



## ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

### श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता मोक्षसंन्यासयोगः Chapter 18 Volume 2

अर्जुन उवाच

संन्यासस्य महाबाहो तत्त्वमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ।  
त्यागस्य च हृषीकेश पृथक्केशिनिषूदन ॥ 18-1

श्री भगवान् उवाच

काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं संन्यासं कवयो विदुः ।  
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं प्राहुस्त्यागं विचक्षणाः ॥ 18-2

त्याज्यं दोषवदित्येके कर्म प्राहुर्मनीषिणः ।  
यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यमिति चापरे ॥ 18-3

निश्चयं शृणु मे तत्र त्यागे भरतसत्तम ।  
त्यागो हि पुरुषव्याघ्र त्रिविधः संप्रकीर्तितः ॥ 18-4

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।  
यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥ 18-5

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।  
कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम् ॥ 18-6

As we saw last time. Arjuna asks Sri Krishna "what exactly are the meanings of the words संन्यास and त्याग. Do they really have distinctly different meanings? If so, what is the difference? Responding to Arjuna's question, भगवान् says:



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं is संन्यासं. Renunciation of all काम्यकर्मस - all कर्मस prompted by one's worldly desires of various kinds is called संन्यास.

Now, "काम्यकर्मस" means what? So long as one entertains the notion of doership in action, every action of that person yields a कर्मफल, a result of action, and consequently all actions of that person naturally become काम्यकर्मस - desire prompted actions, whether or not one seeks or expects or cares for that कर्मफल. Whatever be one's disposition towards one's कर्मफल, that disposition itself is the person's काम- desire with respect to one's कर्म- action. Therefore, for the person who entertains the notion that he or she is the doer of कर्म and enjoyer of कर्मफल, for that person, all of one's कर्मस are काम्यकर्मस, and renunciation of all such काम्यकर्मस is called संन्यास.

On the other hand, सर्वकर्मफल त्यागं is त्यागं. Renunciation of all fruits of one's actions, all results of one's actions is called त्याग. Thus, in general, त्याग is giving up कर्मफल, whereas संन्यास involves giving up कर्म itself. In order to be able to appreciate the mutually distinct nature of त्याग and संन्यास, we must consider the following four related Upanishad expressions, namely कर्म त्याग, कर्म संन्यास, सर्वकर्म संन्यास and सर्वकर्मफल त्याग.

कर्म त्याग simply means giving up कर्म. Anyone who can do a कर्म can also give up that कर्म, just by choice. People do various कर्मस, and also give up various कर्मस at different times for different reasons. This is common knowledge. While such doing a कर्म or giving up a कर्म may or may not have anything to do with one's spiritual



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

endeavors, it is always an expression of one's गुण at any given time. Thus, it is clear that कर्मत्याग - giving up कर्म, is open to any person, and it, by itself, has no particular spiritual significance.

कर्म संन्यास also means कर्मत्याग - giving up कर्म, but in this case, कर्म is given up by one who is a संन्यासी. Now, who is a संन्यासी? In traditional Vedic life, a संन्यासी is one who, having become aware of the need to gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं, आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, for gaining मोक्ष - Total Fulfillment in life, opts for a particular style of daily life, which involves:

- deliberately withdrawing oneself from normal family life, and giving up most (but not all) family duties and associated कर्मs, and
- joining some monastic order, divesting oneself from most of one's personal possessions
- changing one's name and external appearance
- taking some ritualistic vows of self-discipline and
- often choosing to live on alms, etc.,

all these with a view to dedicate oneself almost exclusively to the pursuit of आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, through Upanishad studies.

In this connection, we must remember that giving up any कर्म, is itself कर्म. Therefore, no matter how many कर्मs one may try to give up, one can never give up कर्म itself, so long as one considers oneself as the doer of any कर्म, as we have already seen in Chapter 4 (4 - 18). Therefore, all that a कर्मसंन्यासी tries to do is to voluntarily impose upon oneself certain acts of self-discipline to help oneself to pursue Upanishad studies almost exclusively.

In Vedantic language, such कर्मसंन्यास - such giving up of कर्मs is called आश्रम संन्यास. For our purpose here, let us call such कर्मसंन्यास simply as "ordinary



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

"संन्यास" to distinguish it from "Absolute संन्यास" which is quite different, as we will shortly see.

Such ordinary संन्यास is an accepted way of life in Vedic society, and it remains so, even today in the Vedic tradition. All संन्यासीs we see in Hindu Society today are only ordinary संन्यासीs. When Arjuna talks about संन्यास, he means only ordinary संन्यास. For any person who wants to gain मोक्ष, the choice of life-style is only between ordinary संन्यास and कर्मयोग.

Thus, the word संन्यास generally means only ordinary संन्यास. An ordinary संन्यासी also is a doer of कर्म and gainer of कर्मफल. His कर्म is primarily the pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या Knowledge and his कर्मफल is ब्रह्मज्ञानं, आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge. Even though the ordinary संन्यासीs and कर्मयोगीs follow different lifestyles, both do कर्म, both gain कर्मफल, and ultimately, both gain मोक्ष - Total Fulfillment in life. That is why Sri Krishna said earlier (5 - 5)

यत् सांख्येः प्राप्यते स्थानं तत् योगेरपि गम्यते -The ultimate destination reached by संन्यासीs is also reached by कर्मयोगीs.

Thus, let us understand that the expression कर्मसंन्यास is applicable only to those who have chosen to live a life-style of ordinary संन्यासीs, which life style is only a particular form of self-discipline helpful for the undistracted pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या Knowledge.

Now about सर्वकर्मसंन्यास. सर्वकर्मसंन्यास literally means giving up all कर्मs absolutely. Thus सर्वकर्मसंन्यास is Absolute संन्यास, or True संन्यास. It is obvious that such Absolute संन्यास is practically impossible for any human being because no



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

person can give up all कर्मs. Then, what does सर्वकर्मसंन्यास mean? The term सर्वकर्मसंन्यास only indicates the disposition of the अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि of a ज्ञानी in whom the sense of doership in action is naturally absent. Such a person has already gained Self-realization, Self-recognition of oneself as सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा - ONESELF as The Self of all beings. As Sri Krishna said earlier:

सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते (5 - 7)

such a Self-realized, Self-recognized person, even while performing actions of various kinds, is not bound by any action, is not touched by any action.

The one who realizes one's true self as सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा, recognizes the true nature of oneself as सत्-चित्-आनन्द-स्वरूप आत्मा.

आत्मा - The self, does not perform any action. In the presence of आत्मा, all actions take place. On such realization, the person, even while being busy in life, remains Actionless, free from any कर्म. Such a person is a सर्वकर्मसंन्यासी - an Absolute संन्यासी, a true संन्यासी, a ज्ञानी.

Why is such a person called सर्वकर्मसंन्यासी, when there is really no कर्म for him to give up? He is so called because That is the state of existence that every ordinary कर्मसंन्यासी hopes to reach in one's own lifetime, through his lifestyle of ordinary संन्यास.

That state of existence is indeed मोक्ष, which is his destination in life. When a कर्मयोगी gains मोक्ष, he is also a सर्वकर्मसंन्यासी, a ज्ञानी. Therefore सर्वकर्मसंन्यास or Absolute संन्यास or true संन्यास simply means the state of existence of a ज्ञानी - a Self-realized, Self-recognized person.



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

What we need to understand is this. When Gita talks about कर्म, or ordinary संन्यासी or कर्मयोगी, the discussion is not about सर्वकर्मसंन्यासी or ज्ञानी. The discussion is only about people who entertain the notion that they are doers of कर्म and enjoyers of कर्मफल. Every कर्म naturally produces a कर्मफल for the one who does the कर्म.

Now about सर्वकर्मफलत्याग. सर्वकर्मफलत्याग means renunciation of all fruits of all actions, giving up all results of all actions, without exception. Everybody does कर्म and gains कर्मफल. Occasionally people give up the कर्मफल of a कर्म, as an offering to परमेश्वर. Such renunciation of कर्मफल is NOT त्याग. Only when one gives up the fruits of all actions without exception, such giving up is त्याग. Such त्याग is possible only for a कर्मयोगी, the one whose अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि is saturated with ईश्वरभक्ति and ईश्वरप्रसाद बुद्धि. For a कर्मयोगी every कर्म is ईश्वरकर्म, and every कर्मफल is ईश्वरप्रसाद. A कर्मयोगी fully realizes what भगवान् said earlier in Chapter 2.

"कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन 2 - 47

You have every right, authority, power, choice and duty, only with respect to the कर्म that you do, but you have absolutely no right whatsoever with respect to the कर्मफल you get. Why? Because कर्मफल does not belong to you. कर्मफल belongs only to परमेश्वर ".

Therefore, a कर्मयोगी returns the कर्मफल naturally to परमेश्वर, to whom it belongs.

If I get something which does not belong to me, what do I do? I naturally return it to the person to whom it belongs. Such return is simply a matter of proper conduct, and it is not a matter of any त्याग - any renunciation on my part.



## ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

If every कर्म is ईश्वरकर्म, and if every कर्मफल belongs only to परमेश्वर, then there is really nothing for a कर्मयोगी to renounce. Therefore, for a कर्मयोगी, सर्वकर्मफलत्याग - renouncing all fruits of all actions simply means enjoying the glory of परमेश्वर and The Grace of परमेश्वर at all times. That is what exactly the Upanishad says:

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनं ॥

Therefore, let us understand now that

- ✿ कर्मत्याग is applicable to everyone who does कर्म, and that, by itself, has no spiritual significance
- ✿ कर्मसंन्यास is applicable only to those who choose to live the life-style of ordinary संन्यास, and
- ✿ सर्वकर्मफलत्याग is applicable only to कर्मयोगीs .

Further, both ordinary संन्यासीs and कर्मयोगीs are doers of कर्म and enjoyers of कर्मफल, whereas सर्वकर्मसंन्यास is applicable only to ज्ञानीs, who are untouched by notions of doership of any कर्म. With this understanding, let us now proceed with the discourse.

Recalling briefly, responding to Arjuna's question about the difference between संन्यास and त्याग, भगवान् says: संन्यास is काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं - renunciation of desire-prompted actions, and त्याग is सर्वकर्मफलत्याग - renunciation of fruits of all actions. Continuing this message about कर्म, संन्यास and त्याग, भगवान् says:

त्याज्यं दोषवदित्येके कर्म प्राहुः मनीषिणः ।



## ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं इति चापरे ॥ 18 - 3

There are two prevailing views about कर्म. One is

एके मनीषिणः प्राहुः - some learned people, some scholars, they are not ज्ञानीs, but they know the words of the Vedas, and they have their own understanding of the Vedic knowledge. They say

त्याज्यं कर्म इति - every कर्म should be given up. Why? Because

दोषवत् - every कर्म, whether it is good or bad, has a दोष - has an inherent defect.

The defect is that every कर्म is the cause for bondage. Every कर्म produces पुण्य or पाप, and sometimes both, and they just keep the wheel of संसार going. Therefore, all कर्मs should be given up, and one should take to a life of संन्यास - कर्म संन्यास - ordinary संन्यास, to gain मोक्ष. That is the view of some learned people. On the other hand

च अपरे प्राहुः - there are also others, other learned people, who say that

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं इति - यज्ञकर्म, दान कर्म and तपस् कर्म should never be given up by anybody, including ordinary संन्यासीs.

Since the life style of संन्यास is still in the mind of Arjuna, भगवान्'s view on this matter should be of particular interest to Arjuna. Therefore, भगवान् says: On this matter

निश्चयं शृणु मे तत्र त्यागे भरतसत्तम ।

त्यागो हि पुरुषव्याघ्र त्रिविधः संप्रकीर्तितः ॥ 18-4

Addressing Arjuna as भरतसत्तम and पुरुषव्याघ्र, भगवान् calls for Arjuna's particular attention to this very important matter. भगवान् says,



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

O! Arjuna

तत्र त्यागे - On this matter of त्याग - giving up कर्म

निश्चयं शृणु मे - मम वचनं शृणु - please listen to My words, and clearly understand the truth about त्याग, definitely and decisively (निश्चयं), because decisive knowledge on this matter is very important for everyone who wants to get the best out of one's life of कर्मs

त्यागो हि त्रिविधः संप्रकीर्तितः - Indeed, त्याग has been rightly and very well pointed out in our Sastras in terms of the three-fold गुणs, because, it is the nature of one's गुण that makes one's कर्म as cause for one's bondage, not the कर्म itself. Since one's गुण is three-fold, namely सत्त्व, राजस् and तमस्, so is one's त्याग.

Sri Krishna's view of त्याग is naturally the most authoritative expression of Veda-Vedanta Sastra, and it is that knowledge about त्याग which every person must know. That knowledge is:

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥ 18-5

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।

कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम् ॥ 18-6

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं - The यज्ञकर्म, दानकर्म and तपस् कर्म should never be given up by anybody

तत् कार्यमेव - The यज्ञकर्म, दानकर्म and तपस् कर्म, each one of them, is कर्तव्यं कार्य, कर्म to be done by everybody. That is the clear, conclusive and



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

definitive declaration of Sri Krishna - The परमेश्वर, with respect to यज्ञकर्म, दानकर्म and तपस् कर्म. As we have already seen

- यज्ञकर्म is any form of ईश्वर उपासन - worship of परमेश्वर, not limited to Vedic rituals. A totally worshipful attitude towards all of one's duties arising from one's station in life is यज्ञकर्म .\*
- दानकर्म is maintenance of a charitable disposition of giving and a willingness and readiness to help others in need, in whatever way one can; maintenance of such a charitable disposition at all times is दानं, and
- तपस् कर्म is maintenance of a constant disposition of personal discipline, as described in the last chapter, in terms of काय तपस् (discipline at the body level in general) वाक् तपस् (discipline at the level of speech in particular), and मानस तपस् (discipline at the level of mind and बुद्धि - faculty of thinking and judgment).

All these three kinds of कर्मs, are कर्मs to be done by every person, whether one is a संसारि, कर्मयोगी or संन्यासी. That is the mandate, direct from परमेश्वर Itself, which means, the above three kinds of कर्मs are inseparable components of सनातन धर्म - Eternal law of life.

Why are those three kinds of कर्मs so important for human life? Because

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम्

-----  
\* That means, by giving up one's duties, one cannot become a कर्मसंन्यासी. This is particularly a message not only for Arjuna, but also for everybody.

मनीषिणाम् - For people in general, especially as they cultivate their ability to think, understand and appreciate properly the nature and purpose of कर्म in life, they realize



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

that यज्ञकर्म, दानकर्म and तपस् कर्म are पावनानि, which means शुद्धिकरं - they together have the inherent capacity to continuously purify the अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि, and keep them clean and clear at all times.

Even though अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि, as an instrument, is naturally pure, it is still susceptible to become impure by contamination with impurities arising from काम्य कर्म's impelled by one's रागद्वेष forces of likes and dislikes. Therefore continuous removal of such impurities is absolutely necessary to keep the mind and बुद्धि clean and clear every day of life; and that is what यज्ञकर्म, दानकर्म and तपस् कर्म do to everybody in everyday life.

In order for the above कर्म's to be effective as purifiers of one's अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि, they should be done with proper attitude, says Sri Krishna in the next verse:

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।

कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम् ॥ 18-6

We will see this verse in detail next time.