

Bhagwat Geeta, Class 159 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yoga Verses 12 and 13

In this chapter, Lord Krishna discusses five stages of bhakti yoga:

1. Sakama karma bhakta, using religion for worldly benefits, not necessarily for spiritual benefits. But we should follow two rules:
 1. Do not use immoral or unrighteous methods; in other words, use only dharmic methods.
 1. Use the enjoyment and benefits as a gift from the lord. Change your attitude also and take is eeswara prasadam. This will refine the mind and prepare for the next step of bhakti yoga.
2. Niṣkāma karma: Desires becomes selfless desire. My actions benefit more number of people. Karma is done for the benefit of others.
3. Ishta devata upasana: Mind is refined sufficiently to withdraw external world.
4. Eka or viśvarūpa upsana
5. Nirguna Eeswara upasana or advaida jñānam is the highest level of bhakti yoga.

If one passes through all five stages of bhakti yoga, one becomes sthira pragya.

Verse 12

Knowledge is indeed superior to meditation without knowledge, meditation with knowledge is superior to mere knowledge. Renunciation of the results of actions is superior to

meditation. There is peace after renunciation.

In this verse, Lord Krishna talks about four types of sadhanas, in the order of superiority:

1. Abyāsaḥ: Meditation without knowledge; Meditation upon God in one form or another; a meditation not backed by knowledge; without understanding what god is.
2. jñānam: Knowledge without meditation; By the thorough study of scriptures one person may know what god is; knowledge without practicing meditation.
3. Dhyānam: Knowledge with meditation or meditation with knowledge. A mixture of knowledge and meditation. Dhyānam is practiced after understanding god.
4. Karma pala thyagam: Dedicating all the karma palam to the lord and taking them as a gift from the Lord.

In the previous verse a list of five sadhanas are given, where karma pala thyagam is the highest. Here karma pala thyagam is elevated by Krishna to encourage sadhanas. Unfortunately, the majority of the people are ready only for the lowest study of sakama karma. To encourage people, Lord Krishna glorifies and elevates sakama karma from the lowest to highest.

Krishna says the lowest one in this list mechanical sadhana is abyāsaḥ. But we must notice that even the lowest one is better than not doing any sadhana.

Most people, even the people who are not familiar with scripture, offer anything new to the Lord by placing it in front of the lord, doing puja and taking that item back. This is practicing sakama karma.

With this verse, the first part of Chapter 12 is over.

Verse 13

My devotee is a non-hater of all beings, is friendly

compassionate, free from 'mine' notion, free from 'I' notion, same in comfort as well as discomfort, and forbearing.

A person goes through all five stages of bhakti yoga, he becomes a jñāni. The knowledge is aham brahma asmi or I am Brahman, or the Lord is not different than me. Paramatma and Jivatma are not two entities; they are two words for one and the same. Similar to wave and ocean are not two different things, but they are two different for the substance water.

How does such a bhakta conduct himself in the world? What are the characteristics or behaviors of this advaita jñāni?

First benefit of this knowledge is that a person having this knowledge, will follow this sadhana. The second benefit is that whatever is a natural trait of a realized person, it should be taken as a sadhana as natural trait. When a person practices spiritual sadhana, he obtains a state of mind which will be useful in enjoying this world.

The first trait of a jivan muktha or jñāni is freedom from hate: He or she does not hate any person in the world. Any form of hatred is not justifiable, because all people are divine and innately good. If we are not allowed to hate a person, are we allowed to hate the wrong action of a person? This also does not deserve hatred, because by hating the behavior, you are not changing the character of the person. The appropriate actions in this instance are sāma (educating), dhana (charity), beda (change), and danda (punishment). Note that the longer the list of hated items and people, the further away I am from mokṣa.