

Śloka 37

यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन ।  
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ॥ ३७ ॥

*yathaidhāṁsi samiddho'gnirbhasmasātkurute' rjuna  
jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasātkurute tathā*

यथा	<i>yathā</i>	as
एधांसि	<i>edhāṁsi</i>	fuel
समिद्धः	<i>samiddhaḥ</i>	blazing
अग्निः	<i>agniḥ</i>	fire
भस्मसात्	<i>bhasmasāt</i>	reduced to ashes
कुरुते	<i>kurute</i>	makes
अर्जुन	<i>arjuna</i>	O Arjuna
ज्ञानाग्निः	<i>jñānāgniḥ</i>	fire of knowledge
सर्वकर्माणि	<i>sarvakarmāṇi</i>	all actions
भसमसात्	<i>bhasmasāt</i>	to ashes
कुरुते	<i>kurute</i>	makes
तथा	<i>tathā</i>	so

## VERSE 37

*An Example of How Knowledge Destroys Sin*

37

**As the blazing fire burns the fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge burn all actions to ashes.**

In the previous verse the metaphor of crossing the ocean of sins was given to describe the effect of attaining knowledge. However, that metaphor does not explain that all sins that are caused by action are totally eliminated by Self-knowledge. To explain this, the Lord, in this verse uses the example of a fire that burns the fuel (actions) to ashes.

**As the blazing fire burns the fuel to ashes** - Any kind of fuel that is thrown into a blazing fire will burn to ashes, leaving no hint of its earlier form. Fuel of all shapes, sizes, and varieties simply turns to ash. Metaphorically this means all actions, whether good, bad, or indifferent, become like ash (unproductive) when one attains knowledge of the Self. This happens because the ego rediscovers its real nature as the Self and no longer relates to the mind, intellect, and senses as "I am." In the absence of that relationship between the ego and the mind-body complex, all actions in all forms are wiped out.

Actions fall into three categories:

1) *sañchit karma* (collective actions) - These are the unexhausted mass of good and bad actions from past births that exist in a form of latencies. They are still to be worked out and are not yet operative.

2) *prārabdha karma* (operative actions) - These are actions that are ripe and become operative in the present birth. They are the cause of birth in a body and allow for the sustaining of the body.

3) *kriyamān karma* (current actions) - These are the new actions performed in a current life.

When a person attains knowledge of the Self, *sañchit karma* or the latencies of all the actions that are not yet operative are wiped out. The body of a yogi exists and functions due to the *prārabdha karma* or actions that are ripe and giving fruit in the present birth. However, in the absence of the ego, the yogi remains unattached to the body and its functions. The *kriyamān karma* or current action does not create any latencies because in the absence of the ego of being a doer, desires, attachments, and the feeling of possession automatically burn out.

## Śloka 38

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।  
तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥ ३८ ॥

*na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitramiha vidyate  
tatsvayam yogasamsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati*

न	<i>na</i>	not
हि	<i>hi</i>	certainly, verily
ज्ञानेन	<i>jñānena</i>	to wisdom
सदृशम्	<i>sadṛśam</i>	like
पवित्रम्	<i>pavitram</i>	pure
इह	<i>iha</i>	here (in this world)
विद्यते	<i>vidyate</i>	is
तत्	<i>tat</i>	that
स्वयम्	<i>svayam</i>	oneself
योगसंसिद्धः	<i>yogasamsiddhaḥ</i>	perfected in yoga
कालेन	<i>kālena</i>	in time
आत्मनि	<i>ātmani</i>	in the Self
विन्दति	<i>vindati</i>	finds

## VERSE 38

*Self-Knowledge Is Attained Automatically  
By Perfection of Yoga*

38

**Verily there is no purifier in this world like knowledge. One who is perfected in yoga finds it in the Self in time.**

In verses 25-30 the Lord gives twelve methods of sacrifice to show Arjuna that all actions become sacrifice if they are performed with a spirit of **Karma Yoga**. In this verse the Lord says that knowledge is the supreme purifier.

**Verily there is no purifier in this world like knowledge.** - In this world the greatest pain arises from the fact that the ego exists in its forgetful state and does not know its true nature. All afflictions in life are caused by the ego dwelling in illusion. The illusion is the ego's relationship with the mind-body complex, which is experienced as "I am this mind body complex." When the ego rediscovers its true nature, which is the Self, or when true knowledge is attained, the greatest impurity that was deluding the ego is removed. This is the highest relief for the ego in this world. It is as if one who was chasing a mirage in the desert and dying of thirst finds water.

**One who is perfected in yoga finds it in the Self in time.** - The twelve sacrifices are means for attaining knowledge of the Self. A person who practices yoga in the form of the twelve sacrifices, with persistence and dispassion, attains perfection in yoga, and all the impurities of the mind of that person are removed. For a yogi in that purified state, knowledge of the Self dawns by itself in time.

This verse does not give any specific time for the dawning of knowledge because achievement of knowledge depends on the intensity of a yogi's faith, devotion, and sincerity in practice.

## Śloka 39

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।  
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥ ३९ ॥

*śraddhāvānlabhate jñānaṁ tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ  
jñānaṁ labdhvā parāṁ śāntimacireṇādhiḡacchati*

श्रद्धावान्	<i>śraddhāvān</i>	of faith
लभते	<i>labhate</i>	one obtains
ज्ञानम्	<i>jñānam</i>	knowledge
तत्परः	<i>tatparaḥ</i>	devoted
संयतेन्द्रियः	<i>saṁyatendriyaḥ</i>	who has subdued the senses
ज्ञानम्	<i>jñānam</i>	knowledge
लब्ध्वा	<i>labdhvā</i>	having obtained
पराम्	<i>parām</i>	supreme
शान्तिम्	<i>śāntim</i>	to peace
अचिरेण	<i>acireṇa</i>	not for long, at once
अधिगच्छति	<i>adhiḡacchati</i>	goes

## VERSE 39

*Three Qualifications To Attain Supreme Peace*

39

**One who has faith, who is devoted to it (practice), who has restrained the senses, gains knowledge; having gained knowledge, immediately attains supreme peace.**

In this verse three qualifications for attaining peace are mentioned: faith, devotion, and self-control.

1) **faith** (*śraddhā*) - The word *śraddhā* is made by joining two words: *śrat*, which means truth, and *dha*, which means to bear. *Śraddhā* is a faith that bears truth. It is not a faith in false beliefs or fanatic ideas. It is an unquestioned acceptance of divine beliefs that are based in truth.

2) **devoted to it** (practice) (*tatparahī*) - Yogis who follow a spiritual path with the aim of attaining knowledge of the Self should constantly focus their attention on the practice that they have chosen. Undivided attention to the practice brings positive results. The truth of the Self cannot be experienced simply by reading the scriptures. One must also practice with devotion.

3) **restrained senses** (*samyatendriyahī*) - It is the senses that first pull the mind out into the world when sense objects are contacted. The mind always works through the senses. It is the mind that enjoys the outer world through the senses, because the senses alone cannot enjoy the world. Controlling the senses means to stop the senses from seeking objects for the mind's pleasure. When the sense organs are controlled, the mind will automatically turn inward and seek for inner peace. One cannot be stable on any spiritual path if the senses are not controlled because the mind will remain engaged in sensuous life.

This verse says that a yogi who has attained the three qualifications of faith, devotion, and self-control attains knowledge of the Self. The result of attaining Self-knowledge is the achievement of **supreme peace**. The aim of a human incarnation is to attain that peace which is beyond all limitation.

In the previous verse it is said that one who is perfected in yoga attains Self-knowledge in time. In this verse it says that one who is perfected in the three qualifications gains knowledge and attains supreme peace immediately.

## Śloka 40

अज्ञश्चाश्रद्धधानश्च संशयातमा विनश्यति ।  
 नायं लोकोऽस्ति न परो न सुखं संशयात्मनः ॥ ४० ॥

*ajñāścāśraddadhānaśca saṁśayātmā vinaśyati  
 nāyaṁ loko'sti na paro na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanaḥ*

अज्ञः	<i>ajñāḥ</i>	the ignorant
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अश्रद्धधानः	<i>aśraddadhānaḥ</i>	the faithless
च	<i>ca</i>	and
संशयात्मा	<i>saṁśayātmā</i>	the doubting Self
विनश्यति	<i>vinaśyati</i>	guṇas to destruction
न	<i>na</i>	not
अयम्	<i>ayam</i>	this
लोकः	<i>lokaḥ</i>	world
अस्ति	<i>asti</i>	is
न	<i>na</i>	not
परः	<i>paraḥ</i>	the next
न	<i>na</i>	not
सुखम्	<i>sukham</i>	happiness
संशयात्मनः	<i>saṁśayātmanaḥ</i>	for the doubting self

## VERSE 40

*One Who Does Not Cultivate These Qualities  
Will Get Destroyed*

40

**The ignorant, the faithless, and the doubter are destroyed. For the doubting soul there is neither this world nor the next, nor is there happiness.**

This verse reinforces the teachings of the previous verse, which says that those who have faith, who restrain the senses, and who are devoted to spiritual practice will achieve supreme peace. The verse explains the negative effects that occur when one does not cultivate faith or knowledge, and when one is doubtful. It says that such people **are destroyed**.

**The ignorant** - One who is attached to worldly possessions and desires, who lacks discrimination, and who considers the mind-body complex as the Self is an ignorant person.

**the faithless** - The faithless person is one who does not believe in the teachings of the illumined, nor in the teachings of the scriptures that deal with Self-realization.

**the doubter** - This means one who cannot arrive at any conclusion about the Self, God, or life in the world. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that such a person as described above, who also has a doubting nature, will be ruined completely.

**For the doubting soul there is neither this world nor the next, nor is there happiness.** - This indicates that an ignorant person who is devoid of faith can have some kind of happiness in such things as worldly prosperity, position, or fame. However, a doubting person is not only lost to a spiritual path, but also will remain unhappy in worldly achievements. Those who have a doubtful nature do not believe in anything. They cannot adjust their lives under any circumstances, including those that are completely favorable to them. Their doubting tendency will turn even favorable situations against them. Consequently, they will always remain unhappy in the present life and carry the same unhappiness into the next life.