

GITA CLASS- ŚAṄKARA'S PREFACE- PART 2

In the commentary, Śankara says that *Dharma* is of two kinds; *Pravṛtti lakṣanam*, the *Dharma* of action, and *Nivṛtti lakshanam*, the *Dharma* of renunciation. These 2 *dharma*s were instructed by the Lord at the beginning of the *Kalpa* to the *Prajapatis* and *Sanakas*. This was practiced through lineage for a long time. Then *dharma* declined. How did it decline? It says that among the practitioners, 'Kāmodbhavāt.' 'Desire was born.' That is the most important thing. For no matter what practice, if it is practiced for a long time, certain qualities are needed. In the *Yoga Sūtras* it says, 'dīrghakāla nairantarya satkara asevito dr̥ḍhabhumih.' *Paṭañjali* says this about *abhyāsa*, or practice. For any *dharma*, if it is practiced for a long time, it must also be made firm, *dr̥ḍha*. To attain perfection in that practice, it must have firmness. However, this sūtra also says, 'satkāra,' with lots of *śraddha*. Only then will the benefit come. Otherwise, if lack of concern comes in the mind, then this *dharma* may fail.

So here, it says that *dharma* was gradually lost in classes such as the *Brahmaṇa*. This isn't just referring to the *Brāhmaṇa*, but also the *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*. That is what happened. Even though they understood and practiced for a long time, this lack of interest in *Dharma* occurred, gradually. This can happen over generations, or in one lifetime.

For example, a person develops spiritual interest. The most important cause of a person's spiritual *jijñāsa*, or interest in spirituality, is from the impressions of previous lives (*vāsanās*). These are called *pūrvā janma vāsanās*, the mental impressions left from previous births. So this *pūrvā janma vāsana* will awaken one's interest in spirituality. Then favorable situations and conditions will help the aspirant to proceed forward. Some examples of favorable situations are approaching the Guru, receiving the Guru's instructions, and the practice of rules and regulations in *sādhana*. These help the aspirant move forward. *Śraddha*, faith, and other qualities also help the *sādhak*.

So, because of this person's good karma from previous births, this *jijñāsu* enters the path of *Dharma*. We said before that there are two kinds of *Dharma*;

pravritti and *nivritti*. The Spiritual Path is the path of *nivritti*, renunciation. After entering into this *nivritti* path, what happens? Just as *Śankara* describes what is happening through generations in society, the same thing happens in the individual. What is that? In the *sādhak's* mind, his alertness (*śraddhā*) begins to become weak. *Śraddha* is an important aid in the spiritual path. At this point, the *sādhak's śraddha* is weakened. So, in the same way that the good *vāsanās* awoke and caused spiritual interest, the bad *vāsanās* that are sleeping deep within the mind can also awake. So here what is said by *Śankara*? '*Hiyamāna vivekavijnāna hetukena adharmena abhibhūyamāne dharme.*'

When our *śraddha* is declining, then the sleeping bad *vāsanās* from previous lives will awaken within. This is all concerning a *sādhak*, not worldly people. All of this explanation is for those who have faith in spirituality, not for others. So, what is said, for a spiritual aspirant? '*adharmena abhibhūyamāne dharme.*' The Lord has already advised the two *dharmas*, of action and renunciation. Those become overpowered by *adharma*. This can happen in society, and can also happen to any spiritual aspirant. The initial spiritual intensity of the *sādhak* will be lost while performing *sādhana*. Then, what happens to the *sādhana*? The beginning of the *sādhana* is destroyed. The alertness, intensity, detachment, and everything that was in the beginning will be lost. Then what? '*Dharme abhibhūyamāne, pravṛddhamāne cha adharme.*' *Dharma* becomes overpowered. The negative *vāsanās* become powerful. When these *vasanās* gain power, one can fall from the path of *Yoga* and path of *Sādhana*.

Then one is destroyed. He will become destroyed within. Though externally he may continue to wear the same dress, he will be destroyed inside. So what does the Lord do? After *dharma* is lost over generations in society, the Lord again incarnates, to reveal *Dharma* to the coming generations. That is the *Avatar*. '*Jagataḥ Sthitiṁ Paripipālayiṣuḥ.*' '*Sa ādikarttā nārāyaṇākhyo viṣṇuḥ.*' Desiring to protect the sustenance of the world, the Creator, *Nārāyaṇa*, *Viṣṇu* incarnates.' Why does it say the word '*ādikarttā*?' It is because it is God who began all of this. In the beginning of Creation, the Lord, the '*Adikarttā*,' gave the necessary instructions to all *Jivas*. But even after God Himself directly instructed this *dharma*, it was lost over time.

So, here we are talking about the progression of a *sādhak*. From the *saṁskāra* of his previous lives, his interest in spirituality is awakened and he approaches a Guru. Then the *sādhak* receives instruction in *dharma*, and follows *sādhana*. After this, he may still fall from the path of *dharma*. How is that? In the very presence of the Guru, ‘*pravṛddamāne cha adharme.*’ *Adharma* grows. Then the *sādhak* is destroyed.

So, what is the solution? The Lord gives us the solution. What does the Lord do? Again, the Lord incarnates. So it says, ‘*Devakyām Vasudevāt amśena kila sambabhuvā*’ Again, in *Devaki*, as the son of *Vasudeva*, *Nārāyaṇa* takes birth as *Sri Krishna*. Why? This is to save the lineage of *Dharma*. The Lord incarnates to bring the coming generations to the path of *Dharma*. This happens in the level of society and in the life of the *sādhak* as well.

So, it isn’t that one cannot be destroyed in the Guru’s presence. We see many *sadhaks* around us getting destroyed. This means that the Guru must again incarnate. Actually, the Guru must incarnate within the *sādhak* every moment of life. Only then can he progress forwards. Only if the incarnation of the Guru happens within constantly can the *sādhak* move forward. Otherwise, what is said here will happen.

This is what the Lord does in society. When this *Dharma* is destroyed, the Lord incarnates again and again. Thus, in countless incarnations, as the Gurus, the Lord incarnates. *Rāma*, *Krishna*, and all of these *Avatars* are for this purpose. This is what takes place in the *samasthi*, the cosmic level. In the *veṣṭi* level, what happens?

The individual *sādhak*, even though he is in the presence of the Guru, rejects the Guru. He forgets the Guru. This lack of interest happens in his mind. He is thus destroyed. For such an aspirant, the Guru must incarnate anew within him. This means that the mind must be protected from *adharma* through constant *śraddha*, *satsang*, and *sādhana*.

So, by approaching a Guru, leaving society and living in an *aśram*; this doesn’t mean that one is saved. It is said in the *śrutis* that only through constant *śraddha*, *satsang*, and vigilance of mind can one move forward and be saved in this path. For the individual *sādhak*, the Incarnation is something that is constantly happening all the time. When this doesn’t happen, even though we

are blessed with the difficult-to-attain presence of Great Souls, man still falls from the path. We should think about this. We normally don't think. We don't think about ourselves, but we think about others. We're not aware we are being destroyed, but we ask, 'how did he become destroyed?' He approached the Guru, lived in his presence. So how could he be destroyed?' For the time being, we forget that we ourselves are getting destroyed. We don't think about ourselves. Why does that happen? This is the reason. The Lord himself started this, but still it has fallen.

Śankara says, '*adharmena abhibhūyamāne dharme.*' In any age, *dharma* can be overpowered by *adharma*. Whether it is the *Dharma* of action or renunciation doesn't matter. *Nārāyaṇa* must again incarnate. So, the presence of the Guru in the disciple's heart must be constantly alive with great vigilance. Only then is it possible to move forward.

The external presence is definitely a help, but, the inner presence is necessary. Suppose the body of a disciple is sitting near the Guru's body. We think, 'the disciple is sitting in the presence of the Guru.' That is wrong. Why? This is because that is only a physical presence. It doesn't mean that there is any inner presence. Only if there is the inner presence of the Guru can the disciple be saved. What is this external presence? It comes and goes. That's why some disciples end up rejecting their Gurus. They think, 'This Guru isn't enough for me.' Isn't it true that some disciples reject the Guru? Why is this? They had the external presence of the Guru, and they lost this external presence. They never had the inner presence of the Guru. So, we desire to sit close to the Guru, to be near the Guru's external presence. This isn't enough. We need the Guru's inner presence. Even if we don't have the outer presence, the inner presence is sufficient. That is a true *sādhak*.

A true disciple is like this. For them, the presence of *Vyāsa*, *Vasiṣṭa*, or *Parāśara* are all within. These Gurus lived thousands of years ago, but their presence will be in the heart of such a disciple, even in the present time. This kind of presence is what is needed. Only when the *sādhak* sustains this inner presence constantly can he overcome these crises in the *sādhana*. What are these? '*Adharmena Abhibhūyamāne dharme.*' It is a state where *dharma* is overpowered by *adharma*. In this state, what happens? God incarnates. Why? '*Brāhmaṇatvasya*

rakṣanārtham.’ For the protection of *brāhmanatvam*, the qualities of the *Brahmaṇa*, *Nārāyaṇa* incarnates. This must be given close attention. In the śāstras, it isn’t the literal meaning of the words but what they indicate that the mind should grasp. This Incarnation is for the protection of *brāhmanatvam*.

This ‘*brāhmanatvam*’ is the same derivation in Sanskrit as *manuṣyatvam*, the *dharma* of man, *manuṣya*. Or, the word *gotvam*, the *dharma* of the cow, *go*. So, *brāhmanatvam* is the *dharma* of the *Brāhmaṇa*. In the Gita, 12th chapter, Lord Sri Krishna says, ‘*adviṣa sarva bhutānām, maitri kārūṇa eva cha. Nirmamo nirahamkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣami*’ ‘He hates no beings, is friendly and compassionate. He is rid of all sense of possession and egoism. He is the same in pleasure and pain and is patient.’ So, it is for the protection of these great qualities, *śreṣṭha guṇas*, that the Lord incarnates.

As I said, this incarnation of the Guru always takes place within the sadhak. Why is this? It is for the protection of this *brāhmanatvam*. Thus, this *brāhmanatvam* is protected. At the time of the Lord’s Incarnation, the classes were all destroyed, and these good qualities were also destroyed. That’s why Śankara says, ‘*abhibhūyamāne dharme.*’ *Dharma* was overpowered and lost. So, when this *brāhmanatvam* is lost, then the demonic qualities take over. When this *asūratvam* comes, then the *brāhmanatvam* is destroyed. So, where must this *brāhmanatvam* be saved? It is neither in the tuft of hair nor in the body that it must be saved. Instead, it is in the mind of the sādhak.

For the protection of the *brāhmanatvam* in the *sādhak’s* mind, *Nārāyaṇa* must incarnate in the heart. In the same way that *Nārāyaṇa* incarnates externally to destroy the *adharma* in society and restore *Dharma*, it should also happen internally, within the individual *sādhak*.

How is the society protected? In society, there are the different *dharmas*, such as the *Brāhmaṇa’s dharma*, the *dharma* of the *kṣatriya*, the *dharma* of the *vaiśya*, and the *dharma* of the *śūdra*. These are all needed. Each is a part of society, and aids in the sustenance of society. Though each of these classes is great, the most important is the *Brāhmaṇa’s dharma*, which consists of these *satguṇas*, good qualities. The other *dharmas* are dependant on the *Brāhmaṇa’s dharma*.

For example, take the *kṣatriya* and the *kṣatratvam dharma*. The qualities of this *dharma* are strength, energy, force, and manliness. These are his *dharmas*. This is the *dharma* of *śakti* (power). So, the *kṣatriyas* should be controlled by the *brāhmaṇas*. If the *kṣatra dharma* is controlled by the *brāhmaṇa dharma*, then the society will prosper. *Śakti* must be controlled with *viveka*, discrimination. The *Brāhmaṇas* represent *viveka*, while the *kṣatriyas* represent *śakti*.

This was the social concept of *Śrī Śāṅkarācharya*. This is the concept of the classes such as the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*, and the life-stages such as *brahmachārya*, *gṛhasthya*, *vanaprastha*, and *sanyassa*. The classes and life-stages are not separate. This isn't just mentioned here. This appears in several parts of the Gita. The *kṣatriya* symbolizes power, and the *brāhmaṇa* symbolizes discrimination. So this *viveka* must always control the power of the *kṣatriyas* and direct it. That's why kings appointed *brāhmaṇas* as advisers. It was the *Brāhmaṇas' dharma* to instruct the king his *dharma*. In this way, *śakti* and *viveka*, power and discrimination, were combined together. This creates the prosperity in society. So, with the *dharma* of the other classes dependant on the *brāhmaṇa's dharma*, the *brāhmaṇa's* duty was to give instruction. This was the social concept of *Sri Krishna* in the Gita, and of *Śāṅkarācharya*. So, it says, 'brāhmanatvasya hi rakṣaṇena rakṣitaḥ syāt vaidiko dharmah.'

This *Dharma* of the *Vedas* contains these divisions of *dharma* for the society. These are the dharmas of *brāhmanatvam*, the *kṣatratvam*, *vaiśyatvam*, and *śūdratvam*. This is one of the basic facets of the *Vedas*. 'Tad adhīnatvāt varṇāśramabhedānām.' The *Dharmas* of the other three varṇas are all dependant on this *brāhmanatvam*, the *dharma* of the *brāhmaṇas*.

This was the social view of the *āchāryas* from our past. Just as this view applies to society, it also applies to the individual. The foundation of this is the good qualities exemplified by the *Brāhmaṇas*. 'If that is saved, then society is saved.' All of our Gurus had this concept. That is indicated here. So, for this reason, the Lord incarnates.

***'Sa cha bhagavānjñānaisvāryaśaktibalavīryatejobhiḥ sadā
sampanastriguṇātmikāṁ vaiśnavīm svām māyām mūlaprakṛtīm
vaśīkṛtyājovyayo bhūtānām īśvaro***

*nityaśuddhabuddhamuktasvabhāvopi sansvamāyayā dehavāniva
jāta iva cha lokānugrahaṃ kurvanniva lakṣyate.’*

This part deals with the special qualities of an *Avatar*. An *Avatar* is special. All beings *avatarati*, take birth, but this doesn't make them an *Avatar*. The birth of the *jīva* is controlled and subservient to *Avidyā* (Ignorance). That doesn't happen for *Avatars*. That's the difference between the two. Both the *Avatar* and the normal *jīva* take birth. Some *jīvas* take birth and stay ignorant, while some become *yogis*, and some become *Jñānis*. But, when they take birth, what is the reason for that birth? It is due to their *prārabdha karma*. They are born because of their *prārabdha karma*. Whether it is a *yogi* or a *Jñāni*, they take birth according to *prārabdha karma*. But that isn't how the *Avatar* takes birth. The *Avatar* has no *prārabdha*. That is the specialty of the *Avatar*.

How is this? It says '*svām māyām mūlaprakṛtīm vaśīkṛtya.*' That is how an *Avatar* takes birth. A *jīva* has no choice to take birth, due to the fruits of the actions performed in previous lives, called '*karma vipākam.*' This *karma vipākam* is the sum total of the *karma* from countless previous lives of the *jīva*. Each one of these *karmas* bears fruit; this is called *karma vipākam*. All of these *karmas* bear results for the *jīva*, according to the laws of God. According to the laws of God, being beyond the reach of man's intellect, this accumulation of *karma* prepares a birth for the *jīva*. Thus, the *jīva* must take birth. He can't choose to not be born. He cannot avoid it. According to his *karma vipākam*, he is forced to take birth.

The Lord's incarnation isn't like that. '*Svām māyām vaśīkṛtya.*' Here, there is no *karmic* cause. There is no *prārabdha*. '*Prārabdha*' is the *karma* that causes our birth. This is experienced by the *jīva*. Till the destruction of the body, the *jīva* has to experience this *prārabdha karma*. However, for the *Avatar*, it says, '*Mūlaprakṛtīm.*' This *mūla prakṛtī*, Primordial Nature, is the cause of the Universe. This is different from the *jīva Prakṛtī*, Nature in relation to the *jīva*. For God, this *Mūla Prakṛtī* is an instrument in His hand. However, the *Jīva Prakṛtī* is what is known as *Avidyā*, Ignorance, and holds each *jīva* in Its hand. *Mūla Prakṛtī* acts only under the control of *Īśvara*, God, but the *jīva* can act only under the control of *Mūla Prakṛtī*. The *jīva* has no freedom, because he is controlled. So, that is the difference.

This is the difference between the *jīva*'s birth and the incarnation of God. So, it says, '*svām māyām.*' 'His *Māyā.*' Why is this said? This is said to show that He is not controlled, that the word 'His own,' or '*svām*' is used. Why does this specifically refer to '*Mūla Prakṛti*?' It is because that is not the *Jīva Prakṛiti*. When the *Jīva* is born, he doesn't bring *Māyā* with him. However, That is a special Power used freely by God. God is never under control of *Māyā*. In this way, God incarnates, by controlling His *Māyā Śakti*. That is the difference between a normal birth and the *Īśvarāvataram*.

So, how is this Incarnation? '*Sa cha Bhagavān jñānaiśvaryaśakti balavīryatejobhiḥ sadā sampannah.*' What is the specialty of the Incarnation? All of His actions will be *alaukika*, unpredictable, beyond worldly affairs. All of the actions of the *jīva* are *laukika*, worldly, but all of the actions of Incarnation are *alaukika*. This is seen in the *Avatar* of *Sri Krishna*. From birth itself till the death of His body, all of His actions were unworldly. Nothing that could be expected happened in *Sri Krishna*'s life. When baby *Krishna* was told by his mother to open his mouth, he showed her the three worlds. When *Yashoda* tried to tie him, it was not possible. There were many incidents like this. What are these incidents? These are all unworldly actions, which are the signs of an *Avatar*. From birth itself, these unworldly events will take place.

These things are not possible for ordinary people, but they happen constantly with an *Avatar*. Why? '*Jñānaiśvaryaśaktibalavīryatejobhiḥ sadā sampannah.*' They are always full of knowledge, lordliness, power, strength, vigor, and splendor. This shows the difference between the *Avatar* and the *jīva*. It doesn't matter if the *jīva* is a *Yogi* or a *Jñāni*.

The *Bhagavatam* describes how when *Sri Krishna* was born to *Devaki*, He showed His true form of *Viṣṇu* with four arms to His mother. And what about when the *Jīva* takes birth? When the *Jīva* comes out of the mother's womb, he is controlled by *Māyā*. While in the womb, all of his discrimination and memory of previous lives is lost. When he comes out, he is ignorant.

The Incarnation isn't like that. He is *sadā sampannah*, always in possession of these qualities. When is that? Whether in the womb or when he comes out, the Incarnation is completely in possession of knowledge, lordliness, strength, energy, vigor, and splendor. Before birth and after birth, He is like this. Before

Īśvara comes to the Earth, and after, He is always full of the radiance of Knowledge. He has *aiśvarya*, lordliness, and *Īśvara Bhāvam*, complete Power. He has control over everything. He has the ability to control all of the powers of the Universe. Just as these powers control the *jiva*, the Incarnation controls these powers. The *Upaniṣads* speak about this. They say, ‘*bhīṣāsmād vātaḥ pāvate.*’ ‘The wind blows due to fear of Him, and the fire burns from fear of Him.’

But the *jiva* isn’t like that. He is afraid of the wind and the fire. That is the difference. Man is afraid of everything, but even the wind blows out of fear of Him. Man acts, fearful of committing a mistake, but the Incarnation isn’t like this.

So, this is *aiśvarya*, lordliness. To control all of the powers, the *śaktis* of the Universe, and make them move out of fear is *aiśvarya*. Along with that *aiśvarya* are *Śakti*, *Bala*, *Vīrya*, and *Tejas*. The Incarnation will possess all of these. If one has this *Śakti*, then one can do anything according to one’s wish. That is *Śakti*. Only God has this quality. The nature of fire is to burn. We aren’t able change that nature, but God can. That is the *Śakti* of God. He can take away the power to burn from fire. This is just an example. That is *Śakti*.

Along with that *Śakti*, there is *Balam*, or strength. It is said that the creation, sustenance, and destruction of the Universe are the play of God. What is needed for this? For that, God always has freedom and complete control. Suppose we want to make a pot. For that, we will need many things. First, we need clay, then we need certain instruments, and we also need favorable circumstances; time, place, health, and so on. So, this action of making a pot isn’t always possible for us. If it is possible, we may not be able to use that opportunity. All of these are limitations. As far as God is concerned, there is no kind of limitation in the actions of Creation, Sustenance, and Destruction. That is what is called God’s Strength. This is the possession of Splendor. The *jiva* doesn’t have this, but the Lord is always in its possession. That is what is called the Strength of God.

Then, it says, ‘*vīrya, tejas,*’ Vigor and Splendor. These two things can apply to the *Jiva*. Suppose someone is very strong. He can overcome anyone, but it may sometimes happen that he cannot defeat someone. That is the limitation of the *vīrya*, vigor of man. The *Śakti* that makes everything under one’s control is *vīrya*,

or vigor. In God, there is not one shortcoming in this. That happens in the *Jiva*. In one place, he can defeat something, and in another, he is defeated. That isn't the condition of God. That is *Vīrya*.

And *tejas*, what is *Tejas*? Sometimes someone is strong, but is defeated. To be defeated by oneself is from a lack of *Tejas*. Whether in physical skill, mental skill, or intellectual dexterity, the *Jiva* will be defeated in some places. To be defeated by others or by oneself; both of these don't occur in God. In other words, this is the *Vīrya* and *Tejas* of God. Because God's *tejas* is perfect, any kind of shortcoming and break cannot happen. Nothing can control God. This is the greatness of the *Avatar*.

So, even when God, who possesses all of these powers, incarnates, these powers will be with the *Avatar*. These are Knowledge, Lordliness, Power, Strength, Vigor, and Splendor. That is God's perfection. The perfection of God is never controlled by any kind of *prārabdha*. He is thus always in full possession of these powers. This *Īśvara*, the Lord, what does He do? '*Triguṇātmikāṁ vaiśnavīm svām māyām mūlaprakṛtīm vaśīkṛtya.*' Now it says several descriptions of this Primordial Nature. First, '*Triguṇātmikāṁ.*' Composed of the three *guṇas*. This is *Prakṛtī*, composed of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. When God takes human birth along with these three *guṇas* and acts for the good of the world, how is He seen by the people?

In *Sri Krishna's* boyhood, he was accused of being a thief. When an extremely valuable necklace given by *Sūrya* called the *Shamanthaka* was missing, *Krishna* was accused of stealing it. Because of this, He went to the forest by himself to prove that it wasn't He who stole it. This is because all of the people said, 'he's the one who stole it.' In the end, He Himself had to go and fight with *Jambhava* to get back the necklace and bring it back. Because of the power of *Māyā*, which is composed of the three *guṇas*, all things in the world seem good sometimes, sometimes bad, and so on. This is all part of the play of the Incarnation. Why does this happen? This is '*Triguṇātmikāṁ māyām*' *Māyā* composed of the three *guṇas*. Because the world accepts this *Māyā*, that is how they feel. Some praise, while other blame. Such worship, and some curse. That is how it goes.

So why is all this? This is the specialty of *Māyā*, composed of the 3 *gunas*. Then it says, ‘*Triguṇātmikāṃ vaiśnavīm.*’ This points out the difference between the ignorant *jīva* and God. For the *jīva*, what is *Māyā*? It is dense darkness. To the *jīva*, *Māyā* is very *tamasic*, but for God, *Māyā* is *Vaiśnavī*. This means ‘the very essence of *Viṣṇu*,’ which is *sattvic*. That’s the difference. Because of that, God is not bound. *Māyā* is what deludes the *jīva*. However, for God, *Māyā* is *Vaiśnavī*, and thus under His control. When it comes to the *Jīva*, this *Māyā* becomes the Controller. To show that difference, it says, ‘*vaiśnavīm svām.*’ This shows God’s control over *Māyā*. This *Māyā Śakti* acts according to His Will.

Why is the word ‘*Māyām*’ said last? This word ‘*Māyā*’ means that which is indescribable. It cannot be defined as either *sat* or as *asat*, Real or Unreal. This is what is said in *advaita*. But for God, it’s not enough to say that much. That secret can never be revealed to man’s intellect. Although he may arrive at a partial understanding of it, man can never fully grasp the goal, the purpose of the Avatar, who creates, sustains, and destroys the universe. Has anyone understood the Avatar of *Sri Krishna*? If they did understand, they then forgot!

Sri Krishna’s own mother knew that he was *Viṣṇu* at the time of His birth, but she forgot this in a moment. That is the specialty of *Māyā Śakti*. Those who opposed Him and those who favored Him understood at times, but again they forgot. Even those like *Uddhava* forgot that *Sri Krishna* was an Incarnation. This kind of forgetting is necessary for the *Līla* of the Avatar. Because of this, the name is given, ‘*māyā.*’ This *mūla prakṛti*, Primordial Nature, is being described. This is to differentiate it from the *tamasic* nature of the *Jīva Prakṛti*. This is to show the greatness of the Incarnation, in contrast with the *Jīva*, that *Śankara* uses all these words.

‘*Triguṇātmikāṃ vaiśnavīm svām māyām mūlaprakṛtīm vaśīkṛtya.*’ All these words describe *Māyā Śakti*. *Śankara* is saying that God incarnated as *Sri Krishna*, son of *Devaki* and *Vasudeva*. But to show that God didn’t take birth, He is described as ‘*ajāḥ*,’ ‘one without birth.’ This is because birth is *samsara*. We will doubt, ‘if God takes birth, isn’t He subject to *samsāra*?’

So, we will doubt, because ‘*samsāra*’ means being born, living, and dying. ‘If we say that God does this, we will have to say that God is in bondage. Then what’s the difference between God and ordinary man?’ You could ask this, in

line with the scriptures. So, He is called, ‘*ajāḥ*,’ birthless. The *Avatar* is not born like an ordinary *jīva*. Instead, He incarnates with *Māyā Śakti* under His control. Using His *Māyā*, the Lord accepts a divine, unworldly body for the blessing of the world. In that way, the Lord plays out the *Līlas* of His incarnation. That isn’t birth. There also, God remains as ‘birthless.’ Because of that, the next word says, ‘*avyayaḥ*.’ There, also, destruction and decay don’t take place.

Can you bind *Sri Krishna*? No. Even His body is ‘*avyayaḥ*,’ immutable. That doesn’t experience decay and destruction like the bodies of ordinary humans. That is the meaning. Yes, it’s true, that He was eventually killed by the arrow from a hunter. Still, the Lord is *avavayam*, immutable. The Lord is indestructible and birthless.

‘*Sarvabhūtānām īśvaraḥ*.’ He is the Lord of all beings and creation. ‘*Nityaśuddhabuddhamuktasvabhāvaḥ*.’ This Lord is eternal, pure awareness, and free – all these were discussed before. To be eternal is to be without a Cause. All effects are subject to destruction. Therefore, God is *nitya*, Eternal. He is Purity, Knowledge, and completely free. This *Īśvara*, along with Nature, ‘*Svām māyayā dehavān iva*.’ Through His *Māyā Śakti*, the Lord appears *AS IF* having a body. In the Gita it says, ‘I am birthless, but others think and imagine that I have taken birth.’ So it says here, ‘*dehavānniva jāta iva lokānugrahaṁ kurvān iva*.’ God appears as being born as the son of *Devaki*. ‘*Lokānugrahaṁ kurvan iva*.’ The Lord appears as if blessing the world, through the actions of the *Avatar*. This is an appearance. This doesn’t really happen. Why? The Lord is eternally free, pure Knowledge, so these actions don’t occur.

However, these things seem to occur, ‘*lakṣyate*.’ They are seen to happen by the ordinary *jīvas*. But, for the Lord, in truth, this doesn’t happen. For God, He is not born. To come to the end of the explanation of the *Avatar*, we must say that God doesn’t incarnate in truth. However, it appears that He incarnates to the *jīvas*. But, in truth, this doesn’t happen. That is what is said. So, what is an *Avatar*? According to *Vedānta*, is there any opposition to the acceptance of the *Avatar*? Here these questions are explained in a very *śāstric* way. So, it says that in the beginning of the Creative cycle, the Lord instructed *Dharma*. When this *dharma* was lost, he again incarnates, to restore the dharmas of action and renunciation.

II. The Composition of the Gita and the Bhāṣyā

The other day, we discussed the Lord's Incarnation, the *Avatar*. By controlling His own *Māyā*, God incarnates on Earth in human form. In truth, He is birthless, but still, God is experienced as being born, and as blessing the world. In truth, this doesn't happen. *Śankara* shows this through the use of the word 'iva,' 'as if.' '*Kurvan iva,*' '*jāta iva.*' This means the Lord appears to be acting, and appears to be born. This is experienced as if it were real. Why does the Lord do this? This is discussed in the *bhāṣyā*.

***'Svaprayojanābhāve 'pi bhūtānujighr̥kṣayā vaidikam hi
dharmadvayamarjunāya shokamohamahodadhau
nimagnāyopdidesha gunādhikairhi gṛhīto 'nuṣṭhīyamānaścha
dharmah̥ prachayaṁ gamiṣyatīti.'***

So, it says, '*svaprayojanābhāve 'pi.*' When God incarnates, there is no special purpose or benefit for Himself. There is nothing that God gains for Himself by incarnating in human form. For *the jīva*, there is a purpose in taking birth. What is the purpose of the *jīva*? The worldly purpose of a birth is for the experiences of happiness and sorrow. That is the ordinary purpose of taking birth. Only rare souls take birth for the attainment of *mokṣa*. Why does the *jīva* have to experience this happiness and sorrow? It is because the birth of the *Jīva* is controlled by his *prārabdha*, his *karma* from previous lives. A birth is only useful for a *jīva* who is controlled by *prārabdha*. So, the *jīva* takes birth to experience the pleasures and pains given according to his *karma* from previous lives. Or, in some cases, the *jīva* takes birth for the attainment of *Mokṣa*. One of these two is the purpose of the *jīva*'s birth.

However, God is not controlled by *prārabdha*. Because of this, the *Avatar* doesn't experience happiness and sorrow in the way *jīvas* do. In the view of the *jīva*, the Incarnation will also appear to be in happiness or sorrow, but such things do not happen to the *Avatar*. For them, there are no pleasurable or painful experiences. Because of this, there is no purpose of the *Avatar*'s birth in this way.

God's birth has no purpose for *mokṣa* either. Why is this? This is because God is *nityamukta*, eternally free. Because God assumes a human form through

His own self-will, He doesn't become bound. When the *Paramātmān* becomes controlled by *Avidyā* and assumes *jīva bhāva*, the feeling of individuality, that is called bondage. But because God assumes a body out of Self-will, as an *Avatar*, there is no bondage. For that reason, there is no need of *mokṣa*.

That's why it says, '*Svaprayojana abhāve.*' Though there is no kind of purpose for Himself, '*Bhūta Anujighriksayā,*' 'the Lord desired to bless the Creation, all beings.' This is the desire to give blessing, to all *jīvas*, to Creation. When God sees these *jīvas* controlled by *Avidyā*, moving through the samsara of birth and death, He feels the desire to bless them. Because of this, it says, '*Vaidikam hi dharma dvayam arjunāya śokamoha mahodadhau nimagnāya upadideśa.*' This isn't just a special interest towards Arjuna. That's why it says, '*Bhūta anujighriksayā.*' 'The Lord desired to give blessing to all beings, all *jīvas.*'

That is showing a specialty of the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* wasn't advised to just one individual, *Arjuna*. Instead, it says later, that *Sri Krishna* used *Arjuna* as an instrument to give instruction to the entire world. 'For the entire world,' means for all *jīvas*. *Sri Krishna* advised the *Gita* for all *Jīvas*, an infinite number of *jīvas*. That's why the Bhagavad Gita contains the suitable instructions for all kinds of *adikāris*, or aspirants. According to their level of maturity, the Lord has given within the Gita the needed instructions that they can receive. That is what is meant by the phrase, '*Bhūta Anujighriksayā.*'

Using Arjuna as an instrument, Lord *Sri Krishna* instructed all *jīvas*. Through Arjuna, *Sri Krishna* advised the *Vedic dharmas*, which consist of both *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, action and renunciation. '*Vaidikam hi dharma dvayam.*' These are the paths of *karma*, and the path of *jñāna*, Knowledge. Using Arjuna as an instrument, *Sri Krishna* advised these. '*Arjunāya upadideśa.*'

Now, what condition was Arjuna in? '*Śoka moha mahodadhau nimagnāya.*' 'He was drowning in the huge sea of grief and delusion.' We have discussed this in the talks about the first chapter, dealing with *Arjuna's* condition. *Arjuna* was drowning in the sea of grief and delusion. This is a symbol of the *jīva*. The *jīva* is bound in the cycle of *samsāra*. Thus, all *jīvas* are drowning in the sea of grief and delusion. *Sri Krishna* used Arjuna as an example of this condition, giving this instruction to the world.

Now, why did *Sri Krishna* choose *Arjuna*, an individual, as the instrument for this instruction? That is what is said next. ‘*Guṇādikaḥ hi gr̥hītaḥ anuṣṭhīyamānaḥ cha. Dharmāḥ prachayaṁ gamiṣyati iti.*’ It is because this *Dharma* of the *Vedas*, whether *pravṛtti* or *nivṛtti*, ‘*guṇādikaḥ hi gr̥hītaḥ,*’ is grasped by those with good qualities. This means that it is understood. ‘*Anuṣṭhīyamānas cha.*’ After it is grasped, it must then be practiced. Both are necessary for *Dharma*. First comes knowledge, and then practice.

First, understand what *Dharma* is, then practice it, putting it into action. Those who are suitable must do that. If that is done, then, ‘*dharmāḥ prachayaṁ gamiṣyati.*’ Then, *dharma* will prosper. *Dharma* will grow. Instead, if this *dharma* is taught to those without good qualities, then it won’t be grasped properly, nor will it be practiced. Because of this, *dharmāḥ prachayaṁ*, the growth of *Dharma*, won’t happen. *Sri Krishna* says at the end of the 18th chapter. ‘*Idaṁ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadāchana.*’

The meaning is, ‘You must not tell this *Gita Śāstra* to anyone who lacks *bhakti*, devotion to God.’ This is in the end of the *Gita*. Now, we said before that the *Gita* was instructed for all living beings. Even though the *Gita* is for all living beings, it was instructed to *Arjuna*, one with many noble qualities. *Arjuna*’s state was very high. That’s why it says here, ‘you must not tell this to someone who is not a devotee.’ *Śaṅkara* is indicating this in the commentary here. ‘*Nātapaskāya.*’ It is no use in instructing this to someone without austerity, without *tapas*.

The *saṁskāra* that is the result of performing *tapas* in one’s previous lives is needed. This instruction will bear fruit only for such a person. The *Gita* is ‘*susṛuṣave vāchyaṁ.*’ It must be listened to carefully. The Lord says ‘Don’t tell this to someone who isn’t interested. Don’t tell this instruction to one whose mind is full of negative thoughts and emotions.’ So, the *Gita* says, ‘*mām yobhisūyate.*’ There is no point in telling this instruction to those who curse God. Why? It is because they will have no faith, no *śraddha*. There is no point in telling this to someone who has no faith, because this is a *mokṣa śāstra*. There is absolutely no point in telling the *Gita* to these people.

So, here *Śaṅkara* says, ‘only if this *śāstra* is advised to those with good qualities, those with the qualities of *brāhmanatvam*, will it be of any use. We

spoke before of the qualities of the other classes, such as the *kṣatriya*. Certain qualities make the *Kṣatra dharma*, or *dharma* of the *kṣatriya*. So, the Gita's purpose differs according to the qualities of the individual. It thus creates a growth of *Dharma*.

This *Dharma vṛddhi* happens within the person who grasps *Dharma*. Then, the other form of this growth of *Dharma* is *Dharma prachāram*, the spread of *Dharma* in society. That is when *Dharma* is spread throughout generations continuously. So, there are two kinds of this *Dharma Vṛddhi*, the growth of *Dharma*.

For the individual, how does this *Dharma Vṛddhi* happen? This happens when he grasps *Dharma*, whether in the form of *pravṛtti* or *nivṛtti*. It happens when he truly understands *Dharma*. That is a very important thing. You must truly understand *Dharma*. You must understand it in the proper way. If you interpret *Dharma* in just any way, it is dangerous. Your interpretation will go wrong. There will be doubts and misinterpretations in the mind. So, without doubts, without misinterpretation, a person must understand this *Dharma*. This is 'samyak jñāna,' or full knowledge. Or, it is called 'yathārtha jñāna,' true knowledge, or *prama*.

Only after gaining this complete knowledge of *Dharma* can one truly practice it. If *Dharma* is practiced with an intellect clouded with doubts and misinterpretations, it won't lead to this *dharma vṛddhi*, growth of *Dharma*. How does this *Dharma Vṛddhi* occur for the *jiva*? For the *jiva*, this *Dharma vṛddhi* happens in the *antaḥkaraṇa*. This is the transformation of the *antaḥkaraṇa*. How? It is transformed by understanding and practicing *dharma*. The Gita will discuss this fully.

How is the mind transformed? The *antaḥkaraṇā* becomes modified in *sattva*. We have already discussed this. That is *Dharma Vṛddhi*. How does this happen in society? This *Dharma* is spread in the society. Then *Dharma* is sustained. In the Gita, Chapter 4, verse 7 it says, 'Yadā Yadā hi Dharmasya Glānir Bhavati Bhārata, abhyūthānām adharmasya tadātmānām sṛjāmyahaṁ.' Whenever righteousness declines and unrighteousness prevails, I take birth out of My free will.'

So at times, the decline of *Dharma* happens. How does this occur to the *Jiva*? This happens in the mind of the *jiva*. When the *jiva*'s mind becomes *tamasic* and dark, this '*dharma glāni*,' the fall of *Dharma* happens. When the mind becomes full of light, it is then '*dharma prachayam*,' the growth of *Dharma*.

If the person is a true *guṇādhika*, one with superior qualities, he will truly understand and grasp this *Dharma*. He will know and practice it fully. That is the *vṛddhi* of *Dharma*. That is what the Lord desired. Thus, the Lord gave instruction to the whole world, using Arjuna as an instrument. Next, it says,

'Taṁ dharmam Bhagavatā yathopadiṣṭham vedavyāsaḥ sarvajño bhagavāngītākhyaiḥ saptabhiḥ ślokaṣatairupanibabandha.'

So, '*taṁ dharmam*.' The same *Dharma* that was advised by Lord *Sri Krishna* was composed into the Gita by *Veda Vyāsa*, exactly as instructed. '*Yathopadiṣṭham*.' There wasn't a single difference. There is no difference between the *Dharma* that *Sri Krishna* instructed and the *Dharma* that *Veda Vyāsa* taught and spread. *Vyāsa* perfectly grasped the teaching and ideas of *Sri Krishna*, so *Veda Vyāsa* is described as the all-knowing, Lord *Veda Vyāsa*. '*Veda Vyāsaḥ Sarvajñaḥ Bhagavān*.' Only someone who is all-knowing can grasp the Gita in its entirety. That's why it says that *Veda Vyāsa* grasped the meaning of the Gita, and that he is omniscient.

It also says in the *Anugītā* that the Gita was instructed by *Sri Krishna*, while united in *Yoga*, '*yoga yuktena*.' The *Gita Śāstram* was instructed by the Lord, who was absorbed in *Yoga*. The Lord didn't give this instruction in an ordinary *bhāva*. So, it is only possible for someone who is equally all-knowing to truly understand this Gita. That's the reason why it describes *Veda Vyāsa* as all-knowing, when it says that he grasped the Gita exactly as it was instructed by Lord *Sri Krishna*.

Some commentators may be able to explain and comment on some parts of the Gita. But these same paṇḍits will write in some parts, '*Marakih Asmakābhiḥ*.' This means, 'we have so little knowledge, so how can we possibly comment on this?' This is because the *Gītā Śāstra* is *guhyattamam*, the most

secret knowledge. *Krishna* says, ‘*iti guhyattamaṁ sāstram.*’ It also says, ‘*guhyād guhyatamaṁ mayā,*’ this Gita is the secret of all secrets. So, experienced and learned *paṇḍits* may be able to comment on some parts of the Gita, but in other parts they will say, ‘How can we, of such small intellect, explain this?’

That’s why *Śaṅkara* says next, ‘*durvijñeyārtham.*’ This means that the Gita is very difficult to understand in some sections. It is said that these parts cannot be explained. The reason is that the Lord Himself gave this instruction. Thus, the all-knowing *Veda Vyāsa* put the Lord’s instruction into written form. The Gita is called, ‘*durgraham,*’ difficult to grasp, especially in some sections. So some sections of the Gita will be difficult to understand for ordinary people. However, all-knowing *Veda Vyāsa* didn’t introduce anything except the *sāstra* as instructed by Lord *Sri Krishna*. Then, it continues, ‘*Veda Vyāsa gītākhyaiḥ saptibhiḥ ślokaṣaṭaiḥ upanibabandha.*’

Thus, *Veda Vyāsa*, ‘*gītākhyaiḥ,*’ the work called the Gita, ‘*saptibhiḥ ślokaṣaṭaiḥ,*’ in 700 ślokas, ‘*upanibabandha,*’ composed. *Vyāsa* took the Lord’s instruction and wrote it in *śloka* form. *Sri Krishna* didn’t originally speak in *ślokas*. He was simply speaking to Arjuna. It was a conversation between the Lord and Arjuna. So, Lord *Veda Vyāsa* took this conversation and put it in the form of *ślokas*. Then, it says about the Gita,

**‘*Tadidaṁ gītāśāstram samastavedārthasārasaṁgrahabhūtam
durvijñeyārtham.*’**

‘*Tad idam gītāśāstram,*’ this scripture of the Gita, was told to Arjuna by Lord *Sri Krishna*, and written by *Veda Vyāsa*. It is also said that *Vyāsa* is an *Avatar* of *Viṣṇu*. This Gita, written by *Veda Vyāsa*, is ‘*samasta vedārtha sārasaṁgraha bhūtam.*’ It is the distilling of the essence of the meaning of all the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* are very vast. There is no subject that is not explained in the *Vedas*. But, for understanding the essence of the *Vedas*, the *mokṣa sāstra* (scripture of Liberation) is condensed and written in the form of the Gita. How is this Gita? This *Gītā Śāstram* is *Durvijñeyārtham*. It is difficult to understand its essence and meaning.

This means that except for one with great qualities, it will be very difficult to grasp directly. To grasp the Gita directly from *Vyāsa*'s writing is very difficult. To make that easier, there are explanations and commentaries. So, it is difficult to understand directly from the language of *Veda Vyāsa*. Because of that, *Śaṅkara* continues,

***Tadarthāviṣkaraṇāyānedkairvivṛtapada
padārthavākyārthanyāyamapyatyantaviruddhānekārthatvena
laukikairgṛhyamāṇamupalabhyāham
vivekato 'rthanirdhāranārtham vivaraṇam kariṣyāmi.'***

This shows us the situation *Śaṅkarāchārya* was in, and why he had to compose this commentary. Why did *Śaṅkara* have to write this commentary? This is what is explained. '*Tad arthāviṣkaraṇāya*,' for expressing and shedding light on the meaning of the Gita, composed by *Vyāsa*, '*anekaiḥ*,' countless people before *Śaṅkara* have tried to commentate. These were before *Śaṅkara*'s time, and none of these *bhāṣyās* are available to us today. How did they do this? '*Vivṛta pada padārtha vakyārtha nyāyam api*.' They commented, explaining the meanings, through *bhāṣyās*, *tīkas*, etc. How is this? Through four ways; *pada*, *padārtha*, *vakyārtha*, and *nyāyam*. To commentate with *pada* is to take and explain each *pada*, or word separately and explain. Then, *padārtha* is the explanation of the compound words in a sentence. Finally, to commentate with *vakyārtha* is to take each single word and the compound words and relate them with verbs, and in this way explain the full sentence. This is to explain *sāstrically* the sentences, composed of single words, compound words, and verbs. In doing this, they exercised *Nyāyam*, which is logic and reasoning. These commentators take into consideration their personal philosophy (*siddhāntam*).

This phrase in *Parāshara Smṛti* text explains the rules of traditional Sanskrit scriptural commentary. '*Padacheda padārthokti vighraho vakyayojana akṣepas cha samādhanam*.'

All of these steps are needed in a commentary. According to the rule of the *sāstras*, a commentary must contain *padārthokti*. It must show the meaning of the words, whether it is a single word or a compound word. The next step is

padachedam, which is to separate all of the words that are joined together in a sentence. Then *vigraham* is the analyzing of the compound words by explaining each part of the compound, to get the exact meaning. This is done with the knowledge of the *samāsa*, the compound word. He must know what the rules of the compound word is in that section. According to the kind of compound word used, the meaning of the words can change. The four main kinds of *samāsa* are ‘*Avibhava, tat puruṣa, bhahu vṛhi, and dvandva.*’

These are three main steps; *padachedam, padārtham, and vigraham.* *Vigraham* is the explanation of the compound words. First, he must find the meaning of a single word, then find the meaning of the compound words. In this way, the commentator finds out the meaning of a sentence. Here one must understand the *samāsa*, the kind of compound word, and explain the meaning according to the *samāsa*.

Then after this, the commentator has to combine all of the words together with the verbs. This is called *vakya yojana*, the forming of the sentence. In this way, he can find the meaning of the sentence. Then comes *Nyāyam*, which is described in the previous *śloka*, as ‘*akṣepas cha samādhanam.*’ This means to use a *pūrva pakṣa*, an opposing philosophy to make firm the primary philosophy. When an idea comes, the commentator sees all of the opposing ideas to that in the mind. Through that, the voice of an opposing philosophy is used in the commentary, which is then refuted by the philosophy being established by the commentator. In this way, numerous *āchāryas* before the time of *Śaṅkara* had commented on the Gita. Then, ‘*api,*’ despite even this, what happened through the commentaries of numerous *āchāryas?*

‘*Atyanta virūdhā anekārthatvena.*’ These commentaries have opposing and countless meanings. These have two defects. First, opposing meanings came into being. This means that among the commentators, there were mutual conflicts. What the first person said was different from the next person, and so on. There also came into being countless meanings, countless interpretations of the Gita’s main meaning. Then, the *Gita Śāstra*’s inner meaning could not remain in one place; it was scattered in several directions.

So, different meanings came into being through the commentaries. Thus, this created opposition and differences of meaning in the commentaries. So it

says, ‘*atyanta virūdhā anekārthatvena.*’ That is what *Sri Śaṅkarāchārya* found when he examined the previous commentaries. *Śaṅkara* is explaining why he had to compose this commentary at the time in which he lived. ‘These commentaries have not been able to bring to light the Gita’s true meaning.’ This is what he thought.

Then, because of this, ‘*laukikaiḥ gṛyamāṇam*’ - in whatever way the Gita is commented on, that is how the listeners, the ordinary people will interpret it. So, it says here, ‘*laukikaiḥ,*’ the worldly people. This means people who are attempting to understand the essence of the Gita, through depending on these commentaries. Because the meaning of the Gita is difficult to understand, without the aid of a commentary it isn’t possible to be fully grasped. So, when the people tried to understand the Gita through these commentaries that existed, what did they find? ‘*Atyanta virūdhā anekārthatvena.*’ They found numerous conflicting meanings. That is what they experienced. So, it says, ‘*anekārthatvena laukikaiḥ gṛyamāṇam.*’

The *āchāryas* of the time used all of their abilities to try to comment on the Gita, using the techniques of *pada*, *padārtham*, *vakyārtham*, and *nyāyam*. Even though they commentated on the Gita in this way through explanations, *Śaṅkara* saw that normal people found the Gita commentaries full of numerous conflicting meanings. So, ‘*upalabhya,*’ having seen this..’ *Śaṅkara* saw that instead of helping people gain clearer understanding, these commentaries were confusing the people, ‘*ahaṁ,*’ I, ‘*vivekataḥ arthanirdhāraṇārtham,*’ along with discrimination, will strive to bring forth the meaning of the Gita.

We said that there were numerous opposing meanings given to the Gita through these commentaries. So, to solve this problem, *Śaṅkara* says that he will explain the Gita with discrimination. He determined that the differences found in the instruction of the Gita were due to the different *ādikāris*, or natures of people that such instructions are meant for. When these differences are not accounted for in a commentary, the idea of the instruction becomes unclear. When we say that *Śaṅkaracharya* commented ‘with discrimination,’ we should know that the instructions of the Gita are different instructions for different kinds of aspirants.

Karma Yoga is instructed for a suitable aspirant of Karma Yoga. For a suitable aspirant of *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, *Jñāna Yoga* is instructed. Discriminating thus

between the two, and not allowing their instructions to become mixed, for deciding the meaning of the *Gīta śāstram*, ‘*samkṣepataḥ vivaraṇam kariṣyāmi*,’ I will give explanations in a concise form.

The *samkṣepa*, or concisement of a commentary can refer to two different things. First, is the *artha samkṣepam*, the concisement of the meaning, and second is the *śabda samkṣepam*, the concisement of the words. Here, *Śaṅkarāchārya* is using *samkṣepam* of the words. In other words, he is using comparatively few words. In our view, there are numerous words, but for *Śaṅkara* it is very concise. He is saying that he is writing only a few words. For us, it is not small; it is quite big. So it isn’t the concisement of the meaning but of the words used. The meaning is thus expressed in this way. If the meaning is made concise, it will become difficult to understand. So, through an abridged form, *Śaṅkara* makes the meaning of the *Gīta śloka*s explained. *Śaṅkara* tells us here that he will explain the meaning of the *Gīta śloka*s.

What is *Śaṅkara* telling us here? Here he tells us what the conditions were when he composed this commentary. In this part, *Śaṅkara* explains, ‘why did he have to write this commentary? Who it is for? What are the specialties of this commentary?’ All of these matters are explained here. It’s not that there weren’t commentaries of the *Gīta* before *Śaṅkarāchārya*. Here, the commentary is explained through the differentiation of the types of aspirants referred to in the different instructions. The commentator also explains the utility of the commentary.

***Tasyāsyā gītāśāstrasya samkṣepataḥ prayojanam param
niḥśreyasam sahetukasya saṁsārasyātyantoparamalakṣaṇam.***

‘*Tasya asya gītāśāstrasya*, ‘this *Gīta Śāstra* which is very difficult to understand and instructed by the Lord *Sri Krishna* was commentated by numerous people in various ways. What is the purpose? ‘*Param Niḥśreyasam*,’ or *Mokṣam*, Liberation. We discussed this previously. It is the greatest purpose, which is *Mokṣa*. There will be other benefits, too. *Śaṅkara* says, ‘*samkṣepataḥ*,’ I am defining the purpose in a concise way. So, what is this *mokṣa (niḥśreyasa)*? Here it says, ‘*sahetukasya saṁsārasya atyanta uparama lakṣaṇam.*’ ‘*Sahetukam*,

Along with the Cause of *saṁsāra*. *Saṁsāra* is the cycle of birth and death for the *jīva*. The cause of the *jīva*'s births and deaths is *Avidyā*, Ignorance, *Māyā*. Thus, the *atyanta uparamam*, eternal cessation of these births and deaths, along with the experiences of happiness and pain of the Jiva is indicated. 'Atyanta uparamam,' means that this cessation must be forever. It must be where one does not come back to *saṁsāra*. That is why it is *atyanta uparamam*, ultimate cessation of *Saṁsāra*. This indicates complete peace from *Saṁsāra* (*atyanta śānti*). Once *Saṁsāra* is destroyed, it must not come back. That destruction must be perfect. This kind of cessation comes from Liberation (*Niḥśreyasa*). This *Niḥśreyasa*, *Mokṣa*, is the most primary utility of the Gita.

Why is it called the most important purpose of the Gita? This is because when we perform hearing, reflection, and contemplation on the Gita, it is said that one attains 'sarva puruṣārtha siddhi' - attainment of all the aims of life. These are *Dharma* (righteousness), *Kāma*, (desires), *Artha*, (wealth), and *Mokṣa*, (Liberation). So, all of these *puruṣārthas* will be attained. When we say this, it means that you will get everything from the Gita; *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*. This is possible. However, the most important purpose of the Gita is *mokṣa*, the ultimate cessation of *Saṁsāra*.

The *prayojanam*, the purpose of the Gita, is also to give all of the things that aid in the attainment of this ultimate cessation of *saṁsāra*. How does the Gita help one to attain *mokṣa*? It is from the *Ātma Bodha* gained from the hearing, reflection, and contemplation on the Gita. That's not the only purpose of the Gita. Along with this *Ātma Bodha*, one gains qualities such as tranquility (*śama*) and self-control (*dama*). The Gita aids one's spiritual practice. So, all of these are the purpose of the Gita.

That is why it says that the primary purpose is *mokṣa*. When a person performs this hearing (*śravaṇa*), how does *mokṣa* come? It is not caused just from *śravaṇa*. Through *śravaṇa*, mental purification, (*chitta śuddhi*), and other benefits will occur. These are all the side benefits of hearing the Gita. From this hearing, purification of mind takes place. Then the mind becomes one-pointed, and the qualities such as *śama* and *dama* grow. All of these spiritual benefits occur from the *śravaṇa*, hearing of the *śāstra*.

However, the primary utility is *mokṣa*. How is that *mokṣa*? Here, Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya explains according to his *Advaita* philosophy. Śaṅkara explains the most important part of his philosophy here in the Gita.

***‘Taccha sarvakarmasanyāsapūrvakād
ātmajñānaniṣṭhārūpāddharmādbhavati.’***

What is Śaṅkara saying through the Gita? He says this in one sentence. What comes afterwards in the commentary is the explanation of this concept. In this way, Śaṅkara repeats this concept throughout the commentary. This part of the commentary is for proving Śaṅkara’s *Advaita* philosophy and to reject opposing philosophies. This is seen repeated in many parts. What is this? *Sarvakarmasanyāsapūrvakād ātmajñānaniṣṭhārūpāddharmādbhavati* ‘*Niḥśreyasa*.’ This is the essence of the commentary of the Gita. We may think, what is the essence of Śaṅkara’s commentary of the Gita? If we understand this much, it is enough. ‘*Tat cha*.’ That *mokṣa*, (*niḥśreyasa*), how does *mokṣa* happen? ‘*Sarvakarma sanyāsa pūrvakād*.’ We said before, that two kinds of *Dharmas* from the *Vedas* were instructed to Arjuna. First is the path of *pravṛtti*, action, and second, is the path of *nivṛtti*, renunciation. Dharma was first instructed by the Lord to *Marīchi* and the *Prajāpatīs*. This was the path of *pravṛtti*, action. That’s why Śaṅkara says, ‘*sarva karma sanyāsa*’ the renunciation of all *karmas*. This *karma niṣṭhā*, the path of *karma*, was instructed to the *Prajāpatīs*. Remember, that is a *dharma* spoken of in the *Vedas*.

‘*Sarva karma sanyāsa*,’ refers to all of these *Vedic karmas*. We said earlier that the two kinds of *Vedic Dharmas* were instructed. So, Śaṅkarāchārya is aiming through the words, ‘*sarva karma sanyāsa*’ at the renunciation of all these *Vedic karmas*. We have already discussed this several times. To prevent confusion, I am saying this again. So, Śaṅkara says that the renunciation of all these *Vedic karmas* is ‘*sarva karma sanyāsa*.’ What are these *karmas*? There are four kinds of *Vedic karmas*.

These four *karmas* are *nitya*, *naimitta*, *kāmya*, and *niṣidham*. *Kāmya karmas* consist of the *karmas* one performs for a certain result, such as the attainment of heaven. *Niṣidha karmas* are *karmas* that are prohibited by the

Vedas. The rites of the householder are the *naimitta karmas*. For example, there is one *karma* which is connected to the birth of a son, in the *Vedas*. Then, *nitya karmas* are the daily *karmas*, such as *Agnihotra*, the fire sacrifice. These four *karmas* are what is meant by the words in the *bhāṣyā*, ‘*sarva karma*.’ So the *bhāṣyā* says, ‘*sarva karma saṁnyāsa pūrvakād*.’

In the time of *Śaṅkarāchārya*, the primary debate was about *Vedic Dharma*. That is the *Dharma* that existed based on the system of classes and life-stages. This primarily refers to the *Vedic Dharmas*. *Śaṅkarāchārya* speaks about the complete renunciation of these *Dharmas*, which are based on the system of *varṇas* and *āśramas*.

Śaṅkara’s commentary was written centuries before our society. If we try to understand the commentary through our current environment, we will get confused. If you must understand it, you must go to that time. You must understand from that time. Only then can we see and grasp the meaning of phrases like, ‘*sarva karma saṁnyāsa*,’ the renunciation of all *karmas*. When we think of the phrase ‘*sarva karma*’ in today’s time, this has no relationship with the way this is used in the commentary. These are the *karmas* from centuries ago. These things were said to a society that practiced *Vedic karmas*, accepting the *Vedas* as an authority. What the normal worldly man thinks of when he hears this word ‘*karma*,’ has no relationship whatsoever. There is a difference.

We are all born into a certain environment, and we grow up in this environment with a specific culture. The people for whom this commentary was written are from a completely different culture (*saṁskāra*). This commentary is instructing the people in a society who were born and raised in this *Vedic saṁskāra*. So, there is a difference in the time, in the practices, in the culture, in everything. To understand the essence of the commentary, we have to keep all of these factors in consideration.

When *Śaṅkarāchārya* says, ‘*sarva karma saṁnyāsa pūrvakād*,’ the renunciation of all *karmas*, some of us will become afraid. Some have asked me, ‘Swami, do you have to teach the *bhāṣyā*?’ Why do they say this? It is because they are worried about the Tsunami relief work. ‘If after studying this, everyone decides to reject this work, it will create a problem.’ ‘This Swami must not create

a problem at the Aśram.’ Then, they ask, ‘isn’t it enough if we hear the Gita in a simple way? Is the commentary needed? It’s too much for us.’

For enabling ordinary people to understand the ideas of the *bhāṣyā*, some commentators won’t take into consideration these matters. Some commentators will give the meaning of a word that we are familiar with. They don’t give consideration to the difference in time, or in the totality of the scripture. These commentators don’t even think that these things being discussed are from centuries ago. Such people commentate in this way, and in my opinion, have created confusion.

Not long ago, I surprisingly heard a satsang on the Gita. I didn’t listen on purpose. It was an accident. Then, the speaker was commenting on *karma*, in the section where it says, ‘*Sarva karma saṁnyāsa*,’ ‘the renunciation of all *karma*.’ This person had studied a little. In other words, he had studied *Nyāya śāstra*, the science of logic. You could say he was in the kindergarten of *Nyāya śāstra*. There is a book meant to give the kindergarten lessons of *Nyāya*, called ‘*Tarka Saṁgraham*.’ Some people study this. This divides the types of *karma*; ‘*Uchhepanam, apakṣepanam, akunchanam, prasāranam, gamanam, etc.*’ These are words meaning the movement of normal objects. The commentor was explaining that ‘*karma*’ refers to this kind of movement.

He commentated in this way for the word ‘*karma*’ in the *Śaṅkara Bhāṣyā*. These words have no relationship at all with this. Those words are from another *śāstra*. This meaning of ‘movement’ is a different meaning. The *karma* that we are discussing here is different. Here we are discussing about *Vedic Dharma*. I heard that person commentate on the Gita with no awareness about these things. There were a lot of people listening. They said, ‘what a magnificent explanation. This Swami must be such a scholar. He’s using words like *ucchepanam, apakṣepanam, etc.*’ This is the first time we’re hearing these words.’ If the Swami is saying this, what would we have thought? We would think that he’s a great paṇḍit. Because he is using Sanskrit words that we have never heard before, he immediately becomes a paṇḍit, a knowledgeable person. So, many commentaries on the Gita are like this. That’s why people are afraid. ‘After studying the *bhāṣyā*, all of us will reject all *karmas*, and form a new kind of *sanyassa*.’ This isn’t the *sanyassa* that has been in existence. It is a new kind of *sanyassa*.

All of these doubts are out of place. If we understand the commentary properly, then this confusion won't happen. We can understand all of this directly from the commentary. This isn't an obstacle to any work. All of that will continue. Here, among all of us, we are normally not eligible for that kind of *sarva karma sanyassa*, the renunciation of *Vedic karma*. The reason is that you cannot renounce what you are not practicing. Here, *Śaṅkara* is saying to reject *nitya, naimitta, kāmya, and niṣidha karmas*, and he is speaking to those who are constantly practicing these. He says that they can renounce these. Now, who is practicing these? So, you are hearing about all these things, *Nitya, Naimitta*, and so on, for the first time. Then, there is no scope for practicing these.

This *Vedic Dharma* has been lost. There is no longer a society now that lives according to that *Dharma*. Some rare people may be practicing a part of this, but such a society doesn't exist. Because of this, the performance or renunciation of such *karmas* has no relevance. Like this, when we hear the words, '*sarva karma sanyassa*,' it's nothing we should be afraid of. So, '*sarva karma samīnyāsa pūrvakād ātmajñānaniṣṭhārūpād dharmād bhavati.*' It says that *mokṣa* is attained through the abidance in Self-knowledge (*ātmajñāna niṣṭhā*), which is with the renunciation of all *karmas*. This is the path of *nivṛtti* that we discussed earlier. We said before, '*Dharma dvayam.*' There are two *Dharmas*, two *Niṣṭhās*. This was said before. One path is to live, following *Vedic karmas*. The other is to reject these *Vedic karmas*, in abidance in Self-knowledge. '*ātmajñāna niṣṭhārūpād dharmād.*' That is also a *Dharma*. *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, the path of Knowledge, is also a *Dharma*. *Dharma* is not just to perform *karmas*. This is the *Dharma* of *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, the path of Knowledge. Through this *Dharma* of *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, *Mokṣa* is attained, '*niḥśreyasa bhavati.*'

It is in this section of '*sarva karma samīnyāsa*' where some commentators have different opinions. How must the renunciation of all *karmas* happen? For whom should it happen? Even though it is said that *Mokṣa* is attained through the path of Self-knowledge renouncing all *karmas*, what did the Lord *Sri Krishna* advise Arjuna? '*Kuru Karmaiva Tasmāt Tvam.*' 'You must do karma only.' '*Karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhiṁ āsthitāḥ Janakādayaḥ.*' *Janaka* and others attained *mokṣa* through *karma* alone.' Then, again *Sri Krishna* says, '*Mām anusmara*

yuddhya cha. 'Remember Me and fight!' Then again, '*Mayārpita Mano Buddhih.*' Surrender your mind and intellect to Me, and perform action.'

Thus, in the Gita, some sections describe the performance of *karma*, while other sections describe the renunciation of *karma*. '*Naiṣkarmya siddhiṁ paramaṁ saṁnyāseṇādhigacchati.*' The supreme perfection of *naiṣkarmya*, transcendence of *karma*, is attained through renunciation.' In this way, the Gita speaks about *sanyassa* in different ways. The commentators of the Gita explain this in different ways. What does *Sri Krishna* say to Arjuna? '*Karmaṇaivādikāras te.*' You have the right to *karma* alone. You should only perform *karma*.' But what does the Lord say at the end of the Gita? '*Sarva dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja.*' Renounce all dharmas, and surrender to Me.'

The listeners may become confused at these sections. We will make these parts clear through explanation. In the continuing sections, *Śaṅkara* is expressing his philosophy (*siddhānta*). What is this? It is Self-knowledge along with the renunciation of all *karmas*. In other words, abidance in Self-Knowledge, along with the renunciation of all *karmas* is the cause of Liberation, (*Niḥśreyasa*) according to the commentary.

Among the commentaries of the Gita by the most respected *āchāryas*, is this commentary by *Adi Śaṅkarāchārya*. One other is by *Ramaṇujāchārya*, and another commentary of the Gita is by *Madhvāchārya*. These are the most important among the commentaries of the Gita that are available to us now. These three are the most important; *Adi Śaṅkarāchārya*, *Ramaṇujāchārya*, and *Madhvāchārya*. Besides these, there are countless commentaries written supporting or refuting the ideas in these three commentaries. There is the *Gudhārtha Dipikā*, by *Madhusūdana Saraswati*. There is *Nilakaṇṭhāchārya's* commentary, and one by *Śrīdhārāchārya*. Thus, with these countless commentaries and their explanations, the *Gita Śāstra* is a vast universe of words, a universe of ideas. All of these *āchāryas* commented on the Gita through their own philosophy (*siddhānta*).

The commentary by *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya* is in *Advaita*, the philosophy of non-duality. Other commentaries are in *dvaita* philosophy, or dualism, and others are in *vaśiṣṭa dvaitam*, qualified Monism. All of these philosophies have

been expressed relying on the *śloka*s of the Gita. All of the ideas these *āchārya*s have within will become expressed through the Gita commentary.

If we are talking about *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya*, we know that his philosophy is *Advaita*, non-duality. That is why you can only see *Advaita* wherever you look in his commentary. You won't be able to see dualism anywhere. If there is any part related to dualism, *Śaṅkara* is able to see it in terms of *Advaita*. He will only commentate according to Non-dualism. Instead, if a person's view is dualism, he will be able to see dualism even in a section dealing with non-dualism. Each commentator explains according to the knowledge and *saṁskāra* within them. However, if we examine all of these commentaries from a distance, we can understand one thing.

In the Gita, there are several sections that express dualistic ideas. However, as far as *Śaṅkarāchārya* is concerned, the Gita is nothing like that. There is only *Advaita*. Wherever we look in the commentary, we see *Advaita*. Because that was his view and experience, he could see non-duality everywhere. We cannot blame *Śaṅkarāchārya* for this. This is because each person expresses their own experience. A person with the abidance of *Advaita* can see non-duality anywhere and in anything. That is why when we read some sections, we may think, 'is this explanation correct?' I myself have felt this before. However, each *āchārya* commentates according to their Path. We have no choice but to accept this. There is no *śloka* anywhere in the Gita that says, '*brahma satyam jagan mīthyā.*' *Brahman* is Truth, and the world is illusory.' You can find hints of this. But there isn't a single *śloka* that clearly says this idea.

However, according to the philosophy of *Advaita*, that is the essence of the Gita; '*Brahma satyam Jagan mīthyām.*' Why is that? For the *āchārya* of *Advaita*, *Śaṅkarāchārya*, whether in the Gita, the *Upaniṣads*, or *Brahma Sutras*, only this idea exists. There is no other idea. So he commentates according to his own experience. For this reason, there are some that criticize *Śaṅkarāchārya*'s commentary as being one-sided or biased. That is another matter, but we can understand one thing. Each person comments according to their own experience. According to *Śaṅkarāchārya*'s experience, what is it? Through abidance in Self-knowledge along with the renunciation of all *karmas*, Liberation is attained. Here, *Śaṅkara* is commentating according to his path and goal.

So, a person may ask, ‘if so many *āchāryas* have commented on the Gita, which one should we accept?’ These are all great *āchāryas*. They have more knowledge, intelligence, and experience than us. What do we need to do? According to each person’s *vāsana* and suitability, each one will have the taste for a certain path. They will accept that. You won’t have the taste for all of them. After studying *Advaita* with an *āchārya*, *Ramaṇuja* left that path for his own. Why is that? This is because *Ramaṇuja*’s path and taste were different. In the spiritual path itself, the primary matter is the disciple’s taste, his *vāsana*, and interest. A person grasps things according to these. According to this, a person will like something and feel interest in that. Then he will feel that it is right, and then grasp the idea. So, that is all that is needed.

Some people will be interested in the abidance in Self-knowledge discussed here in the *Śaṅkara Bhāṣyā*. They can then follow the path of the commentator, *Śaṅkarāchārya*. So, as I said, people ask, ‘which of these is correct?’ ‘Is it the abidance in Self-knowledge of *Śaṅkara*, or is it to worship the Lord, who is the wealth of infinite auspiciousness, according to *Ramaṇuja*?’ That is another path. There, devotion and *karma* are combined. The combination of *Jñāna* and *karma* that *Śaṅkara* refutes is supported by *Ramaṇuja*. ‘Can it be in that way?’

So, if we ask, ‘which is correct?’ this depends on the different kinds of aspirants. According to this, either can be correct or incorrect. Whatever one feels is correct according to one’s suitability; whatever you feel is right for you is correct. Ultimately, each person must decide for themselves what is right and wrong. This is exactly what the Lord says.

‘*Vimrishyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathechhasi tathā kuru.*’ So, first look and think it over. Then, you decide which is correct. ‘I am not the one to decide what is correct for you. I can give the things needed to decide right and wrong. So, think thoroughly. After thinking, decide for yourself which is right.’ Here, the Lord is speaking to the listener. For deciding whether *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya* is correct, or if *Ramanujāchārya*, or if *Madhvāchārya* is correct, the person doing the listening and thinking must determine this themselves. The Lord Himself advises this in the Gita.

What is the ultimate instruction of the Lord? ‘*Udaret ātmanātmānām.*’ ‘Uplift the self by the self. You correct yourself.’ It is true that the Lord says in

the Gita, '*Aham Tvāṁ Sarvapāpebhyo Mokṣayiṣyāmi Mā Suhaḥ.*' 'I will release you from all sins.' And then, also, there is the śloka, '*Yogaḥsemāṁ Vahāmyaham.*' 'I will protect what you have and give what is needed.' Even though the Lord makes all these promises, what does the Lord say in the end? 'You do what you need to do. I have no responsibility.' '*Udaret ātmanātmānām.*' In the end, the burden comes to the listener. The *ādikāri*, the aspirant, takes the burden.

The Gita is a *samagra śāstram*. This means that it contains everything. What is said about the *Mahābhārata*? That which is not found in the *Mahābhārata* can't be found elsewhere. But, that which is not found elsewhere can be found in the *Mahābhārata*. Similarly, for *Atma Vidyā*, you can find things in the Gita that aren't found elsewhere, but you can't find something elsewhere that isn't found in the Gita. That is its fullness, its completeness. The Gita has everything needed for each kind of person to approach and accept.

Till today, if you look at the instruction of any *āchārya*, you can find it in the Gita. Whatever the *āchāryas* hereafter instruct will also be able to be found in the Gita. This doesn't matter how 'modern' we may think the instruction is. What is the final instruction? It is, '*Udaret ātmanātmānām.*' Who can say better than this? 'Uplift yourself by yourself.' This is the final word of the Gita.

So, the Gita is a complete *śāstra* that contains everything for everyone. In this Gita, the Lord has given the freedom to think using a philosophical view and discover the suitable meaning for us. This is said by the Lord. '*Vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru.*' After thinking this over deeply, act as you deem fit.'

The Lord also says, '*kacchitetat śrutāṁ pārtha tvayaikāgrenā chetasā.*' Have you listened to this, Arjuna, with concentration of mind?' *Sri Krishna* says with great pity, 'have you heard with concentration everything I said?' The Lord had a doubt. After instructing Arjuna, the Lord thought, 'was your mind in some fantasyland? Did you listen to these matters with alertness?'

If you have listened carefully, consider things one more time. After thinking, come to a decision by yourself.' So, we ask, 'Do we need *Advaita*, or *dvaita*? Do we need *jñāna*, or *bhakti*, or *karma*?' Why is this freedom to choose

given? The primary reason is that this depends on the qualities of the aspirant. It doesn't just depend on the greatness of an instruction.

So, the opinion that *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya* is giving is what he discovered. '*Sarva karma samnyāsa pūrvakād ātmajñānanaiṣṭhārūpād dharmād bhavati.*' '*Niḥśreyasam bhavati.*' Through the path of Self-knowledge, along with the renunciation of all *karmas*, *mokṣa* is attained. This is his opinion. So, when we study the commentary, we must keep these things in mind.

***'Tathameva gītārthadharmamuddiśya bhagavataivoktam.
'Sa hi dharmah suprayāpto brahmaṇah padavedane' ityanugītāsu.'***
***'Tatraiva chokam -
'Naiva dharmī na chādharmī na chaiva hi śubhāśubhī
Yah syādekāsane līnastūṣṇīm kimchidachintayan.'***
'Jñānam samnyāsalakṣanam' iti cha.'

So, the commentator who is expressing an idea will utilize scriptural authority (*pramāṇa*) to back up the idea. Whatever he says will be based on *pramāṇa*. *Pramāṇa* is what is agreed on by previous *āchāryas*, and by the *Vedas*. It can be what is agreed on by the *Smṛtis* and the present-time *āchāryas* as well. The commentator uses these authorities when he is trying to prove his idea.

'Tathā imam eva gītārthadharmam' - according to this *dharma* of the Gita's meaning, the path of renunciation, the Lord Himself has spoken. '*Bhagavatā eva uktam'* - the Lord Himself has said this. What did the Lord say? The Lord instructed this path of Self-knowledge and renunciation of all *karmas*, which leads to *mokṣa*. *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya* doesn't accept an ounce of anything but this.

'Sa hi dharmah suparyāpto brahmaṇah pada vedane' iti anugītāsu.' This is said in the *Anugītā*. '*Sa hi Dharmah suparyāpto'* - this *Dharma* alone is enough, the *dharma* of renunciation. For *brahmaṇah padam*, the state of *mokṣa*, this path of Self-knowledge and renunciation of all *karmas* alone is sufficient. Through the *sādhana* of the path of Renunciation, Self-knowledge is attained. Through Self-knowledge, *mokṣa* is obtained. This quote is from the *Anugītā*, in the Mahābhārata.

‘*Kiñcha anyad api tatra eva uktam ‘naiva dharmī na chādharmī na chaiva hi śubhāśubhī.’* It is also said there, ‘*naiva dharmī*’ - he is not a follower of *Dharma*. Whoever practices *dharma* is a *Dharmī*. One who lives and practices the dharma of Action is a *Dharmī*. Then if he is not a *Dharmī*, is he adharmic? No. It says further, ‘*na cha adharmī*’ - he isn’t an *adharmī*. He doesn’t practice *adharmā*, either.

Then what does it say about one in the discipline of Self-knowledge? ‘*na chaiva hi śubhāśubhī.*’ *Śubha* is the merit gained from the practice of *Dharma*, and *aśubha* is the demerit from practicing *adharmā*. Here, he is neither *śubhī* or *aśubhī*. You cannot find sin or merit in him. Who is this? ‘*Yaḥ syād ekāsenā līnas.*’

‘*Ekāsenā.*’ *Āsana* can refer to an external sitting position here. *Ekāsanam parabrahmam.*’ Sitting in a single posture, he is merged in the Supreme *Brahman*. His mind is absorbed in the *Paramātman*. ‘*Tūṣṇīm*’ - without any outer dealings of the mind. This is the meaning of ‘*tūṣṇīm sthiti.*’ The ordinary meaning of this is to not speak. Here, this means to be without any outer dealings of the mind. Without any actions of the mind, tongue, or body, ‘*Kimchit achintayan.*’ Without a single modification of mind, established in *Brahman*, he cannot be called a *dharmī* or an *adharmī*, nor *śubhī* or *aśubhī*. That is what *Śaṅkarāchārya* calls abidance in Self-knowledge while renouncing all *karmas*. This abidance (*niṣṭhā*) is the cause of *mokṣa*.

Here it says that the cause of *Mokṣa* not the external performance of *karma* as instructed by *Marīchi* and the *Prajāpatīs*. Instead, the cause is as described here; seated in a single posture, the mind firmly established in *Brahman*, without any kind of the mind’s outer dealings. That is *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, abidance in Self-Knowledge. That is the *dharma* of *nivṛtti* (renunciation).

Then it says, ‘*Jñānam samnyāsalakṣaṇam*’ *iti cha*’ - knowledge is indicated by renunciation.’ When we say the word ‘*Jñāni*,’ it means that he must have renunciation. That is the meaning of what is said. Here it is speaking of the renunciation of all *karmas*. This renunciation of all *karmas* is the mark of *Jñāna*, Self-Knowledge. The commentator is saying that *Jñāna* and *Karma* cannot exist together, in one place. One won’t find *Karma* In *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*. Instead, you will see the renunciation of *Karma*. That is the characteristic of *Jñāna*.

This concept will come in the following sections, so we will continue to discuss this. Here Śaṅkara is explaining this concept in a general way, through the preface.

***‘Thāpi chānta uktamarjunāya – ‘sarvadharmānparityajya
māmekam śaraṇam vraja’ iti.’***

In the Gita, in the end of the last chapter, *Sri Krishna* says this to Arjuna. This is called the *parisamāpti*, the conclusion of the Gita. Some commentators say that this *śloka* is the conclusion of the Gita’s philosophy. What is this *śloka*? ‘*Sarva dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja.*’

So the Lord begins instructing with the *ślokas*, ‘*kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam,*’ ‘you must do *karma* alone, and ‘*Karmaṇaivādikāras te*’ – you only have the right to *karma*; not to *sanyassa.*’ After instructing this, what does the Lord say at the end? ‘*Sarva Dharmān Parityajya.*’ This shows the conclusion of *karma yoga*. The conclusion of *karma yoga* is *karma tyāgam*, the renunciation of *karma*. That’s why Lord *Sri Krishna* says, ‘*sarva dharmān parityajya,*’ renouncing all *dharmas.*’

Should we renounce this *karma* externally or mentally? We will discuss these matters in the coming sections. Here it is talking about the renunciation of all *karmas*. So, it says, after renouncing all *dharmas*, surrender to Me. What is renunciation? Even *āchāryas* have different opinions on this. We will explain this fully.

‘*Mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja.*’ Surrender is indicated here. This is surrender to the Lord. What is this surrender to the Lord? Śaṅkarāchārya says that it is abidance in Self-knowledge with the renunciation of *karma*. This abidance in Self-knowledge leads one to *mokṣa*.

What is this surrender? What name should we give this? The different commentators of the Gita have different opinions about this. Should it be called *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*? Or should it be called *Parā Bhakti*, supreme Devotion? There are differences in opinion for this. The result is the same. We will understand this.

Thus, in the phrase, ‘take refuge in God,’ Śaṅkara says that this is the abidance in Self-knowledge which leads to the attainment of *Mokṣa*. The essence

of what Śaṅkara is going to commentate on is summarized in this section. ‘*Ātma Jñāna Niṣṭhā*.’ ‘Abidance in Self-knowledge.’ *Ātma Niṣṭhā* is the constant identification with the Self, through the hearing, reflection, and contemplation of śāstra. Through *Ātma Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, abidance in Self-knowledge, comes the attainment of Self-knowledge. Then, this Self-knowledge (*Ātma Bodha*) becomes firm. Through this firm *Ātma Bodha*, ignorance is destroyed. The *jīva* then exists as the embodiment of the Self. This is the path that Śaṅkarāchārya is instructing. So, we have made this section clear.

Continuing, we come to *Karma* and *Karma Yoga*, and their purpose. If the benefit of abidance in Self-knowledge is *mokṣa*, then what is the need of *Karma Yoga*? What is the importance of *Karma*? Śaṅkara will discuss fully two things; the performance of *karma* and the renunciation of *karma*. How does one perform *karma*, and for how long? When does *karma tyāga* begin? We will continue to discuss these matters in the next class.

V. Shankara's Philosophy in the GITA

We discussed the previous day about the utility of the *Gita Śāstram*. The chief purpose of the *Gita* is *mokṣa*. The *śāstra* is an instrument used for this attainment. How does it help? It says, '*sarvakarmasamnyāsapūrvakād ātmajñānaniṣṭhārūpād dharmād bhavati*.'

This means that *mokṣa* is attained through the practice of Self-knowledge, along with the renunciation of all *karmas*. This is called *Atma Jñānā Niṣṭhā*, and becomes a cause for Self-Knowledge and *Mokṣa*. According to the commentator, that is the primary instruction of the *Gita Śāstra*.

To prove this, the necessary scriptural authorities were given. One of these is, '*Jñāna Samnyāsa Lakṣaṇam*.' 'Knowledge is indicated by Renunciation.' In other words, wherever there is Knowledge, there must also be renunciation. The indication of knowledge is *sanyassa*. For that reason, *Sri Krishna* advised Arjuna, '*Sarva dharmān parityajya, mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*.' 'Having renounced all *dharmas*, surrender to Me.' This is what the Lord instructs at the end of the *Gita*. This is what we discussed earlier. Next in the *bhāṣyā*, it says,

***'Abhyudayārtho 'pi yaḥ pravṛttilakṣano dharmo
varṇāśramāmschoddiśya vihitaḥ sa devādisthānaprāptiheturapi
sannīshvarārppanabuddhyānuṣṭhīyamānaḥ sattvaśudhaye bhavati
phalābhisamdhivarjitaḥ.'***

This is a primary philosophy of *Śaṅkarāchārya*. '*Abhyudayārthaḥ api yaḥ pravṛttilakṣano dharmah*.' '*Pravṛttilakṣano dharmah*' means the *dharmā* that is in the form of *Vedic* action. After the Lord created sages such as *Marīchi*, he instructed to them the *Dharma* of Action.

'*Varṇāśramān cha uddiśya vihitaḥ*.' This is according to the system of the classes and life-stations ordained by the *Vedas*. This word '*vihitaḥ*,' is of great importance. What kind of *dharmā* is the commentator speaking of? '*Vihita dharmā*.' It is the *dharmā* that was ordained. Where? This was ordained in the

Vedas. Without the *Vedas*, there is nothing to ordain this. This *Dharma* ordained in the *Vedas* is for the classes and life-stages.

If we must, we can also accept the *Smārta* ordinances, those that are spoken of in the *Smṛtis*, as ordained *karmas*. The commentator doesn't allow us to go further than that. The *Dharmas* being spoken of are *Śrouta* and *Smārta*, of the *Śrutis* and the *Smṛtis*. This is the kind of *dharma* being referred to. So here, when we use the word '*karma*', or '*pravṛtti dharma*,' we are referring to the *Dharma* that is ordained in the *Vedas* and the *Smṛtis*, according to the system of the classes and life-stages, for the individuals in society.

Then it says, '*Saḥ*,' that *dharma*, '*devādisthānaprāptihetuḥ api*.' What is the utility of this *dharma*? '*Devādisthānaprāpti*.' That is the purpose. That's what was called earlier, as '*abhyudaya*.' *Abhyudaya* is the attainment of positions such as a *deva*. *Abhyudaya* and *Niḥśreyasa* are the results of the two kinds of *Dharma*. The word *Niḥśreyasa* means *mokṣa*, Liberation. So, this *Abhyudaya* is the reason why *karmas* are performed.

For every *karma* in the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis*, that *karma*'s fruits will be described. '*Devādisthānaprāpti*' refers to the attainment of Heaven. There can also be results here on earth. For example, there is a sacrifice for bringing rainfall, for obtaining a son, and for obtaining wealth. These are all *Vedic karmas*. They are *karmas* that tell us about their results. These results are what is meant by '*abhyudayam*.' This type of *karma* is the cause of attainments such as heaven. Then it says, '*hetur api san*.' Even though they are such, even though these *karmas* give desired results, it says, '*īśvarārpanabuddhyā anuṣṭhīyamānaḥ sattvaśuddhaye bhavati phalābhisaṁdhi varjitaḥ*.'

Even though these *karmas* are normally meant for desired results, it says, '*phala abhisaṁdhi varjitaḥ*.' So, this *abhisaṁdhi*, attachment, is towards the result. *Abhisaṁdhi* is attachment to results. By avoiding this, these *karmas* must be performed. In the mind of whoever is performing the *karma*, normally there will be attachment to the result. Avoiding this, it says, '*īśvarārpanabuddhyā anuṣṭhīyamānaḥ*.' This means to practice *karma* with the awareness of surrender to God. If this ordained *karma* is performed in this way, '*sattvaśuddhaye bhavati*' – this will cause an increase in the *sattva guṇa*, making the mind purified.

In that way, this also becomes a cause for *niḥśreyasa*, Liberation. What kind of *karmas* are these? They are *karmas* that cause the attainment of desired results. These same *karmas* can also become a cause for Liberation (*niḥśreyasa*). Thus, ordained *karmas* must be performed along with the awareness of surrender to God, without attachment to the result or any reward. If these *karmas* are practiced in this way, then even if they are ordained for the attainment of heaven and other fruits, they become a means for attaining *chitta shuddhi*, purity of mind.

After rejecting *kāmya karmas* (desire-prompted karmas) and *niṣidha karmas* (prohibited karmas), the two *karmas* left are *naimitta* and *nitya karmas*. The *bhāṣyā* is aiming at these kinds of *karmas*. This is because *Kāmya karmas* cannot be performed without *kāma*, desire. There is a *karma* ordained for the attainment of Heaven, called ‘*Jyotiṣthom*.’ A person who has no interest in heaven cannot perform that *karma*. The primary element of that *karma* is the person’s desire in attaining heaven. The commentator says that these karmas should be renounced.

In this way, many *yāgas* are refuted. There is no performance of selfless action in these. Is it possible to perform a *yāga* that gives the attainment of heaven without desire? That cannot happen. Desire and desirelessness cannot exist in the same place. Therefore, these karmas are refuted for a Karma Yogi.

The instruction is then given is to perform the *nitya* and *naimitta karmas*. According to the opinion of the commentator, these are described as, ‘*varṇāśramāns cha uddiśya*’ – these must be performed according to the system of classes and life-stages. This is said in particular. After performing these *karmas* in this way, it will become a cause for *chitta śuddhi*, purity of mind. In that, ordinary karmas will be included. This will be explained in the Gita.

Here, this principle is a must for *Śaṅkarāchārya*. If we use the word ‘*karma*,’ it must refer to Vedic karma, related to the system of classes and life-stages. No matter what section the commentator is explaining, he will say this again and again. But when we generally look in the Gita regarding karma, there is no conviction that this word refers to Vedic karma only. This is because it says in Chapter 5,

‘*Paśyān śṛṅvān spṛśān jighrān aśnān gacchān svapān chshvasān.*’ The Yogi thinks, ‘I do nothing’, even while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, etc.’

Here, all actions that compose the individual are referred to as *karma*. It is not just those rituals that are ordained in the *Vedas*; It is all *karmas*. This even means the *karmas* that happen naturally all the time. These are practiced without any ordinance from the *Vedas*. What is the specialty of *Vedic karma*? Without the ordinance of the *Vedas*, it isn’t possible to know about or practice these *karmas*. But when the Gita speaks about *karma*, what does the Lord say? He speaks about all *karmas*. Our seeing, hearing, and so on, are all included in *Karma Yoga*. The Gita says that these actions must be performed, united in *Yoga*.

For the commentator, this word ‘*karma*’ refers primarily to *Vedic karma*, which he had to refute at that time. What he aims at in the commentary is the *karmas* of the classes and life-stages. *Śaṅkara* has also written about these sections of the Gita dealing with the ordinary kind of *karma*. *Śaṅkara* is also commenting on such sections, according to the meaning of the verse. But even though he accepts that kind of *karma*, he usually gives a commentary referring to the *Vedic karma* of the classes and life-stages. The reason is because of the influence of the time in which he lived. That is the specialty of a society that existed centuries ago. Because of that, he repeats this again and again.

Śaṅkarāchārya gives importance to *Vedic karma*, while the Gita also talks about ordinary *karmas*. In those parts, *Shankara* will comment in that way. There, he doesn’t talk about the *Vedic dharma* or the *dharma* of the classes and life-stages. Instead, he comments on this as *karma yoga*.

So, what is said in this part of the Gita? If you perform these *karmas* as *Karma Yoga*, it will become a cause for *chitta śuddhi*, mental purity. What kind of *karma* must be performed as *karma yoga*? Is it only *Vedic karma*? No. This is all *karmas*, one’s every movement. Every movement of the individual must be performed as *Karma Yoga*. *Karma* must be practiced as *Karma Yoga*. This is the ultimate essence of the Gita.

This doesn’t just refer to *Vedic karma*. We can understand this from the Gita *ślokas*. That kind of performance of *karma* becomes a cause for *chitta śuddhi*, purification of mind.

**‘Śudhasattvasya cha jñānaniṣṭhāyogyatāprāptidvāreṇa
jñānotpattihetutvena cha niḥśreyasahetutvamapi
pratipadyate.’**

‘Śudhasattvasya.’ The commentator is speaking of these *Vedic karmas*. If a person practices these without attachment to their results, he gains *chitta śuddhi*, purification of mind. In that way, it says, ‘Śudhasattvasya.’ For one whose *antaḥkaraṇa* is pure, ‘jñānaniṣṭhāyogyatāprāptidvāreṇa’ – he attains the suitability for *jñāna niṣṭhā*, the Discipline of Knowledge. We said earlier what *Jñāna Niṣṭhā* is. It is the practice of hearing, reflection, and contemplation. Here, the *sādhak* becomes suitable for that *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*. This means that his mind becomes prepared.

The commentator will say repeatedly that the prompting behind *karma* is *kāma*, desire. What inspires *karma* is the subtle desire that exists in the mind. We said before that *chitta śuddhi*, purity of mind, is the absence of likes and dislikes. These are in both gross and subtle form. In accordance with how much the mind is free from these, the mind becomes pure. So, a person with such purity becomes an *adhikari*, a fit aspirant for *karma tyāga*, the renunciation of karma. Then, *karmas* naturally fall away from him. He thus becomes suitable for *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*. He becomes suitable for practicing hearing, reflection, and contemplation with one-pointedness and introspection. In that way, it says in the *bhāṣyā* ‘jñāna niṣṭhā yogyatā prāpti dvāreṇa.’

After he gains this suitability, what does he do? ‘jñānotpatti hetutvena.’ This *Jñāna* becomes manifest in him. The same *tattvam* that he has been identifying with through hearing, reflection, and contemplation becomes an experience. This is called ‘*Jñānotpatti*.’ You should understand the difference between *Jñāna Niṣṭhā* and *Jñānotpatti*. *Jñāna Niṣṭhā* is performance of *sādhanas* such as hearing, along with *tyāga*, renunciation. What does this become a cause of? This causes *Jñānotpatti*, the arising of Knowledge. Whoever experiences this principle through practice has attained *jñānotpatti*.

Thus, *Jñāna Niṣṭhā* becomes a cause for *Jñānotpatti*, the arising of Knowledge. What does this *Jñānotpatti* become a cause of? It then says, ‘*cha*

niḥśreyasa hetutvam.’ It becomes a cause of *niḥśreyasa*, Liberation. Here, this *niḥśreyasa* is primary. The lines here say how Liberation is attained through cause and effect. *Niḥśreyasa*, Liberation, is caused by *Jñānotpatti*, the arising of Knowledge. *Jñānotpatti* is caused by *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, and *Jñāna Niṣṭhā* is caused by *chitta śuddhi*, purity of mind. The cause of *Chitta śuddhi* is *Niṣkāma Karma*, Desireless action.

So, in the *upodghāta*, *Śaṅkara* is explaining the main features of his philosophy. The *Upodghāta* is where *Śaṅkara* is discussing about all the things he is going to say, and all the foundational principals of the commentary. That is the meaning of *Upodghāta*. From the *Upodghāta*, we can understand what this person is going to present, and what the subject is. That is made clear here.

So, *Śaṅkara* says to practice the *karmas* instructed by the *Vedas*, without desire and according to the system of classes and life-stages. The result of this is *chitta śuddhi*, purification of mind. That purification of mind makes one fit for *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, the Discipline of Knowledge. This means that on attaining purification of mind, one may practice hearing, reflection, and contemplation. That becomes a cause for the arising of Knowledge, or *Jñānotpatti*. This arising of Knowledge becomes a cause for *mokṣa*. In that way, one becomes free from *Samsāra*. That is *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya*’s idea of the Gita. This is one path. This is the way for those who depend on *pravṛtti*, action.

Without taking this path, there is another, the path of Renunciation. We said before, ‘*Nivṛtti Lakṣano Dharmah.*’ This is the *Dharma* indicated by renunciation. As far as these aspirants are concerned, this kind of performance of *karma* doesn’t happen. For them, there is only *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, *Jñānotpatti*, and *mokṣa*. That is the *Nivṛtti mārga*, the path of renunciation.

In the *Pravṛtti mārga*, the path of action, there is the performance of *karma yoga*, and then *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*. For the *nivṛtti mārga*, the path of renunciation, there is *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, then *Jñānotpatti*, and then *mokṣa*. These are the two paths. It says here that these two Disciplines are for two kinds of *ādikāris*, or aspirants. It says in the Gita, ‘*Jñānayogena Sāṁkhyānām Karmayogena Yoginām.*’

In that section, *Śaṅkara* will discuss this matter in great detail. ‘For

followers of *Sāṃkhya*, there is the path of *Jñāna Yoga*, and for *Yogis*, there is the path of *Karma Yoga*.' Here, the *Gita* is advising the aspirant in the attainment of *mokṣa*. Thus, *Śaṅkara* is keeping the idea of these two paths in mind while commentating in the *Gita*. There are two kinds of *adhikāris*. There is *Jñāna Yoga* for followers of *Sāṃkhya*, and *Karma Yoga* for those who practice *karma*. Both of these are said. '*Tathā cha,*' it says next.

***'Tathā chemamevārthamabhisamdhāya vakṣyati -
'brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi'
'Yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṃ tyaktvātmaśuddhaye' iti.'***

The commentator then says, '*Tathā cha imam eva artham abhisamdhāya,*' aiming at this same meaning, '*vakṣyati,*' the Lord will speak. What will the Lord say? '*brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi.*' '*yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṃ tyaktvātmaśuddhaye iti.*' The Lord instructs this in the *Gita*. 'Whoever acts, surrendering all actions to *Brahman*, he is not bound by *karma*.' This is speaking about *Karma Yoga*.

How does *karma*, which is a cause of bondage, become a cause for *Mokṣa*? It says here. 'Act while surrendering all actions in *Brahman*. Act as an offering to God.' How can one act as an offering to God? This is what we will discuss in the coming sections. Here it is indicated.

'Yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṃ tyaktvātmaśuddhaye.' *Karma Yogis,* '*karma kurvanti,*' perform action. How? '*Saṅgaṃ Tyaktvā,*' without attachment towards the *karma* or its result, '*Ātmaśuddhaye*' and for purification of mind. It says this about *Karma Yoga* in the *Gita*.

The commentary will continue this discussion, focusing on these two *dharmas*. In this, there is one thing *Śaṅkarāchārya* insists on. This is that these two cannot be combined. *Karma Yoga* is one thing, and *Jñāna Niṣṭhā* is another. These can only happen for two separate *adhikāris*. This doesn't happen in one person at the same time. This an argument *Śaṅkara* holds forcefully. We will see this as we move forward.

*‘Imaṁ dvīprakāraṁ dharmāṁ niḥśreyasaprayojanaṁ
paramārthatattvaṁ chavāsudevākhyāṁ param
brahmābhīdheyabhūtaṁ viśeṣato ‘bhīvyāñjayadvīśīṣṭa
prayojanasāmbandhābhīdheyavadgītāśāstram.’*

This is speaking about the specialty of the *Gīta Śāstram*. ‘*Imaṁ dvīprakāraṁ dharmāṁ*.’ These two primary *dharmas* that were spoken of are *Karma Niṣṭhā* and *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*, or *Karma Yoga* and *Jñāna Yoga*. What are these? ‘*Niḥśreyasa prayojanam*.’ Their purpose is *mokṣa*, *niḥśreyasa*. This is speaking about the two kinds of *Dharma*. Then what is the content of the Gita? These two *dharmas* are discussed, as well as their utility, and the Principle of the Supreme Truth, ‘*Paramārthatattvaṁ cha*.’

The Gita is discussing about the two paths, and the Supreme Reality. What is that? ‘*Vāsudevākhyāṁ*.’ It is called *Vāsudeva*. Why does the commentator call the Supreme Reality ‘*Vāsudeva*?’ This is because *Sri Krishna*’s attitude in the Gita is, ‘I myself am the Paramātman.’ For example, the Lord says, ‘*Ahaṁ ātma guḍhākeṣa sarvabhūta śayasthitaḥ*’ ‘I myself am that *Paramātman*, the Supreme Self.’ In this way, the Lord gives instructions. He instructs in *Ātma Niṣṭhā*. Why does the Lord instruct in *Ātma Niṣṭhā*? According to the opinion of the commentator, it is so that the listener grasps the principle that is being instructed in that way.

It is so that the instruction is grasped in *Ātma Niṣṭhā*. That is why *Sri Krishna* is instructing in that way. That is the essence of what *Śaṅkara* is saying in his *Bhāṣyā*. The listener must have *ekatva bodha*, awareness of Oneness. The attitude that one’s Self is the Self of all Creation (*sarvātma bhāva*) should be experienced in the same way that *Sri Krishna* displays. That is the reason. That is why it uses the word, ‘*ahaṁ*,’ or ‘I.’ *Sri Krishna* says, ‘I am that *Paramātman*, the Supreme Self.’ The Gita instructs in this level. It doesn’t instruct about a *Paramātman* that is separate.

Sri Krishna doesn’t instruct in the Gita, ‘There is the Supreme Self and you must understand That.’ Instead, *Sri Krishna* says, ‘I Myself am that *Paramātman*.’ That’s why it says, ‘*Vāsudevākhyāṁ*.’ This *Paramātman* is called ‘*Vāsudeva*.’ It then says, ‘*Parambrahma abhīdheyabhūtam*.’ Here it is speaking

about the word '*Parabrahman.*' This means, 'the content of the Gita is *Parabrahman.*'

Thus, this principle and the two paths are discussed. Of these two paths, it says, '*viśeṣato abhivyañjayat.*' *Viśeṣato* means to make distinct, to differentiate. These two paths are different from each other. Also, the *Paramārtha Tattva*, the Principle of the Supreme Truth, is the content of the Gita. The word '*abhivyañjayat*' asserts this in this way. Why is this said?

Arjuna, at this part, didn't ask *Sri Krishna* for *Ātma Vidyā*. Arjuna didn't ask, 'What is the Self? Is it eternal or perishable? Is it one or many?' He didn't ask a single question like this. What Arjuna requested to the Lord was, 'please save me from this trouble!' That was all he demanded. But what the Lord instructed wasn't all that Arjuna requested.

Arjuna says to *Krishna*, 'What will be good for me? '*Niśchitam Brūhi Tanme.*' 'Please tell me for certain!' 'What is my duty?' He only asked this to the Lord. For Arjuna, there was only one problem; whether to fight the war or to avoid it. Here, the Self is not the subject of Arjuna's question.

However, the Lord didn't directly answer his question. He didn't start by saying, 'go and fight the war!' or, 'don't fight!' Even though He does say to fight, what does He say at first? At first, the Lord reveals this *Paramārtha Tattva*, the Principle of the Supreme Truth.

Ignorance of that principle was Arjuna's basic problem. First, the Lord told the solution for that problem. By revealing that *Paramārtha Tattva*, the Lord explains that there are several types of paths. Thus, the Lord revealed and gave Arjuna the path of *Karma*, the path of *Jñāna*, the path of *Bhakti*, and the path of *Yoga*. By that revelation, He gave Arjuna the understanding of what the *Ātman* is. He revealed *Ātma Bodha* to him. Through that, he also gave Arjuna the understanding of what *Dharma* is. Arjuna asks *Sri Krishna*, 'Which *dharma* should I practice? Is it *nivṛtti* or *pravṛtti*?' *Sri Krishna* revealed to Arjuna, 'you should not follow the *Nivṛtti marga*. You are an *adhikāri* for *Karma Yoga*.'

The commentator says that the content of the Gita is of two kinds, primarily. One is the two Paths, and second is the Supreme Truth. Both were instructed to Arjuna. So, it says '*abhivyañjayan.*' Both of these are made practical

through the *Gīta Śāstra*. The *Gīta Śāstra* is the Lord's *Upadeśa*. Thus, it says about this *Gīta Śāstra*, '*viśiṣṭa prayojana sambandhābhidheyavad gītāśāstram.*'

The Gita has a special purpose (*prayojanam*), relationship (*sambandham*), and content (*abhidheyam*). All of these are there. In any *śāstra*, you can find these three things. But in the Gita, these are very special, *viśiṣṭa*. They are *alaukika*, unworldly. The *prayojanam*, or purpose, is *mokṣa*. We have discussed *sambandham*, or relationship before. There is a relationship between *śāstra* and *mokṣa*. There is also a relationship between *śāstra* and the *ādikāri*, the aspirant. Thus, in different ways, these things are interconnected. *Abhidheyam*, the content, is the *Paramātmā Tattva*. What is the subject? This is the *abhidheyam*. Thus, there is a special *prayojanam*, *sambandham*, and *abhidheyam*. It says about the *Gīta Śāstra* next,

***'Yatastad arthe vijñāte samastapuruṣārthasiddhir
ityatastadvivaraṇe yatnaḥ kriyate mayā.'***

Therefore, '*Yataḥ tad arthe vijñāte.*' Once it is truly grasped, once the essence of the Gita is truly understood, '*samasta puruṣārtha siddhiḥ.*' One attains all the *puruṣārthas*, the four aims of life. That's why it says that Liberation is the Gita's most primary benefit, '*param prayojanam.*' What is the most important among the four *puruṣārthas*? It is *mokṣa*. It is the *parama puruṣārtha*, the greatest of the aims of life. However, the other aims of life are also needed for man. Thus, it says that through the *Gīta Śāstra*, all these *puruṣārthas* are attained. '*Samasta Puruṣārtha Siddhi.*' How does that happen? This is because all of the methods for attaining the aims of life are discussed. All of these subjects are in the Gita. *Dharma* is discussed. *Karma* and *Karma Yoga* are discussed, etc. Because of this, the Gita gives all the aims of life. Then, the *bhāṣyā* says, '*ityataḥ tad vivaraṇe yatnaḥ kriyate mayā.*' Thus, in its explanation, '*yatnaḥ kriyate mayā.*' I will put forth effort.

The Gita is called a *Mokṣa Śāstra*. It's not that only those who desire *Mokṣa* will derive benefit from the Gita. This will benefit anyone who desires the *puruṣārthas*, the four aims of life. That is the rarity of the Gita. If it happens that only one who desires *mokṣa* alone can gain benefit from the Gita, then such a

mokṣārthī must be established in the four requirements of *Advaita Sādhana* (*sādhana chatuṣṭaya*). He must possess qualities such as *śama* and *dama*, tranquility and self-control. He must also also possess discrimination (*viveka*), dispassion (*vairāgya*) and desire for Liberation (*mumukṣatvam*). It would then come that only a person full of such qualities can study the Gita.

If that happens, then, as it says in the Gita, '*manuṣyānām sahasreṣu*.' 'One man among thousands.' Only one man among thousands would obtain the right to study the Gita. But here, it doesn't say that. The Gita is for everyone. It is only that the fruit depends on the suitability of the individual. The Gita is not a *śāstra* that should only be studied by those established in this *sādhana chatuṣṭayam*. If an aspirant who is established in these qualities studies the Gita, then through the *śravaṇa*, he will experience its most primary fruit.

If others who are not like that hear the *Gita Śāstra*, then they will experience the *avantara* fruits, the side benefits. In this are the other *puruṣārthas*, such as *dharma*, *kāma*, and *artha*. He will gain these. Thus, one thing acceptable by all people is the *Gita Śāstra*. It is not only for rare and mature aspirants. This matter is stated clearly by the commentator. That's why he says, '*samasta puruṣārtha siddhi*.'

However, the chief fruit is only for the primary *adhikāri*, the most mature aspirant. Others will obtain the other *puruṣārthas*, such as *kāma*, *dharma*, and *artha*. This means that the Gita can be instructed to anyone. That is the meaning. In that way, the *Upodghāta* ends.