

## CHAPTER 12

### DIMENSIONS OF MEDITATION

#### 1. Aspects of Meditation: *Jnana, Bhakti, Karma*

Of the three paths, *jnana* (knowledge), *karma* (action), or *bhakti* (devotion), one should choose one which suits one's nature. No one of these paths is superior or inferior to the others. It is sheer ignorance to consider one's own path to be superior and those of others to be inferior. The follower of the path of knowledge begins practicing meditation through intellect, the devotee does so with the heart, and the *yogi* begins with the body. In society there are very few intellectuals, but those believing in God and duty or action (*karma*) are found in, large proportions. Under such circumstances it is natural and appropriate that those involved in worldly affairs take recourse to either the path of devotion or that of action.

Followers of the path of knowledge study books on philosophy. Devotion to God does not interest them. They do not even practice *yoga* for they believe that action results in bondage. In ancient times such people were known as *sanyasis* (renunciates of worldly life). Devotees (*bhaktas*) are not as interested in philosophical discussions as they are in God. This group still leans towards worldly enjoyments and hence *vairagya* (the spirit of non-attachment) is lacking. Nonetheless, they are certainly capable of performing *yoga* (withdrawal from possessions and social activities). They also do not consider knowledge or action to be worthless.

The followers of the path of *Karma Yoga* (action) are most interested in action. They are scientific-minded and always try to find causes and effects. They try to understand and know God from a neutral point of view. They do not accept anything as quickly as do the devotees and unlike the followers of the path of knowledge, they do not consider mere intellectual indulgence without actual experience as the proper course. Experiment is their medium and a satisfactory result is what they want to attain.

Those who believe knowledge, action, and devotion to be different are mistaken. Knowledge means learning everything about the attainment of God; devotion means the intense desire to attain God or limitless love for God; and action means the process of attaining God or *Brahma*. The sum total of all these three is *yoga*. Yes! They differ in technique but not in result.

The technique which I have shown here is the royal road to all *yogas*. This same process is known by different names, such as: *Kriya Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Siddha Yoga, Anugraha Yoga, Saktipata, Dhyana Yoga, Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Laya Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Purna Yoga, Maha Yoga, Saranagati Yoga, Niskama Karma Yoga,*

*Bhakti Yoga*, etc. Due to different ways of understanding, different names have been used. There are always differences of approach and differences of opinion.

## 2. *Jnana Yoga*

This technique of meditation is called *Jnana* or *Samkhya Yoga* by the followers of the path of knowledge. It is called *Jnana Yoga* because through it the highest state of wisdom is attained. In order to be fit for entering *Jnana Yoga*, one has to practice *Niskama Karma Yoga*. The *yogi* who attains this is called an *urdhvareta* or *rajarsi*. They have conquered two out of the three *gunas* (qualities of nature) namely *rajoguna* (passion) and *tamoguna* (inertia). This state is the first stage of *Jnana Yoga*. Thereafter, with the help of available knowledge, one completes the remaining practice of *yoga* and identifies himself with *Brahma*. A *yogi* reaching this stage is called a *jnana* or a *brahmarsi*. One is considered to have crossed over all the three *gunas* (qualities of nature) because his composure is never disturbed. *Niskama Karma Yoga* removes impurities, disturbances, and deceptions, and through that the sense organs become introvert.

In the next stage the perceptive or subtle senses become introvert. As a result the mind gets dissolved or merges into its own source, *prakrti* (nature). The *jivatman* (individual soul) merges into *paramatman* (God). *Niskama Karma Yoga* is also known as *samprajnata*, *sabija* or *savikalpa samadhi*. The stage that begins after that is known as *asamprajnata*, *nirbija*, or *nirvikalpa samadhi*.

The *jnana yogi* believes that all actions are initiated by *prakrti* (nature) and not by the *atman* (soul), which is actionless. Through this technique of meditation, this principle is *realised*. The seeker experiences in meditation that he is free and separate from the body. He remains a witness and observes all the activities of the senses. Lord *Krsna* has described this experience of meditation in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

“The sage centered in the Self should think, ‘I do nothing at all though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking; emptying, holding, opening and closing the eyes, firm in the thought that the senses move among sense objects.’<sup>1</sup>

As said in the eighth stanza, the *yogi* who knows the essence of things believes, “I do nothing at all. So I do not perform actions. Only these senses inspired by *prana* (vital air) are activated towards sense objects.” This, in short, is *samkhya darshana* (philosophy of *samkhya*).

Some followers of the path of knowledge, while in meditation, ask the question “Who am I?” and try to know who they are. Such a person thinks, “I am not the physical senses, nor am I the perceptive senses. I am not even the mind, intellect or ego. I am pure and free *atman* (soul),” but this is called *tattiyachintana* (philosophical contemplation) and not *nididhyasana* (practice of meditation). Contemplation is different from meditation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, V. 8 & 9

Contemplation is the churning of philosophical reasoning, while meditation is the actual experience of philosophical conclusions.

How is *Jnana Yoga* attained? Lord *Krsna* answers:

“He who, sitting like one unconcerned, is moved not by the qualities of nature, who, knowing that the qualities of nature operate, is firm and moves not; balanced in pleasure and pain, Self-abiding, viewing a clod of earth, a stone and gold alike; the same to agreeable and disagreeable, firm, the same in censure and praise; the same in honor and dishonor, the same to friend and foe, abandoning all undertakings he is said to have risen above the qualities of nature.”<sup>2</sup>

The one who stands this test is the *jnana yogi*.

### **3. Pranic Activity, *Jnana* and *Dhyana Yoga***

During meditation one experiences that by taking away the mind’s control over the body, various organs of the body begin to perform activities. One or both hands may begin to be lifted slowly; one or both legs are stretched without one’s will; the body bends down without one’s doing so; the head starts revolving without one’s intention; one begins to rock or tremble or sing or laugh without apparent cause; one may sleep even though one does not stay up late at night, or start performing various *asanas*, *mudras*, and *pranayamas* without having learned them. One observes all these activities during meditation with wonder. But there is nothing to wonder at. All these activities are performed due to the strengthening of *jnana*.

Ordinarily we perform actions with some purpose, but during meditation actions are performed without any purpose. A question arises: how does this happen? The answer is that the entire physical organization of the body works under the control of the mind. But the mind itself does not do any activity. It orders *prana* (vital air) to follow its wishes. During meditation, the mind’s control over the body is lifted. As a result, *prana* becomes free. *Prana*, then, becomes the guardian and the operator of the body. So, without paying attention to the orders of the mind, *prana* makes the body perform various activities in order to protect it. Physical organs perform actions without one’s will during meditation. A person watching the scene would believe that one is purposefully doing these activities, but one’s own experience is different. This is called *akarma* (inaction) in *karma* (action). The seeker undergoing such experiences is called a *puṇakarmakṛt* (one performing complete actions) and also “wise among men” by Lord *Krsna*:

“He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is wise among men, he is a *yogi* and accomplisher of everything.”<sup>3</sup>

Have you ever seen a delirious person? He also acts this way. But his activities are the result of disease, while those done during meditation are the result of *yoga*. The delirious

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., XIV, 23-25.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., IV, 18.

person lifts the mind's control over his body unknowingly, and hence he is unable to stop the activity of *prana*. But a seeker practicing meditation is able to reestablish the control of the mind over the body at will and hence the uncontrolled activity of *prana* comes to a stop. *Yogis* term the process of meditation *sahaja* (natural) *yoga*. The scriptures tell of *sahaja samadhi*:

“It is not possible to get rid of sensual indulgence and to realize the Essence or Truth; it is equally impossible to attain *sahajavastha* (state of *sahaja samadhi*) without the grace of the *guru*.”<sup>4</sup>

Through this *Dhyana Yoga* the seeker gets rid of sensual indulgence and becomes an *urdhvareta*. But it is not easy, to become an *urdhvareta*. It is extremely difficult. It is through *Dhyana Yoga* that self-realization is possible. But only a bold seeker reaches that stage. After years of regular practice of *Dhyana Yoga*, the activities of *prana* become so natural that the *yogi* remains in *samadhi* under any condition. All this is not dependent on the untiring efforts of the seeker; it is the result of the grace of an all powerful *guru*. During *sabija samadhi*, the seeker lifts the mind's control over the body, and during *nirbija samadhi*, one lifts the *atman*'s control over the mind. Thus the mind exists during *sabija samadhi* but not during *nirbija samadhi*.

Some observers of *saktipata* initiation retreats believe that the participants begin performing various actions under the effect of hypnotism and that they are feeble-minded. But such a belief shows only ignorance. A hypnotist, through suggestive sleep, brings the medium under his control. In *Dhyana Yoga* the *guru* keeps the seeker conscious and independent. Yes! At times the seeker does slip into *tandra* (*yogic* drowsiness) or *nidra* (*yogic* sleep). But the cause of this is not the *guru* but the strengthened *prana* of the seeker oneself. In hypnotism, the medium is incapable of doing anything through his own will. In *Dhyana Yoga* the seeker begins as well as ends the meditation through his own will. Not only that, but after entering *Dhyana Yoga* by the grace of the *guru*, he can even meditate independently (i.e., without the presence of the *guru*).

Having practiced this sort of meditation, some seekers complain that their mind remains busy observing bodily activities in the earlier stages of meditation, but afterwards it is no longer interested in these activities. As a result, the body goes on doing various activities, while the mind is roaming elsewhere.

This is true. Under such circumstances, the seeker must try to keep his mind busy observing and understanding the physical and esoteric aspects of these bodily activities. If this is not possible, one should observe the thoughts as a mere witness without being moved by them. It should not be forgotten that in meditation one is detaching the mind from the body and the former has no control over the latter. It is true that the mind is carried away by the stream of thoughts, but it is equally true that one is in a state of meditation. When meditation takes the form of habit, it is automatically performed, and along with it one can take to secondary meditation (*gauna dhyana*). Once having learned

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<sup>4</sup> *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, 4:9

to cycle one has the experience of cycling through a main street crowded with people and at the same time talking with one's companion. It is but natural that an idle mind gets tired of observing physical activities and begins to roam elsewhere. But one need not be disheartened by that. Sometimes a horse is allowed to graze in a field while it is tied with a long rope. The condition of the seekers roaming mind during meditation is similar to that of this horse.

The follower of the path of knowledge has to observe the activities of his mind, his body, and *prana* as a mere witness, and has to steadily contemplate the fact that he is unpolluted *atman* and beyond them all. It is common that the seeker's mind becomes introvert while in meditation, but it can be said to be firmly established only when it continues to remain introvert even when one is not in meditation. Moreover, this introversion should be based on the realization of the Essence and not upon its contemplation. Through the regular practice of this *dhyana*, (meditation), the seeker attains the constant meditative state. As a result, one experiences self-realization, Lord *Krsna* says:

“Constancy in Self knowledge, perception of the end of the knowledge of Truth; this is declared to be knowledge, and what is opposed to it is ignorance.”<sup>5</sup>

This *dhyana* is a very simple and unailing technique of God-realization. In it, the seeker experiences that they are not the body, senses, mind, intellect or ego. Therefore their actions are the result of *prakrti* (nature). This is clarified by Lord *Krsna* as follows:

“He verily sees (*pasyati*) who sees that all actions are done by *prakrti* alone and that the *atman* is, actionless.”<sup>6</sup>

In this stanza, *pasyati* is a Sanskrit verb meaning ‘sees.’ It is appropriate, but in order to make it more clear, it can be translated as ‘experiences’ or ‘realizes.’ This experience is helpful in God-realization, as Lord *Krsna*, says:

“When the seer perceives no agent (who performs all actions) other than the qualities of nature and knows what is higher than these qualities, he merges into My Being.”<sup>7</sup>

A follower of the path of knowledge should practice this meditation regularly and should also study the *Upanishads*, *Brahma Sutra*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Srimad Bhagavata*, and other books on *yoga*. When one at last feels that *Bhakti Yoga* and *Karma Yoga* are no different from *Jnana Yoga*, it should be understood that their sense of non-duality has been firmly established and that they have attained knowledge.

#### **4. Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Dhyana Yoga**

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<sup>5</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, XIII,II

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII, 29.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV, 19.

So far, we have observed the nature of *Dhyana Yoga*, considering it to be the process of *Jnana Yoga* or *Samkhya Yoga*. Now let us look at its nature considering it as the process of *Bhakti Yoga*.

This *dhyana* (meditation) is known by devotees as *Bhakti Yoga*, *Prapatti Yoga*, *Saranagati Yoga*, *Buddhi, Yoga, and Anugraha Yoga*. Other *yogas* like *Mantra Yoga*, *Nada Yoga*, *Laya Yoga*, etc., are included in it. In *Jnana Yoga*, the seeker has a feeling of being the *swami* (master) while in *Bhakti Yoga* they have the feeling of being the *sevak* (servant). A servant acts only to serve the master; so another term for *Bhakti Yoga* is *Niskama Karma Yoga*. *Bhakti* is of two types: *sakama* (with motivation) and *niskama* (without motivation). *Sakama bhakti*, although it is the more basic of the two, keeps the *bhakta* a *sansari* (a worldly person) and *niskama bhakti* makes them a true *sanyasis* (one who has renounced worldly life). *Niskama bhakti* is also of two types: *apara* (lower) *bhakti* and *para* (higher) *bhakti*. *Apara bhakti* is also known as *samprajnata*, *sabija* or *savikalpa samadhi* and *para bhakti* is also called *asamprajnata*, *nirbija* or *nirvikalpa samadhi*. The end result of any *yoga* is complete control over the vagaries of the mind. *Samadhi* is this control.

There are two main states of mental control: *ekagrata* (concentration) and *samadhi*. Although *ekagrata* is included in *samadhi*, during this stage only the *rajasic* and *tamasic* (passionate and inert) characteristics of the mind are controlled. Hence it is considered to be *samadhi* of a lower order. Only complete control of the mind (i.e. control of the *rajasic*, *tamasic* and *sattvic* qualities of the mind) is called *nirbija samadhi*. There the mind loses its existence. This state is the final limit of *Jnana*, *Bhakti*, and *Karma Yoga*. Followers of the path of knowledge believe in *Brahman*<sup>8</sup> (the unmanifested absolute). This same *Brahman* is known as *purusottama* (Supreme Being) by devotees. Followers of the path of knowledge try to observe thoughts arising during meditation as mere witnesses. Devotees contemplate new thoughts so as not to permit undesired thoughts to arise. By attaching emotion to these new thoughts, *dhyana* becomes very easy. Devotees believe that God is the sum total of the parts and *jiva* (*atman*) is a part. The *jnani* believes that nature acts and the *bhakta* believes that God acts; but both believe themselves to be *akarma* (actionless). Devotees obey the orders of God. Lord *Krsna* says:

Verily this divine illusion of Mine, made up of the qualities of nature, is hard to surmount; but those who take refuge in Me alone, they cross over this illusion.<sup>9</sup>

What is described here as the divine illusion made up of qualities and hard to cross over is what the *jnani*s call nature with its three qualities: *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*. And that is the *shakti* (divine power) of God. Devotees, therefore, surrender themselves to God in order to overcome this nature. The Lord himself orders one to resort to such surrender. This order is *isvaranugraha* (the grace of God). That is why devotees call this *Dhyana Anugraha Yoga*. In the *Bhagavad Gita* there is a reference to this ‘grace of God’:

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<sup>8</sup> *Brahman* cannot be expressed in terms of ‘being’ or ‘nonbeing.’ It is beyond the reach of the mind and the senses. The *Vedas* declare that it is without attribute, activity, parts or attachments. It is transcendental and unmanifested Absolute.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, 14.

“To them, ever devout, worship Me with love;

I give the *yoga* of discrimination by which they come to Me.

Out of pure compassion for them, dwelling in their hearts, I destroy the ignorant - born darkness, by the luminous lamp of wisdom.”<sup>10</sup>

Here the Lord says, “I bestow *Buddhi Yoga*.” That knowledge or wisdom is known by the *jnanis* as *viveka* (discrimination), *sattvic buddhi*, *niscayatmika buddhi*, or *suddha prajna* (pure wisdom). Devotees call it is *isvaranugraha* (grace of God), *isvarasrqaya prapti* or *divya caksu* (divine vision). Through it they visualize God in various forms. Lord *Krsna*, tells *Arjuna* in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

“But you cannot see Me with these eyes of yours;  
I give you divine sight; behold My Supreme *Yoga*.”<sup>11</sup>

It is quite appropriate that devotees call this attainment of divine vision *isvaranugraha* (grace of God). It is not possible to attain it through mere efforts. Those practicing *gayatri* are always praying only for the attainment of this *vishuddha buddhi* (pure wisdom).

God is a whole made up of parts and *jiva* (individual soul) is a part; hence both are connected with each other. A ray of sun, appearing to be separate from the sun, is not separate from it, as its origin is in the sun. Similarly, an individual soul, appearing to be separate from God, is not separate from Him, as its origin is in God. *Jiva* (individual Soul) and *Siva* (Lord) both reside in the same body. But *jiva*, a being under the bondage of the senses, is dependent, while *Siva*, being free from bondage, is independent. In other words, it can be said that *jiva* is controlled by nature, which in turn is controlled by *Siva*. So that the devotee does not have to roam about here and there but can reach Him easily, the Lord has shown the way to His abode:

“Oh *Arjuna*! The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings and by His illusive power causes all beings to revolve as though mounted on a machine. Oh *Bharata*! Seek refuge in Him with all thy being; by His grace thou shalt obtain supreme peace and everlasting abode.”<sup>12</sup>

### **a) *Saranagati***

What resistance can a straw offer when it is carried away in the heavy floods of a river during monsoon? With what support can it reach a safe place on the bank? Under such conditions, there is no alternative to *saranagati* (complete surrender). It is not possible to experience real *saranagati* merely by hearing sermons from saints or studying scriptures. *Saranagati* is one of the most difficult stages in *yoga*. Until this stage is attained, the real nature of it cannot be understood. On

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., X, 10 & 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., XI, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., XVIII, 61 & 62.

confronting this stage, even great *yogis* give up the refuge of God and surrender helplessly to nature. When the seeker reaches that stage through the practice of meditation, he finds himself in an extremely helpless position. Yet, they still have the strong determination that he wants to conquer *rajoguna* (passion) and *tamoguna* (inertia) and eliminate physical and mental impurities. But when he so often gets defeated by the qualities of nature, he takes refuge in the Lord dwelling in the heart and courageously wages war against them. Nothing in this world distresses the seeker more than the instincts of sex, anger, etc. In spite of this, brave, aspiring seekers do not budge an inch against nature. They keep faith in God, the Lord of nature, and seek refuge in Him.

The great sage, *Vishvamitra*, performed hard penance. But when he reached a very difficult stage of *Samprajnata Yoga*, the beautiful queen *Menaka* confronted him. The strong flow of animal spirit dragged away even his hard penance. From a *yogi* he became a *bhogi* (one involved in sensual enjoyments) and *Sakuntala* was born. *Menaka* brought before her Master his daughter, who was like a beautiful idol of attachment. Due to previous pious deeds *Vishvamitra* was reminded of his *sadhana* (spiritual practice). He awoke from his illusion and experience great shame. Thus he made a strong resolve to become an *urdhvareta* by conquering the animal spirit. Lord *Krsna* has pointed out this difficult stage in *yoga*:

“The excited senses, Oh son of *Kunti*, impetuously carry away the mind of even a wise man, striving for perfection.”<sup>13</sup>

The ‘wise man’ mentioned in this stanza is not any ordinary person; he is the same *purnakarmakrt yogi* (one performing all actions in entirety), wise among men, as mentioned in Chapter IV, stanza 18, of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Here the strength of nature is depicted.

Again in Chapter 18, stanza 62, of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the power of the Almighty is depicted when Arjuna is told to seek refuge in Him in order to obtain supreme peace and the everlasting abode. A child while learning to walk often falls down. But that fall only makes him fit to rise. In the same way, when the seeker is practicing meditation upon *muladhara* and *svadhastana chakras*, he is hurled down in spite of his hard endeavor. Only then does he realise the feebleness of his endeavor and the strength of nature. At that time the grace of the *guru* comes to his rescue and induces him to accept the *saranagati* of the Lord.

The seeker is then reminded of the promise given by Lord *Krsna*:

“Fix your mind on Me; be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me; prostrate before Me; so shall you come to Me. This is My pledge to you, for you are dear to Me.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., II, 60.

Renounce all *dharmas* and take refuge in Me alone. I shall liberate you from all sins; grieve not.”<sup>14</sup>

In the above stanza the word ‘sin’ is used. What is this ‘sin’? Does the ‘sin’ not spare even the seeker? Is it so strong that it can fearlessly invade even the sacred place where penance is performed and hurl down a *tapasvi* (one who performs penance)? The answer to this is that *papa* (sin) is the fall and *punya* (the good deed) is the rise or elevation. The strength of *rajoguna* (passion) and *tamoguna* (inertia) is the cause of sin and the strength of *sattva guna* (purity) is the cause *punya* (good deeds). Therefore, Lord *Krsna* says:

“Those who are fixed in *sattva* (purity) go upwards; the *rajasicas* (those with passion) remain in the middle; and the *tamasicas* (those with inertia), abiding in the lowest quality of Nature, go downwards.”<sup>15</sup>

Sins stand along the road leading to God. Therefore, those treading this path have to fight it out with sin. In other words, they have to conquer *rajoguna* (passion) and *tamoguna* (inertia). When *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* are totally annihilated and only *sattva guna* (purity) is left, *samprajnata samadhi* is perpetuated. Lord *Krsna* says:

“But the disciplined *yogi*, moving among objects with the senses under control, and free from attraction and aversion, gains in peacefulness. In peacefulness, all his sorrow is destroyed. For the intellect of the tranquil-minded is soon anchored in equilibrium.”<sup>16</sup>

## **b) Knowledge Hidden by Sensuality**

Raga and *dvesa* (attachments and aversions) are mental impurities. Since the body and the mind are closely connected, physical impurities affect mental purity and mental impurities affect physical purity. If *rajoguna* (passions) and *tamoguna* (inertia) are not destroyed through this process of meditation, sensuality does not become extinct and the *yogi* is not able to become an *urdhvareta*. Until then, the *yogi* is not called *atmajeta* (conqueror of the self). When the *yogi* acquires *sattvaguna* in abundance through *sadhana* (spiritual practice), he attains *rtambhara prajna* (the highest wisdom) and *apara vairagya* (state of detachment). The word ‘peace’ (*prasada*) used in the foregoing stanzas signifies the removal of the screen of illusion covering the intellect (*buddhi*). Devotees know this *prasada* (peace) as *anugraha* (grace).

*Jnana* (knowledge) is hidden by *kama* (sensuality). When sensuality is conquered, knowledge shines unthwarted. In other words, on reaching this stage, the *yogi*

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., XVIII, 65 & 66.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., XIV, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., II, 64 & 65.

attains (the highest wisdom). During this peaceful meditation, the mind becomes introvert and ultimately gets dissolved in its own source, *prakṛti* (nature).

When *samprajñata samādhi* or *apara bhakti* is perpetual, all miseries are completely destroyed because the causes of all miseries are *rajoguna*. They are the origin of all sins. Therefore, on perpetuation of *samprajñata samādhi*, the *yogi* with only *sattvaguna* (purity) attains everlasting happiness or bliss. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* mentioned the attainment of *samprajñata samādhi* through *asamprajñata samādhi* thus:

“Supreme Bliss verily comes to that *yogi*, whose mind is calm, whose passions are pacified, who has become one with *Brahman* and who is sinless. Constantly engaging the mind this way, the *yogi* who has put away sin, attains with ease the infinite bliss of contact with *Brahman*.”<sup>17</sup>

The follower of the path of knowledge, after beginning meditation, says, “I have lifted the mind’s control over the body,” while the devotee begins meditation and says, “I have surrendered my body to the Lord and have sought refuge in Him. All activities performed during meditation are not done voluntarily by me, but I act as the Lord desires me to do. The Lord is my master, guide, *guru*, and protector. Attainment of the Lord is the only goal of my spiritual practice.”

The follower of the path of knowledge considers all activities performed during meditation to be the play of nature. The devotee believes them to be acts of the Lord. As devotees progress in meditation, they gradually become fit for the grace of God, and at an auspicious moment, receive it. Without profound devotion (i.e. *niskama bhakti* or *para bhakti*) one can never have the vision of the Lord in His cosmic form. This is specifically told by Lord *Kṛṣṇa*:

“Very hard it is, indeed, to see this form of Mine which you have seen. Even the *Devas* (Gods) are very eager to see this form.

Neither by the Vedas, nor by austerity, nor by gift, nor by sacrifice can, I be seen in this form as you have seen Me.

But by unswerving devotion can I, of this form, be known and seen in reality and also entered into, Oh scorcher of foes. He who does work for Me, who looks on Me as the Supreme, who is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment, who is without hatred for any being, he comes to Me, Oh *Pandava* (*Arjuna*).<sup>18</sup>

It is not that the devotee, after obtaining divine vision, visualizes only the cosmic form of the Lord during meditation. They also see the *lilas* (divine play) of *Siva* and *Shakti*. Do not think that after leaving this meditation you will be able to

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., VI, 27 & 28.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., XI, 52-55.

visualize this eternal play of the Lord within three days, three months, or three years. If you think this, you will be disappointed. Leave all that to the will of God. You have to give up the desire for the result and be engaged persistently in the practice of meditation, the service of the Lord. Lord *Krsna* himself has spoken of when a person attains God:

“But the yogi; striving with perseverance, purified from sins and perfected after many births, reaches the supreme goal.”<sup>19</sup>

At the end of many births, the man of wisdom takes refuge in Me, realizing that *Vasudeva* (Lord *Krsna*) is all that is. Rare indeed is that great soul.”<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Karma Yoga and Dhyana Yoga

Now let us see, in short, the nature of this *Dhyana Yoga*, considering it to be the process of *Kriya Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, *Niskarma Karma Yoga*, *Hatha Yoga*, *Kundalini Yoga*, *Siddha Yoga*, or *Pranopasana*.

On *Atmasamyama Yoga* (the yoga of self-subdual), Lord *Krsna* says:

“*Karma* (action) is said to be the means of the sage who seeks to attain yoga; serenity is said to be the means when he has attained *yoga*.”<sup>21</sup>

The meaning of the above sermon of the Lord is that the seeker who is just a beginner should first of all try to make the physical senses introvert by resorting to karma (action). Those who have already made them introvert and have ascended to yoga should try to make the perceptive senses introvert by taking recourse to the mind.

Experienced masters of the *Karma Yoga* give much importance to *yoga* techniques and *yoga* action. They believe that if *sakama karma* (action with motivation) is the cause of bondage, *niskama karma* (action without motivation) must be the cause of liberation. Lord *Krsna* is also the great master of *yoga*. He is *jagad guru* (i.e. the *guru* of the whole universe). He also substantiates this very principle thus:

“The world is bound by action unless performed for the sake of sacrifice; Oh son of *Kunti* (*Arjuna*), therefore perform action free from attachment. *Janaka* and others indeed achieved perfection by action; having an eye to the guidance of men also you should perform action.”<sup>22</sup>

It has already been mentioned that the practitioner of *Karma Yoga* takes the scientific approach and hence does not accept any principle without experimentation. One can enter into this *Karma Yoga* in two ways: through *saktipata* or the grace of the *guru* or with the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., IV, 45.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., VIII, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., VI, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., III, 9 & 20.

help of yogic scriptures. If the seeker enters through the grace of the *guru*, they don't have to learn the eight-fold aspects of *yoga* from anybody. All these aspects are automatically generated in their body.

As shown in the *yogic* scriptures, these eight-fold aspects of *yoga* are: *yama* (restraint of the senses), *niyama* (moral rules), *asana* (postures), *pranayama* (breath control), *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and *samadhi* (state of bliss). The first two of these, *yama* and *niyama*, are included since they are considered very important for the preservation or protection of *yoga*. By reading the description of these aspects from the scriptures or by learning them from a *guru* who has not reached the higher stage of *yoga*, one can, through practice, enter into *yoga*; but at every moment he will be afraid of disease or death. That is why the scriptures have instructed that one should begin the practice of *yoga* only after receiving guidance and blessings from a proper *guru*.

When the seeker who has received the grace of the *guru* is doing meditation, he observes every activity of his own body with great interest and micro-analyzes the causes and effects of these activities. While doing so, he completely forgets the outside world. After scientific observation of his *sadhana* (spiritual practice) he looks to the main principle of *bhakti* (love for God) and the main principle of *jnana* (information about principles) and tries to determine their places in *Karma Yoga*. Having found this out, he dances for joy. He does not find any contradiction or difference between *jnana* (knowledge), *bhakti* (devotion) and *karma* (action). The follower of the path of knowledge, the devotee and the follower of the path of action are all doing the same type of spiritual practice, but their points of view are different. The *jnani* gives importance to pure feelings and the yogi emphasizes scientific experience. *Jnana Yoga* can never be attained without first removing impurities, disturbances, and the veil of duality through *Karma Yoga*. One who has studied scripture knows the Essence but has not realized the Essence. Knowledge of the Essence (*tattva jnana*) can be attained through Scripture but realization of the Essence (*tattva darshana*) is possible only through *yoga*. That is why Lord *Krsna* showed these two characteristics of the *guru*: *jnana* (knower of the Essence) and *tattva darsi* (seer of the Essence):

..The Wise, Who have realized the Essence, will instruct you in knowledge.<sup>23</sup>

However learned a person may be in scripture, he cannot be called *jnani* if his body and mind are ruled by *rajoguna*.

An unlighted lamp can be called a lamp, but it cannot remove darkness. Only a lighted lamp can emanate light. Similarly, only the *jnani* purified by penance can impart true knowledge.

Lord *Krsna* says:

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., IV, 34.

“Verily there is no purifier in this world like knowledge. He that is perfected in yoga realizes it in his heart in due time.”<sup>24</sup>

## 5. Liberation: Before and After Death

Liberation is of two types; *Krama mukti* (liberation by stages) and *sadyo mukti* (immediate liberation). One class of *yogi* believes that *sadyo mukti* is the real liberation. This question requires consideration from another angle. After the removal of impurities, disturbances, and the veil of duality, the old cells of the body of the *urdhvareta yogi* are destroyed and replaced by new cells. Such a body purified by penance is known by *yogis* as *divya sarira* (divine body) or the body purified by *yogic* fire (*yogagni*). At that time the (old) body possessing *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* is already destroyed. Thus the *yogi* gives up the old body without death and assumes the new body. That is called *jiva mukti* (liberation during one’s lifetime). It is only through this body that *nirbija samadhi* can be attained. Lord *Krsna* has shown how *divya purusa* or *purusottama* (the supreme being) is attained:

“He attains that divine supreme *Purusa* (being) who, at the time of forth going, with unshaken mind and fixed in devotion draws the vital air (*prana*) thoroughly in the middle of the eyebrows by the power of yoga.”<sup>25</sup>

‘The time of forthgoing’ (*prayanakala*) that is mentioned in this stanza relates to *samprajnata samadhi*; because the *yogis* mind can be steadfast only after reaching that state. Steadfastness of mind is impossible during ordinary death. One stage of *yoga* is called “the passage of death” (*mrtyu ghati*) by the *yogis*. When a *yogi* crosses over this ‘death pass’ he becomes an *urdhvareta* and attains divine body. In the above stanza Lord *Krshna* says to draw and stabilize *prana* (vital air) in the middle of the eyebrows (*bhrumadhya*). This also suggests the time to “forthgoing” (*pranayama*) pertaining to *samprajnata samadhi*. No one, except a *yogi*, can stabilize *prana* like this voluntarily. In this same chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* it is shown that the, *yogi*, meditating with *kechhari mudra* (the tongue is made to stand erect in the passage behind the uvula, in the upper palate), gives up the old body and having attained the new body, reaches the highest state of liberation.

*Karma Yogis* also should read and ponder the scriptures on *jnana* (knowledge), *karma* (action), and *upasana*, (spiritual practices) with faith. True knowledge can be said to have been attained only when these three elements are found automatically combined. Finally, I would remind the *jnani*, *bhakta*, and *yogi* of one commandment of Lord *Krsna* from the *Bhagavad Gita*:

“Fix your mind on Me; be devoted to Me; sacrifice unto Me; bow down to Me. Having thus made yourself steadfast in Me, taking Me as the Supreme Goal, you will come to Me.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., IV, 38.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., VIII, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., IX, 34.

OH LORD, LEAD US  
From Illusion to Reality  
From Darkness to Light  
From Death to Immortality