



# Karma Yoga

## A Simple Explanation

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ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौभुनक्तु ।  
सहवीर्यं करवावहै ।  
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।  
ॐ शांतिः शांतिः शांतिः ॥ ॥

Aum

sahanaa-vavatu, sahanao-bhunaktu,  
saha-veeryam-karavaa-vahai  
tejaswinaa-vadheetama-astu  
maa vidwishaa-vahai-i  
Aum shaantih, shaantih, shaantih

# Topics

Dharma

Yoga

Paap-Punya

Karma, Detachment

Mind

Dharma

Dharma

Does it mean 'religion'?

Limitations of History and English Language

Hinduism

Religion

Sadly, once the label "religion" is imposed on it, all the misgivings and limitations of the word 'religion' and all problems of all religions are also forced to be in Hinduism.

# Dharma

Properties / Principles that govern .....

## Materials

physical objects (animate, inanimate)

## Energy

gravitational, kinetic, thermal, electromagnetic, nuclear etc.

## And beyond

emotional, intellectual, spiritual/Consciousness

(unappreciated and unapproachable by modern day  
scientific methods)

## Dharma

Some of these principles are tangible and easy to understand

such as:

Rules / laws that apply to the material /physical world and our bodies

Panchkosha Shareera:

Annamaya, Praanamaya, Manomaya

# Dharma

These universal principles are always in force.

Nothings can happen that is not in accordance with these principles without a penalty.

Examples:

(Jada)

Laws of physics, chemistry

Laws of thermodynamics, electrodynamics

Conservation of mass and energy

(Chetan)

Laws of karma, thoughts and spirit

# Dharma

Some of these principles are not so obvious:

e.g.

Laws relating to human actions, attitudes,  
thoughts and spirit

# Dharma

All these Dharma (of matter, energy and spirit) are all in a continuum, interdependent and affect each other to varying degrees.

## Examples:

Electromagnetic effects on matter

Mind-body relationship,

Effect of meditation, yoga on body, mind

Subtler relationships

## Dharma (Sanaatana)

So, really, what does it mean?

Sanaatana: Timeless, eternal, continuous

Dharma: Property, nature, principles, rules

In short:

The Eternal Rules, Principles of Existence, the  
Grand Scheme, Universal Order

# Sanaatana Dharma

Properties/principles that are inherent in the creation.

# Dharma

Our scriptures (specially the Vedaanta/Upanishads) are full of these principles,

(although they are not stated in explicit mathematical terms as we are used to see now-a-days)

Yoga

Yoga is commonly meant as “joining”

Example: Yoking the second bull in a bullock cart

A more practical meaning is “aligning”

A practical interpretation of meaning of Yoga from this perspective is as follows:

**To be in alignment with the  
Laws of Creation/Existence,**

Or

**To swim with the**

***Stream of Consciousness***

## **Punya**

Thoughts and actions in harmony with the Universal order. (No penalty for swimming with the stream)

## **Paapa**

Thoughts and actions that are in discordance with the Universal order. (Penalty for swimming against the stream)

## **Bhakti Yoga**

What are laws of emotions/faith/Shraddhaa?

How to make our feelings and attitude harmonious  
with the laws of existence?

Acceptance, Service, Respect / Reverence, Devotion,  
Help, Love, Sacrifice

## **Jnyaana Yoga**

What are the laws of intellect/reasoning/knowledge?

How does the machinery of existence work?

Who are we?

Why are we here?

Who created us?

How to think in harmony with the laws of nature?

Vigilance, Analysis, Logic, Focus, Determination

# Karma Yoga

What are the laws of action and its effects (laws of karma)?

How to work in synch with the laws of existence?  
Selfless, Foresight, Dedication, Optimism, Forgiving

(Note: Karma Yoga does not demand belief in God!)

## Additional Terminologies

Sanchita Karma (results yet to be manifested)

Praarabdha Karma (results being manifested)

Purushaartha Karma (free will)

Note: Animals do not have free will, they act on instinct (no Paapa to them). Therefore, the Laws of Karma do not bind them.

(Additional Karma terminologies:

Saatwik, Raajasik, Taamasik, Vi-karm, A-karm)

The famous shloka from Geeta Chapter 2, verse 47

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥४७॥

karmanyevaadhikaarastay maa faleshu kadaa-cha-na  
maa karma-fala hetu-bhuh maa tay sango-astva-akarmani

On action alone you have rights, not on the fruits  
of the action.

Neither should your actions be attached to the  
fruits, nor should you become inactive.

Let's rephrase the meaning

The famous shloka from Geeta Chapter 2, verse 47

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥४७॥

karmanyevaadhikaar-astay maa faleshu kadaa-cha-na  
maa karma-fala hetu-bhuh maa tay sango-astva-akarmani

Action only is your privilege. You have no claims to (i.e. you may not demand) the fruits of your action. You should neither become an instrument to achieve the fruits, nor should you become (discouraged and be) inactive (lazy).

Note: The shloka does not say that you should not have goals.

The famous shloka from Geeta Chapter 2, verse 47

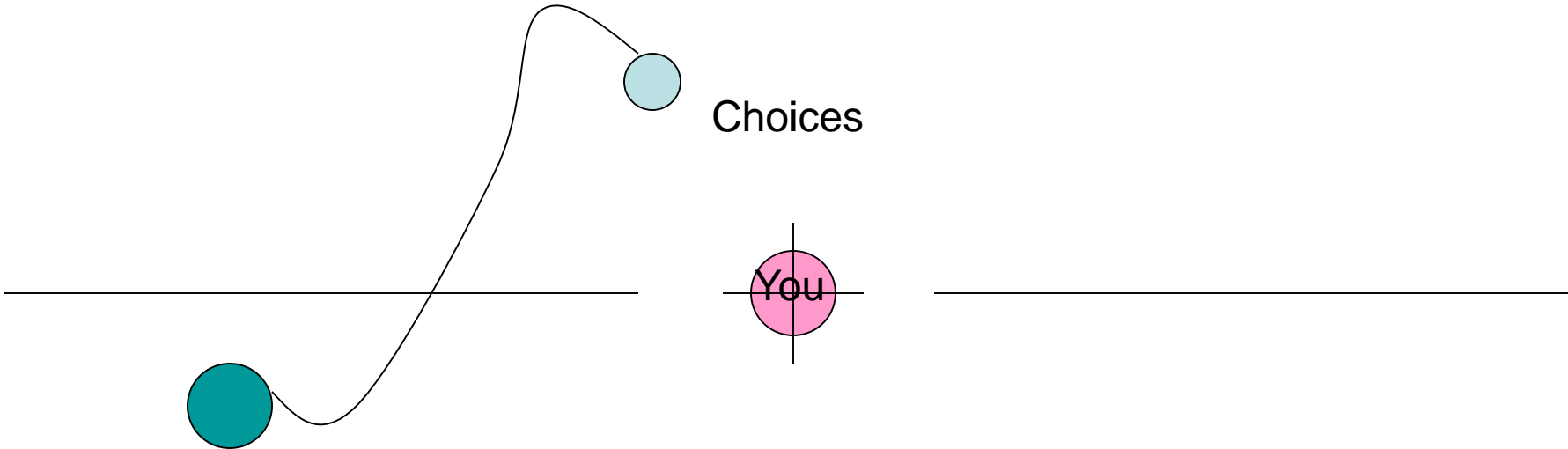
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karmanyevaadhikaarastay maa faleshu kadaa-cha-na  
maa karma-fala hetu-bhuh maa tay sango-astva-akarmani

1. Action only is your privilege.
2. You have no claims to (i.e. you may not demand) the results of your action.
3. You should not become an instrument (obsessed) to achieve the (desired) results.
4. You should not become (discouraged and) inactive.

Example: Crossing a road to catch a bus.

Desired  
Results



Undesired  
Results

There are times when you find that:

The choice of action was in the desired sections but the end result was in undesired/or desired section.

The choice of action was in the undesired section and the result was in the desired/undesired section.

Why does that happen?

(Geeta Chapter 18, verse 14)

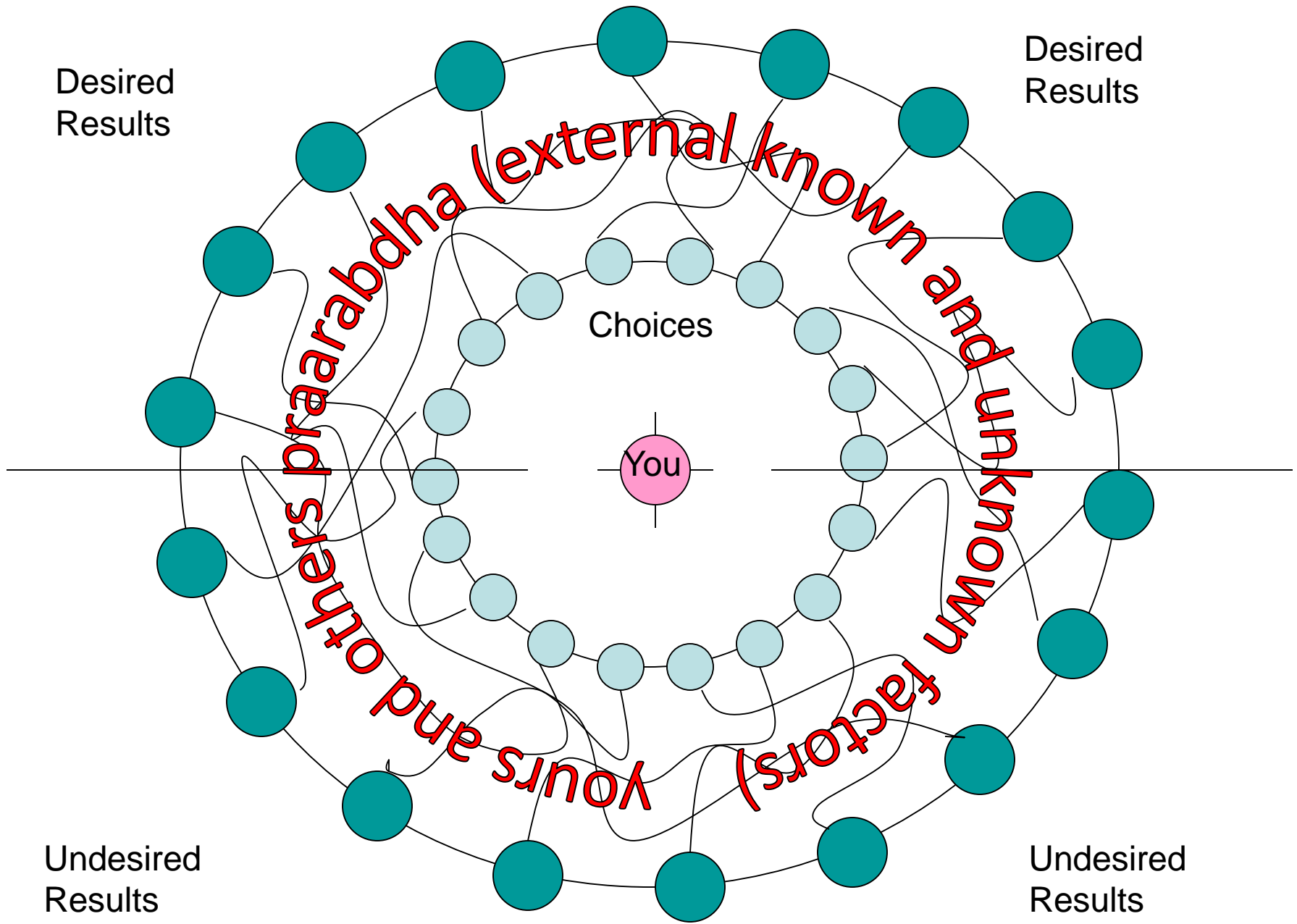
अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम् ।  
विविधाश्च पृथक्चेष्टा दैवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम् ॥१४॥

Five Factors in any completion of any action

1. Subject
2. Object
3. Instrument of action
4. Act itself
5. External factors

## According to the Laws of Karma (External Factors)

1. The result of an action is dependent upon the praarabdha of all persons involved (affected).
2. (Keep in mind that what we assume as the “result” of an action, may not actually be the true final result of that action.)



Are you the sole cause of the fruits of your actions?

Can you control the results all by yourself?

Are you the owner of the result?

**NO, NO & NO**

(Unless the action and its results are completely  
and totally limited to you)

1. Therefore, you can realistically only decide on your what choice / action you will undertake. (Do the right thing. Live in the present.)

2. You may not **insist** on obtaining the result you desire. You should not be **obsessively** attached to the result.

The result depends on the sum of the praarabdha of all 'team' members. (Leave the result to God).

3. This understanding is the seed of detachment and elimination of sense of 'doership'/ego (ahamkaara).

What happens if we insist upon (get attached to, become an instrument / slave to) the fruits of our actions?

(i.e. we want our wishful result – wealth, power, fame - by hook or crook.)

Your thinking (mind) becomes distorted.

# Mind

Let's take an example of the rules / principle  
that governs human mind.

## Geeta Chapter 2 verses 62

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।  
सङ्गात्संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥६२॥

Dhyaayate vishayaanpunsah, sangas te upjaayate  
Sangaat sanjaayate kaamah, kaamat krodho abhijaayate

By (repeated) thinking one develops attachment to that object. From attachment is born desire (to acquire it). From (frustration in fulfilling that) desire is born anger. (ShrimadBhagavad Geeta II-62)

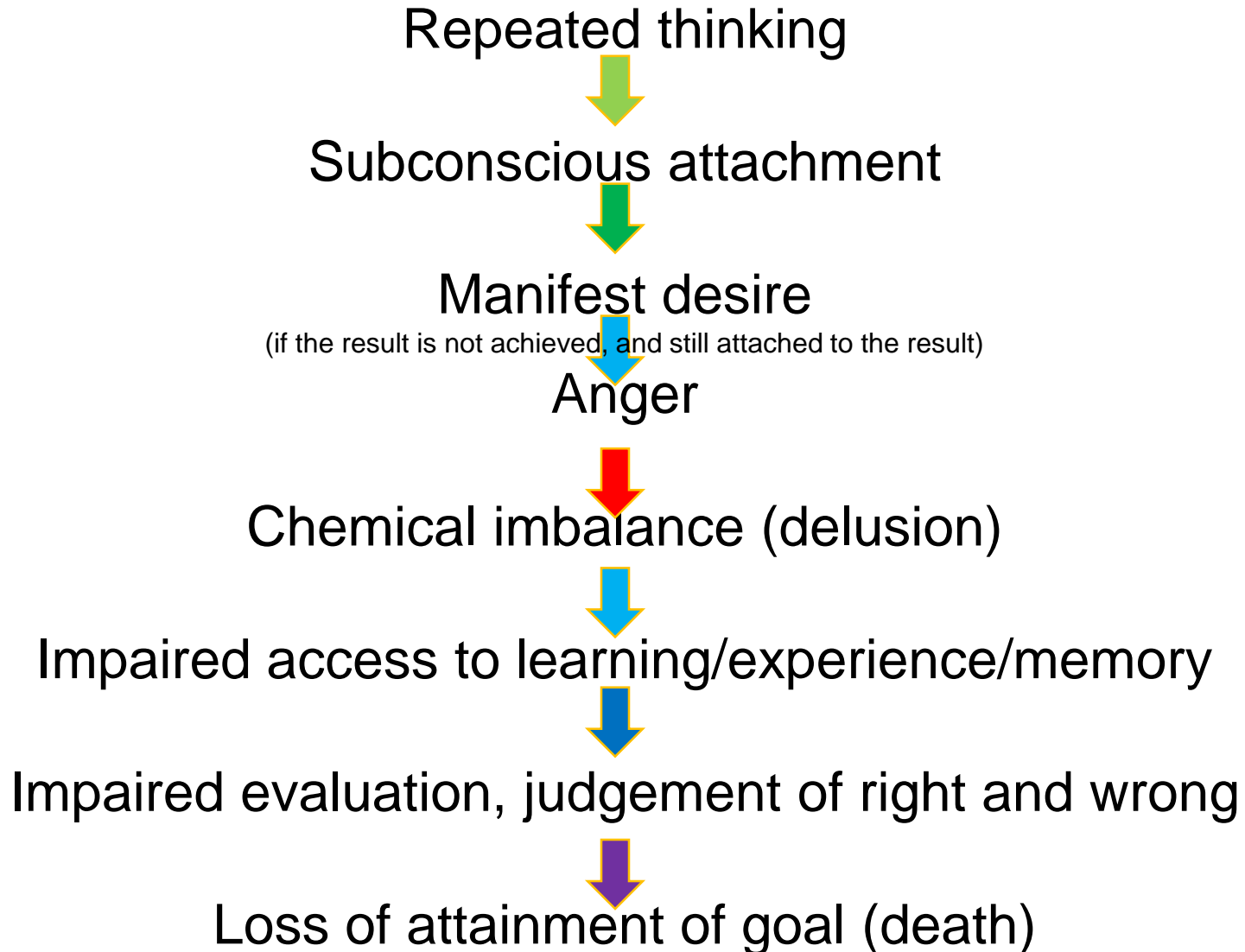
Bhagawaan Krishna says: Geeta Chapter 2 verses 63

क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।  
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥६३॥

krodhaat bhavati sanmohah, sanmohaat smruti vibhramah  
smruti bhranshaad buddhi naasho, buddhi naashaat pranashyati

Because of anger one becomes deluded. From delusion comes corruption of memory. Impairment of memory causes loss of intellect. After intellect is lost, death (defeat) is sure to follow. (ShrimadBhagavad Geeta II-63)

Diagram for the previous shlokas:

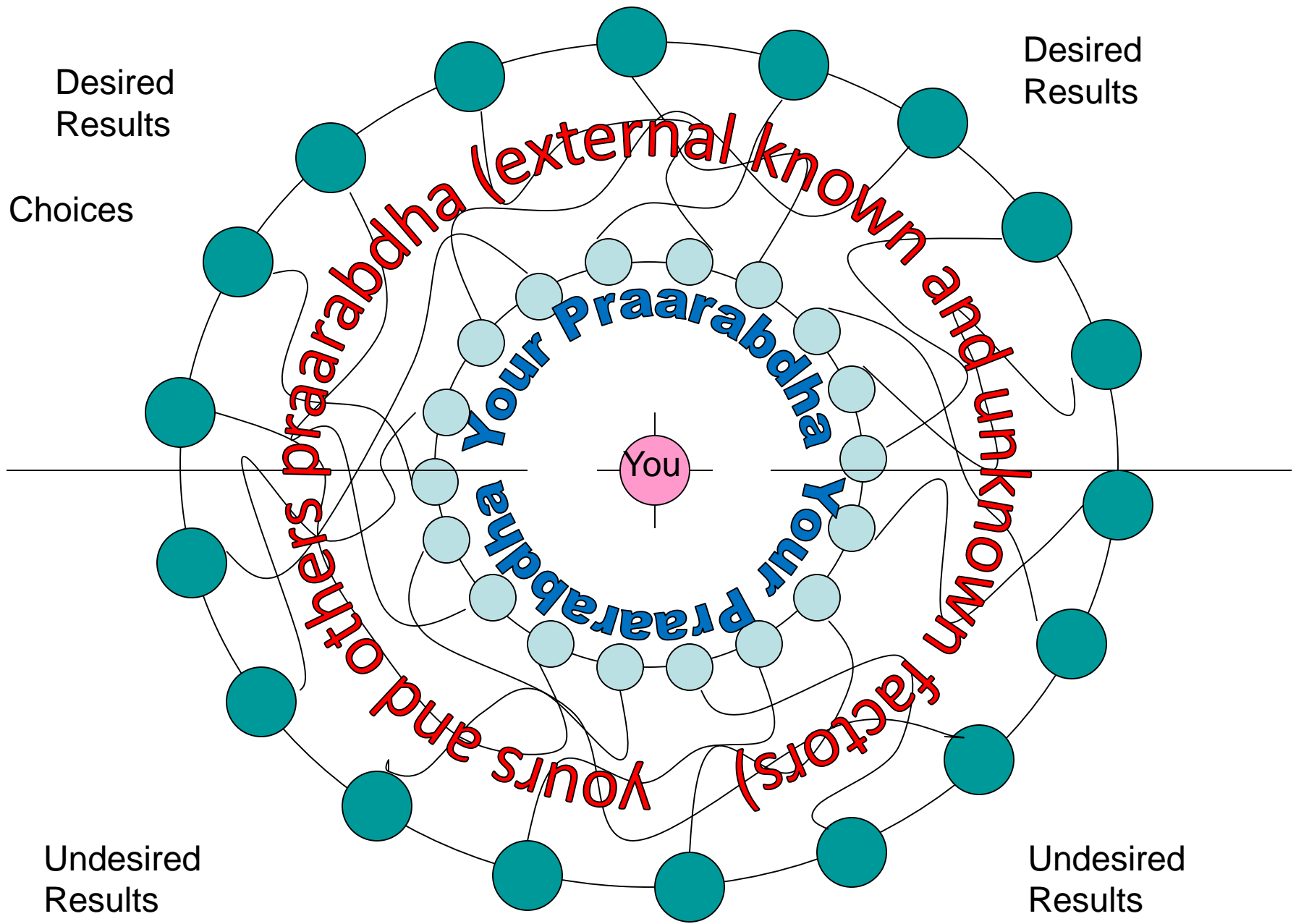


Therefore, because of undue attachment to the result (goal) you are predisposed to make choices that are hurtful to you.

If you want to stop undue attachment to anything, stop brooding on it.

An additional layer of intricacy.....

The choices you make (your free will, your disposition) are affected by your praarabdha.



So what do we do? Are we doomed??

## Two things

1. Choice of action - How to make the right choice.  
(This is under our control).
2. The results (success and failure) of the action –  
How to handle them.  
(This is also under our control).

## 1. Choice of Action

How to develop the skill of making the right choice?

How to develop the clarity of mind?

# 1. Choice of Action

By controlling our mind

By making it think clearly, in the right manner

By not allowing it to wander and get attached to wrong thoughts

## 1. Choice of Action

These skills are developed over time and by practice:

Mind is trainable!

This knowledge/perspective is a crest jewel of Hinduism

# 1. Choice of Action

How to  
Train your mind  
Develop a disciplined life style

Satsang

(being influenced by the right company, thoughts)

Meditation

(being observant of and in control of our thoughts)

Ashtaanga Yoga

(creating the right internal and external circumstances  
to attain total self control)

# 1. Choice of Action

## Ashtaanga Yoga

Yama

Niyama

Aasana

Praanaayaama

Pratyahaara

Dhyaana

Dhaarana

Samaadhi

## 1. Choice of Action

This practice enables us to make the right choice instinctively and naturally

Our thinking and our vision become in synch/alignment with the Universal order  
(Dharma)

## 2. Result of Action

What should be our attitude toward the result of our actions?

## 2. Result of Action

We made the right choice of action.

Then

The conversion of our actions to their fruits happens by taking into account the net effect of praarabdha of many people involved (according to the Universal Order, Dharma, God's plan).

## 2. Result of Action

If we obtain what we 'expected', it is a gift from that Universal Order (God)

Accept it as Prasaad.

## 2. Result of Action

If we did not get what we thought we should have gotten, it is also God's will (Prasaad).

Learn from it to make a better choice for the next set of actions.

We need not be sad or hateful, because it will distort our thinking, and spoil our next set of choice actions and bind us to the karmic cycle.

So why worry!  
Have a positive attitude. Be optimistic.

## 2. Result of Action

This way we develop the right mental perspective towards work, relationships, results, and life in general

## 2. Result of Action

This attitude helps reduce the sense of ego and develops a healthy “detachment” from the events in life

## 2. Result of Action

You learn to accept  
God's plan  
the Universal Order  
Sanaatana Dharma

Your mind becomes steady

You become "cool"!

This is called Samatva Bhaava (steady attitude)

Such a person is called Sthitaprajnya.

*Performing the right action  
with Samatva Bhaava  
without unreasonable  
attachment to its results is  
Karma Yoga*

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ओम् पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ।

Aum

Poornam adah poornam idam  
poornaat poornam udachyate  
poornasya poornam aadaaya  
poornam eva avashishyate