

Chapter 18: Moksha Samnyaas Yoga – Yoga of Liberation by Renunciation

This chapter is known as *Moksha Samnyaas Yoga* or simply as *Samnyaas yoga* or the *Yoga of Liberation by Renunciation*. Arjuna had a final question in his mind, and he places it before the Lord as the opening verse of this final chapter. He requested the Lord to explain the meaning of the terms *Samnyaas* and *Tyaag*. He says that he wished to know their exact meaning and their difference. We know that right from the first chapter Arjuna has been requesting the Lord to allow him to refrain from fighting, performing actions, thereby wanting to be a *Samnyaasi* (renunciator). The Lord during His teachings also sang praises about *Samnyaas* but he told Arjuna to perform actions. Lord also told Arjuna a few demerits of Action (*karma*) but still He orders Arjuna to perform actions. Arjuna was unable to decipher these interpretations given by the Lord. If taking up *Samnyaas* was so good, why was he asked to perform actions? Arjuna's mind was unclear so he requests the Lord to clear his thinking on this point. The Lord starts explaining in great detail as such this chapter becomes the largest in the Gita.

The Lord defines *Samnyaas* as the *nyaas* of *Sakaam Karma* that is end to all actions done for the attainment of fruit. *Tyaag* is defined as the abandonment of the fruit of action.

The action performed, with any fruit in mind, is left behind or not done at all, by the *Samnyaasi* (follower of the path of *Samnyaas*) The *Tyaagi* (follower of the path of *Tyaag*) performs *karma*; however the fruit of the karma is left behind.

Karma is said to be of many varieties, but for discussion only two are being picked up. All actions performed for the individual self are called *sa-kaam karma*, like actions performed for the increase of comfort and happiness of the individual, those pertaining to, my house, my car, my land, my garden, my wife, my bank balance, my insurance policy, and my stock of grains. All activities done to collect these and retain these are *sa-kaam karma*. Worship to the Lord, to get a better job, more riches and all desires in relation to happiness in the family and material goods are *sa-kaam karma*, which may include desire of winning lawsuits, even that of attaining heaven.

All these *sa-kaam Karma* are voluntarily left behind (renounced) by the *Samnyaasi*, as soon as he enters this path. For those people who are performing *Sa-kaam Karma* it may be possible to do actions but abandon the fruit of those actions. It will change the same actions into *Nish-kaam Karma*. Having thus abandoned (*tyaag*) the fruits of one's actions, the person becomes a *Tyaagi*. Such a *Tyaagi*, who has abandoned the fruits of his actions is equal to and may be understood to be a *Samnyaasi*. Gita teaches one to be a *Tyaagi*. The Lord has all the while been telling Arjuna to become a *Tyaagi*.

Sa-kaam karma is responsible for the bondage of the soul to the body and is the cause of various miseries. On the other hand, *Nish-kaam Karma* performed by the person releases the soul from miseries and leads one to the path of becoming a *Tyaagi*. This is the reason why the Lord has been emphasizing the importance of *nish-kaam karma Yoga*.

A *Samnyaasi* is naturally able to perform *Nish-kaam Karma*. Those who are not *Samnyaasi* have to gradually strive to attain to do their activities in a *nish-kaam* manner.

The Lord in the Gita has carefully explained the secrets of ***nish-kaam karma Yoga*** to Arjuna. To unravel the intricacies associated with the explanations, Swami Ji Maharaj has explained in a very simple manner.

If a man prepares ladoo (dry sweet) and kheer (rice-pudding in milk base) and distributes them to hungry people by the roadside, then this act of donation or charity will be considered to be a *nish-kaam karma*. If a second person prepares the same sweets and distributes them to his neighbours, then the action will also be categorized as *nish-kaam karma*. If a third person prepares the same sweets and offers it to the Lord in temple, which is later shared as *Prasadam* by the devotees, then this action will also be considered as *nish-kaam karma*.

All the above three are examples of *nish-kaam karma*.

Even though the first one is an example of donations or *Daan*, the second is an example of *Tyaag* and the third is an example of *samarpan* (offering to the Lord).

Take a second example. The first person, after earning money distributes to the poor. The second also earns money and distributes to children of his caste, for their education. The third person earns money and surrenders it to his Guru, just like Shivaji, surrendered his kingdom to his Guru Ramdas.

The actions of all three types of persons are *Nish-kaam Karma*. When the money is distributed to the poor it is called *Daan*, when it is distributed for the welfare of the society it is called *tyaag* and when the money is gifted to the Guru it becomes *samarpan* or surrender.

In the above example all the three people abandoned the fruits of their actions; hence all the three can be termed as *Tyaagi*. The first one donated the fruits of his actions. The second one abandoned the fruits of his actions, while the third one surrendered the fruits of his actions. It is not possible for a *samnyaasi* to do these three actions, namely, *daan*, *tyaag*, and *samarpan*. He has no earnings so he is not able to perform *daan*, *tyaag*, and *samarpan*. He has no sense of doership. The businessman has the sense of doership. He performs actions and also earns in the process. It is possible for him to convert his actions into *nish-kaam karma yoga*. The *samnyaasi* has no action directed for the self. What is there for him to abandon?

Arjuna had a desire in his mind. He wanted to accumulate a large army and fight. He wanted to win the war. He wanted to defeat the Kauravas. He had gone to the battlefield with this in mind. When Arjuna expressed his desire not to fight to the Lord in the first chapter even then he had desires in his mind. He would lose. His own people would die. Their wives would become widows. His relatives would be unhappy. He preferred to beg for food. With so many desires in Arjuna's mind it was not possible for him to become a *samnyaasi*. A *samnyaasi* is one who has no enmity with anyone. He has no attachment to anyone. Even the desire to beg is absent. He is without the effects of dualities. Nobody is his own and nobody is not his own. The Lord knew very well that Arjuna was not in a state of mind where he could ever hope to become a *samnyaasi*.

There is a small similarity between a *samnyaasi* and a small child. They are both devoid of desires. Both are devoid of the sense of doership. Both have the same response to friends as well as foes. Both are devoid of worries regarding job or business. The only difference is that the child has no knowledge and is therefore in darkness. The *samnyaasi* is pent up with the light of knowledge. They do not commit *punya* and *paap*. The state of the small child remains thus for only a short time till he grows up and is engulfed by the objects of senses and the world. The state of the *samnyaasi* remains unchanged, because once a person has achieved the light of knowledge of the supreme, one is not destroyed.

A person leading a homely life also can easily attain the state of enlightenment of the *samnyaasi*. In the examples considered before the homely person can perform all the three acts. Thus any donation he gives in a nish-kaam manner becomes DAAN. Any action he performs for the welfare of the society in a nish-kaam manner becomes TYAAG and any samarpanam he does to the Lord in a nish-kaam manner becomes TAPA.

The Lord repeatedly tells Arjuna that these three DAAN, YAJNA and TAPA are to be performed and never to be left aside.

In conclusion, the Lord blesses Arjuna and proposes that he should perform the action of fighting the enemy as his duty as a Kshatriya, and also perform it with a view of ridding the society of these evil people and not for his personal grandiosment. Finally he advises Arjuna that he can if he wants to abandon all his duties and seek refuge in Him alone by performing actions only considering it to be His. The Lord reassures Arjuna that He will liberate him of all his sins and therefore he should not grieve.

He then blesses the sacred dialogue between Him and Arjuna and declares anyone reading these verses would be praying to Him, directly by the method of sacrifice of wisdom and such a person would be very dear to Him. He also blesses all the persons engaged in devotional service, including those who work for the dissemination of the Gita to be His dearest representatives.

The Lord finally asks Arjuna if he had heard with single-minded attention and whether his delusion, born of ignorance had been dispelled.

Arjuna's delusions vanish. He recollected his original state. He became a mighty warrior once again. He picks up his Gandiva bow and promises to obey to the Lord.

Sanjaya reporting to King Dhritrashtra in the concluding verse of the Bhagavad Gita says, "It is my firm conviction that wherever there is Lord Krishna, the Lord of Yoga and Partha, the supreme archer, there is assurance of prosperity, victory, glory and sound policy."

Hari Aum Tat Sat.