

Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12: Devotion

As I was sitting here I reached up to my version of the Supreme Being and this force came in, so intense that I am having to have to come back out of it. So please excuse me if I seem a little befuddled. We are in the twelfth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, The Yoga of Devotion. Much has happened up to this point. The consciousness has matured in its own individual relationship with its inner reality. It has from that point continued to open itself up to the universal forces that are continuously here but most of us have no access to. These universal forces have come in and have been creating this passion in Arjuna, this aspiration and longing for what it is that is coming. The power and the force of this universal divine principle that Krishna represents is being experienced directly in the feelings, the emotions, and the body.

(1:52) There is no doubt at this point in the journey that these things are real and that what is happening to you is of a completely different nature than what you had experienced in the first stage of the journey. Not that people don't have glimpses of these things where there is as much wattage as can be absorbed before it goes out. But now it is of a different nature. Now the consciousness has gathered some density, some capacity to stay present with these archetypal forces that are governing creation continuously. Most human beings are completely sheltered from it. Even in their passage between births they rarely transition into these domains.

This is the point of the Bhagavad Gita. It is only when we are in this body, in the distinctiveness of our individuality, that the full depth of the divine manifestation can be appreciated. We keep coming back to the reference point of our bodily incarnation, which makes that seem even more distinct and more apparent. The point is the transformation of the individual into a container that can hold the universal forces and become an effective instrument or channel for these forces. This is not talked about much within the Western spiritual tradition but it is accepted in the Indian Vedic tradition. They have understood and languaged this with a tremendous degree of clarity and consistency.

(4:13) This is the last chapter of the second phase of the journey. Each of these chapters are a yoga: an engagement or activity that takes us to union through one of the means, be it dejection, knowledge, action, royal knowledge, or the royal secret. These are all means by which consciousness, by engaging in those experiences, becomes prepared for the next stage of the journey. So at this stage, Arjuna has foolishly asked for an early vision of the universal Vishwarupa, the great experiential demonstration of the nature of the Supreme Being. Krishna took away his human vision and gave him the vision to see the nature of the Supreme Being. In this process something in him got burned out. The trembling with fear yet ecstasy was the intense transformation process he was going through from just a glimmer, just the sight.

This is how a container is prepared: by an injection of a force that is bigger than the container. The container, the little consciousness that has gotten habituated to a separate existence even on the spiritual path, expands and becomes more capable of holding these universal forces, so that they become normal. They become more ordinary, something that the person can carry with them even while they are operating in the world. The Gita is going to a state of consciousness that at the early stages was too extraordinary for the consciousness to handle, to something one can become

capable of holding. Everything quiets in the twelfth chapter. At the end of the eleventh chapter Arjuna was overwhelmed and exclaimed, "O my God, enough, enough! Be this beautiful form with four arms, and even with two extra arms you are still more comfortable than what you revealed.' It was as much as he could handle so Krishna withdrew.

(7:40) Basically the universal force withdraws when we say "enough" because it is a collaboration between the individual and the universal. And the individual has a say in this process. At this point in the journey, once past the seventh chapter, the old human egoic consciousness cannot overtake one for very long. But by the time you get to the twelfth chapter there is an irresistible, day in and day out, injection of the force of the universe intruding on what would be the normal life. So it is no longer possible to be a human being and hang onto the old paradigm, the old way you have handled your insights and realizations. It takes on a completely different character when these vaster universal forces are allowed to come in. There is a natural intelligence to them and they recognize not to push the container beyond its capacity, although if it is your container you will feel like you are being pushed beyond your capacity.

The transformation process at this point is extremely fiery and intense. There is no ability to eat normally or sleep normally or operate normally. The intrusion of universal forces is very strong. But when they come to a certain surge and then quiet, you are back into some new mixture of your previous individuality and this new universal quality or force that is now beginning to work in your system.

Chapter 12, Bhakti Yoga, The Yoga of Devotion

Arjuna said:

O Lord, which of the two has a higher attainment in yoga, one who is thus constantly linked with Thee and worships Thee with devotion or one who worships Thee as the Eternal unmanifest?

(10:19) At this point Arjuna has returned to some degree of his ordinary consciousness. Now he wants to understand the proper relationship between himself and Krishna, and the principle that Krishna is demonstrating to him. What is the most effective way that he can move into relationship with this divine force that is coming in? He is presenting two options that he sees. One is "who is thus constantly linked with Thee." This constancy of linking is a state of intoxication where nothing else is possible. Ramakrishna was a demonstration; he was constantly in ecstasy about God. That is the constant link. The only way that can happen is if the consciousness is on the edge of merging. From its separate position it is beginning to experience the universal non-separate condition. It is creating ecstasies in this tremendous interface between the two. But the human system can't tolerate them past some point; they will quiet and then they will come back.

When this was happening for me I was basically resting when I felt the separation, waiting for them to return. Like a moth being drawn to the flame will take a break and then come back and see how close it can get without getting fried. The moth is slowly roasted. It is a state of great bliss. Ramakrishna, the great Hindu saint at the turn of the century, would say, "I would rather taste sugar than be sugar." Because inevitably over a certain period of time the merger happens; and when it happens all the fanfare quits and you become quieter. Ramakrishna preferred the fanfare.

Because when it quiets you are the radiating force of the universe into your environment. You no longer experience it yourself but others around you begin to experience it, and in your relationship with them you then experience yourself. So instead of the relationship with the divine being within your own personal sphere, when you merge the divine starts showing up in all other forms.

(13:38) It takes a response in the atmosphere. Other people experience their own attraction to the light that the person has become in the merger process. When I am in samadhi there is no transmission going on. It is only when I am in a more ordinary state that the transmission can occur and other people can feel it. People used to think that they would go sit with Sat Shree when he was in samadhi and they would sneak in because I didn't know anything. They would sit in the room, but they didn't notice anything in particular. But they get blown out when I am doing the talk or interacting with them and am more in my body.

What is happening here is that Arjuna is trying to understand what is going on and what is the best way. He is still seeking; this is advanced seeking, seeking for the universal truth. You are getting immediate experience going along with your understanding and your recognition. Is it better to worship Krishna with devotion, with this feeling of relationship and connection? Because in this case Arjuna is relating to the form of Krishna. For him there is clearly a form by which the universe is manifesting and the state of devotion is emphasized. Devotion has its basis in human feeling and human relationship. Or, is it better to worship God as the Eternal unmanifest, as the Brahma? We were introduced to the Brahman, the Absolute in the eighth chapter.

The Blessed Lord said:

471. Arjuna, I consider them to be most devoted to Me who worship Me with supreme faith, their minds ever established in Me and their consciousness fixed on Me.

472. However, those who worship Me as the imperishable, unmanifest, unthinkable, all-pervading, changeless, eternal,

473. By controlling the senses fully, always being even-minded and devoted to the welfare of all beings, they also attain Me.

(16:33) Krishna is responding to this in two parts. He is first saying "most devoted to Me who worship Me with supreme faith." And what is faith? Faith is the capacity to continue forward even if there is no evidence that anything is there. It is that capacity to bridge the gap between something you have known in the past through a period where you are no longer able to connect with that. In the case of devotion, these experiences come in waves, and between the waves you are separate. At first this separation can be one of anguish; there is only a longing for it to come back. This momentum eventually takes one to the place where devotion disappears in merger. So faith is the part of you that knows that even though there is no evidence, the divine is there. Supreme faith means you have direct experience, direct knowledge.

When someone has had, like Arjuna, a direct experience that was very real for them, then faith is less of an issue. It is no longer an idea or something that only occurs in your higher states; you

know it is always there at some level, but right now it is quiet. The supreme faith begins to disappear into a kind of confidence that nothing more can be lost, that nothing can be lost. There is a resolute relationship with what has come. Even though the external personality might be feeling bereft of God's presence, and feel like it is living in a miserable, small, ordinary state, and longing for being with God. That cry still occurs, but it is occurring in the context of supreme faith because something has come that you will never forget. It can no longer be covered over. It is irrevocable.

Krishna continues, "those who worship Me as the imperishable, unmanifest, unthinkable, all-pervading, changeless, eternal." This is the path of the sannyasi, the renunciate, where they discover themselves as the context for the content of their lives. They move into this imperishable, unchanging state of consciousness that occurs when the individual identity has fallen away. Although it is still there as content, it is not who you are. This is what we talked about in the eighth chapter: experience of the Absolute is stepping outside of the individualized human ego point of view into that which has a human individualized ego point of view. The experience is profound, satisfying, beyond words and labels. It cannot be brought in consciously. It is different than human. It is not beyond just feeling and thought but it includes feeling and thought in this vibrational field of the potentiality of the Absolute.

(21:19) This path is for those who reduce their human identification to the minimum. People who travel on this path are less likely to come back into their human consciousness in the ordinary way. The body and the mind are irritants. They take care of it because they have to. They go through the ordeal of being a bound, small, powerless, stupid human being waiting for it to pass, knowing that they are the infinite and not the finite, the universal and not the individual. Gita says, "By controlling the senses fully, always being even-minded and devoted to the welfare of all beings, they also attain Me." We could call these people agnostics or skeptics of the whole spiritual paradigm. People who have a natural automatic relationship with the infinity without fanfare and have come to a place in their consciousness through that particular focus are able to hold onto that. These people tend to remove themselves from the world and have no interest in returning to manifest. This would be the Shiva principle. The three gods are Shiva, Vishnu and Brahman. The Shiva expression stands aloof as the purusha, ever the witness, never allowing itself to step down into the dance of prakriti, holding itself aloof. The devotional condition is different.

474. However, the hardships for those whose minds are fixed on the Unmanifest are greater because the goal to realize the Unmanifest is difficult for the embodied beings.

475. But those who worship Me as Supreme by renouncing all actions to Me, exclusively depending on Me and constantly meditating on Me only,

476. Their consciousness ever linked with Me, Arjuna, I speedily deliver them from the ocean of death and birth.

The goal to realize the unmanifest is difficult because we as human beings are connected to our mom and dad and family, our bodies, our comforts, our stories about ourselves. This keeps bringing us back to our human condition. It is rare, and it was much more rare previously because human consciousness was more tamasic than it is now, at least in the operational plane. In the Indian tradition, the family and community is everything. So it was difficult for people at that time

to give one's life over to some vast infinity. They much preferred their gods and rituals and worship. This is why Buddha came in after the Gita and said, "Enough of this worship, enough of these rituals, let's go for nirvana, let's go for that which is the pure essence of Sat or Truth." And then live life from that aloof place, but serving all of mankind. This is the attitude in Buddhist monasteries. There is detachment, compassion, and willingness to serve others and mankind without any personal interest.

(26:24) These distinctions are somewhat arbitrary. As one gets into this state both of these qualities become available. In the process of merging there is a mix of these two, the parusha and the prakriti, this aloof witness and the one who is still engaged in creation, but in a new relationship to it, not as an ordinary human being. The chord has been broken; the root has been cut. The plant is still there, but it is not motivated by the same life force. It still looks like a human form but the origin of desiring, fear, craving, or control has been cut. All you see running is what is remaining in the stem and leaves until it dies out. It is cut but not yet empty.

There is ambiguity with what you see. It depends upon one's nature. If someone was devotional before, and the root is cut, they still are devotional but the motives grow weaker and weaker, the dance becomes weaker and weaker. Their system becomes quieter and quieter and the ecstasies quiet down and they become very authentic and natural and friendly. This is what this chapter will reveal: the symptoms of one who has come to this state, who is still engaged in the world in some way, and expressing the remaining samskaras and impulses and drives they were born with. They work it out as a teacher or by serving others.

477. Keep Me in your mind alone and in your intellect too. Thereafter you shall dwell in Me; there is nothing higher than this.

This is just to emphasize that there is a process in this chapter. It is called yoga of devotion so by experiencing devotion you are moving closer to the goal. What Arjuna saw was just the outer limits of the radiance of reality, the divine Vishwarupa. But now what is going on through the experience of falling back and moving towards is that the person's capacity to be present with it increases. There is a merging process going on in this chapter through the feeling of devotion, aspiration, awe, wonder and terror, or intense bliss and longing. There is something in the human that is burning out. Everything in us that has ever loved, all the loves we have had, everything we have striven for and lost, everything that has made up our individual identity are all being dissolved in this fire. This is the ultimate transformation of the vehicle. It is constantly being tested, strengthened, and expanded.

478. But if you find it difficult to be linked with Me in your consciousness then try to attain Me through practice.

479. If you are unable to pursue the path of practice then work for Me alone; you shall also attain perfection by working for Me.

480. However, while striving to realize Me, if you find this too difficult then by controlling your senses relinquish the fruits of all actions to Me.

(31:19) So now this is the first chapter where Krishna is talking about attaining Me. All the other chapters were about relationship with Him. Now it is about attaining Him, about dwelling in Him. At this point the sadhana takes on a different quality. There is more to be done. There is a way to collaborate with this intense process. According to your nature, one of these three ways introduced will come naturally. For some it will be a mix of all three. What is the practice? It is the mantras, the techniques, the rituals, the ceremonies. Or it is by working for me? That is someone who is doing spiritual work. In my case this is when I was working for my teacher. I was a spiritual teacher at that point but I was doing it as service for him. There was nothing individual left of my old life. I was not practicing architecture, or balancing my checkbook, or driving a car that I owned. I was working entirely for my teacher who was the medium by which I was able to access the universal force.

My path was devotion at this point. The way I progressed was by serving his work. I knew I was serving the divine that was occupying his form. I wasn't deluded by that part, but I knew that whatever work he gave me was proportional to my stage of development. By the stage of merger he had already given me a spiritual name, a center, and a group of people. I was beginning to discover the nature of what I was becoming.

The third part is relinquishing the fruits of all actions to Me. If you don't have the opportunity to work for your teacher then it is whatever is available for you to do out of the necessity of your circumstances. You take those actions and they become the opportunity to worship the divinity: your difficult child, your bad boss, things breaking down. These are all opportunities of getting off it and letting go. Moving into relation with the dynamic of individual life, but now as a being who is in the process of merger. Everything that arises becomes an opportunity to allow that process to go forward, to continue.

481. Knowledge is better than practice, meditation is superior to knowledge, but renouncing the fruits of action is superior to meditation because peace comes instantly from renunciation.

Gita is giving a reference point. If someone understands the nature of truth, knowledge at this point is direct experience, so the knowledge of the reality that Krishna represents is being revealed to one at this stage. That is a very powerful means by which you can do the yoga of devotion. This is more powerful than practice because practice requires personal effort and that gets in the way of the natural revelation that is occurring at this stage. I attended all five programs that happened every day. It felt like it was my duty, and I had lived life dutifully. But that practice had no value for me. When I wasn't doing that practice was when everything was happening for me. When I was doing the practice, trying to chant, and sitting in the talks, they were meaningless for me. The real things were happening for me alone in my room. The nature of the practice, however, kept me grounded in the world, it kept me in my body and my personality. If I stayed in my room I would have just become more and more expanded and abstract and lost in the infinity of me, so practice did have a utility.

(37:36) So at the point of the yoga of devotion, it says that one should work with what is most natural to them. If it is more natural to practice, then do the practice. If it is more natural to allow for the state of revelation to occur in order to move into the state of knowledge through reading poetry that puts you in touch with the infinity or just being with it within yourself—that is

superior. It goes on and says, "meditation is superior to knowledge." What is meditation? In terms of this chapter and the yoga of devotion, meditation is when the consciousness has turned outward and turns in on itself. What happens when consciousness turns outward and then in on itself, all the attention that comes with that awareness is now feeding that from which attention comes.

It creates a feedback loop. As we attend to that which gives attention, our ability to attend to that which gives attention expands and it grows into this feedback loop, one building on the other. It is a very powerful way and it leads to samadhis. The nature of consciousness turned in on itself, even in the early stages of meditation, is quietude, calmness, silence, and peace. It is a satisfying experience. At this point it is more than satisfying; it is absorbing. You lose yourself in the absorption of yourself. So meditation is a more effective means of moving into the integrated merger state than practice of knowledge.

The last one is renouncing the fruits of action, which is the orientation of the Bhagavad Gita, because Arjuna is not going to come out of this living in a cave in Samadhi. He is going to come out of this to be a warrior living in the middle of intense conflict and battle, committing acts that even for an ordinary human would be difficult. It says, "Superior to all of these is renouncing the fruits of actions," because peace comes from renunciation. I like to say, "This you can experience for yourself." When you have a situation where you are plugged into an issue and you catch yourself, you find your pain body happening in you and in that moment of it happening, instead of allowing it to overtake you, you choose to get off it.

(41:00) As soon as you choose to get off it your authority is at its peak with whatever that issue was. That issue is our unconsciousness. We have no authority in our unconscious reactions, opinions, and judgments. If we can catch ourselves in the dynamics of that part of our egoic identity and gain the authority to step off it, then the reality of what we are comes forward in that issue in a way that a tremendous space is created. In that space many things could arise: a sense of aliveness, a larger capacity of being, and breaking out of the structures that set up the situation so you have a broader perspective. And you are fully conscious while this occurs. You are conscious in the surface outer personality. This is what Gita is trying to get us to, where we strengthen the individual consciousness so it can be universal as well as impersonal and personal when needed. This happens as we come forward as the authority in the vehicle that up to now has been running us. This is the integration that the rest of the Gita will be pointing to.

482. One who is free from malice, is friendly and compassionate to all, if free from attachment and egoism, takes happiness and sorrow in the same light and if forgiving in nature,

483. Ever contented, ever linked with Me and is of firm resolve in the pursuit of yoga, one who has surrendered his mind and intellect to Me, such a devotee of Mine is dear to Me.

So now Krishna is describing the symptoms of one who is engaged in the merger process. These symptoms are evidence that the merger process is occurring in you. These attributes that are going to be described in the rest of the chapter are measures by which you can see where you are in relationship with the world as you have known it. In my own merger process I came back to the West from India and I was driving, and my driving nature was pretty aggressive and impatient. I

was stuck in the Safeway parking lot, unable to get into traffic, and I just had to sit and sit. Finally I got frustrated, slammed my foot on the gas pedal, didn't give a damn who I scared or ran over, and went into the traffic. Seemingly mindless rage or anger rose up. I experienced it. I was in this intoxicated state. There was no rage or anger. There was this huge surge of aliveness and energy and presence. Boy was I surprised. It was completely unexpected.

(45:09) And so it kept happening that the old ways of being were something other than what I thought they were. Feelings of oppression by my circumstances or people around me, struggling not to feel constricted or angry or run away would shift as I noticed it and attended to it. Suddenly it is just a circumstance; somebody trying to work out their own issues. And compassion would come; acceptance and forgiveness would come. There was no conscious effort on my part. And qualities started manifesting that weren't there before in my human life. Qualities like "being ever contented, ever linked with Me, and of firm resolve" and "surrendered in mind and intellect." How many can do that? The nature of what is described here is someone who has come into a completely different, authentic, unquestioning relationship with existence. These are the symptoms that are demonstrated without any effort of their part.

484. One who does not cause annoyance to anyone in this world nor also feel perturbed by anybody, and is free from excitement, sorrow, fear and anxiety, such a person is dear to Me.

Wouldn't it be interesting to be free from sorrow, fear, and anxiety? What would your life be like if these things didn't exist for you? How would you be with people? How would you be with things happening? Try to imagine a life without fear, a life without anxiety or anticipation, without a need to plan for the future or to protect what you have. When these things fall away a whole relaxation would occur; a capacity to just be without struggle and effort. The Gita says, "free from excitement." Many people think it is good to be excited. Excitement is on the surface. Excitement exhausts itself. It is what we do to distract ourselves from our condition. We want to indulge ourselves in something new and exciting. But excitement will always go away and we will end up in a more depleted state than before.

(48:21) Excitement is different than enthusiasm. Enthusiasm arises from the joy of the being. Enthusiasm is a spontaneous happiness that comes for some manifesting aspect of truth of oneness in your life. It is this joyful relationship with nature, with adventure, with discovery, with experience. Excitement is a state of agitation. It is funny how often we fall and how hard we fall and get taken away with excitement.

485. He who wants nothing for himself, is pure, free from laziness, impartial, has no mental divergence, who is free from the feeling of doership in all actions, such a devotee is dear to me.

486. One who is free from attraction and repulsion, remorse and desire, who has gone beyond good and bad and has devotion to Me, is dear to Me.

487. He who accepts a friend and a foe with equal feeling, honor and dishonor in equal spirit, takes heat and cold, happiness and sorrow equally and is free from attachment,

488. Takes praise and blame alike, has attained inner silence, who remains ever happy irrespective of what he receives, has no attachment to any place of dwelling, is stable in thought and has devotion for Me, such a person is dear to Me.

Such a person is My very Self. Such a person is who Krishna is. These are attributes of one whose individual identity has merged with their universal identity. They both co-exist. Before it was breaking out of the individual identity and beginning to know your universal identity and here now the two are coming together. The universal and the impersonal that comes with the universal, the stepping back and being able to see the big picture and the personal that can only see the tree that is before it, comes together. So the quality of the individual that is expressed to other people is of a different sort. Instead of trying to be good and get along, the person is automatically in an authentic relationship from the place of oneness with what is happening. They may just as likely be fierce as gentle, or rough as caring, or indifferent as well as compassionate. The system is no longer limited by one cluster of the dualities or another. They all become available to the person according to the situation. This is pointing to something very important.

489. And, Arjuna, those devotees who honor this nectar-like, imperishable law as explained above with faith and devotion and are linked with Me, are exceedingly dear to Me.

Thus ends the twelfth chapter of Gita entitled The Yoga of Devotion.

(52:26) "Exceedingly dear to Me" means that this soul that Arjuna represents is not a manifestation of what Krishna is. Arjuna is becoming Krishna. This is the transformation of the individual being into the divine being. Of course there is a dynamic, a relationship that exists from the individual point of view to the universal and from the universal point of view it is all one. There is not relationship in the way we understand relationship. Everything is itself. But for the individual, the experience is that the divine is your intimate companion, an intimate part of you, a deep and profound a relationship that is as intimate as any relationship you could imagine as human beings. So God is right there. Always there.

You've surrendered yourself. You don't even have to think about surrendering yourself because you are now becoming it. Surrender actually starts occurring after we get off it enough, after we let go enough, after we forgive enough, after we come to acceptance. We come to some terms with the things in life we don't want. Then there comes intimacy with those things. We begin to know them and feel the relationship to all the parts of ourselves and others that up to now we were not able to be in relationship with. This is the state of oneness. This is the condition of universal love where there is no sense of separation. And then how you act and demonstrate coming from a state of connection rather than the ego's place of separation is of a completely different quality. That is what this chapter is pointing to.

So when you look at this chapter and you look at how you are in these areas, this gives you some idea. Maybe you have half of these qualities or a quarter or seventy five percent. This gives you some clue into the nature of your relationship with the divinity that you are. You may have these without even knowing. You may be in the yoga of devotion without even knowing you are in the yoga of devotion: that is the point. Some people don't even know that they are operating from the state of merger until they read these lists and recognize themselves in them. Then you have to be

honest with yourself and test this. When you are out in the world and say, "Oh no, not today, I am not treating everybody equally today." Or "I am finding myself really invested in having things be different than they are."

(55:57) It is a good measuring point to find out where you are. Now we are entering into the next stage of the Bhagavad Gita. Not that the yoga of devotion is complete, not that the yoga of the universal vision is complete, not that the yoga of all the previous chapters is complete. They all may still be going on to some extent as we encounter different parts of our multiple selves that are at different stages of development. But by this point, the consensus of all our multiple selves is much more aligned with our divine nature. What will happen now is that you are a different kind of creature on the planet than what had existed before, relative to your capacity for experiencing and knowing. You are feeling in yourself the manifesting force of the creation and it is becoming yours. It is as if ascension has come. A confidence is coming about the nature of how you are and how existence is and how everyone else is.

This is the state that the next chapters will be describing and revealing some of the characteristics. Each of these chapters is in themselves a continuing of this same yoga, this same process that takes us to the supreme state of consciousness. So it is not over yet. If you thought this was too impossible to comprehend in your own experience all I can tell you is that it is not over yet. When I came to the twelfth chapter that was as far as I could go. What was starting to occur in these next chapters for years I could not get. I wanted to get it. I wished I could get it. I would get bits and pieces of it but it is not until later that each chapter reached their maturity and the revelation that was being pointed to became more and more tangible for me. That's it for today's revelation on the Bhagavad Gita. Om Namo Bhagavate Vashudevaya.