

V. The Yoga of Renunciation of Action

Summary of Fifth Discourse

In spite of Sri Krishna's clear instructions, Arjuna still seems to be bewildered. He wants to know conclusively which is superior, the path of action or the path of renunciation of action.

The Lord says that both the paths lead to the highest goal of God-realisation. In both cases the final realisation of the Atman is the aim, but the path of Karma Yoga is superior. Actually there is no real difference between the two.

Krishna further asserts that perfection can be attained and one can be established in the Atman only after the mind has been purified through the performance of selfless action. The Karma Yogi who is aware of the Atman and who is constantly engaged in action knows that although the intellect, mind and senses are active, he does not do anything. He is a spectator of everything. He dedicates all his actions to the Lord and thus abandons attachment, ever remaining pure and unaffected. He surrenders himself completely to the Divine Shakti. Having completely rooted out all desires, attachments and the ego, he is not born again.

The sage who has realised Brahman and is always absorbed in It does not have any rebirth. Such a sage sees Brahman within and without—within as the static and transcendent Brahman, and without as the entire universe. He sees the one Self in all beings and creatures—in a cow, an elephant, and even in a dog and an outcaste. He is ever free from joy and grief and enjoys eternal peace and happiness. He does not depend upon the senses for his satisfaction. On the other hand the enjoyments of the senses are generators of pain. They are impermanent. Sri Krishna reminds Arjuna that desire is the main cause of pain and suffering. It is the cause of anger. Therefore, the aspirant should try to eradicate desire and anger if he is to reach the Supreme.

The Lord concludes by describing how to control the senses, mind and intellect by concentrating between the eyebrows and practising Pranayama. One who has achieved perfect control of the outgoing senses and is freed from desire, anger and fear attains liberation and enjoys perfect peace.

Arjuna Uvaacha:

*Sannyaasam karmanaam krishna punar yogam cha shamsasi;
Yacchreya etayorekam tanme broohi sunishchitam.*

Arjuna said:

1. Renunciation of actions, O Krishna, Thou praisest, and again Yoga! Tell me conclusively which is the better of the two.

Sri Bhagavaan Uvaacha:

*Sannyaasah karmayogashcha nihshreyasakaraa vubhau;
Tayostu karmasannyaasaat karmayogo vishishyate.*

The Blessed Lord said:

2. Renunciation and the Yoga of action both lead to the highest bliss; but of the two, the Yoga of action is superior to the renunciation of action.

*Jneyah sa nityasannyaasi yo na dweshti na kaangkshati;
Nirdwandwo hi mahaabaaho sukham bandhaat pramuchyate.*

3. He should be known as a perpetual Sannyasin who neither hates nor desires; for, free from the pairs of opposites, O mighty-armed Arjuna, he is easily set free from bondage!

COMMENTARY: A man does not become a Sannyasin by merely giving up actions due to laziness, ignorance, some family quarrel or calamity or unemployment. A true Sannyasin is one who has neither attachment nor aversion to anything. Physical renunciation of objects is no renunciation at all. What is wanted is the renunciation of egoism and desires.

*Saankhyayogau prithagbaalaah pravadanti na panditaah;
Ekam apyaasthitah samyag ubhayor vindate phalam.*

4. Children, not the wise, speak of knowledge and the Yoga of action or the performance of action as though they are distinct and different; he who is truly established in one obtains the fruits of both.

*Yatsaankhyaih praapyate sthaanam tad yogair api gamyate;
Ekam saankhyam cha yogam cha yah pashyati sa pashyati.*

5. That place which is reached by the Sankhyas or the Jnanis is reached by the (Karma) Yogis. He sees who sees knowledge and the performance of action (Karma Yoga) as one.

*Sannyaasastu mahaabaaho dukkham aaptuma yogatah;
Yogayukto munir brahma na chirenaadhigacchati.*

6. But renunciation, O mighty-armed Arjuna, is hard to attain without Yoga; the Yoga-harmonised sage proceeds quickly to Brahman!

*Yogayukto vishuddhaatmaa vijitaatmaa jitendriyah;
Sarvabhootaatmabhootaatmaa kurvannapi na lipyate.*

7. He who is devoted to the path of action, whose mind is quite pure, who has conquered the self, who has subdued his senses and who has realised his Self as the Self in all beings, though acting, he is not tainted.

*Naiva kinchit karomeeti yukto manyeta tattwavit;
Pashyan shrunvan sprishan jighran nashnan gacchan swapan shwasan.*

8. "I do nothing at all" –thus will the harmonised knower of Truth think–seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing,

*Pralapan visrijan grihnan nunmishan nimishannapi;
Indriyaaneendriyaartheshu vartanta iti dhaa-
rayan.*

9. Speaking, letting go, seizing, opening and closing the eyes–convinced that the senses move among the sense-objects.

COMMENTARY: The liberated sage always remains as a witness of the activities of the senses as he identifies himself with the Self.

*Brahmanyaadhaaya karmaani sangam tyaktwaa karoti yah;
Lipyate na sa paapena padmapatram ivaambhasaa.*

10. He who performs actions, offering them to Brahman and abandoning attachment, is not tainted by sin as a lotus leaf by water.

*Kaayena manasaa buddhyaa kevalair indriyair api;
Yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyaktwaatmashuddhaye.*

11. Yogis, having abandoned attachment, perform actions only by the body, mind, intellect and also by the senses, for the purification of the self.

*Yuktah karmaphalam tyaktwaa shaantim aapnoti naishtikeem;
Ayuktah kaamakaarena phale sakto nibadhyate.*

12. The united one (the well poised or the harmonised), having abandoned the fruit of action, attains to the eternal peace; the non-united only (the unsteady or the unbalanced), impelled by desire and attached to the fruit, is bound.

*Sarvakarmaani manasaa sannyasyaaste sukham vashee;
Navadwaare pure dehee naiva kurvan na kaarayan.*

13. Mentally renouncing all actions and self-controlled, the embodied one rests happily in the nine-gated city, neither acting nor causing others (body and senses) to act.

*Na kartritvam na karmaani lokasya srijati prabhuh;
Na karmaphala samyogam swabhaavas tu pravartate.*

14. Neither agency nor actions does the Lord create for the world, nor union with the fruits of actions; it is Nature that acts.

*Naadatte kasyachit paapam na chaiva sukritam vibhuh;
Ajnaanenaavritam jnaanam tena muhyanti jantavah.*

15. The Lord accepts neither the demerit nor even the merit of any; knowledge is enveloped by ignorance, thereby beings are deluded.

*Jnaanena tu tad ajnaanam yeshaam naashitam aatmanah;
Tesdaam aadityavaj jnaanam prakaashayati tatparam.*

16. But, to those whose ignorance is destroyed by knowledge of the Self, like the sun, knowledge reveals the Supreme (Brahman).

*Tadbuddhayas tadaatmaanas tannishthaas tatparaayanaah;
Gacchantyapunaraavrittim jnaana nirdhoota kalmashaah.*

17. Their intellect absorbed in That, their self being That; established in That, with That as their supreme goal, they go whence there is no return, their sins dispelled by knowledge.

*Vidyaavinaya sampanne braahmane gavi hastini;
Shuni chaiva shvapaake cha panditaah samadarshinah.*

18. Sages look with an equal eye on a Brahmin endowed with learning and humility, on a cow, on an elephant, and even on a dog and an outcaste.

*Ihaiva tairjitah sargo yeshaam saamye sthitam manah;
Nirdosham hi samam brahma tasmaad brahmani te sthitaah.*

19. Even here (in this world) birth (everything) is overcome by those whose minds rest in equality; Brahman is spotless indeed and equal; therefore, they are established in Brahman.

*Na prahrishyet priyam praapya nodwijet praapya chaapriyam;
Sthirabuddhir asamoodho brahmavid brahmani sthitah.*

20. Resting in Brahman, with steady intellect, undeluded, the knower of Brahman neither rejoiceth on obtaining what is pleasant nor grieveth on obtaining what is unpleasant.

*Baahyasparsheshwasaktaatmaa vindatyaatmani yat sukham;
Sa brahma yoga yuktaatmaa sukham akshayam ashnute.*

21. With the self unattached to the external contacts he discovers happiness in the Self; with the self engaged in the meditation of Brahman he attains to the endless happiness.

*Ye hi samsparshajaa bhogaa duhkhayonaya eva te;
Aadyantavantah kaunteya na teshu ramate budhah.*

22. The enjoyments that are born of contacts are generators of pain only, for they have a beginning and an end, O Arjuna! The wise do not rejoice in them.

*Shaknoteehaiva yah sodhum praak shareera vimokshanaat;
Kaamakrodhbhavam vegam sa yuktah sa sukhee narah.*

23. He who is able, while still here in this world to withstand, before the liberation from the body, the impulse born of desire and anger—he is a Yogi, he is a happy man.

*Yo'ntah sukho'ntaraaramas tathaantarjyotir eva yah;
Sa yogee brahma nirvaanam brahmabhooto'dhigacchati.*

24. He who is ever happy within, who rejoices within, who is illumined within, such a Yogi attains absolute freedom or Moksha, himself becoming Brahman.

*Labhante brahma nirvaanam rishayah ksheenakalmashaah;
Cchinnadwaidhaa yataatmaanah sarvabhootahite rataah.*

25. The sages obtain absolute freedom or Moksha—they whose sins have been destroyed, whose dualities (perception of dualities or experience of the pairs of opposites) are torn asunder, who are self-controlled, and intent on the welfare of all beings.

*Kaamakrodhaviyuktaanaam yateenaam yatachetasaam;
Abhito brahma nirvaanam vartate viditaatmanaam.*

26. Absolute freedom (or Brahmic bliss) exists on all sides for those self-controlled ascetics who are free from desire and anger, who have controlled their thoughts and who have realised the Self.

*Sparsaan kritwaa bahir baahyaamschakshus chaivaantare bhruvoh;
Praanaapaanau samau kritwaa naasaabhyantara chaarinau.*

27. Shutting out (all) external contacts and fixing the gaze between the eyebrows, equalising the outgoing and incoming breaths moving within the nostrils,

*Yatendriya manobuddhir munir mokshaparaayanah;
Vigattecchaabhaya krodho yah sadaa mukta eva sah.*

28. With the senses, the mind and the intellect always controlled, having liberation as his supreme goal, free from desire, fear and anger—the sage is verily liberated for ever.

*Bhoktaaram yajnatapasaam sarvaloka maheshwaram;
Suhridam sarvabhootaanaam jnaatwaa maam shaantim ricchati.*

29. He who knows Me as the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities, the great Lord of all the worlds and the friend of all beings, attains to peace.

*Hari Om Tat Sat
Iti Srimad Bhagavadgeetaasooapanishatsu Brahmavidyaayaam
Yogashaastre Sri Krishnaarjunasamvaade
Karmasanyasayogo Naama Panchamo'dhyaayah*

Thus in the *Upanishads* of the glorious *Bhagavad Gita*, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna ends the fifth discourse entitled:

“The Yoga of Renunciation of Action”
