

Baghawad Geeta, Class 155: Chapter 12, Verses 1 & 2

Swamiji introduced the chapter today. It is a small chapter consisting of 20 shlokas but a very significant chapter giving a comprehensive picture of the entire Vedic teaching or the Veda Sara.

In this chapter the first part, Shlokas # 1-12, deal with Bhakti Yoga as a means of attaining moksha. By way of discussing this topic, it removes many misconceptions about Bhakti Yoga. Shlokas # 13-20 discusses Bhakti Yoga Phalam.

These are the two topics discussed in this chapter. I will now give you a bird's eye view of Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti Yoga is not a particular sadhana but it is an entire range of sadhanas that culminate in moksha. Three sadhanas are discussed in Vedas. Gita, being the essence of Vedas, gives them as: 1) Karma yoga, 2) Upasana Yoga and, 3) Gyana Yoga. In Vedas, the word bhakti is almost never used. These three sadhanas together form Bhakti yoga. Why is it so? Sri Krishna feels, all three sadhanas should be practiced, with Ishwara Bhakti. Without an atmosphere of Ishwara Bhakti, they are not Yoga.

Thus:

Bhakti Yoga level 1: Karma
Yoga

Bhakti Yoga level 2:
Upasana Yoga

Bhakti Yoga level 3: Gyana
Yoga

For the sake of all
seekers, Sri Krishna further subdivides the three levels of
sadhanas into five
to make it a little simpler.

Thus:

Karma Yoga: First level

Second level

Upasana Yoga: First level

Second

level

Gyana Yoga: Not divided.

What is difference between
Karma yoga level 1 and level 2? In level -1, Sri Krishna wants
to accommodate all
materialistic people who are not interested in moksha or in
serving other
people. He says, let materialistic people pursue their worldly
desires; as
suppression of desires is dangerous, as mind then fantasizes
on them and could
lead one astray. Even if you are not interested in god, but
only in money and
entertainment, continue. You can still be a Karma Yogi so long
as you follow

two conditions:

1. Fulfill your selfish desires legitimately.
2. When you pursue worldly pleasures and get results, before enjoying them, look upon them as gift of God or Ishwara Prasada.

Be it a car, dress, house or even food, take it first as a prasada and then enjoy it. Thus, look at house as a temple of god and that you are living in a temple of God.

Look upon even your children, not as your children, but as a gift from the Lord; thus this level of karma yoga can be defined as prasada buddhya, sakama karma anushtanam.

If I continue to perform this sadhana, then gradually, mind becomes purer and purer. And as the mind becomes purer and purer, I begin to question: Can I spend my entire life for my own personal benefit? Should't I contribute something to the world? So this kind of questions gradually comes, which is an indication of purity; desire for para upakara; in sakama karma, I have a desire only for taking; in nishkama karma, I develop a desire for giving also. Life is not mere taking; life is giving also; previously I measure my success in terms of how much I have taken. Now my mind changes; I ask the question how much I have given; success is not proportional to taking; Success is directly proportional to giving.

This is the difference
between materialistic and spiritual approach.

Second level of Karma Yoga:

Sakama karma becomes level one; now, selfishness becomes less; awareness of paroupakara karmani rises. Nishkama karma and Pancha Maha Yagna karmani find more time. I do fulfill selfish desires but I also contribute to others. Giving, need not be money alone, but it can also be time and consoling words, all performed without arrogance, but done with Ishwara Arapana Bhavana. My narrowness of mind comes down. These are two levels of karma yoga.

Sakama karma gives purity.

Nishkama karma gives purity
at a faster level.

Once one has gone through two levels of Karma Yoga next comes Upasana Yoga. It is meditation on Ishwara or Saguna Ishwara Dhyanam.

Karma yoga is a must for purity of mind but it has some disadvantages. A karma yogi involved in sakama karma or nishkama karma is a busy person. In both levels of karma, the person is extrovert in nature, or with Bahir Mukhatvam. This extroverted-ness is an obstruction to Gyana Yoga. Gyana Yoga involves enquiry into your own self or Pancha Kosha Viveka; it requires an introverted mind.

Extrovert will miss self-knowledge.

In Upasana, I turn inwards, and invoke God in my heart. I train to look at my inner nature, a very important training. Sri Krishna divides this meditation into two groups.

1. Eka Ishwara Rupa
Dhyanam
2. Aneka Rupa
Ishwara Dhyanam.

Eka Rupa Ishwara Dhyanam:

Ishta Devata Dhyanam is known as Abhyasa Yoga. Once one has practiced this for some time, Sri Krishna suggests, going onto Aneka Rupa Ishwara. Look at God as not located in one place, but expand mind to Vishwa Rupa Ishwara. First sadhana focuses one's mind, while second one expands the mind. Both are Saguna Ishwara Upasanas. These are two levels of Upasanas.

Now person has Gyana

Yogyata. Now he is entering Gyana Nirguna Ishwara Brahman. In Chapter 7 it is called Para Prakriti and it includes Vedanta Sravanam, Mananam and Nidhidhyasanam. It is the systematic study of Nirguna Ishwara so that we come to know Aham Brahma Asmi. Here, Ishwara and Jiva difference disappears.

Having gained this knowledge I go to mananam to remove doubts or obstacles.

Finally, Nidhidhyasanam is that which removes psychological traumas in life. These

traumas don't allow us
to enjoy the divine knowledge.

So, the three put together
is Gyana Yoga. In Nirguna Ishwara, there is neither male nor
female. This Gyana
Yoga is the final Sadhana.

All five Sadhanas put
together is Bhakti Yoga. Gyana Yoga is a part of Bhakti Yoga.

Everyone has to go through
all five sadhanas. No one is born with desire to know God.
That is why Vedas
have many Sakama karmas such as Putra kameshti Yaga. Aham
Brahma Asmi is
ultimate goal.

Shlokas 1- 12: Start with sakama karma and go
through all the stages, and gain the knowledge, aham brahma
asmi; which is the
culmination of bhakthi

yoga. This is the
topic of the first twelve verses;

Shokas 13-20: Sri Krishna talks
about the nature of a person; the character of a person who
had gone through
all these five stages; successfully, or a
Para Bhakta, or an Advaita Gyani is described. This Para
bhakta is my dearest
devotee, says Sri Krishna. He is nirguna Bhakta; he has become
one with me and
I have become one with him. With this background we enter the
chapter.

Shloka # 1:

Arjuna said Those devotees who, being thus ever dedicated, meditate on You, and those again (who meditate) on the Immutable, the Unmanifested-of them, who are the best experiencers of yoga [(Here) yoga means samadhi, spiritual absorption.] ?

Chapter begins with question of Arjuna, an Anuprashnam; a question based on previous teaching. He asks, Is Saguna Bhakta superior or is Nirguna Bhakta superior?

First line of shloka: Some saguna bhaktas meditate on sgauna Ishwara with constant commitment. What type of Saguna Ishwara is meditated upon? The Saguna Ishwara as Aneka Rupa Ishwara or Vishwa Rupa Ishwara is meditated upon.

Second line: There are some other people who meditate on Akshara Ishwara or Param Brahman, the one free of all attributes or Nirguna Brahman. He is attribute-less, not perceptible to sense organs, can't hear, smell or touch; he is not objectifiable by our sense organs. On this Nirguna Brahman, some meditate upon. How can they meditate without an un-objectifiable Brahman? They do so by seeing the subject, I, as Brahman or through Atma Dhyanam.

Among them, the two groups, who is superior? Indirectly, Arjuna's question is, is Saguna Ishwara superior or Nirguna Ishwara superior?

Shloka # 2:

The Blessed Lord said Those who meditate on Me by fixing their minds on Me with steadfast devotion (and) being endowed with supreme faith-they are considered to be the most perfect yogis according to Me.

Sri Krishna answered Arjuna's question. Saguna Ishwara has objectified beauty. Many philosophers say Nirguna Ishwara does not exist. Others say it is not worth knowing. Real answer is that the question itself is wrong. For a wrong question there is no right answer. It is like asking, how many centimeters is the weight of this clip? It can't be answered, as it is not a logical question. So, when we compare two things, comparison comes only when we have to choose between the two. Thus, choice can only be between two similar things. Suppose one wants to drink something; he has a choice of tea, coffee or coke; here he has a choice. Choice can be in the type of container to drink from as well, such as cup, tumbler etc. But if you ask, do you want a tumbler or a drink; there is no choice there. Comparison is only among similar things.

Dvaitam or Saguna bhakti is a means, a stepping-stone, to reach nirguna bhakti, the goal. There is no choice, as nirguna bhakta has to go through Saguna Bhakti. Without Saguna Bhakti one can't get nirguna bhakti. This is the culmination of the Sadhana. But Sri Krishna does not want to insult Arjuna by telling him his question is

not meaningful.

So Sri Krishna says, Saguna Bhaktas are superior, while nirguna bhakta attains

Me. So everyone has to take Saguna Bhakti and then move to Nirguna bhakti.

Take away:

Bhakti Yoga is not a particular sadhana but it is an entire range of sadhanas that culminate in moksha.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy