

Baghawad Geeta, Class 158: Chapter 12, Verses 9 – 11

Shloka # 9:

If, however, you are unable to establish the mind steadily on Me, then, O Dhananjaya, seek to attain Me through the Yoga of Practice.

Continuing his teachings

Swamiji said, by the way of answering Arjuna's question Sri Krishna is teaching

us Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti Yoga is not a particular Sadhana; rather it is a range

of sadhanas that everyone has to go through. The range of Sadhanas are

presented at five levels and completion of all levels ensures one's moksha. In

this chapter all five levels are presented, hence importance of the chapter.

While dealing with the five levels Sri Krishna starts from the highest level

and then descends to lower levels. If a person is not ready at the fifth level,

the highest level, then he can go to the fourth level and so on, down to first.

Fifth level is the step that leads to liberation; Gyana Yoga sadhana is also

known as Akshara Upasana in this chapter; this upasana which is, same as Gyana

yoga, consists of sravanam, mananam and nidhidhyasanam. Thus, Gyana Yoga is

name of Bhakti Yoga at the highest level.

Shankaracharya confirms

this in Viveka chudamani as well. Bhakthi is the final stage of liberation; and in the final stage; bhakthi is defined as self-enquiry; Brahman enquiry; nirguna Ishvara vicharah. And Sri Krishna himself admitted that this Gyana yoga form of bhakthi yoga is not easy for the majority and they need not feel bad about it; let them try the fourth step and the fourth level of bhakthi yoga was discussed in shlokas No.6, 7 and 8.

For such persons, he advises going to fourth level, that is Saguna Ishwara Upasana, as Nirguna Upasana is difficult for an unprepared mind. This Saguna Ishwara is Vishwarupa Ishwara. The eight faceted Ishwara, Ashtamurthy, is Vishwa rupa Ishwara. The eight facets are: The five elements, the Pancha Bhutas, Surya (stars), Chandra (planets) and all Jiva Rashis. This is the Ashtamurthy or Virat Ishwara or Vishwa. May you learn to meditate on such an Ishwara.

If the mind is not subtle enough to conceive the Vishwa Rupa Ishwara, do not feel bad; come down one more level. Instead of Vishwa Rupa Ishwara we can choose a personal God. In our religion, we have many personal gods to choose from. You have gods who are in human form, animal, tree or even a mixture of forms, such as Narasimha etc. We have puranas that describe these gods. We have 36 puranas; 18 puranams and 18 upa puranams; They will give the description of eka rupa Isvara, which includes their body; how many hands they have; how many heads they have; and how many weapons they wield; what type of dress they wear; all these are there; Choose an Ishta devatha, and then practice ishta devatha upasana; otherwise called eka rupa upasana; which Sri Krishna calls abhyasa yoga.

This third step was discussed
in Shloka # 9.

If you are unable to focus mind on Vishwa Rupa Sadhana; if you have strong Raga Dvesha; mind will dwell on objects of attachments and hatreds. Such a mind can't enjoy nature, as it is a narrow mind. In such a situation nothing wrong in taking to abhyasa yoga; and if you cannot love a personal God; we have got mantra, yantra, tantra; thus, we have, shree chakra; it is not a person but a symbol which you can visualize; we have got surya devatha, which is not a person, but a symbol, which is called pratika upasana. Either a prathima upasana or pratika upasana; prathima means God as a person with limbs like you and mine; that is called anthropomorphism; anthropomorphism means visualising God as a human being; like you and I. Our weaknesses are also attributed to God; this is called anthropomorphic approach to Lord; which is also acceptable; and in Gita it is called abhyasa yoga.

May you strive to reach Me.

May you strive to attain Moksha. Can one get moksha through
Ishta Devata

Upasana? Answer is both yes and no. No, one can't directly get
liberation; yes,

one can indirectly obtain moksha. Thus Ishta Devata Upasana
will lead to Vishwa

Rupa Upasana; rather Ishta Devata Upasana will lift you to
Vishwa Rupa Upasana;

Vishwa rupa Upasana will eventually lift you to Nirguna
Upasana and then on to Moksha.

So, it is a parampara karanam for moksha.

Therefore, Arjuna, come to
Ishta Devata Upasana.

Suppose a person says O Krishna I am not fit for eka rupa
upasana also, because upasana is a mental activity. Upasana is
visualizing the Lord within myself; purely with the help of

the mind; Upasana is defined as manasam karma; which means the physical body has to be passive; this is the technical definition; many people define puja as upasana. Remember physical puja cannot be called upasana, because upasana by definition is manasam karma. I should be seated in a place; I should not use any of my Gyanendriyas or karmendriyas, I have to withdraw all my sense organs and it should be, a purely mental activity; which means a person should not be an extrovert person. Upasana is possible only when a person is ready to withdraw the mind away from the external world, make it antharmukham; turn inwards and within my heart, I should be able to visualize my iShta devatha.

And therefore, if a person is extrovert; if a person is rajo guna pradhana; that person will find it difficult, even to sit in a place for five minutes when one has to meditate. Even to sit in a place for five minutes, a rajasic person will find extremely difficult; because he is an embodiment of dynamism and therefore he wants to be active. And therefore Sri Krishna, I am not ready for meditation; and if I do meditation, I will end up as 'mad'. For a restless person, sitting quiet is extremely difficult, that is why many people after retirement get into lot of problems. Not only problem for themselves; the primary sufferer is the wife and family. Generally she recommends take up another job; if you leave me it is OK, because it is extremely difficult.

So, I am not ready for meditation. In that case come down to Step # 2; come to karma or life of activity. This is described in next shloka.

Shloka # 10:

If you are unable even to practise, be intent on works for Me. By undertaking works for Me as well, you will attain perfection. [Identity with Brahman.]

O Arjuna, if you are unfit for Abhyasa Yoga as well (Eka Rupa Upasana) then may you be committed to a life of activity. There are two types of activity: 1) Nishkama Karma; serving society; taking to Pancha Maha Yagna. And 2) Sakama Karma.

Nishkama karma: To serve humanity look at nature; how a river flows down; how trees give fruits, how cows give milk; thus in nature there is more giving and less taking. Therefore, may you be, like a Vrikshaha (tree); standing in the hot sun, the tree gives shade, they give fruits, they give everything expecting nothing; every tree is like a mahatma; So, it is a life dedicated to others. So, make your life one of contribution and do so with proper attitude. Look at society as Ishwara. Be selflessly active. Be a Nishkama karma performer. Lead a life of service. You will certainly attain liberation.

How will you attain liberation? It is an indirect way to liberation; it will lead to eka rupa upasana; it will then lead to aneka rupa upasana; then to gyana yoga and eventually to moksha. Therefore, Arjuna, take to a life of Nishkama Karma.

If one says, I can't commit to nishkama karma as I still have countless desires; I still have to fulfill my duties;

How, then, can I come to

nishkama karma?

Sri Krishna says, Ok, have your personal desires; nothing wrong in fulfilling your duties as a family person; then perform Sakama Karmas. Vedas do prescribe Sakama Karmas. Reality is that, unfulfilled desires can obstruct your spiritual path when you perform other Upasanas. So fulfill your desires. So, be committed to Sakama Karma yoga. If so, How to perform this yoga? This is the lowest step.

Shloka # 11:

If you are unable to do even this, in that case, having resorted to the Yoga for Me, thereafter renounce the results of all works by becoming controlled in mind.

If you can't perform Nishkama Karma, serving society, serve yourself.

So Sri Krishna says; if you are not able to commit yourselves to serving others; serving the society; by taking to Ishvara-arpana buddhi; as Ishvara-arpanam; by taking to that attitude; if you are not able to do that; then may you take to sakama karma.

Shankarcharya says, in rare cases even Nishidha karmas are allowed such as animal sacrifice to god; it even allows use of alcohol. How to perform this karma; it is sakama karma, selfish activity, expecting worldly benefits and personal benefit. Here, dedicate sakama karma as Ishwara Arpanam. Take the phalam as your own result and enjoy. But when you are enjoying the benefit, don't call it your

benefit; call it

Ishwara Prasadam; hence, the reason, children are named Ram Prasad, Krishna

Prasad etc; with this, even a selfish action purifies the mind. Even a house

you built for yourself; look upon that house as Lord's house.

Install God in the

house; dedicate house to God; " say, "permit me to live in your temple". I am

living in temple of god. This fulfills your personal desire at the same time kama

karma purifies your mind. So you are under care of Lord.

In

fact, that house will be a pure house free from all forms of inauspiciousness; therefore

it becomes Lord's house; it becomes Lord's responsibility to drive away all the

evil forces and therefore you are living under the care of the Lord. So this

life style is called sakama

karma pradhana karma yoga.

Therefore

Sri Krishna says, dedicate the result of all the karmas, which includes kama karmas and

which includes the inevitable nishidha karmas; like when you are cleaning

the house, by using insecticide etc. Certainly himsa is involved; you are doing

himsa; for keeping up the house; And there will be inevitable papam; they are

called soona; soona means inevitable papams, to be done by a grihastha and even if such papams are there;

nishidha karmas are

there; even those nishidha

karmas will not affect you, when they are offered to the Lord.

They will only
purify you.

If I do this karma yoga, I
will graduate to second step of nishkama karma yoga; where
world of glamor will
not appeal anymore; material desire will be replaced by
spiritual desires. This
is called maturity. Once kama comes down, I will get Chitta
Shudhi and then I
continue on to Eka Rupa, then Aneka rupa and finally Gyana
yoga.

This is lowest level of
bhakti. If one says, I can't even practice this, then better
luck in next
birth. With this all five stages have been discussed. All five
together are
known as Bhakti Yoga. If a person is born advanced; he can go
to Gyana Yoga
directly; because they have gone through those Upasanas in
previous lives,
other wise one has to start at level # 1.

Take away:

Bhakti Yoga is not a
particular Sadhana; rather it is a range of sadhanas that
everyone has to go
through.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy