

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>tam tam</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 tanum 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

VERSES 21-22

*How Devotees Achieve God's Favor by Worshipping a
God of Their Choice*

21

Whatever form a devotee desires to worship with faith, that faith of that devotee I make stable.

Though God is one without name and form, people worship God with various names and forms, according to the religions created from the teachings of high saints and prophets. Due to ignorance, people become fanatics in worshipping a particular path, belief, or religion, rather than worshipping God with faith and devotion; thinking their path, belief, or religion is the only true one.

In this verse the Lord brings unity to the different paths, beliefs, and religions by saying, "**Whatever form a devotee desires to worship with faith**, I stabilize the faith of that particular devotee." Devotees choose their own particular name and form of God conducive to their nature. The idea of different types of gods with different names and forms is created in the mind. The mind is within the realm of nature (*prakṛti*) and is comprised of the three *guṇas*, which manifest everything. When a devotee worships a particular form of God with devotion and unmitigated faith, the divine Self within, which is all-pervading and the substratum of nature, is cognized.

Anything that takes place in nature is due to the energy of God (the Self). In verses 6-7 Lord Kṛṣṇa said, "I am the source and dissolution of the universe. All forms are strung on Me as clusters of gems on a string." Therefore, all those who worship God with any name or form, with unmitigated faith, have their faith stabilized by the Self or God.

Śloka 22

स तथा श्रद्धया युक्तस्तस्याराधनमीहते ।
लभते च ततः कामान्मयैव विहितान् हि तान् ॥ २२ ॥

*sa tayā śraddhayā yuktas---tasyārādhanamīhate
labhate ca tataḥ kāmān---mayaiiva vihitān hi tān*

सः	<i>saḥ</i>	he
तथा	<i>tayā</i>	with that
श्रद्धया	<i>śraddhayā</i>	with faith
युक्तः	<i>yuktaḥ</i>	endued
तस्य	<i>tasya</i>	of it
आराधनम्	<i>ārādhanam</i>	worship
ईहते	<i>īhate</i>	engages in
लभते	<i>labhate</i>	obtains
च	<i>ca</i>	and
ततः	<i>tataḥ</i>	from that
कामान्	<i>kāmān</i>	desires
मया	<i>mayā</i>	by Me
एव	<i>eva</i>	surely
विहितान्	<i>vihitān</i>	ordained
हि	<i>hi</i>	verily
तान्	<i>tān</i>	those

22

Endowed with that faith, one engages in the worship of that (deity) and from it obtains one's desires, which are being verily ordained by Me.

The eternal Self (God) is that string on which everything in the universe is strung, and is the source of all activities. Such pairs as pleasure-pain, success-failure, and hope-despair are all identified by the reflection of the Self in the mind. Without the energy of the Self, there would be no experience of any kind.

Devotees whose faith is stabilized by the Lord, worship the form or name of God (deity) of their choice and obtain their desired enjoyments. However, whatever enjoyments the devotee obtains are, in fact, **ordained by Me**, the eternal Self that is attributeless, changeless, and actionless. This eternal Self is the substratum of all and the cause of creation. In verse 5 this Self is identified as the higher nature of God.

Śloka 23

अन्तवत्तु फलं तेषां तद्भवत्यल्पमेधसाम् ।
देवान् देवयजो यान्ति मद्भक्ता यान्ति मामपि ॥ २३ ॥

antavattu phalaṁ teṣāṁ tadbhavatyalpamedhasām
devān devayajo yānti madbhaktā yānti māmapi

अन्तवत्	<i>antavat</i>	finite, perishable
तु	<i>tu</i>	however, verily
फलम्	<i>phalam</i>	the fruit
तेषाम्	<i>teṣām</i>	of them
तत्	<i>tat</i>	that
भवति	<i>bhavati</i>	is
अल्पमेधसाम्	<i>alpamedhasām</i>	those of small intelligence
देवान्	<i>devān</i>	to the gods
देवयजः	<i>devayajaḥ</i>	the worshippers of the devas
यान्ति	<i>yānti</i>	go to
मद्भक्ताः	<i>madbhaktāḥ</i>	My devotees
यान्ति	<i>yānti</i>	go to
माम्	<i>mām</i>	to Me
अपि	<i>api</i>	also

VERSE 23

The Fruit of Worshipping Their Gods

23

The fruit obtained by these people of small understanding, however, is perishable. The worshippers of the gods go to the gods, but My devotees come to Me.

In this verse those people who worship different kinds of gods for fulfillment of their worldly desires are called **people of small understanding**. Such deluded people do not understand that there is one supreme God, and that all other gods are simply entities based on the one supreme God. Furthermore, their aim in worshipping a chosen god with faith, devotion, and austerities is to achieve the transitory, sensuous desires for their life in the world.

The worshippers of the different gods may achieve what they desire, but the fruit of their effort is not everlasting. Sooner or later their sense of satisfaction and joy will turn to discontent and sorrow, because everything in God's lower nature is changing and perishable. The desires, the objects, and the instruments of enjoyment cannot remain the same forever.

The worshippers of the gods go to the gods, but My devotees come to Me - Even if the worshipper attains the fruit as desired, that fruit does not bring eternal peace, but rather brings a finite result. Since the gods are finite, they are not capable of giving the infinite result of eternal peace. On the other hand, the Lord says that those who worship the Lord, the eternal, infinite Self, come to Me. This means that those strivers, by their single-minded meditation, attain realization of the Self; the eternal, infinite, supreme Lord.

Those wise people who understand that the whole creation is perishable do not create any attachment to sensual objects. Instead they only meditate on the Self with faith and devotion in order to find eternal peace. Such devotees realize the Self within and get liberated from the cycle of birth and death. The worshippers of the different gods may achieve what they desire, but the fruit of their effort is not everlasting.

Śloka 24

अव्यक्तं व्यक्तिमापन्नं मन्यन्ते मामबुद्धयः ।
परं भावमजानन्तो ममाव्ययमनुत्तमम् ॥ २४ ॥

*avyaktam vyaktimāpannam manyante māmabuddhayaḥ
param bhāvamajānanto mamāvyayamanuttamam*

अव्यक्तम्	<i>avyaktam</i>	the unmanifested
व्यक्तिम्	<i>vyaktim</i>	to manifestation
आपन्नम्	<i>āpannam</i>	come to
मन्यन्ते	<i>manyante</i>	think
माम्	<i>mām</i>	Me
अबुद्धयः	<i>abuddhayaḥ</i>	the foolish, the ignorant
परम्	<i>param</i>	the highest, unsurpassable
भावम्	<i>bhāvam</i>	nature
अजानन्तः	<i>ajānantaḥ</i>	not knowing
मम	<i>mama</i>	My
अव्ययम्	<i>avyayam</i>	immutable
अनुत्तमम्	<i>anuttamam</i>	most excellent

VERSE 24

*How the Ignorant See the Self and Do Not Strive For
Self-realization*

24

The ignorant think of Me, the unmanifest, as having come to manifestation; not knowing My unsurpassable, immutable, and most excellent nature.

The preceding verse described those people who are limited to seeking worldly enjoyments. They remain engaged in worshipping different deities in order to fulfill their finite desires. Such people lack discrimination as to what is perishable and what is eternal; as a result of their worship, they achieve the limited objects they desire. But those who worship the eternal, infinite Self achieve eternal peace.

In this verse the Lord says that those ignorant people who only seek worldly enjoyments do not know the **unsurpassable, immutable**, and peerless nature of the Self. They think of the unmanifest as having come to manifestation (with a form).

In verses 4-5 the Lord described His two natures as: 1) the eight-fold *prakṛti* (five subtle elements, mind, intellect, and ego), which is the lower nature of the Self; and 2) the pure consciousness, *puruṣa*, which is the higher nature of the Self. The higher nature of the Self is the very life element by which the world is upheld. Verse 7 stated, "All this is strung on Me as clusters of gems on a string." Hence, the higher nature of the Self is the substratum of all creation.

The unmanifest (*avyakta*) is that which is not realized through the mind, intellect, or sense organs, whereas the manifest (*vyakta*) is that which is realized through them. The Self should be known as unmanifest since it is beyond the recognition of mind, intellect, and sense organs. However, it should also be known that the Self, while unmanifest, is the life-force behind the sense organs, mind, and intellect. It is the main principle by which they are able to function in their respective areas.

Those divine incarnations who have appeared in human form were completely established in the Self. However, those people who perceived them by the faculties of mind, intellect, and sense organs only perceived them as manifest human beings. The Self is beyond the capacities of mind, intellect, and sense organs, and forever remains in its eternal, infinite, and unmanifest state.

Śloka 25

नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।

मूढोऽयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययम् ॥ २५ ॥

*nāham prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ
mūḍho'yaṁ nābhijānāti loko māmajamavyayam*

न	<i>na</i>	not
अहम्	<i>aham</i>	I
प्रकाशः	<i>prakāśaḥ</i>	manifest
सर्वस्य	<i>sarvasya</i>	of all
योगमायासमावृतः	<i>yogamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ</i>	veiled by yoga māyā
मूढः	<i>mūḍhaḥ</i>	deluded
अयम्	<i>ayam</i>	this
न	<i>na</i>	not
अभिजानाति	<i>abhijānāti</i>	knows
लोकः	<i>lokaḥ</i>	world
माम्	<i>mām</i>	Me
अजम्	<i>ajam</i>	unborn
अव्ययम्	<i>avyayam</i>	imperishable

VERSE 25

What is the Cause of Ignorance, Which Veils the Truth?

25

Veiled by My yoga māyā (divine potency), I am not manifest to all. This deluded world does not know Me, the unborn and imperishable.

Yoga māyā, or divine potency, is comprised of the three *guṇas*, the cause of the whole creation. In an individual, *rajas guṇa* is responsible for agitation and all kinds of mental projections. *Tamas guṇa* is responsible for veiling the reality. Together *rajas* and *tamas guṇas* obstruct and distort the function of *sattva guṇa* (pure consciousness). As a result of the functioning of the three energies in this manner an individual gets confused and lives in a state of ignorance, called *avidyā*. In this state an individual is unable to experience the Self, which is the true nature of a being.

This deluded world does not know Me, the unborn and imperishable - The world functions by the energy of the three *guṇas*, and according to these energies, the world reality is colored. The reality of the Self remains obscure for those who view the world through the mind, intellect, and senses, which are evolutes of the three *guṇas*. However, those individuals who practice meditation regularly, observing austerities, and reflecting on the Self, get control over the mind. Such individuals are not affected by *rajas*, which causes agitation of the mind, and *tamas*, which veils the truth of the Self. By removing the twin impurities of mind, the agitation of *rajas* and the veiling effects of *tamas*, the ego stops longing for worldly objects and a state of quiescence is achieved. In that state a yogi achieves knowledge of the Self, which is unborn and imperishable.

It is like sunlight, which makes everything in the world visible, and is known as the eye of the world. Similarly the Self is considered the knower of everything. Without sunlight nothing can be seen, and without the Self nothing can be known.

Śloka 26

वेदाहं समतीतानि वर्तमानानि चार्जुन ।
भविष्याणि च भूतानि मां तु वेद न कश्चन ॥ २६ ॥

*vedāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna
bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kaścana*

वेद	<i>veda</i>	know
अहम्	<i>aham</i>	I
समतीतानि	<i>samatītāni</i>	the past
वर्तमानानि	<i>vartamānāni</i>	the present
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अर्जुन	<i>arjuna</i>	O Arjuna
भविष्याणि	<i>bhaviṣyāṇi</i>	the future
च	<i>ca</i>	and
भूतानि	<i>bhūtani</i>	beings
माम्	<i>mām</i>	Me
तु	<i>tu</i>	verily
वेद	<i>veda</i>	knows
कश्चन	<i>kaścana</i>	anyone