

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 64: Chapter 7, Verses 17-22

(July 24 –July 30, 2019)

Please Note: Click Anywhere On The Dark Area Below to Listen to the Above Verses

ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्त एकभक्तिर्विशिष्यते ।
प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थमहं स च मम प्रियः ॥ ७-१७ ॥

teṣhām jñānī nitya-yukta eka-bhaktir viśhiṣhyate
priyo hi jñānino 'tyartham ahaṁ sa cha mama priyaḥ

उदाराः सर्व एवैते ज्ञानी त्वात्मैव मे मतम् ।
आस्थितः स हि युक्तात्मा मामेवानुत्तमां गतिम् ॥ ७-१८ ॥

udārāḥ sarva evaite jñānī tvātmaiva me matam
āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām evānuttamāṁ gatim

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥ ७-१९ ॥

bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ

कामैस्तैस्तैर्हृतज्ञानाः प्रपद्यन्तेऽन्यदेवताः ।
तं तं नियममास्थाय प्रकृत्या नियताः स्वया ॥ ७-२० ॥

kāmais tais tair hṛita-jñānāḥ prapadyante 'nya-
devatāḥ
taṁ taṁ niyamam āsthāya prakṛityā niyatāḥ svayā

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥ ७-२१ ॥

yo yo yām yām tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śhraddhayārchitum
ichchhati

स तया श्रद्धया युक्तस्तस्याराधनमीहते ।
लभते च ततः कामान्मयैवविहितान्हि तान् ॥ ७-२२ ॥

sa tayā śhraddhayā yuktas tasyārāadhanam ihate
labhate cha tataḥ kāmān mayaiiva vihitaṁ hi tān

TRANSLATION

- (17) Amongst these, I consider those who worship me with knowledge and wisdom, and are steadfastly and exclusively devoted to me, to be the highest. I am very dear to them and they are dear to me.
- (18) Indeed, all those who are devoted to me are noble. But those in knowledge, who are of steadfast mind, whose intellect is merged in me, and who have made me alone as their supreme goal, I consider them as my very self.
- (19) After many births of spiritual practice, one who is endowed with knowledge surrenders unto me, knowing me to be all that is. Such a great soul is indeed rare.
- (20) Those whose knowledge has been carried away by material desires surrender to the celestial gods. Following their own nature, they worship the *devatās*, practicing rituals meant to propitiate these celestial personalities.
- (21) Whatever celestial form a devotee seeks to worship with faith, I steady the faith of such a devotee in that form.
- (22) Endowed with faith, the devotee worships a particular celestial god and obtains the objects of desire. But in reality I alone arrange these benefits.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1h0w-yGFk-rs5KeJVNoep2CKy8ri-grCI>

Chapter 7

Verse 17:

Here, Lord Krishna confirms that of the previous four classes of devotees, the *jnani's* or the knowers of the Supreme Lord, are His elites. This is because they are *nitya-yukta* or eternally connected and *eka-bhaktir* or exclusively devoted to the Supreme Lord Krishna by reason of His being their only goal. Others merely establish relationships with Him for selfish purposes in hope of gaining desired material objects. But from the *knowers* of the Supreme Lord, emerge the *lovers* of the Supreme Lord, who regard Him as the most cherished objective of their existence and thus they are His elect. *Tyartham* means the most, even beyond description. The *jnani* is not attached to others nor does he serve others because he is solely possessed of exclusive devotion to the Supreme Lord in the forms of hearing about, speaking about, singing to, meditating upon, worshipping and informing others. Such love for Him has no limitations assigned to it as evidenced in the case of Prahlad, the pre-eminent among the *jnani's* who although was persecuted many times to die on the order of his demon, never was even slightly harmed. So much was Prahlad's mind blissfully absorbed in devotion to the Supreme Lord, aided by the rapture induced by constant remembrance of Him. Such a devotee is blissfully loved by the Supreme Lord. To the enlightened devotees who know the reality of Lord Krishna as the Supreme Lord, He is extremely dear to them and they are also extremely dear to Him in reciprocation.

Verse 18:

Since Lord Krishna talked about *Jnani* as His elite or the most favorite of all four classes of His devotees, in the previous verse, the question may arise about how He regards the other three classes that He described earlier (refer to Verse 16): the *artta* or afflicted/impoverished, the *artharthi* or those desiring wealth, and the *jijnasuh* or those desiring self-realization, and *moksa* or liberation. Are they all wretched and unworthy? To the contrary, as Lord Krishna confirms this with the word *udarah*, meaning that they are indeed noble and magnanimous. All these devotees have accumulated great merit in the course of tens of thousands of previous births. No one can become a devotee of Lord Krishna if they only have a small amount of merit from previous lives. The devotees of the Supreme Lord Krishna have such a surplus of accumulated merit due to having practiced austerities, undergone penance, performed *yoga*, engaged in meditation, offered prayers and worship. That it is a natural course of events that in their early lives they attain the opportunity to be Lord Krishna's devotee. All these noble beings obtain *moksa* or liberation from the cycle of birth and death in the material existence; but the *jnani* or knower of God is His very *atma* or soul. This is because the *jnani* with his mind fixed solely upon the Supreme Lord, has taken complete refuge in Him alone as the only goal other than which there is nothing superior. So such a realized being is interested in no other purpose than attaining the Supreme Lord and thus devotes all his efforts on this. Lord Krishna accepts the *jnani* as His very self to exemplify their exalted position, because nothing is dearer than oneself.

Verse 19:

It takes not just a few births of performing righteous activities for one to evolve to the level of consummate spiritual wisdom enough to realize that the *atma* or soul is an eternal portion of the Supreme Lord and irrevocably devoted to Him. It takes innumerable births of meritorious deeds to achieve this platform and realize this. This is explained by Lord Krishna using the words *bahunam janmanam ante* meaning at the final cycle of innumerable births. All these final cycle births are meritorious, characterized by righteous actions and noble activities. It is not possible to achieve such felicity with the meagre merits acquired from righteous activities through a single lifetime. This is the evolved wisdom of the illuminated *jnani*, who is totally dependent upon Lord Krishna, and for whom all activities of his mind and body, conceptions and perceptions are only of value if they have direct relevance to Lord Krishna. For a *Jnani*, Lord Krishna is his way, Lord Krishna is his goal, Lord Krishna is his highest attainment. Whatsoever his heart longs for, that is Lord Krishna to him. Lord Krishna is everything to him. Such an elevated being totally devoted to the Supreme Lord Krishna in causeless love is very rarely found in creation. It should be evident that the two natures, one being matter and the body and the other being spirit and the soul, in their conditions of cause and effect, are both completely dependent upon the Supreme Lord for their very existence, character, personality and impulses. Thus the one who is cognizant of this reality possesses spiritual wisdom and is the *jnani*. He is an exalted being endowed with the discriminating power of this knowledge, and is *su-durlabah*, meaning extremely rare, perhaps only one among millions of humans.

Verse 20:

In previous verses, Lord Krishna revealed just how rare and difficult it is to meet an enlightened *jnani* or knower of God among the four virtuous types of human beings. He also

deliberated on the other three types who also worship Him: *artto*, the impoverished, *jijnasuh*, the seekers of liberation, and *artharthi*, the seekers of wealth. Lord Krishna further explained how they too, after several cycles of birth, gradually become free from desire and attachment, and attain *moksha* or liberation. In this verse, Lord Krishna speaks of those who are not devoted to Him but are attracted to the various celestial gods or demigods. These humans are overtly situated in *rajas guna* or the mode of passion or in *tamas guna* or the mode of ignorance. They are overwhelmed by their expectations to gratify their material desires. They give homage to the demigods and worship them through fasts, hymns of praise, celebration of the demigods' special days, etc., in order to obtain the fulfilment of their material desires. Thus, they remain in bondage with the endless cycle of birth and death. When Lord Krishna (the Supreme Lord) is the basis of all that exists, no celestial god can be independent of Him. Celestial gods are simply office-bearers in God's government. Although they are souls like us, they are elevated to higher posts in the material realm because of their pious deeds in their past lives. They cannot, however, grant anyone liberation from the bondage of Maya because they are themselves not liberated, and they have finite lifetimes as well, according to Upanishads. Nonetheless, they do have the ability to grant material things that are within their jurisdiction. Driven by material desires, people worship these demigods. Lord Krishna makes it clear that persons whose knowledge has been clouded by material desires worship the celestial gods (demigods).

Verse 21:

In this verse, Lord Krishna explains how the devotees of demigods are able to worship them with firm and unflinching faith. He says that faith in the celestial gods is also created by Him. He says: "*yam yam tanum*", meaning whichever form of demigod or other gods that one craves for worshiping in order to gratify their desires. It is the Supreme Lord only who keeps the faith of that individual directed toward the very demigod that one contemplates, keeping it firm and steady, and thus helps them in their devotion. The demigods themselves do not have the ability to generate faith in their devotees. It is the indwelling "*Paramātmān*" (Supreme Soul), who inspires faith in them. One may wonder why does the Supreme Lord create faith in the celestial gods, when such faith is inappropriately placed? This is just as parents allow their children to shower affection on dolls as if they were real babies. The parents know their child's affection for the doll is out of ignorance, and yet they encourage the child to love and play with dolls. The reason is that the parents know this will help develop qualities of affection, love, and care, which will be beneficial when the child grows up. Similarly, when souls worship the celestial gods for material gains, God steadies their faith, in the expectation that the experience will help evolve the soul upward. Then, one day the soul will surrender to the Supreme Lord, understanding Him to be the highest good of everything.

Verse 22:

If a devotee, worshiping the demigods, gets his cherished desires fulfilled by them independently, then one might wonder what is the contribution of the Supreme Lord in this? Lord Krishna answers this question with the word "*mayaiva*", meaning by Him alone. As the Supreme soul within every sentient being, all rewards are granted solely by Him. The devotees of demigods may obtain their desired ends by worshiping the respective celestial gods, but in actuality, it is not the demigods, but God, the Supreme, who grants the benefits to be given. This verse clearly shows that the celestial gods do not themselves sanction

material benefits; they can only grant them to their devotees when God sanctions it. However, people of mediocre understanding deduce that help comes to them from the gods they worship.