

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 43: Chapter 5, Verses 01-05

(February 27 –March 5, 2019)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

अथ पञ्चमोऽध्यायः

अर्जुन उवाच ।

संन्यासं कर्मणां कृष्ण पुनर्योगं च शंससि ।
यच्छ्रेय एतयोरेकं तन्मे ब्रूहि सुनिश्चितम् ॥ ५-१ ॥

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

संन्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकरावुभौ ।
तयोस्तु कर्मसंन्यासात्कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ॥ ५-२ ॥
ज्ञेयः स नित्यसंन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न काङ्क्षति ।
निर्द्वन्द्वो हि महाबाहो सुखं बन्धात्प्रमुच्यते ॥ ५-३ ॥
साङ्ख्ययोगैः पृथग्बालाः प्रवदन्ति न पण्डिताः ।
एकमप्यास्थितः सम्यगुभयोर्विन्दते फलम् ॥ ५-४ ॥
यत्साङ्ख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते ।
एकं साङ्ख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥ ५-५ ॥

TRANSLITERATION

Chapter 5

arjuna uvācha

*sannyāsam karmaṇām kṛṣhṇa punar yogaṁ cha śhansasi
yach chhreya etayor ekam tan me brūhi su-niśhchitam*

śhrī bhagavān uvācha

*sannyāsaḥ karma-yogaśh cha niḥśhreyasa-karāvubhau
tayos tu karma-sannyāsāt karma-yogo viśhishyate*

*jñeyah sa nitya-sannyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkshati
nirdvandvo hi mahā-bāho sukham bandhāt pramuchyate*

*sāṅkhya-yogau pṛithag bālāḥ pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ
ekamapyāsthitaḥ samyag ubhayor vindate phalam*

*yat sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānam tad yogair api gamyate
ekam sāṅkhyam cha yogaṁ cha yah paśhyati sa paśhyati*

TRANSLATION

- (01)** Arjun said: O Lord, You praised *Karma Sanyāsa Yoga* (the path of renunciation of actions), and You also advised me to do *Karma Yoga* (work with devotion). Please tell me decisively which of the two is more beneficial?
- (02)** Lord Krishna replied: Both the path of *Karma Sanyāsa* (renunciation of actions) and *Karma Yoga* (working in devotion) lead to the supreme goal. But *Karma Yoga* is superior to *Karma Sanyāsa Yoga*.
- (03)** The *Karma Yogis*, who neither desire nor hate anything, should be considered always renounced. Free from all dualities, they are easily liberated from the bonds of material energy.
- (04)** Only the ignorant believe that *Sāṅkhya Yoga* (renunciation of actions, or *Karma Sanyāsa Yoga*) and *Karma Yoga* (work in devotion) are different. Those who are truly learned say that by applying ourselves to any one of these paths, we can achieve the results of both.
- (05)** The supreme state that is attained by means of *Karma Sanyāsa* is also attained by working in devotion. Therefore, those who see *Karma Sanyāsa* and *Karma Yoga* to be identical, truly see things as they are.

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Commentary:

Chapter 5

Verse 01:

In Chapter 4 (Verse 4.41), Lord Krishna introduced to Arjuna the principle of *Karma-Sanyasa Yoga*, wherein one renounces all his ritualistic duties and social obligations and instead engages oneself in devotional service to God with his body, mind, and soul. However, earlier in Chapter 1, Lord Krishna had advised Arjuna about importance *Karma Yoga*, wherein one engages in one's prescribed duty with dedication of all fruits one's action to God. Specifically, Lord had told Arjuna that his *karma* (social duty) as a warrior was to fight the war on the side of righteousness. But, since *karma* binds one to the fruits of actions, Arjuna should dedicate the fruits of his works to God, which would relieve him from any attachments. This apparently contradictory advice from Lord Krishna totally confused Arjuna. So, he asked the Lord whether should he engage in action as taught by Lord in Chapter 1 or renounce his action as advocated by Him in Verse 41 of Chapter 4? Which one of the *Yogas*, *Karma-Sanyasa Yoga* or *Karma Yoga*, is better for him to follow?

Verse 02:

In this verse, Lord Krishna answers the question posed by Arjuna in the previous verse, "which one of the two *Yogas*--*Karma-Sanyasa Yoga* or *Karma Yoga*-- is better for him to follow?". He says that for Arjuna, it is the latter *Yoga*, that is *Karma Yoga*. If one carefully

analyzes this answer of Lord Krishna in the context of all other earlier descriptions and advices He gave on *Yogas*, He did not really mean to denigrate *Karma-Sanyasa Yoga*, but instead He specifically recommends to Arjuna the *Karma Yoga* over *Karma-Sanyasa Yoga*. *Karm Sanyāsa* is for elevated souls, who have already risen beyond the bodily platform. A *Karma Sanyāsī* is one who discards all his social duties due to complete absorption in God, and engages entirely in the performance of spiritual duties (devotional service to God). Those who practice *Karma Sanyāsa* do not consider themselves to be the body, and consequently, they do not feel obligated to discharge their bodily duties. Such *Karma Sanyāsīs* dedicate their full time and energy to spirituality. On the other hand, *Karma Yogis* have to perform all their worldly duties while totally dedicating the fruits of their action to God. However, *Karma-Sanasa Yoga* is not for everyone as it is more difficult to practice than *Karma Yoga*. After having renounced one's duties, if one cannot absorb one's mind in God, one is left with nothing. There are tens of thousands of such sadhus, who felt they were detached, and thus, renounced the world, but their mind was not yet firmly attached to God. Consequently, they could not experience the divine bliss of the spiritual path. They wander around wearing the saffron clothes of mendicants, and indulge in grossly sinful activities. In comparison, *Karma Yoga* is less dangerous because they have at least their work to fall back upon if their mind turns away from spirituality. Thus, *Karma Yoga* is the safer path for the vast majority of the people, while *Karma Sanyāsa Yoga* is only to be pursued under the expert guidance of a seasoned Guru.

Verse 03:

In this verse, Lord Krishna continues to elaborate why *Karma Yoga* is preferred to *Karma-Sanyasa Yoga*. He says that *Karma Yogis* discharge their worldly duties while internally detached from the fruits of their actions which they always dedicate to God. They accept both positive and negative outcomes, such as desire/hate, attraction/repulsion, joy/distress, wealth/poverty, and the like, with equanimity. Therefore, they should be considered totally renounced. If one continues to lead one's normal life and tolerates whatever comes in one's way, while happily doing one's duty, the world naturally pushes one toward spiritual elevation. Thus, *Karma Yogis* work with devotion, and are equipoised with the good or bad results, while constantly attaching their mind to God. Free from all dualities, they are easily liberated from the material bonds.

Verse 04:

The *Karma Yogis*, while conducting their daily duties externally, develop the sentiment of renunciation internally. They see themselves as the servants God and God as the enjoyer of their service. Thus, their mind becomes fixed in the consciousness of doing everything for God's pleasure. Externally, they may appear to be worldly people, but internally they are no less than *Sanyāsīs*. Therefore, their internal state of mind becomes the same as that of the *Karma Sanyāsīs*, who are completely absorbed in divine consciousness. According to Shrimad Bhagavatam (11.2.48), "One who accepts the objects of the senses, neither yearning for them nor running away from them, in the divine consciousness that everything is the energy of God and is to be used in His service, such a person is the highest devotee." Thus,

the truly learned see no difference between *Karma Yoga* and *Karma Sanyāsa Yoga*. By following one of them, the results of both can be achieved.

Verse 05:

According to Vedic scriptures, it is our state of mind that determines our state and level of consciousness. Mind is both the cause of bondage and liberation. Whatever form of devotion one chooses to do, the mind should be engaged in meditation upon God.” Those who do not possess this spiritual vision, see the external distinction between *Karma Sanyāsī* and *Karm Yogi*, and declare the *Karm Sanyāsī* to be superior to the latter because of the apparent external renunciation of the former. But those who are learned see that both the *Karma Sanyāsī* and the *Karm Yogi* have total absorption of their minds in God, and so they are both identical in their internal consciousness.