



श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

भक्ति योगः

Chapter 12

Volume 2

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

क्लेशोऽधिकरस्तेषाम् अव्यक्त आसक्त चेतसाम् ।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्विरवाप्यते ॥ 12 - 5

Briefly recalling what we saw last time, Arjuna wants to know what kind of ईश्वर उपासन – mode of worship of परमेश्वर is appropriate for his own needs, under his present circumstances. Therefore, he asks Sri Krishna this question. “ There are ईश्वर भक्तः who worship परमेश्वर in the mode of visualizing परमेश्वर in various forms, names and attributes. There are also other ईश्वर भक्तः who worship परमेश्वर in the mode of अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, contemplating on परमेश्वर with no form, no name, and no attributes. Of these two kinds of ईश्वर भक्तः, who are the best in terms of their knowledge and practice of योग – the means and end of योग?” That is Arjuna’s question.

Responding to Arjuna’s question, भगवान् points out that for people who are committed to the ever-changing worldly life, a life of activities of various kinds, and a life of कर्म



and कर्मफल s, which means , for Arjuna, and indeed for almost all of us, there is ONLY ONE way for making spiritual progress by any means of practice of योग leading ultimately to मोक्ष – absolute freedom, peace and happiness, and that way is to simultaneously cultivate अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति and कर्म योग बुद्धि.

अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति means ईश्वर भक्ति – devotion to परमेश्वर wherein परमेश्वर is not away from oneself, and there is no distance between oneself and परमेश्वर; and कर्म योग बुद्धि means an attitude of service to परमेश्वर in everything one does, an attitude consistent with the निमित्त मात्रं भव उपदेश – an attitude wherein one considers oneself totally as an instrument to serve the will of परमेश्वर at all times. Such अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति and कर्म योग बुद्धि together constitute the surest and the only means for one's continued spiritual progress leading to मोक्ष.

The most proper and the most effective means of cultivating अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति is through सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन with श्रद्धा, सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन is worship of परमेश्वर in forms, names and attributes of one's own choice, and श्रद्धा is unqualified and enlightened faith – faith in oneself, faith in one's mode of worship of परमेश्वर, faith in our scriptures, and faith rooted in an understanding and appreciation of Upanishadic knowledge on the nature of जीव, जगत् and ईश्वर.

Such सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन with श्रद्धा is the most proper and the most effective means for one's spiritual progress leading ultimately to मोक्ष. That is Sri Krishna's उपदेश, (teaching) for Arjuna on सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन, which is the one that is appropriate for his own immediate needs at this time. Sri Krishna is going to talk about सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन in detail a little later. भगवान् now proceeds to talk about अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, its nature and what it does to people capable of doing such उपासन. भगवान् says

ये तु अक्षरम् अनिर्देश्यम् अव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगं अचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थम् अचलं ध्रुवं ॥

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सन्नियम्य इन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति माम् एव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥

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तु - on the other hand

भगवान् is now talking about a totally different class of ईश्वर भक्तस – the अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासकस who are ज्ञानीस, ज्ञान कर्म संन्यसी s who cannot be directly compared with people who are committed to a life of worldly activities. Referring to those अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासकस, भगवान् says

ये अक्षरम् परि उपासते – those who worship परमेश्वर by meditation and/or contemplation on ब्रह्मन् with no form, no name and no attributes. About such worshippers of परमेश्वर, भगवान् has something to say. Before we see that, let us understand what is उपासन

उपासनं is an Upanishad word. उप आसनं is उपासनं. उप means “near”, आसनं means स्थिति – state of being. Therefore उपासनं means, “state of being on the part of a person having reached closer and closer to the object of worship through some form of physical or mental activity”. In any form of ईश्वर उपासन, the object of worship is ब्रह्मन् – the परमेश्वर. In अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, ब्रह्मन् is worshipped purely through a मानस कर्म – an activity of the mind and बुद्धि, namely meditation and contemplation, more particularly contemplation.

Now the question is, how can one contemplate on something, which has no forms, no name and no attribute whatsoever? It is undoubtedly difficult for ordinary people, but it is possible to understand. How? The means of such contemplation is through प्रत्यय प्रवाहं – continuous flow of knowledge. As we know, it is common experience in any process of objective enquiry that by continuous flow of knowledge, one’s बुद्धि – faculty of discrimination, moves closer and closer to the target of enquiry. That is true with respect to ईश्वर उपासन also.

Even though ब्रह्मन् cannot be reached by immediate meaning of any word, or by one’s इन्द्रियस – organs of perception and action, ब्रह्मन् is बुद्धिग्राह्यं – It can be reached by one’s चित्तेक चैराग्य बुद्धि. Just as, if only I can properly point out a far off target in many different ways by my finger, even though my finger itself does not reach the target following the directions pointed out by the finger, one can reach the target by one’s बुद्धि.



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In ब्रह्म उपासन, such pointing out is accomplished by Upanishad words, indicating ब्रह्म लक्षणं – words capable of directing and propelling one's cultivated बुद्धि closer and closer to परमेश्वर within oneself. Upanishad words such as ओं, शान्ति, शिवोहं, ब्रह्मोहं, etc. are examples of such words of ब्रह्म लक्षणं.

अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन is natural for ज्ञानी s, because they already have ब्रह्मज्ञानं. Their आत्मबुद्धि – knowledge about oneself, is already in ब्रह्मन्. Therefore any Upanishad word indicating ब्रह्म लक्षणं is enough to keep their अन्तःकरण – mind and बुद्धि as a जीव, in continuous joy of ब्रह्मानन्दं.

On the other hand, due to the environment of the world we live in, some dust may collect in the अन्तःकरण – mind and बुद्धि of the ज्ञानीs also from time to time, which may temporarily blur their direct vision of परमेश्वर already in themselves, in which case, अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, directing and propelling बुद्धि through different words indicating ब्रह्म लक्षणं, can cleanse their अन्तःकरण and restore their direct vision of ब्रह्मन् – The परमेश्वर in themselves.

Here भगवान् gives few examples of word-pointers - words of ब्रह्म लक्षणं used by ज्ञानीs in their अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, to direct and propel their अन्तःकरण – mind and बुद्धि, towards the परमेश्वर already in themselves. These word pointers are

अक्षरं, अनिर्देश्यं, अव्यक्तं, सर्वत्रगं, अचिन्त्यं, कूटस्थं, अचलं, ध्रुवं

All these different words indicate the distinguishing marks of the same One ब्रह्मन् – the परमेश्वर, already in oneself.

अक्षरं means That which is immutable, never subject to change, decay or destruction. That which is ever as it is. That is the same अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Sri Krishna pointed out in Chapter 8 as अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं (8 – 3). That ब्रह्मन् is अक्षरं, ब्रह्म and परमं, all words indicating the same One ब्रह्मन्

अक्षरं – unchangeable

ब्रह्म – limitless and infinite in any dimension,



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अणो : अणीयान् – महतो महीयान् (कठ 2-20) – smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest one can think of, and

परमं – supreme, incomparable and incomprehensible

Thus अक्षरं, ब्रह्म and परमं are themselves word pointers indicating ब्रह्मन्, usually expressed as अक्षर ब्रह्मन्. Again,

अनिर्देश्यं – that which is indescribable and indefinable. That which is beyond the reach of words, mind and all organs of perception and action.

अव्यक्तं – that which is unmanifest, not available for objectification by any instrument of perception, and hence That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् is अनिर्देश्यं

सर्वत्रगं – that which is all pervasive, everywhere. That which is not limited to any particular location. That which is सर्वात्मकं – the self in one is also in all beings, which means अक्षर ब्रह्मन् is one's प्रत्यग आत्मा – one's innermost self.

अचिन्त्यं – that which is not the object of any thought. During अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, some extraneous and irrelevant thoughts might creep up in the mind. All such thoughts have to be rejected by one's बुद्धि, and the mind has to be educated and disciplined not to disturb the course of the बुद्धि towards the प्रत्यग आत्मा – the अक्षर ब्रह्मन् – the परमेश्वर already in oneself. As भगवान् said earlier in ध्यान योग,

आत्म संस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चित् अपि चिन्तयेत्

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Use your चित्तैक वैराग्य बुद्धि to fix your wandering mind firmly to आत्मा – The ब्रह्मन् – the परमेश्वर. Do not think of anything else. That is governing law of ध्यान योग, which makes the Upanishad word अचिन्त्यं as ब्रह्म लक्षणं, as the word pointer for अक्षर ब्रह्मन्.

The बुद्धि has to recognize that आत्मा एव सर्वम् – आत्मा alone is everything.

तत् अन्यत् किञ्चित् अपि नास्ति other than आत्मा, there is indeed nothing, which means ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं – पूर्णं अदः पूर्णं इदं – there is in fact, no distance between जीव and ब्रह्मन्.



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Just as I never lose sight of clay even while I see the pot, and I never lose sight of gold even while I see the ornament, I never lose sight of ब्रह्मन् – the परमेश्वर even while I see many forms, names and attributes. That is the discipline of the mind in ध्यान योग, in any ईश्वर उपासन, including अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन.

कूटस्थं – The word कूट ordinarily means something that is false as seen. It also means माया. It also means anvil. As an Upanishad pointer word, कूटस्थम् stands for that which is behind all false appearances; that which is behind the ever-changing manifestations of माया. That which remains unchanged while allowing all changes to take place upon It, That is indeed अक्षर ब्रह्मन्.

A thought bubble is कूट, and the चैतन्य – the awareness behind the thought bubble is कूटस्थं. The thought itself has no independent existence. The कूटस्थम् – the pure awareness by which the thought is maintained is कूटस्थम् ब्रह्मन् - अक्षर ब्रह्मन् and that is the ब्रह्म लक्षणं for कूटस्थम्. That is how कूटस्थम् becomes a pointer word for अक्षर ब्रह्मन्.

अचलं – That which has no चलनत्वं - susceptibility to move, because It is all-pervading and hence there is no place it can move into. As भगवान् said earlier,

मया ततमिदं सर्वाम् जगत् अव्यक्त मूर्तिना

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By Me, the परमेश्वर, in My Unmanifest Form, this entire universe is pervaded. Consequently, अचलं – That which has no susceptibility for any kind of movement is the ब्रह्म लक्षणं for the Upanishad pointer word अचलं.

ध्रुवं – Because अक्षर ब्रह्मन् is अचलं, it is also ध्रुवं – means नित्यं – Eternal, stable, not bound by time.

Thus, these words of ब्रह्म लक्षणं, namely अक्षरं, अनिर्देश्यं, अव्यक्तं, सर्वत्रगं, अचिन्त्यं, कूटस्थं, अचलं, ध्रुवं are some of the pointer words used by ज्ञानीs in their अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, to direct and propel their अन्तःकरण towards the unmanifest ब्रह्मन् – the परमेश्वर, already in themselves. There are also many other such pointer words in our



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Upanishads. Whatever pointer words they use, they do their अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन with the following disposition of mind and बुद्धि, namely

संनियम्य इन्द्रियग्रामं – keeping their ज्ञान इन्द्रियs and कर्म इन्द्रियs – organs of perception and action totally and properly under their control, keeping all their internal and external faculties under total discipline

सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः - maintaining an attitude of equanimity towards all beings and in all situations

सर्वभूतहिते रताः – being delighted in the well-being of all beings, all people

Mental and physical discipline, attitude of equanimity towards all beings in all situations, and the natural ability to feel delighted in the well-being of all people, indeed all living beings – these are some of the लक्षणs – distinguishing marks of अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासकs – worshippers of परमेश्वर through अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन. When they do worship of परमेश्वर in that manner, what happens to them? भगवान् says:

ते प्रप्नुवन्ति मां एव – they gain Me, they gain identity with Me, the परमेश्वर straight away, which means any apparent distance between them and परमेश्वर simply vanishes ते भगवत् स्वरूपाः भवन्ति they become परमेश्वर Itself, natural to themselves. They regain संयक् दर्शनं – clear recognition of परमेश्वर in themselves. Being so, they enjoy ब्रह्मानन्दं. They being ज्ञानीs – self realized जीवs, for them, I am the most beloved, and for Me, they are the most beloved.

Thus Sri Krishna has briefly answered Arjuna's question with respect to both सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन and अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन rejecting any comparison between कर्म योगीs and संन्यासी s, the ज्ञान कर्म संन्यासीs, who are ज्ञानीs.

As सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन is the most appropriate for कर्म योगी s, so is अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन the most natural for ज्ञानीs. But if the कर्म योगी tries to do अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन, it is going to be very difficult for him to do – so says भगवान् in the next verse.

क्लेशोऽधिकरस्तेषाम् अव्यक्तासक्त चेतसाम् ।

अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्विरवाप्यते ॥

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तेषाम् – for those people - who are they?

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्य युक्ता उपासते

तेषाम् – for those who worship Me the परमेश्वर with immense devotion and कर्म योग बुद्धि as described earlier (11-54, 55)

तेषाम् – for such God conscious कर्म योगी s for whom सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन is the most appropriate and the most effective mode of cultivating अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति

तेषाम् – for those people

अव्यक्तासक्त चेतसाम् – if they choose to try to do अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन by committing their minds to the pursuit of The Unmanifest, Unobjectifiable, Unknown परमेश्वर, for cultivating अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति

क्लेशः अधिकतरः – the difficulties in such pursuit of परमेश्वर are far greater. Why? The difficulties arise from their देह अभिमानं – their deep-rooted notion of Self in their bodies, because of their “I” notion in their bodies.

All people committed to the worldly life of कर्म sand कर्मफलs, including the कर्मयोगीs, entertain the notion of “I” in their bodies. For them, to give up that identity with their physical bodies, and seek identity with an unseen and unknown परमेश्वर is extremely difficult. Therefore, भगवान् says

अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिः अवाप्यते हि

देहवद्भिः means देह अभिमानवद्भिः – By those who have deep-rooted “I” notion in their physical bodies

अव्यक्ता गतिः दुःखं अवाप्यते हि – गति here is the path leading to the ultimate destination, namely मोक्ष

अव्यक्ता गतिः – That path leading to मोक्ष – that path leading ultimately to the recognition of one’s identity with the Unmanifest परमेश्वर already in oneself, that path

दुःखं अवाप्यते is hardly reached, is seldom gained

Those who live a worldly life of कर्मs and कर्मफलs, even if they have immense ईश्वर भक्ति and कर्म योग बुद्धि, they still entertain deep-rooted identity of self with their own physical bodies, and it is extremely difficult for them to uplift themselves from that



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identity, and identify themselves with an Unmanifest, Unseen and Unknown परमेश्वर, without going through the discipline of अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति cultivated through सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन.

Therefore, for such people, the ultimate Goal of reaching परमेश्वर, recognizing परमेश्वर in themselves through अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन is seldom accomplished.

By so saying, भगवान् makes it absolutely clear to Arjuna that he being what he is, अक्षर ब्रह्म उपासन is not for him, and सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन is both the best and the most effective mode of ईश्वर उपासन – worship of परमेश्वर, appropriate to his needs at this time.

Having said that, भगवान् then talks about सगुण ब्रह्म उपासन in detail in the next seven extraordinary verses, which we will see next time.



Appendix

अक्षर ब्रह्मन् ब्रह्म लक्षणं

Word pointers indicating Unmanifest ब्रह्मन्

ईश्वर भक्त s of all kinds may find the following three sets of word pointers for अक्षर ब्रह्मन् – words of ब्रह्म लक्षणं taken from our Upanishads, particularly enlightening in their daily worship of परमेश्वर through contemplation.

1. सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म – This is from तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत् (2 – 1). We will be talking about this ब्रह्म लक्षणं in detail a little later
2. श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यत्
वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः
चक्षुषश्चक्षुः अतिमुच्य धीराः
प्रेत्य अस्माल्लोकात् अमृता भवान्ति

This is from केनोपनिषत् (1-2) . We have talked about this verse already in detail.

3. एतत् अक्षरं अदृष्टं अश्रुतं श्रोतृ
अमतं मन्तृ अविज्ञातं विज्ञातृ
न अन्यत् अतः अस्ति द्रष्टृ न अन्यत् अतः
अस्ति श्रोतृ, न अन्यत् अतः अस्ति मन्तृ,
न अन्यत् अतः अस्ति विज्ञातृ,
एतस्मिन् उ खलु अक्षरे आकाशः ओतः प्रोतः च ॥

This is from बृहदारण्यक उपनिषत् (93-8-11). What is pointed out here is the following.

The अक्षर ब्रह्मन् – the immutable, is never seen by anyone, not being a sense object, but is itself the witness, being vision itself.

It is never heard, not being an object of hearing, but is itself the hearer, being hearing itself.



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

It is never thought, not being an object of the mind, but is Itself the thinker, being thought itself.

It is never known, not being an object of the intellect, but it is Itself the knower, being intelligence itself.

There is no other witness but this. अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself is everywhere the witness, the subject of vision.

There is no other hearer but this. अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself is everywhere the hearer.

There is no other thinker but this. अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself is everywhere the thinker, thinking through all minds.

There is no other knower but this. अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself is the knower, knowing through all the intellects.

This अक्षर ब्रह्मन् is immediately and directly The Self within every being, transcending all attributes, and inseparably pervading all existence in all directions and in all dimensions.

Such is the glory of अक्षर ब्रह्मन्.