

Bhagavad Gita

Chapter 12

Devotional Service

Bhakti Yoga

Section – I

**Bhakti is Superior to
Impersonalism (1-7)**

Section-I Bhakti is Superior to Impersonalism (1-7)

|| 12.1 ||

arjuna uvāca
evam satata-yuktā ye
bhaktās tvām paryupāsate
ye cāpy akṣaram avyaktam
teṣām ke yoga-vittamāḥ

Arjuna said: Who are the best knowers of yoga (**teṣām ke yoga-vittamāḥ**)—those devotees (**ye bhaktāḥ**) who worship You as just described (**tvām evam paryupāsate**), with desire to constantly associate with You (**satata-yuktā**), or those who worship the un-manifest Brahman (**ye cāpy akṣaram avyaktam**)?

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SVCT

- In the twelfth chapter, the superiority of all types of devotees to the jñānīs is described, and among the devotees those who are endowed with wonderful qualities like lack of hatred are praised.
- Arjuna heard the great superiority of bhakti at the beginning of the topic of bhakti in the following words:
**yoginām api sarveṣām mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ**
- But I consider he who worships Me with faith, with mind attached to Me, to be greater than all types of yogīs. BG 6.47
- Arjuna, desiring to hear about the superiority of bhakti, even if it is in summary, asks a question.

SVCT

- The devotees described as being constantly engaged, worship You as Śyāmasundara, mentioned at the end of the last chapter with - mat-karma-kṛṇ mat-paramaḥ (BG 11.55).
- Others worship the Brahman (akṣara) with no qualities (avyakta means nirviśeṣa) described in the śrutis with statements such as etad vai tad akṣaram gārgi brāhmaṇā abhivadanty asthūlam anaṅv ahrasvam: O Gārgī, that akṣara, which is not wide, not small and not short, is called Brahman. (Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.8.9)
- Among these two types of persons who know yoga, who are the best knowers of yoga (yoga-vittamaḥ)?
- Who know the best process for attaining You? Or, do they not know the process for attaining You?

SVCT

- In a comparison involving two items, usually the form yoga-vittara (which of the two types know yoga better) would be used.
- The word yoga-vittama should be understood to suggest that among the better of the two types of knowers of yoga (yoga-vittarā), who are the best knowers of yoga (yoga-vittamā)?

Baladeva

- In the twelfth chapter, the Lord says that among all processes, pure bhakti, having the greatest power, enables one to quickly attain the Lord.
- In the second and consequent chapters, one particular path was described, in which after one understands about and realizes the jīvātmā, one then meditates on the Lord, the amśī.
- This is illustrated in verses like avināśi tu tad viddhi. (BG 2.17)
- A second path was shown in the seventh and consequent chapters, in which, after understanding that the jīva is an amśa of the Lord, one meditates upon the source of the amśa, the amśī, the Supreme Lord, by the process of bhakti with hearing and other activities.

Baladeva

- Verse such as mayy āsakta-manāḥ pārtha (BG 7.1) illustrate this.
- In those chapters, bhakti mixed with yoga was described in such verses as prayāṇa-kāle. (BG 8.10)
- Jñāna mixed in the process of bhakti was described in such verses as jñāna-yajñena cāpy anye. (BG 9.15)
- At the end of the sixth chapter, before the middle six chapters, with the verse yoginām api sarveṣām (BG 6.47) the pure bhakti of those exclusively attached to the Lord, who were also the best among all, was described.
- Arjuna now asks a question

Baladeva

- There are those desiring paramātmā who, being constantly absorbed in You by the processes thus described (evam) in verses such as mayy āsakta-manāḥ pārtha (BG 7.1), worship You, Śyāmasundara Kṛṣṇa, with everything, such as body, senses and mind.
- There are also those desiring paramātmā who worship the jīva's svarūpa, the akṣaram, invisible to the material senses and endeavor to realize the jīva akṣara by dhāraṇa, dhyāna and samādhi.
- Of these two types of people, which persons have the quickest process of reaching the goal (yoga vittamāḥ)?
- The meaning is this.

Baladeva

- One choice is to attain the Lord by first realizing ātmā and then meditating on the Lord.
- Since the jīva is the source of bondage, by realizing ātmā one becomes free of obstacles, and can then attain the Lord.
- But because of the difficulty in meditating on the jīvātma which is very small and formless, can the goal be accomplished by meditation on the ātma?
- The other process is exclusive bhakti to the Lord, which quickly destroys all obstacles and yields realization of the Lord.
- They are completely absorbed in that bhakti. What is the best process of all the processes of these two types of persons (teṣām)? Please tell me.

Srila Prabhupada

- Kṛṣṇa has now explained about the personal, the impersonal and the universal and has described all kinds of devotees and yogīs.
- Generally, the transcendentalists can be divided into two classes. One is the impersonalist, and the other is the personalist.
- The personalist devotee engages himself with all energy in the service of the Supreme Lord.
- The impersonalist also engages himself, not directly in the service of Kṛṣṇa but in meditation on the impersonal Brahman, the unmanifested.

Srila Prabhupada

- We find in this chapter that of the different processes for realization of the Absolute Truth, bhakti-yoga, devotional service, is the highest.
- If one at all desires to have the association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then he must take to devotional service.
- Those who worship the Supreme Lord directly by devotional service are called personalists.
- Those who engage themselves in meditation on the impersonal Brahman are called impersonalists.
- Arjuna is here questioning which position is better.

Srila Prabhupada

- There are different ways to realize the Absolute Truth, but Kṛṣṇa indicates in this chapter that bhakti-yoga, or devotional service to Him, is the highest of all.
- It is the most direct, and it is the easiest means for association with the Godhead.
- In the Second Chapter of Bhagavad-gītā, the Supreme Lord explained that a living entity is not the material body; he is a spiritual spark.
- And the Absolute Truth is the spiritual whole.

Srila Prabhupada

- In the Seventh Chapter He spoke of the living entity as being part and parcel of the supreme whole and recommended that he transfer his attention fully to the whole.
- Then again in the Eighth Chapter it was said that anyone who thinks of Kṛṣṇa at the time of quitting his body is at once transferred to the spiritual sky, to the abode of Kṛṣṇa.
- And at the end of the Sixth Chapter the Lord clearly said that of all yogīs, one who always thinks of Kṛṣṇa within himself is considered the most perfect.
- So in practically every chapter the conclusion has been that one should be attached to the personal form of Kṛṣṇa, for that is the highest spiritual realization.

Srila Prabhupada

- Nevertheless, there are those who are not attached to the personal form of Kṛṣṇa.
- They are so firmly detached that even in the preparation of commentaries to Bhagavad-gītā they want to distract other people from Kṛṣṇa and transfer all devotion to the impersonal brahma-jyoti.
- They prefer to meditate on the impersonal form of the Absolute Truth, which is beyond the reach of the senses and is not manifest.
- And so, factually, there are two classes of transcendentalists. Now Arjuna is trying to settle the question of which process is easier and which of the classes is most perfect.

Srila Prabhupada

- In other words, he is clarifying his own position because he is attached to the personal form of Kṛṣṇa.
- He is not attached to the impersonal Brahman.
- He wants to know whether his position is secure.
- The impersonal manifestation, either in this material world or in the spiritual world of the Supreme Lord, is a problem for meditation.

Srila Prabhupada

- Actually, one cannot perfectly conceive of the impersonal feature of the Absolute Truth.
- Therefore Arjuna wants to say, "What is the use of such a waste of time?" Arjuna experienced in the Eleventh Chapter that to be attached to the personal form of Kṛṣṇa is best because he could thus understand all other forms at the same time and there was no disturbance to his love for Kṛṣṇa.
- This important question asked of Kṛṣṇa by Arjuna will clarify the distinction between the impersonal and personal conceptions of the Absolute Truth.

Section-I Bhakti is Superior to Impersonalism (1-7)

|| 12.2 ||

śrī-bhagavān uvāca
mayy āveśya mano ye mām
nitya-yuktā upāsate
śraddhayā parayopetās
te me yuktatamā matāḥ

The Lord said: I consider (**me matāḥ**) those who worship Me (**ye mām upāsate**), desiring to associate with Me constantly (**nitya-yuktā**), absorbing their minds in Me (**mayy āveśya manah**), endowed faith beyond the guṇas (**śraddhayā parayā upetāḥ**), to be the best knowers of yoga (**te yuktatamāḥ**).

The Lord said: I consider (**me matāḥ**) those who absorb their minds in Me (**ye mayy āveśya manah**), who desire to associate with Me constantly (**nitya-yuktā**), and who with firm faith worship Me (**ye śraddhayā parayā upetāḥ mām upāsate**), to be the quickest attainers of Me (**te yuktatamāḥ**).

SVCT

- Among them, My devotees are the best.
- Those who absorb their minds in Me, Śyāmasundara, those who desire to be constantly united with Me (nitya-yuktā), with faith which is beyond the guṇas (parayā śraddhayā)—they, My ananya-bhaktas, are the best knowers of yoga (yuktatamā).
- Concerning faith, it is said:

sāttviky ādhyātmikī śraddhā karma-śraddhā tu rājasī
tāmasy adharme yā śraddhā mat-sevāyām tu nirguṇā

SVCT

Faith directed toward spiritual life is in the mode of goodness, faith rooted in fruitive work is in the mode of passion, faith residing in irreligious activities is in the mode of ignorance, but faith in My devotional service is purely transcendental. SB 11.25.27

- From this it should be inferred that inferior to these ananya-bhaktas are those having bhakti mixed with jñāna, karma or other processes, who are called yoga-vittarā.
- Thus it shown here that bhakti is better than jñāna, and that, among the types of bhakti, ananyā bhakti is the best.

Baladeva

- The Lord, being asked, answers.
- Those devotees who, continuously absorbing their minds in Me, svayam bhagavān, the son of Devakī having the complexion of a blue lotus as well as other qualities, worship Me with very firm faith (parayā śraddhayā), who worship Me by hearing and other methods, who desire eternal relationship with Me (nitya yuktā), are considered by Me to be the most qualified—they have the method for most quickly attaining Me (yuktatamā).

Srila Prabhupada

- In answer to Arjuna's question, Kṛṣṇa clearly says that he who concentrates upon His personal form and who worships Him with faith and devotion is to be considered most perfect in yoga.
- For one in such Kṛṣṇa consciousness there are no material activities, because everything is done for Kṛṣṇa.
- A pure devotee is constantly engaged.
- Sometimes he chants, sometimes he hears or reads books about Kṛṣṇa, or sometimes he cooks prasādam or goes to the marketplace to purchase something for Kṛṣṇa, or sometimes he washes the temple or the dishes—whatever he does, he does not let a single moment pass without devoting his activities to Kṛṣṇa. Such action is in full samādhi.

Section-I Bhakti is Superior to Impersonalism (1-7)

|| 12.3-4 ||

ye tv akṣaram anirdeśyam
avyaktam paryupāsate
sarvatra-gam acintyam ca
kūṭa-stham acalam dhruvam

sanniyamyendriya-grāmam
sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ
te prāpnuvanti mām eva
sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ

But those who (**ye tv**) worship (**paryupāsate**) the unnamed (**anirdeśyam**), formless entity (**avyaktam**), all-pervading in space and time, the inconceivable (**sarvatra-gam acintyam ca**), unchanging, eternal Brahman (**kūṭa-stham acalam dhruvam akṣaram**), completely subduing their senses (**sanniyamya indriya-grāmam**), looking on all things equally (**sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ**), intent on the welfare of all (**sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ**), attain Me alone— in the form of impersonal Brahman (**te prāpnuvanti mām eva**).

But those who (**ye tv**) worship (**paryupāsate**) the ātmā, unnamable (**akṣaram anirdeśyam**), beyond the senses (**avyaktam**), pervading the body (**sarvatra-gam**), inconceivable (**acintyam**), unchanging, unmoving and fixed (**kūṭa-stham acalam dhruvam**), completely subduing their senses (**sanniyamya indriya-grāmam**), looking on all things equally (**sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ**), intent on the welfare of all (**sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ**), attain Me alone (**te prāpnuvanti mām eva**).

SVCT

- Those who worship My impersonal svarūpa known as Brahman are inferior because of their state of suffering.
- This the Lord states in two verses. Those who worship the Brahman (akṣaram) which is not possible to designate (anirdeśyam), because it is without form or other qualities (avyaktam), which is spread everywhere (sarvatra-gam), beyond logic (acintyam) and extending over all time (kūṭa-stham), devoid of increase or other change (acalam) and eternal (dhruvam), attain Me in the form the impersonal Brahman. He says that they attain “Me” because the Brahman is non-different from the Lord.
- Amara Kośa says that kūṭastha means “that which pervades time with one form.”

Baladeva

- Those who do not worship Me while attempting realization of their ātmā will also attain Me, but with great suffering and after a long time.
- They are inferior to the devotees.
- This is explained in three verses.
- Those who first only worship their own ātmā (akṣaram) undergo a great deal of suffering.
- The ideas presented in verse 3 are connected with the conclusion in verse 5 (kleśo' dhikaratas teṣām).

Baladeva

- The ātmā (akṣaram) is described.
- It is impossible to define (anirdeśyam) by the words related to devas or men who have bodily designations, because it is different from the body.
- It is beyond the range of the senses (avyaktam).
- It spreads through the body, senses and prāṇas (sarvatra gam).
- It is not subject to logical analysis (acintyam).
- Thus, it is to be known only through śruti.
- Only by śruti is the ātma acknowledged as both cognition itself, and the knower of itself and other things (jñāna-svarūpam eva jñātr-svarūpam.)

Baladeva

•[Note: This phrase seems to indicate that it is a quotation from śruti, but I cannot find the source. Of course both statements are made separately in different places in the śruti. The advaitins argue that ātmā is jñāna svarūpa, knowledge itself, with no consciousness of anything, even of itself, since there is a rule that the subject cannot be the object simultaneously in grammar: karma-karṭṛ-bhāva-virodha.]

•It is at all times limited to enjoying a small form (kuṭastham). It is without movement (acalam), because of being knowledge itself (which can have no movement) and because of even being the knower (which distinguishes it from a body with gross movement).

•It is eternally fixed (dhruvam) in having paramātmā as its sole shelter.

Baladeva

- The process of worship of this ātmā is then described. Completely controlling all of the senses, withdrawing them from the sense objects, seeing the friend, well wisher, enemy and neutral person equally (sarvatra sama buddhayaḥ), (or seeing brahman situated in all living and non-living entities, and thus because they are the abodes of Brahman, not having enmity towards any of them), endeavoring for the auspiciousness of all beings, engaging in devotion to Me, in the form of offering their actions to Me, after attaining realization of their own ātmā—these persons also attain Me, in a form predominated by extreme majesty.
- There is no doubt about this.

Srila Prabhupada

- Those who do not directly worship the Supreme Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, but who attempt to achieve the same goal by an indirect process, also ultimately achieve the same goal, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- "After many births the man of wisdom seeks refuge in Me, knowing that Vāsudeva is all."
- When a person comes to full knowledge after many births, he surrenders unto Lord Kṛṣṇa.
- If one approaches the Godhead by the method mentioned in this verse, he has to control the senses, render service to everyone and engage in the welfare of all beings.

Srila Prabhupada

- It is inferred that one has to approach Lord Kṛṣṇa, otherwise there is no perfect realization.
- Often there is much penance involved before one fully surrenders unto Him.
- In order to perceive the Supersoul within the individual soul, one has to cease the sensual activities of seeing, hearing, tasting, working, etc.
- Then one comes to understand that the Supreme Soul is present everywhere. Realizing this, one envies no living entity—he sees no difference between man and animal because he sees soul only, not the outer covering.
- But for the common man, this method of impersonal realization is very difficult.

Section-I Bhakti is Superior to Impersonalism (1-7)

|| 12.5 ||

kleśo 'dhikataras teṣām
avyaktāsakta-cetasām
avyaktā hi gatiḥ duḥkham
dehavadbhir avāpyate

Those who are attached to the impersonal realization (**avyakta āsakta-cetasām**) encounter extreme difficulties (**kleśo adhikataras teṣām**). The unmanifest goal (**avyaktā hi gatiḥ**) brings suffering (**duḥkham avāpyate**) to those who have bodies (**dehavadbhir**).

Those who are attached to the ātmā (**avyakta āsakta-cetasām**) encounter extreme difficulties (**kleśo adhikataras teṣām**). Concentrating on the invisible ātmā (**avyaktā hi gatiḥ**) brings suffering (**duḥkham avāpyate**) to those who have bodies (**dehavadbhir**).

SVCT

- This verse describes a little of their inferior position.
- Those who are attracted to only Brahman (avyaktāsaktācetasām), who desire only realization of Brahman, undergo excessive difficulties in attaining it, because (hi) by what means at all can something without qualities be made manifest? That goal is attained by the jīvas endowed with bodies (dehavadbhiḥ) only by undergoing suffering (duḥkham).
- The senses have the power for particular knowledge such as sound, not for something which does not possess particular qualities.
- Therefore, stopping of the senses is necessary for those who desire knowledge of the impersonal without particular qualities (nirviśeṣa).

SVCT

- But stopping the senses is like stopping rivers.
- Stopping the senses is difficult. Sanat Kumāra says:

yat-pāda-paṅkaja-palāśa-vilāsa-bhaktyā
karmāśayaṁ grathitam udgrathayanti santaḥ
tadvan na rikta-matayo yatayo' pi ruddha-
sroto-gaṇās tam araṇaṁ bhaja vāsudevam

- The devotees, who are always engaged in the service of the toes of the lotus feet of the Lord, can very easily overcome hard-knotted desires for fruitive activities.
- Because this is very difficult, the non-devotees—the jñānīs and yogīs —although trying to stop the waves of sense gratification, cannot do so.

SVCT

- Therefore you are advised to engage in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva. SB 4.22.39

kṛcchro mahān iha bhavārṇavam aplaveśām
ṣaḍ-varga-nakram asukhena titīṣanti
tat tvam harer bhagavato bhajanīyam aṅghriṁ
kṛtvodupam vyasanam uttara dustarāṇam

- The ocean of nescience is very difficult to cross because it is infested with many dangerous sharks.
- Although those who are non-devotees undergo severe austerities and penances to cross that ocean, we recommend that you simply take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord, which are like boats for crossing the ocean.

SVCT

•Although the ocean is difficult to cross, by taking shelter of His lotus feet you will overcome all dangers. SB 4.22.40

•Furthermore, even that goal of impersonal Brahman which is attained by such suffering is attained only by having a mixture with bhakti. Without bhakti to the Lord, the worshippers of the impersonal Brahman obtain only suffering, and not Brahman. Brahmā says:

**teṣām asau kleśala eva śiṣyate
nānyad yathā sthūla-tuṣāvaghātinām**

•As a person who beats an empty husk of wheat cannot get grain, one who simply speculates cannot achieve self-realization. His only gain is trouble. SB 10.14.4

Baladeva

- “If the worshippers of ātmā also attain You, what is the foundation for your saying that the devotees are superior attainers of You?”
- Those whose minds are engaged in intense meditation (samādhi) on the jīvātmā, very subtle in form, endure greater difficulties.
- Even though the former category of persons (devotees) also endure difficulty in withdrawing the senses from objects other than Me and engaging in the various aṅgas of bhakti, because of the appearance of My blissful form, they do not experience the same suffering.

Baladeva

- Why has this greater suffering which is difficult to remove come about? The mind's concentration on the invisible ātmā becomes difficult for those who think they are their bodies.
- How can those residing in bodies who for so long have been thinking they are their bodies cultivate thoughts of being a small conscious particle, which was for such a long time rejected?
- Others explain this section as follows. Brahman has two forms, with qualities and without qualities.
- [Note: The next section is a summary of Śaṅkara's explanation of the verse.]

Baladeva

- Worship of the Lord with qualities is easily performed with attention because of having a form as the object of concentration. Worship of the Lord without qualities is difficult to perform and done without proper attention because of lack of an object.
- The brahman without qualities is called akṣaram. For defining brahman without qualities, seven descriptions are given.
- It is beyond the scope of the Vedas or words (anirdeśyam), because it is devoid of class and other qualifications (avyaktam). It is pervasive (sarvatra gam), and not comprehended by the mind (acintyam).
- Śruti says: yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha: words along with the mind return without attaining it.

Baladeva

- (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.4.1) The world is called false (kūṭam), since it appears real when it is actually illusory.
- The ātmā is situated within this false world (kūṭa stham).
- The usage is similar to the phrase kūṭa kārṣāpaṇa, meaning false weights.
- That ātmā is situated as the substratum for false attributes.
- The ātmā is without change (acalam).
- It is eternal (dhruvam).

Baladeva

- For those persons striving to know ātmā without qualities, there are great difficulties, in digesting the meaning of the upaniṣads after worshipping the guru, then contemplating ātmā and then meditating on the ātmā.
- The first type of person (utilizing brahman with qualities), without undergoing these methods, attains vijñāna from mercy of the Lord with qualities as described by guru, which wipes out ignorance and its effects.
- He then attains liberation in the form of oneness with the ātmā devoid of quality, which gave rise to the Lord's form.
- The final result is the same, but one is filled with difficulty and therefore inferior, and the other is without difficulty and superior.

Baladeva

- This idea is foolish, because the Brahmā Sūtras reject the idea of the brahman having two forms with the words gati-sāmānyāt: only one conception of brahman is taught. (Vedānta Sūtra 1.1.10)
- This one brahman is to be known by the Vedas: yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate: the indestructible, the akṣara, is attained by that knowledge. (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.1.5) (Thus it is not anirdeśyam, in describable by the Vedas, as interpreted by the impersonalists.)
- Statements such as “words cannot describe it” (quoted above) apply to all aspects of brahman (and thus there is no reason to assume two brahmans, one of which, with form, can be approached by the senses.)

Baladeva

- The brahman without qualities cannot be observed anywhere, because it is impossible to prove the existence of the nirguṇa, since the word nirguṇa (without quality) has no power to denote anything, and because it is consequently a useless term.
- And we must accept that all scriptures are meant to describe that brahman.
- The word kūṭa cannot mean “false world” in this verse because kūṭastha is defined in the dictionary as that object which remains always in one state. (Thus it refers to the ātmā.)
- The world is not false but real according to the śrutis:

**kavir manīṣī paribhūḥ svayambhur
yāthātathyato'rthān vyadadhāc chāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ**

Baladeva

- He creates (vyadadhat) since time immemorial all real objects (yathatathyatah arthan), because He knows all (kavi), is intelligent (manisi), controls all (paribhuh), and is independent (svayam bhuh).
- By His own energy, He performs all acts. Īsopaniṣad 8
- Since the śrutis testify that the form of the supreme brahman, full of knowledge and bliss, is Kṛṣṇa who drinks the milk from the breast of Yaśodā, the concoction of an akṣaram devoid of qualities situated within the body of Kṛṣṇa must be considered a result of blind faith (it has no basis in proper reasoning or scriptural proof). Therefore is rejected.

Srila Prabhupada

- The group of transcendentalists who follow the path of the inconceivable, unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme Lord are called jñāna-yogīs, and persons who are in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, engaged in devotional service to the Lord, are called bhakti-yogīs.
- Now, here the difference between jñāna-yoga and bhakti-yoga is definitely expressed.
- The process of jñāna-yoga, although ultimately bringing one to the same goal, is very troublesome, whereas the path of bhakti-yoga, the process of being in direct service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is easier and is natural for the embodied soul.
- The individual soul is embodied since time immemorial.

Srila Prabhupada

- It is very difficult for him to simply theoretically understand that he is not the body.
- Therefore, the Bhakti-yogī accepts the Deity of Kṛṣṇa as worshipable because there is some bodily conception fixed in the mind, which can thus be applied.
- Of course, worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His form within the temple is not idol worship.
- There is evidence in the Vedic literature that worship may be saḡuṇa or nirḡuṇa—of the Supreme possessing or not possessing attributes.
- Worship of the Deity in the temple is saḡuṇa worship, for the Lord is represented by material qualities.

Srila Prabhupada

- But the form of the Lord, though represented by material qualities such as stone, wood or oil paint, is not actually material. That is the absolute nature of the Supreme Lord.

- A crude example may be given here.

- We may find some mailboxes on the street, and if we post our letters in those boxes, they will naturally go to their destination without difficulty.

- But any old box, or an imitation which we may find somewhere but which is not authorized by the post office, will not do the work.

- Similarly, God has an authorized representation in the Deity form, which is called arcā-vigraha.

Srila Prabhupada

- This arcā-vigraha is an incarnation of the Supreme Lord.
- God will accept service through that form.
- The Lord is omnipotent, all-powerful; therefore, by His incarnation as arcā-vigraha He can accept the services of the devotee, just to make it convenient for the man in conditioned life.
- So for a devotee there is no difficulty in approaching the Supreme immediately and directly, but for those who are following the impersonal way to spiritual realization the path is difficult.
- They have to understand the unmanifested representation of the Supreme through such Vedic literatures as the Upaniṣads, and they have to learn the language, understand the nonperceptual feelings, and realize all these processes.

Srila Prabhupada

- This is not very easy for a common man.
- A person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, engaged in devotional service, simply by the guidance of the bona fide spiritual master, simply by offering regulative obeisances unto the Deity, simply by hearing the glories of the Lord, and simply by eating the remnants of foodstuffs offered to the Lord, realizes the Supreme Personality of Godhead very easily.
- There is no doubt that the impersonalists are unnecessarily taking a troublesome path with the risk of not realizing the Absolute Truth at the ultimate end.
- But the personalist, without any risk, trouble or difficulty, approaches the Supreme Personality directly.

Srila Prabhupada

- A similar passage appears in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.
- It is stated there that if one ultimately has to surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead (this surrendering process is called bhakti), but instead takes the trouble to understand what is Brahman and what is not Brahman and spends his whole life in that way, the result is simply troublesome.
- Therefore it is advised here that one should not take up this troublesome path of self-realization, because there is uncertainty in the ultimate result.
- A living entity is eternally an individual soul, and if he wants to merge into the spiritual whole, he may accomplish the realization of the eternal and knowledgeable aspects of his original nature, but the blissful portion is not realized.

Srila Prabhupada

- By the grace of some devotee, such a transcendentalist, highly learned in the process of jñāna-yoga, may come to the point of bhakti-yoga, or devotional service.
- At that time, long practice in impersonalism also becomes a source of trouble, because he cannot give up the idea.
- Therefore an embodied soul is always in difficulty with the unmanifest, both at the time of practice and at the time of realization.
- Every living soul is partially independent, and one should know for certain that this unmanifested realization is against the nature of his spiritual blissful self.
- One should not take up this process.

Srila Prabhupada

- For every individual living entity the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which entails full engagement in devotional service, is the best way.
- If one wants to ignore this devotional service, there is the danger of turning to atheism. Thus the process of centering attention on the unmanifested, the inconceivable, which is beyond the approach of the senses, as already expressed in this verse, should never be encouraged at any time, especially in this age.
- It is not advised by Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Section-I Bhakti is Superior to Impersonalism (1-7)

|| 12.6-7 ||

ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi
mayi sannyasya mat-parāḥ
ananyenaiva yogena
mām dhyāyanta upāsate

teṣām ahaṁ samuddhartā
mṛtyu-saṁsāra-sāgarāt
bhavāmi na cirāt pārtha
mayy āveśita-cetasām

O son of Pṛthā (**pārtha**), I quickly deliver (**ahaṁ na cirāt samuddhartā bhavāmi**) from the ocean of repeated birth and death (**mṛtyu-saṁsāra-sāgarāt**) those who meditate on Me (**teṣām mayy āveśita-cetasām**) and worship Me with ananyā bhakti (**ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate**), having surrendered to Me (**mat-parāḥ**) and given up all other processes for attaining Me (**sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannyasya**).

SVCT

- “But the devotees, even without jñāna, by kevalā bhakti alone, comfortably attain liberation from saṁsāra.
- Having given up (sannyasya means tyāga or renunciation) all other process for the purpose of attaining Me (mayi), they worship Me by ananyā bhakti-yoga (ananyena yogena)—which is devoid of karma, jñāna, tapas or other elements.
- It is said:

yat karmabhir yat tapasā jñāna-vairāgyataś ca yat
yogena dāna-dharmeṇa śreyobhir itarair api
sarvaṁ mad-bhakti-yogena mad-bhakto labhate'ñjasā
svargāpavargam mad-dhāma kathañcid yadi vāñchati

SVCT

•Everything that can be achieved by fruitive activities, penance, knowledge, detachment, mystic yoga, charity, religious duties and all other means of perfecting life is easily achieved by My devotee through loving service unto Me.

•If somehow or other My devotee desires promotion to heaven, liberation, or residence in My abode, he easily achieves such benedictions. SB 11.20.32-33

•In the Mokṣa Dharma, Nārāyaṇīya portion it also says:

**yā vai sādhana m sampattiḥ puruṣārtha catuṣṭaye
tayā vinā tad apnoti naro nārāyaṇāśrayaḥ**

•Whatever among the four goals of human life can be achieved by various spiritual practices is automatically achieved without such endeavors by the person who has taken shelter of Lord Nārāyaṇa, the refuge of all persons.

SVCT

- “Still, what is the method by which they cross saṁsāra?”
- “There is no question about the method by which they cross saṁsāra, because without even having a method, I take them over it.
- I quickly become their deliverer from the ocean of saṁsāra.”
Implied here is that the Lord has affection for His devotees, but not for the jñānīs

Baladeva

- Those who perform exclusive bhakti to Me, the source of the jīvātmā, after hearing the real nature of ātmā, and who do not strive just for direct perception of ātmā, quickly attain Me alone, by that exclusive bhakti alone.
- This is explained in two verses.
- Those solely dedicated to Me, for the purpose of attaining Me (mayi), giving up all prescribed activities (sarvāni karmāṇi samnyasya), giving them up with the understanding that they are distractions from bhakti, taking Me as the only goal (mat parā), worship Me, Kṛṣṇa, by the one method (anyena yogena), characterized by hearing and other devotional activities.
- While practicing this method, even while hearing and chanting, they absorb their minds in Me (dhyāyantaḥ).

Baladeva

- For these devotees whose minds are attracted to Me (mayy āveśita cetasām), I am the deliverer from saṁsāra bringing about death, which is difficult to cross like an ocean.
- Not after a long time, but very quickly, not being able to bear delay in meeting them, I, putting them on the shoulders of Garuḍa, bring them to My dhāma.
- They attain My dhāma without going along the path of light and the waxing fortnight.

[Note: This was mentioned in chapter eight.]

**nayāmi paramaṁ sthānam arcir ādi-gatiṁ vinā
garuḍa-skandham āropya yatheccham anivāritaḥ**

Baladeva

- According to My desire, unchecked, I bring them to My dhāma, putting them on the shoulders of Garuḍa, without going via the path of light. Varāha Purāṇa
- Even though one disregards prescribed activities, bhakti brings one to the desired goal.

**yā vai sādhana-sampattiḥ puruṣārtha-catuṣṭaye
tayā vinā tad āpnoti naro nārāyaṇāśrayaḥ**

- He who takes shelter of Nārāyaṇa attains the goal of his practice without performing the duties of artha, dharma, kāma and mokṣa. Nārāyaṇīya

Baladeva

sarva-dharmojjhitā viṣṇor nāma-mātraika-jalpakāḥ
sukhena yām gatiṁ yānti na tām sarve'pi dhārmikāḥ

- Those who utter the name of Viṣṇu giving up all dharmas, easily attain the goal, whereas those who follow all rules of dharma do not attain it. Padma Purāna

Srila Prabhupada

- It is explicitly stated here that the devotees are very fortunate to be delivered very soon from material existence by the Lord.
- In pure devotional service one comes to the realization that God is great and that the individual soul is subordinate to Him.
- His duty is to render service to the Lord—and if he does not, then he will render service to māyā.
- As stated before, the Supreme Lord can be appreciated only by devotional service.
- Therefore, one should be fully devoted. One should fix his mind fully on Kṛṣṇa in order to achieve Him.

Srila Prabhupada

- One should work only for Kṛṣṇa.
- It does not matter in what kind of work one engages, but that work should be done only for Kṛṣṇa.
- That is the standard of devotional service.
- The devotee does not desire any achievement other than pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- His life's mission is to please Kṛṣṇa, and he can sacrifice everything for Kṛṣṇa's satisfaction, just as Arjuna did in the Battle of Kurukṣetra.
- The process is very simple: one can devote himself in his occupation and engage at the same time in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Srila Prabhupada

- Such transcendental chanting attracts the devotee to the Personality of Godhead.
- The Supreme Lord herein promises that without delay He will deliver a pure devotee thus engaged from the ocean of material existence.
- Those who are advanced in yoga practice can willfully transfer the soul to whatever planet they like by the yoga process, and others take the opportunity in various ways, but as far as the devotee is concerned, it is clearly stated here that the Lord Himself takes him.
- The devotee does not need to wait to become very experienced in order to transfer himself to the spiritual sky.

Srila Prabhupada

- In the Varāha Purāṇa this verse appears:

**nayāmi paramam sthānam
arcir-ādi-gatiṁ vinā
garuḍa-skandham āropya
yatheccham anivāritaḥ**

- The purport of this verse is that a devotee does not need to practice aṣṭāṅga-yoga in order to transfer his soul to the spiritual planets.
- The responsibility is taken by the Supreme Lord Himself.
- He clearly states here that He Himself becomes the deliverer.
- A child is completely cared for by his parents, and thus his position is secure.
- Similarly, a devotee does not need to endeavor to transfer himself by yoga practice to other planets.

Srila Prabhupada

- Rather, the Supreme Lord, by His great mercy, comes at once, riding on His bird carrier Garuḍa, and at once delivers the devotee from material existence.
- Although a man who has fallen in the ocean may struggle very hard and may be very expert in swimming, he cannot save himself.
- But if someone comes and picks him up from the water, then he is easily rescued. Similarly, the Lord picks up the devotee from this material existence.
- One simply has to practice the easy process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and fully engage himself in devotional service.

Srila Prabhupada

- Any intelligent man should always prefer the process of devotional service to all other paths.
- In the Nārāyaṇīya this is confirmed as follows:

yā vai sādhana-sampattiḥ
puruṣārtha-catuṣṭaye
tayā vinā tad āpnoti
naro nārāyaṇāśrayaḥ

- The purport of this verse is that one should not engage in the different processes of fruitive activity or cultivate knowledge by the mental speculative process.
- One who is devoted to the Supreme Personality can attain all the benefits derived from other yogic processes, speculation, rituals, sacrifices, charities, etc.

Srila Prabhupada

- That is the specific benediction of devotional service.
- Simply by chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—a devotee of the Lord can approach the supreme destination easily and happily, but this destination cannot be approached by any other process of religion.
- The conclusion of Bhagavad-gītā is stated in the Eighteenth Chapter:

**sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ**

[Purport. 18.66]

- One should give up all other processes of self-realization and simply execute devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Srila Prabhupada

- That will enable one to reach the highest perfection of life.
- There is no need for one to consider the sinful actions of his past life, because the Supreme Lord fully takes charge of him.
- Therefore one should not futilely try to deliver himself in spiritual realization.
- Let everyone take shelter of the supreme omnipotent Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.
- That is the highest perfection of life.

Section – II

Progressive Stages of Devotion (8-12)

Section-II Progressive Stages of Devotion (8-12)

|| 12.8 ||

**mayy eva mana ādhatsva
mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya
nivaśiṣyasi mayy eva
ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ**

Concentrate your mind only on Me (**mayy eva mana ādhatsva**). Fix your intelligence on Me (**mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya**). You will attain residence with Me (**nivaśiṣyasi mayy eva**) after leaving the body (**ata ūrdhvaṁ**), without doubt (**na saṁśayaḥ**).

SVCT

- “Since bhakti is the best, please perform only bhakti.” He teaches this bhakti in three verses.
- The word *eva* excludes the impersonal aspect of the Lord.
- Concentrate your mind on Me only, remember only Me (*mayy eva mana ādhatsva*), that form of Śyāmasundara, with yellow cloth and forest garland—and not the impersonal Brahman.
- And also, fix your intelligence, which has the power of discrimination, upon Me. This means to continually reflect on the statements of scripture using intelligence, which will result in meditation. Such contemplation is called *manana*.
- Thus, you will attain residence near Me.

Baladeva

- Since this is so, concentrate your mind upon Me alone, not upon your ātmā (mayi eva ādhatsva).
- Offer your intellect to Me.
- Doing this, you will live very close Me, Kṛṣṇa (mayi).
- You are not like the sanīṣṭha devotee, who, after realizing the enjoyments of svarga, attains Me in a majestic form (but not close to Me).

Srila Prabhupada

- One who is engaged in Lord Kṛṣṇa's devotional service lives in a direct relationship with the Supreme Lord, so there is no doubt that his position is transcendental from the very beginning.
- A devotee does not live on the material plane—he lives in Kṛṣṇa.
- The holy name of the Lord and the Lord are non-different; therefore when a devotee chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa and His internal potency are dancing on the tongue of the devotee.
- When he offers Kṛṣṇa food, Kṛṣṇa directly accepts these eatables, and the devotee becomes Kṛṣṇa-ized by eating the remnants.
- One who does not engage in such service cannot understand how this is so, although this is a process recommended in the Bhagavad-gītā and in other Vedic literatures.

Section-II Progressive Stages of Devotion (8-12)

|| 12.9 ||

atha cittam samādhātum
na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram
abhyāsa-yogena tato
mām icchāptum dhanañjaya

Otherwise (**atha**), if you are not able (**na śaknoṣi**) to concentrate your mind (**cittam samādhātum**) on Me steadily (**mayi sthiram**), then seek to attain Me (**tato mām icchāptum**) by the method of withdrawing the mind from sense objects and fixing it on Me (**abhyāsa-yogena**), O conqueror of wealth (**dhanañjaya**).

SVCT

- The Lord then speaks of a method to attain the state of remembrance mentioned above, if one is unable to remember the Lord with no preparation.
- Repeatedly withdrawing the mind when it goes here and there, and fixing the mind on Me is called abhyāsa. By this method of abhyāsa (abhyāsa-yogena), endeavor to attain Me.
- In common words, this means, “Stop the movement of mind, which like a river cannot be controlled, and which gravitates to vulgar sense objects such as taste, and establish the mind’s movement in My beautiful form and taste.
- O Dhanañjaya, having conquered many enemies, you have taken much wealth. Now, conquering the mind, you can take the treasure of meditation.”

Srila Prabhupada

- In this verse, two different processes of bhakti-yoga are indicated.
- The first applies to one who has actually developed an attachment for Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by transcendental love.
- And the other is for one who has not developed an attachment for the Supreme Person by transcendental love.
- For this second class there are different prescribed rules and regulations one can follow to be ultimately elevated to the stage of attachment to Kṛṣṇa.

Srila Prabhupada

- Bhakti-yoga is the purification of the senses.
- At the present moment in material existence the senses are always impure, being engaged in sense gratification. But by the practice of bhakti-yoga these senses can become purified, and in the purified state they come directly in contact with the Supreme Lord.
- In this material existence, I may be engaged in some service to some master, but I don't really lovingly serve my master. I simply serve to get some money.
- And the master also is not in love; he takes service from me and pays me. So there is no question of love.
- But for spiritual life, one must be elevated to the pure stage of love. That stage of love can be achieved by practice of devotional service, performed with the present senses.

Srila Prabhupada

- This love of God is now in a dormant state in everyone's heart.
- And, there, love of God is manifested in different ways, but it is contaminated by material association.
- Now the heart has to be purified of the material association, and that dormant, natural love for Kṛṣṇa has to be revived. That is the whole process.
- To practice the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga one should, under the guidance of an expert spiritual master, follow certain principles: one should rise early in the morning, take bath, enter the temple and offer prayers and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, then collect flowers to offer to the Deity, cook foodstuffs to offer to the Deity, take prasādam, and so on.

Srila Prabhupada

- There are various rules and regulations which one should follow.
- And one should constantly hear Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam from pure devotees.
- This practice can help anyone rise to the level of love of God, and then he is sure of his progress into the spiritual kingdom of God.
- This practice of bhakti-yoga, under the rules and regulations, with the direction of a spiritual master, will surely bring one to the stage of love of God.

Section-II Progressive Stages of Devotion (8-12)

|| 12.10 ||

abhyāse 'py asamartho 'si
mat-karma-paramo bhava
mad-artham api karmāṇi
kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi

If you are unable to practice in this manner (**abhyāse apy asamarthah asi**), then perform transcendental services for Me (**mat-karma-paramo bhava**). Performing activities for My pleasure (**mad-artham api karmāṇi kurvan**), you will attain perfection (**siddhim avāpsyasi**).

SVCT

- “As the tongue contaminated by jaundice does not like sugar candy, so the mind contaminated by ignorance does not accept Your form, even though it is sweet. Therefore, it is not possible for me to combat this very strong, uncontrollable mind.”
- “If you should think in this way, then I answer with these words.”

SVCT

- “Become engaged in My supreme activities, in activities meant for the highest benefit (mat-karma-paramah).
- Doing services (karmāṇi kurvan) such as hearing and singing about Me, bowing to Me, worshiping Me, sweeping and washing My temple, picking flowers, [Note: These are external activities of bhakti.] even without remembrance of Me as previously described, you will attain perfection (siddhim), characterized by being one of My associates in prema.”

Srila Prabhupada

- One who is not able even to practice the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga, under the guidance of a spiritual master, can still be drawn to this perfectional stage by working for the Supreme Lord.
- How to do this work has already been explained in the fifty-fifth verse of the Eleventh Chapter.
- One should be sympathetic to the propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- There are many devotees who are engaged in the propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and they require help.
- So, even if one cannot directly practice the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga, he can try to help such work.

Srila Prabhupada

- Every endeavor requires land, capital, organization and labor. Just as in business one requires a place to stay, some capital to use, some labor and some organization to expand, so the same is required in the service of Kṛṣṇa.
- The only difference is that in materialism one works for sense gratification. The same work, however, can be performed for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, and that is spiritual activity.
- If one has sufficient money, he can help in building an office or temple for propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Or he can help with publications.
- There are various fields of activity, and one should be interested in such activities.

Srila Prabhupada

- If one cannot sacrifice the results of his activities, the same person can still sacrifice some percentage to propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- This voluntary service to the cause of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will help one to rise to a higher state of love for God, whereupon one becomes perfect.

Section-II Progressive Stages of Devotion (8-12)

|| 12.11 ||

athaitad apy aśakto 'si
kartuṁ mad-yogam āśritaḥ
sarva-karma-phala-tyāgam
tataḥ kuru yatātmavān

If you cannot do this (**atha etad kartuṁ apy aśakto asi**), take shelter of dedicating all prescribed actions to Me (**mad-yogam āśritaḥ**). While controlling your mind (**yata ātmavān**), act with detachment from the results of the work (**tataḥ kuru sarva-karma-phala-tyāgam**).

If you cannot do this (**atha etad kartuṁ apy aśakto asi**), take shelter of My protective nature (**mad-yogam āśritaḥ**). While controlling your mind (**yata ātmavān**), act with detachment from the results of the work (**tataḥ kuru sarva-karma-phala-tyāgam**).

SVCT

- If you are unable to do this, then taking shelter of the process of offering all your actions to Me (mad-yogam āśritaḥ), give up all the results of your actions as described in the first six chapters (karma-yoga).
- The meaning is this.
- In the first six chapters, the Lord spoke of niṣkāma-karma-yoga offered to the Lord, a method to attain liberation.
- In the second six chapters, the Lord spoke of bhakti-yoga, the method of gaining the Lord Himself.
- Bhakti-yoga has two types: being fixed in bhakti through internal senses, and being fixed in bhakti through external senses.

SVCT

- The first type of bhakti, using internal senses, has three sub categories: smaraṇa ātmika and manana ātmika (mentioned in verse 8, using mind and intellect), and for those who desire remembrance, but cannot do continual remembrance, practice of the above, called abhyāsa-rūpa (verse 9).
- These three are difficult for a person with poor intelligence, and easy to perform for one with good intellect and no offenses.
- The second type, relying on external senses, is composed of hearing and chanting (verse 10).
- It is easy to perform for everyone.

SVCT

- Those who are qualified for performing both methods (internal and external) are most outstanding.
- This was stated in the second six chapters.
- Those who cannot do this, who do not have faith in fixing the senses on the Lord, those who are qualified for niṣkāma-karma offered to the Lord as mentioned in the first six chapters of the Gītā , are in an inferior position to the devotees (verse 11).

Baladeva

- If you or others are not able to do these activities, such as cleaning My temple, which are very easy and pleasing to Me, if you are prevented by obstacles such as being the leader of a great family, take shelter of My protective nature (mad yogam āśritaḥ), and perform all activities which are to be performed with renunciation of the results, with controlled mind (yatātmavān).
- By performance of fire sacrifice and full moon sacrifices devoid of desire for results which are form of worship of Me, knowledge arises within the person like the lotus arising from the muddy water.
- One realizes ones position and paramātmā's position as servant and master, and then realizes the supreme position of the Lord. Gradually supreme bhakti will manifest.

Baladeva

- The Lord will later say:

**yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānām yena sarvam idaṁ tatam
sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ**

By worship of the Lord, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading, through performing his own duties, a man can attain perfection. **BG 18.46**

mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām

He will then attain supreme bhakti to Me. **BG 18. 54**

Srila Prabhupada

- It may be that one is unable even to sympathize with the activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness because of social, familial or religious considerations or because of some other impediments.
- If one attaches himself directly to the activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there may be objections from family members, or so many other difficulties.
- For one who has such a problem, it is advised that he sacrifice the accumulated result of his activities to some good cause.
- Such procedures are described in the Vedic rules.

Srila Prabhupada

- There are many descriptions of sacrifices and special functions for the full-moon day, and there is special work in which the result of one's previous action may be applied.
- Thus one may gradually become elevated to the state of knowledge.
- It is also found that when one who is not even interested in the activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness gives charity to some hospital or some other social institution, he gives up the hard-earned results of his activities.
- That is also recommended here because by the practice of giving up the fruits of one's activities one is sure to purify his mind gradually, and in that purified stage of mind one becomes able to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Srila Prabhupada

- Of course, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not dependent on any other experience, because Kṛṣṇa consciousness itself can purify one's mind, but if there are impediments to accepting Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one may try to give up the results of his actions.
- In that respect, social service, community service, national service, sacrifice for one's country, etc., may be accepted so that some day one may come to the stage of pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord.
- In Bhagavad-gītā (18.46) we find it is stated, *yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānām*: if one decides to sacrifice for the supreme cause, even if he does not know that the supreme cause is Kṛṣṇa, he will come gradually to understand that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme cause by the sacrificial method.

Section-II Progressive Stages of Devotion (8-12)

|| 12.12 ||

śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj
jñānād dhyānaṁ viśiṣyate
dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgas
tyāgāc chāntir anantaram

Manana is better than practice (**śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāt**), but meditation is better than manana (**jñānād dhyānaṁ viśiṣyate**). From meditation, one easily becomes detached from the results of work in the form of bhukti and mukti (**dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgah**). From this detachment one finally attains lasting peace (absorbing his senses only in Me.) (**tyāgāt śāntir anantaram**)

Realization of ātmā is preferable to practicing remembrance of the Lord (**śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāt**), but practice of meditation on ātmā is preferable to realization of ātmā (**jñānād dhyānaṁ viśiṣyate**). Preferable to practice of meditation is renunciation of the results of work (**dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgah**). From this detachment one finally gets purity (**tyāgāt śāntir anantaram**).

SVCT

- In this verse, the Lord makes clear the successive superiority of abhyāsa, manana and smaraṇa (meditation) mentioned previously.
- Better than practice is fixing the intelligence on Me (jñānam or mananam).
- By performing practice alone, it is difficult to achieve meditation.
- By performing manana, easily one can come to meditation.
- Therefore, by this distinction, it is concluded that meditation (mayi mana ādhatsva, or smaraṇa) is better than jñāna (manana).
- Why?

SVCT

- From meditation one becomes devoid of desire for fruits of sakāma-karma in the form of Svarga, and the fruits of nişkāma-karma in the form of liberation.
- Even though Svarga and liberation are attained without his endeavor, the devotee becomes indifferent to them.
- Before the devotee reaches steady meditation, when he has not yet attained rati (bhāva), he has just a desire to give up liberation.
- But when he becomes fixed in meditation (at bhāva stage), he becomes disgusted with mokṣa.
- He takes liberation as insignificant. That meditation is the cause for indifference to mokṣa.

- This is stated in Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu, where bhakti is glorified with six qualities:

**kleśa-ghnī śubhadā mokṣa-laghutākṛt sudurlabhā
sāndrānanda-viśeṣātmā śrī-kṛṣṇākaraṣaṇī ca sā**

Bhakti is characterized by destruction of suffering, bestowal of good qualities, disregard for liberation, rarity, intense spiritual bliss and attracting even Kṛṣṇa. **Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.1.17**

- [Note: The first two qualities appearing during sādhanabhakti, the second two, including indifference to liberation, appear during bhāva-bhakti, or rati. The last two qualities appear in prema-bhakti. The state of meditation is equated with bhāva-bhakti. One is naturally detached from both bhukti and mukti at that stage, achieving karma-phala-tyāga mentioned in this verse.]

SVCT

na pārameṣṭhyam na mahendra-dhiṣṇyam
na sārvaḥmaṇam na rasādhipatyam
na yoga-siddhīr apunar-bhavam vā
mayy arpitātmeccchati mad vinānyat

The devotee who has offered his soul to Me does not want anything if it is separate from Me—not the position of the supreme demigod of the universe, Brahmā, nor that of Lord Indra, nor kingship over the entire earth or over the lower planetary systems, nor the mystic perfections of yoga, nor even freedom from the cycle of rebirth. [SB 11.14.14](#)

- In that verse, the phrase mayy arpita ātmā means “fixed in dhyāna on Me.”

SVCT

- After developing distaste for the fruits of action, he then attains peace in the form of stopping the senses from dwelling on all objects except My form and qualities.
- This explanation directly links the succession of stages from the two words śreyah and viśiṣyate in the first line to anantaram in the second line.
- No other explanation can be considered.

Baladeva

- This verse praises karma yoga without seeking results, because it is easy to perform, can be done with full attention, and contains the seeds of knowledge.
- Better than not accomplishing (the practice of) continuous remembrance of Me (abhyāsāt) is jñāna, direct perception of your own ātmā.
- Better than unaccomplished realization of ātmā (jñānāt) which is the door to realization of paramātmā, is the practice of meditation (dhyānām) on ones own ātmā.
- This is better, in the sense that it is beneficial for you for attaining realization of ātmā.

Baladeva

- But better than unsuccessful practice of meditation is renunciation of results, performing actions without seeking results.
- After giving up results in activities, one attains purification of the mind (śantiḥ).
- Then with a pure mind one can perform meditation.
- With proper meditation, one can realize ātmā.
- As a result of ātmā jñāna, one gains knowledge of paramātmā.
- By that knowledge of paramātmā, one takes to pure bhakti.

Baladeva

- By that, one attains Me, in the mood of majesty. The meaning is that this method is difficult.
- Moreover, this is not an instruction for Arjuna, because he was an exclusive devotee.
- Those who are *saniṣṭah*, engaged in *niṣkāma* karma and meditating on the Lord, realize their own *ātmā*.
- Then *para bhakti* to the majestic form of the Lord arises, and by that *bhakti*, the devotee realizes Hari, the seat of *prema*, and become liberated. This is the method indicated in the *Gītā*.
- However, one should understand that this instruction is meant for those who are devoid of exclusive devotion.

Srila Prabhupada

- As mentioned in the previous verses, there are two kinds of devotional service: the way of regulative principles and the way of full attachment in love to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- For those who are actually not able to follow the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness it is better to cultivate knowledge, because by knowledge one can be able to understand his real position.
- Gradually knowledge will develop to the point of meditation.
- By meditation one can be able to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead by a gradual process.

Srila Prabhupada

- In the cultivation of knowledge there are processes which make one understand that one himself is the Supreme, and that sort of meditation is preferred if one is unable to engage in devotional service.
- If one is not able to meditate in such a way, then there are prescribed duties, as enjoined in the Vedic literature, for the brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras, which we shall find in the last chapter of Bhagavad-gītā.
- But in all cases, one should give up the result or fruits of labor; this means to employ the result of karma for some good cause.

Srila Prabhupada

- In summary, to reach the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the highest goal, there are two processes: one process is by gradual development, and the other process is direct.
- Devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the direct method, and the other method involves renouncing the fruits of one's activities.
- Then one can come to the stage of knowledge, then to the stage of meditation, then to the stage of understanding the Supersoul, and then to the stage of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- One may take either the step-by-step process or the direct path.

Srila Prabhupada

- The direct process is not possible for everyone; therefore the indirect process is also good.
- It is, however, to be understood that the indirect process is not recommended for Arjuna, because he is already at the stage of loving devotional service to the Supreme Lord.
- It is for others, who are not at this stage; for them the gradual process of renunciation, knowledge, meditation and realization of the Supersoul and Brahman should be followed.
- But as far as Bhagavad-gītā is concerned, it is the direct method that is stressed. Everyone is advised to take to the direct method and surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

Section – III

Qualities that Endear one
to Krsna (13-20)

Section-III Qualities that Endear one to Krsna (13-20)

|| 12.13-14 ||

adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānām
maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ
sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣamī

santuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī
yatātmā dr̥ḍha-niścayaḥ
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir
yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ

That devotee (**yah mad-bhaktaḥ**) who is without hatred towards any person (**adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānām**), who is a friend to all living entities (**maitraḥ**), who is merciful (**karuṇa eva ca**), without possessiveness (**nirmamaḥ**), without false identification with his body (**nirahaṅkāraḥ**), who is equal in happiness and distress (**sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ**), tolerant (**kṣamī**), satisfied with what comes of its own accord (**santuṣṭaḥ**), constantly engaged in bhakti-yoga (**satataṁ yogī**), restrained in mind (**yatātmā**), fixed in determination (**dr̥ḍha-niścayaḥ**), and with mind and intelligence offered to Me (**mayy arpita-mano-buddhir**), is dear to Me (**sah me priyaḥ**).

SVCT

- What is the description of the devotee who has attained such peace? In response to this question, the different natures of many types of devotees are described in eight verses.
- Adveṣṭa means that a person does not have hatred even for those who hate oneself.
- Rather one has friendliness towards them (maitraḥ). One is merciful to them, thinking that they should not end up in unfortunate circumstances (karuṇaḥ).
- “But by having what type of discriminating powers can one attain friendliness and mercy even to enemies?”

SVCT

- “One should not make distinctions at all.
- By non-possessiveness of children and wife (nirmamaḥ), by not thinking of the body as the self (nirahaṅkāraḥ), My devotee never develops hatred towards others.
- Why should he accept such distinctions, if he wants to reduce suffering produced from hatred (a distinction)?”
- “But then one will be suffering pain in the body by getting punched or kicked by others.”

SVCT

- “It is said by Siva:

**nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve na kutaścana bibhyati
svargāpavarga-narakeṣv api tulyārtha-darśinaḥ**

Devotees solely engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, never fear any condition of life. For them the heavenly planets, liberation and the hellish planets are all the same, for such devotees are interested only in the service of the Lord.

SB 6.17.28

- Thus one should consider happiness and distress equally (sama-duḥkha-sukham). Moreover, that person thinks that he should necessarily endure his prārabdha-karmas.
- [Note: Prārabdha-karmas are those which will manifest results in this lifetime. Aprārabdha-karmas will manifest in future bodies, though the acts have been committed in past lives.]

SVCT

- In being equal to happiness and distress, he should be tolerant of the suffering (kṣamī).” Kṣamī means having tolerance, coming from the root kṣam meaning to endure.
- “But how will such a devotee be able to maintain his life?”
- “He is satisfied to eat what comes of its own accord, or with very little effort (santuṣṭhaḥ).”
- “But since You have said that one should be equal in happiness and distress, then how can one express satisfaction (santuṣṭhaḥ) with getting something to eat?”
- “That person is constantly engaged in bhakti-yoga (satatam yogī). He is acting for the purpose of attaining perfection in bhakti.
- [Note: He will express satisfaction because it is helpful for him to execute bhakti-yoga.]

SVCT

- It is said:

**āhārārtham yatataiva yuktaṁ tat-prāṇa-dhāraṇam
tattvaṁ vimṛśyate tena tad vijñāya paraṁ vrajet**

If required, one should endeavor to get sufficient foodstuffs, because it is always necessary and proper to maintain one's health. When the senses, mind and life air are fit, one can contemplate spiritual truth, and by understanding the truth one is liberated. **SB 11.18.34**

SVCT

- “Moreover, if by chance he does not attain his required food, his mind is restrained (yata ātmā); it is without agitation.
- Even if his mind happens to become disturbed, he does not resort to aṣṭāṅga-yoga or other processes to bring about peace.
- He remains convinced that he should only perform ananyā bhakti (dṛḍha-niścayaḥ).
- His devotion does not become weakened.
- The cause of all of this is mentioned: he is absorbed in meditating on and contemplating Me (mayy arpita mano buddhiḥ).
- Such a devotee greatly pleases Me (me priyaḥ).”

Srila Prabhupada

- Coming again to the point of pure devotional service, the Lord is describing the transcendental qualifications of a pure devotee in these two verses.
- A pure devotee is never disturbed in any circumstances. Nor is he envious of anyone.
- Nor does a devotee become his enemy's enemy; he thinks, "This person is acting as my enemy due to my own past misdeeds. So it is better to suffer than to protest."
- In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.14.8) it is stated: tat te 'nukampām su-samīkṣamāṇo bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ vipākam. Whenever a devotee is in distress or has fallen into difficulty, he thinks that it is the Lord's mercy upon him.

Srila Prabhupada

- He thinks, "Thanks to my past misdeeds I should suffer far, far greater than I am suffering now. So it is by the mercy of the Supreme Lord that I am not getting all the punishment I am due. I am just getting a little, by the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead."
- Therefore he is always calm, quiet and patient, despite many distressful conditions.
- A devotee is also always kind to everyone, even to his enemy.
- Nirmama means that a devotee does not attach much importance to the pains and trouble pertaining to the body because he knows perfectly well that he is not the material body.

Srila Prabhupada

- He does not identify with the body; therefore he is freed from the conception of false ego and is equipoised in happiness and distress.
- He is tolerant, and he is satisfied with whatever comes by the grace of the Supreme Lord.
- He does not endeavor much to achieve something with great difficulty; therefore he is always joyful.
- He is a completely perfect mystic because he is fixed in the instructions received from the spiritual master, and because his senses are controlled he is determined.
- He is not swayed by false arguments, because no one can lead him from the fixed determination of devotional service.

Srila Prabhupada

- He is fully conscious that Kṛṣṇa is the eternal Lord, so no one can disturb him.
- All these qualifications enable him to fix his mind and intelligence entirely on the Supreme Lord.
- Such a standard of devotional service is undoubtedly very rare, but a devotee becomes situated in that stage by following the regulative principles of devotional service.
- Furthermore, the Lord says that such a devotee is very dear to Him, for the Lord is always pleased with all his activities in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Section-III Qualities that Endear one to Krsna (13-20)

|| 12.15 ||

yasmān nodvijate loko
lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ
harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegair
mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ

He who does not agitate others (**yasmān na udvijate loko**), nor is agitated by others (**lokān na udvijate ca yaḥ**), he who is free from material emotions such as joy, jealousy, fear and anxiety (**yaḥ harṣa-amarṣa-bhaya-udvegair muktaḥ**), is dear to Me (**sa ca me priyaḥ**).

- Moreover, it is said:

**yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā
sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ**

One who has unflinching devotion for the Personality of Godhead has all the good qualities of the demigods. **SB 5.18.12**

- By this statement it is understood that other qualities which please the Lord also automatically appear by the constant performance of bhakti to Me. Please hear about these. Five verses describe these qualities.
- The qualities mentioned here—being freed from material jubilation, anger, fear and anxiety—are mentioned again in verse 17 in order to show the difficulty in becoming free from those elements.

Srila Prabhupada

- A few of a devotee's qualifications are further being described. No one is put into difficulty, anxiety, fearfulness or dissatisfaction by such a devotee.
- Since a devotee is kind to everyone, he does not act in such a way as to put others into anxiety.
- At the same time, if others try to put a devotee into anxiety, he is not disturbed.
- It is by the grace of the Lord that he is so practiced that he is not disturbed by any outward disturbance.
- Actually because a devotee is always engrossed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and engaged in devotional service, such material circumstances cannot move him.

Srila Prabhupada

- Generally a materialistic person becomes very happy when there is something for his sense gratification and his body, but when he sees that others have something for their sense gratification and he hasn't, he is sorry and envious.
- When he is expecting some retaliation from an enemy, he is in a state of fear, and when he cannot successfully execute something he becomes dejected.
- A devotee who is always transcendental to all these disturbances is very dear to Kṛṣṇa.

Section-III Qualities that Endear one to Krsna (13-20)

|| 12.16 ||

**anapekṣaḥ śucir dakṣa
udāsīno gata-vyathaḥ
sarvārambha-parityāgī
yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ**

He who is devoid of expectations from his work (**yaḥ mad-bhaktaḥ anapekṣaḥ**), is clean (**śucir**), skilful in all situations (**dakṣa**), detached from other persons (**udāsīno**), without distress (**gata-vyathaḥ**), and who rejects all undertakings (**sarvārambha-parityāgī**), is dear to Me (**sah me priyaḥ**).

SVCT

- Anapekṣaḥ means devoid of expectations from material work.
- Udāsīnaḥ means to be unattached to material persons.
- He has the quality of giving up all material endeavors in the present and future, and even some spiritual endeavors such as teaching scripture (sarvārambha-parityāgī).

Baladeva

- He is without aspirations (niḥspr̥haḥ), enjoying what comes of its own accord, and is without expectations.
- He has internal and external purity (śuciḥ).
- He is skilful (dakṣaḥ), being able on his own to deliberate on the meaning of the scriptures.
- He is neutral (udāsīnaḥ), not taking sides.
- He is without distress (gata vyāṭhaḥ), even though wronged by others.
- He does not make any attempts which are contrary to his practice of devotion (sarvārambha parityāgī).

Srila Prabhupada

- Money may be offered to a devotee, but he should not struggle to acquire it.
- If automatically, by the grace of the Supreme, money comes to him, he is not agitated.
- Naturally a devotee takes a bath at least twice in a day and rises early in the morning for devotional service. Thus he is naturally clean both inwardly and outwardly.
- A devotee is always expert because he fully knows the essence of all activities of life and he is convinced of the authoritative scriptures.
- A devotee never takes the part of a particular party; therefore he is carefree.

Srila Prabhupada

- He is never pained, because he is free from all designations; he knows that his body is a designation, so if there are some bodily pains, he is free.
- The pure devotee does not endeavor for anything which is against the principles of devotional service.
- For example, constructing a big building requires great energy, and a devotee does not take to such business if it does not benefit him by advancing his devotional service.
- He may construct a temple for the Lord, and for that he may take all kinds of anxiety, but he does not construct a big house for his personal relations.

Section-III Qualities that Endear one to Krsna (13-20)

|| 12.17 ||

yo na hr̥ṣyati na dveṣṭi
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
śubhāśubha-parityāgī
bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ

The devotee (**yaḥ bhaktimān**) who neither rejoices or hates (**yaḥ na hr̥ṣyati na dveṣṭi**), neither laments nor hankers (**na śocati na kāṅkṣati**), who gives up all sinful and pious actions (**śubhāśubha-parityāgī**), is dear to Me (**sah me priyaḥ**).

Baladeva

- He does not rejoice at gaining dear things, such as sons or students.
- He does not show hatred on attaining what is disagreeable.
- He does not lament on the destruction of what is dear to him.
- He does not hanker for what he does not have.
- He has given up both piety and sin because they are both causes of bondage.

Srila Prabhupada

- A pure devotee is neither happy nor distressed over material gain and loss, nor is he very much anxious to get a son or disciple, nor is he distressed by not getting them.
- If he loses anything which is very dear to him, he does not lament.
- Similarly, if he does not get what he desires, he is not distressed.
- He is transcendental in the face of all kinds of auspicious, inauspicious and sinful activities.
- He is prepared to accept all kinds of risks for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. Nothing is an impediment in the discharge of his devotional service. Such a devotee is very dear to Kṛṣṇa.

Section-III Qualities that Endear one to Krsna (13-20)

|| 12.18-19 ||

samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ
śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅga-vivarjitaḥ

tulya-nindā-stutir maunī santuṣṭo yena kenacit
aniketaḥ sthira-matir bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ

The devotee (**bhaktimān**) who is equal to enemy and friend (**samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca**), equal in respect or disrespect (**tathā māna apamānayoḥ**), in cold or heat (**śīta uṣṇa**), happiness or distress (**sukha-duḥkheṣu**); who does not associate with materialistic persons (**saṅga-vivarjitaḥ**); who is equal in criticism or praise (**tulya-nindā-stutir**), controlled in speech (**maunī**), satisfied with whatever is there (**santuṣṭo yena kenacit**); who is unattached to his house (**aniketaḥ**) and convinced in his knowledge (**sthira-matir**), is dear to Me (**me priyo naraḥ**).

Baladeva

- The meaning of the first part of the verse is clear.
- He does not associate with materialistic persons (saṅga varijitaḥ). He does not become dejected on being criticized nor elated on being praised (tulya nindā stutiḥ).
- He is controlled in speech, or is contemplating only his Lord (maunī).
- He is satisfied with whatever comes by fate, whether it is coarse or agreeable—such as food.
- He has no fixed residence, or devoid of the illusions arising from possessing a house (aniketaḥ). He is convinced in his knowledge (sthira matiḥ).

Baladeva

- There is no fault in the repetition of qualities listed in these seven verses, as the purpose of repetition is to show the great rarity of these qualities.
- These qualities which appear in the three types of devotees (saniṣṭha, pariniṣṭha and nirapekṣa) are understood to appear proportionately according to the category of devotee.
- [Note: The qualities will appear to maximum in the nirapekṣa bhakta and least in the saniṣṭha bhakta.]

Srila Prabhupada

- A devotee is always free from all bad association.
- Sometimes one is praised and sometimes one is defamed; that is the nature of human society.
- But a devotee is always transcendental to artificial fame and infamy, distress or happiness.
- He is very patient.
- He does not speak of anything but the topics about Kṛṣṇa; therefore he is called silent.
- Silent does not mean that one should not speak; silent means that one should not speak nonsense. One should speak only of essentials, and the most essential speech for the devotee is to speak for the sake of the Supreme Lord.

Srila Prabhupada

- A devotee is happy in all conditions; sometimes he may get very palatable foodstuffs, sometimes not, but he is satisfied.
- Nor does he care for any residential facility.
- He may sometimes live underneath a tree, and he may sometimes live in a very palatial building; he is attracted to neither.
- He is called fixed because he is fixed in his determination and knowledge.
- We may find some repetition in the descriptions of the qualifications of a devotee, but this is just to emphasize the fact that a devotee must acquire all these qualifications.

Srila Prabhupada

- Without good qualifications, one cannot be a pure devotee.
- Harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇāḥ: one who is not a devotee has no good qualification.
- One who wants to be recognized as a devotee should develop the good qualifications.
- Of course he does not extraneously endeavor to acquire these qualifications, but engagement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service automatically helps him develop them.