



श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता  
पञ्चमोऽध्यायः - संन्यास योगः  
**Chapter 5**  
**Volume 1**

अर्जुन उवाच

संन्यासं कर्मणां कृष्ण पुनर्योगं च शंससि ।  
यत् श्रेयः एतयोरेकं तन्मे ब्रूहि सुनिश्चितम् ॥ 5 - 1

श्री भगवान् उवाच

संन्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकरावुभौ ।  
तयोस्तु कर्मसंन्यात् कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ॥ 5 - 2

ज्ञेयः स नित्य संन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति ।  
निर्वृन्दो हि माहाबाहो सुखं बन्धात् प्रमुच्यते ॥ 5 - 3

Sri Krishna introduced the concept of कर्मयोग in Chapter 2, simply in one verse.

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनजय ।  
सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ 2 - 48

He expanded on this statement and described कर्मयोग in detail in Chapter 3. That was not enough to meet the needs of Arjuna. Therefore, Sri Krishna repeats the concept of कर्मयोग in the three following chapters 4, 5 and 6 in a different way in each chapter.

This kind of repetition is the लक्षण - distinguishing characteristic of the Vedantic teaching. On every such repetition, one gains a new level of understanding of the subject matter under discussion.

in Chapter 4, कर्मयोग is presented as ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यासयोग. In Chapter 5, the same कर्मयोग is presented as संन्यास योग, and in Chapter 6, the same कर्मयोग is presented as ध्यानयोग. In daily spiritual life, one starts with ध्यानयोग and progressively matures through संन्यासयोग to ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यासयोग, which is the same as ज्ञानयोग leading to मोक्ष - which is a life of Total Fulfillment.



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

In the beginning of Chapter 3, Arjuna's question to Sri Krishna was "If gaining ज्ञानं, namely आत्मज्ञानं, or ब्रह्मज्ञानं is more important than going about doing various कर्मs, why do you push me into action with reference to this war, instead of asking me to engage myself in the pursuit of ज्ञानं ?" Sri Krishna's answer to that question was Chapters 3 and 4. Briefly, the answer was

" The only way to gain आत्मज्ञानं is through कर्म, performed as कर्मयोग, which includes not only doing your duties as dedication to परमेश्वर, but also uplifting your plane of ईश्वर consciousness through श्रवणं, मननं and निदिध्यासनं - listening and understanding the sounds of the Upanishads, reflecting on the words of the Upanishads, and absorbing the content of the Upanishad teachings in every one of your actions in daily life. Through such कर्मयोग, your अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि - gets purified and becomes progressively more and more fit for आत्मज्ञानं - Self Knowledge - Knowledge of the Self in every self, including oneself. In time, when the mind and बुद्धि are mature, one indeed finds oneself established in आत्मज्ञानं. When that state is reached, one recognizes ईश्वर in all actions, and, at the same time, recognizes all actions as the very Glory of परमेश्वर. In that state of existence, one is a ज्ञानी - a wise person, which means that one, even while being engaged in all worldly activities, remains spontaneously dissociated from all कर्मs because of the total absence of any sense of doership in action.

Such a ज्ञानी is a ज्ञान कर्म संन्यासी, which is the same as सर्वकर्म संन्यासी - the one who remains totally dissociated from all actions and hence totally unaffected by all actions and their results."

Now we must know the meaning of the word संन्यास. न्यास means त्याग - renunciation or giving up of something, by will or by choice. संन्यास means संयक् न्यास - natural giving up, not by forced giving up. It is not giving up something by will or by choice. It is a natural spontaneous dissociation. In one's spiritual progress, one starts with न्यास, and progressively matures into संन्यास.

A संन्यासी does not hold on to actions, and no actions can hold on to him either. Thus a true संन्यासी is really सर्वकर्मसंन्यासी, and such a संन्यासी alone is a ज्ञानी - a person of wisdom.



## ब्रह्मचिदा **Brahma Vidya**

What भगवान् points out in chapter 3 and 4 is this. For a ज्ञानी, life is one of सर्वकर्म संन्यास, which is ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यास योग, or simply ज्ञानयोग. सर्वकर्मसंन्यास itself is ज्ञानं, and ज्ञानं is मोक्षं - श्रेयस् - The परम-पुरुषार्थ. On the other hand, for the one who is not yet a ज्ञानी, which means for an अज्ञानी, life is one of कर्मयोग - life is one of कर्म totally dedicated to परमेश्वर.

Therefore what भगवान् says is clear. ज्ञानयोग is for a ज्ञानी. कर्मयोग is for an अज्ञानी. There is no choice here. A ज्ञानी cannot be a कर्मयोगी, because he is free from any notion of doership. A ज्ञानी realizes that आत्मा is अकर्ता, आत्मा is not the doer of any action. Even though one may be doing, one is still not doing. A ज्ञानी sees only परमेश्वर in every कर्म. He is simply a functionary of परमेश्वर, and as such, he is the very expression of the Glory of परमेश्वर.

Similarly, an अज्ञानी cannot be a ज्ञानयोगी. He can only be a कर्मयोगी, because he still feels that he is the doer - the कर्ता, he is the one who chooses either to do or not to do any particular कर्म. So long as he has the notion of doership, he remains an अज्ञानी and his means for gaining ज्ञानं is only through कर्मयोग - कर्म totally dedicated to परमेश्वर.

Arjuna is still an अज्ञानी. His ज्ञानसाधनं - his only means for gaining ज्ञानं, is कर्मयोग, and there is no choice for Arjuna. Therefore भगवान् expounds कर्मयोग to him and leads him into ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यास योग. But, Arjuna's mind is not yet ready for that vision of कर्मयोग leading to ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यास योग.

Therefore Arjuna thinks in this way, somewhat erroneously. "I am an अज्ञानी, that I know. I want to gain ज्ञानं, that is true. But in order to gain ज्ञानं, why should कर्मयोग be the only path for me. Why should I not follow the path of त्याग, which is कर्मसंन्यास, giving up actions by choice and by will. I will give up some actions now, and more and more actions as the time goes on, until finally I give up all actions and become a सर्वकर्मसंन्यासी, if that is all a ज्ञानकर्म संन्यास means. कर्मसंन्यास appears closer to सर्वकर्मसंन्यास than कर्मयोग. By giving up a few कर्मs at a time, one is closer to giving up all कर्मs in due course of time". So thinks Arjuna.



## ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

The error in Arjuna's current thinking is obvious. सर्वकर्मसंन्यास is not simply an extension of कर्मसंन्यास. Giving up all actions is not simply an extension of giving up a few actions at a time. It is practically impossible to give up all actions. One can give up all actions only when there are no actions to give up, and that happens only through ज्ञान - wisdom, which is what Arjuna needs to realize.

However, at this time Arjuna seems to think: "Since कर्मयोग involves doing actions and संन्यास involves giving up actions, कर्मयोग and संन्यास appear to be opposed to each other. In any case, for an अज्ञानी who wants to become a ज्ञानी, there should be a choice between कर्मयोग and संन्यास. If that is so, between कर्मयोग and संन्यास, which one is better for me to follow so that I may ultimately gain the श्रेयस् that I seek?" Such a question arises in the mind of Arjuna at this time. Therefore, this chapter - chapter 5, starts with a question and a request from Arjuna to Sri Krishna. Arjuna says:

अर्जुन उवाच

संन्यासं कर्मणां कृष्ण पुनर्योगं च शंससि ।

यत् श्रेयः एतयोरेकं तन्मे ब्रूहि सुनिश्चितम् ॥ 5 - 1

कृष्ण O! Krishna,

कर्मणां संन्यासं शंससि, पुनः योगं च शंससि

कर्मणां - In the matter of all actions to be done

संन्यासं शंससि - You glorify संन्यास, which to me means कर्मसंन्यास - a life of renunciation of actions

पुनः योगं च शंससि - At the same time, you glorify कर्मयोग also. As the means for gaining ज्ञान - gaining श्रेयस्, you glorify संन्यास, and at the same time, कर्मयोग also. Such glorification causes confusion to my mind. As I understand it, संन्यास is कर्मसंन्यास which involves giving up actions, and कर्मयोग involves doing actions. Thus संन्यास and कर्मयोग seem to lead in opposite directions. If that is so, both cannot lead to the same end, namely The श्रेयस् I seek. Therefore,



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एतयोः यत् श्रेयः - Of these two, namely कर्मसंन्यास and कर्मयोग, which is superior, which is better for me, which is the one that is the most appropriate for me in my present situation, which is the one that will certainly lead me to the श्रेयस् that I seek.

एतयोः एकं तत् मे ब्रुहि युनि श्रुतं - Of these two, namely कर्मसंन्यास and कर्मयोग, please tell me, decisively, the ONE which is the best for me to follow. My mind is too confused to make the decision for myself.

Thus Arjuna's question is: Between संन्यास and कर्मयोग meaning between कर्मसंन्यास and कर्मयोग, which one will certainly lead one to मोक्ष? And Arjuna's request is " Of the two, namely कर्मसंन्यास and कर्मयोग, please tell me the one that I should follow to gain मोक्ष.

In order to understand Arjuna's question properly, we must know clearly that there are two distinctly different kinds of संन्यास. One kind is the ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यास which Sri Krishna introduced in the last chapter (4 -4) and which Sri Krishna elaborates in detail as मोक्ष संन्यास in chapter 18 which we will see later. The other kind is आश्रम संन्यास, which is essentially कर्मसंन्यास.

ज्ञानकर्म संन्यास or मोक्ष संन्यास is the spontaneous dissociation with कर्म which occurs naturally in a person as a result of सम्यक् ज्ञानं - clear recognition that there is, in fact, nothing other than ब्रह्मन् in all existence. Such recognition is the distinguishing characteristic of a ज्ञानी. For a ज्ञानी there is no such thing as giving up of कर्म or not giving up of कर्म, because a ज्ञानी, not being a कर्ता, has no कर्म. The कर्म of a ज्ञानी is only ज्ञानकर्म - wisdom in action, where there is no कर्तृत्व भाव - no notion of doership in action.

On the other hand, आश्रम संन्यास means that at a particular stage in one's life, one chooses to take to a different lifestyle, giving up certain worldly duties and obligations in order to concentrate exclusively on some form of spiritual pursuit of one's own choice. Most of the संन्यासीs in the Vedic society of the past and also in the present day Hindu Society are only आश्रम संन्यासीs. An आश्रम संन्यासी is still an अज्ञानी and if he or she chooses to live a life of कर्म संन्यास to pursue ब्रह्मज्ञानं, such कर्म संन्यास is only another form of कर्मयोग.



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While कर्मसंन्यास is deliberate giving up of actions as a matter of discipline, कर्मयोग is deliberate performance of actions totally dedicated to परमेश्वर. कर्मसंन्यास and कर्मयोग involve two different lifestyles, suited to people of two different mental dispositions, but both serve the same purpose, and have the same goal. Therefore, responding to Arjuna's question and request, भगवान् says:

श्री भगवान् उवाच

संन्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकरावुभौ ।  
तयोस्तु कर्मसंन्यात् कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ॥

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संन्यासः कर्मयोगः च निःश्रेयस-करौ उभौ

संन्यासः कर्मयोगः च - संन्यास and कर्मयोग, both of them

निःश्रेयसकरौ - are certainly capable of leading one to श्रेयस् -मोक्ष. Both संन्यास and कर्मयोग are मोक्ष साधनं - means for gaining मोक्ष. Both can lead to मोक्ष. Here संन्यास means कर्मसंन्यास, because only कर्मसंन्यास and कर्मयोग are comparable.

कर्मसंन्यास being only another form of कर्मयोग, is not opposed to कर्मयोग. Each is meant for different people with different mental dispositions - that is all the distinction between कर्मसंन्यास and कर्मयोग.

Therefore, to Arjuna's question, between संन्यास and कर्मयोग, which will lead to मोक्ष, the answer is that both can lead to मोक्ष. Now, about Arjuna's request, Sri Krishna's response is

तयोः तु कर्मसंन्यासात् कर्मयोगः विशिष्यते

तयोः तु - But of the two modes of life, for your particular situation,

कर्मसंन्यासात् कर्मयोगः विशिष्यते - कर्मयोग is far superior to

केवल कर्मसंन्यास - mere renunciation of actions.

Such कर्मसंन्यास is not the ज्ञानकर्म संन्यास which Sri Krishna talked about in chapter 4, but it is ज्ञान रहित कर्मसंन्यास - it is simply renunciation of certain actions as a matter



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of self-discipline, accomplished purely through the force of will, devoid of wisdom. Therefore भगवान् says:

As a means of gaining मोक्ष, कर्मयोग - कर्म performed as यज्ञ कर्म totally dedicated to परमेश्वर, totally free from मम-बुद्धि - my notion, and totally free from any longing for, or any expectations of कर्मफल - that kind of कर्मयोग is far superior to कर्मसंन्यास. Why? Sri Krishna gives the reasons in the later verses. In this opening verse he simply says:

O! Arjuna, even though both कर्मसंन्यास and कर्मयोग are both means for gaining मोक्ष, for a person of your mental disposition, कर्मयोग is the only appropriate means for you to gain मोक्ष. There is no other means for you. You being what you are, you have no choice in the matter". That is Sri Krishna's **firm** response to Arjuna's request.

If it is merely a prescription to solve an immediate problem is all that Arjuna needed at this time, Sri Krishna has now given the needed prescription. But Sri Krishna knows that a mere prescription alone will not solve Arjuna's problem, because of the very nature of the means and the end.

कर्मयोग is not an object that one can buy and swallow. And, even if that were possible, कर्मयोग by itself is not मोक्ष. कर्मयोग makes one fit for मोक्ष. When one is so fit with that fitness, one's mind and बुद्धि must still mature to the state of संन्यास. That संन्यास is not कर्मसंन्यास, it is ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यास or मोक्ष संन्यास - a संन्यास which is itself मोक्ष. Therefore, one has to understand what संन्यास really means, and why, for a person like अर्जुन कर्मयोग is the only appropriate means for the realization of that state of संन्यास, which is indeed the subject matter of the rest of this chapter.

As a discipline and as a means for gaining मोक्ष, कर्म संन्यास is appropriate only for those whose mind is predominantly governed by सत्त्वगुण, a mind which is overridingly oriented towards ब्रह्मज्ञानं - Self Knowledge. Such a mind tends to be more and more contemplative in its disposition. For such a contemplative mind, कर्मसंन्यास is indeed a helpful means for gaining the state of ज्ञानकर्म संन्यास.

But contemplative mind is not something that comes by one's will. One cannot will to be contemplative. One has to grow to be contemplative. Mere giving up of actions, mere





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कर्मसंन्यास does not make one contemplative. A contemplative person is contemplative, whether he does actions or gives up actions. A prior life of कर्मयोग, either in this life or in previous lives, is necessary for a person to be naturally contemplative with a mind and बुद्धि oriented towards ब्रह्मज्ञानं – towards परमेश्वर.

When we talk of कर्मसंन्यासी as a कर्मयोगी, we mean only that कर्मसंन्यासी who has naturally a contemplative disposition towards ब्रह्मज्ञानं at all times. Referring to such कर्मयोगीs, भगवान् says:

ज्ञेयः स नित्य संन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति ।  
निर्द्वन्द्वो हि माहाबाहो सुखं बन्धात् प्रमुच्यते ॥

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माहाबाहो - O! Arjuna

ज्ञेयः - you should understand, which means

ज्ञातव्यः - this is, first and foremost, a matter of understanding clearly who a संन्यासी is and who a कर्मसंन्यासी is. Therefore, please listen carefully.

यः न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति - The person who is neither a hater nor a lover; the person who does not identify oneself with one's likes or dislikes; the person who neither hates nor avoids something out of fear, nor loves or goes after something because of attachments;

सः नित्यसंन्यासी - That person is a नित्यसंन्यासी - always a संन्यासी, whether that person calls himself so or not. That person remains naturally dissociated with actions and the fruits of actions even though he may be enthusiastically engaged in actions all the time.

न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति - The one who neither hates nor loves, this is the लक्षण of both a कर्मयोगी as well as a कर्मसंन्यासी. For a कर्मसंन्यासी, this लक्षण is by deliberate discipline. He may have strong likes and dislikes, but by discipline, he is not overpowered by them. For a कर्मयोगी, न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति is a लक्षण by cultivated disposition. Thus a कर्मयोगी is a नित्य संन्यासी, and is always a कर्मसंन्यासी. Such a नित्य संन्यासी is निर्द्वन्द्वः - free from the hold of राग and द्वेष - the powers of likes and dislikes.

सुखं बन्धात् प्रमुच्यते - he is easily (सुखं ) uplifted and set free from all bondages, all kinds of sorrow and distress ( बन्धात् प्रमुच्यते )





## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Therefore a कर्मयोगी is a नित्य सन्यासी by disposition. He is free from the hold of all powers of राग and द्वेष, and he is easily uplifted and released from all kinds of bondages by virtue of his very nature, namely न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति. He is above his likes and dislikes.

Thus, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna "Arjuna, if you want to be a सन्यासी, be a कर्मयोगी first. That is all you have to be. You do not have to change your name, your external appearance, your life style, etc. You do not have to give up your duties, and you need not be fanatic about anything. Be a कर्मयोगी, and by being so, you will naturally grow up to be नित्य सन्यासी - you will remain a सन्यासी at all times.

There is something important here to understand. Sri Krishna does not say "You give up all your likes and dislikes, then you will become a सन्यासी ". No, Sri Krishna does not say that, because one cannot give up one's राग and द्वेष, one's likes and dislikes, just by will. You did not **will** to have all the likes and dislikes that you have. They are there by virtue of your प्रारब्ध कर्मs and प्रकृति गुणाs - composition of the mind and बुद्धि due to one's सत्व-रजस्-तमस्-गुणाs which are ever subject to change. राग and द्वेष are there in every human being at all times. Human progress itself is due to the presence of such likes and dislikes, and the actions prompted by them. Therefore, राग and द्वेष - likes and dislikes, by themselves do not constitute a problem. When properly handled, they are also one's assets.

The problem lies in our inability to recognize ourselves to be independent of our राग and द्वेष, and also our inability to handle the राग-द्वेष generated actions and their results properly. One must first realize that one is not one's राग and द्वेष, and then, one must know how to handle properly the कर्म and कर्मफल - the actions and their results arising from one's राग and द्वेष, which change from time to time.

Sri Krishna says that the only proper way to handle the problems arising from राग and द्वेष is through कर्मयोग and प्रसाद बुद्धि. As a human being, one enjoys a free will, with the help of which one can choose an action. Expecting the result of an action is legitimate, and it is included in the choice of the action itself. Once the action is performed, one has no choice over the result. It is given to me to act, but it is not given to me to get the result that I want. As Sri Krishna said earlier,



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कर्मण्येव अधिकारस्ते, मा फलेषु कदाचन – The cause-effect relationships are governed by laws over which I have no control. But I must realize that all results are from परमेश्वर only. And every result is ईश्वर प्रसाद. That is कर्मयोग attitude and प्रसाद बुद्धि.

That कर्मयोग attitude and प्रसाद बुद्धि together help one to dedicate all actions to परमेश्वर in the first place, and receive the results of all such actions, whatever they are, as the very Grace of परमेश्वर, with a sense of gratitude and fulfillment. प्रसाद बुद्धि causes no reaction. It only inspires one to greatness in action, which is again dedicated to परमेश्वर only, which makes one ready to receive further results of such actions with the same प्रसाद बुद्धि, and this process goes on.

As Sri Krishna said earlier:

प्रसादे सर्व दुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।  
प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥ 2 - 65

All sorrows are destroyed by प्रसाद बुद्धि. Freed from the hold of राग and द्वेष, the mind acquires a cheerful disposition, ever ready for further greatness in actions, inspired by परमेश्वर at all times. And that is कर्मयोग. Such a कर्मयोगी is निर्द्वन्द्वः - unaffected by राग and द्वेष. He is न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति - he ever remains independent of his likes and dislikes, and he is a नित्य सन्यासी - he is an ever active संन्यासी, with unbounded joy and zest, untouched by any action. As the Upanishad says:

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेत्तंगं समाः । एवं त्वयिनान्यथेतोस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥

That is the लक्षण, the distinguishing characteristic of a कर्मयोगी, a नित्यसन्यासी.

We will continue next time.