

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 19: Chapter 2, Verses 48-53

(September 5 –September 11, 2018)

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योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि संगं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।
सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ ४८ ॥
दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय ।
बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥ ४९ ॥
बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।
तस्माद् योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥ ५० ॥
कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः ।
जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् ॥ ५१ ॥
यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति ।
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च ॥ ५२ ॥
श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला ।
समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि ॥ ५३ ॥

TRANSLITERATION

*yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya
siddhy-asiddhyoh samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate*
*dūreṇ hy avaram karmā buddhi-yogād dhanañjaya
buddhau śaraṇam anviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phala-hetavaḥ*
*buddhi-yukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛta-duṣkṛte
tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*
*karma-jām buddhi-yuktā hi phalaṁ tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ
janma-bandha-vinirmuktāḥ padaṁ gacchanty anāmayam*
*yadā te moha-kalilaṁ buddhir vyatitariṣyati
tadā gantāsi nirvedaṁ śrotavyasya śrutasya ca*
*śruti-vipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niścalā
samādhāv acalā buddhis tadā yogam avāpsyasi*

TRANSLATION

- (48)** Be steadfast in the performance of your duty, O Arjun, abandoning attachment to both success and failure. Such equanimity is called Yoga.
- (49)** Seek refuge in divine knowledge and insight, O Arjun, and discard reward-seeking actions that are certainly inferior to works performed with the intellect established in Divine knowledge. Miserly are those who seek to enjoy the fruits of their works.
- (50)** One who prudently practices the science of work without attachment can get rid of both good and bad reactions in this life itself. Therefore, strive for Yoga, which is the art of working skillfully (in proper consciousness).
- (51)** The wise endowed with equanimity of intellect, abandon attachment to the fruits of actions, which bind one to the cycle of life and death. By working in such consciousness, they attain the state beyond all suffering.
- (52)** When your intellect crosses the quagmire of delusion, you will then acquire indifference to what has been heard and what is yet to be heard (about enjoyments in this world and the next).
- (53)** When your intellect ceases to be allured by the sections of the Vedas that deal with fruitful actions and remains steadfast in divine consciousness, you will then attain the state of perfect Yoga.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OSLKJfG_X0lpqVWYrhaXZC6O127fFk8s/view?usp=sharing

Commentary:

Verse 48:

In this verse, Lord Krishna dictates that one should perform one's duty equipoised to accept success and failure, fame and infamy or pleasure and pain, relinquishing any attachment or motivation for rewards and leaving the fruit of work solely to the will of the Supreme Lord. Shri Krishna calls this equanimity *Yoga* or union with the Supreme, which enables one to accept all circumstances with serenity. For example, if we are sailing in the ocean in a boat, it is natural to expect the waves of the ocean to shake the boat. If we get perturbed each time a wave rocks the boat, our miseries would be endless. On the other hand, if we hope the waves to never rise, we would be expecting the ocean to become something other than its natural self. Waves are an integral phenomenon of the ocean. Similarly, as we wade through the ocean of life, it throws up all kinds of waves that are beyond our control. If we keep hoping to eliminate undesired situations, we will never be able to avoid unhappiness. But if we can learn to accept everything that comes our way, without sacrificing our best efforts, we will have surrendered to the will of God, and that will be a true *Yoga*.

Verse 49:

In this verse, Lord Krishna declares that actions initiated by desire for rewards are abominable and inferior, whereas those performed in spiritual intelligence by the science of *Yoga* (the individual consciousness attaining communion with the Ultimate Consciousness) are far superior. Therefore, perform actions in spiritual intelligence and take complete refuge in the Supreme Lord. But those who are impelled and motivated by desire have only misery and despire to look for. Take for

example, a temple is being built in a holy land. The workers are engaged in a sacred activity, but their attitude is somewhat mundane. They are more concerned with the salary they would receive than the sacredness of the work they perform. If another employer offers higher wages for a non-temple work, they will not mind switching their job. Suppose that there shows up an ascetic living in the area, who, seeing the glorious temple being built, offers to engage himself in *kār sevā* (voluntary work) as a service to God. While the work to be performed by the *sadhu* and the workers are the same, their motivation and attitudes toward work are poles apart. Here Lord Krishna advises Arjuna that those who work with the motivation of rewards and self-pleasure are miserly. Those who are detached from the fruits of their work and dedicate their work to a higher cause are far superior.

Verse 50:

In this verse, Lord Krishna extols *Karma Yoga* to Arjuna by saying that the one who practices it can relieve oneself of both good and bad results of one's actions in this very life, such as power, prestige, fame, and wealth (good results) or pain, poverty, and misery (bad results). The total surrender of one's work to the Supreme Lord without expecting any fruit of one's actions, equipoised to both success and failure, and conjoining Individual Consciousness (the *Atman*) with the Ultimate Consciousness (the *Paramatman*) is what defines *Karma Yoga*. People often wonder if they give up attachment to results, will their performance go down? Lord Krishna explains that working without motivation for rewards does not reduce the quality of our work at all. Arjuna's personal example illustrates this point. Arjuna's initial intention to engage in a war with the Kauravas was with the sole desire of winning a kingdom. When he saw his close relatives and friends in the battle field, he was filled with emotions and wanted to withdraw from the battle. But after hearing the *Bhagavad Gita* from Lord Krishna, he was fighting again because he was convinced that it was his duty as a *Kshatriya*, and that he would be committing sin if he did not. The fact that Arjuna did his duty without attachment or motivation for rewards did not make him any less competent than before. In fact, he fought with greater inspiration because his work was directly in service of the Lord.

Verse 51:

Lord Krishna continues to expound on the topic of working without attachment to the fruits of actions, and states that it leads one to the state beyond suffering. The paradox of life is that we strive for happiness, but reap misery; we crave for love, but we meet with disappointment; we covet life, but know we are moving closer to death by each day. As a result, practically everyone in this world is unhappy. Some suffer from the miseries of their own body and mind; others are tormented by their family members and relatives; some suffer from scarcity of wealth and the paucity of the necessities of life. Materially minded people know they are unhappy, but they think that others ahead of them must be happy, and so they continue running in the direction of material growth. This blind pursuit has been going on for many lifetimes and yet there is no sight of happiness. Now, if people could realize that nobody has ever achieved happiness by engaging in

works with motivation of getting good results, they would then understand that the direction in which they are running is futile, and they would think of doing a U-turn toward spiritual life. Those whose intellects have become steadfast with spiritual knowledge would renounce attachment to the fruits of their actions, surrender everything to the Lord. In doing so, their actions become free from karmic reactions that bind one to the cycle of life and death.

Verse 52:

Lord Krishna previously had said (see Verses 2.42–2.43) that people who are attached to worldly enjoyment get attracted to only those sections of the Vedas that propagate ostentatious rituals for gaining worldly pleasures as well as for attaining the celestial abodes. However, the one whose intellect is illumined with spiritual knowledge that crosses the boundaries of mental delusion, no longer seeks material sense pleasures, and becomes totally indifferent to what has been heard before or what will be heard in the future about those pleasures. In this context, it is worth noting the similar statement in *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣhad (1.2.12)[v45]: parīkṣhya lokānkarmachitānbrāhmaṇo nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛitaḥ kṛitena*. “Realized sages go beyond Vedic rituals, after understanding that the pleasures one attains from fruit-motivated karmas, in this life and in the celestial abodes, are temporary and mixed with misery.”

Verse 53:

Lord Krishna begins this verse with the word *Shruti* which means “*the ones that were heard*” and often refers to Vedas. For it is by the hearing of transcendental instructions that the mind is evolved as it begins to reflect and contemplate on the immortal, incomparable and exceedingly subtle nature of the eternal soul. When people advance on their spiritual path, within their minds their relationship with God becomes stronger. At that time, they find the Vedic rituals they were previously performing for fruitful results to be inadequate in uniting the *Atman* with the *Paramatman*, a process called *Yoga*, and attain self-realization. Lord Krishna uses the word *Samādhāv-achalā* in this verse to refer to the state of steadfastness in divine consciousness. The word *Samādhi* has been formed from the roots *sama* (equilibrium) and *dhi* (intellect), meaning, “a state of total equilibrium of the intellect.” One who is steadfast in the higher consciousness, unmoved by material allurements, attains that state of *Samādhi*, or the perfect *Yoga*.