

The Shreyas Art of Living

By: Dr. Maulik Trivedi

The last two month's articles gave you an overview of the *Ashtang* system of yoga. (Pronounced 'Yog' in original Sanskrit, not Yoga) You read about the eight-step secular method as prescribed by *Patanjali* unfolded for everyday practice. Let's face it, modern everyday life is so intertwined with conflicting priorities and high demand stresses, that following such an eightfold path seems like a distant goal. When looking from a different angle, however, the same life offers innumerable opportunities for one to practice *Ashtanga* Yoga in the daily life. The same priorities can become extremely manageable and the stresses can melt away when one infuses their daily life with the essence of *Ashtanga* Yoga. Actually, there were 4 forms of Yoga prescribed centuries before the time of *Patanjali*. This month's article discusses these original forms of yoga as prescribed in the *Bhagvad Gita*.

Most of you have probably heard the name of *Mahabharat*. It is the epic story of the war between two royal families. Within this ancient Indian text is an epic poem called the *Bhagvat Gita*. In the *Gita*, **Arjuna**, a great warrior, is faced with a difficult decision: whether or not to fight in a battle against his own family members. In this moment of ambivalence between righteous action and emotional attachments, **Lord Krishna**, who is the charioteer for **Arjuna**, advises him on how to decide. Certainly, the aim of the poem is to alert the reader to the struggles that one faces in everyday life.

If you really think about it, you will recognize that most of our day-to-day decisions are greatly influenced by our emotions. Once you become aware of this, you will immediately recognize the struggle between taking the convenient or easy option versus the harder and righteous one. You will find yourself amidst the same dilemma as the righteous warrior **Arjuna**. It is in this exact moment that the message of the **Gita** applies. It is a universal message applicable to every human being living the everyday life. It does not matter what you do for a living, how rich or poor you are, and whether you're young or old. In fact, the methods of pursuing righteous action are prescribed in the words of **Lord Krishna** in more than one way. Each of these, when expanded fully and applied to everyday life, is a method of complete yoga in itself. By simply following this method in everyday life, one will be naturally guided in their journey to spiritual realization.

There are four main methods of Yoga presented in the **Bhagvad Gita**. Each is designed for a specific type of person. To be more specific, each is best suited for a specific type of mind. In tech-speak, the software must match the hardware one has. Let's take a look at the four software options.

The four main methods are named *Karma Yoga*, *Gyan* (also spelled as *Jnana* by some) *Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga* and *Raj Yoga*. Each describes a slant on perceiving and interacting with everyday life such that one is constantly moving towards their highest spiritual goal. You can imagine each method as separate trails going to the peak of the same (spiritual) mountain.

Karma yoga: This path translates literally to *union through physical action*. It is indicated for the action-oriented individual. *Karma yoga* is the science of achieving perfection in action. The words *Karma yoga* literally translate to the path of *union through action*. However, according to *Vedantic* philosophy the word *karma* means both action and the effects of such action. *Karma yoga* prescribes a specific way of thinking, willing and acting in the material world. The followers of *Karma Yoga* orient themselves toward spiritual realization by acting in accordance with one's duty (*dharma*) without being swayed by personal or self-centered desires, likes or dislikes. More specifically, they act without being attached to the fruits of one's deeds.



Krishna explains to **Arjuna** that all work done without selfish expectations purifies one's mind to be free from the influence of emotions. He states that it is neither necessary nor practical to remain in external solitude, or remain actionless, in order to pursue a spiritual life, since the state of action or inaction is primarily determined in the mind.

Gyan yoga: This path literally translates as *union through knowledge*, particularly self-knowledge. This method is indicated for the learning oriented logical individual. In the **Bhagvad Gita**, **Lord Krishna** says that *gyan* consists of properly understanding the battle-field that is none other than one's body. Furthermore, through practice of *Gyan yoga*, one experiences the material reality of *Maya* as a transitory stuff that regales the mind. Over time, one develops a constant awareness the entity that is *the knower* of the body intermingled within perceptual world of *maya*, which is one's spiritual-self. This constant awareness of the separation of one's

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- Even if the immigration officer tries to coax you into signing the order of voluntary departure, do not sign it. Ask to speak to your attorney and do not sign anything unless your attorney advises you to do so.
- In most cases after the arrest you will be placed in proceedings and you will be given a Notice to Appear (NTA) before the Immigration Court. You can always request the immigration officer to issue you an NTA. You can always request the immigration officer that you need to see the immigration judge. Unless you have an outstanding order of removal, immigration will allow you to go before the immigration judge and seek the appropriate relief if one is available. It is better that you are represented by an experienced immigration attorney when you go before the judge.
- If you are issued an NTA and placed in proceedings, tell the immigration officer that you want your hearing in the Immigration court which is closest to the city where you live in. This is very important in cases when people get arrested while they are traveling and are in a different city/state.

I cannot stress enough that any time such an event occurs you MUST contact an experienced immigration attorney immediately and explain your entire situation. It is equally important that you do not hide any details from your attorney. I have noticed that there are a lot of people that are afraid of talking to immigration attorneys, this psyche needs to be changed. Please understand that the immigration attorney works for you and not the government so there is no need to be afraid of them.

As suggested above in this article even if you are not pursuing any immigration process yet, do meet with an attorney and appraise them about your entire situation. Do have an immigration attorney on your speed dial for any situations mentioned above.

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body from their spiritual identity to a state of perfection is another trail leading to the spiritual pinnacle. As the **Bhagvad Gita** states, "Those who see with eyes of knowledge the difference between the body and the knower of the body, and can also understand the process of liberation from bondage in material nature, attain to the supreme goal."

Bhakti yoga: This path translated literally means *union through devotion*. The person best suited for this path is one who can completely surrender their ego in devotional love. This method is followed by immersing oneself in fostering loving devotion to a personal form of God. This is often a very difficult task for the modern educated individual because it requires giving up your own ego and trusting your personal God completely. However, in the same logic, it is probably the shortest route to spiritual realization. According to **Lord Krishna** in the **Bhagvad Gita**, "Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisance to Me and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me" and "One can understand Me as I am, as the supreme personality God-head only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of Me by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God."

Raj Yoga: This name translates to the *royal union*. It is the *Yoga of mind-control*. The pursuer of this method uses meditation as a method for calming down their mind to a level of inner silence where their self-awareness disentangles from the material *maya* and spiritual realities are achieved. According to the **Bhagvad Gita**, "When, through the practice of yoga, the mind ceases its restless movements and becomes still, the aspirant realizes the *Atman*." The *Ashtanga Yoga* you read about in the last two months was *Patanjali's* expansion of the original *Raj Yoga* method as described in the **Bhagvad Gita**.

So, as you can see, the **Bhagvad Gita** presents us with four different paths to reach the mountaintop. One can pick their preferred route and wind up at the same destination. The key is to recognize your natural inclination towards one of these and stick relentlessly to your practice. Best of luck as you progress in your journey. Namaste.

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