

ANANTA SATSANG • SACRED TEXTS

कल्याणके तस्ससंगम माग

Kalyāṇa ke Tīna Sugama Mārga

Three Accessible Paths to the Highest Good



Swami Ramsukhdas

*Knowledge, Selfless Action,
and Devotion*

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Knowledge, Selfless Action, and Devotion

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This is a fresh, complete English reading edition translated paragraph by paragraph from the official Hindi scan. Scan 1 is the book's cover; scans 2-61 contain the complete authored text and correspond to printed pages 1-60. The cover is represented bibliographically but is not treated as a translation paragraph.

The author presents the paths of knowledge, selfless action, and devotion as distinct yet complementary approaches to the highest good. The closing comparison table is retained in full, followed by the separately titled essay *The Seeker, the Goal, and the Means*, which belongs to the source book rather than being an editorial appendix.

Reader's Orientation

This book is not a personality test for choosing one yoga and dismissing the others. It clarifies the characteristic standpoint, discipline, culmination, and mutual relation of all three. In the author's account, knowledge and selfless action culminate in liberation, while devotion also opens into supreme divine love.

Terminology Guide

Kalyāṇa is the highest good; *jñāna-yoga* is the path of knowledge; *karma-yoga* is the path of selfless action or service; and *bhakti-yoga* is the path of devotion and divine love. *Sādhaka*, *sādhya*, and *sādhana* mean seeker, goal, and means. *Svarūpa* is one's true nature; *sattā-mātra* is pure Existence; *svāśraya* is reliance on the Self; and *bhagavad-āśraya* is reliance on, or refuge in, Bhagavān.

Introduction

Salutations to Śrī Hari.

Śrī Bhagavān says:

*yogās trayo mayā proktā nṛṇāṃ śreyo-vidhīsayā | jñānaṃ
karma ca bhaktiś ca nopāyo 'nyo 'sti kutracit ||*

“Desiring to bring about the highest good of human beings, I have taught three yogas: knowledge, action, and devotion. Nowhere is there any other means.”

“For human beings who seek their own highest good, I have taught three yogas: Jñāna-yoga, Karma-yoga, and Bhakti-yoga. Apart from these three, there is no other path to the highest good.”

Every human being is, in truth, a seeker. The individual being, after wandering through 8.4 million forms of birth, has received a human body solely to attain the highest good. A particular bodily shape is not what makes someone human. A human being is one who possesses discernment between the real and the unreal, and between what ought and ought not to be done. This discernment is beginningless and received from Bhagavān. By giving importance to it, a person can become a practitioner of Jñāna-yoga, Karma-yoga, or Bhakti-yoga and readily attain the highest good. The body that has been received and will one day part from us is not the human being. The body is only an instrument for action, and its sole use is in serving others. But when a person regards the body, possessions, abilities, powers, and other things that have been received and will depart as “mine” and “for me,” he is not a yogī of any kind but an enjoyer. An enjoyer suffers himself and also causes others to suffer,

for it is the unhappy person who gives unhappiness to others. This is a principle.

The human body has been received solely for attaining the highest good; no person should therefore despair of attaining it. Every human being has a birthright to the attainment of the Supreme Self. In the capacity of a seeker, every person is free and able to attain the goal. The first necessity is to recognize one's purpose and accept: "I am not a worldly person; I am a seeker." Such identifications as "I am a woman," "I am a man," "I am a brāhmaṇa," "I am a kṣatriya," "I am a vaiśya," "I am a śūdra," "I am an outcaste," "I am a celibate student," "I am a householder," "I am in the forest-dwelling stage," or "I am a renunciant" are appropriate for worldly conduct and its proper bounds, but they obstruct the attainment of the Supreme Self. These identifications concern the body. It is not the body that attains the Supreme Self, but the seeker, who is bodiless. Once a person accepts himself as a seeker, he spontaneously begins to relinquish what is not a means to the goal. To regard the body, possessions, abilities, powers, and other things that have been received and will depart as "mine" and "for me" is itself a non-means. Every seeker must remove this non-means.

There is nothing apart from these three: the world, the individual being, and the Supreme Self. The Gītā describes them under various names, such as the higher nature, the lower nature, and Bhagavān; the perishable, the imperishable, and the Supreme Person. Of these three, the world and the individual being are "within the world" because they can be objects of reflection. *The Supreme Self, however, is "beyond the world" because He is not an object of reflection.* Jñāna-yoga proceeds in relation to the individual being, Karma-yoga in relation to the world, and Bhakti-yoga in relation to the Supreme Self. Jñāna-yoga and Karma-yoga are therefore

“means within the world,”[†] while Bhakti-yoga is a “means beyond the world.” The means within the world leads to liberation; the means beyond the world leads to supreme divine love.

dvāv imau puruṣau loke kṣaraś cākṣara eva ca | kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi
bhūtāni kūṭa-stho 'kṣara ucyate ||*

“There are these two persons in the world: the perishable and the imperishable. All beings are the perishable; the one established as unchanging is called the imperishable.”

uttamaḥ puruṣas tv anyāḥ paramātmety udāhṛtaḥ | yo loka-trayam
āviśya bibharti avyaya īśvaraḥ ||*

“But the Supreme Person is another, declared to be the Supreme Self: the immutable Lord who enters the three worlds and sustains them.”

† *loke 'smin dvi-vidhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha |
jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānām karma-yogena yoginām ||*

“In this world, O sinless one, I formerly taught a twofold commitment: through the yoga of knowledge for the contemplative and through the yoga of action for the yogī.”

Within every human being, three demands remain in seed form: the demand for liberation, or unbroken bliss; the demand for the cessation of sorrow; and the demand for supreme divine love. The demand for liberation - the hunger of the self - is fulfilled through Jñāna-yoga, the demand for the cessation of sorrow through Karma-yoga, and the demand for supreme divine love through Bhakti-yoga. If a seeker has no insistence upon or partiality toward his particular means, fulfillment of any one demand fulfills all three.

The Path of Jñāna-yoga

Every human being experiences his own existence in the form “I am.” Only because the ego, the “I,” is mixed into this existence does one's localized existence appear as “am.” If the ego were absent, all-pervading existence alone would be experienced as “is.” That all-pervading existence is the human being's true nature. Ego - inertness - is not present in it. When a person accepts the ego, he becomes bound; when he accepts existence, the “is,” he becomes free.

The world consists of action and objects. Both action and objects have a beginning and an end; they are impermanent. Every action begins and ends. Every object is produced and destroyed. Only inert things have been received, and at every moment they are departing. Whatever has been received and will part from us can be used only in service of the world; it has no use for oneself. For what has been received and will depart is not one's own. This is a principle. What is not one's own is not for oneself either. Something truly one's own would be that over which one had complete authority, and something truly for oneself would be that after whose attainment nothing remained to be attained. Yet we all experience that we have no independent authority over received things such as the body. We cannot acquire them according to our wish, retain them, make them, or alter them. Even after acquiring them, the desire “May I get more, may I get more” remains; that is, a sense of lack remains. This lack is never filled. A seeker should therefore accept the truth that what has been received and will part from him is neither his nor for him.

By not regarding what has been received and will depart as one's own or for oneself, a person becomes free of possessiveness. As soon as he is free of possessiveness, the things he has received begin to be put to proper use with ease, for received things cannot be rightly used until possessiveness is gone. A possessive person only misuses what he has received. To enjoy and accumulate received things is to misuse them; to employ them in serving others is to use them rightly. Misuse of received things creates conflict in society, while their proper use establishes peace.

It is a human error to regard things that have been received and will depart as one's own and for oneself. When the self is conscious and imperishable, how can an inert and perishable thing be one's own or for oneself? This error is not intrinsic or natural; it has been artificially created by the person himself. It arises because he gives no importance to his discernment. From this one error, many kinds of error arise. It is therefore essential to remove this root error, and the responsibility for removing it belongs to the person himself. Bhagavān has given human beings discernment for this purpose. When a person values his discernment and removes the error, he becomes free of possessiveness.

Freedom from possessiveness is essential for every seeker, because a seeker cannot progress without eradicating possessiveness. Not only that: whatever one regards possessively also becomes impure, and its development is obstructed. Possessiveness gives rise to many faults in a person.

Some people wonder: without possessiveness, how will our body be maintained? How will we serve our family or society? In reality, possessiveness only obstructs service of the body, society, family, and so on. A person free of possessiveness maintains the body very

well. Only such a person truly serves family, society, and others. One who is possessive of his body cannot serve his family. One who is possessive of his family cannot serve society. One who is possessive of his society cannot serve the country. One who is possessive of his country cannot serve the world. The point is that possessiveness makes a person's outlook narrow and limited. Turning away from service, he becomes bound in self-interest. Every seeker must therefore relinquish possessiveness. When an intense longing to relinquish it awakens in the seeker, its relinquishment becomes very easy. For when a seeker sincerely desires to turn away from the world and move toward the Supreme Self, the entire world and the Supreme Self Himself stand ready to help him. A seeker should therefore never despair of fulfilling his purpose. Even with very little life remaining and very little capacity, he can fulfill it. For it is precisely to fulfill this purpose that Bhagavān, through His causeless grace, gave him a human body:

kabahuṅka kari karunā nara dehī | deta īsa binu hetu sanehī ||

“On a rare occasion, out of compassion, the loving Lord gives a human body without any cause.”

Desires arise only because of possessiveness. For example, if there is possessiveness toward the body, the body's needs become our needs, and numerous desires for food, water, clothing, a house, and so forth arise. The moment possessiveness is relinquished, the seeker gains the capacity to relinquish desire. The body and the world are made of the same substance; the body cannot be separated from the world. Thus, when possessiveness toward the body is destroyed, worldly desires are also destroyed.

Desires arise only because one places the sense of “I” and “mine” in things that have been received and will depart. No one has ever fulfilled every desire; no one ever will, nor can it be done. Even desires that are fulfilled ultimately yield only sorrow. When one desire is fulfilled, many others arise, and the pain of unfulfilled desire remains just as it was. A person thinks that fulfilling a desire has made him free, but in reality he becomes dependent upon the desired object. Through heedlessness, however, he experiences happiness even in this dependence. Sorrow comes through Bhagavān's auspicious ordinance to release a person from this dependence. Yet by becoming unhappy because of sorrow, he disregards even Bhagavān's auspicious ordinance. If instead of becoming unhappy he sought the cause of sorrow and eradicated desire, the cause of all sorrows, he would be happy forever.

It is essential for every seeker to become free of desire, for without freedom from desire he cannot fulfill his duty. Not only that: because of desire, he turns Bhagavān, who is the goal, into a means for satisfying desire. That is, if he worships Bhagavān while harboring any desire, the desired object becomes his goal and Bhagavān becomes the means of attaining it. As long as desire remains, a person remains dependent. A dependent person can neither renounce, serve, nor love. He can become neither a Jñāna-yogī, a Karma-yogī, nor a Bhakti-yogī. It is therefore essential to become desireless in order to end dependence.

All human beings are dependent when it comes to fulfilling desire, but every one of them is free and able to relinquish desire. Every person can freely attain freedom, or liberation. But as long as desire remains within him, he cannot be free. Dependence can be completely destroyed only when one becomes desireless. Becoming desireless, the seeker conquers the world. A person with desires

must depend upon many others, whereas one who wants nothing need depend upon no one. His worth becomes greater than that of the world. He becomes qualified for all three yogas. More than this, he becomes a fit recipient of divine love, for a person with desire cannot love anyone.

When the doer becomes desireless, the duties that ought to be done begin to be fulfilled through him spontaneously. Until the doer is desireless, duty is not fulfilled; and without the fulfillment of duty, present circumstances are not properly used. A person with desire becomes subject to present circumstances and keeps thinking about circumstances not yet obtained. As soon as he becomes desireless, he is freed both from subjection to present circumstances and from thinking about absent ones, and he attains the Reality beyond circumstances.

Desire is not destroyed by means dependent upon action, such as repetition of the Name, austerity, vows, pilgrimage, or scriptural study. To perform any action or practice, one must take the body's assistance, and desires arise precisely from one's relationship with the body. Desire is therefore destroyed not by any action but by becoming entirely actionless and giving importance to discernment. As soon as one becomes actionless, one's relationship with the body is severed and one is spontaneously established in one's true nature. Freedom from possessiveness and desire are intrinsic to that true nature. It is therefore necessary to sever one's relationship with action and objects in order to destroy possessiveness, desire, and the other faults arising from relationship with the body and the world.

When a seeker becomes free of possessiveness and desire, his egoity disappears. Once egoity is gone, nothing remains for him to do for

himself: *nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntim adhigacchati* - “Free of possessiveness and ego, he attains peace” (Gītā 2.71). As long as a seeker does anything for himself, his relationship with action and objects continues. As long as that relationship remains, dependence remains. Action and objects are useful for serving the world, but for oneself only their relinquishment is useful. Service and relinquishment are not artificial; they are natural and spontaneous. It is therefore an error to take pride in thinking, “I serve” or “I renounce.” If nothing in the world is mine at all, what has been renounced? If something has merely been given back to the one to whom it belonged, what service has been performed? It is a principle that whatever will ever become separate is separate even now, and whatever will ever be attained is attained even now. Thus, only what is eternally absent is relinquished, and only what is eternally present is attained. A seeker must accept this truth.

As long as a seeker retains the intention to do anything for himself, his relationship with the instruments of action - body, senses, mind, and intellect - remains. As long as a relationship with the body remains, neither selflessness nor freedom arises in him; that is, he is qualified for neither Karma-yoga nor Jñāna-yoga. How can a person who has not become free of self-interest and dependence become a lover of Bhagavān? Every seeker must therefore relinquish reliance upon action and embrace rest, doing nothing for oneself; and relinquish reliance upon objects and embrace reliance upon the Self or reliance upon Bhagavān.

Discernment is awakened not by any action but by becoming actionless. When importance is given to discernment, discernment itself matures into knowledge of Reality. Knowledge of Reality comes not through any action or object but through oneself alone. No practice is needed for that which is attained through oneself;

practice, on the contrary, only makes it more distant. A person cannot see himself - his true nature as pure Existence, without any instrument - through the instruments with which he sees the world: mind, intellect, and senses. He can see himself only through himself: *yatra caivātmanātmānaṃ paśyann ātmani tuṣyati* - “Where, seeing the Self by the Self, one is satisfied in the Self” (Gītā 6.20). The point is that the self cannot be seen through any instrument, but only through relinquishment of the instruments.

The Path of Karma-yoga

Karma-yoga is perfected when a seeker relinquishes evil from his life. Evil is relinquished through three things: (1) not harming anyone, (2) not regarding anyone as bad, and (3) not wishing harm upon anyone. Without relinquishing evil, a person cannot become devoted to duty.

A person harms another only when, out of self-interest, he first makes himself bad. Without making himself bad, he cannot harm anyone. Actions are like the doer; this is a principle. Actions are subject to the doer. A person should therefore first accept himself as a seeker. Once the doer is a seeker, how could actions contrary to the seeker arise through him? A seeker harms no one. More than this, he does not harm even one who harms him; instead, he has compassion for that person. Repaying evil with evil will only increase evil - how could it bring evil to an end? Evil can end only by not returning evil for evil and by doing good.

No human being is completely bad or bad for everyone. A person can become wholly good, but cannot be wholly bad, because evil is artificial, adventitious, and unnatural. Evil has no independent existence. Therefore, if evil is not repeated, it disappears completely. The seeker's special task is not to repeat evil. By not repeating it, a person ceases to be bad and becomes good.

No person has the right to regard anyone as bad. The evil seen in another does not belong to that person's true nature; it is adventitious. Human nature has this fault: a person excuses his own evil, but upon seeing another's evil, applies justice to him. A seeker's duty is to apply justice to himself and forgiveness to another. As a part of Bhagavān, every human being is faultless in his true nature:

īśvara aṃśa jīva abināsi | cetana amala sahaja sukharāsi ||

“The individual being is an imperishable part of the Lord: conscious, stainless, and by nature a treasury of happiness.”

One should therefore never establish evil as belonging to any person. It is wrong to regard someone as bad on the basis of adventitious evil. Whether or not the other person acts badly, regarding him as bad necessarily brings evil into oneself. If we regard another as bad, harmful intentions, anger, enmity, inequality, and partiality will arise within us. When these arise, our actions also begin to become impure. Evil should therefore be established neither in oneself nor in others. Establishing evil benefits neither oneself nor another. Regarding someone as bad or wishing him harm is an even greater fault than committing a harmful act.

When a person wishes harm upon another, the other is not harmed, but he himself certainly is. The one who wishes another harm suffers the greater loss, because the wish brings evil into his inner disposition. Disposition is subtler and more pervasive than action. Wishing harm upon another therefore contains one's own harm. It is a rule that whatever we do toward another will ultimately be done toward us. A seeker thus has no right to wish anyone harm, regard anyone as bad, or harm anyone. His only right is to serve everyone while holding everyone's good equally in view. Only through service does he become qualified for Karma-yoga.

One who harms another, regards another as bad, or wishes another harm may rule over the other, but cannot serve him. A ruler cannot be a servant, and a servant cannot be a ruler. Society advances through the servant, not through the ruler.

Doing good requires effort, but refraining from evil requires neither effort nor expense. Everyone is therefore free and able to relinquish evil. A question arises here: when another person is harming us, how can we refrain from regarding him as bad or wishing him harm? The answer is that when the other person does us harm, that evil has entered into him; it is not his nature. In his essential nature, he is entirely free from evil. Second, when harm comes to us, our past sins are cut away and we are purified. Third, deep reflection reveals that another person harms us only when we are weak. We become weak when attachment to life makes us fear death and, for that reason, we submit to the harm done to us. If attachment to life, the desire to live, and the fear of dying did not remain in us, no powerful person could tyrannize over us.

It is a principle that material strength can never conquer spiritual strength. How could the perishable conquer the imperishable? How could darkness conquer light? No one can bring under his control a person who has no sense of “I” or “mine” in the body that was acquired and will be lost. No one can overcome him. We should reflect: if our being is not destroyed even when the body is destroyed,* what is gained by wanting to preserve the body or by fearing death? Therefore, a seeker holds his duty dearer than even his own life. To safeguard his duty, he will sacrifice his life. Not even the most powerful person can subdue such a seeker and turn him from his duty.

“It is never born, nor does it ever die. Having once been, it never ceases to be. Unborn, eternal, everlasting, and ancient, it is not slain when the body is slain.”

While fulfilling his own duty, the Karmayogī safeguards the rights of others. Whatever is another person’s right is our duty. For

example, serving one's parents is a son's duty and the parents' right. A person who demands his own rights cannot fulfill his duty. Therefore, a practitioner of Karmayoga relinquishes his own rights. Relinquishing his own rights prevents new attachment from arising; protecting another's rights removes old attachment, and the seeker easily becomes free from attachment.

A person is free to relinquish his own rights and to protect the rights of others, but he is not free to obtain rights for himself. The craving to acquire rights turns a person away from his duty and fills him with faults such as desire, anger, and greed, causing his downfall. Therefore, a practitioner of Karmayoga protects the rights of others.

When we have no control even over the body we call our own, how could we exercise dominion over the world of which the body is a part? The body and the world, however, certainly have claims upon us. The body's claim is that we not let it become lazy, idle, heedless, or undisciplined. The world's claim is that through the body we serve the world, harm no one, and bring happiness to all.

As the craving to obtain rights grows within society, people increasingly turn away from their duties, and conflict arises. The desire to acquire rights brings enslavement. Every seeker must therefore relinquish his own rights. By doing so, both generosity and non-attachment arise. Generosity brings Karmayoga to perfection, while non-attachment brings Jñānayoga to perfection.

In reality, a right is something to be given, not something to be taken. Even if someone tries to seize a right by force, he cannot truly take it. The most powerful person may destroy others, but he cannot make them feel respect, love, faith, or trust toward him. Although

the worth of a human being is greater than that of the world, the craving for rights lowers his worth. At the root of the craving for rights lies the craving for perishable pleasure. When the seeker removes attachment to pleasure, the craving for rights also disappears, and his Karmayoga is perfected.

The Path of Bhakti-yoga

It is a principle that at the root of every creation there is some creator, and at the root of everything produced there is some unproduced Reality. If a person accepts the world but does not accept its Creator, that is a very great mistake. The Supreme Self is the ground and illuminator of both *parā*—the living being—and *aparā*—the world. It is essential for the seeker to place firm trust in that Supreme Self and establish intimate belonging with Him, or to take complete refuge in Him.

It is not necessary for the seeker to know what the Supreme Self is or is not like. He needs only to accept this much: God exists, and He is mine. God cannot be known through the senses, mind, or intellect; He can only be accepted in faith. How could a creation know its Creator? How could a part know the Whole to which it belongs?

The Supreme Self is not an object of thought, but of faith and trust. A human being is entirely free to accept or not accept Him. The living being and the world are objects of thought. We can reflect upon something about which we know certain things and do not know others. But toward that of which we know nothing and which we have not seen, only faith and trust are possible. No one else can erase the faith and trust one has freely placed.

We cannot know God, yet we cannot live without accepting Him. In the same way, we cannot know our mother and father directly; we can only accept them, because at that time our bodily existence was not yet present. If we accept the existence of our body, we must accept the existence of our parents. If we exist, our parents exist; if an effect exists, its cause exists. Likewise, if we ourselves exist, God

also exists. Our own existence is direct evidence of God's existence. No one can negate his own being by saying, "I do not exist." If our own being cannot be negated, neither can God be negated.

It is even more impossible to know one's father than one's mother, because by the time we were born from our mother, our body had already been formed, whereas at the time of our father's contribution, our body did not yet exist at all. God is the Father of the entire world: "I am the seed-giving Father" (*aham bīja-pradaḥ pitā*, Bhagavad Gītā 14.4); "I am the Father of this world" (*pitāham asya jagataḥ*, 9.17); and "You are the Father of the moving and unmoving world" (*pitāsi lokasya carācarasya*, 11.43).

Therefore, it is altogether impossible to know God. He can only be accepted in faith. There is no other way than to accept Him. Acceptance through faith is not weaker than knowing. Firmly accepting God brings intimate belonging with Him, and that intimate belonging gives rise to love for Him.

The body and the world did not exist before, will not remain afterward, and even now move toward destruction at every moment; they are wholly unworthy of trust. How can we trust what does not remain with us even for a single moment and changes continually? It may be served, but it cannot be trusted. Trust can be placed only in the One who is always with us and never parts from us. God is always with us: "I am seated in the heart of all" (*sarvasya cāham hr̥di sanniviṣṭaḥ*, Bhagavad Gītā 15.15). We may pass into any species-animal, bird, or another-or go to any realm, heaven, hell, or elsewhere, but God never leaves our side.

When a person can neither fulfill his own need nor have the world fulfill it, he is naturally drawn toward God, whom he has not seen

but only heard about. When a crisis comes upon him, no means of escape appears, and every effort to save himself proves futile, he is compelled to trust God and call out to Him.

A person who does not trust God but places his trust in the body and the world becomes caught in the cycle of birth and death and suffers in many ways. Trust in the body and such things gives rise to egoity, possessiveness, desire, attachment, greed, and many other distortions. The result is that the body and other things do not remain, yet one's relationship with them remains, becoming the cause of birth in many different wombs: "His association with the qualities is the cause of his births in higher and lower wombs" (*kāraṇam guṇa-saṅgo 'sya sad-asad-yoni-janmasu*).

One who trusts neither God nor the body and world, but trusts his own Self, becomes a practitioner of Jñānayoga. Such a seeker investigates, "Who am I?" As he continues searching for the "I," the "I" disappears and only "is" remains. Whether or not the seeker accepts "is"-the Supreme Reality-in the end he attains only "is." However much someone may jump about or dance, he must ultimately come to rest upon the ground.

When one firmly trusts that there is one Existence alone, trust in the body and world becomes lifeless and insipid, because two mutually opposed trusts cannot remain together. When the seeker accepts that the Supreme Self is one without a second, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, the friend of all, belonging to all, and present everywhere, faith in the Supreme Self awakens naturally within him. Once faith and trust in the Supreme Self arise, the seeker no longer accepts the independent existence of anything other than the Supreme Self.

Just as waking from sleep brings forgetfulness of the dream and remembrance of the waking state, so within the seeker there spontaneously awakens the remembrance of his eternal relationship with the Supreme Self-“is”-and there comes complete forgetfulness of the world-“is not”: “The unreal never comes to be, and the Real never ceases to be” (*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*). As soon as the remembrance of this eternal relationship awakens, the seeker becomes non-different from the Supreme Self or gains intimate belonging with Him. With that non-difference comes love that increases at every moment-the highest goal of human life.

A doubt arises: if the Supreme Self is present at all times and in all places, why does the seeker feel distant from Him? Deep reflection reveals that the seeker feels this distance when he tries to attain the Supreme Self through the body, senses, mind, and intellect-all of which were acquired and will be lost. The Supreme Self is not attained through action or material things, but through relinquishing action and material things, by one’s own Self alone. Therefore, the seeker should dedicate the body, senses, mind, and intellect to the service of the world, and dedicate his own Self-the form of pure Existence-to God. When the seeker turns away from everything on all sides and takes refuge in God alone, God graciously makes him His own and makes him non-different from Himself.

If we reflect carefully, how can there be distance from the One who fully pervades every place, time, object, person, event, condition, circumstance, and all else? It is a principle that what is never distant is not attained through action, but merely through the longing for it. If the seeker does not regard acquired and perishable beings and things as his own or for himself, and establishes

intimate belonging-*apnāpan*-with God, no distance from God remains, for in reality he is a part of God alone: “An eternal part of Me in the world of living beings” (*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke*, Bhagavad Gītā 15.7).

The human mistake is to regard acquired objects, abilities, strength, and the like as one’s own, while not regarding their Giver-God-as one’s own. In truth, the object is not one’s own; its Giver is one’s own. The moment the seeker regards God as his own and takes refuge in Him, God makes the seeker His own. God does not look at the seeker’s past but at his present; He does not look at his conduct but at his inner feeling:

The Lord does not keep in mind the faults one has committed;

He remembers each good act a hundred times over in His heart.

God makes the devotee who has taken refuge in Him fearless, free from grief, free from worry, and free from doubt. But no reliance on anything else should remain alongside this refuge. As long as reliance upon, trust in, or relationship with another remains, one’s refuge in God does not become firm. A person who sees no one but God as his own, and sees no special excellence in himself, easily comes to depend entirely upon God. Once sheltered in God, nothing remains for him to do for himself; every activity that proceeds through him becomes worship of God.

One’s relationship with God should be solely for the attainment of *prema*. The one means of attaining *prema* is intimate belonging with God. By regarding God alone as one’s own, love awakens. When love awakens, the ego is completely destroyed. When the ego is wholly destroyed, distance, distinction, and difference from God

all disappear completely. Without the awakening of love, the ego is never entirely destroyed:

*Without the water of loving devotion, O Lord of Raghu,
The stain within and without can never depart.*

Even within a liberated great soul there remains a demand-a hunger-for *prema*. Therefore, to one who is not satisfied even with liberation, God grants His love. From this standpoint, liberation too is a means, while *prema* is the end. Without the attainment of *prema*, the means does not reach completion. Although God is the very form of knowledge, He hungers for love.

Even after liberation has been attained through Jñānayoga or Karmayoga, a subtle ego remains. Because of it, distance and distinction from God disappear, but complete non-difference from Him does not arise. This subtle ego does not cause birth and death, but it does produce philosophical differences. Because of it, differences persist among liberated great souls and among their doctrines and principles. When *prema* is attained and this subtle ego disappears completely, all differences vanish and one becomes non-different from God. With that non-difference, nothing exists apart from God alone: “Vāsudeva is all” (*vāsudevaḥ sarvam*).

Conclusion

The Upaniṣad says that God did not delight in being alone: “Being alone, He did not rejoice” (*ekākī na ramate*, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.3). Therefore, for the sake of play-the play of love-God became many from One: “He desired, ‘May I become many; may I be born forth’” (so *’kāmayata bahu syām prajāyeyeti*, Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.6).

Among those many forms, Śrījī remained facing God alone, while living beings became absorbed in the toys of the play-the body and the world. Because Śrījī did not become absorbed in the toys, she attained love that increases at every moment. Because living beings became absorbed in the toys, they attained the world in the form of birth and death. These toys are neither ours nor for us; they exist only to bring happiness to others. To regard them as ours and for us is a very great error, and it is a human being’s duty to relinquish it. According to where it appears, this one error assumes the forms of desire, anger, greed, delusion, jealousy, hatred, hypocrisy, pretence, and many other distortions. Errors then keep multiplying without end.

Forgetting one’s own Self gives rise to identification with the body. Forgetting one’s duty leads to what ought not to be done. Forgetting God creates a relationship with the perishable. There are three Yogas for removing this error: Jñānayoga, Karmayoga, and Bhaktiyoga. To separate oneself, through discernment and reflection, from the things received from the world is Jñānayoga. To employ those things in the service of the world is Karmayoga. To become absorbed in God, of whom one is oneself a part, is Bhaktiyoga.

But one who follows none of these three and instead becomes absorbed in the world-in enjoyment and accumulation-falls into birth and death. Once born, death remains; once dead, birth remains. Thus he keeps circling through the cycle of birth and death: “Again birth, again death, again lying in a mother’s womb” (*punarapi jananaṁ punarapi maraṇaṁ punarapi jananī-jāṭhare śayanam*).

A human being has received only three powers: the power to know, the power to act, and the power to accept in faith. The power to know is for Jñānayoga, the power to act is for Karmayoga, and the power to accept in faith is for Bhaktiyoga. The right use of the power to know is to know one’s own Self; the right use of the power to act is to serve; and the right use of the power to accept is to accept God.

Objects, the body, ability, and strength-all four belong to the inert domain. They never reach the conscious domain, one’s true nature. Therefore, objects, the body, ability, and strength belong to the world and are useful only to the world; they are not of the slightest use to the Self. Through the inert domain-the body and world-we gain nothing; the Self receives not the slightest nourishment or benefit. Only severance of the relationship with body and world is useful and beneficial to the Self. Therefore, no person can become free from bondage with the aid of body and world. Actions performed through the body are useful only to body and world; only severance of the relationship with them serves the Self.

It is a mistake to think that doing something will benefit the Self. All actions are inert and perishable, while the Self is conscious and imperishable. What could the conscious receive from an inert object? How could the imperishable benefit from the perishable? Inert and perishable action cannot bring about our true good.

Therefore, we should have no concern either with performing action or with not performing it: “For him there is no purpose in what is done, nor any purpose here in what is not done” (*naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana*).

Both “doing” and “not doing” belong to nature-the inert domain-and are forms of absence. In the Self-the conscious domain-there is neither doing nor not doing. Rather, the Self is the independent, positive Reality that illuminates both. Just as doing brings exertion to the body, so not doing-that is, deep sleep-brings rest only to the body, not to the Self. Rest for the Self comes only through severance of its relationship with all three bodies: gross, subtle, and causal.

The seeker should enter deeply into the understanding: “I am not the gross body, nor the subtle body, nor the causal body. No object, ability, strength, or anything else is mine. All these are subject to change. My true nature is changeless, pure Existence. It neither comes nor goes, neither arises nor perishes; it remains exactly as it is.” Understanding this, the seeker should become still, established in his own nature as pure Existence-the bare fact of being.

In Existence-in our bare being-there is no “I”-ness. The connection with “I”-ness has been assumed through error. In “I am,” the “I” is not real, but “am” is. Our existence is independent of “I.” As pure “is,” the one Supreme Self pervades everywhere. “Am” is merely a part of that “is.” In the four statements “I am,” “you are,” “this is,” and “that is,” only “I” is accompanied by “am.” If “I” no longer remained, “am” would not remain; only “is” would remain. The point is that “am” too is actually nothing but “is.” If the seeker understands this, it is immensely beneficial.

The world's existence is only because of "I." The world is born from "I." The ego-sense within the living being is what makes this world appear: "By which this world is sustained" (*yayedam dhāryate jagat*). Therefore, the world exists neither in the vision of the Supreme Self nor in the vision of the great soul liberated while living; it exists only in the living being's vision. There is no "I"-ness in our bare being. "I"-ness belongs to the inert domain. Birth and death continue as long as our relationship with inertness remains. To sever that relationship and abide in pure Existence is liberation.

"This is a human being; this is an animal; this is a bird. This is an aquatic creature; this is a creature of the land; this is a creature of the sky. This is a brick; this is lime; this is a stone." In them all, the quality of "is" remains. But when "I"-ness accompanies it, bondage arises. Those who know Reality are established in "is." Although everyone is in fact established in "is," assuming a relationship with inertness produces "I am." If the relationship with inertness ceased, "I am" would no longer remain; instead, "I is" would remain. This state is called liberation while living.

In animals, birds, gods, demons, and all the rest alike, the one existence that equally pervades them all is the very nature of the Supreme Self. When that existence is joined to the "I," one becomes an individual being; when it is separated from the "I," one becomes liberated; and when it is joined to God, one becomes a devotee.

The human being's special task is to sever the relationship with inert matter, for all misfortune has arisen only because inert matter is regarded as one's own and as existing for oneself. If one continues to regard it as one's own and for oneself, inertness alone will remain; consciousness will not arise. The body should therefore be engaged in service to the world. The human birth alone is fit for

service. No other form of birth exists for the purpose of serving. Service may be taken from other forms of life, but they cannot render service deliberately. We can put trees and plants to our use, but they cannot themselves perform our work. One who does not serve falls from humanity and passes into animality.

Therefore, a human being should employ whatever has been received from the world in service to the world and desire nothing in return. Once the world's thing has been given back to the world, what is there to desire? To employ the world's things in the service of the world is Karma-yoga. To stand apart from the world and become established in consciousness is Jñāna-yoga. To become wholly engaged in God is Bhakti-yoga.

Surrender contains neither worldly abjectness nor dependence. God is not “another”; He is one's very own. Nature and its products are “other.” Dependence exists only in subjection to nature and its products - actions and objects. Subjection to God is supreme freedom. A devoted child of his parents is not dependent upon them; he is simply fulfilling his duty, because his parents are not “others” but his own. Worldly abjectness contains a desire to take something, whereas surrender contains no taking at all, but the giving of oneself. Since the individual being is a part of God, he has always belonged to God. The remembrance of this eternal relationship with God is surrender.

God has said that He is subject to His devotees:

अहं भक्तपराधीनो ह्यस्वतन्त्र इव द्विज।

ahaṁ bhaktaparādhīno hy asvatantra iva dvija |

“I am subject to My devotees, as though I were not independent, O twice-born one.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 9.4.63)

This is love's extraordinary nature. God hungers for love. In reality, God is not dependent; He is only as if dependent. Dependence exists where there is difference. In devotion, difference disappears and God and devotee become inseparable, so the question of dependence no longer arises. When relationship with the "other" - actions and objects - is wholly erased, love for God grows at every moment. In love there is neither a second nor a stranger. Thus not even the scent of dependence remains in love.

Bhakti-yoga is the goal. Jñāna-yoga and Karma-yoga are means. Freedom from the world's bondage of birth and death is called liberation. Liberation is attained through Jñāna-yoga and Karma-yoga*. Through Bhakti-yoga, love is attained together with liberation. Bhakti-yoga is therefore distinctive.



Authorial starred note

* God has declared Jñāna-yoga and Karma-yoga to be equal:

साङ्ख्ययोगौ पृथग्बालाः प्रवदन्ति न पण्डिताः।

एकमप्यास्थितः सम्यगुभयोर्विन्दते फलम्॥

यत्साङ्ख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते।

एकं साङ्ख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति॥

sāṅkhyayogau pṛthag bālāḥ pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ |

ekam apy āsthitaḥ samyag ubhayor vindate phalam ||

yat sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṁ tad yogair api gamyate |

ekaṁ sāṅkhyam ca yogaṁ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||

(Bhagavad Gītā 5.4-5)

“The undiscerning, not the wise, speak of Sāṅkhya-yoga and Karma-yoga as yielding different fruits. A person firmly established in even one of the two means attains the Supreme, who is the fruit of both.”

“The Reality attained by followers of Sāṅkhya-yoga is also attained by followers of Karma-yoga. Therefore, the person who sees Sāṅkhya-yoga and Karma-yoga as one in their fruit truly sees.”

The Three Paths Compared

Jñāna-yoga	Karma-yoga	Bhakti-yoga
1. A spiritual discipline	A material discipline	A theistic discipline
2. The power to know	The power to act	The power to believe
3. Primacy of discernment	Primacy of action	Primacy of devotional feeling - faith and trust
4. Knowing one's essential nature	Rendering service	Acknowledging God
5. Devotion to one's essential nature	Devotion to duty	Devotion to God
6. Reliance on the Self	Reliance on dharma - duty	Reliance on God
7. Renunciation of egoity	Renunciation of desire	Renunciation of possessiveness
8. Erasing egoity	Purifying egoity	Transforming egoity
9. Useful for oneself	Useful for the world	Useful for God
10. Primacy of the Imperishable	Primacy of the perishable	Primacy of Puruṣottama, the Supreme Person
11. What was to be known has been known	What was to be done has been done	What was to be attained has been attained
12. Undivided rasa	Peaceful rasa	Infinite rasa
13. Ontological relationship	Eternal relationship	Intimate relationship of belonging
14. Unity with the Supreme Self	Nearness to the Supreme Self	Inseparability from the Supreme Self
15. Attainment of realization	Attainment of yoga	Attainment of love
16. Independence	Generosity	Intimacy
17. One becomes established in one's essential nature	Attraction to inert matter disappears	Attraction to God arises
18. Renunciation of doership	Renunciation of enjoyership	Renunciation of possessiveness

Jñāna-yoga	Karma-yoga	Bhakti-yoga
19. Being happy in the happiness of the Self	Being happy in the happiness of the world	Being happy in God's happiness
20. Doing nothing at all	Acting for the world	Acting for God
21. Surrendering to nature	Surrendering to the world	Surrendering to God
22. Detachment	Nonattachment	Loving attachment
23. Identification with the body is an obstacle	Desire is an obstacle	Turning away from God is an obstacle
24. Primacy of reflection	Primacy of effort	Primacy of faith
25. Actions are reduced to ashes	Actions become non-actions	Actions become divine
26. Desiring nothing	Fulfilling the desires of others	Merging one's own desire into God's desire
27. Regarding no one as one's own	Regarding everyone as one's own for the sake of service	Regarding God alone as one's own



The Seeker, the Goal, and the Means

Nothing exists apart from existence alone. Within that existence there is neither “I,” nor “you,” nor “this,” nor “that.” The existence of the world is something we have assumed; in reality, it does not exist. Existence alone “is,” and the world “is not.” What “is not” simply is not, and what “is” simply is:

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः।

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ |

“The unreal has no being, and the real never ceases to be.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 2.16)

The absence of what “is not” is natural and self-evident, and the presence of what “is” is natural and self-evident. That which “is” alone is our goal. How could what “is not” be our goal? That which “is” is not something to be experienced as an object; it is experience itself.

Seen from the standpoint of Reality, the seeker is one who cannot live without the goal, and the goal is that which cannot remain without the seeker. The seeker cannot be separate from the goal, and the goal cannot be separate from the seeker, because the existence of seeker and goal is one. Nothing can exist apart from that which “is.” Therefore, if we truly are seekers, the goal ought to be attained immediately. A seeker is one who does not acknowledge the existence of anything apart from the goal and who takes refuge in nothing but the goal - neither in objects nor in actions.

What kind of seeker can remain without the goal, and what kind of goal can remain without the seeker? What kind of child can live

without its mother, and what kind of mother can live without her child? Our goal cannot remain without us; it has no power to do so, because at the root there is only one existence. Just as the same reality of water is present in both ocean and wave, the same existence is present in both seeker and goal. The wave-form is merely an assumption. As long as there is relationship with the wave-like body - inertness - there is a seeker. When relationship with inertness is wholly severed, no seeker remains; only the goal remains.

If a seeker lives without the goal, one should understand that he also seeks something other than the goal - enjoyment and accumulation. In his mind he has granted reality to that other thing as well. If the goal exists apart from the seeker, one should understand that the seeker has some other goal besides it; enjoyment and accumulation have also become goals. To the extent that the perishable is important in one's heart, one's status as a seeker is deficient. The measure of deficiency in one's seeking is the measure of one's distance from the goal. When one becomes a complete seeker, the goal is attained.

Only because the seeker regards the body as "I," "mine," and "for me" does the goal appear unattained. The best means of attaining the goal is to acknowledge no reality apart from it. The seeker's vision should therefore remain fixed solely on the truth that the world does not exist. The world was absent before, will be absent afterward, and even now is passing into absence at every moment. The world has no true abiding state. The stream of arising and dissolution alone appears as stability.

For a seeker, faith in and love for the goal are indispensable. Faith and love should be directed toward a goal that does not contradict

discernment. To place faith and love in something that is met and later lost contradicts discernment. If either faith or love becomes complete, the other follows naturally. When faith becomes firm, love arises of itself. If love does not arise, one should understand that faith is deficient: alongside faith in the goal, the Supreme Self, there is still faith in the world. With complete faith, nothing other than the one existence will retain reality; the world will have no reality of its own. A deficiency of faith in the goal also produces a deficiency of faith in the means; that is, desires other than the goal remain. The extent of other desire is the extent of deficiency in the means. At the root of all desires lies the one desire for the Supreme Self. Every desire rests upon it. Our error is that we try to fulfill this natural desire for the Supreme Self with the body's assistance. In reality, not the slightest help from the body or the world is needed to attain the Supreme Self. The Supreme Self is within oneself; He is therefore experienced by doing nothing. The body is needed in order to do something, but what need is there of a body in order to do nothing? Eyes are needed in order to see something, but what need is there of eyes in order to see nothing? Practices such as repetition of the Divine Name and devotional singing should certainly be performed, because through performing them one gains the capacity to do nothing.

We are parts of the Supreme Self; therefore, our relationship is with the Supreme Self alone. Our relationship is neither with the body nor with the sense-objects of sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. The seeker should firmly trust this truth: "We belong to the Supreme Self." If one cannot establish such firm faith, one should ask God for it. "We belong to the body and the world" is an error. It may take time to recognize an error as an error, but once recognized, the error takes no time to disappear.

The rule is that the Supreme Self is not attained through the unreal - objects and actions - but through severing one's relationship with the unreal. To sever that relationship completely, the seeker must accept three truths:

(1) Nothing whatsoever is mine.

(2) I want nothing.

(3) I am nothing.

Let us reflect deeply upon these three truths. The first is: "Nothing whatsoever is mine." To accept it, the seeker should reflect upon what we brought with us and what we will take with us. Reflection reveals that we brought nothing and can take nothing away. It follows that whatever is acquired and later lost cannot be ours. Whatever arises and is destroyed cannot be ours. Whatever comes and goes cannot be ours. For the Self does not meet and part, arise and perish, or come and go. It is thus established that not even a sesame-seed-sized object in the infinite universes belongs to us.

The second truth is: "I want nothing." The seeker should reflect: if no object in the world is mine at all, then what could I need? Only by taking the body to be one's own does desire arise: "I need food, water, clothing, a house," and so on. The seeker should consider what he needs when standing apart from the body. The point is that once the seeker accepts the truth that nothing whatsoever is his, he becomes able to accept the truth that he wants nothing.

The third truth is: "I am nothing." Everyone sees the body and the world, but no one has seen the "I." The body is perceived and the Self is experienced, but the "I" is neither perceived nor experienced; only a sense of "I" arises. When the seeker accepts the truth "I want

nothing,” he becomes able to accept the truth “I am nothing.” That in which possessiveness toward the world and longing to know the Supreme Self occur is called “I,” but in reality the “I” is nothing. In deep sleep, the Self remains but the “I” does not. Everyone experiences the presence of the Self and the absence of the “I” in deep sleep.

As soon as the truths “Nothing is mine” and “I want nothing” are realized, the “I” dissolves into existence alone - into that which “is.” The conscious component merges into the conscious Reality, and the inert component into the inert. Nothing then remains apart from the one existence alone.

Nature consists of objects and actions. Objects arise and perish; actions begin and end. Reliance upon material things such as the body is dependence upon another, while reliance upon action is exertion. Neither actions nor objects are needed at all for attaining the Supreme Self. In the world, “doing” is central; with respect to the Supreme Self, “not doing” alone is central. The Supreme Self is not attained through the aid of body and world. How could the Reality that already pervades everywhere be attained by “doing”? Doing would only make it seem farther away.

Body, senses, mind, intellect, ability, strength, and all the rest belong to nature. To rely upon them is to rely upon nature. How can the Supreme Self be attained while one relies upon nature? Since the body belongs to nature, it is neither ours nor for us. Whatever is done through the body should therefore be done solely for the world. Repetition of the Divine Name, meditation, worship, pilgrimage, vows, and whatever else is performed through the body should be performed with the feeling that it benefits others. To do anything for oneself is enjoyment, not yoga. The body is a part of

the world; therefore, every action performed through it is for the world, not for us. The Supreme Self alone is for us, for we are parts of Him. Thus dependence upon another and exertion are enjoyment. One who abandons dependence upon another for reliance upon God, and abandons exertion for repose, is a yogi. One who embraces dependence upon another and exertion is an enjoyer.

Everyone is dependent in reliance upon another and in exertion, but everyone is entirely free in reliance upon God and in repose. Dependence upon another and exertion are for the world; reliance upon God and repose are for oneself. The degree of deficiency a seeker sees within himself is the degree to which he depends upon another and exerts himself. Human life becomes complete as soon as reliance upon God and repose arise. Apart from God, there is no one who remains with us always and never parts from us. Action is for attaining the world; repose is for attaining the Supreme Self. Action expends power, while non-action - repose - gathers power. More than that, all powers arise from the principle of non-action itself. After laboring all day, a person sleeps at night; sleep removes his fatigue and restores his power to work.

The pleasure of sleep, however, is tamasic:

निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम्।

nidrālasya pramādotthaṁ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam |

“That which arises from sleep, indolence, and heedlessness is declared tamasic.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 18.39)

To repose for oneself - to do nothing for oneself - is enjoyment; to repose for the Supreme Self is a spiritual means, because the

Supreme Self is the very embodiment of supreme repose. Repose should therefore be not for oneself but for the Supreme Self. To remain continuously established in the eternal existence of the Supreme Self is to repose for Him. Repose for the Supreme Self is not tamasic; it becomes sattvic and then transcends the guṇas. Thus the two most valuable things for a seeker are reliance upon God and repose. Through reliance upon God and repose, the spiritual longing is fulfilled and worldly desires disappear.

If a seeker has no faith in God but has faith in himself, he may adopt reliance upon the Self. If he has faith neither in God nor in himself, he may take refuge in dharma - duty. "I belong to God; God is mine" is reliance upon God. "Nothing is mine; I want nothing" is reliance upon the Self. "Objects and actions exist only for the welfare of others" is reliance upon dharma. Reliance upon God is Bhakti-yoga. Reliance upon the Self is Jñāna-yoga. Reliance upon dharma is Karma-yoga. Although through all three paths of yoga one relinquishes reliance upon nature in the form of objects and actions and experiences one's self-established state in existence alone, reliance upon God is supreme among them, because at the root we are parts of God Himself. Through reliance upon God, devotion is attained together with liberation; this is the highest goal of human life.

Liberation is attained by knowing that nothing exists apart from the one "is" - existence alone. Devotion is attained by accepting that this "is" is one's own. In truth, only that which "is" can be one's own. How could that which "is not" be one's own? If the seeker does not acknowledge any reality in the unreal and retains no personal insistence, devotion arises of itself.

