

# Bhagavad Gītā

5: Dhyāna Yoga & Parallels to *Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras*

10.8.19

© 2019 Robert Lindsey

# Learning Objectives

- Familiarity with how terms related to *yoga* are being used
- Familiarity with different interpretative possibilities, specifically that of Sankara and Rāmānuja
- Understanding of the prescriptions for meditation practice
- Familiarity with comparative language and concepts from *Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras*
- Familiarity with outcomes for the unsuccessful yogi

# Chapter 6 Overview

- 1-2: Yoga synthesis
- 3-4 Means for yoga [goal]
- 5-9 Mind of the yogī
- 10-20: Meditative process
- 18-32: yogī & yoga defined
- 33-4: Arjuna's counterpoint
- 35-6: Means for attaining yoga: abhyāsa, vairāgya, yatna
- 37-45: What happens to the unsuccessful yogī
- 46-7: Be a yogī

# Review of Key Concepts

- Sāṃkhya Metaphysics (dualistic)
  - Puruṣa: person, ātman, self, consciousness
  - Prakṛti (matter)
- Karma = action
- Saṃsāra = mundane cycle of birth & death, transmigration
- Mokṣa = liberation/release
  - Permanent release from the cycle of birth and death.

# Review: Yoga in Ch.2

- 2.47-50: Yoga defined
  - 47: act without attachment to outcomes
  - 48: yoga is evenness of mind
  - 49: buddhi yoga supersedes ordinary action
  - 50: yoga is skill in action
  - 51: Outcome: release from bondage of rebirth
- This understanding of yoga (karma yoga) continues through chapter five

## 2 Paths: Ch. 3-5

- Jñāna yoga for the followers of sāṃkhya
- Karma yoga for the yogis
- 5.2: Kṛṣṇa: both paths lead to ultimate welfare but karma yoga is superior
- Commentary
  - R: 2 paths based on qualification (intelligence agitated by sense objects). Selfless action purifies and thus qualifies for knowledge. Both paths liberate.
  - S: no combination of knowledge & action. Knowledge only to be taken up by renunciates. Only knowledge liberates.

# Meditation Introduced: 5.27-9

- Meditation 5.27-8
- R:
  - Karma yoga culminates in meditation
  - Final goal: vision of self
- 5.29 Realization of the meditator
  - R: Karma yoga is worship of Kṛṣṇa. Attains peace even while performing karma yoga.
  - S: peace = cessation of samsāra

# Chapter 6 Overview

- 1-2: Yoga synthesis
- 3-4 Means for yoga [goal]
- 5-9 Mind of the yogī
- 10-20: Meditative process
- 18-32: yogī & yoga defined
- 33-4: Arjuna's counterpoint
- 35-6: Means for attaining yoga: abhyāsa, vairāgya, yatna
- 37-45: What happens to the unsuccessful yogī
- 46-7: Be a yogī

# 1: Yoga Synthesis

- New paradigm: work without expectation for result = yogī & renouncer
- Critique on renouncers
- R
  - Vedic reference: expected fruit of action is heaven
  - Work is focus b/c it is form of worship of supreme person
  - Renouncer = follower of jñāna yoga
  - Yogī = follower of karma yoga
  - Combination is means to meditation leading to vision of the self
  - Critique on followers of solely jñāna yoga
- S
  - The person of action described is unique among persons of action
  - Yogī is one of concentrated mind whose practice is meditation

## 2: Yoga Synthesis cont.

- Renunciation [of expectation for result] = Yoga
- Pre-requisite for yogī = renouncing desire [for result]
- R
  - Combination: yoga (= karma yoga) = renunciation (jñāna yoga)
  - Yogī: what is renounced is identification with the body as the self (sāṃkhya)
- S
  - Similarity between karma yoga and real renunciation—giving up all actions and their results—is the agent's sense of renunciation
  - Karma yoga is praised as renunciation because it aides dhyāna (meditation)
  - In renouncing results—the cause of mental distraction—the practitioner of karma yoga becomes a yogī with a steady mind

# 3: Means for Yoga

- Action is the means for yoga [renunciation of desire for result] for the aspirant
- Tranquility is the means for one who has attained yoga
- R
  - Karma yoga is the means for the aspirant
  - Yoga is vision of the self
  - Tranquility = freedom from action
  - Person should perform action until there is vision of the self
  - Liberation is after death of the body for one who has a vision of the self
- S
  - Yoga = dhyāna yoga
  - Karma yoga is helpful for the aspirant of dhyāna yoga

# 4: Means for Yoga cont.

- Attainment of Yoga
  - No attachment to sense objects
  - No attachment to action
  - Renounced all desire
- R
  - The aspirant—who still is disposed to sense objects—wishing to attain yoga should perform karma yoga: practice of detachment to these objects
  - Karma yoga is the means to yoga: vision of the self
- S
  - When one gives up all desires, renunciation of all action follows

## 5-6: Mind as Friend or Enemy

- *Ātman* seems to be used in sense of self and in sense of mind/intellect
- R:
  - mind alone is the friend of the self (in causing liberation) and the foe of the self (in causing bondage in *samsāra*)
  - “sinking” is allusion to ocean of *samsāra*
  - Attachment of the mind to sense objects is the cause of sinking

# 7-9: Equipoised mind of the yogī

- 7: One with conquered mind is poised in the face of opposites
  - S: One who has control over aggregate of body and its senses
- 8: Yogī is indifferent to manifold dimensions of prakṛti
  - R: karma yogī is satisfied in knowledge of the self and its distinction with prakṛti
  - S: vijñāna is realization of what is known by the scriptures
- 9: equal vision
  - R: self is only end in yoga and person of equal vision sees others as ātma (rather than prakṛti)

# Meditative Process: Place & Possessions

- 10: In solitude & without possessions (aparigrah)
  - R: the practitioner of karma yoga should practice concentration daily for a vision of the self
    - Solitary: devoid of crowd, noise, and even a second person
    - Without possession: without idea of “mine” with regard to anything but the self
  - S: yogī: person of meditation
    - Solitary place (i.e. mountain caves) and alone indicate the meditative yogī has already become a renouncer
- Yoga Sūtra: aparigrah (II.30)
  - One of the five yamas (restraints) in addition to non-violence, truthfulness, refrainment from stealing, and celibacy that collectively are the universal great vow, not exempted by time, place, and circumstance
  - Vyāsa: not accepting things due to seeing the defects in their acquisition, protection, and decay and in being attached to them.

# Meditative Process: Seat

- 11: sthiram āsanam: steady seat
- Yoga Sūtra: āsana (II.46)
  - Sthira-sukham āsanam
  - Vyāsa: cites eleven specific seated postures, etc. (padmāsana, vīrāsana...)

# Meditative Process: Single object

- 12: ekāgra: fixing one's attention upon one object
  - R: practice of yoga = practice concentration for vision of the self in order to end bondage
- Yoga Sūtra I.32: eka-tattva-abhyāsa (practice of one object)
  - Vyāsa: In order to remove distractions, the yogī should practice concentrating the mind on a single entity as support

# Meditative Process

- 13: Body positioning
  - S: not literally gazing at the tip of the nose but fixing the gaze of the eyes internally in concentration on the self and therefore withdrawing them from external objects
- 14: Sit
- 14: Vow of celibacy (brahmacārya)
- Yoga Sūtra: brahmacārya (II.30)
  - One of the five yamas (restraints) in addition to non-violence, truthfulness, refrainment from stealing, and renunciation of possessions that collectively are the universal great vow, not exempted by time, place, and circumstance
  - Vyāsa: control of the hidden sense organ of generation

# Meditative Process cont.

- 14: controlling the mind
  - S: by stopping the modifications of the mind
  - Yoga Sūtra 1.2: stopping the modifications of the mind
- 14: Mind fixed on me (Kṛṣṇa)
  - R: remain concentrating on Kṛṣṇa alone
  - S: Kṛṣṇa who is the supreme god
- 14: performing yoga holding me (Kṛṣṇa) as highest object
  - S: Kṛṣṇa is the meditative object and the goal

# Consequence: Liberation

- 15: always practicing yoga
  - Yoga Sūtra I.14: abhyāsa is established when it is uninterrupted, for a long time, and with respect
- 15: yogī of subdued mind attains liberation (nirvāṇa), which is union with me
  - R: Kṛṣṇa, i.e. the supreme Brahman, the supreme person, the auspicious object of meditation. Mind becomes steady because it is purified through contact with Kṛṣṇa.

# Meditative Process cont.

- 16-17: Moderation
  - R: Also opposed to yoga are excessive recreation or non-recreation and overwork or idleness
- 17: Yoga destroys duḥkha (suffering)
  - R: yoga unites bondage (of samsāra)

# **Yogī: one with controlled mind**

- 18: yogī abides in the self with controlled mind
  - R: on account of discerning the unsurpassable good in the self alone rather than sense enjoyments
- 19: yogī is one whose mind is controlled
  - R: self remains with its steadily illuminating light because all other activities of the mind have stopped
- 20: Mind is quiet/terminates [thought] by yoga
  - S: by the mind purified by concentration
  - Yoga Sūtra I.2-3: Yoga is the stilling of the changing states of mind. When that is accomplished, the seer abides in its own nature.

# Characteristics of the accomplished yogī

- 20: content in the self
- 21: established in that beyond the senses, no deviation from truth
  - S: established beyond the senses: not objective, but subjective experience
- 22: not moved by sorrow

# Yoga Defined

- 23: Yoga is the dissolution of the union with duḥkha (suffering)
  - R: one is delighted with the self and indifferent to all other objects. This state delivers overwhelming happiness, which one experiences
- 23: Yoga is practiced with resolve
  - S: with a heart that is free from depression
  - R: with zest and exaltation
- 25: gradual process
  - Yoga Sūtra I.14: abhyāsa is established when it is uninterrupted, for a long time, and with respect
- 25: no thoughts as mind is fixed on the self
  - S: the mind fixed on the self with the idea that the self alone is all there is; there is nothing other than it

# 26-8: Yogī attains Brahman

- 26 restrain the flickering mind
  - S: In the beginning, it is important to restrain the wandering mind from sounds and other sense objects. Restrain it through the discernment that those causes of flickering are mere appearances.
  - R: contemplate on the incomparable bliss of the self
- 27: supreme happiness
  - R: peaceful mind = whose rajas and impurities are destroyed
  - S: peaceful mind = whose rajas and its ensuing defects such as delusion are eliminated
  - R: becoming Brahman = remaining steady in the nature of ātman, which has the form of supreme bliss
  - S: becoming Brahman = has attained the certainty that Brahman is all there is
- 28: endless happiness
  - S: result of yoga is realization of identity with Brahman and cessation of samsāra
  - R: Brahman = ātman

# 29-32: Yogī's Vision

- 29: Equality everywhere
  - R:
    - Inequalities pertain only to prakṛti, i.e. bodies
    - Yogī sees that all ātmans are the same
    - all beings in the self: all living beings have the same form as one's own ātman
- 30-1 Kṛṣṇa equating himself with ātman
  - S: idea is the yogī is not obstructed from liberation by anything
  - R: Kṛṣṇa does not become invisible to the yogī
  - R: yogī views the similarity of himself with Kṛṣṇa and all living beings
- 32: equipoised in pleasure and pain
  - R: self is unrelated to the pain and pleasures of the mind-body.
  - R/S: makes no distinction between one's own pleasure and pain and that of other living beings
  - Yoga Sūtra II.3, 7-8: obstacles to meditative absorption: attachment stemming from sukhā and aversion stemming from duḥkha

# 33-4: Arjuna's Counterpoint

- 33: Arjuna does not perceive this yoga of equanimity on account of the flickering [of the mind]
  - R: Arjuna does not see how this is possible given the nature of the mind
- 34: Mind is like the wind
  - R: means for the restraint of the mind should be explained further

# 35-36: Means of attaining of Yoga

- 35: abhyāsa (practice) & vairāgya (dispassion)
  - R: cultivate favorable attitude to self based on its auspicious attributes (eternity, luminosity, bliss, freedom from karma, etc.) and seeing the detrimental qualities in objects other than the self
  - S: vairāgya: absence of hankering for desirable things that are seen or unseen as a result of discerning their defects
- 36: Through effort (yat) with controlled mind
  - R: Subdued mind = that which is first purified by karma yoga, which is the nature of Kṛṣṇa worship and which contains jñāna
- Yoga Sūtra:
  - 1.2: Yoga is the stilling of the changing states of mind
  - 1.12: [These changing states of mind] are stilled by *abhyāsa* and *vairagya*
  - 1.13 From these, practice is the effort (*yatna*) to be fixed in concentrating the mind

# 37: What happens to the unsuccessful yogī?

- 39 R: path of Brahman or (Vedic) path of rituals for heaven
- 40: one who does good does not go to misfortune
- 41: after attaining a celestial realm, one takes another birth among the virtuous and prosperous
  - R: ill dwell in the celestial realm until desire for enjoyment is exhausted
- 42: or [one takes another birth] in a family of wise yogis
- 43: then strives towards perfection with the knowledge from the previous birth
- 44: the prior practice drives one unintentionally
- 44: one who wants to know yoga transcends the Vedas (the path of Vedic recitation)
  - R: śabda Brahman = prakṛti
- 45: attains the supreme goal after multiple births

# Be a Yogī

- 46: Yogī is superior to the performers of austerities, the learned, and the performers of ritual work
  - R: yoga as vision of the self
  - S: learned refer to scriptural learning rather than knowledge of Brahman
- 47: of the all the yogis, the one of faith whose mind is absorbed in Kṛṣṇa and is devoted to Kṛṣṇa is best
  - S: the yogī who is meditatively absorbed in Kṛṣṇa as opposed to a different deity is best
  - R: the yogī indicated here is different from the four types listed in the prior verse and is characterized by his devotion to Kṛṣṇa