

Bagawat Geeta, Class 23

Greetings All,

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Refreshing our memory, Swamiji says, after talking about Gyana Yoga now Sri Krishna wants to talk about Karma Yoga. Before starting his talk he has some general observations about Karma Yoga.

Shloka # 40:

“Here in the sphere of Karma Yoga there is no loss of good beginnings ; nor is there any sin involved. Even a little of this righteous law delivers one from great peril.”

In Shloka # 40, Sri Krishna glorifies Karma Yoga. In Karma Yoga, the focus is on inner growth. In Karma Yoga there is no failure, rather the focus is on building capacity to learn from success and failure. Since he learns from experiences there is no failure involved.

Shloka # 41:

“This conviction as regards this (two fold yoga), marked by resolution, is single; the convictions of the irresolute are indeed many-branched and endless, O Arjuna!”

In this shloka Sri Krishna glorifies a Karma Yogi. A Karma Yogi has a clear picture of the immediate, long term and ultimate goals. This he gets from life's experiences as well as from Scriptures. This clear thinking is the "inner freedom". Inner freedom means psychological freedom. Just as a child drops holding his mother's hand as he or she gains strength in the legs, so also the Yogi develops inner strength. The discovery of inner strength is Atma Gyanam. This Gyanam comes only to a prepared mind. The process is:

Obtain Gyana Yogyatha>Obtain Gyanam> Obtain Moksha.

The question is how to obtain Gyana Yogyatha? It can be obtained by leading a religious, ethical, moral and Karma yogic life. This is the clarity of vision. Many people, although of religious inclination, are not aware of these goals. So they end up following or performing different sadhanas at different times and are utterly confused. These confused people have different views or opinions as well. Swamiji says: “ Fact is one, however, confusions are many”.

Shlokas 42, 43 and 44 were combined.

Shloka # 42:

“They are the unwise who utter flowery speeches, O Arjuna! They revel in the letter of the Vedas and declare “there is nothing else”.

Shloka # 43:

“Desire ridden, heaven bent, they utter words which lead to births and actions replete with specific rites that yield enjoyments and power”.

Shloka # 44:

“ In the case of those who have given themselves up to pleasures and power and whose minds have been enslaved by the words of the Vedas that command rites, there is no chance of the resolute mind addressing itself in concentration.”

In these three verses Sri Krishna criticizes people who are confused about the ultimate goal of life. Non-Karma Yogi's or Karmi's are the confused people.

Swamiji says, in Chapter 17 of the Gita, Sri Krishna has divided human activities in three types: Sathvic, Rajasic and Tamasic Karmani.

Satvic actions benefit many people and are self-less actions.

Rajasic actions are individual oriented and are self-centered. "I" is the focus and actions are selfish.

Tamasic actions are not only selfish but in the process may also harm others. These actions often are cruel and harmful.

Thus, the three actions can be classified as: Selfless, Selfish and Harmful.

For inner growth what is the contribution of each one of them?

Satvic contributes to inner growth or purity and gives Gyana Yogyatha. It may produce material benefits as a by-product as well.

Rajasic contributes to growth of person only in outer and material sphere. Spiritual growth is slow or none at all.

Tamasic actions can be harmful and may result in some material growth. Scams, cheating etc., come to mind. Inner growth does not occur. It actually pulls one down spiritually. It retards inner growth.

The real peace and happiness of a person depends on inner growth alone not on material growth.

A person who has no inner growth but is materially well off cannot have peace of mind and joy. Peace and Joy are a given for a person of inner growth.

Suppose there is a person who does not have inner growth; even if he has got all the material wealth, he cannot enjoy life, because he will have conflicts because he would have gone against the conscience. So, when the inner growth is stunted the external things cannot give peace and joy, whereas when the inner growth is there, whether the external things are there or not, a person can enjoy peace and joy. This is the basic concept to be kept in mind about karma Yoga.

Sri Krishna criticizes those who are committed to rajasic actions, which means people are interested in their own personal benefit and that too material benefits alone. And they do not care about any other thing. And such selfish people are criticized strongly. Krishna does not criticize here tamasa karmaṇi. That is to be understood.

That material accomplishment alone can make the life successful; this notion is called here avivekaḥ. Whereas the conclusion of the Gita is, material accomplishment alone cannot give that. As they say, money can buy bed, but money cannot buy sleep; Money can buy food, but money cannot buy hunger; Money can buy people, but it cannot buy love. There are many important things in life, which money cannot buy. If I do not understand that, I am an aviveki.

In Vedas, under Karma Kanda's, many rituals are prescribed for material gains. One example is the Aavahanthi Homa. The purpose of this ritual is to obtain wealth. Since Vedas prescribe it, it means it accepts material accomplishments. However, one's life cannot be dedicated to material growth alone. It should include spiritual growth as well. Learning Gita is a fundamental necessity for spiritual growth including one's Emotional Quotient, EQ. EQ is the capacity to maintain mental balance.

Shloka 43:

Such people consider life is all about eating, drinking and merry making. They are the embodiment of material and sensory pleasures. Sri Krishna does not criticize sensory pleasures but criticizes giving undue importance to them at cost of inner growth. Their list does not include Dharmic activities. Their goal is Swargam. However, to reach Swarga you have to die first.

Such people cannot be Karma Yogi's. They also spread their philosophy to every one. Their philosophy is an attractive

one. It is "Maya" that is more attractive than Brahman. Shankara says choose your friends carefully.

Their speeches are flowery and seducing. They speak of varieties of projects, full of actions or rituals or varieties of ambitious projects. Such a person does not have time for the spiritual side. They do not know that one action leads to more actions until it becomes a whirlpool of actions, from which it is difficult to get out of. It is like a Chakravyuham. Thus, such a person goes through the cycle of life and death.

Gita says, know how to get out of actions. It does not mean Sanyasa. Gita does not say action is bad, but at some point we need to grow out of actions.

Actions lead to more actions and thus from birth to birth. These activities are not for purifying the mind. Even religious actions are performed for materialistic gains. Also called Bhoga Aishwarya, its goal is only more and more money.

Shloka 44:

They are totally attached to materialistic things. They find they cannot fulfill all desires of the mind. Increase in desires is fast but fulfillment is slow. Now, when increasing desires cannot be fulfilled by Dharmic means, one takes to Adharmic ways. Concepts of justice, honesty etc., are all lost. There is nothing pricking the conscience. If everybody is doing it, what is wrong with it, is the approach?

Swamiji says: Yatha Raja tatha Praja or Yatha Praja tatha Raja in a democracy. Conscience is stifled and viveka shakthi goes away.

Sri Krishna says such selfish and materialistic people cannot become Karma Yogi's.

Shloka # 45:

This is an important shloka describing who can be a Karma Yogi, what is their personality and what is their thinking etc.

Trigunya here means material accomplishments. Vedas do not condemn material accomplishments. However, a Karma Yogi should not be overwhelmed by material pleasures. While pleasures are allowed they should not be given too much importance, rather they should be subservient to a higher goal. Because ultimately, the peace of mind does not depend upon what we have; but peace of mind depends upon what we are. So if a healthy inner growth is there; he can enjoy both the presence and the absence of wealth; but if the inner growth is not there; then the wealth cannot offer much to that human being.

Shankaracharya says, reduce those activities, which are meant only for artha-kama, or reduce kama karmas; reduce rajasa, tamasa karmas and let there be an increase in satvika karmas. Sri Krishna does not say drop money oriented action; but he says the time and energy should not be spent for this alone.

Swamiji citing example of curd rice and pickle, for some, which is the main dish becomes a question. So also with Artha and Kama. Even as Dharmic entertainments are acceptable, one should constantly remember the ultimate goal.

Even if you reduce your kama karmas, you are going to face many ups and down in life; brought out by the prarabdha karma. Because of the past karmas that we have done, we are going to go through ups and downs in life; we are going to go through the pairs of opposites known as dvandvas. Examples of Dvandvas are mana-apamanah, labha-naṣṭa, jaya-apajaya, all these are called pairs. To resolve such problems we go to an astrologer who prescribes Parihar karma. For the many Akramas (wrong deeds) that we commit we have to perform a lot of parihara's, says Swamiji. Rather, we should accept minor difficulties of life and transcend the pair of opposites by strengthening our inner growth.

Karma Yoga's goal is to reduce Parihar Karmani or Prayaschitha Karmani.

With Best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy