

Śloka 33

श्रेयान्द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञाज्ज्ञानयज्ञः परंतप ।

सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ॥ ३३ ॥

*śreyāndravyamayādyajñājñānayaajñāḥ paramtapa
sarvaṁ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate*

श्रेयान्	<i>śreyān</i>	superior
द्रव्यमयात्	<i>dravyamayāt</i>	with objects
यज्ञात्	<i>yajñāt</i>	than sacrifice
ज्ञानयज्ञः	<i>jñānayaajñāḥ</i>	knowledge of sacrifice
परंतप	<i>paramtapa</i>	O Paramtapa (Arjuna)
सर्वम्	<i>sarvam</i>	all
कर्म	<i>karma</i>	action
अखिलम्	<i>akhilam</i>	in its entirety
पार्थ	<i>pārtha</i>	O Pārtha (Arjuna)
ज्ञाने	<i>jñāne</i>	in knowledge
परिसमाप्यते	<i>parisamāpyate</i>	is culminated

VERSE 33

Of All Sacrifice, Which Is the Best Sacrifice?

33

O Parantapa (Arjuna), sacrifice through knowledge (Jñāna Yajña) is superior to sacrifice with material things (Dravya Yajña). All actions in their entirety, O Pārtha (Arjuna), culminate in knowledge.

All the various sacrifices that are explained in the **Bhagavad Gītā** as well as in the **Vedas** are divided into two categories: 1) *Dravya Yajña* or sacrifice using material things, and 2) *Jñāna Yajña* or sacrifice through knowledge. The Lord compares these two types of sacrifice and declares that *Jñāna Yajña*, in which ignorance is burned up, is the highest and most divine sacrifice because in *Jñāna Yajña*, egocentric desire and action do not coexist.

Dravya Yajña is a ritualistic system of offering that includes such acts as offering food into the sacred fire, spending money to help the poor, and building hospitals and orphanages. These acts can be performed out of a desire to attain joy or happiness; or, in some cases, for recognition, name, or fame. In these cases egocentric desire and the ego of being a doer exist.

Dravya Yajña, or sacrifice with material objects, is conducive to final liberation only when performed with a feeling of dedication to God; without a feeling of attachment, possessiveness, or desire for the fruit of the action. Otherwise the sacrifice (action) will create bondage. There will be no end of action and desire (the seed of action) until a yogi attains true knowledge. This is because without true knowledge, desire creates action and action creates desire.

all actions in their entirety culminate in knowledge - In contrast to *Dravya Yajña* is *Jñāna Yajña*, in which a yogi develops discriminative knowledge and spiritual insight. In the practice of *Jñāna Yajña*, the yogi's ignorance is offered into the fire of knowledge. This automatically burns the ignorance that appears in the form of attachment, egoism, and desire and the yogi attains freedom from the bondage of *karma* (action). That is why the Lord says to Arjuna that the highest goal to be achieved through the performance of any sacrifice is the attainment of true knowledge of God. For one who has attained true knowledge of God, all actions create no bondage and nothing else remains to be attained.

Śloka 34

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ ३४ ॥

*tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ*

तत्	<i>tat</i>	that
विद्धि	<i>viddhi</i>	know
प्रणिपातेन	<i>praṇipātena</i>	by long prostration
परिप्रश्नेन	<i>paripraśnena</i>	by question
सेवया	<i>sevayā</i>	by service
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति	<i>upadekṣyanti</i>	will instruct
ते	<i>te</i>	thee
ज्ञानम्	<i>jñānam</i>	knowledge
ज्ञानिनः	<i>jñāninaḥ</i>	the wise
तत्त्वदर्शिनः	<i>tattvadarśinaḥ</i>	those who have realized the truth

VERSE 34

The Process of Attaining Knowledge of the Self

34

Know this: by prostration, by question, and by service (to them), the wise seers of truth will instruct you in that knowledge.

This verse gives the methods for approaching a spiritual teacher in order to attain knowledge of the Self.

1) **by prostration** - This is a method of bowing by lying face down, flat on the ground in front of the spiritual teacher. The head should point toward the teacher's feet. This physical posture by itself is not considered true prostration unless the student's mental attitude is one of surrender to the teacher with respect, obedience, and humility.

This physical prostration to the spiritual teacher removes ego and pride and creates an attitude of surrender. When a student approaches a spiritual teacher with the desire to gain knowledge from the teachings, it is important to approach the teacher with this attitude of true prostration; that is, an attitude of surrender, humility, respect, and obedience.

2) **by question** - A seeker of the truth should ask questions in order to remove doubts that appear from time to time about such things as God, the Self, and the purpose of human incarnation. Hearing the questions, the perfected teacher will detect the confusion in the aspirant's mind and give the appropriate advice that will allow the student to tread the right path.

If the student asks questions for the sake of argument or with the intention of testing the teacher, then the teacher will not be able to pour out knowledge from the heart. Therefore, a student should keep an attitude of surrender and reverence when asking a question.

3) **by service** - This means to obey the teacher and carry out the teacher's instructions with full faith, reverence, and complete devotion. It also means to please the teacher by physical service. The attitude of serving the teacher strengthens the student's spirit of surrender.

For an aspirant who wants to approach a spiritual teacher to attain knowledge of the Self, these three attitudes of prostration, sincere questioning, and service to the teacher are unavoidable. All three are necessary for the aspirant to become perfectly harmonized with the teacher.

Śloka 35

यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव ।
येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥ ३५ ॥

*yajñātvā na punarmohamevaṁ yāsyasi pāṇḍava
yena bhūtānyaśeṣeṇa drakṣyasiātmanyatho mayi*

यत्	<i>yat</i>	which
ज्ञात्वा	<i>jñātvā</i>	having known
न	<i>na</i>	not
पुनः	<i>punaḥ</i>	again
मोहम्	<i>moham</i>	delusion
एवम्	<i>evam</i>	thus
यास्यसि	<i>yāsyasi</i>	will get
पाण्डव	<i>pāṇḍava</i>	O Pāṇḍava (Arjuna)
येन	<i>yena</i>	by this
भूतानि	<i>bhūtāni</i>	beings
अशेषेण	<i>aśeṣeṇa</i>	all
द्रक्ष्यसि	<i>drakṣyasi</i>	(you) see
आत्मनि	<i>ātmani</i>	in Self
अथो	<i>atho</i>	also
मयि	<i>mayi</i>	in Me

VERSES 35-36

The Fruit of Attaining the Knowledge of the Self

35

O Pāṇḍava (Arjuna), knowing that (knowledge) you shall not again get deluded; and by that (knowledge) you shall see all beings in your own Self and also in Me.

When an aspirant is illumined by the teachings of a perfected one, the aspirant does not fall back into delusion again. The aspirant attains knowledge of the Self and ceases to identify with the mind-body complex as "I am." The aspirant becomes free from attachment, desire, and egoism. No morbid feelings like joy and sorrow, or attachment and aversion affect the aspirant.

The Lord tells Arjuna, who has become the victim of attachment, delusion, and grief on the battlefield, that after attaining knowledge of the Self, he will not be deluded again. Not only will Arjuna be free from delusion, but by attaining true knowledge he will also be able to recognize the creation as none other than his own real Self. Arjuna will see this real Self to be all-pervading and infinite, and none other than God who is the embodiment of truth, knowledge, and bliss.

Śloka 36

अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः ।
सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव वृजिनं संतरिष्यसि ॥ ३६ ॥

*api cedasi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpakṛttamaḥ
sarvaṁ jñānaplavenaiva vṛjinam santariṣyasi*

अपि	<i>api</i>	even
चेत्	<i>cet</i>	if
असि	<i>asi</i>	(you) are
पापेभ्यः	<i>pāpebhyaḥ</i>	than sinners
सर्वेभ्यः	<i>sarvebhyaḥ</i>	(than) all
पापकृत्तमः	<i>pāpakṛttamaḥ</i>	most sinful
सर्वम्	<i>sarvam</i>	all
ज्ञानप्लवेन	<i>jñānaplavena</i>	by the raft of knowledge
एव	<i>eva</i>	alone
वृजिनम्	<i>vṛjinam</i>	sin
सन्तरिष्यसि	<i>santariṣyasi</i>	(you) shall cross

Even if you are the most sinful of all sinners, yet you shall cross the ocean of sins by the raft of knowledge alone.

After explaining the methods and the results of attaining knowledge of the Self, the Lord now gives Arjuna more assurance. He does so because He knows that Arjuna may be feeling unworthy of attaining this knowledge of the Self (God).

Even if you are the most sinful of all sinners - In reality the ego self is nothing other than the eternal Self. When the ego forgets its divine nature and becomes involved with the activities of the mind, intellect, and senses, it only sees its own self-interest supported by desire and attachment. In that state a human is capable of performing animal-like actions such as violence, deceit, and theft, which are called "sins." In that deluded state a person only thinks and acts for selfish gain and consequently gets trapped in ignorance.

The metaphors of **raft of knowledge** and **ocean of sins** are used to explain that state when one is able to identify the ego with the real Self, unrelated to the mind, intellect, or senses. At such a time the yogi sits in the raft of knowledge and rows over the ocean of sins, which are the desires for worldly objects. Such a yogi is able to do this without being affected by desires, and thus reaches the destination.

The essence of the verse is that anyone, even the most sinful, can attain Self-knowledge at any time, and will do so as soon as the person discovers that the ego in its purest form is no different than the Self. This knowledge is available to everyone.