewing his own pleasures and pains of the above description as being not different from those of others of the same kind --- tht Yogin is deemed the highest; he is judged as having reached the summit of Yoga. [The idea is to prevent misconstruing the verse as meaning that one shares the joy and misery of all as his own. It means only that the highest type of yogins understand that the self is unrelated to the pain and pleasures of his own body-mind. He understands also that the same is the case with other selves.]

6.33 Arjuna said -- This Yoga as explained by you consists in maintaining equality of vision everywhere, viz., i) among themselves which have been so far known to be of different kinds such as gods and

men, and ii) between the individual selves and the Supreme, in so far as (a) all the selves are of the same form of knowledge, and (b) in so far as the individual self (i.e., the released soul) and the Supreme are alike free from Karma. I do not see how this Yoga can be steadily established in my mind, fickle as the mind is.

6.34 For the mind, which is found to be fickle even in matters incessantly practised, cannot be firmly fixed by a person in one place. It agitates that person violently and flies away stubbornly elsewhere. Regarding such a mind, which by nature is fickle even in matters practised, I regard that its restraint and fixing in the self, which is of quite opposite nature, is as difficult as restraining a strong contrary gale with such things as a fragile fan etc. The meaning is that the means for the restraint of the mind should be explained.

6.35 The Lord said -- No doubt, the mind is hard to subdue on account of its fickle nature. However, it can be subdued with difficulty by cultivating favourable attitude in the direction of the self by repeated contemplation of Its being a mind of auspicious attributes (these being eternality, self-luminosity, bliss, freedom from Karma, purity etc.), and by the absence of hankering produced by seeing the host of evil qualities in objects other than the self hankered for.

6.36 Yoga is hard to attain even in spite of great efforts by one of unrestrained self, i.e., of unrestrained mind. But the same Yoga which is

of the form of sameness of vision can be attained by proper means by one who is striving, whose 'mind is subdued,' i.e., by one whose mind is conquered by works (Karma Yoga) taught before, which is of the nature of My worship and which includes within itself knowledge (Jnana).

Then Arjuna puts questions in order to hear the greatness of Yoga, as it really is, which he has already heard about at the beginning of the teaching, 'Here there is no loss of effort' (2.40). There the greatness of Karma Yoga as inclusive of knowledge of the self with Yoga as its culmination was taught. This alone is the real greatness of Yoga.

6.37 - 6.39 Arjuna said -- What way does he go, who has embarked on Yoga endowed with faith, but who by inadequacy of exertion in practice, does not gain success in Yoga and has his mind wandering from Yoga? Does he not perish like a small piece of cloud torn from a large mass of cloud --- perish without reaching another large mass of cloud? Now does he not fall away from both (sides)? He has no support and is confused on the path leading to the Brahman. He is without any support in the sense that Karma or rituals which constitutes the means of heaven etc., does not give support for a person who is devoid of attachment to fruits; for Karma is the means for generating its own fruits. He is also confused in the path leading to the Brahman on which he has just begun to traverse; He has lost his way. Does he then get lost by falling down from both sides, these being attainment of heaven on the one hand and liberation on the other. Does he not thus perish? You should remove this doubt altogether from my mind; for there is no other remover of this

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6.40 The Lord said -- Neither here nor there is destruction for him who has begun Yoga with faith and has then fallen away from it. The meaning is that there is no destruction either in the form of failure of attainment of desires or in the form of Pratyavaya, which means the attainment of what is undesirable because of defects in the performance of works. Therefore no one who practises this incomparably auspicious Yoga ever comes to an evil end in the present, past or future. Sri Krsna explains how this is so:

6.41 This person, who had wandered away from Yoga because of desire for whatever kind of enjoyments, he will gain those very

enjoyments through the excellence of Yoga alone. Having attained to the worlds of those who do meritorious acts, he will dwell there for a long time, i.e., till his desire for such enjoyments gets exhausted. Then, devoid of desire for these enjoyment, this person who has swerved from Yoga at the very beginning of Yoga, is born, by virtue of the excellence of Yoga, in a family of those who are competent to practise Yoga.

6.42 If one swerves from the right path at an advanced stage of Yoga, he will be born in a family of wise Yogins who practise Yoga and are themselves capable of teaching Yoga. Thus, these two types of birth --- one in the family of those who are fit to practise Yoga and the other in that of accomplished Yogins --- are hardly met with among common people in this world. But Yoga is of such great potentiality that even this rare blessing is achieved through it.

6.43 - 6.44 There, in that existence, he regains the mental disposition for Yoga that he had in the previous birth. Like one awakened from sleep, he strives again from where he had left before attaining complete success. He strives so as not to be defeated by impediments. This person who has fallen away from Yoga is borne on towards Yoga alone by his previous practice, i.e., by the older practice with regard to Yoga. This power of Yoga is well known. Even a person, who has not engaged in Yoga but has only been desirous of knowing Yoga, i.e., has failed to follow it up, acquires once again the same desire to practise Yoga. He then practises Yoga, of which the first stage is Karma Yoga,

and transcends Sabda-brahman (or Brahman which is denotable by words). The Sabda-brahman is the Brahman capable of manifesting as gods, men, earth, sky, heaven etc., namely, Prakrti. The meaning is that having been liberated from the bonds of Prakrti, he attains the self which is incapable of being named by such words as gods, men etc., and which comprises solely of knowledge and beatitude. After thus describing the glory of Yoga the verse says:

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6.45 Because of such excellence of Yoga, through accumulation of merit collected in many births the Yogin striving earnestly, becomes cleansed from stains. Having become perfected, he reaches the supreme state, even though he had once gone astray. Sri Krsna now speaks of the superiority of the Yogin above all others because of his being devoted to the supreme goal of human existence.

6.46 Whatever end of human endeavour is attained by mere austerity, by knowledge of different subjects (i.e., different from experience of the self) and by mere rituals like the horse-sacrifice etc., ---- greater than all these is the end achieved through Yoga. Consequently the Yogin is superior to those who practise austerity, to those who possess learning and to those who perform rituals. Therefore, O Arjuna, become a Yogin.

Thus, so far the vision of the self, which has been expounded in the teaching of Prajapati as forming a part of supreme Vidya, has been taught; then Sri Krsna extols that supreme Vidya:

6.47 'Yoginam', which is the genitive case, has to be taken in the sense of the ablative. In the verses beginning with, 'He sees the self as abiding in all beings' (6.29), Yogins at four degrees of attainment have been mentioned. Since the Yogin who is now mentioned in this passage cannot be included in the four types mentioned earlier, the genitive case specifying one out of many will be inappropriate here. In 'api sarvesam,' those who practise austerities etc., are referred to by the

word 'sarva' (all). According to the principle set forth, here also the case ending has to be taken as ablative. The meaning therefore is that the Yogin who is now referred to, is the most integrated compared with those mentioned earlier and all other types. Compared to this Yogin, the differences in point of superiority and inferiority among the other Yogins such as the performers of austerities etc., are of no significance like mustard-seeds compared to Mount Meru. Even though there exists smallness and bigness in relation to one another among mustard-seeds, still when compared to Meru, such distinctions among them have no significance, as they are all small compared to Meru. I consider him the most integrated who, with his innermost self, has his mind fixed on Me, on account of My being the only object of his overflowing love and also on account of his having a nature which cannot be supported by anything other than Myself; who has 'faith,' i.e., who strives rapidly to attain Me because of his being unable to bear a moment's separation from Me on account of My being very dear to him; and who 'worships Me,' i.e., serves Me with devotion and meditates on Me --- Me whose sportive delight brings about the origination, sustentation and dissolution of the entire cosmos filled with multifarious and innumerable objects of enjoyment, enjoyers, means and places of enjoyment; who is untouched by any evil without exception; whose divine figure is the treasure-house of innumerable multitudes of auspicious, unlimited and unsurpassed attributes such as knowledge, power, lordship, energy, potency and splendour; whose divine figure is the treasure-house of infinite, unsurpassed attributes agreeable and highly worthy, such as radiance,

beauty, fragrance, tenderness, pervading sweetness and youthfulness which are uniform, inconceivable and divine, wondrous, eternal and flawless; whose essential nature and qualities transcend all thought and words; who is the great ocean of compassion, condescension, paternal love and beauty; who is the impartial refuge of all beings without exception and without considerations of any difference; who is the reliever of the distress of supplicants; who is the great, unfathomable ocean of affection for supplicants; who has become visible to the eyes of all men without abandoning His essential nature; who has incarnated in the house of Vasudeva; who has made the entire world illumined with His limitless and excellent glory; and who has satisfied the entire universe with the impeccable glory of beauty. The idea is that I, who by Myself alone see all things directly as they are, look upon him, the last mentioned type of Yogi here, as superior to all other types mentioned earlier.