



CHAPTER TWELVE

12

Bhakti Yoga

The yoga of devotion

Total shlokas: 20

Summary of Chapter 12

The twelfth chapter is regarded as the shortest chapter of the Gita (only 20 shlokas) but the sweetest. In tradition the merit of reciting it daily is praised.

With form or without form? After seeing the universal form, Arjuna asks — of the devotees who lovingly worship You in Your form and those who worship the imperishable formless Brahman, which are better? Shri Krishna replies that those who worship Me with faith, fixing their minds on Me, seem best to Me. Those who worship the formless also reach Me, but that path is harder for embodied beings. Those who meditate on Me, offering all actions to Me, I soon carry across the ocean of worldly existence.

Step-by-step means (shlokas 8–12): With great love Shri Krishna shows a path for seekers of every level — (1) fix your mind and intellect on Me; (2) if you cannot, seek to reach Me by practice; (3) if you cannot even practise, perform actions for Me; (4) if even that is not possible, renounce the fruits of all actions. For renunciation of the fruit of action brings peace at once.

The marks of the devotee dear to God (shlokas 13–20): The second part of the chapter is a beautiful list of the devotee dear to the Lord: one who hates no one, is a friend to all and is compassionate; is free from the sense of “mine” and from ego; is the same in pleasure and pain and is forgiving; who neither distresses the world nor is distressed by it; who is the same to enemy and friend, honour and dishonour, blame and praise; who is content with little and steady in mind. After each mark the Lord repeats — “he is dear to Me.”

Lesson of this chapter: For everyone there is some path to reach God — one only has to begin. And the mark of true devotion is not merely worship but good character — kindness, forgiveness, contentment and friendliness toward all.

Shloka 1

ARJUNA SAID

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते ।
ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ॥ १२.१ ॥

*evaṃ satatayuktā ye bhaktāstvāṃ paryupāsate |
ye cāpyakṣaramavyaktaṃ teṣāṃ ke yogavittamāḥ || 12.1 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

Arjuna said — Of those devotees who, constantly devoted to You in this way, worship You in Your form, and those who worship the imperishable, unmanifest (formless) Brahman — which of the two are better knowers of yoga?

Shloka 2

THE BLESSED LORD SAID

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥ १२.२ ॥

*mayyāveśya mano ye mām nityayuktā upāsate |
śraddhayā parayopetāste me yuktatamā matāḥ || 12.2 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

The Blessed Lord said — Those devotees who fix their minds on Me, are always united with Me and worship Me with supreme faith are, in My view, the best of yogis.

Shloka 3

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ॥ १२.३ ॥

*ye tvakṣaramanirdeśyamavyaktaṁ paryupāsate |
sarvatragamacintyaṁ ca kūṭasthamacalaṁ dhruvam || 12.3 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

But those who worship that imperishable, indescribable, unmanifest, all-pervading, unthinkable, ever-unchanging, unmoving and eternal Brahman ...

Shloka 4

संनियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥ १२.४ ॥

*saṁniyamyaendriyagrāmaṁ sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ |
te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ || 12.4 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

And who, keeping the whole group of senses well controlled, with an equal mind everywhere, are engaged in the welfare of all beings — they too come to Me alone.

Shloka 5

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ॥ १२.५ ॥

*kleśo'dhikatarasteṣāmavyaktāsaktacetasām |
avyaktā hi gatirduḥkhaṁ dehavadbhiravāpyate || 12.5 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

But for those seekers whose minds are set on the unmanifest (formless), the effort is greater, because the path toward the unmanifest is reached with great difficulty by embodied beings.

Shloka 6

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः ।
अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥ १२.६ ॥

*ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṁnyasya matparāḥ |
ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate || 12.6 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

But those devotees who, offering all their actions to Me and holding Me as the supreme goal, worship Me meditating on Me with undivided Bhakti Yoga ...

Shloka 7

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।
भवामि नचिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥ १२.७ ॥

*teṣāmahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṁsārasāgarāt |
bhavāmi nacirātpārtha mayyāveśitacetasām || 12.7 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

O Partha! for those devotees whose minds are fixed on Me, I very soon become the deliverer from the ocean of death-bound worldly existence.

Shloka 8

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥ १२.८ ॥

*mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya |
nivasisyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ || 12.8 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

Fix your mind on Me alone and place your intellect in Me alone. After this you will dwell in Me alone — there is no doubt about this.

Shloka 9

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।
अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छाप्तुं धनञ्जय ॥ १२.९ ॥

*atha cittaṁ samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram |
abhyāsayogena tato māmichchāptum dhanañjaya || 12.9 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

O Dhananjaya! If you are not able to fix your mind steadily on Me, then seek to reach Me through the yoga of practice.

Shloka 10

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव ।
मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन् सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि ॥ १२.१० ॥

*abhyāse'pyasamartho'si matkarmaparamo bhava |
madarthamapi karmāṇi kurvan siddhimavāpsyasi || 12.10 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

If you are unable even to practise, then devote yourself to performing actions for Me. Even by performing actions for Me you will attain perfection (attaining Me).

Shloka 11

अथैतदप्यशक्तोऽसि कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं ततः कुरु यतात्मवान् ॥ १२.११ ॥

*athaitadapyaśakto'si kartuṁ madyogamāśritaḥ |
sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmanvān || 12.11 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

And if you are unable even to do this yoga which takes refuge in Me, then, controlling the mind, renounce the fruits of all actions.

Shloka 12

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते ।
ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥ १२.१२ ॥

*śreya hi jñānamabhyāsājñānāddhyānaṁ viśiṣyate |
dhyānātkarmaphalatyāgastyāgācchāntirnantaram || 12.12 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

Knowledge is better than (mindless) practice, meditation is better than knowledge, and renunciation of the fruits of actions is better even than meditation. For peace follows immediately upon renunciation.

Shloka 13

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥ १२.१३ ॥

*adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca |
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī || 12.13 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

One who hates no being, is a friend to all and is compassionate; who is free from the sense of “mine” and from ego, is the same in pleasure and pain and is forgiving ...

Shloka 14

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥ १२.१४ ॥

*santuṣṭaḥ satataṃ yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ |
mayyarpitamanobuddhiryo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ || 12.14 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

The yogi who is always content, keeps the mind controlled, is firm in resolve and has offered his mind and intellect to Me — that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.

Shloka 15

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥ १२.१५ ॥

*yasmānnodvijate loko lokānnodvijate ca yaḥ |
harṣāmarṣabhayodvegairmukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ || 12.15 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

One by whom no creature in the world is distressed (agitated) and who is not distressed by any creature, and who is free from joy, envy, fear and anxiety — that devotee is dear to Me.

Shloka 16

अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः ।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मदभक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥ १२.१६ ॥

*anapekṣaḥ śucirdakṣa udāsīno gatavyathaḥ |
sarvārambhaparityāgī yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ || 12.16 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

One who expects nothing, is pure within and without, is skilful, impartial and free from worries, and who has given up all selfish new undertakings — that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.

Shloka 17

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः स मे प्रियः ॥ १२.१७ ॥

*yo na hr̥syati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati |
śubhāśubhaparityāgī bhaktimānyaḥ sa me priyaḥ || 12.17 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

One who neither rejoices too much, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, and who has given up the fruits of both good and bad actions — that devoted person is dear to Me.

Shloka 18

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥ १२.१८ ॥

*samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ |
śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ || 12.18 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

One who is the same to enemy and friend, in honour and dishonour, the same in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, and is free from attachment ...

Shloka 19

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥ १२.१९ ॥

*tulyanindāstutirmaunī santuṣṭo yena kenacit |
aniketah sthiramatirbhaktimānme priyo narah || 12.19 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

Who regards blame and praise as equal, is of few words (reflective), is content with whatever comes, has no attachment to a home or a place and is steady in mind — that devoted person is dear to Me.

Shloka 20

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते ।
श्रद्धधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः ॥ १२.२० ॥

*ye tu dharmyāmṛtamidaṁ yathoktaṁ paryupāsate |
śraddadhānā matparamā bhaktāste'tiva me priyāḥ || 12.20 ||*

SIMPLE MEANING

But those faithful devotees who, holding Me as the supreme goal, follow exactly this nectar of dharma described above are exceedingly dear to Me.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे
श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे भक्तियोगो नाम द्वादशोऽध्यायः ॥ १२ ॥

Thus ends the twelfth chapter, called Bhakti Yoga, of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita — the Upanishad, the science of Brahman and the scripture of yoga — in the form of the dialogue between Shri Krishna and Arjuna.
