

THE FIFTH TRACK OF SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

by

Ramananda Prasad, Ph.D.;
Founder, American Gita Society

Abstract

There are four general paths of yoga ³/₄ the path of Karma, Jnaana, Bhakti, and Dhyaana. In this article the author who has been a student of the Bhagavad Gita for over twenty five years points out and elaborates the ultimate and the most powerful fifth track hidden in the conclusive verse of the last chapter of the Gita. **That path is the path of surrender to the will of God. The practice of Karma-yoga is not possible without surrendering. It is said that one who obeys in his heart the will of God with pleasure attains nirvana in a true sense. Gold and stone, pain and pleasure are alike to such a person only.**

The author lays a firm foundation and points to methods and requirements, based on the Gita and other major world scriptures such as the Dhammapada, the Bible, Koran, and the teachings Sikhism and Jainism, that may lead a seeker automatically to this track and help reach the goal of Self-realization in this very life. A proper technique for prayer as well as the difference between prayer, worship and meditation is also discussed for the benefits of sincere seekers.



Introduction

The Supreme Lord Krishna said: In this world, O Arjuna, a twofold path of spiritual discipline has been stated by Me in the past. The path of Self-knowledge (Jnana-yoga) for the contemplative, and the path of unselfish work (Seva, or Karma-yoga) for the active. (Gita 3.03)

If we follow the path of Karma-yoga with a deep feeling of love of God $\frac{3}{4}$ Bhakti, then Karma-yoga is called Bhakti-yoga, the path of devotion. Thus we generally think of three tracks or paths of Jiva's grand return journey to Eternal Abode $\frac{3}{4}$ back to Godhead.

These paths are $\frac{3}{4}$ the paths of Karma, Bhakti, and Jnana. The fourth path, the path of meditation, contemplation, and worship is generally considered to come under Bhakti, or it is separately called Raja-yoga or Dhyaana-yoga. Thus there are four commonly known paths. Let us examine the most important fifth, or the ultimate path, of the journey by examining the following five verses of the Bhagavad-Gita:

This divine power (Maya) of Mine, consisting of three states (Gunas) of mind, is very difficult to overcome. Only those who surrender unto Me easily cross over this Maya. (7.14)

Anybody $\frac{3}{4}$ including women, merchants, laborers, and the evil-minded $\frac{3}{4}$ can attain the Supreme Abode by just surrendering unto My will with loving devotion, O Arjuna. (9.32)

If you are unable to work for Me, then just surrender unto My will, and renounce (the attachment to, and the anxiety for) the fruits of all work with subdued mind (by learning to accept all results, as God's grace (Prasad)) with equanimity. (12.11)

A Karma-yogi devotee attains Moksha, the eternal immutable abode, by My grace $\frac{3}{4}$ even while doing all duties $\frac{3}{4}$ just by taking refuge in Me (by surrendering all action to Me with loving devotion). (18.56)

Setting aside all meritorious deeds (Dharma), just surrender completely to My will (with firm faith and loving devotion). I shall liberate you from all sins (or the bonds of Karma). Do not grieve. (18.66)

The word "surrender" is common to all the five verses. We also know that verse 18.66 of the Gita is considered to be the summary verse, or the most important point to be

remembered from the teachings of the Gita. Let us first elaborate the meaning of this conclusive verse of the Gita.

The fifth path

The meaning of abandoning all duties and taking refuge in the Lord is that a seeker should perform her or his duties, as an offering to the Lord, without any selfish attachment, and totally depend only on the Lord for help and guidance. The Lord takes full responsibility for a person who totally depends on Him (Gita 9.22). The scripture says: The wise should not be attached even to righteous deeds for their entire life, but should engage their mind and intellect to the contemplation of the Supreme Being (Mahabharata 12.290.21). One should develop a spirit of genuine self-surrender to the Lord by offering everything, including even the fruits of spiritual discipline (Sadhana), to Him. **We should offer all our work to God. The world is controlled by the laws or the will of God. One has to learn to abide by His will. Be thankful in prosperity and resign to His will in adversity.**

A true devotee perceives: O Lord, I remembered You, because You remembered me first.

One breaks away every yoke of bondage, and becomes free in this very life as soon as one gains the knowledge and a firm conviction that everything is done by the will of God; it is His world, His sport (Lila), and His battle, not ours; and regards oneself as a mere actor in the divine play, and the Lord as the great director in the cosmic drama of soul on the stage of creation.

Surrendering of individual will to divine will is the culmination of all spiritual practices (Sadhana) resulting in joyful participation in the drama of joys and sorrows of life. This is called Jivana-mukti, or Mahaayaana in Buddhism. One cannot realize God as long as one does not completely get rid of ego, the body consciousness or the feeling of doership and ownership. The grace of God is triggered when one becomes firmly convinced that he or she is not the doer, and at once becomes Jivana-mukta $\frac{3}{4}$ free in this very life. Contemplation on the following verses of the Gita should help get rid of body consciousness:

All works are being done by the energy and power of nature; but due to delusion of ignorance, people assume themselves to be the doer. (3.27)

The one who perceives that all works are done by the powers (Gunas) of material Nature (Prakriti) alone, and thus does not consider oneself (or the Atma) as the doer, that person truly understands. (13.29)

When visionaries perceive no doer other than the powers of Eternal Being (Brahma) ³/₄ the modes (Gunas) of material Nature(Prakriti); and know That which is above and beyond the Gunas; then they attain salvation (Mukti). (14.19)

The Supreme Lord Krishna abiding as Ishvara in the causal heart (or the inner psyche) of all beings, O Arjuna, causes them to act (or work out their Karma) by His divine kinetic energy (of Maya) as if they are (puppets of Karma) mounted on a machine. (18.61)

Thus, when we fully believe that we are nothing but a divine instrument (Gita 11.33) or a mere puppet (Gita 18.61) in the cosmic drama, then surrendering becomes a natural, and an effortless process.

The meaning of Surrendering

Surrendering to God does not involve leaving the world, but realizing that everything happens in accordance with His laws, and by His direction and power. To fully recognize that everything is controlled and governed by a divine plan is to surrender to Him. In surrender one lets the divine plan rule his or her life without giving up one's best effort. It is the complete renunciation of individual existence or the ego. It is the feeling: O my beloved Lord, nothing is mine, everything — including my body, mind, and ego — is Yours; I am not Brahma (or Soham); but Dasoham, Your servant; save me from the ocean of transmigration. I tried to get out of the ocean of the material world (Samsaara) using all the methods given in the scriptures, but failed. Now I have discovered the ultimate process — the process of seeking divine grace through prayer and surrender.

God can be discovered by seeking His help in discovering Him and not by spiritual practices alone. Thus, one should start the spiritual journey as a dualist (Dvaitins), experience monism (Advaitism), and again come back to dualism (Dvaitism). A successful journey begins and ends at the same place.

The process of surrender may be called the fifth or the ultimate path of yoga ³/₄ the other four being the path of Karma, Jnaana, Bhakti, and Dhyaana. His Holiness Swami Chidanand Saraswati (Muniji) beautifully explains this process. He says: Every pain, every ache, every discomfort becomes Prasad, or His gift and grace when you lay it in His lap. If you put the reins

of your life-chariot in His hands, you will be ever happy, ever peaceful. This is the lesson of ultimate surrender that one must learn.

It is the divine grace or power that comes in the form of self-effort. The divine grace and self-effort, as well as dualism (Dvaitism) and monism (Advaitism) are nothing but the two sides of the same coin of Reality. **The grace of God is always available — one has to collect it. To win the grace is not easy. One has to earn it by sincere spiritual discipline (Sadhana) and effort.** Grace is the cream of that effort — our own good Karma. It is said that self-effort is absolutely necessary, but the last rung of the ladder to the Supreme is not Sadhana or the self-effort but praying for His grace in the spirit of surrender. **When everything is surrendered to Him; and one truly understands that He is the goal, the path, the traveler, as well as the obstacles on the path; vice and virtue become powerless and harmless as a cobra with fangs removed.**

According to Shri Shankaracharya, if any object other than the Supreme Being (Para-Brahma) — the Cosmic Energy Field — appears to exist, it is unreal like a mirage, or the presence of a snake in the rope. When one firmly understands that there is nothing else except Para-Brahma and His sport (Lila), all Karma gets exhausted; one surrenders to His will, and attains Mukti. Shri Yukteswar said: Human life is beset with sorrow until we know how to surrender or tune in with the divine will that baffles our intellect. The Koran says: Whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them; neither shall they grieve (Surah 2.38). The Upanishad says: The knower of the Par-Brahma goes beyond grief.

The Lord chooses much better things for you if you let Him be your guide by surrendering unto His will. The Bible says: Father in the heaven knows all of what you need. Give first place to His Kingdom, and what He requires. He will provide you everything (Matthew 6.32-33).

Surrendering to God (or Ishvara Parinidhaana) with faithful loving devotion is also the tenth and one of the most important Yamas and Niyamas of Patanjali yoga-sutra that Jains follow. Guru Nanak Deva said: The one who obeys the will of God with pleasure is free and wise. Gold and stone, pain and pleasure are alike only for such a person.

Does this process work?

Let us examine few examples from the history how this process of surrender has worked in the actual lives of saints and sages. Take the example of Draupadi in Mahabharata. She was quite helpless when she was being humiliated in the most insulting way. She first tried her best to hold on to her Sari being pulled by one of the evil minded Kaurava brothers. And in the end when she found that it was impossible for her to protect herself, and nobody else present there had the courage to do something about it, she surrendered to Krishna. She stopped holding on to her Sari and said: O Lord, I cannot protect myself from this shameful act, I give up, help me O, Krishna. She lifted both hands from Sari in prayer to Krishna in the spirit of complete surrender instead of trying to protect herself. And as we know the miracle happened, and she was helped by the process of surrender. The omnipresent Infinite Para-Brahma became the Sari of infinite length.

How to pray

There are many instances of this process working miracles in the lives of saints and sages. Another more recent example may be found in the Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda in "Two Penniless Boys in Brindaban." There are several other examples of the effectiveness of this process of surrender.

Sometimes people say that Lord does not listen to my prayer, I am tired of praying. Prayer, like any other technique, also should be done in a proper way in order to be effective. **The Bible says: When you ask for something in a prayer, have faith and believe that you have received it, and it will be given to you (Mark 11.24).** In a prayer one should ask Lord's help in getting what one needs, and not what one wants; in worship you adore, glorify, and thank Him for what you have. And meditation is listening to God by stilling the mind, and assuming a receptive posture in order to hear Lord's instructions, insights, and revelations. One should first be aware of and contemplate on one's plight, feel helpless in getting out of the difficulty, then seek divine help ^¾ through prayer^¾ in a state of helplessness. Be very specific in what you ask, and then cry for His help like a baby.

The prerequisites

However, there is a simple prerequisite for the process to take place and work. **The light of Self-knowledge (Jnaana) that dispels ignorance and makes the process of surrender comes automatically from the Eternal Being (Brahma), the internal Parama-guru, when one's mind is purified by sincere Seva, and Sadhana.**

It is just like cleaning the jewelry first before goldplating it. The Eightfold Noble Path of Buddhism $\frac{3}{4}$ Right view, right thought, right speech, right deeds, right livelihood, right effort, right resolve, and right meditation $\frac{3}{4}$ or the doctrine of Buddha is meant for purification of our inner psyche.

To quote the words of His Holiness Muniji: **"Doing is Being, and Being is doing.** This is Lord Krishna's message. So many people today assume that a spiritual path is one of idleness, one of silent contemplation high on a Himalayan mountain top. But, Lord Krishna teaches otherwise. **We should be the hands that do God's work — this is Karma-yoga.** We should not only be divine, but we should do divine. It is a different kind of "doing" than most people do. It is "being" while "doing." What does this mean? It means letting your work be prayer, be meditation. All the time your hands are doing, your mind should be on God (Gita 8.07). **Have His name on your lips and in your heart, and have His work on your hands."**

Ignorance is the mother of all sins. The giving of the gift of knowledge is the best charity. It is equivalent to giving the whole world in charity (Mahabharata 12.209.113). The best welfare is to help others discover their real nature that is the source of everlasting happiness rather than provide material goods and comforts for temporary happiness. The Bible says: Whoever obeys the law, and teaches others to do the same, will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5.19). **Happiness is not attained through wealth and self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy cause (Helen Keller).** And that worthy cause is mentioned by the Lord Himself when He said:

The one who shall propagate (or help its propagation in any way) this supreme secret philosophy (or the transcendental knowledge of the Gita) amongst My devotees, shall be performing the highest devotional service to Me, and shall certainly (attain the Supreme Abode, Parama-dhama, and) come to Me. No other person shall do a more pleasing service to Me, and no one on the earth shall be more dear to Me. (Gita 18.68-69)

Karma-Yoga and surrendering

Selfish desire is the root of all evil in the society, family, or the world from time immemorial. These negative qualities such as anger, greed, attachment, pride, jealousy, hatred, and fraud are born out of desire. Desire, when fulfilled, brings more desires, thereby breeding greed. The unfulfilled desires cause anger. The ignorance of metaphysics is responsible for material desires, including the desire for fame. They who have overcome desires have really conquered the world, and live a peaceful, healthy, and happy life.

"Helping one another you shall attain the Supreme (Gita 3.11)" is the original commandment of the creator, Brahmaa, to humanity. Cooperation, not competition, is more conducive to overall progress of the individual as well as the society. **Nothing worthwhile can be achieved without the cooperation and help from others.** It is the selfish motive that prevents cooperation even between spiritual organizations. **A Karma-yogi only knows cooperation.** The word competition does not exist in the vocabulary of a true Karma-yogi. The lack of cooperation is due to the fact that people do not depend on God and do not follow the fifth track. It is not possible to practice Karma-yoga without surrendering to His will.

In conclusion, after one has tried all other paths and reached a dead end $\frac{3}{4}$ helpless, tired, and about to become an atheist $\frac{3}{4}$ in the journey; switch to the fifth track, the track of ***Maam-ekam sharanam vraja***. Let this conclusive formula 18.66 of the holy Gita be the mantra of the last resort. But do not worry, if one has sincerely followed any one of the four above mentioned tracks or paths, one shall be automatically switched to the fifth track by the track Master.

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Reference:

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA (*The Song of God*) Translated by Ramananda Prasad, Ph.D.;
Published by the American Gita Society,

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The author is the founder of the American Gita Society that offers absolutely free Gita lessons by correspondence for the beginners. Dr. Prasad is a Senior Supervisory Civil Engineer (Research and Planning) with the United States Navy. He has his own translation of the Bhagavad-Gita, published by the Motilal of Delhi. He lives at 511 Lowell Place, Fremont, California 94536-1805 and can be reached at (510) 791-6953.