



श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

भक्ति योगः

Chapter 12

Volume 1

अर्जुन उवाच

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते ।
ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ॥ 12 - 1

श्री भगवानुवाच

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥ 12 - 2

येत्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवं ॥ 12 - 3

सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र सम बुद्धयः ।
ते प्रप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥ 12 - 4

क्लेशोऽधिकरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्त चेतसाम् ।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्विरचाप्यते ॥ 12 - 5

This 12th chapter of भगवत् गीता is entitled भक्ति योग. Each chapter of भगवत् गीता is called as a particular योग, because योग – the essential unity, the essential identity of जीव, जगत्, and परमेश्वर, is the continuing theme of the entire भगवत् गीता Teachings, but the topic of discourse in each chapter is distinct in its content. For example, the last chapter is called विश्वरूपदर्शनयोग, because the topic of discourse is Arjuna's विश्वरूपदर्शनं. Likewise, this chapter is भक्ति योग, because the topic of discourse here is भक्ति, ईश्वर भक्ति – devotion to परमेश्वर. That means the discourse here is not on the all-inclusive भक्ति योग that Sri Krishna has been talking about in the last few chapters, but the topic of discourse here is simply on ईश्वर भक्ति – devotion to परमेश्वर, which is of course part of the all-inclusive भक्ति योग.



As we may recall, at the end of the last chapter, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna:

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।

ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप ॥ 11 - 54

मात्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।

निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥ 11 - 55

Any ईश्वर भक्त – any devotee of परमेश्वर who has अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति – a devotion to परमेश्वर wherein परमेश्वर is not someone away from oneself, can see the true nature of My विश्वरूप in all its fullness and glory and also can gain पूर्ण ईश्वर ज्ञानं .- totality of knowledge of जीव, जगत् and ईश्वर, eliminating all distance between oneself and the परमेश्वर already in oneself. By such elimination, ईश्वर प्रवेशनं – full entry into परमेश्वर already in oneself is accomplished, and thus the devotee reaches one's परं धामं – ultimate destination, one's मोक्ष स्थानं – विष्णो परमं पदं in oneself.

The means for cultivating such अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति is for one to be a मात्कर्मकृत्, मत्परमः, मद्भक्तः, संगवर्जितः and सर्वभूतेषु निर्वैरः at all times. The one whose ईश्वर भक्ति – devotion to परमेश्वर is so at all times, naturally reaches Me, the परमेश्वर, and thus gains the श्रेयस् – the ultimate destination in life. So says Sri Krishna to Arjuna.

From the words of Sri Krishna, Arjuna now realizes that even though he has immense ईश्वर भक्ति, it is still far short of अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति that he needs for gaining his goal of the श्रेयस् he seeks. Therefore, on the subject of ईश्वर भक्ति – devotion to परमेश्वर, there arises a question in the mind of Arjuna. Hence, this chapter starts with a question from Arjuna.

In daily life, one's ईश्वर भक्ति – devotion to परमेश्वर, manifests itself as one's ईश्वर उपासन – mode of worship of परमेश्वर. Essentially, Arjuna's question is, what kind of ईश्वर उपासन – mode of worship of परमेश्वर is appropriate for his needs. ईश्वर उपासन refers to ईश्वर आराधन – worship of परमेश्वर one does in any form in thought, word or deed in order to direct and propel one's अन्तःकरण – mind and बुद्धि, towards परमेश्वर, whatever be one's vision of परमेश्वर from time to time.



Sri Krishna has already talked extensively about worship of परमेश्वर in His earlier discourses on कर्म योग, ध्यान योग and भक्ति योग. At this point, Arjuna's question is specific to meet his immediate need, namely, knowledge about mode of worship of परमेश्वर helpful for gaining अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति. It is common knowledge that people worship परमेश्वर in very many different ways. All forms of worship, however, fall under two distinct types, namely, सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन or अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन.

सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन means visualizing परमेश्वर in different forms and names with attributes, such as समस्त कल्याण गुण विशेषs – all the exalted virtues in incomparable infinite and absolute measure and worshipping such परमेश्वर through various kinds of religious and secular activities, including meditation, ध्यान, जप, पूजाs, Vedic rituals of various kinds, भजन्s etc. For example, all the various modes of worship of परमेश्वर we do here at this temple constitute सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन.

अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन means propelling one's अन्तःकरण – mind and बुद्धि, towards परमेश्वर, recognized as निर्गुण ब्रह्म with no form, no name, and no attributes, referring to That निर्गुण ब्रह्म simply by words such as अक्षरं, अनिर्देश्यं, अचिन्त्यं, अव्यक्तं, etc. - indestructible, beyond the reach of thoughts and words, unmanifest, etc.

Our scriptures describe परमेश्वर both as सगुण ब्रह्मन् as well as निर्गुण ब्रह्मन्. Devotees of परमेश्वर are of many kinds. Most of them can do only सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन. Only true संन्यासीs, who are ज्ञानीs, can do अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन.

Arjuna's question now is, whether सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन or अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन is better or superior for one to gain मोक्ष – meaning which kind of ईश्वर उपासन – mode of worship of परमेश्वर, is appropriate for him to cultivate अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति. Arjuna asks his question in this manner

अर्जुन उवाच

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते ।

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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Arjuna says "O! Krishna, with respect to ईश्वर उपासन – mode of worship of परमेश्वर, I recognize that there are two ईश्वर उपासक s, meaning ईश्वर भक्तs who are worshippers of परमेश्वर. They are

ये भक्ताः एवं सततयुक्ता त्वां (परमेश्वरं)

परि उपासते – those भक्तs – devotees who worship परमेश्वर repeatedly, meditating on परमेश्वर and seeking identity with परमेश्वर as their ultimate destination in life

एवं – in the manner just described by you in the last verse of the last chapter, namely, being as मत्कर्मकृत्, मत्परमः, मद्भक्तः, संगवर्जितः and सर्वभूतेषु निर्वरः सन्, which means those ईश्वर भक्तs being endowed with कर्म योग बुद्धि and भक्ति योग disposition who worship परमेश्वर in the mode of सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन

सततयुक्ता : – all the time remaining totally committed to the pursuit of परमेश्वर with unflinching mind, with a mind not yielding to distractions and temptations of any kind, all the time holding on to ईश्वर ध्यानं – God consciousness, and doing ईश्वर कर्मs – actions dedicated to परमेश्वर as

भगवत् आज्ञया भगवत् कै कर्मम् – being always an instrument serving the will of परमेश्वर

अनन्य शरणाः सन् – being endowed with a clear realization that परमेश्वर is their only आश्रय – their only abode of peace, security and happiness.

Such people are one kind of ईश्वर भक्तs, who worship परमेश्वर repeatedly in the mode of सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन, with कर्म योग बुद्धि and भक्ति योग disposition. On the other hand,

ये च भक्ताः अक्षरं अव्यक्तं त्वां (परमेश्वरम्) परि उपासते – there are also the other kind of ईश्वर भक्तs who meditate on, and seek identity with परमेश्वर, repeatedly worshipping परमेश्वर as अक्षरं ब्रह्म, as परमेश्वर who is indestructible and unchanging and अव्यक्तं ब्रह्म, as परमेश्वर who is unmanifest and निर्गुणं, who is without any उपाधि भेदs, without any differences in forms, names and attributes, and who is करण अगोचरं, beyond the reach of any instrument of perception and action, as परमेश्वर who cannot be objectified in any way but can still be reached by one's बुद्धि through indicator words



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

such as सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं, etc. Such ईश्वर भक्तस are निर्गुण ब्रह्म उपासकस, who are ज्ञानी स, true संन्यासी स, who seek and worship परमेश्वर as अक्षरं अव्यक्तं ब्रह्म.

तेषां - Of these two kinds of ईश्वर भक्तस, namely those who are सगुण ब्रह्म उपासकस endowed with कर्म योग बुद्धि and भक्ति योग disposition, and those who are अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासकस – who are self-realized ज्ञानी स, ज्ञान कर्म संन्यासी स totally free from all worldly bondages, of these two kinds of ईश्वर भक्तस.

के योग वित्तमाः – who are the best (superlative) in terms of योग वित् – as knowers of योग, meaning, who are the best in terms of their knowledge and practice of योग, for gaining मोक्ष.

That is Arjuna's question. The formulation of this question is rather peculiar. What Arjuna needs to know is, what mode of ईश्वर उपासन is best suited to his needs but what he is asking for is a comparison between कर्म योगी स and संन्यासीस in their knowledge and practice of योग. The form of Arjuna's question may have been prompted, consciously or unconsciously by his own continuing inclinations to take up the life of a संन्यासी and avoid participation in the war he finds himself in.

In any case, the form of Arjuna's question reveals his own inadequate appreciation of the essential difference between कर्म योगीस and संन्यासीस, and also on the very scope of the Upanishad word योग itself. Sri Krishna accepts Arjuna as he is, and enlightens him on the subject in clear and unambiguous terms.

We must remember that the Upanishad word योग indicates both the means as well as the end with respect to gaining मोक्ष, reaching मोक्ष स्थानं – the ultimate destination already in oneself.

कर्म योग, ध्यान योग, भक्ति योग and ज्ञान योग are means of human endeavour for gaining मोक्ष – for reaching the मोक्ष स्थानं already in oneself, and the end of such human endeavour is being at the destination, being at the मोक्ष स्थानं - विष्णोः परमं पदं already in oneself, being in the state of मोक्ष itself.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

While a कर्म योगी is still striving to reach the मोक्ष स्थानं in oneself, a true संन्यासी, a ज्ञान कर्म संन्यासी is already at the मोक्ष स्थानं in oneself. That is the essential difference between a कर्म योगी and a संन्यासी – a ज्ञानी. That being so, कर्म योगीs and संन्यासीs (ज्ञानीs) belong to two mutually distinct classes of human beings, and hence they are not directly comparable.

Later in this chapter, Sri Krishna gives the लक्षणस – the distinguishing marks of ज्ञानीs, which we will see later. At this point, let us understand that ज्ञानीs are ज्ञान कर्म संन्यासीs, and as भगवान् said earlier (7 – 18),
ज्ञानी तु आत्मैव मे मतं – a ज्ञानी is परमेश्वर Itself in human form.

Only ज्ञानीs are capable of worshipping परमेश्वर in the mode of अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन – worshipping परमेश्वर as निर्गुण ब्रह्मन्, ब्रह्मन् transcending all forms, names and attributes. Such ज्ञानीs, such संन्यासीs, are already सम्यक् दर्शिनः – they already have a clear recognition of परमेश्वर in themselves. Through बुद्धि योग they have already gained union with परमेश्वर in themselves. They already have चित्त प्रसादं, ओ शान्ति, पूर्ण आनन्दं ब्रह्मानन्दं. When they do अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, they are only enjoying That ब्रह्मानन्दं.

Fortunate indeed is a society wherein there are such ज्ञानीs, still living in their human forms, waiting for their प्रारब्ध कर्मs to be exhausted. By the very nature of the environment in which human beings live, some dust can collect from time to time in the अन्तःकरण – mind and बुद्धि of even the ज्ञानीs.

By meditation on परमेश्वर, through अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, the ज्ञानीs, the ज्ञान कर्म संन्यासीs cleanse their अन्तःकरण, keep their vision of परमेश्वर clear, and continue to enjoy ब्रह्मानन्दं, as long as their status as जीव continues. When they do अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन – when they meditate on परमेश्वर, there is no distance between the meditator and the meditated, which means, as जीवs, the ज्ञानीs enjoy अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति at all times.

The situation is quite different with respect to people who consider themselves as कर्म योगीs. Every ईश्वर भक्त, every devotee of परमेश्वर, considers oneself as a कर्म योगी of



one's own description, to different extents at different times, and practices a variety of forms of ईश्वर उपासन – worship of परमेश्वर, to achieve one's objective.

Thus there are many different kinds of कर्म योगीs practicing many different modes of ईश्वर उपासन – worship of परमेश्वर, seeking different immediate objectives, but the same one ultimate objective, namely gaining मोक्ष. Naturally, therefore, all the different forms of ईश्वर उपासन practiced by कर्म योगी s of different kinds cannot be equally effective in accomplishing the ultimate objective, namely, the devotee reaching the मोक्ष स्थानं already in oneself. In view of this situation, Sri Krishna now tells Arjuna what is the best and the most effective mode of ईश्वर उपासन for a कर्म योगी of any kind.

श्री भगवानुवाच

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।

श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥ 12 - 2

भगवान् says

मय्यावेश्य मनः मयि आवेश्य मनः

मयि – परमेश्वरे, विश्वरूपे, अनन्त रूपे, समस्त कल्याण गुण निलय स्वरूपे, सगुण ब्रह्म स्वरूपे (That is the meaning for मयि)

मयि – In Me the परमेश्वर, in My all-inclusive विश्वरूप form, in My countless forms and names, recognizing Me, The परमेश्वर, as the abode of all the exalted and incomparable virtues and powers, recognizing Me, the परमेश्वर in every form, name and attribute involved in सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन

मनः आवेश्य – मनः समाधाय – Committing one's mind totally to परमेश्वर, bringing one's mind to rest in परमेश्वर

अनन्य शरणतया – resting the mind in total surrender to परमेश्वर, recognizing परमेश्वर as the only abode of all security, peace and happiness, recognizing परमेश्वर as one's destination in life – मोक्ष स्थानं – विष्णो परमं पदं in oneself

ये मां नित्ययुक्ताः उपासते – सततं नित्ययुक्ताः उपासते – those who worship Me, the परमेश्वर, at all times, being in अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति with कर्मयोग बुद्धि, as indicated earlier, namely



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

मत्कर्म कृत्, मत्परमः, मद्भक्तः, संगवर्जितः सर्वभूतेषु निर्वरः सन् – all the time being a God conscious कर्म योगी in the pursuit of परमेश्वर, all the time recognizing one's destination as परमेश्वर Itself, all the time committed to gaining पूर्ण ईश्वर ज्ञानं and ईश्वर प्रवेशनं – total entry into परमेश्वर already in oneself, all the time striving to be free from all worldly material and emotional bondages, all the time striving to be free from any notion of enmity towards any being anywhere

ये मां नित्ययुक्ताः उपासते – those who worship Me, The परमेश्वर, in the form of सगुण ब्रह्म with कर्मयोग बुद्धि and भक्ति योग disposition

नित्य युक्ताः – ever remaining steadfast in their endeavors

परया उपेताः – endowed with supreme, unqualified and enlightened faith

In any form of ईश्वर उपासन, श्रद्धा is paramount. This faith is not blind faith. It is परया श्रद्धया, श्रेष्ठया श्रद्धया – It is enlightened faith rooted in an understanding and appreciation of Upanishad knowledge, especially that relating to जीव and परमेश्वर, and the connection between अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति, together with कर्मयोग बुद्धि on the one hand and मोक्ष साधनं and मोक्ष प्राप्ति on the other hand.

ते मे युक्ततमा मताः

ते युक्ततमाः – those ईश्वर भक्तःs, those devotees who worship परमेश्वर in the mode of सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन with कर्मयोग बुद्धि, भक्ति योग disposition and unqualified and enlightened श्रद्धा, they are युक्ततमाः s, they are the best (superlative) in terms of their mode of ईश्वर उपासन – in their endeavour to reach परमेश्वर already in themselves, in their endeavour to reach the मोक्ष स्थानं in themselves, in their endeavour to gain मोक्ष.

मे मताः – that is my contention. When भगवान् says मे मताः, it means “That is the Eternal Law of nature”.

Please listen to भगवान् 's words again

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

In response to Arjuna's question on के योगवित्तमाः – who are the best in terms of their knowledge and practice of योग, भगवान् gives a definite and highly focused answer, using the word युक्ततमः. युक्तः refers to an action that is both proper and effective in accomplishing its objective. युक्ततमः refers to the action that is both the most proper and the most effective in accomplishing its objective in a superlative sense. Here the objective is योग, both as the means as well as the end, for which Sri Krishna says

सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन – worship of परमेश्वर with different forms, names and attributes, together with कर्म योग बुद्धि, भक्ति योग disposition and supreme श्रद्धा – faith in both the means and the end and faith in oneself, is the most proper and the most effective means for achieving the objective of reaching परमेश्वर already in oneself and thus gaining मोक्ष – the परम पुरुषार्थ for every human being.

This is a very important message from Sri Krishna, not only for Arjuna, but also for every one of us, committed to कर्म s of various kinds in our everyday life. We may recall here that Sri Krishna talked about कर्म and ज्ञानं in chapter 2 and at the beginning of chapter 3. Arjuna responded by saying:

व्यमिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीवमे ।
तदेकं चद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहं आप्नुयाम् ॥ 3-2

By your contradictory words it seems as if you are confusing my बुद्धि. What I want is श्रेयस्. Should I go after कर्म, or should I go after ज्ञानं. Please tell me, ONE decisively.

Now, after many chapters of गीतोपदेश especially after the विश्वरूप दर्शन योग, भगवान् tells Arjuna in clear, unambiguous terms “Arjuna, you are not a संन्यासी. You are a man of action. If you want to gain श्रेयस्, there is only one way for you, and it is that you must cultivate अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति together with कर्म योग बुद्धि. The most proper and the most effective way to cultivate अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति is through सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन – worship of परमेश्वर in forms and names of your own choice, with supreme श्रद्धा – faith in yourself and in your mode of worship, rooted in understanding and appreciation of Upanishad knowledge on जीव जगत् and ईश्वर.



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

That is Sri Krishna's उपदेश – teaching for Arjuna, and also for all of us. That is why people fortunate enough to be born in the Vedic tradition, build temples similar to what we have here, and provide themselves and others, opportunities to do ईश्वर उपासनs of various kinds, similar to what we do at this temple.

In view of the negative attitude popularly held in certain sections of the Hindu society itself regarding the propriety or the wisdom of worshipping परमेश्वर in multifarious forms and names, let us remain fully assured on the authority of the भगवत् गीता itself, that सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन – worship of परमेश्वर in different forms, names and attributes, with श्रद्धा – with unqualified faith in oneself and in one's mode of worship is not only right and proper, it is also the best and the most effective for one's continued spiritual progress, prosperity , peace and happiness.

Sri Krishna's response to Arjuna's question continues, which we will see next time.