

Freedom from desire

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The eighteenth chapter, '*Moksha SanyasaYogah*', starts with a question from Arjuna who asks, 'I want to know the truth of *sanyasa* and *tyaga*.'

Sanyasasyamahabahotattvamichchamiveditum |

Tyagasyacahrsikeshaprtakkesinisadana || 18.1 ||

Arjunasaid:

Hrisikesha(Krishna), the slayer of Kesi! The mighty armed! I want to know distinctly the truth of sanyasa and tyaga.

If you notice, Arjuna has asked this question before in the third chapter. In this last chapter, he asks the question again and Krishna answers it elaborately.

Kamyamkarmanamnyasamkavayoviduh |

Sarvakarmaphalatyagamprahustyagamvicakshanah|| 18.2||

Shri Bhagavan said:

The wise know sanyasa as renunciation of actions for desired objects; the learned people say renunciation of the results of all actions is tyaga.

Giving up *kamya karma*, says Krishna, is called *sanyasa*. In fact, literally speaking, with *sanyasa* we give up all *karma*. In Krishna's view, he modifies it and says, *kamyamkarmanamnyasam*, meaning 'giving up your desire-prompted activities is called *sanyasa*'. Growing out of your desires is *sanyasa*, but he is not talking of the official robes yet.

And what does Krishna say about *tyaga*? *Sarva karma phalatyagam* is called *tyaga*. This is a technical expression of *karma yoga* i.e. giving up the fruits of action by bringing in the attitude of *Ishvaraarpanam* and *prasadabuddhi*. *Sanyasa* is freedom from desires, Krishna says. You have fulfilled all your priorities or let go of them and you are free. *Tyaga*, on the other hand, is a means to get that freedom by living a life of *karma yoga*. So a *karma yogi* is actually a *tyagi*.

In the third verse, he also says that in *sanyasa* you can give up all actions, all *karmas*, whereas some scholars say '*yagna, dana, tapa karma natyajya*', meaning 'Don't give up (*yagna*)worship, (*dana*)sharing'. Keep doing all that you do for your growth. Even a *sanyasi* who has not yet gained knowledge needs to keep these going. These are two opinions on *sanyasa*.

The result is that once the mind, which is free from likes and dislikes, is exposed to the knowledge, or you are exposed to the truth along with your growth, you find that nothing is seen as good, bad, or ugly, and you are perfectly fine with anything that happens in the world. You can go along with things. Once you are rooted in the Reality, what you do or don't do doesn't matter any more. That is absolute *sanyasa*, that self-knowledge you are rooted in.

Let me illustrate this with a story. There was a kid in Mumbai who used to love playing marbles, usually the ones made of glass. He had a huge collection he had bought from his allowance and some he had won while playing. One day his father saw him playing marbles in the street and told him to stop playing. "It is unhygienic," he said, "you squat on the streets, put your hands on the ground and mess them up..." As an obedient son, the boy stopped playing, but he used to watch his friends play. After a couple of days, he stopped watching as he feared he would be tempted to join them. He had given up playing marbles, but his love for the game remained. Some years went by. Later, as a teen, his attention shifted to cricket. He was good at it and it won him admirers. One day, he called his 10-year-old cousin and gave him his entire collection of marbles. He still liked them, but he was no more dependent on them for his happiness, he had grown out of them. That's the difference between *tyaga* and *sanyasa*. Part 2 of the story will feature in the next post.

In the fourth chapter, Krishna had said that all *karmas* cannot be given up by one who has self-ignorance. If a person believes that he is merely the physical body, he naturally has to do a lot of things. And one who has self-knowledge is free even in his doing. That's why, Krishna says, there is no difference between *sanyasa* and *karma yoga*. *Karma yoga* becomes a must and *sanyasa* as a lifestyle becomes optional, but *sanyasa*, in terms of knowing the truth, is not optional if you seek *moksha*. Therefore, a *tyagi* you have to be, but the *sanyasi* lifestyle is optional.

Further, he adds in the twelfth verse that the result of an action can be *ishtam* (desirable), *anishtam* (undesirable), or maybe a mix of both. After death, *punya* is the result of the good that you have done, and *paapa* the result of the bad that you have done. Generally, you cannot categorise these as black and white and, therefore, the results will also be mixed. All this will be the lot of the ignorant and not the

sanyasi (the one who knows the truth). This is in harmony with what Vedanta says, which is that self-knowledge is what leads you to *moksha*. Only in a state of knowledge can there be a giving up of all actions, otherwise there is a limited giving up of actions in terms of your priorities. If you are not ready for *sanyasa*, then choose a lifestyle of *karma*.

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