

VERSE 15

Why People Do Not Seek Refuge in God

15

The evildoers, the deluded, the lowest of men, deprived of discrimination by māyā and following the ways of demons, do not seek refuge in Me.

The previous verse explained that it is hard to cross over the divine illusion, but for those who take refuge in God alone, it is possible to transcend self-created delusion (*māyā*). In this verse Lord Kṛṣṇa says that those who are the **evildoers, the deluded, and the lowest of men**, who follow **the ways of demons, do not seek refuge in Me** (God). Those who act in the world with selfish motive, who are greedy, and who are attached to worldly objects are described as evildoers. Due to their selfish motives, all their actions, thoughts, and ideas are guided by dishonesty, fraud, anger, and deceit.

Such people are described as deluded because worldly pleasures become real and important to them. They cannot see that the cause of pain and misery is their own attachment to the world. They are not capable of discriminating between the real and the unreal; consequently, instead of seeking peace or God, they seek worldly pleasure and go through all kinds of suffering.

Those deluded evildoers are the lowest among humans. There is a difference between people with a human level of consciousness and people with an animal level of consciousness in that those of human consciousness have a superior intellect that is able to discriminate between good and evil, between what brings peace and what causes pain, and between what is moral and what is immoral. As a result of this superior intellect, those of a human level of consciousness are capable of removing their own self-created delusion and finding their true nature, the Self. In contrast, those of animal consciousness are devoid of this kind of superior intellect and live their lives by their instinctive abilities, which are limited to working to feed themselves, sleeping, and reproducing. By referring to these people as the lowest of humans, it is implied that they are no better than animals.

The more a person lives in egocentric desires, full of attachment, the more delusion increases and the more a person gets lost in the world. Such a person displays only a demonic disposition and follows the impulses of lust, anger, greed, hypocrisy, and violence. That person will not even think of seeking God.

Śloka 16

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरार्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥ १६ ॥

catuṛvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino'ṛjuna
ārto jijñāsuarthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha

चतुर्विधाः	<i>catuṛvidhāḥ</i>	four kinds
भजन्ते	<i>bhajante</i>	worship
माम्	<i>mām</i>	Me
जनाः	<i>janāḥ</i>	people
सुकृतिनः	<i>sukṛtinaḥ</i>	virtuous
अर्जुन	<i>arjuna</i>	O Arjuna
आर्तः	<i>ārtaḥ</i>	the distressed
जिज्ञासुः	<i>jijñāsuḥ</i>	the seeker of knowledge
अर्थार्थी	<i>arthārthī</i>	the seeker of wealth
ज्ञानी	<i>jñānī</i>	the wise
च	<i>ca</i>	and
भरत ऋषभ	<i>bharata ṛṣabha</i>	O Best of the Bharatas

VERSE 16

What Type of People Worship God?

16

Four types of virtuous people worship Me, O Arjuna: the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and the wise, O Best of Bharatas.

In the previous verse Lord Kṛṣṇa described the negative nature of those who are unable to take refuge in God. In this verse the Lord describes the various reasons why virtuous people seek God. He classifies these into four main categories: 1) *ārta*, **the distressed**, 2) *jijñāsu*, **seeker of knowledge**, 3) *arthārthī*, **the seeker of wealth**, and 4) *jñānī*, **the wise**.

1) *Ārta* (the distressed): When people are either in physical or emotional pain, they try to remove the cause of that pain; it is a natural reaction. However, virtuous devotees who suffer pain and misery in this world take refuge in God with their prayers in order to free themselves from all suffering. They start seeing that the greatest suffering comes from the continuous cycle of birth and death, which is the result of ignorance. To be free from the cycle of birth and death and to enjoy infinite bliss, they worship the divine with complete faith and devotion.

2) *Jijñāsu* (the seeker of knowledge): A seeker of knowledge is motivated by the desire to obtain the highest knowledge of reality, which exists behind the appearance of the phenomenal world. By knowing this reality, everything is known. A seeker with such motivation worships God with complete faith and devotion.

3) *Arthārthī* (one who desires worldly possessions): The devotees who desire worldly possessions depend on God alone, and worship God with faith and devotion. Their desire does not remain limited merely to worldly possessions. They also wish to attain the divine kingdom on earth, which is comprised of virtuous life, wealth earned by virtuous means, and fulfillment of spiritual desires.

4) *Jñānī* (the wise): The virtuous devotees who have achieved wisdom also worship God with complete faith and devotion. They do not worship for the sake of achieving anything in the world. Such devotees neither desire to have anything, nor do they worry if they do not have anything. Their demands, needs, and desires subside because for them all worldly expectations are insignificant in comparison to supreme divine realization. Such devotees take refuge in the supreme divine only to merge and become one with it.

All four types of virtuous devotees, with their different aims, worship God with unflinching faith.

Śloka 17

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

teṣām jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktirviśiṣyate
priyo hi jñānino'tyartham---aham sa ca mama priyaḥ

तेषाम्	<i>teṣām</i>	of them
ज्ञानी	<i>jñānī</i>	the wise
नित्ययुक्त	<i>nityayukta</i>	ever steadfast
एकभक्तिः	<i>ekabhaktiḥ</i>	whose devotion is to the One
विशिष्यते	<i>viśiṣyate</i>	excels
प्रियः	<i>priyaḥ</i>	dear
हि	<i>hi</i>	verily
ज्ञानिनः	<i>jñāninaḥ</i>	of the wise
अत्यर्थम्	<i>atyartham</i>	exceedingly
अहम्	<i>aham</i>	I
सः	<i>saḥ</i>	he
च	<i>ca</i>	and
मम	<i>mama</i>	to Me
प्रियः	<i>priyaḥ</i>	dear

VERSE 17

Which Type Is the Best of These Four?

17

**Of these the best is wise, ever steadfast, and devoted to the One.
For I am extremely dear to the wise and that one is dear to Me.**

Among the four types of virtuous people described in the previous verse, the person of wisdom is the best. This is because the person of wisdom knows the truth about God, and dwells constantly on thoughts of God, without self-interest of any kind. Desire and attachment to the world are illusory realities based on ignorance. In the wise, all desires and attachments are wiped out by Self-knowledge. Such a wise yogi surrenders to the Self or God. This is called single-pointed devotion (*ekabhakti*).

I am extremely dear to the wise - For the person of wisdom who has surrendered to God, all worldly attractions, attachments, and desires subside and there remains nothing of attraction in the world. Consequently, where nothing else but God exists in the heart of the wise, the pure love for God shines in its utmost supremacy.

Again the Lord says, **that one is dear to Me**. The unconditional love in which all self-interest is removed is not one-sided. God loves the person of wisdom who loves God with the same intensity.

God is love absolute. It is from this love that the individual soul derives its love. If an individual soul finds extreme love for God within, then that individual will also experience the supreme divine within.

Śloka 18

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

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

उदाराः	<i>udārāḥ</i>	noble
सर्वे	<i>sarve</i>	all
एव	<i>eva</i>	surely
एते	<i>ete</i>	these
ज्ञानी	<i>jñānī</i>	the wise
तु	<i>tu</i>	but
आत्मा	<i>ātmā</i>	Self
एव	<i>eva</i>	very
मे	<i>me</i>	My
मतम्	<i>matam</i>	opinion
आस्थितः	<i>āsthitaḥ</i>	is established
सः	<i>saḥ</i>	he
हि	<i>hi</i>	verily
युक्तात्मा	<i>yuktātmā</i>	steadfast minded
माम्	<i>mām</i>	Me
एव	<i>eva</i>	verily
अनुत्तमाम्	<i>anuttamām</i>	the supreme
गतिम्	<i>gatim</i>	goal

VERSE 18

Are the Other Three Types Not Dear to God?

18

All these are noble indeed, but the wise are My very Self. Such is My view. For, steadfast in mind, that one is established in Me alone as the supreme goal.

All living beings in this creation are dear to God. However, those who worship any form of the divine with faith and devotion for the purpose of: 1) removing pain and misery, 2) achieving wealth and prosperity, or 3) simply understanding God intellectually, are considered more noble than those who are completely unaware and unconscious of the divine. Noblest of all is the fourth category of devotee called “the wise.” Compared to those of the first three categories who worship God with self-interest, the Lord says, **the wise are My very Self.**

A person of wisdom is one who identifies with the Self alone. That person has removed attachment to the world, along with any desire for worldly objects, and thus has achieved the total excellence of mind and intellect. By these methods the ego is separated from its field of activity, which is comprised of the mind, senses, and intellect. The ego discovers itself as the Self, and becomes one with the Self. In this way the person of wisdom becomes established in the Self, which is the supreme goal of life.

Lord Kṛṣṇa declares that it is His own opinion that all seekers of God are noble, but the person of wisdom is His very Self.

Śloka 19

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

bahūnām janmanāmante jñānavānmām prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvamiti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ

बहूनाम्	<i>bahūnām</i>	of many
जन्मनाम्	<i>janmanām</i>	of births
अन्ते	<i>ante</i>	in the end
ज्ञानवान्	<i>jñānavān</i>	the wise
माम्	<i>mām</i>	to Me
प्रपद्यते	<i>prapadyate</i>	approaches
वासुदेवः	<i>vāsudevaḥ</i>	Vāsudeva
सर्वम्	<i>sarvam</i>	all
इति	<i>iti</i>	thus
सः	<i>saḥ</i>	he
महात्मा	<i>mahātmā</i>	the great soul
सुदुर्लभः	<i>sudurlabhaḥ</i>	very hard to find

VERSE 19

Rare Are Such Wise Yogis

19

At the end of many births the wise approach Me, realizing that all this is God. Such a great soul is very hard to find.

Of all the different possibilities of birth as a sentient creature, a human birth is the hardest to achieve. Only in a human incarnation is one given the right to experience the world and achieve liberation from all experience. All other sentient creatures are only capable of experiencing the world. Even though those who attain a human incarnation are superior in mind, intellect, and ego to all other sentient beings, and are capable of liberation, very few think about getting liberated. Among those few who do think about liberation, even fewer actually try to achieve liberation. Among those striving yogis only a rare few achieve the goal of liberation. This does not mean that liberation is impossible. In each birth a striving yogi moves closer to liberation. However, one who has firm faith, intense devotion, dispassion for the world, and who strives hard to achieve the goal can attain Self-knowledge in this very life.

A human being, after going through the cycle of birth and death many times, achieves liberation. Self-realization is the end of that cycle because the wise yogi knows there is nothing else except God (Self) and merges into the Self. Such great souls are rare and **hard to find**.

Śloka 20

कामैस्तैस्तैर्हतज्ञानाः प्रपद्यन्तेऽन्यदेवताः ।

तं तं नियममास्थाय प्रकृत्या नियताः स्वया ॥ २० ॥

kāmaistairhṛtajñānāḥ prapadyante'nyadevatāḥ
taṁ taṁ niyamamāsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā

कामैः	<i>kāmaiḥ</i>	by desires
तैः तैः	<i>taiḥ taiḥ</i>	by this or that
हतज्ञानाः	<i>hṛtajñānāḥ</i>	those whose wisdom has been rent away
प्रपद्यन्ते	<i>prapadyante</i>	approach
अन्यदेवताः	<i>anyadevatāḥ</i>	other gods
तम् तम्	<i>taṁ taṁ</i>	this or that
नियमम्	<i>niyamam</i>	rite
आस्थाय	<i>āsthāya</i>	having followed
प्रकृत्या	<i>prakṛtyā</i>	by nature
नियताः	<i>niyatāḥ</i>	led
स्वया	<i>svayā</i>	by one's own

VERSE 20

Why People Do Not Struggle to Realize the Self (God) Alone

20

Those whose wisdom has been rent away by this or that desire go to other gods, following this or that rite, prompted by their own nature.

Why is it that people do not sincerely strive to realize the Self, or recognize God alone as their all? It is because desire for worldly objects creates a veil over the intellect. The desires for worldly objects and for sense gratification produce thoughts in the mind that then generate more desires. In this way desires and thoughts reinforce each other and create a state of confusion that weakens the discriminative capability of the intellect to such an extent that a person cannot discriminate what is real and what is not real. Such an individual fails to understand the aim and purpose of life and gets lost in various worldly enjoyments, and as a result never seeks the path to the real (Self). Those deluded individuals, instead of seeking God-realization, engage themselves in a form of ritualism as prompted by their nature in order to please God in one form or another for the sake of fulfillment of desires in this life and other lives to come.

Human nature is constituted by the imprints of desire and action of past lives, which are stored in the mind and become active in the present birth. In this way, each person's nature is distinct, prompting them to worship a particular god who is conducive to their nature. The rites and rituals of worship of each god are different. Therefore, individuals, according to their nature, follow a particular set of rites and rituals of worship to please the god they feel inclined to worship.

The essence of this verse is that the deluded seekers strive for sensual satisfaction by worshipping various deities and never struggle to achieve Self-realization.

Śloka 21

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

*yo yo yām yām tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitumicchati
tasya tasyācalām śraddhām tāmeva vidadhāmyaham*

यः	<i>yaḥ</i>	who
यः	<i>yaḥ</i>	who
याम्	<i>yām</i>	which
याम्	<i>yām</i>	which
तनुम्	<i>tanum</i>	form
भक्तः	<i>bhaktaḥ</i>	devotee
श्रद्धया	<i>śraddhayā</i>	with faith
अर्चितुम्	<i>arcitum</i>	to worship
इच्छति	<i>icchati</i>	desires
तस्य तस्य	<i>tasya tasya</i>	of him
अचलाम्	<i>acalām</i>	unflinchingly
श्रद्धां	<i>śraddhām</i>	faith
ताम्	<i>tām</i>	that
एव	<i>eva</i>	surely
विदधामि	<i>vidadhāmi</i>	make
अहम्	<i>aham</i>	I