

Twelfth Chapter

INTRODUCTION

Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the thirty-third and the thirty-fourth verses of the fourth chapter, explained the superiority of the path of knowledge (wisdom), and exhorted Arjuna to gain knowledge. Then He explained, the glory of knowledge. After that, He explained the importance of worship of the Supreme, Who is attributeless and formless, in the sixteenth and the seventeenth verses, and from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-sixth verses of the fifth chapter, from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-eighth verses of the sixth chapter and from the eleventh to the thirteenth verses of the eighth chapter.

In the forty-seventh verse of the sixth chapter, He explained the glory of a devotee. From the seventh chapter to the eleventh chapter, He time and again through the terms 'Aham' (I) and 'Mām' (me) specially, laid emphasis on the importance of worship of God, Who is endowed with attributes and form, and also is endowed with attributes, but is formless. At last, in the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth verses of the eleventh chapter, He glorified exclusive devotion, and its fruit.*

* Before this chapter in the following verses, there is a description of the devotees who worship the Lord, with form.

6/47—He full of faith worships Me with his inner self abiding in Me.

7/1—The mind intent on Me, practising Yoga and taking refuge in Me.

7/29-30—They strive taking refuge in Me of steadfast in mind.

8/7—With mind and intellect fixed in Me.

8/14—He constantly remembers Me with single-minded devotion.

9/14— They firm in vows worship Me with steadfast devotion.

9/22— They worship Me alone thinking of no one else.

9/30—Worship Me with exclusive devotion.

Having heard the above description, Arjuna had a curiosity to know, which of the devotees—of those who worship God with attributes, or those who worship the unmanifested, attributeless Brahma, is better. So he puts the question—

अर्जुन उवाच

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते ।
ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ॥ १ ॥

arjuna uvāca

evaṁ satatayuktā ye bhaktāstvāṁ paryupāsate
ye cāpyakṣaramavyaktaṁ teṣāṁ ke yogavittamāḥ

Arjuna said:

Those devotees who, ever steadfast, thus worship Thee (Saguṇa) and those again, who worship only the Imperishable and the Unmanifest (Nirguṇa) which of them are better versed in Yoga? 1.

Comment:—

'Evaṁ satatayuktā ye bhaktāḥ'—The expression 'Ye bhaktāḥ'

10/9—With their mind and their life wholly absorbed in Me, enlightening each other.

11/55—He performs all actions for Me, he is devoted to Me and he depends on Me.

In the following verses before this chapter there is the description of the devotees who worship formless God.

4/34—Know that (knowledge of the self) by prostration, by question, by service.

4/39—The man who is full of faith obtains that knowledge.

5/8—Sāṅkhyayogī who knows the truth (reality) thinks, "I do nothing at all."

5/13—Neither acting nor causing others to act.

5/24-26—Attains Brahma Nirvāṇa (beatitude of God).

6/25—Having established the mind in the self or in God.

8/11—The Supreme Being who is declared Imperishable by those who know to the Vedas.

8/13—Uttering the mono-syllabled Om, the Brahma and remembering Me.

9/15—Others worship Me in My absolute formless aspect.

(those devotees) stands, for the same striver for whom 'Yah' (who) and 'Sah' (he) terms, have been used by the Lord in the fifty-fifth verse of the eleventh chapter. Such strivers, worship God, Who is endowed with attributes and form.

Here the term 'Evam', directs towards the fifty-fifth verse of the eleventh chapter.

'Satatayuktā (ever steadfast), is he who believes 'I am only God's.'

The strivers (devotees), who have full faith in God, have the only aim of God-realization. Therefore while undertaking, either spiritual activities, such as adoration and meditation etc., or mundane activities, such as business or service or earning their livelihood, such devotees ever remain steadfast in Him, by thinking of Him i.e., they have their affinity only for Him.

A striver, commits an error if while performing spiritual activities, he thinks that he has affinity for God, and while performing mundane actions, he believes that he has affinity for the world. The reason is, that he has not fixed God-realization, as the only aim of his life. If he realizes that the only aim of human life is, God-realization, and sticks to it, all his activities will conduce him to God-realization.

If an aspirant thinks of the Lord, at the beginning of an activity and at its end, it means, that he has thought of the Lord, even during the performance of the activity, in the same way as a businessman while making entries in his account book, gets so much absorbed in it, that he even forgets who he is, and why he is making those entries and calculations. Though it seems forgetfulness, yet it is not forgetfulness because he has his aim in his mind. Similarly a striver, always believes that he is only God's and whatever action he performs, is only for Him. Therefore while engaged in performing duties his apparent forgetfulness of God is not in fact forgetfulness of God as he has no doubt in his conviction that he is only God's and working only for God.

'Tvām paryupāsate'—Here, the term 'Tvām'—should be interpreted in a wider sense, covering all the forms with attributes assumed by Him during His various incarnations, as well as the form with which He resides in His Divine Abode, and also He, Who is called by different forms and names, according to, the beliefs of devotees.

The term 'Paryupāsate' means, 'to worship well.' As a chaste wife through her body serves her husband, thinking of him in his absence and serves his parents and performs all household duties, only to please and serve him, so does a striver, being engrossed in Him, by chanting His names, through thinking and meditation, by rendering service to beings and through the performance of mundane duties, worships Him alone, without attaching the least importance to perishable objects and actions.

'Ye cāpyakṣaramavyaktam'—The term 'Ye', stands for the strivers, who worship attributeless and formless, God.

The term 'Akṣaram', stands for the Imperishable Brahma, Who is all Truth, all Consciousness and all Bliss consolidated, (it will be explained in the third verse of this chapter).

The term 'Avyaktam', stands for the Unmanifested, Who is incomprehensible to the senses. Here, the use of two adjectives 'Akṣaram' (imperishable) and 'Avyaktam' (Unmanifest), has been made for attributeless and formless Brahma (It will also be explained in the third verse of this chapter).

It seems, that the Lord by using the term 'Api' (only), wants to compare the devotees who worship the Lord endowed with form, with those devotees who worship only the formless Absolute (Brahma), by regarding Him, superior.

'Teṣāṁ ke yogavittamāḥ'—Here the term 'Teṣāṁ', stands for both the devotees—those who worship God with attributes, and also those, who worship attributeless God. In the fifth verse of this chapter, this term has been used for devotees who worship attributeless, God, while in the seventh verse, it has been used

for devotees, who worship God with attributes. So Arjuna wants to ask, which of the two, is better.

If we give a serious thought to the answer offered by the Lord to Arjuna's question, we come to realise the importance of Arjuna's question.

From the second verse of this chapter to the twentieth verse of the fourteenth chapter, Lord Kṛṣṇa went on speaking continuously. This is the only occasion when Lord Kṛṣṇa, spoke continuously for such a long time, by uttering seventy-three verses. It shows that, Lord Kṛṣṇa wants to clarify many vital points. He wants to explain the identity of the Lord, Who is endowed with form, with Brahma, Who is formless; the means of attaining the two, and the marks of perfect devotees (Gītā 12/13—19) and the wise (Gītā 14/22—25) and how they may realize the importance of renouncement, of attachment to the world.

It means, that the supreme word, the most secret of all, for the supreme good of all beings, which the Lord wanted to announce, for the welfare of them, was disclosed in response to Arjuna's question inspired by Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Appendix—The Gītā being a 'Yogaśāstra', in it 'Yoga' is important. Therefore who is a real Yogavettā?—This is Arjuna's question. There are three categories of Yogavettās—(i) Yogavit viz., Yogī, (ii) Yogavittara viz., better of the two Yogīs, (iii) Yogavittama viz., the best of all Yogīs. Arjuna has no doubt about 'Yogavit' and 'Yogavittara' but he has doubt about 'Yogavittama'.



Link:—The Lord, answers Arjuna's question, in the next verse pertaining to the superiority of worshippers who worship God with attributes, and those who worship, attributeless God.