

# Class 1 – Introduction

Faculty of choice or *free will* is one of the features of human beings. Animals do not have any goals in life; they eat, propagate, live for a few years, and die. But there are many human beings who question *free will* and argue that we do not have the choice of *free will* and that we are governed by destiny alone. Even if that is the view, then we have to divide humans into those who accept *free will* and exercise *free will*, and the other group who do not accept *free will*. According to the scriptures, those who do not accept *free will* are not much different from animals. Scriptures address those human beings who accept *free will*.

Once we accept *free will*, we have many goals to achieve and must work toward the fulfillment of those goals. In the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, two mantras address this topic. The entire *Bhaja Govindam* text is based on these two mantras. All human goals can be classified into two varieties:

- **The limitless, eternal, immortal, and complete one.** This can be only one, because only one infinite is possible. One name for this infinite goal is *Bhagavān*, or *Īśvara*, or *Brahman*, or *mokṣa*. In the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, this is called *śreyas*. All four words are synonymous.
- **Finite goal.** All other goals are finite—money, status, name, fame, political victory, relationships, position, possessions, etc. All these are limited by time and space. They are called *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*. These are called *preyas*.

Finite I is “world”; infinite I is “God.” Scriptures point out that those who choose *mokṣa* as the ultimate goal are intelligent and call them *vivekī*. Those who do not choose *mokṣa* as the goal are called *avivekī*. Scriptures want to educate people from *avivekī* to *vivekī*. Whoever chooses *mokṣa*

as the ultimate goal, scriptures call them *mumukṣu*.

There are three sets of people—religious, spiritual, and atheistic.

We should differentiate spiritual people from religious people. Both accept God. The spiritual person accepts God and chooses Him as his destination. The religious person accepts God but does not accept God as the destination—rather as a means to an end. A third set of people do not accept God either as a means or as a goal; these are atheists. The scriptures say that non-spiritual people will remain in *saṃsāra*. This is described by Śaṅkarācārya in *Bhaja Govindam*.

This work consists of thirty verses, describing various problems faced by human beings in making wrong choices. The aim is to change the direction of our life—converting an atheist and a merely religious person into a *mumukṣu*. *Vedānta śāstras* are relevant only for a *mumukṣu*.

The real name of *Bhaja Govindam* is *Moha Mudha-karaṇa* (commonly referred to as *Moha-mūḍha-kara* or *Moha-mukha*). *Moha* means delusion. The majority of humans are governed by *moha*—similar to moths attracted by the brightness of fire, or a fish attracted by bait at the end of a hook. Humans, despite intelligence, do not realize that a finite and perishable thing cannot give lasting security. Our intelligence is covered by illusion. A simple translation of *Bhaja Govindam* is “Choose the Infinite and discover lasting happiness.”