

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 12: Bhakti-Yoga

1/2 (Ślōka 1-8), Sunday, 15 January 2023

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/whp878rcWJo>

Supreme Path to the Ultimate Bliss - Devotion

The session started with the lighting of the lamp and prayers to Śrī Bhagavān. This was followed by prayers to the Gurujans, saints expressing gratitude for their blessings. It is through their grace and perhaps some of our punya karma that we have been connected with Śrīmadbhagavadgītā. We have been handed the opportunity to learn and recite Bhagavadgītā with perfection, in spite of the fact that many of us may not be exposed to Hindi or Sanskrit. In the 18th chapter, Śrī Bhagavān proclaims that he who learns, teaches and spreads the knowledge of Gītā is His most favourite! We are blessed indeed.

The 12th Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is about the Yoga of Bhakti - The Yoga of Devotion, and describes the various ways one can reach The Divine. The chapter also describes the various characteristics of a devotee (bhakta lakshana) that God would want his disciple to possess/ follow in order to reach Him.

As new entrants into Geeta Pariwār one might wonder why the recitation of Bhagavadgītā begins from the 12th chapter. The main reason is that this chapter is the shortest (with 20 shlokas) and once we learn to recite the shlokas herein, it instills confidence and kindles the enthusiasm to surge forward. Contrary to this, the first chapter consists of 47 shlokas and as early learners, the lengthy challenge may dissuade us from moving on in our Gītā journey.

The vivechak then goes on to strengthen the background for the 12th chapter a bit further. To understand anything, one must understand its components in its entirety. To this end, it is important to understand the 3 major components of the Gītā before delving into it-

Arjuna - who comes across as someone in his late 30s, engulfed by stress and depression. This is the picture that we paint in our minds when we imagine Arjuna's character. Well, it turns out that he is 84, mature, courageous, skillful; one who has fought many battles and has never lost. An individual who always follows Dharma and who has won over his sleep with great tapas. He is named Gudakesha for this. He won the heart of Bhagavān Śiva with his courage and received the Pashupatastra.

Gītā – This miniature book (grantha) has answers to all questions a person could possibly have. Many of the well-known leaders and scientists found the best in this grantha. God created Vedas, which are the main source of knowledge to mankind. The Upaniṣadas are the gist of the Vedas while Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, which is the voice of Śrī Bhagavān is the gist of the Upaniṣadas. Importantly, the crux of Gītā is surrendering to the Supreme (sharanagati).

Śrī Bhagavān believes that Arjuna possesses all the divine qualities that are required to create the awareness among people and hence God chooses Arjuna as His medium. If the same had been imparted to someone like Duryodhana, the world might have been deprived of Gītā.

Bhagavān Śrī Krishna – HE asked Agnidev for Arjuna's love and was willing to be his charioteer. On Arjuna's direction, HE rode the chariot and halted the same in between the armies. However, HE who had maneuvered the entire Mahābhārata, stopped the chariot in front of Bhīṣma, Drona and Krupacharya, knowing too well that this would create a conflict in Arjuna's mind. This would in effect create the right context for imparting Śrīmadbhagavadgītā to mankind through Arjuna.

It must be understood at the outset that the portrayal of Arjuna's confusion through Śrīmadbhagavadgītā is an indication of how the human mind works and the advice therein is to guide us in the right path.

In the first 10 chapters, Śrī Bhagavān explains about worshipping the Aksharabrahman and in the 55th sloka of the 11th chapter, HE talks about the worship of the manifest form of the Supreme (Saguna Sākar; with attributes, such as Bhagavān Śrī Rāma and Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa). The 12th chapter opens with Arjuna's confusion about the unmanifested form of the Parabrahman (Nirguna Nirākāra Brahman; with no attributes or form) and Saguna Sākar Brahman.

12.1

arjuna uvāca
evaṁ(m) satatayuktā ye, bhaktāstvām(m) paryupāsate,
ye cāpyakṣaRāmayaktaṁ(n), teṣāṁ(n) ke yogavittamāḥ. 12.1

Arjuna said :

The devotees exclusively and constantly devoted to You in the manner stated just earlier, adore You as possessed of form and attributes, and those who adore as the supreme Reality only the indestructible unmanifest Brahma (who is Truth, Knowledge and Bliss solidified)- of these two types of worshippers who are the best knowers of Yoga?

Arjuna wants to know which one of the paths is better for a devotee? One who has perpetually immersed himself in Saguna Sākar form entirely or one who chooses to follow the Nirguna Nirākāra Brahman? But it should be noted that Arjuna's query is not intended to differentiate between the two forms of the Supreme but is primarily to understand which path is better for a seeker.

Happiness is the main goal of all pursuits, material or spiritual as described in the 15th chapter and the main source for eternal happiness (*Paramanand*) is Bhagavān Krishna himself.

Taking the example of 2 people involved in devotion or *sadhana* (spiritual practice); one is in constant contemplation of Bhagavān and the other is not. The person on the spiritual path glows with peace and radiance of his devotion who seems calm and happy. This is similar to the glow created by the reflection of light as one move towards the source.

Both the paths of Manifest and Unmanifest worshipping involved constant contemplation of Paramātmā. One needs a form to meditate while the other is formless.

When HE explained about *Sagun Brahman*, Arjuna was confused, hence he inquired about the simpler path to reach HIM.

12.2

**śrībhagavānuvāca
mayyāveśya mano ye mām(n), nityayuktā upāsate,
śraddhayā parayopetāḥ(s), te me yuktatamā matāḥ. 12.2**

Śrī Bhagavān said :

I consider them to be the best Yogīs, who endowed with supreme faith, and ever united through meditation with Me, worship Me with their mind centred on Me.

Śrī Bhagavān explains that those who worship the manifest form of the Supreme with unflinching faith, stay connected and think about ME at all times, even in adversities, are the better knowers of yogas. Having said that, it should be understood that worshipping Saguna Sākar Brahman (bhakti marga) is easier while the path of knowledge (jñāna marga) is more difficult. This is the reason God said that devotees following the bhakti path are better – only because the path is easier!

Those who are integrated and completely fixated on The Divine are considered the true yogis. One should also remember that conscious bhakti is better than unconscious bhakti as one needs a form to meditate and focus completely.

This isn't saying that the *Saguna sadhana* was better as individual sadhak would determine what type of path he was to follow just as one mathematical question can be solved by different people in different ways.

For most common people, Bhakti yoga is relatively easier. However, that wasn't the only method, the next shlok enlightens about the other ways of devotion.

12.3

**ye tVākṣaRāmanirdeśyaṁ(m), avyaktaṁ(m) paryupāsate,
sarvatragamacintyaṁ(ñ) ca, kūṭasthamacalaṁ(n) dhruvam. 12.3**

Those, however, who fully controlling all their senses and even-minded towards all, and devoted to the welfare of all beings, constantly adore as their very self the unthinkable,

Arjuna's confusion about the people who worship the indestructible, unmanifest form or Aksharabrahman continues – something that has no attributes, is undefinable, omnipresent, unchangeable, immovable, eternal, is beyond comprehension and hence very difficult to worship.

12.4

sanniyamyendriyagrāmaṁ(m), sarvatra śamabuddhayaḥ, te prāpnuvanti māmeva, sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ. 12.4

omnipresent, indestructible, indefinable, eternal, immovable, unmanifest and changeless Brahma, they too come to Me.

In this shloka, Bhagavān Śrī Krishna explains the guidelines for behaviour (Āchāra Samhita), for those asserting themselves to be His devotees. The devotee must:

- a. control all the ten senses (indriyas) - sense organs of knowledge (jñānendriya) and sense organs of action (karmendriya)
- b. look at everyone equally as Brahman is in everyone, and
- c. always think about the welfare of all.

Let there be no doubt that a devotee who follows the path of Nirguna Nirākāra Brahman will also definitely reach HIM.

Nirguna Brahman (unmanifest consciousness) can be identified by the following qualities:

- **Akshar Swarupa** (that which never decays/destroys/degrades),
- **Anirdeshya** (that which could not be indicated),
- **Avvyakta** (indescribable and that which was invisible).
- **Achintyam** (something that is beyond dreams and thoughts of beings).
- **Kutastha** (the cause of Maya-illusion).
- **Achalam** (unmovable).
- **Dhruvam** (eternal)

The Upanishads described *Nirguna Brahman* as something that couldn't be seen through one's eyes but the eyes were powered (to see) by HIM because HE is omnipresent. *Yogeshwar* present in every atom. When in meditation, one is asked to close the eyes and meditate on nothing; that is *Brahman*.

This was proved by Narsimha Avatar to Hiranyakashipu when he asked Prahlad whether his Vishnu was in the pillars. Prahlad agreed and Bhagavān Narsimha appeared when Hiranyakashipu mockingly crashed the pillar.

HE is also the creator of the illusion. The thought *Ekam Satya Jagat Mithya* came to mind when describing Maya as one knows that **only The Divine is true and the world is an illusion created by HIM.**

The *Nirguna Brahman* is also eternal and stable. HE doesn't need to move as HE is present everywhere and in everything. Meditating on either *Sagun or Nirgun Brahman*, allowed one to reach their goal of liberation (*moksh*).

The fourth shloka elucidated the qualities of a *jñānayogī* or a seeker, which are also present in a volunteer.

The 4 parts of the shloka elaborate the way of life (*achar samhita*), they are,

- One's will
- The vision,
- Fruits of one's actions.
- Action required

It is important to have full control over the ten senses at all times. There are:

- *Jñānendriya* are the 5 senses of knowledge in the form of eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin.
- *Karmendriya* are the 5 senses of action in the form of hands, legs, stomach, rectum and genitals.

One should consider all living beings as equal. Here it means *sam darshan* and not *sam vartan* (impartial in consideration and not action), e.g. considering a dog as fellow soul and not treating the dog as another human being.

Thus, **it is important to have restraint over every sense organ and be equanimous at all times. One should be engaged in activities that lead to the welfare of all which assures that such a devotee would attain HIM.**

12.5

**kleśo'dhikatarasteṣāṁ(m), avyaktāsaktacetasām,
avyaktā hi gatirduḥkhaṁ(n), dehavadbhiravāpyate. 12.5**

Of course, the strain is greater for those who have their mind attached to the Unmanifest, as attunement with the Unmanifest is attained with difficulty by the body-conscious people.

Following the unmanifested, undefinable form of the Supreme is difficult for people who haven't renounced their ego with respect to their body (identify themselves as the physical form). This is the reason why God advises His devotees to take the easier path of devotion to reach Him.

The Divine acknowledged that the strain and struggle was higher when one followed the path of worshipping the Unmanifest, especially since humans are limited by their physical bodies. So, HE recommended Arjuna to follow Bhakti yoga.

For those finding even the path of complete devotion difficult, more paths are elaborated further by HIM.

12.6

**ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi, mayi sannyasya matparāḥ,
ananyenaiva yogena, mām(n) dhyāyanta upāsate. 12.6**

On the other hand, those depending exclusively on Me, and surrendering all actions to Me, worship Me (God with attributes), constantly meditating on Me

In the next few slokas, Śrī Bhagavān explains the various ways that one can reach Him. Surrendering all karmas, holding Him as Supreme; those who feel intertwined with God with complete dedication, they will reach the same brahman.

12.7, 12.8

**teṣāmahaṁ(m) samuddhartā, mṛtyusaṁsārasāgarāt,
bhavāmi nacirātpārtha, mayyāveśitacetasām. 12.7**

**mayyeva mana ādhatsva, mayi buddhiṁ(n) niveśaya,
nivasīṣyasi mayyeva, ata ūrdhvaṁ(n) na saṁśayaḥ. 12.8**

with single-minded devotion, then, Arjuna, I speedily deliver from the ocean of birth and death, their mind being fixed on Me.

Therefore, fix your mind on Me, and establish your intellect in Me alone; thereafter you will abide solely in Me. There is no doubt about it.

Śrī Bhagavān asserts that those who merge with Him will cross the ocean of birth and death with His help. Further, Śrī Bhagavān says that dedicating one's mind and intellect in Him will help one dwell in the same Brahman.

Arjuna from his actions seemed to seek more guidance, and Śrī Bhagavān in all his compassion eagerly gives him another method that is to completely surrender to HIM.

One should meditate on HIM with exclusivity and devotion, dedicating all of their karmas (actions) to HIM. Just as Meera bai said '*Mere toh Giridhar Gopala Dusroh na Koi*'- as she believed completely that the only thing she possesses is *Giridhar Gopal* (another name for Krishna Bhagavān), and no one else. This is also known as **Ananya Yoga** (Yoga of exclusive devotedness).

Those who completely fix and connect their mind in The Divine, will be welcomed on HIS boat to cross the *bhavsagar* (the ocean of birth and death of the created world/samsar).

One uses intellect to think while the mind helps to grow affection towards other beings. When the Mind and Intellect, both in a person are completely absorbed and fixed on The Divine, ultimately they would reach HIM.

To prepare Arjuna to fight the war, Paramātmā is going to present many more options which would continue in the next session with 9th shloka.

The discourse ended with HARINAM SANKIRTANAM.

Question & Answer Session

Deepa RajMohan ji

Question: Is air an unmanifest form of the Supreme?

Answer: No, air is not an unmanifest form for one can feel it or perceive it through their sense organs; while unmanifest form is even beyond the perception of the mind.

Question: Which form does Bhagavan Krishna say better form of love or devotion; Manifest or Unmanifest?

Answer: Arjuna asked Bhagavan as to which path of devotion is better the manifest or the Unmanifest? Bhagavan said both the paths lead to HIM but the path of unmanifest is very difficult one while the path of manifest is easier to practice and reach HIM.

This is so because one can have their point of focus on the manifest form in much easier way while unmanifest devotion is to be totally detached from material world which is tough.

Vijay Choubey ji

Question: Am from Defense background and these days feel that my journey of life has no

significant direction and now the Supreme has to take care of everything for I am doing my bit for the nation and yet feel something missing? Life is just going to go on as it is. And to find the reason have joined Geeta Pariwar classes so that I may find a solution.

Answer: First of all If the Supreme was not watching or was not concerned you would not have been learning Gita. Patiently train yourself by attending classes and vivechan regularly for few weeks and notice the changes in you. Another thing by saying HE has to take care you are not going to gain anything. "As the saying goes,"God Helps those, who Help themselves". So keep performing your duties with utmost faith and dedication you would find the changes. It's not that the situations would change but it is the perception that would change. It would be the way you would start looking at the things that would change your state of mind and in turn responses to the situation.



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Thank you-For reading the summary

You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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