

PATH OF DEVOTION

SHOULD ONE WORSHIP A PERSONAL OR AN IMPERSONAL GOD?

Arjuna asked: Those ever steadfast devotees who worship the personal aspect of God with form(s), and others who worship the impersonal aspect, or the formless Absolute; which of these has the best knowledge of yoga? (12.01)

Lord Krishna said: Those ever steadfast devotees who worship with supreme faith by fixing their mind on a personal form of God, I consider them to be the best yogis. (See also 6.47) (12.02)

But those who worship the unchangeable, the inexplicable, the invisible, the omnipresent, the inconceivable, the unchanging, the immovable, and the formless impersonal aspect of God; restraining all the senses, even-minded under all circumstances, engaged in the welfare of all creatures, also attain God. (12.03-04)

REASONS FOR WORSHIPPING A PERSONAL FORM OF GOD

Self-realization is more difficult for those who fix their mind on the impersonal, unmanifest, and formless Absolute; because, comprehension of the unmanifest by embodied beings is attained with difficulty. (12.05)

For those who worship the Supreme with unswerving devotion as a personal deity of their choice, offer all actions to Me, intent on Me as the Supreme, and meditate on Me; I swiftly become their savior $\frac{3}{4}$ from the world that is the ocean of death and transmigration $\frac{3}{4}$ whose thoughts are set on My personal form, O Arjuna. (12.06-07)

FOUR PATHS TO GOD

Therefore, focus your mind on Me, and let your intellect dwell upon Me alone through meditation and contemplation. Thereafter you shall certainly attain Me. (12.08)

If you are unable to focus your mind steadily on Me, then long to attain Me by practice of any other spiritual discipline; such as a ritual, or deity worship that suits you. (12.09)

If you are unable even to do any spiritual discipline, then be intent on performing your duty just for Me. You shall attain perfection by doing your prescribed duty for Me — without any selfish motive — just as an instrument to serve and please Me. (12.10)

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

KARMA-YOGA IS THE BEST WAY TO START WITH

The transcendental knowledge of scriptures is better than mere ritualistic practice; meditation is better than scriptural knowledge; renunciation of selfish attachment to the fruits of work (Karma-yoga) is better than meditation; peace immediately follows renunciation of selfish motives. (See more on renunciation in 18.02, 18.09) (12.12)

THE ATTRIBUTES OF A DEVOTEE

One who does not hate any creature, who is friendly and compassionate, free from the notion of "I" and "my", even-minded in pain and pleasure, forgiving; and who is ever content, who has subdued the mind, whose resolve is firm, whose mind and intellect are engaged in dwelling upon Me, who is devoted to Me, is dear to Me. (12.13-14)

The one by whom others are not agitated and who is not agitated by others, who is free from joy, envy, fear, and anxiety, is also dear to Me. (12.15)

One who is desireless, pure, wise, impartial, and free from anxiety; who has renounced the doership in all undertakings; such a devotee is dear to Me. (12.16)

One who neither rejoices nor grieves, neither likes nor dislikes, who has renounced both the good and the evil, and is full of devotion; is dear to Me. (12.17)

The one who remains the same towards friend or foe, in honor or disgrace, in heat or cold, in pleasure or pain; who is free from attachment; who is indifferent to censure or praise; who is quiet, and content with whatever he or she has; unattached to a place, a country, or a house; equanimous, and full of devotion ³/₄ that person is dear to Me. (12.18-19)

ONE SHOULD SINCERELY TRY TO DEVELOP DIVINE QUALITIES

But those faithful devotees, who set Me as their supreme goal and follow — or just sincerely try to develop — the above mentioned nectar of moral values are very dear to Me. (12.20)