

Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12, Part 10, dated 09_01_2021 by Swami Dayatmanada (Lecture delivered online from India.)
Subjects: C12, Verse 17, 18 and 19.



Illustrations: Saint Francis of Assisi and A Ferocious Wolf: Shri Rama's promise to Vibhisana: Mahabharata -Vow of Shri Krishna: Story of a Zen Monk and a Pregnant Girl: Adbhutanandaji and a Devotee with Disobedient Children: Poem by Rabindranath Tagore: Bhajan by Swami Primesanandaji: Mad Brahmajñani at the Dakshinেশ্বর Temple: M used to sit among the Beggars in the Cold Winter Nights:

Om Jananim Saaradam deviim,Raama-krishnam jagad-gurum

Paada-padme tayoh sriitvaa,prana-maami muhur-muhuh

ॐ वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम्। देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

Vasudeva sutham devam, Kamsa Chanura mardanam,
Devaki paramanandam, Krishnam vande jagat gurum

I worship Lord Krishna, who is the spiritual master of the universe, who is the son of Vasudeva, who is the Lord, who killed Kansa and Chanura, and who is the bliss of Devaki.

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो, दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दनः। पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता, दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

Sarvopanishado gaavo, dogdha gopala nandanahal
parthovatsa: sudheerbhoktaa, dugdham gitamrutam mahat I

All the Upanishads are like cows. The milker is Krishna, the son of Nanda. Partha (Arjuna) is like a calf, while the drinkers are the wise ones. The nectar of Gita is the milk.

मूकं करोति वाचालं पङ्गुं लङ्घयते गिरिं। यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्द माधवम् ॥

Mookam karoti vachalam pangum langhayate girim I
Yat-krupa tamaham vande paramananda madhavam II

I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, the deliverer of the fallen souls. His mercy turns dumb into eloquent speakers and enables the lame to cross mountains.

Recollection:

We are studying the 12th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, which is very aptly named as the chapter on Bhakti Yoga, the chapter on devotion. And in this, the Lord has highlighted certain beautiful points.

- **The path of devotion is suitable for most of us.** Why? Because people are highly body-conscious. In fact, we don't know anything else except that I am the body. Even the mind is also a terrible slave to the body, except in a few exceptional cases for example, great scientists, artists, great writers, poets, etc. We know they get absorbed and forget food and other sensory pleasures. Even though they are not spiritual, they are far higher than most of humanity. So for people who are sincerely struggling to progress in spiritual life, the easier path would be the path of devotion.
- **Most of us are emotional individuals.** Our devotion strengthens our emotions and makes it one-pointed and directs it towards God. That is Bhakti-Yoga. Some people may become very emotional while listening to devotional songs, doing *Japa*, meditation and start to shed tears. They may think that they are great devotees. That is no great deal and doesn't prove that they are devotees. Only those people whose personality, whose life has been transformed by the acquisition of certain qualities and by the destruction or at least lessening of certain unspiritual qualities alone are worthy to be called devotees.
- **Only the Divine Lord can give a 'Certificate of Devotion'.** We are all slaves to get praise from other people. If somebody says, "You are a great devotee." We feel happy. It is not anybody who can give a 'Certificate of Devotion'. Who gives the certificate? Only the Divine Lord Himself gives a 'Certificate of Devotion'. In what form does He provide this certificate? He draws us nearer and nearer to Him. When God says, "This person who has acquired these qualities, He is very dear to Me." He also means the person is very near to Me.
- **Sri Ramakrishna puts it beautifully.** He says, "When a man approaches closer to the seashore, he feels the cooling breeze more and more." So a devotee who approaches God by developing these spiritual qualities, feels more and more joyful. He becomes more peaceful and more devoted.
- **We need to know these qualities** that need to be developed and the habits we should discard. When the Lord says: A devotee should acquire these qualities, by the same token He also tells us the opposite qualities that need to be discarded.

As we may move towards the East more and more, the West recedes behind, but we have to make the effort.

In our last class, we have been discussing about the 17th *śloka* where 5 important spiritual qualities have been explained.

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 12, Verse 17.

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः स मे प्रियः ॥ 17॥

yo na hrīṣhyati na dveṣṭī na śhochati na kāṅkṣhati
śhubhāśhubha-parityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ

He who rejoices not and hates not, who grieves not and desires not and who has renounced both good and evil and is full of devotion, He is dear to Me.

[1) He doesn't rejoice. 2) He doesn't hate. 3) He doesn't grieve. He doesn't regret. 4) *na*—nor; *kāṅkṣhati*—hanker for gain. He doesn't desire anything. 5) And last, fifth quality is *śhubha-aśhubha-parityāgī*—who renounces both good and evil deeds.]

So these are the five qualities we have to acquire. And in the same coin, we have to discard the opposite of these qualities. What does it mean? This verse looks a little bit confusing to understand. We have to be crystal clear about its meaning.

Does it mean, he is a stone?

He who never rejoices, does it mean he is a stone? He who never hates. So is he also a stone? नशोचति, he never grieves and never desires anything. These are characteristics of a lifeless object such as a lump of clay, stump of a tree or a stone, anything like that. Is he a lifeless stone? No, on the other hand, these are the highest spiritual qualities. What does it mean?

- **yo na hrīṣhyati -He does not rejoice.** What does it mean? When circumstances turn favourable, the ordinary mind often becomes a slave to elation, exhilaration, and excessive excitement. A devotee, however, responds differently. He certainly rejoices, but his joy is rooted in gratitude. He thanks God, accepts the success as *prasāda*, and feels, “The Divine Lord Himself has given me this, for my own good.”
- **na dveṣṭi - He never hates.** What does it mean? What are the causes of hatred? Somebody criticises us, does some harm to us, takes away something from us, deprives us of something, these are some of the reasons to hate somebody. It may be a human being or an unfavourable circumstance. We hate it if it is very cold or very hot. (We use certain abusive words as epithets, which I do not want to repeat.)
- **na śhochati- He does not grieve.** When a person loses something to which he is attached, then he grieves.
- **na kamkshati -** He doesn't desire anything except what is necessary and whatever he gets due to his past actions. This person practices Karma-Yoga. He offers everything to God and his actions are only to please God. Let us remember the saying of Brother Lawrence. He made an extraordinary statement. He said, “I will not lift a straw but for the pleasure of God.” That means he will never do anything good or bad except for the pleasure of God. But we must understand it: what does it mean if a person struggles to progress spiritually? It means he can tolerate anything good or evil but he cannot tolerate the other person's suffering. He loves the people because he sees the manifestation of God in everything including animals.

Saint Francis of Assisi and A Ferocious Wolf:

I have got so many examples. One familiar example would be Brother Francis. He never harmed any creature. He came in contact with a ferocious wolf. He was not frightened of this wolf. He knew how to encounter the wolf. He loved it and addressed it as brother. St Francis converted the wolf into a good Christian and he made that wolf a beloved of the villagers. The villagers wanted to kill the wolf up until that time but then, a miracle happened. The children of those



villagers, especially from one particular village became fond of this brother wolf. The children would enjoy playing with the wolf, riding on its back, pulling its hair, and pulling its ears. The wolf loved the children and never harmed them. How? It came into contact with a *Satpuruṣha*, Saint Francis of Assisi, and turned into not only a good harmless innocent animal but he excelled many worldly people in spiritual qualities all because of the association with such a great saint.

We must understand these characteristics as all spiritual qualities.

- A devotee really rejoices when he approaches God.
- He does not hate obstructions. He prays to the Divine Lord. He has a strong will. He keeps moving forward.
- Similarly, he does not grieve on account of any personal loss or a tragedy. But he will grieve very much at the grief of other people.
- ***Nakankshati***, personally he doesn't desire anything. Why? Does he not have any wants? Does he not lack something? Does he not feel hungry or thirsty? Yes, but he depends completely upon the Divine Lord like a baby depends on its mother. We come across hundreds and thousands of examples of these great saints who surrendered themselves to God. They were totally dependent upon Him. In the mind of such a devotee, there is nothing called good and evil. In the kingdom of God - there is nothing good and nothing called evil. Everything is wonderful. Everything is spiritual.
- ***Shubha, Ashubha, Parityagi***. For him also the world goes up and down. He also faces happiness and unhappiness, good and evil, heat and cold. But *Parityagi*, he renounces, means he changes his mentality. Let good come, welcome. Let evil come, welcome. Let life come, welcome. Let death come, welcome. Let loss come, welcome. Let gain come, welcome. Let anything come. He is firmly convinced - all is only by the bidding of God, by the will of God. Whatever happens in his life, it only comes because of Him.

A person who acquires these five qualities and make them strong and natural, such a person is considered ***Bhaktimaan***. He is the only devout person and not others by implication. Such a person is very dear to the Divine Lord. Why? Because these are the qualities that pull us, keep us near God. This was what we have discussed in our last class.

A strong foundation is required for a spiritual life:

Now the Lord emphasises. What does He say? The Divine Lord stresses on sameness, absence of worldly desires, and freedom from the claims of the lower egotistic nature as the foundation of spiritual life. All of us are required to lay a very strong foundation for spiritual life. Why?

What does it mean by spiritual foundation here?

Foundation means a certain state of the mind. The mind should not be restless. It becomes restless. Sometimes it rises and sometimes it falls. That is not a very desirable condition for those who want to think of God. If we are under the control of the mind, then sometimes we are happy to take God's name but most often we are not. Why? We get distracted by our minds. A nice TV programme, a nice book, and thoughts of a friend with whom I have not been in contact for a long time are some of the causes of our distraction. We feel like contacting that person. Anything will do to relieve the tedium of thinking about God. That's why we need to lay a strong foundation. Why? This building called spirituality has to reach heaven. As a simile, we know our house needs a strong foundation. A bridge requires a strong foundation. What a strong foundation it should be. Jesus Christ used to give this simile. If a house doesn't stand on a strong foundation it will sway and collapse when the wind becomes a little strong. So we need to build a strong foundation. The Lord is adding nine more spiritual qualities as a foundation. In fact, it is not only nine. All the qualities that the Lord Himself has been teaching to all of us through the medium of Arjuna, all these qualities have to be acquired. As I mentioned earlier, one good quality will pull all other good qualities. You cannot practice in isolation one simple good quality or for that matter, even one bad quality. One bad quality pulls all its friends and relatives. And a good quality does the same thing. What happens when we pray sincerely to God? We surely albeit slowly acquire all good spiritual qualities. Because when God is gracious to us, he wants to draw us to him. And therefore, he will not be deterred by any failure on our part. A few examples are:

Shri Rama's promise to Vibhisana:

Shri Rama once said to Vibhisana, "If anybody once says sincerely to me: Oh Rama, I am Yours, I belong to You. Thereafter, let that devotee do whatever he

likes. Let him try to slip away from Me, but I will not give him up. I will hold on to his promise and make his promise true. That is My promise.”

Mahabharata: Shri Krishna’s Vow and Bhishma’s Vow:

We get a beautiful example of this in the Mahabharata war. Sri Krishna takes a vow that I will not fight with any weapon. He lends His ‘*Narayani Sena*’ His army to Duryodhana. Duryodhana gets everything other than Krishna. Arjuna, though has the first choice, he chooses only Bhagavan Krishna. Arjuna knows by his instinct that wherever there is Krishna, there is bound to be victory. Why? Because there is bound to be wisdom, there is bound to be dharma and righteousness. *Yato dharmaha tato jayaha* - where there is dharma, there will be sure victory to be there. In the end, that has proved to be absolutely right. Bhishma hears about Krishna’s vow. So he takes a vow as well. He says, “I will make Krishna break his promise.” A day comes in the Mahabharata war when Krishna confronts Bhishma. Shri Krishna takes up a weapon to kill Bhishma. Because nobody could defeat Bhishma on that day. So Krishna says, “Let me break My vow, it doesn't matter. For the good of the world, for the victory of the Pandavas, I will break my vow.” Later on, Bhishma comes down and surrenders to Krishna. Bhishma says, “Oh Krishna, how gracious You are? You are willing to break Your own vow but You do not allow a devotee's vow to be broken because you are *Bhakta-Vatchala*. You are the mother and father of the devotees.” Shri Krishna breaks His vow. Why? He wants to protect His devotee’s vow and honour. The Divine Lord cares about His devotee’s honour and is prepared to get a bad name for Himself. We also see this in the life of Shri Ramakrishna. Shri Ramakrishna said, “If anybody prays to me sincerely just once. He comes to me only.” And Shri Krishna says to Arjuna, “Oh, Kaunteya, you broadcast without fear- My devotees/*Madh-Bhakta* shall never perish. I take the responsibility of My devotees.” If we are sincere, pray to God, and try our level best, God will endow us with all these qualities.

Now let us deal one by one with these nine qualities which are evenly spread in two verses, 18 and 19.

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 12, Verse 18, 19.

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।

शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥ 18॥

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित् ।

अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥ 19॥

*samaḥ śhatrau cha mitre cha tathā mānāpamānayoḥ
śhītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣhu samaḥ saṅga-vivarjitaḥ
tulya-nindā-stutir maunī santuṣṭo yena kenachit
aniketaḥ sthira-matir bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ*

samaḥ—alike; **śhatrau**—to a foe; **cha**—and; **mitre**—to a friend; **cha tathā**—as well as; **māna-apamānayoḥ**—in honour and dishonour; **śhīta-uṣhṇa**—in cold and heat; **sukha-duḥkheṣhu**—in joy and sorrow; **samaḥ**—equipoised; **saṅga-vivarjitaḥ**—free from all unfavourable association; **tulya**—alike; **nindā-stutiḥ**—reproach and praise; **maunī**—silent contemplation; **santuṣṭaḥ**—content; **yena kenachit**—with anything; **aniketaḥ**—without attachment to the place of residence; **sthira**—firmly fixed; **matir**—intellect; **bhakti-mān**—full of devotion; **me**—to Me; **priyaḥ**—very dear; **naraḥ**—a person

Those, who are alike to friend and foe, equipoised in honour and dishonour, cold and heat, joy and sorrow, and are free from all unfavourable association; those who take praise and reproach alike, who are given to silent contemplation, content with what comes their way, without attachment to the place of residence, whose intellect is firmly fixed in Me, and who are full of devotion to Me, such persons are very dear to Me.

Some of these ideas we did discuss earlier. The Lord re-emphasises again making sure that they are strongly impressed in our brains. The Lord repeats but the commentators also give slightly different meanings so that we can enjoy the same *shlokas* much more.

1) samaḥ—alike; **śhatrau**—to a foe; **cha**—and; **mitre**—to a friend; **cha tathā**:

In this world, we must be equivalent. Everybody has to go through what we call dualities. Life is nothing but dualities. Cold and heat, happiness and unhappiness, good and evil, honour and dishonour, loss and gain, victory and defeat, and friends

and foes, this is called life. In one simple phrase, it is known as *dvandvas/duality*. We get this idea in the second chapter. But it is much more elaborate here. That person who is aspiring to be a devotee, he will not have any enemy because who is an enemy? He who gives us trouble, is an enemy. And he who does good, he is a friend. This is the normal definition. But he who praises us whether we deserve it or not, he who flatters us, he is not a real friend, he is an enemy. And that person who criticises us seriously, sincerely, finding and highlighting our faults, in case we are not aware of them, is more of a friend than an enemy. Normally, our understanding is that anyone who makes us lose something is our enemy. And anyone who gives us something is our friend. But for a devotee, there is no enemy, there is no friend. Why? Because such a devotee, what does he see? The same Brahman is manifest everywhere. The same God is manifest everywhere, first of all. Secondly, if something good occurs, who is giving? Not the instrument, not another person, but it is God. If some unhappiness is our lot, then who is giving? Not anybody, not any person, but it is the Divine Lord in accordance with the actions that we have done in the past. Here, we have to especially understand that when we do something wrong, the result comes by the grace of God. As Holy Mother says, “It may be very mild.” We get the opportunity to learn our lesson, but it will not give us unbearable pain because we are sincerely striving to be devotees. God knows it and He is within us, and outside us. He gives us pain or sorrow to awaken us, but not to make us suffer like a mother punishing the child. Similarly, if we do meritorious deeds, the Lord also will give a little bit of pleasure in moderate proportions so that we won't be overwhelmed. We won't be too attached. For a devotee, everything is God, and what is spiritual life? Nothing but seeing God everywhere. Exactly in the same way-

2) *māna-apamānayoḥ*—in honour and dishonour:

In the world, somebody may honour us, somebody may dishonour us. A devotee may be honoured as being a great scholar, a wonderful singer, a wonderful speaker, a wonderful writer or as a wonderful philanthropist or in whatever way. He must remember that every power, whether it is knowledge or energy or good intention, belongs to God. It is a manifestation of God. We should never take any credit for it. That is the idea here. Why does someone honour us? He finds some good quality within us and he honours us. But that good quality is, as Bhagavan Krishna says, “It's My manifestation.” It belongs to the Divine Lord.

Similarly, **apamanah**: There is nobody in this world who is not honoured, who is not also dishonoured. Most of us get more dishonour than honour.

Somebody insults us, dishonours us, pulls our name down. That is also a grace of God. That is also positive in some way. How? Lots of people know a famous person. This could be harmful and obstructive in his spiritual life.

Three ways to understand **apamanah:**

There are three ways to understand why **apamanah** comes and how we should react to it.

1. Firstly, we might have done some unrighteous/*adharmic* actions in our past life or this life. The other person is only an instrument. That's what Krishna advises Arjuna in the 11th Chapter. *Nimitra atram bhava savyasanchi*
2. **apamanah** is a great awakener. Why? Because it allows us to test our devotion. Am I dependent upon God or not? I am having this dishonour. Who is giving this to me? It is only the Divine Lord. Dishonour helps to awaken us. This is the second way we have to take it.
3. There is a third way and this is a great opportunity for us to really test our spirituality against these things. Our mind is not likely to get excited or depressed if we do not receive honour or dishonour. We would not know whether we are progressing in spiritual life or not without experiencing honour and dishonour. I'll give you a beautiful real example that happened. There is nobody in this world who is not honoured and not dishonoured. Most of us get more dishonour than honour.

Story of a Zen Monk and a Pregnant Girl:

In Japan, there was a Zen monk. He was living in a village. The people really honoured him because of his pure life. There was a young girl who was unmarried. She became pregnant and her parents wanted to know about the father of this baby. They pressed her and eventually she named this monk the father of that child. The villagers went to him, beat him up, and abused him. They said, "You did something wrong, immoral and sinful." The monk did not say anything. He remained calm and quiet and faced this disrespect. After a few months, this girl

gave birth to a baby. Immediately the villagers brought that baby to the monk and said, "This is your baby. We don't want our girl to have this. You bring this baby up." The monk accepted the baby most lovingly. The Japanese monk worked very hard to bring up the baby. So, every prayer and everything was focused on the baby. Two or three years passed and the girl found this untruth harder to bear. She decided to tell the truth and confessed to everyone that the monk was not the father. She told everyone, "A boy from the neighbouring village is the real father of the child. The monk is totally innocent." The villagers understood it. They came rushing, fell at the feet of the monk and apologised repeatedly. When they abused him and beat him up, his face was calm and quiet. When these people begged pardon and went on praising him, he kept the same face. He said, "It has nothing to do with anyone. It is the Will of God. It's my *prarabdha/fate/destiny*. I have to face it." He left the village and shifted to some other place.

Every person rich or poor, king or beggar has to go through honour and dishonour. Just look at what is happening to the world leaders. How much abuse is being heaped upon their heads from every side. Every person has some good and some not-so-good qualities. Nobody can really escape these wonderful things that we are talking about - honour, praise, friend, enemy.

Adbhutanandaji and a Devotee with Disobedient Children:

There is a beautiful incident. Swami Adbhutanandaji (Latu Maharaj) was at Varanasi. Once a householder devotee came to him. He was in great grief. Adbhutanandaji asked him, "What happened?" He said, "Maharaj, my children don't listen to me. They disobey me and do whatever they like. I brought them up with so much difficulty. I love them but they have turned so bad." He wanted to get some consolation. Then Latu Maharaj smiled and said, "Look, with how much difficulty, how much love God is bringing us up and we don't obey Him. We don't listen to Him. We don't take His name, and we rarely think about Him. So when you can feel so much pain because of your children's disobedience, how much pain God must be feeling who is an embodiment of love." This is such a wonderful teaching. If we do not obey our Divine Mother and Divine Father, how much pain must we be causing them?

Poem by Rabindranath Tagore:

There is a beautiful poem by Rabindranath Tagore. He says, “Life after life I am running away from You. But You follow me with the same loving gaze. I thought you had abandoned me. After a long time, when I looked back. I found that you have never abandoned me in life. You have been looking at me with the same loving gaze. My child, the moment you turn towards me, I am ready for you.” Such a beautiful poem. I do not remember the exact Bengali. When I read it, I said to myself, “This is exactly what God is doing to us.” As we know, the Holy Mother did the same even to her disobedient monks. Some monks left, but her loving gaze followed them. “My child, do not forget. Wherever you are, you have a mother, call me when you are in difficulty. I will come to you and aid you.” This is how we all give pain to our Divine Mother. For how many aeons, yugas, has the Divine Lord been waiting for us?

Bhajan by Swami Primesanandaji:

Swami Primesanandaji Maharaj expressed these sentiments in that unforgettable bhajan - *aroopashay re lila lahari, koto jugo goto, tumari ashay, samshay jato aji tirohit, jache amal, laho upahar, shapi no jeevan, tava shebhay*. What is the Lord telling? Oh my child, how many aeons I have been waiting for you to turn towards me. Look at me at least once. But I have never lost my hope and faith. Today, I am overwhelmed with joy. Why? Because you have once and for all turned your gaze only towards me. *Koto jugo goto, tumari ashay, samshay jato*, whatever doubts I had, aji tirohit, they all disappeared just in one try. This *jache amal, laho upahar*, God is telling my child, whatever I have, I am offering it to you, *shapi no jeevan*. I lay down my life in your service. We foolish people, we think we can serve God. We believe, we can give things to God. What do we have to offer Him? Our body belongs to Him, our mind belongs to Him. Any dishonour comes to us. It is a gift from God. So, we can make our will strong, our devotion even more steadfast and turn towards God.

3) śhīta-uṣhṇa—in cold and heat; **4) sukha-duḥkheṣhu**—in joy and sorrow: These are all very common things.

5) samah—equipoised; **saṅga-vivarjitah**—free from all unfavourable association: We must keep our mood in equanimous mood.

6) **tulya**—alike; **nindā-stutiḥ**—reproach and praise: We must be equanimous.

Ninda: Somebody blames us unnecessarily, and somebody praises us. I have seen so many of these dramas in my life. My devotees praise me, and those who do not like me, they condemn me to anything. I say that if you condemn, it doesn't mean I am guilty of those things. If you praise me, I don't think that I am worthy of whatever you are attributing to me. Everything belongs to God and that is how I would like it. I would try to keep my mind equipoise.

7) **maunī**—silent contemplation: **Mauni** means going on thinking. What should we be thinking? *Tattva, Hitha, Purushartha*. What is the truth? God alone is the truth. Each soul is potentially divine. What is the *Purushartha*? To manifest this divinity by controlling nature, by controlling the mind and by developing dispassion towards the external world. I am quoting from Swami Vivekananda - 'Manifest to this divinity either through *Karma- Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga, Jnana-Yoga*, by one, more, all of these put together and be Free. This is the whole of religion. Everything else is secondary detail.' So we should remember this constantly. Remembering God means remembering the ephemerality and the dualities of this world. The only place where we can anchor our boat so that it will be protected from all storms. That is only God. That is called **Mauni**, not mere silence, not mere suppression of what we call words.

santuṣṭaḥ—content; **yena kenachit**—with anything; **aniketaḥ**—without attachment to the place of residence; **sthira**—firmly fixed; **matiḥ**—intellect; **bhakti-mān**—full of devotion; **me**—to Me; **priyaḥ**—very dear; **naraḥ**—a person

8) **santuṣṭaḥ**—content; **yena kenachit**—with anything: We must always have contentment. Patanjali says, "*Saucha and Santosha*." Again, whatever comes to a devotee, he should accept it as *Prasada*. I do not mean only good things. Let good come. Let some unpleasant come. Both are *Prasada*. *Prasada*, means the divine offering from God - it is His grace. That is how we have to accept it. So whatever comes, *santushtaḥ*. Do not think, why did this come? Okay, I will tolerate it this time. I expect something very positive and good next time. No, sir. Whole life, if you want me to suffer, that is fine. However, I will beg You one favour only. And I will not allow You to not give me that. I will pester You. What is that favour? Let me never lose devotion to Your lotus feet. And let me not have any ulterior motive. Let it be pure for the sake of love of You, Bhakti of You. Now let me give you a few illustrations.

Mad looking Brahmajnani at Dakshineswar Temple:

I hope you remember the story of that mad Brahmajnani/realised soul who visited Dakshineswar. Even the beggars did not allow him to sit next to them. By the way, we have to understand. At that time, plenty of tasty food used to be cooked at the Dakshineswara Temple. Because that was Rani Rasmani's wish. Food used to be offered to the Divine Mother first. And the same food was distributed among the wandering monks, beggars or any other guests that came with the same love. Of course, because of social inequalities, there was a separate place for beggars to sit. The beggars used to get the same food in a separate place. This great soul, because of his appearance, was not allowed by the beggars to sit there. What did he do? **Santushtaha**. He was so happy. He went to the garbage dump. There was a heap of food. This garbage food could be today's food or yesterday's food. Dogs were eating there and I am sure some birds and insects were also there. But happily, he put one hand on one of the dogs and went on eating. What was his mental state? Absolutely calm, *Prabhu mere avaguna chita na dharo samadarishi hai nama ti haro*. It's not merely an evocative statement but it is a felt truth. **Santushtaha**. Whatever comes, let good come, let evil come. Finally, let happiness come, let unhappiness come. It doesn't matter.

M used to sit among the Beggars in the Cold Winter Nights:

Remember! M used to get up sometimes in the winter season and throw off his warm clothing. He would go down, open the door and then step into the dark street. Many beggars used to be on the street. They were huddling, putting whatever clothes they had in that winter, somehow curling themselves up, trying to bear the cold and get some sleep. M used to sit there the whole night. Somebody saw him. The person was surprised seeing him there. He asked, “ Sir, why are you sitting among beggars in the cold night? M said, “Who knows? I also could have been in the same condition. If they could put up with it then, why can't I?” This is the difference between voluntarily refraining from eating food and starving. A beggar also starves. A world-renouncing monk also may starve. What is the difference? One is voluntary, the other is completely involuntary. That's why the beggar feels suffering whereas the monk happily accepts it.

Shri Ramakrishna and his story of a Monk:

Shri Ramkrishna illustrates it with a beautiful story. A group of fanatics beat a monk unconscious. He was covered with cuts and bruises. Some devotees saw him in this condition and they cared for him and gave him water and milk. He slowly came back to consciousness. The devotees asked, "Who beat you so ruthlessly?" "The same who is pouring milk into my mouth", the Monk replied humbly. No one is free from dishonour. We all face it from time to time. Was Shri Rama dishonoured or not? Was Bhagwan Krishna dishonoured or not? There are many examples. Harishchandra, Pandavas, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Buddha also faced dishonour. Even attempts were made to kill them. Jesus Christ was crucified by his own tribe. It is shameful even to think of it. Then what about Ramakrishna? He was kicked, he was abused. And what about Holy Mother? What about Swami Vivekananda? How much criticism did he face especially in the USA? And people wanted to do away with him at least on two occasions. What did he do? He said Shiva, Shiva. And as soon as he uttered Shiva, he immediately became free and cheerful. These are the characteristics of a devotee. We have to acquire the quality - how to handle dishonour. As I said earlier - surely but albeit slowly.

9) aniketah—without attachment to the place of residence: **Niketaha** means a definite guaranteed place to stay, a house. But a devotee says, "O, Lord, today you may keep me in a king's palace. Tomorrow may be under a tree and day after tomorrow in a cave. Wherever you choose for me, I will happily take these things.

An Incident in the life of Swami Akhandanandaji:

I remember the incident of Swami Akhandanandaji. Once it so happened that Swami Akhandanandaji was wandering in the Himalayas. During that period he saw a beautiful cave. Swami Akhandanandaji was a great lover of natural beauty. He decided to meditate that night in the cave thinking about God. He came down to have some alms and the village people welcomed him with great respect. He told them, "I saw a cave and after taking food, I would like to go back to that cave." The villager said, "Swami please do not go. A man-eating tiger is roaming there. A few people have been killed. Please spend the night in one of our houses. Whichever house you like. Early morning you make your way." The villagers tried to persuade him so Swami rested there for a while. A thought came to his mind. Did I lose faith

in God? God is there, is He not going to protect me? Immediately he got up and despite the loving protests of the villagers, he made his way up to the cave. The villagers were sure that they would find his bones the next morning. Fortunately, Shri Ramakrishna saved him. These kinds of incidents are there. God is there. But does it mean that every time He would save us? No. Sometimes they can also be killed by an accident or something else. They have been kicked by people. Saint John of the Cross was kept in prison and beaten regularly and severely by his own brother monks. Until one day God decided to make him free.

Saint Teresa and Lord Jesus Christ:

Saint Teresa suffered so much in her life. Once Jesus Christ gave her a command, "You go and reform my church." She took it very seriously. Unfortunately, she had to go through so much abuse by her own nuns and monks because she used to advise them and they did not like it. They used to say, "You have fallen from your ideal. You are bringing a bad name and a bad idea to everybody." They made her life difficult and obstructed her way. Her physical health was not too good either. She got tired. One day she went to Jesus and said, "Lord, You commanded me to do good. Why do you keep creating all these problems for me? Why don't you remove these unnecessary hurdles?" Jesus smiled very sweetly and said, "My dear, that is how I treat my friends." Saint Teresa responded promptly. She said, "Now I know why you have so few friends. If you are going to treat your friends in this way, it's no wonder you have few friends." Every devotee goes through tremendous difficulties. I have mentioned some incidents in the lives of devotees of Shiva. I may quote them also later on. Here are certain points.

9) aniketah—without attachment to the place of residence; **sthira**—firmly fixed; **matih**—intellect; **bhakti-mān**—full of devotion; **me**—to Me; **priyah**—very dear; **narah**—a person: We must keep in mind. No person should ever think that I have a secure house. I have health insurance. My income is fixed. These people do not have faith in God. A devotee should totally depend upon God. How many devotees are willing to part with a bit of their high income? We think about inflation and other financial situations. There may be inflation in the finance system, but there will be deflation in their Bhakti system. That people do not understand. These qualities have to be meditated upon. What is the take-up of this? A devotee must think: My only home is God. That's why Swamiji sang, *maan chalo nij niketane*.

sthira—firmly fixed; **matih**—intellect: A devotee's mind is totally fixed on God. It will not move one millimetre from what it decides to stick to it. This is called **sthiramatih**. The greatest example is Buddha. We will talk about it tomorrow.

bhakti-mān—full of devotion: Any devotee who has these qualities is called **bhaktiman**/endowed with *Bhakti/devotion*. So what is *Bhakti*? What is meant by being endowed with *Bhakti*? Acquisition of these spiritual or devotional qualities. Every devotional quality is a spiritual quality. Whether you call it the characteristics of Jnana, or Karma-Yoga, or Bhakti-Yoga, or Raja-Yoga, as explained by Patanjali in his *Astang-Yoga* अष्टांग योग- *Yama* यम and *Niyama* नियम. There is absolutely no difference. If anybody strives sincerely to acquire these qualities, such a person is sure to be endowed with *Bhakti*. Because the person gets the knowledge: I and God are very closely related. I belong to God. He belongs to me. I am part of God. He is the whole and I am part. And in the final run, I am none other than God. These are the stages every devotee has to pass through, east or west, consciously or unconsciously. The Divine Lord says: Such a devotee is very dear to me, and by implication, very near to me. We will discuss these things in tomorrow's class.

May Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda bless us all with bhakti. I wish the newcomers who have joined this Bhagavad Gita class a very spiritual new year. May Sri Ramakrishna help us, guide us and fill us with spiritual knowledge.

May Swami Sivanandaji, Mahapurush Maharaj also bless us with bhakti. Today is his auspicious Janma Tithi. We celebrated his birthday in many places. And devotees continue to celebrate it. Jay Ramakrishna.

Vasudeva sutham devam kamsa Chanoora mardhanam,
Devaki paramanandam Krishnam vande Jagat Gurum.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

May Shri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda bless us all.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

Kind regards

(Mamta Misra)