

Bhagwat Geeta, Class 164 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yoga Summary

The 12th chapter is Culmination of middle section of Bagawad Gita, called madhyama śatakam. Bhakti or love or devotion is possible only towards someone who is known. Our attitude towards God will also depend on our knowledge of God. Knowledge alone can contribute towards a healthy attitude.

Five chapters are devoted to give knowledge of God. This 12th chapter is the culmination of the previous five chapters. In this chapter Lord Krishna has condensed entire vedantic teachings, both Veda Poorva and Vedanta concepts. This chapter has two topics – bhakti yoga and bhakti yoga param.

This chapter begins with a question from Arjuna (verses 1 to 3), based on the previous chapter – viśvarūpa eeswara, which comes under saguna eeswara. Arjuna has heard about nirguna eeswara also and he has a question of superiority of saguna and nirguna eeswara. Generally, we are attracted to saguna eeswara because we are not capable of conceiving nirguna eeswara. This question is relevant only when there is a question of choice. In this case, there are no choices. One must follow both saguna dhyānam and nirguna dhyānam. Without saguna dhyānam, one can not come to nirguna dhyānam. Without nirguna dhyānam, saguna dhyānam is not complete. Nirguna eeswara is the ultimate reality.

Bhakti yoga is not the name of a particular sadhana, but a range of sadhana that everyone must go through (Verses 3 to 12). This range consists of five levels.

1. Sakama Karma Pradhāna Karma Yoga: This is the beginning stage where a person is allowed to do any karma to

fulfil personal desire. For the maintenance of acquired karmas (yoga shema pradhāna karma), transfer some of the yoga shema to lord. Then only we will have time for the other activities which is meant for chitha siddhi.

2. Nishkama Karma Pradhana Yoga or chitha siddhi pradhāna karma yoga. Accept to live with whatever comes our way.

1 plus 2 is kama yoga.

- Ishta Devata Upasana: Transfer yoga shema to lord, enabling the mind to turn inward, forgetting family, and other samsara. In 12th chapter, this is called abyāsaḥ yoga; look at ishta devata as viśvarūpa eeswara.
- Viśvarūpa dhyānam is aneka roopa dhyānam. Once, I look upon as total universe, there are not many gods. The Lord is not bound by any form, and this helps in the expansion of mind. At this point he is Sadhana Catuṣṭaya Sampatti. This is the mental preparedness for knowledge.
- jñāna Yoga: The final level of bhakti is self-inquiry. This consists of vedanta sravanam manana Nidhithyasanam, consistent systematic study of vedantic scriptures for a length of time under the guidance of competent guru (sravanam). Krishna states this in the fourth chapter. That nirguna eeswara is not different from me, the real me. Any doubt that obstructs this knowledge should be removed (mananam). Internalize and assimilate vedanta that I am the higher nature (nidhithyasanam).

When the five levels are completed, there will be a transfer of emotional personality. The first four levels belong to veda poorva and the fifth level belong to Vedanta. These five levels do not have clear cut division. We will be following all the sadhanas, but one of them will be predominant.

Verses 13 to 19: Bhakti Yoga Palam:

1. Direct benefit of bhakti yoga is atma jñānam; aham brahma asmi; I am pūrṇaḥ; I am complete.
2. Removal of ignorance: What is the connection between intellectual knowledge and emotional benefit. Vedanta says we are complete and pūrṇaḥ. Due to self-ignorance, we don't realize that we are complete. Ignorance leads to erroneous conclusion that we are incomplete. This erroneous conclusion is at an intellectual level. When we feel we are incomplete, we go on struggling in life and we go after other material benefits, searching for something that will make us complete. This is kama and it is at emotional level. When there is obstruction to kama, there is krōdha. Fulfilment of kama leads to more kama. Unfulfillment of kama leads to krōdha. Fulfilled kama leads to lōbha. Kama is caused by ignorance – that I am incomplete – apurna. This ignorance is at the intellectual level, but the result is at emotional level – kama and krōdha.

All our transactions are at three different levels:

1. As a kartha – doer
2. As a boktha – experiencer
3. As a Pramada or witness/observer

Benefits of bhakti yoga are:

1. As a kartha, all my actions are not meant for fulfilment but done with fulfilment (poornatvam) – acceptance of the result.
2. As a boktha, my mind has fullness, love and compassion; that mind is not vulnerable to emotional disturbances, like anger, impulsive actions etc.
3. As a Pramada, the action comes from love and compassion without expectations, the quality of actions are excellent. The action is sound and appropriate. As an

observer the perspective of the experiencer is tranquility not subject to raga and dwesha.

To get these benefits, everyone has to go through all five stages.

Bhagwat Geeta, Class 163 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yoga Verses 17 to 20

In the second part of the 12th chapter, beginning of 13th verse, Lord Krishna talked about the highest bhakta who has gone through all the five levels of bhakti yoga. This bhakta will necessarily be jñāni. This Jñāni is sthira pragya. Jñāni's source of love is himself. He is efficient in all situations and takes appropriate actions in every situation. Generally, a samsari takes two extremes. The first extreme is when there is a problem, impulsively takes action and often unjust or inappropriate actions, because discriminative power is not used when making this action. The other extreme is whatever is the situation, he puts up with all the problems and allows other people to be exploited. Inaction and passivity is the other extreme. One is reaction and the other is inaction. Vedanta says both are wrong and what is required is appropriate action. Punishment should be given only after proper inquiry.

Verse 17

That devotee who neither rejoices nor grieves, neither desires nor hates, and gives up good and evil is dear to Me.

The one who is free from extreme emotional reactions to situations is dear to Krishna. The reactions to favorable and unfavorable situations should not be extreme. It is this discriminating power is what distinguishes humans from animals. Emotional upheaval clouds discriminating power. We should have enough discriminating power to know that our discriminating power is getting clouded and postpone any response. We should have mental balance to know that the mental balance is out of balance. We must be free from binding raga dwesha and binding expectations. Have expectations but be prepared for their fulfillment as well as their non-fulfilment. You can contribute to your future, but you can't control your future.

From vedantic angle, both punyam and pavam are bondage. Since punyam is finite in nature, it is also bondage. Punyam is golden shackle and pavam is iron shackle. A jñāni does punya karma for jñāna nishta.

Verse 18

He is the same towards friend and foe, as well as honor and dishonor. He is the same in cold and heat as well as comfort and discomfort and is free from attachment.

The one who has the same attitude towards friend and foe is jñāni. jñāni does not develop raga or dwesha towards friend or foe. A Jñāni's goal always is to correct the other person and not to punish the other person. Compassion does not mean putting up with wrong actions. With compassion we can take appropriate steps. Honor and dishonor are not totally under our control. We have to be mentally prepared to treat honor and dishonor with equanimous.

Life nothing but a series of opposing events. If there is birth, there is death. If there is health, there is illness. We can only prepare to accept all opposing events. Until jñānam comes only option is bhakti towards ishta devata. We

should strengthen our bhakti until we get jñānam. When a favorable situation comes, don't expect it to be permanent.

Verse 19

That devotee, who is the same towards censure and praise, who is a person of limited speech, who is content with anything, who is homeless, and who has firm knowledge of the Self is dear to Me.

Whatever you do, there will be somebody to criticize because criticism does not involve any expenditure. If there are people willing to advise you, they will tell you directly. The uniqueness of Jñāni's mind is easy to please. Self-knowledge gives him this strength and it is the most powerful knowledge.

Verse 20

Those devotees who keep Me as the primary goal and who faithfully pursue this righteous and immortal teaching as mentioned are very dear to Me.

How can I attain such a state of mind? One must go through the five stages of bhakti yoga:

1. Sakama Karama yoga.
2. Nishkama karma yoga.
3. Eka roopa bhakti.
4. Aneka roopa bhakti.
5. Nirguna eeswara jñānam.

Krishna says that this teaching is based on veda and not contrary to the revelation given in vedas.

Bhagwat Geeta, Class 162 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yoga Verses 15 and 16

After talking about the five stages of bhakti yoga, Lord Krishna is talking about a person who has successfully gone through all five stages and therefore he is the highest bhakta who is para bhakta or advaida bhakta or jñāni bhakta or one who has jivan mukthi.

Moksha is not a benefit which we get after death, but it is a benefit here and now. This benefit is at mental level and not mystical or miraculous powers. Jivan mukthi is freedom from samsara or free from kama, krōdha, moha and permanent disturbances we endure during waking stage.

Four fundamental disturbances are:

1. Harsha: We saw this in last class.
2. Amarshaha: Intolerant at many levels. Intolerance is that I can't accept the success of other party. We look for something to criticize of others and find something to put the other party down. This envy or jealousy is Amarsha. It is very difficult to find remedy to jealousy. To free from that and admire another person's superiority in my field, is very difficult. Moksha is freedom from this envy or jealousy.
3. Bayam: Innate fear that starts from birth to the end. Fear is because we hold on to wrong things. Most of the things we hold on to cause fear. Whatever we like usually creates a variety of problems. If I am very proud of my family, but there is a fear that our children protect the name of the family. Our biggest fear is what others will think. When we have money, we are afraid of tax. If I become famous, I am worried

about my dishonor. For a person who is honored, losing that honor is worse than death. Fear of competition and rivalry is common in any field. If I love my body and its beauty, then I am afraid losing that beauty in old age. When I am committed to various sciences and theories, I am afraid of others challenging my theories. If I am dharmic person, other adharmic people start putting me down. If I am attached to physical body, I am afraid of death. Learning to depend on yourself is the only solution.

4. Uthevga: Mental disturbances and sorrow.

All these disturbances are happening without my control, and these are called samsara. Our travel out of all these mental disturbances is gradual – world dependence to god dependence to self-dependence. Self-dependence is independence.

Verse 16

The devotee of Mime who is independent, pure, resourceful, impartial, undisturbed of all action is dear to Me.

The one who is not emotionally dependent on any external factors to be happy, does not have any expectations. Freedom from dependence is freedom from expectations. Freedom from frustrations is possible only when there are no expectations. If at all you want to have expectations, let them be non-binding expectations. If it is fulfilled, great; if it is not fulfilled, be willing to accept it. This resilience of mind is required to come out of frustrations.

One must be pure both internally and externally. One must be indifferent, meaning the one who is not partial and must not belong to any groups; one who belongs to everyone. The one who is free from sorrow. We do not have control over our experiences. Experiences are controlled by desa (space), kala (time) and praraptha. After jñānam all experiences do not become favorable, but jñānam makes me endure those

experiences. We all require different experiences for spiritual growth. Every experience is specially chosen by an eeswara. Let me not judge what experiences given by eeswara; my spiritual lesson should be to learn from those experiences. From tragic experiences we learn more. That is why sorry is a spiritual lesson or sadhana, if I am willing to learn from a tragic experience. So, a jñāni welcomes all experiences. Any action you do, thinking that once that action is successful, my life will be complete, that action is a binding karma. Because no karma or karma phalāṅṁ gives poornatvam.. Action is finite, result is finite. Finite plus finite cannot become infinite. If I am expecting poornatvam, that will not happen with more and more action; life becomes a struggle or bondage. Jñāni has understood this fact; and therefore, he does not do anything for poornatvam, but he does everything from poornatvam. Poornatvam becomes a way of life, and it is not destination. Poornatvam as a destination makes life miserable, poornatvam as a way of life is liberation.

Bhagwat Geeta, Class 161 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yoga Verse 15

In the second part of the 12th Chapter, Lord Krishna talks about the characteristics of highest bhakta, the one who has completed all five levels of bhakti yoga or who is a jñāni. What are the characteristics of such a bhakta? That is the topic for now.

This bhakta has understood that he is not different from poorna eeswara. When I understand that I am purnam, I do not

miss anything in life. In this context, purnam is sathyam, Jñānam and anandam. I don't miss anything. As long as I miss something, there will be a struggle to make me complete. Dissatisfaction can be three:

- Physical dissatisfaction. Not being satisfied with physical appearance.
- Emotional dissatisfaction.
- Intellectual dissatisfaction. There are many basic questions for which I don't have answers.

In the case of jñāni, he is involved in the activities, but the activities do not come from an incomplete mind and therefore they are not struggle. Jñānam is in the primary purpose and karma and upasana are in the secondary purposes.

Yoga is the means that brings jivatma and paramatma together. The yoga that really brings jivatma and paramatma together is the knowledge that they were never away from each other.

Atma here is the body mind sense organ complex or sthūla, sukshma kārāṇa śarīram that has been managed well. He knows how to use and not enslaved by them and has self-discipline. For this self-discipline, we have ashtanga yoga.

- Yama and niyama take care of my moral integration.
- Asana takes care of physical integration.
- Prana takes care of energy integration.
- Prathyagara takes care of sense organ integration.
- Dharana, dhyānam and samadhi takes care of mental integration.

This self-integration is required before coming to vedanta. During the study of vedanta, we require this integration for reception. A man or woman without self-discipline will not be able to accomplish anything in life. Because of this self-

discipline alone a jñāni was able to achieve self-knowledge with conviction.

Vedanta requires two processes:

- Sravanam: Listen to vedanta systematically, for a length of time, without asking questions or raising doubts; keep doubts and questions aside. Many questions and doubts will be answered when you continue to listen and complete comprehension.
- Mananam: You remove the doubts at intellectual level. Raise questions and doubts until they are removed. The greatest bhaktas must have the greatest vedantic knowledge. Without this knowledge, there will be distance between atma and paramatma.

The greatest bhakta will have complete knowledge of vedanta.

Next characteristic of para-bhakta

God is appreciated in three levels.

- Eka rūpa eeswara
- Viśvarūpa eeswara
- Aroopa eeswara

The important point to note here is that the higher levels of bhakti do not displace lower levels of bhakti. A jñāni who appreciates formless god, can also appreciate a ishta devata. When there is emotional need, personal relationship is important. Ishta devata fulfils this need. Advaita bhakti cannot destroy dvaita bhakti.

At times, our intellect is dominant, God with absolute reality, nirgunam brahman fulfil the intellectual need. At emotional level ishta devata will be useful and at intellectual level, nirguna brahman or Aroopa eeswara will be

useful. Use both of them. Ishta devata bhakti is developed through puranic literature.

Verse 15

He by whom the world is not disturbed, who is not disturbed by the world, and who is free from elation, envy, fear and anxiety is dear to Me.

There are two types of people:

1. One who has rock like heart, nothing affects him. These people have the advantage of not being hurt by other or any situation. But they may keep hurting others. They are not hurt, but they keep hurting others.
2. One who are extremely sensitive people who can sense other's pain. They are always careful with regard to handling others. Since they are too sensitive, they get very easily hurt by others.

Jñāni is like a flower when he handles others and like a rock when he receives experience from the world. As a kartha he is like a flower and a boktha he is like a rock. Jñāni is so sensitive to others feeling, he does not hurt others. Even though he is so tender like a flower, when it comes to receiving criticism, his heart becomes like a rock, and he does not get disturbed. Many people in the world are the other way around. When they handle others, they are like rock, when they receive experience, they are like a flower.

Since a jñāni doesn't hurt, he doesn't have any guilt either. Jñāni is free from both guilt and hurt and he is relived and liberated. Jñāni has internal freedom from four:

1. Harsha: Elation or over excitement. Over excitement is that type of happiness where we lose our discriminative power. When I lose the discriminative power, I lose the

fact that the greatest excitement is also temporary. This is wrong expectation because of lack of discrimination.

2. Amarsha: Intolerance, impatience. The more dynamic and perfect a person is, the more disturbed that person is.
 3. Bhayam: Insecurity, which is innate in everyone.
 4. Udhvitha: Mental disturbances and sorrow.
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Bhagwat Geeta, Class 160 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yoga Verses 13 and 14

In the first 12 verses of the 12th chapter, Lord Krishna talked about the entire range of sadhanas that should be followed and these sadhanas are bhakti yoga. Bhakti yoga includes the first two levels and the second two levels of upasana yoga and the last two levels of jñāna yoga. Bhakti yoga should be culminated by vedanta sravana, manana nidhithyasanam. If a person has gone through all five stages of bhakti yoga, he would have gone through jñāna yoga, and he will be a jñāni.

A person who has gained this jñānam is called Paramahamsa. Jñāni is the greatest bhakta. In advaida, the distance between jivatma and paramatma is zero and the level of bhakti or love is infinite.

Jñānis praraptha is a mixture of punyam and pavam, because he would have committed pavam when he was an ajñāni.

From the verse 13th to 19th verse, Lord Krishna talks about the qualities of this Paramahamsa. We can test ourselves to see

how many of the qualities we have assimilated. But self-judgement should be used for improvement of ourselves. It should be an exhilarating force and not a retarding force.

Qualities of Paramahansa or parameters to test myself:

1. Never justifies hatred because there is no justifiable hatred. Hatred can never be a sign of disapproval. I should be able to pray for the benefit of all. That is the inner non-exclusion of any person.
2. A friend to all. A friend is one:
 1. Who will guide and direct me when I follow the wrong path and tells me what my problems are.
 1. Who puts me in a righteous path.
 1. With whom I can share my intimate secrets and have the confidence that he will not share it with others.
 1. Who shares my virtues with others.
 1. Who is there to help me (with money, moral support etc.) when I am in crisis.
3. Mind having empathy. A mind having the ability to place ourselves in the position of others. When the other person goes through painful experiences, they become my experience. I go out to help spontaneously, just like I help myself spontaneously.
4. Give up ownership (mamakara). There are two methods to achieve this:
 1. One method is vedantic method – that is to recognize atma is asaṅgaḥ like space, not related to or connected to anything. Free from all relations and associations.
 1. Another method is religious – that is to understand that whatever I have is a temporary gift from the Lord for temporary use and ready to return it anytime.

5. Give up ahangara – Ahangara is identification with the three bodies (sthūla, sūkṣma and kāraṇa śarīram) or body mind complex (identification with everything else is mamakara).
6. Be able to treat everything in life is purposeful and endowed with both sugam and duḥkam. The vedantic method is to understand aham sathyam and everything else is mithyā. The religious method is to understand that everything in creation is given by the Lord and is purposeful. This conviction must be very strong to understand everything in creation is purposeful. We must have this conviction for sugam and duḥkam also.
7. Shama or titikṣā: When I face a situation which I consider unfavorable to me the tendency is to change the situation to make it favorable to me. This conversion is done either by a violent method (verbal or physical) or a nonviolent method. Our immediate reaction is mostly the violent method. A person who postpones this method and tries to adopt nonviolent method is shama. To develop shama, we must understand that violent methods are natural and give more effective results. But the side effects are worse as the victim of the violence also becomes violent.

Verse 14:

That devotee of Mine whose mind and intellect are fixed up Me and who is ever content, tranquil, self-restrained and with clear knowledge is dear to Me.

If there is contentment, how would I contribute to the world? But contented people alone can contribute, and the discontented people will not be able to contribute. The entire life of jñāni is to contribute to the world.

There is no distance between jivatma and paramatma, because Bhagavān is all pervading. If I still feel distance, is

notional delusion caused by ignorance and the ignorance is removed by jñānam.

Four types of people: The last two are Jñānis the other two are not Jñānis, but people with samsara.

1. One who has neither miraculous power or jñānam.
 2. One who has siddhi but no jñānam.
 3. One who has gyanam but without any miraculous power.
 4. One who has both gyanam and miraculous power.
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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. Nişkāma 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 upasana
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 pragra.

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 advaida 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 dhanda (punishment). Note that the longer the list of hated items and people, the further away I am from mokśa.

Bhagwat Geeta, Class 158 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yoga Verses 10 and 11

Bagawan Krishna presents the important teaching of bhakti yoga. Bakti yoga is not a particular sadhana, but it is the name of the entire range of sadhana everyone should go through. Bagawan Krishna starts with the highest level, he starts with the fifth and final step is jñāna yoga sadhana, which is closer to moksha. This is nirguna savanna manana nidhithyasanam. jñāna yoga is the name of bhakti yoga at the highest level. This form of bhakti yoga is difficult for many, then they should practice the fourth level, which is saguna eeswara upasana. Saguna eeswara is viśvarūpa eeswara, which is ashta murti eeswara. Ashta Moorthi of virad or viswa roopa Eeswara represented by:

- Five elements are panca bootha are five Moorthy.
- Surya stands for all stars and is the sixth.
- The moon stands for all planets and is the seventh.
- All the living beings are the eighth.

Ishta roopa upasana itself uplifts you to viśvarūpa upasana which will lift you to nirguna brahma upasana.

If mind is not subtle enough to conceive viśvarūpa eeswara, then practice eka roopa. Chose a personal god and practice eka rūpa upsana which Krishna calls abyāsaḥ yoga. A person with raga dwesha will find it difficult to visualize viśvarūpa eeswara, then that person can practice abyāsaḥ yoga or ishta devata upasana. By ishta devata upasana one can not directly achieve moksha, but one can indirectly attain moksha, ishta devata upasana will lift devotee to nirguna eeswara upasana and bringing to liberation. Ishta devata upasana is paramparā karanam, that is indirect means of achieving liberation.

Upsana is mental activity and implies withdrawing all sense organ and a mental activity. Upsana is a introverted activity and is possible only when a person is ready to withdraw from mental activity. If a person is extrovert or rājo guna pradhāna that person will find it difficult to practice upsana.

Verse 10

If you are incapable of abyāsaḥ yoga also, be devoted to My works. Even by doing works for My sake, you will attain liberation.

If a person is not ready for eka rūpa upsana, then commit to karma yoga or activities. The activities can be classified as:

1. Niṣkāma karma: Activities dedicated to the service of the society; this will purify spiritually and qualify you for ishta devata upasana. For example, trees produce fruits for themselves but for others also. River flows through the plains for the benefit of other living beings, not for itself. Niṣkāma karma will lead to liberation indirectly by making the mind ready for

eka rūpa to aneka rūpa to arupa or nirguna brahman.

2. Sakama karma: But many of us have many worldly desires and not ready for niṣkāma kara, then practice sakama karma. Sakama karma is fulfilling legitimate worldly desires but dedicate that karma also to lord and enjoy the results as a prasadam from the lord. Don't call the results of sakama karma palam your accomplishment. After this, you can start practicing niṣkāma karma.

Verse 11

If you are not able to do this also, then, taking to My worship, renounce the results of all actions with self-restraint.

Niṣiddha Karma like himsa (killing insects) etc. Some of these are inevitable.

In rare cases, niṣiddha karma is also ok, says Sankarachariyar. That is why some tamasic activities are mentioned in shastras. That is why some tamasic rituals are mentioned in scriptures.

When a person does sakama karma, he expects a worldly benefit out of it. You dedicate that result to eeswara, do not take it as the result of your efforts. Then selfish actions will have the capacity to purify the mind. Dedicate the results of all the karmas – kama karmas and niṣiddha karma to the lord.

If we practice sakama karma for a length of time, then we can transcend to niṣkāma karma. We will grow out of petty desires and life will become niṣkāma karma pradhāna karma yoga.

Bhagwat Geeta, Class 157 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yoga Verses 6 to 9

Lord Krishna presents bhakti yoga in five levels. The fifth level is jñāna yoga and that is the highest level of bhakti yoga. The lord in jñāna is nirguna eeswara. The worship of nirguna eeswara is unique, and it is not a physical worship because nirguna eeswara does not have a physical form. So the worship is in the form study and inquiry of nirguna eeswara. The inquiry consisting of sravanam, mananam nidhithyasanam.

jñāna yoga form of worship is presented in verses 3, 4 and 5. The technical word for jñāna yoga aksharobasanam. Lord Krishna admits jñāna yoga is difficult because:

1. Nirguna brahman is not available unobjectifiable and inconceivable. It can be only received in one form only and that is in the form of myself.
2. Requires lot of qualifications like viveka, vairāgyam etc.

Since jñāna yoga is very difficult, people follow simpler yoga like bhakti yoga, karma yoga etc. For moksha, many paths are not available, and scriptures clearly says jñānam is the only path. If darkness is the problem, the only solution is to bring light. All other acts like sweeping the floor, chanting slokas etc. will not remove darkness. Ignorance goes away only by jñānam or knowledge. You can get knowledge in any field only by inquiry and the relevant study. That should be extended to jñānam. If jñāna yoga is difficult, make it is easy, by preparing and qualifying for jñāna yoga. Jñāna yoga is difficult for unprepared person and easy for a prepared person.

Verses 6 and 7

Keeping Me as the primary goal and dedicating all actions unto Me, some devotees worship, mediating upon Me with undivided attention. For them, whose minds are set on Me, I shall soon become the savior from the ocean of samsara, which is best with death, Oh Arjuna.

Those who find jñāna yoga to be difficult can practice saguna brahma upasana, meditating up on eeswara with attributes. Saguna brahman can be:

1. Viśvarūpa saguna brahman, as described in the 11th Chapter. Dedicate all actions to the Lord. Dedication is the attitude that after I complete my action, I will get a karma palam as per the laws of karma. I will accept the resulting karma palam, committing to the goal of nirguna eeswara. This will make them qualified for the fifth step of nirguna eeswara bhakti.
2. Ishta devata brahman

Verse 8

Fix the mind on Me alone. Fix the intellect on Me alone. Thereafter you will dwell in Me alone. There is no doubt.

In this stage, fix the emotional mind in viśvarūpa lord and the intellectual mind should be convinced of viśvarūpa eeswara as the world. Akasha, vayu, agni all are eeswara. The glory of viśvarūpa bhakti is I am never away from eeswara. This should be the conviction born out of scriptural study. If not convinced, continue the study until you are convinced of viśvarūpa eeswara.

Verse 9

If you are not able to fix the mind firmly on Me, then seek to attain Me by means of abyāsaḥ yoga, Oh Arjuna!

If you are not able to come to viśvarūpa eeswara, come to eka roopa eeswara or Ishta devata upasana. Choose any particular form or any particular form of relationship – like a father, mother or friend. Ishta devata bhakti can be formed by dwelling on purana paryanām. Krishna calls this abyāsaḥ yoga.

Bhagwat Geeta, Class 156 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yogaha, Verses 3 to 5



The 12th Chapter begins with a question from Arjuna. Arjuna asks whether saguna dhyānam or nirguna dhyānam is superior. Saguna dhyānam means meditation up on the Lord with various features. Nirguna dhyānam means meditation up on the lord with no features. This question is wrong because the idea of superior comes only when you can choose. According to Krishna, there is no choice between saguna dhyānam or nirguna dhyānam as everyone has to go through both. Everyone needs to do both. What saguna dhyānam can give, nirguna dhyānam cannot give, so both are compulsory. They cannot be simultaneously practiced. Everyone should start with saguna dhyānam, purify the mind, go to nirguna dhyānam and get moksha. Krishna says that saguna dhyānam is superior, but nirguna dhyana devotees will reach him. The benefits of saguna dhyānam is not material wealth, but transformation of inner personality.

Verses 3 and 4

Having restrained the sense organs, being even-minded towards all, and being interested in the welfare of all beings, some (devotees) meditate upon the imperishable (Brahman) which is indefinable, unmanifest, all-pervading, incomprehensible, immutable, immoveable, and eternal. They attain Me alone.

There are people who follow nirguna dhyānam as part of jñāna yoga. In these three verses, Krishna is elaborating jñāna yoga, which is nirguna dhyānam nidhithyasanam. Nirguna eeswara is:

- Avyaktam: Not perceptible to any sense organs. The universe is made up of five element and our five sense organs recognize each one of them. When we close the five sense organs, and then meditate upon nirguna Brahman. Brahman or nirguna brahman is inconceivable, imperceptible, incomprehensible and indescribable or in one word unobjectifiable or Aprameya. Nirguna Brahman is everywhere. Saguna Brahman is finite and can move from one place to another. But nirguna Brahman is infinite and formless and all-pervading and cannot move from one place to another. Nirguna Brahman is free from spatial limitation.
- kūṭastham: Brahman is free from sixfold modifications caused by kala tattvam – time. kūṭa is also the anvil, the base used by iron smith for hammering iron. Up on the anvil, the smith places the hot metal and shapes the metal. The metal undergoes change, but the anvil remains changeless. Nirguna brahman is like kūṭa or anvil that does not change. Changeless substratum is required for all changes. All lifestyle event shape our personality, but the witness principle, the Brahman remains changeless.

How can we meditate up on a featureless Brahman. Krishna says

one must qualify oneself for such mediation.

The preparation for nirguna eeswara dhyānam is fourfold qualifications are sādhana catuṣṭaya saṃpatti or:

- Discrimination
- Dispassion
- Discipline
- Desire

Sādhana catuṣṭaya Saṃpatti is described in these verses.

Krishna has said that nirguna eeswara is not objectifiable, that eeswara can exist in only one way. The un-experienceable principles is experienter alone. Therefore, nirguna dhyānam is mediating up on myself, the atma or meditating up on the meditator. Therefore, the mediator must be non-extrovert at the time of nirguna dhyānam.

- Mastering indriya grama or group of five sense organ
- Maintaining equanimity under all circumstances. The mind must be free from raga dwesha – likes and dislikes.
- Being committed to the well beings of all creatures; universal love; Expanded mind; Mind must be sensitized to feel the difficulties of others and interested in their wellbeing.

Verse 5

Difficulties are more for those people whose minds are committed to the pursuit of the unmanifest Brahman, for the goal of unmanifest Brahman is attained with difficulty by the people of bodily attachment. jñāna yoga is difficult because the destination of the formless one is difficult to reach; a highly refined mind is required. jñāna yoga requires sravanam, mananam and nidhithyasanam and nidhithyasanam is jñāna yoga. The difficulties of people committed to jñāna

yoga is many. Because the destination of the formless Brahman, is difficult to reach. The common obstacle is deha abimana or strong attachment to one's own physical body and we are busy maintaining and improving the body. Stronger the body attachment, the more difficult jñāna yoga.

Bhagwat Geeta, Class 154 – Chapter 12 Bhakti Yogaha, Verses 1 to 2

The 12th Chapter gives a comprehensive essence of Vedas. The first part (the first 12 verses) of this chapter deals with Bhakti Yoga as a means of moksha. This chapter removes many confusions regarding bhakti yoga. Second part (13 to 20th) Bhakti Yoga palam or moksha is discussed in the second part – 13th to 20th verses.

Bhakti yoga is not a particular sadhana, but the range of spiritual sadhana culminating in Moksha. There are three sadhanas of bhakti yoga:

1. Karma Yogaha. Krishna divides this into sakama and niṣkāma karma. In both of these, a person is extroverted, dependent on the world. This is an obstacle to jñāna yoga.
2. Upasana Yogaha
3. Jani Yogaha

These three sadhanas should be practiced only in the atmosphere of eeswara bhakti, therefore these three yogas are

called bhakti yoga.

Krishna subdivides these three into five levels; karma yoga is subdivided into level one and level two; and upasana yoga is also divided into level one and level two. jñāna yoga is the fifth level.

In Karma yoga level one Krishna wants to accommodate all materialistic people.

- In the first level of karma yoga, we practice karma yoga for selfish activities, but accept the results as prasadam from the lord. This attitude will purify the mind. In this level, karma yoga is pursuing worldly pleasures but with two conditions.
 - First condition is you pursue worldly pleasures only by legitimate means.
 - The second condition is attributing these acquisitions as eeswara parasadam. Claim everything as eeswara prasadam.

This first level of karma yoga is sakama karma yoga, where we have desire only for taking.

- In the second level, the karma yoga practiced for sharing. This is niṣkāma karma yoga. This will give purity at a faster rate. In sakama karma, we measure our success based on how much we have taken, in niṣkāma karma, we measure success based on how much we have given. This will give purity at a faster rate.
- In the third level, or first level of upasana yoga, Eka roopa Eeswara dhyānam. This Krishna calls this as abyāsaḥ yoga.
- In the fourth level or the second level of upasana yoga is aneka roopa Eeswara dhyānam. This helps in

expanding the mind. Both third and fourth levels come under saguna Eeswara dhyānam.

- Once a person has completed the four level, that person is eligible for jñāna yoga. jñāna yoga consists of three levels:
 - Sravanam, systematic study of scriptures for a period of time under a competent guru.
 - Mananam, resolving all doubts.
 - Nidhithyasanam: Converting the intellectual knowledge to strengthen emotional personality; dwelling on the teachings of scriptures.

Karma yoga is important for the purity of mind, but it has the disadvantage of extroverted, which is an obstacle for jñāna yoga. In upasana yoga, I invoke the Lord inside and therefore upasana yoga is invertedness. All these five levels put together is Bhakti yoga.

In the last eight verses, Krishna discusses the character of a person who has successfully completed these five levels. Krishna calls him para bhakta, and there is no difference between him and the Lord.

Verse 1

Arjuna asked: Who are the best yogis among them – the ever-steadfast devotees who meditates up on You as described before and those who meditate upon the imperishable unmanifest Brahman?

This Chapter begins with a question from Arjuna, based on the previous chapters. Arjuna asks who is superior – saguna bhakta or nirguna bhakta?

Saguna eeswara can be eka roopa eeswara or aneka roopa eeswara. Nirguna eeswara is not perceptible to anybody. There is only way to meditate to nirguna eeswara that is to

see as the subject itself as there is no subject object division in nirguna brahman.

Arjuna is asking indirectly who is superior – saguna eeswara or nirguna eeswara?

Verse 2

Lord Krishna said – Fixing the mind upon me with great faith, those ever-steadfast devotees who meditate upon Me are considered to be the best yogis by Me.

The real answer to Arjuna's question is that the question is wrong; for a wrong question, there is no right answer. Comparison is possible only between two similar items. There is no question of choice between two dissimilar items. Saguna eeswara and nirguna eeswara are not comparable.

Saguna bhakti is the means and nirguna bhakti is the end. Saguna bhakti is the steppingstone and nirguna bhakti is the goal. There is no choice between the two. Without saguna bhakti, nirguna bhakti is impossible, without nirguna bhakti saguna bhakti is incomplete.

Krishna does not want to tell Arjuna that the question is wrong. But he says saguna bhaktas are superior and nirguna bhaktas attain me. There is no question of choice.