

Book III, Chapter 28

1. Śrī Bhagavān said:

“I will describe to you the characteristics of *sabija yoga*, O princess [when the mind is fixed undeviating on an object].⁹⁵ By this practice, the mind becomes joyful, and undoubtedly attains the path to Truth.

2. It includes: performing one’s duties (*dharma*) to the best of one’s capabilities, refraining from unrighteousness, contentment with what is obtained by Providence, worshipping the feet of those who know the *ātman*.⁹⁶

3. Giving up mundane *dharma* and attraction to the *dharma* of liberation,⁹⁷ the moderate intake of pure foodstuffs, and living always in a solitary peaceful place.

4. One should practice nonviolence (*ahimsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), and adopt only as many possessions as required (*yāvadartha-parigrahaḥ*). One should practice celibacy

(*brahmacarya*), austerity (*tapah*), cleanliness (*śauca*), study (*svādhyāya*), and worship the Supreme Being (*Puruṣārcana*).⁹⁸

5. Observing silence, one should become fixed [in a sitting posture] by mastering the appropriate *āsanas*, gradually mastering breath control (*prāṇa-jaya*), and practicing withdrawal of the senses from sense objects (*pratyāhāra*), with the mind fixed on the heart.

6. One should fix the breath on one of the *cakras* (subtle energy centers)⁹⁹ of the body with one’s mind. One should contemplate the activities of Lord Viṣṇu and become absorbed (*samādhāna*) in that way.

7. By these and other processes, alert, and with controlled breath, one should gradually fix one’s mind, which is prone to corrupt and unspiritual ways, with one’s intelligence.

8. Once one has mastered *āsana* one should establish a seat (*āsana*)¹⁰⁰ in a clean place, and, sitting comfortably with the body erect, one should perform practice.

9. One should cleanse the passageway of the air by performing *pūra-kumbhaka-recaka* breath restraints¹⁰¹ or by the reverse processes, such that the mind (*citta*) can become fixed and undistracted.

10. The mind of the *yogī* whose breath is controlled should soon become purified, just as iron, [melted by] fire and fanned by wind, releases its impurities.

11. By *prāṇāyāma* one can burn imperfections,¹⁰² by *dhāraṇā*, one’s sins; by *pratyāhāra*, contact with sense objects; and by *dhyāna*, ungodly tendencies.

12. When one’s mind is perfectly controlled by the practice of *yoga*, with one’s gaze fixed on the tip of the nose,¹⁰³ one should meditate on the form of *Bhagavān*.

13. He has pleasing lotuslike features, with reddish eyes like the interior of a lotus, and is dark like the petals of the blue lotus. He bears a conch, discus, and club.

14. His shiny silken garments are yellow like the filament of a lotus, the *kaustubha* jewel adorns His neck, and the mark of *śrīvatsa* His chest.¹⁰⁴

15. His neck is encircled by a forest garland with intoxicated humming bees swarming about it, and He is adorned by a magnificent necklace, bracelets, helmet, armlets, and anklets.

16. His hips are adorned with a brilliantly shining girdle, and He is seated in the lotus of the heart. His countenance is serene and He has the most beautiful appearance, gladdening the eyes and the mind.

17. He is eternally gorgeous to behold, and is worshipped by the entire universe. He has the youthful vigor of the prime of youth, and is anxious to bestow His blessings upon His devotees.

18. The glories of this exalted person are worthy of recitation in hymns, and bring renown to pious people [who glorify Him]. One should perform meditation (*dhyāna*) upon the entire form of the Lord, until the mind no longer deviates.

19. The activities of the Lord are always attractive. Therefore, with the mind full of pure love, one should meditate upon Him in the core of one's heart as standing, walking, sitting, or lying down.

20. When the mind has attained fixed concentration focused on all His limbs together, the sage should then visualize and fix the mind on *Bhagavān*'s respective limbs, one by one."

[A detailed visualization of each of *Bhagavān*'s limbs follows here.]

34. A person, at this point, with heart flowing with love for the Lord, Hari, *Bhagavān*; with hair standing on end from ecstasy; and constantly overwhelmed with streams of tears from intense love, gradually withdraws the hook of the *citta*.¹⁰⁵

35. At this stage, the mind suddenly attains liberation (*nirvāṇa*), and enters the state of freedom, detached and without objects, like the flame of a lamp [when it is extinguished]. Freed from the flow of the *guṇas*, one now perceives the *ātman*, fully manifest and autonomous.

36. The *yogī*, as a result of this supreme dissolution of the mind, becomes situated in the wonders of the *ātman*. Attaining the nature of the higher self, the *yogī* realizes that the cause of the experiences of pleasure and pain (*duḥkha*) that one had previously attributed to one's own self, were actually occurring in the *ahankāra*, which has no ultimate and enduring reality.

37. The highest *yogī*, who has realized his or her own true nature as *ātman*, is not aware of whether the body is sitting or standing, or whether, by chance, it has reached somewhere or else departed under the control of Fate, just like one who is blinded by intoxication is not aware of whether one is covered by clothing or not.

38. The body along with its life airs remains under the control of Fate for as long as its *karma*, which has already been activated, has not expired.¹⁰⁶ But the *yogī* who has attained *samādhi* and awakened to

the reality of things does not again accept it or its expansions as real, but rather as just a dream.

39. Just as a mortal being is seen as different from sons and wealth, even though they are considered to be one's own, so is the case with the *puruṣa*, which is seen as different from the body and its extensions.

40.–41. Just as fire is different from the firebrand and the sparks and smoke produced from it—it is in fact different even from the very firebrand that is considered identical to it, so the *ātman*, who is the seer, is different from the sense objects, senses, and internal organ. And *Bhagavān*, who is known as *Brahman*, is different both from *prakṛti* and from that which is called *jīva*.

42. One should see all beings in the *ātman* and the *ātman* in all beings, by dint of the fact that all beings have the same nature within the material elements.

43. Just as fire, although one, appears different according to its sources, so the *ātman* situated in *prakṛti* appears different due to the diversity in its embodiments [but is one].

44. Therefore, after transcending one's own *prakṛti*, which is divine and very hard to comprehend, and which has the nature of cause and effect, one becomes situated in one's own true nature.

Book III, Chapter 29

1.–2. Devahūti said:

"You have described the characteristics of *mahat* (cosmic intelligence)¹⁰⁷ etc., and of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* and the higher nature of these two as outlined in the Sāṅkhya traditions. Now please tell me about their root, the path of *bhakti yoga*. Describe this to me in detail, O Lord.

3. Narrate the various destinations in *samsāra* of the embodied *jīvas*. From hearing about these complete detachment can arise in the *puruṣa*, O Lord.

4. Please tell me about that manifestation of *Īśvara* called Time, which is the controller of even the higher celestials. It is because of [the fear of] Time that people perform pious activities.

5. You have appeared as the shining light of *yoga* for those people who are spiritually blind due to false understanding and who have been sleeping under the false security of *tamas* for such a long

time. They are exhausted because their minds are devoted to activities performed for the satisfaction of desire.”

6. Maitreya said:

“The great sage welcomed these gentle words of his mother, O best of the Kurus. Pleased and overwhelmed with compassion, He replied to her.”

7. Śri Bhagavān said:

“*Bhakti yoga* has many different forms, which manifest in different ways, O noble lady! These ways are differentiated in accordance with their natural *guṇas*. And the mental states of people are distinguished in accordance to these ways.

8. A person considering himself different from others, who performs *bhakti* to Me out of a motive involving violence, pride, or envy, is one in *tamas*, full of anger.

9. A person considering himself different from others, who engages in acts of worshipping the deity with a motive involving desire for sense objects, fame, or power, is in *rajas*.

10. A person considering himself different from others, who engages in worship for the purpose of eliminating *karma*, or as an offering to the Supreme, or because worship is something that ought to be done, is in *sattva*.

11.–12. The characteristic of *bhakti yoga* that transcends the *guṇas* (*nirguṇa*) is described as when the mind flows without cessation toward Me, simply from hearing about My qualities. I am the most intimate refuge. This *bhakti* toward *Puruṣottama*, the Supreme Being, is uninterrupted and free of all motives (*ahaitukī*).

13. Devotees do not accept the five types of liberation—*salokya*, living on the same realm as Me; *sārṣṭi*, having the same opulence as Me; *sāmīpya*, living in My association; *sārūpya*, having the same form as Me; and *ekatvam*, undifferentiated oneness with Me—even when these are awarded, if they are devoid of My service.¹⁰⁸

14. It is this latter which has been described as the highest type of what goes by the name *bhakti yoga*. By this one transcends the three *guṇas* and attains My abode.

15.–19. Through worship and through performing one’s duty without attachment to the results; through regular lavish acts of ritual worship which do not involve any violence; through seeing, touching, offering *pūjā* (ritual worship) and praise, and honoring My deities; through

considering Me to be in all living entities; through *sattva*; through detachment; through offering respect to the great saints; through compassion to the less fortunate; through friendship with those who are one’s equals and through following the *yamas* and *niyamas* (moral virtues); by hearing spiritual discourses; by chanting My name congregationally (*nama-saṅkīrtana*); through uprightness and association with noble people; through abandoning ego; through these qualities the mind of a person dedicated to Me becomes purified. Then he or she easily draws close to Me, simply by hearing of My qualities.

20. Just as the flow of wind delivers a smell from its source to the nose, so the mind devoted to *yoga* is carried to the Supreme.

21. I am always present in the *ātman*s of all beings.¹⁰⁹ A person disregarding this performs deity worship in the temple that is hypocritical.

22. One who worships Me in the form of the Deity, but, out of ignorance, disregards Me as *Īśvara* in the form of the *ātman* residing in all beings, offers only ashes.

23. The mind of a person who does not see others as equal, honoring Me but hating other entities, who is fixed in hostility with other beings, does not attain peace.

24. O sinless lady, I am not satisfied when I am worshipped in the Deity through the performance of rituals conducted with all sorts of paraphernalia by a person who is disrespectful of other living beings.

25. One should worship Me as *Īśvara* through deity worship and such things, performing one’s duty, until one sees Me in one’s own heart, and situated in the hearts of all beings.

26. To one who makes a distinction between his own belly and that of others, I inflict great fear in the form of Death. Such a person does not see all beings as equal.

27. Therefore, by means of charity, respect, and friendship, and with equanimity, one should honor Me as residing as the embodied *ātman* in all beings.

28. Living entities are superior to nonliving entities, O pious lady, and among them, those that have life airs (*prāṇa*) are higher. From these, those that have developed minds (*citta*) are higher, and from these in turn, those with sense perception are higher still.

29. Even among these, those that have the sense of taste are higher than those who have the sense of touch, and higher than these are

those with the sense of smell, while those with the sense of hearing are superior.

30. Entities who can distinguish forms are higher than these, and from these those with teeth in two jaws. From these, many-legged creatures are higher, from which the quadrupeds are best, and the two-legged beings higher still.

31. From these, those who respect the fourfold caste division of society are better, and from these, the *brāhmaṇas* are best. From among the *brāhmaṇas*, the knower of the Veda is higher; and better than him, the one who knows the true meaning of the Vedas.

32. One who can remove all doubts is better still, and one who performs his or her *dharma* superior again. Higher still than this is the performance of *dharma* free of all attachments, without seeking any benefit for oneself.

33. From all these, the soul who has completely dedicated his or her wealth and works to Me is best of all. I do not consider any living entity superior to a person whose soul is dedicated to Me, who has renounced all works to Me, who realizes he or she is not the ultimate doer of action,¹¹⁰ and who sees all beings equally.

34. One should honor all these living beings with one's mind, considering that it is *Īśvara, Bhagavān*, who has entered them in the form of his partial manifestation,¹¹¹ the *jīva* (embodied *ātman*).

35. My dear lady, I have explained to you both *bhakti yoga* and the eight-limbed path of generic *yoga*. By means of either one of these, a person may attain the *puruṣa*.

36. This *puruṣa* is transcendent to *prakṛti*. It is a form of *Bhagavān*, who is *Brahman*, the *Paramātmān*, and Destiny, the force behind *karma*.

37. That which is the source of the changes in the forms of all matter from *mahat (buddhi, the macro cosmic intelligence)*,¹¹² to the microatoms of Sāṅkhya, is known as divine Time. It is because of Time that those who do not see the oneness behind all things¹¹³ experience fear.

38. The one who enters all entities, who is the sustainer of everything, and who annihilates them through other entities is known as Viṣṇu. He is Time, the Master of all rulers. He is the Lord of sacrifice.

39. No one is dear to Him, no one an enemy, and no one a friend. Ever vigilant, He approaches in the form of Death those people who are forgetful.

40. It is out of fear of Him that the wind blows, it is out of fear of Him that the sun shines, it is out of fear of Him that the god Indra showers rain, and it is out of fear of Him that the host of stars shine.

41. It is because of Him that the trees along with the plants and creepers bear their fruits and flowers at their appropriate times.

42. It is because of Him that the frightened rivers flow, that the ocean does not rise up beyond its bounds, that fire blazes, and the earth along with its mountains does not collapse.

43. It is under the control of Him that the sky provides space for all breathing creatures, and the first macro-evolute of *prakṛti*, the *mahat*, expands its body into the universe, covered by its seven sheaths.¹¹⁴

44. It is out of fear of Him that the divinities, who oversee the functions of the *guṇas*,¹¹⁵ and in whose power lie all moving and non-moving entities, perpetuate creation, maintenance, and destruction in every *yuga*, age.

45. Time is the eternal destroyer. It has no beginning but is the cause of all beginnings. It causes the birth and destruction of people through other people. It brings death even to the celestial Yama, the Lord of death.”