

Hindu Temple of New Hampshire
Sath Sangh
Class notes --- 2017 - 18

We started the Sath Sangh 2016 – 17 classes with the following objective:

Everyone wants to live a life of peace, happiness and contentment.

In order to understand how to get there we need to know what is “life”?

Life is a collection of “experiences”.

We went through **Baghawath Geetha; Chapter 14** in great detail. This chapter started with the promise from Lord Krishna

“I am going to teach you the secret. On learning this the saints
have reached a higher plane or better mode of living”.

What is that secret?

Understand the source of all our experiences!

The life force or Consciousness (*Purusha*) inside each of us is the enabler. When IT gets connected to anything external – our body, mind and intellect – everything we see as “life” (*Prakruthi*) is created.

Learn this role of the consciousness (seed) as distinct from all that are tangible and visible (like the tree and its branches that grow out of the seed).

**When the Consciousness gets connected
to the external (body, mind and intellect) “experience” is born.**

Hence see life as a series of connections between the inner self (Consciousness) and the external to IT (our body, mind and intellect).

There are three connectors (*Guna*) which are ever present. They bind the inner person (I – the consciousness (*Dehinam*)) to the external (body, mind and intellect (*Deham*)).

The three connectors are:

- *Sathvikam* (Knowledge and understanding),
- *Rajasam* (Bias, attachment to partial knowledge as the whole) and
- *Thamsam* (Ignorance).

Under the influence of these ever present connectors we live in a world of opinions, judgement, pleasure/pain, like/dislike, etc. These effects change with time and we remain “subjective”.



By focusing on these connectors and their interplay – through the dominance of one over the other two at a given moment - we move away from being subjective (impulsive with thoughts, emotions and perceptions /opinions that change every moment) to Objective (analytical, reflective, contemplative and less judgmental) frame of mind that is stable, tranquil and at peace.

Such objectivity and its faithful practice brings with it divine qualities (closer to God), exhibited through a sustained peace, calm and contentment.

We also learned the details of these three connectors and how to observe them and their roles before, during and/or after any event.

Arjuna asks for evidences of such an objective person or mindset. Krishna gives a series of examples. The Chapter 14 is called as the ***Guna Thraya Vibagha Yoga* (Self-control through reflection and vigilant analysis of the three connectors)**.

In the summer session:

We practiced on how to look at the three connectors in every day events. We also learned about a few simple techniques to relate the symbols   as tools to keep in mind the role of the connectors and their effects.

We also studied that Self-Control can be through two dimensions:

- Reflection of the connectors: Progressively moving from Subjective to Objective outlook or progressing from *Gunathvam* to *Sagunathvam* to the ideal or *Nirgunathvam*. *Nirgunathvam* is an ideal and abstract view of Consciousness. “Electrical energy” is the enabler which can be perceived only through its effects – like the glowing light bulb. Like the electrical energy the Consciousness has no properties (*Nirgunathvam*) to identify with on its own accord.
- Meditation starts with focus on breathing; it expands to a calm mind with no specific needs or desires; such an open mind becomes expansive and open to all and excludes nothing. We feel love and kindness limitlessly (*Karuna Sagaram*).

October to Nov. 18, 2017:

We started our discussions on **Baghawath Geetha, Chapter 12 – Bhakthi Yoga (Self-Control through “faith”)**.

Arjuna asks:

- 12.1. If there are two pathways for self-control – one focused on abstract thinking leading to union with Consciousness (eternal and ever-present force: God) and the second focused on faithfully worshipping God (through love and kindness to all), then which of these two pathways is superior?

Just as in Chapter 14 the immediate answers by Krishna are complicated. So we shifted to Verse 12. 8 to 11. We shall return to Verse 2 to 7 later.

- 12.8. Arjuna! Set your mind and reasoning (*Buddhi*) firmly on Me (the Consciousness). There is no doubt you shall become part of Me. ---- Gnana Yoga
- 12.9. If you are unable to focus your mind, you can reach Me through the practice of constant devotion and worship as the path for enlightenment ---- Bhakthi Yoga
- 12.10. If you are unable to offer constant devotion, then dedicate your life activities (*Karma*) – duty - towards Me. One who conducts his life activities for My cause shall reach the state of tranquility (*Siddhi*) borne out of a resolved (stable and tranquil) mind. ----- Karma Yoga
- 12.11. If you are unable to do even this then seek refuge in Me by abandoning the emphasis on the results of all your actions (*Sarva Karma Phala Thyagam*) --- Practice of Action without attachment: *Abyasa Yoga*

The above implies an unflinching faith (Doing everything with only one thought: *Iswaro Rakshathu*: May this act be blessed by the Lord).

Start with Step 4 (Verse 12.11). Most of the time it is difficult to give up the objective or goal or desired end result we seek. These are the benefits we wish to enjoy or the difficulties we want to avoid as a result of our action. We ARE attached to the outcomes or expected end result.

How can you let go of your attachment to the end result? It becomes easier if we **set the goal a bit larger or broader** (e.g.): I want to help “my” child. Instead re-state that as: “I want to help any child as best as I can”. In this case the focus shifts from “my” child to “any” child. Personal or self-intended objective is replaced by a broader global objective.

How can I help any child? What are the duties? – Verse 12.10 (Karma yoga)

Duties become clearer when we ask “How should I take care of any child? We study and learn about **our duties** from many sources (e.g.):

Duty of any father is to make his son best educated and of high moral values so that he stands out in an assembly of noble men – Thirukkural

Duty of a son is to behave in a manner that noble men in the community shall wonder “who are his parents blessed to have such a good child?” --- Thirukkural

We seek clarity on what is our duty from scriptures, from elders, others or follow the traditions laid out by earlier generations.

How do I know I am doing my best to take care of any child? Let me **pray**. --- Verse 12.9. Faith brings an emotional comfort (Remember elders praying to God so that their child can do well in exam!). This emotional comfort creates a climate conducive for best action.

Through prayer my mind is calm and reflective. It focusses on the **three connectors and their interplay** - -- Verse 12.8. My emotional and subjective mind becomes calm, reflective analytical and objective. The cause and effect are clear. My “duty” is far clearer. I thank the Lord and engage in what is right – my duty - without emphasis on my personal needs – caring for “my” child - which were limiting my thinking early on.

As you can see even though self-less engagement is stated as the fourth or last step, in reality every one of the three yoga contain an element of sacrificing – looking beyond - personal or self-driven end results.

- 12.12. Knowledge and understanding (*Gnanam*) is better than the mere practice of worship. Meditation or contemplation (*Dhyaanam*) on the basis or meaning of enlightenment while engaged in worship services is better than mere knowledge. Renouncing the results of actions (*Karma Phala Thyaagam*) - unattached active participation - is superior to mere meditation as a ritual activity. Through renunciation of self-driven needs one attains peace (*Shanthi*).

We see this description of the three yoga and the need for non-attachment also described in Verse 12. 2 to 12.5.

- 12.2. The person of constant reflection who faithfully worship Me with mind totally fixed on Me are the best in Yoga in My view – Bhakthi Yoga

The “self-control” implied here is the worship which leads to internal reflection (i.e.) observing the “connectors” and their roles / effect. “Total self-control” is implied when the study of connectors is for a larger cause (i.e.) perfect union with our consciousness as described below.

- 12.3. Those - who seek relentlessly the eternal, boundless, indefinable or un-manifested, omnipresent, and incomprehensible which is a higher, firm and constant plane of existence reach me. – Gnana Yoga.
- 12.4. Those holding in check all their senses, being of objective reasoning and in that state (and through their actions) rejoice in the welfare of all beings - also reach Me (the Lord) --- Karma Yoga.
- 12.5. For those who are rooted only in their physical state (in their body, mind and intellect – *Deham*), **it is indeed difficult to pursue the goal of reaching Me the un – manifested.** One cannot be “Objective” or “loving and kind to all” when one is attached only to their physical, personal or immediate needs.

In verse 12.2 to 4 we see Bhakthi / Gnana / Karma Yoga described in that order; In verse 12.8 to 10 we see Gnana / Bhakthi / Karma Yoga described in that order. In other words we can say: don’t worry about the separation or ordering of the three Yoga. Indeed they are inter-related and inter-twined.

In verse 12.5 and 12.12 we see the theme of non-attachment (giving up personal or self-driven need) which is the foundation for all three Yoga. We can illustrate this pictorially as noted in the figure below:



- 12.6. Enlightened persons devote all their activities toward Me – Karma Yoga (*Sarvaani Karmaani Mayi Samnyasya*); lean heavily on Me (Mathparaaha) – Bhakthi - for support and solace; meditate (upon Me – *Dehinam*; *Consciousness*) as a means of worship as their undivided path of enlightenment – Gnana Yoga.
- 12.7. I (the Lord; Consciousness) am the liberator from the ocean of mortal world of all persons whose mind is set on Me (i.e.) who conduct their life activities focused on their duties, with faith and an objective frame of mind. That is the path way for the inner peace, contentment and the joy that we seek as our goals. BUT, these results will happen on their own accord as a result of the above manner of living (which is a blend of action, faith and objectivity). Anyone who seeks these end goals as their only objective (through attachment) may be denied of that due to the related personal or self-driven desires and passion.

In Chapters 12 and 14 we are introduced some clear/tangible concepts easy to follow and some abstract concepts that require reflection and comprehension.

	Chapter 12 – Bhakthi Yoga	Chapter 14 – Guna Thraya Vibhaga Yoga
Abstract concept	Non – attachment: Giving up personal or self-driven needs as	Body Vs. Soul (Consciousness) Residence Vs. Resident (<i>Deham – Dehinam</i>)

	the goal(<i>Karma Phala Thyagam</i>)	Driven Vs. Driver (<i>Prakruthi vs. Purusha</i>).
Tangible concepts	Three pathways for Self-control (<i>Yoga</i>): Gnana Yoga (Subjective to Objective) Bhakthi Yoga (Faith in a larger order) Karma Yoga (Doing your duty)	Objectivity is the result of reflection upon and management of three co-existing connectors (<i>Guna</i>) that link the body with the soul: Knowledge and understanding (<i>Sathvikam</i>) Bias ; Turbulence and duality (love/hate, ..) through attachment to partial knowledge as the whole (<i>Rajasam</i>) Ignorance : Inertia, lack of direction, delusion (<i>Thamasam</i>)

Both Chapters end with a listing of the features or characteristics of any person of enlightened living.

12. 13 to 20.

My devotee (*Bhaktha*) is the enlightened person (*Yogi*) who is restrained on his own accord with a firm sense of purpose, with his/her mind and reasoning set or dedicated unto Me.

Such a person is friendly and compassionate to all and hates none. Free from self-driven needs and their effects (ego and vanity), such a person is equal in composure in happiness / sorrow; embodiment of kindness and forgiveness. Such a person is dear to Me.

The person who is neither disturbed nor disturbs his/her surrounding and remains free from pride, anger, fear or worry is dear to Me (the Lord).

The person who seeks nothing (for his unbridled personal needs), pure, versatile / flexible (but rooted in strong principles), impartial or unbiased, free from wants and abandons self-driven motives to initiate any action (*Sarva Aarambha Pari Thyaagi*), is My devotee. He/she is dear to Me (the Lord).

The person who neither rejoices without limit nor hates; neither seeks for association nor grieves any loss; forsakes the good and the bad (*Shubha Ashubha Pari Thyaagi*) is My devotee. He/she is dear to Me (the Lord).

The person - who is equal to friend and foe; equal in honor and dishonor; equally at ease in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, free from attachments, equal in response to blame and praise; silent (*Mauni*); contented with any occurrence; without firm roots or attachments of personal nature of any kind (described as homeless); of firm determination in the worship - is dear to Me.

Indeed, those who pursue these immortal or essential laws (*Dharma Amrutham*) as described here are My devotees. They are very dear to Me (the Lord).

14.22 to 27

An enlightened person (Objective person who has transformed beyond the influence of Guna as the drivers) does not dislike the effect of the three Guna – as seen in our daily life - when they happen; nor does he/she seek them out when they do not happen or when they cease to exist. (e.g.): illumination or knowledge (*Prakasam*) is welcome but it not an obsession. Endless chain of activity are Ok but they do not consume him/her, desires or illusions (*Moham*) are recognized as part of natural order but they do not overwhelm him/her.

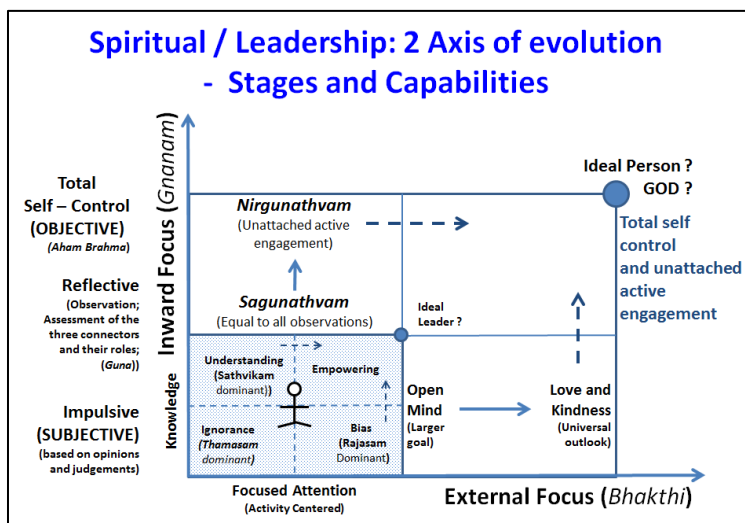
Such a person remains unconcerned and unaffected by these three Guna, recognizing that all the effects around him/her arise out of these Guna. Thus he/she can focus within oneself and remain steady or unshaken.

Such a person relies on his/her own self. He/she has a firm and balanced frame of mind, where opposites such as happiness / sorrow, dear and not so dear, praise / blame are equal in effect. He/she has a value system, where a piece of clay, a stone and a piece of gold are of equal significance.

Such an objective person perceives honor / dishonor, friendship / enmity with equal poise. Such a person does not initiate any actions based solely on personal or self-driven needs. (See Chapter 12 for more details).

One who has transcended beyond the three Guna through relentless commitment to Yoga (Self-control through internal reflection) is fit to become (or realize) that he is Brahman. I am the abode or seat of the eternal, immutable, changeless Brahman (Universal Consciousness). Hence the enlightened person becomes unified with Me (the Lord).

In Chapter 14 we learn the tools to move from Subjective to Objective (through internal reflection) and from self-centered / personal to Universal (love and kind to all – through external engagement) – figure below:



In Chapter 12 we learn the three pathways to progress from body/material centered view of life to Consciousness / Spiritual centered way of life. This progress happens as noted in the figure below. It also requires the “sacrifice” of personal attachments (the view of life – and “I” - limited only to my body/mind/intellect and nothing beyond that).

