

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 12: Bhakti-Yoga

1/2 (Ślōka 1-8), Sunday, 12 January 2025

Interpreter: GĪTĀ PRAVĪṆA RUPAL SHUKLA

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/kZip3sywpGo>

Bhagavān rescues those devotees who surrender to HIM, from the cycle of life and death

The 12th chapter of Bhagavad Gītā is **Bhakti Yoga - Yoga of Devotion**.

The session started with the customary deepa prajwalan, lighting of the divine lamp, and prayers to the divine and gurus.

We are fortunate and blessed to be learning Gītā, because we are becoming dear to Bhagavān. HE HIMSELF has declared that those people who learn and apply Gītā in their lives are the most dearest to HIM.

**ya imaṁ parāmaṁ guhyaṁ, madbhakteṣvabhīdhāsyati,
bhaktiṁ mayi parāṁ kṛtvā, māmevaiśyatyasamaśayaḥ. 18.68**

**na ca tasmānmanuṣyeṣu, kaścinme priyakṛttamaḥ,
bhavitā na ca me tasmād anyāḥ priyatara bhuvi. 18.69**

In Geeta Pariwar, one embarks on the Gītā journey from the 12th chapter, for two reasons:

- It is the smallest and easiest chapter among all of the 18 chapters of Gītā, and can be taught in a short span of 10 days. It will instil confidence and motivation for the sadhak to move forward with the remaining chapters.
- It deals with the concept of devotion (Bhakti yoga), a concept that is easy to understand and follow by anyone.

Bhagavadgītā is a part of the Bhīṣma Parva of The Mahabharata written by Veda Vyas ji. It is a divine conversation between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, and is the voice of Bhagavān HIMSELF. Through 700 shlokas, the Gītā teaches us how to get closer and become one with Paramātmā. The text is widely studied and has about 1800 authentic commentaries. Renowned personalities like Gandhi ji, Lokamanya Tilak ji, and Einstein have derived inspiration from it.

In order to capture the essence of Gītā, one must understand it's three main components :

- **Arjuna**
- **Gītā**
- **Sri Krishna**

Arjuna: He is one of the Pāṇḍavas, and a dear friend of Sri Krishna. It is often misunderstood that he was a dynamic young man all set to wage the war against his cousins, but then desired to back off at the last minute. On the contrary, he was 84 years old when the Kuruksetra war took place. He was famous for his righteousness, courage and skill. He was so mighty that he wrestled with Shiv ji HIMSELF. He was so righteous that even the beautiful apsara Urvasi could not lure him by her beauty. Infact, she got so enraged that she cursed him to live a life of a transgender for a year. He gracefully accepted and fulfilled the curse by living as the dancer Brihannala, during the Pāṇḍavas' incognito exile.

Arjuna is described as **Gudakesha** - one who conquered sleep, after six months of severe penance on top of a branch that extended over a river. Each time he lost control over his sleep, he would fall into the river. After six months of relentless practice, he finally had total control over sleep. He was also the only person who could enter swarga loka with his physical body. Such was his might and control over his senses. Yet, he became weak when he saw his own kith and kin standing against him in the battle field.

***sīdanti mama gātrāṇi, mukhaṃ ca parīśuṣyati,
vepathuśca śarīre me, romaharṣaśca jāyate. 1.29***

***gāṇḍīvaṃ sraṃsate hastāt, tvākaiva paridahyate,
na ca śaknomyavasthātum, bhRāmatīva ca me manaḥ. 1.30***

He confides to Sri Krishna that his body has gone limp, he was losing his strength, and his bow Gāṇḍīva was slipping from his hands.

Gītā:

***pārthāya pratibodhitām bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayaṃ
vyāsenā grathitām purāṇa-muninā madhye mahābhārate
advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm
amba tvām anusandadhāmi bhagavad-gīte bhava-dveṣiṇīm***

It is the song recited by Sri Narayana HIMSELF. Its verses are mantras. Their recitation creates vibrations. It carries the gist of all scriptures, and advocates total surrender (saranagati).

Gītā is a divine conversation that took place between Bhagavān Sri Krishna and Arjuna, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. It was inked onto paper by Maharshi Vedavyas ji, for the benefit of the mankind in large. One may wonder as to why Gītā was professed to Arjuna, and not to others, say Duryodhana or Yudhishtara? The 5th shloka of 16th chapter holds the key to the answer, where Sri Krishna acknowledges that Arjuna possesses all of the required 26 divine qualities.

***daivī sampadvimokṣāya, nibandhāyāsuri matā,
mā śucaḥ sampadam daivīm, abhijāto'si pāṇḍava 16.5***

In Sankara bhasyam, Sankaracharya ji has said that **knowledge should be provided only to those who are eligible to receive it; else it will not serve its purpose.**

Sri Krishna: Arjuna's dearest friend and charioteer in the Kuruksetra war. HE used Arjuna as a tool to deliver the Gītā upadesha for the entire mankind. When Arjuna requested Sri Krishna to place his

chariot between the two armies so that he could see the warriors of either side, Sri Krishna chose to place the chariot right in front of the respected elders, Bhīṣma Pitāmaha and Dronacharya. As expected, Arjuna's emotions were stirred on seeing his favourite elders standing on the opposite side. He too was their favourite. Bhīṣma Pitāmaha adored him so much that he wouldn't mind getting his white robes soiled when little Arjuna would hug him with dirty hands. Dronacharya also had special feelings for him, so that he taught him special archery skills that he didn't teach his own son. Naturally, Arjuna lost his hunger for revenge. On the contrary, dilemma sets in and he seeks Sri Krishna's advice, leading to the birth of Gītā.

Gītā is comprised of 18 chapters; Sri Krishna explains the concept of nirguna nirakara bhakti (devotion to the unmanifest form) as the path to reach the Supreme, in the first ten chapters; and in the 11th chapter he explains saguna sakara bhakti (devotion to the manifested form). Arjuna is confused as to which of the two was best for him to follow.

He raises the doubt to Sri Krishna, who proceeds to explain that a devotee can reach HIM through any of the multiple paths. HE can be attained by anyone who offers true devotion to HIM, be it through manifested or un-manifested worship.

12.1

arjuna uvāca evaṁ(m) satatayuktā ye, bhaktāstvām(m) paryupāsate, ye cāpyakṣaRāmavyaktaṁ(n), teṣāṁ(ñ) 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 wishes to know which is better for a devotee - worship of the unmanifest Nirguna Nirākāra Brahman, or the manifested Saguna Sākar form of Bhagavān? It should be noted that Arjuna was not intending to differentiate between the two forms of the Supreme, but wished to know which path was better for a seeker.

The ultimate goal of any human being is Happiness, be it material or spiritual. One should realise that the ultimate bliss is **Sachidananda Swarupa**, Bhagavān HIMSELF. Hence, **HE should be the main goal of all pursuits.**

HE is not difficult to pursue because as HE has stated in the 15th chapter, HE resides in all beings.

sarvasya cāhaṁ hr̥di sanniviṣṭo, mattaḥ smr̥tirjñānamapohanaṁ ca, vedaiśca sarvairahameva vedyo, vedāntakṛdvedavideva cāham. 15.15

Contemplation on the LIGHT within oneself will bring calmness and happiness. A person who is involved in devotion or sadhana (spiritual practice) and is in constant contemplation of Bhagavān glows with peace and radiance, as if the source's radiance is reflected upon him. He is calm and happy. On the contrary, the one who chases material desires and is not on the spiritual path will be seen to be restless and unsatisfied, irrespective of the gains he has in his life.

One can adopt either of the two paths of worship - Manifest or Unmanifest form of worship. The former (manifest form) needs a form to meditate while the latter (unmanifest) does not involve a form

to contemplate upon. Albeit, both lead to the Supreme.

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 opines that those people who worship the manifest form of the Supreme with unflinching faith, and contemplate on HIM at all times, even at times of adversities, are the true yogis.

Worshipping the manifest Saguna Sākar Brahman through the path of devotion or bhakti marga is easier; contemplating HIM through the path of knowledge (jñāna marga) is more difficult. Hence, the former is the easier path an ordinary bhakta can adopt to reach HIM.

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,

Bhagavān details the characteristics of unmanifest **nirguna nirakara** form, that is difficult to comprehend by ordinary people. He classifies it as follows:

- **ākṣarām** - indestructible
- **anirdeśyaṁ** - incomprehensible
- **avyaktaṁ** - invisible to the physical eyes
- **sarvatragama** - omnipresent. Like the sky, HE is present everywhere, even in the minutest of the atoms. HE emerged from within the pillar as Bhagavān Narasimha swaroopa when Hiranyakashyapu challenged his devotee Prahlada.
- **acintyaṁ** - beyond imagination
- **kūṭastha** -illusory, the cause of Maya
- **acalaṁ** - immovable
- **dhruvam** - eternal

12.4

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

Controlling all their senses, equal-minded towards all, and devoted to the welfare of all beings, assuredly they come to Me only.

Bhagavān explains the qualities of a jñānayogī, as follows.

The devotee must:

- control (**sanniyam**) the ten senses (**indriyas**): 5 organs of knowledge (**jñānendriya**) and 5 organs of action (**karmendriya**)
- be impartial (**sarvatra samabuddhayah**) and see all living beings as same (**samadarshana**). In other words, see the Brahman in everyone.
- strive for the welfare of all (**sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ**).

The shloka also serves as a guideline for those who wish to serve HIM as devotees. Each quarter signifies a way of life:

- 1st quarter: how to live (**Āchāra Samhita**)
- 2nd quarter: the perspective of action (**dristi kona**)
- 3rd quarter: pursuit of one's actions (**attaining HIM**)
- 4th quarter: action one ought to do (**service for everyone's welfare**).

12.5

**kleśo'dhikatarasteṣām(m), avyaktāsaktacetāsām,
avyaktā hi gatirduḥkham(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.

Sri Krishna agrees that it is practically difficult for a common person to contemplate on the formless unmanifested Nirguna nirakara, due to the limitations of the soul in physical body. Hence, HE recommends the Bhakti Yoga as the easier path to reach HIM.

However, some people may find it difficult to worship the manifested form of Bhagavān also. Sri Krishna gives such people other paths through they can reach 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 with single-minded devotion.

One can also meditate upon HIM by surrendering all actions/karmas to The Supreme (**sannyasya matparāḥ**), contemplating upon HIM as the ultimate truth with undaunting faith (**ananyenaiva yogena**) and exclusive devotion (**mām dhyāyanta upāsate**).

Meera bai is an epitome of such exclusive devotion. "**mere toh Giridhar Gopala Dusroh na Koi**" She considered Sri Krishna as her everything. There was nothing else other than HIM in her life.

12.7

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

O Arjuna! Who fix their mind on Me, I rescue them from the ocean of birth and death.

Bhagavān assures that HE shall take complete care of such devotees who take total refuge in HIM. HE

will help them cross the ocean of life and death (*mṛtyusaṁsārasāgarā*), and liberate them from the cycle of birth and death.

12.8

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

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.

Further, Bhagavān asserts that one can dwell in the Supreme by simply surrendering one's mind and heart to HIM. We use our mind/ intellect for thinking, and heart for expressing feelings. Dedicating both the mind and heart onto HIM indicates complete dedication to the Supreme.

Bhagavān continues to reveal many more ways by which a devotee can worship HIM, which will be dealt in the next session.

The discourse concluded with Hari Nama Sankirtanam, followed by Questions and Answers.

Questions and Answers:

Rohit ji

Q: People from different languages or regions pronounce the sanskrit words differently. For eg. hindi speakers say 'Arjun'; people from South say 'Arjunaa'. Which is the correct way of pronunciation?

A: The correct sanskrit pronunciation is 'Arjuna', neither 'Arjun' nor 'Arjunaa'. Likewise, it is 'Raama', not 'Raam' or 'Raamaa'.

Purvika ji

Q: Can you please explain the concept of Brahman?

A: Brahman is the Absolute truth, which is unmanifested and hence, formless (nirakara). As it has no form, it is undescribable, difficult to imagine, and hence difficult to worship.

Amrutavalli ji

Q: Why is it said that we got the benefit of Gītā because Sri Krishna told it to Arjuna, and not any one else like Duryodhana?

A: Sri Krishna gave some advice to Duryodhana too, when he went as a peace maker. But, do we remember or know what he said? No, we dont know, because it has no relevance as it was spoken to th wrong person. Anything shared between two great people has more relevance; both Sri Krishna and Arjuna are great in that respect, and hence the teaching has more relevance, and we receive the benefit of studying the same.

Vyshali Rajan ji

Q: Is there any ritual that is needed to follow before starting Gītā chanting?

A: One can follow any ritual like cleansing the body, to bring in sacred feeling withing oneself. But no ritual is mandatory for Gītā chanting.

Ramalakshmi ji

Q: According to this chapter, 99% of the people are eligible for the path of devotion towards the saguna form of Bhagavān. Who are the 1% who are eligible for the niguna formless worship?

A: The Yogis are those 1% who are eligible for the worship of the nirguna Brahman, because they

have the intellect to discard their identification with their body and experience the divinity. 99% of us are deeply rooted with the body identification, and hence lack the eligibility to experience the nirguna form.



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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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