



ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

Just for the Record

Last time, following the scripture reading session, a mature looking gentleman stopped me for a brief conversation, the gist of which is as follows:

He said: "All that you said today was interesting, but is it really relevant in the world of today". I replied "Yes. Sri Krishna has been talking about सनातन धर्म - The Eternal Order, which is relevant at all times. That was relevant then, in Arjuna's time, and that is relevant today, and that will be relevant tomorrow as well."

Then he said "I was born in a वैश्य family, but I am not doing any business these days, then what is my duty now?"

I replied "By virtue of your past कर्मs, you are blessed to be born in a वैश्य family. With that birth as your base, you have been growing and evolving in your own way all these years and as a result, you and I are now talking here today, which is not a matter of accident. You are asking me now what your duty is at this time. May I know whether you are comfortable doing whatever you are doing these days", to which he replied "Yes, I am comfortable".

I continued "If you are comfortable with what you are doing today, that is all your duty for today. Please continue doing whatever you are doing comfortably from time to time, with कर्मयोग बुद्धि and ईश्वराभिराधन बुद्धि. The rest of your life will take care of itself. That is the end of the conversation.

I am referring to that conversation at this time just to point out that whatever is being said in these scripture readings has nothing to do with me personally. I simply say what The Gita says, what the Upanishads say, to the best of my understanding and appreciation.

All this is pure knowledge. After having listened to this knowledge, every one is totally free to do whatever one wishes to do.

यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु (G. 18 - 63)

As you desire, so you do, do as you like. That is also Sri Krishna's advice to Arjuna, and, indeed, to all of us.

Let us now continue with today's verses.



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श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता मोक्षसंन्यासयोगः Chapter 18 Volume 12

असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः ।
नेष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां संन्यासेन अधिगच्छति ॥ 18 - 49

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे ।
समासेनेव कोन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा ॥ 18 - 50

In the past three sessions, Sri Krishna has been talking about वर्णधर्म and वर्णकर्म - the four duty-based groups of people called ब्राह्मणs, क्षत्रियs, वैश्यs and शूद्रs constituting the entire Vedic society, and their natural duties in the society, arising from their स्वभाव गुणs - in-born personal qualities. From such वर्णधर्म and वर्णकर्म, arise स्वधर्म and स्वकर्म - every person's own natural place in the society at birth (स्वधर्म), together with one's ever-changing immediate duties (स्वकर्म) in the social fabric throughout one's life, contributing to the continuing material and spiritual progress of both oneself and the society as a whole.

Sri Krishna's advice to every person is not to reject one's own स्वधर्म and स्वकर्म for any reason, but try to build on them by being totally committed to them, and enjoy doing, as well as one can, one's own duties, whatever they are, because that is the surest and the quickest means for one to reach the ultimate goal of Total Fulfillment in life, which is the same for every person. Recalling Sri Krishna's words again:

स्वे स्वे कर्मणि अभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।

By being totally committed to स्वधर्म and स्वकर्म in terms of कर्मयोगबुद्धि and ईश्वरप्रसादबुद्धि, a person gains संसिद्धि, meaning पूर्ण अन्तःकरण शुद्धि - total



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restoration of the inherent purity and clarity of one's mind and बुद्धि. That means, Sri Krishna continues:

असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः ।

नेष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां संन्यासेनाधिगच्छति ॥ 18 - 49

In terms of one's spiritual progress, कर्मयोग gives संसिद्धि, which is अन्तःकरण शुद्धि. That means the person now has:

असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र - a बुद्धि which is totally free from all attachments and bondages, and notions of exclusive possessions with respect to all संसार विषयs - all worldly matters, which again means a बुद्धि which has gained total freedom from one's forces of likes and dislikes, success and failure, pleasure and pain, elevation and depression, etc. and consequently, a बुद्धि which has gained absolute समत्वं समचित्तत्वं - evenness of mind at all times. Further

जितात्मा meaning पूर्ण आत्म निग्रह - total self-control and self-discipline. The person now has complete control over one's organs of perception and action, so that the entire शरीर - one's body vehicle, has become a helpful instrument for one's सन् मार्ग, मोक्ष मार्ग - one's pursuit of ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, which means the body demands do not stand in the way of one's further spiritual progress in the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, and

विगत स्पृहः - the person's अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि has now become totally free from cravings, longings, anxieties and excitements of any kind. All these recognizable manifestations, namely

असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा and विगतस्पृहः together are the लक्षणs - recognizable distinguishing marks of संसिद्धि, gained by कर्मयोग and ईश्वरप्रसाद बुद्धि.



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Having gained That **संसिद्धि**, the person is now fit for gaining the Highest **सिद्धि** - The **परमां सिद्धिम्** - The Most Exalted Fulfillment of human existence called **नेष्कर्म्यसिद्धि**. Sri Krishna says:

परमां नेष्कर्म्यसिद्धिम् अधिगच्छति - Having gained that **संसिद्धि**, the person can ultimately gain also That **परमां सिद्धिम्**, namely **नेष्कर्म्यसिद्धि** - the Supreme Fulfillment of human existence, characterized by the State of Absolute Actionlessness, state of Total Freedom from action of any kind. (How that is possible, we will see a little later).

Such **नेष्कर्म्य** - the state of Absolute Actionlessness, is not gained by giving up one's **स्वकर्म**, born of one's **स्वधर्म**, by giving up one's duties in life. **नेष्कर्म्यम्** is not a matter of **कर्म** at all. It is entirely a matter of **ज्ञानं** - Knowledge about the true nature of oneself.

Let us understand that **कर्मयोग**, by itself, does not give a person **नेष्कर्म्यसिद्धि** - the supreme accomplishment of gaining total freedom from action of any kind - The state of Absolute Actionlessness, but, **कर्मयोग** provides a person with a body vehicle, namely **शुद्ध अन्तःकरण** - a pure mind and **बुद्धि**, by which one can gain **नेष्कर्म्यसिद्धि** - total freedom from action, even while the body is actively engaged in action. How?

संन्यासेन अधिगच्छति - With the vehicle of pure **अन्तःकरण** by **संन्यास**, meaning **सर्वकर्मसंन्यास** - by a mind and **बुद्धि** totally and naturally free from **कर्तृत्वभाव** - the very notion of being the **कर्ता** of any **कर्म** - the doer of any action, which means, the mind and **बुद्धि** naturally exist in total dissociation from notions of identification and association with all **क्षेत्र धर्म**s, **शरीर धर्म**s - attributes of one's physical body, and those of the world of objects, thoughts and actions.



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Such dissociation from all क्षेत्र धर्मस is naturally accomplished by सम्यक् आत्मस्वरूप दर्शनम् - by a clear vision of the true nature of ONESELF, the true nature of आत्मा, The Self I, as It is, as सत्यं-ज्ञानं-अनन्तं ब्रह्म, as ब्रह्मन् Itself. Such clear vision of ONESELF is, indeed gaining Self-knowledge. Since ब्रह्मन् is ever-free from any कर्म, gaining आत्मज्ञानं, recognizing ONESELF as ब्रह्मन्, one recognizes oneself as absolutely free from all कर्मस.

Therefore, नेष्कर्म्यम् - The state of Absolute actionlessness, has nothing to do with doing or not doing any कर्म. नेष्कर्म्यम् is purely a matter of gaining आत्मज्ञानं - Knowledge of oneself as ब्रह्मन् Itself.

Such नेष्कर्म्य सिद्धि is indeed the लक्षण of an आत्मज्ञानी - the distinguishing mark of a Self-realized, Self-recognized, Absolutely liberated person, a ज्ञानी who is totally and naturally free from any notion of being the कर्ता of any कर्म - the doer of any action. It is such a person who is a real संन्यासी - a सर्वकर्मसंन्यासी.

Supposing a person is able to gain such नेष्कर्म्य सिद्धि and becomes an आत्मज्ञानी, what does such a ज्ञानी do with the rest of his life? As भगवान् said already in Chapter 5

सर्वकर्माणि मनसा सन्यस्यास्ते सुखं वशी
नवद्वारे पुरे देही नैव कुर्वन् न कारयन् ॥ (5 - 13)

The आत्मज्ञानी, even though fully engaged in स्वकर्म - one's own duties in life, stands totally dissociated from the notion of being the कर्ता of any कर्म - the doer of



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any action, by virtue of one's **आत्मज्ञानं** - Self-knowledge. He is ever-cheerful, and ever at peace within himself, because he has no weariness born of **कर्म**. He realizes, and recognizes that he is simply sitting in his physical body as a witness for the **जीव** to exhaust itself of all its **प्रारब्धकर्मफल शेष** - whatever fruits of past actions which the physical body has still to experience. Though acting, the **आत्मज्ञानी**, in fact, neither acts nor causes any action to take place. All his actions take place spontaneously, by his very presence and in his very presence.

Such state of being is the state of **नेष्कर्म्य सिद्धि** - the state of Absolute Actionlessness, which is indeed **मोक्ष** - Total Fulfillment in life.

Now, the question is, after gaining **संसिद्धि** through **कर्मयोग**, how does one gain **नेष्कर्म्य सिद्धि**? In other words, is there a distinct state of existence between **संसिद्धि** and **नेष्कर्म्य सिद्धि**? If so, what is that state of existence and how does one go through that state of existence?

The answer is: Yes, there is indeed a distinct in-between **State of Existence** called **ज्ञाननिष्ठा**, which is both the means as well as the end of that state of existence. As the means, **ज्ञाननिष्ठा** is the process by which one gains absolute certainty of knowledge about one's true identity as **ब्रह्मन्** Itself, which is **पूर्ण आत्मज्ञानं** - Self-knowledge. As the end, **ज्ञाननिष्ठा** is **नेष्कर्म्य सिद्धि** - the certainty of knowledge of ONESELF being **ब्रह्मन्** Itself. Calling attention to That **ज्ञाननिष्ठा**, **भगवान्** says:

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे ।

समासेनेव कोन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा ॥

18 - 50



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सिद्धिं प्राप्तः - The one who has gained सिद्धि, meaning संसिद्धि, namely पूर्ण
अन्तःकरण शुद्धि - absolute purity and clarity of mind and बुद्धि through कर्मयोग
and ईश्वरप्रसाद बुद्धि

यथा - in the manner described earlier (18 - 46), namely, by doing all of one's कर्मs as
acts of worship of परमेश्वर, and thereby gaining संसिद्धि, which gives the person ज्ञान
निष्ठायोग्यता - fitness for gaining पूर्णईश्वर ज्ञानं, आत्म ज्ञानं - Self knowledge.
Having gained that fitness

यथा - तथा - येन प्रकारेण - by what exact means, likewise

ब्रह्म आप्नोति - one gains ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge in the form of
निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा - absolute certainty of परमात्म ज्ञानं - Knowledge of one's
identity as परमात्मा, the Self of all selves there are, which means, Knowledge of
oneself identified with ब्रह्मन् Itself. Gaining that Knowledge is ज्ञानस्य परा निष्ठा -
The Ultimate destination, the ultimate end of the pursuit of आत्मज्ञानं, namely
नेष्कर्म्य सिद्धि - gaining the state of Absolute Actionlessness, absolute freedom from
all notions and bondages of कर्म itself.

In every chapter of the भगवत् गीता, Sri Krishna has already said in detail some
aspect of the many steps involved in ज्ञाननिष्ठा, gaining आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge.

That is why every chapter of the भगवत् गीता is called a योग. Therefore, भगवान्
says here,

कोन्तेय - O! Arjuna. I am now going to tell you

समासेन एव - only briefly (about ज्ञाननिष्ठा)

निबोध मे मम वचनात् निश्चयेन अवधारय - Please listen to my words and
understand clearly That ज्ञाननिष्ठा, the exact sequence of the process involved in



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gaining absolute certainty of knowledge on the true nature of oneself as ब्रह्मन् Itself, as परमेश्वर Itself. So saying, Sri Krishna now proceeds to talk about ज्ञाननिष्ठा briefly in a highly focused manner.

First, we must understand clearly what is ज्ञाननिष्ठा, what for is ज्ञाननिष्ठा, and how It is accomplished. The process by which the ultimate end of any pursuit is reached, with absolute certainty, is called निष्ठा. Therefore, ज्ञाननिष्ठा is the process by which the Ultimate End, The Ultimate Destination of the pursuit of आत्मज्ञानं, namely मोक्ष - Total Fulfillment in life is reached, with absolute certainty.

Only with reference to the pursuit of आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, there can be certainty of an End. With reference to the pursuit of any other kind of knowledge, there can be no end.

In the pursuit of आत्मज्ञानं, there are essentially three steps involved. They are: श्रवणं, मननं and निदिध्यासनं. आत्मज्ञानं is communicated by pointer words in all the Upanishads which include The भगवत् गीता. श्रवणं is listening and understanding what is communicated by the words of the Upanishads. श्रवणं is primarily a matter of श्रद्धा, an abiding interest in such knowledge. मननं is repeatedly reflecting and analyzing the content of That Knowledge in all its aspects, both worldly aspects and spiritual aspects, till one becomes convinced of That knowledge. Gaining such conviction is a very slow process, for which, not only continued श्रद्धा and कर्मयोग बुद्धि and ईश्वरप्रसाद बुद्धि are necessary, but also the final step of निदिध्यासनं is absolutely necessary.

निदिध्यासनं is absorption of That Knowledge in practice, by which one becomes the very embodiment of That Knowledge. This is accomplished through continuous and reverential contemplation (which means, both intellectual understanding and emotional



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appreciation) of the Upanishad Knowledge on the true nature of जीव, जगत् and ईश्वर, and hence the true nature of आत्मा - The Self I. Such continuous and reverential contemplation on आत्मा is ज्ञाननिष्ठा - सम्यक् आत्म विचारं, as we saw in Mundaka Upanishad.

Thus ज्ञाननिष्ठा is the natural extension of the कर्मयोग process, wherein श्रद्धा, ईश्वरध्यानं and ईश्वर भक्ति get integrated through ईश्वरज्ञानं and सर्वकर्मफलत्याग बुद्धि - सर्वकर्मसंन्यास बुद्धि, as unfolded in the Upanishads, which makes ज्ञाननिष्ठा the Highest Form of ईश्वरभक्ति, which is ज्ञानलक्षणभक्तियोग, where ईश्वरभक्ति and ईश्वरज्ञानं become identical.

That being the nature of ज्ञाननिष्ठा, it itself involves neither कर्म nor कर्मफल. It involves only विवेक बुद्धि - a बुद्धि which can discriminate between what is "आत्मा" and what is "NOT आत्मा", what is "I" and what is not "I". That is बुद्धियोग (2-49) and That is ज्ञाननिष्ठा.

What for is this ज्ञाननिष्ठा? ज्ञाननिष्ठा is not for discovering आत्मा, not for discovering oneself. आत्मा is always Self-evident as Oneself Itself, as "I" Itself. Even in total darkness, one recognizes oneself as "I".

But even with all Upanishad Knowledge on आत्मा, and the clarity and purity of mind and बुद्धि gained through कर्मयोग, one has only an indirect knowledge of "I", because a variety of long-standing, deep-rooted mental obstructions to the direct and immediate recognition of "I" as It truly is, as the Upanishads say It is. Consequently, one still entertains the notions such as:

"I am this body"

"I am all the attributes and limitations of this body"



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"I am the doer of कर्म, and enjoyer of कर्मफल"

"I am happy now and then, and I am unhappy now and then".

"I am mortal", etc., etc.

All these descriptions are erroneous superimpositions of what are "NOT I" on the true nature of "I". These superimpositions are obstructions to the direct, clear and immediate recognition of "I" as It truly is. These obstructions have to disappear naturally in order for one to gain certainty about one's knowledge of ONESELF, one's knowledge of आत्मा - The Self I as It is.

Thus, to remove all obstructions to the direct and immediate recognition of आत्मा - The Self I as It is, is the purpose of ज्ञाननिष्ठा. How is this purpose accomplished? In ज्ञाननिष्ठा, the mission is to search for Absolute Truth, and nothing else. By ज्ञाननिष्ठा, by ज्ञानलक्षणभक्तियोग, the obstructions to आत्मज्ञानं progressively and naturally disappear, because all such obstructions have no independent reality.

The natural disappearance of all obstructions to आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, enables one's बुद्धि, by the Grace of परमेश्वर, to recognize आत्मा - The Self I, clearly, directly and immediately as It is, already available for such recognition in the ब्रह्मपुरि region of one's own बुद्धि, by which one gains absolute certainty of knowledge of oneself as: ब्रह्मेवाऽहं अस्मि - I am indeed ब्रह्मन्.

आनन्द रूपं अमृतं यत् विभाति - That ब्रह्मन् shines by Itself, revealing Itself as The Immortal Ever-existent सत् चित् आनन्दस्वरूप ब्रह्मन्. Gaining such certainty of Knowledge of ONESELF as ब्रह्मन् Itself is indeed the very destination of ज्ञाननिष्ठा and That is नेष्कर्म्यसिद्धि - The state of Absolute Actionlessness, The मोक्ष, Total Fulfillment of life.



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Sri Krishna describes the process of ज्ञाननिष्ठा in concise terms in the next five highly focused verses, which we will see next time.