Ancient Vedic Mantras and Rituals

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita Chapter–3 Shalok–39 | श्रीमद् भगवद्गीता अध्याय तीन–श्लोक उनतालीस | PDF

Chapter 3 – Karma Yoga
Verse 39
Sanskrit Verse

Āvṛitaṁ jñānam etena jñānino nitya-vairiṇā |
Kāma-rūpeṇa Kaunteya duṣhpūreṇānalena cha ‖39‖

Simple Meaning

Lord Krishna said:

O Arjuna, the knowledge of even wise people is covered by this eternal enemy in the form of desire, which can never be satisfied, just like an ever-burning fire.

Detailed Explanation

Desire Covers Knowledge

In this verse, Lord Krishna explains that uncontrolled desire (Kāma) is one of the greatest obstacles to spiritual wisdom.

Even when a person possesses knowledge and understanding, strong desires can cover that wisdom and prevent

the person from acting according to truth and righteousness.

Knowledge remains present within, but desire creates a veil that prevents it from being properly expressed.

Desire – The Eternal Enemy

Lord Krishna describes desire as the **“nitya-vairi”**, meaning the eternal or constant enemy of wisdom.

Desire continuously creates new expectations in the mind.

When one desire is fulfilled, another desire often takes its place.

Therefore, a person who constantly follows desires may remain trapped in an endless cycle of wanting and seeking.

The Never-Satisfied Fire

Lord Krishna compares desire to an ever-burning fire.

A fire is not satisfied by receiving more fuel. Instead, the more fuel it receives, the more intensely it burns.

Similarly, worldly desires do not become satisfied simply because some wishes have been fulfilled.

The more a person gives in to uncontrolled desires, the more desires may arise.

This creates restlessness, dissatisfaction, attachment, and suffering.

How Desire Covers Wisdom

Desire affects the mind and intellect in several ways.

First, it creates attachment toward objects, people, achievements, and pleasures.

Then the mind becomes focused on obtaining or protecting those things.

When the desired result is not achieved, frustration and anger may arise.

As a result, the person's ability to think clearly and make wise decisions becomes weakened.

Thus, desire gradually covers spiritual knowledge and disturbs inner peace.

Even the Wise Must Remain Alert

The verse uses the word **"jñāninaḥ"**, referring to those who possess knowledge.

This teaches that merely acquiring intellectual or spiritual knowledge is not enough.

A seeker must also develop self-control and remain aware of subtle desires within the mind.

Without discipline, even a knowledgeable person can become distracted by attachment and worldly temptation.

Karma Yoga in Practice

Karma Yoga teaches that desires should be purified rather than blindly followed.

When a person performs duties without selfish attachment to the results and offers actions to God, the influence of personal desires gradually decreases.

Through selfless action, devotion, meditation, spiritual knowledge, and self-discipline, the mind becomes increasingly peaceful and pure.

As the mind becomes purified, the covering created by desire begins to disappear.

The Path to Freedom

Lord Krishna teaches that true freedom does not come from fulfilling every desire.

Instead, freedom comes from understanding the nature of desire and gaining control over the mind.

When desires no longer control one’s thoughts and actions, wisdom becomes clearer and the person progresses toward self-realization.

This inner victory leads toward lasting peace and liberation.

Key Points

- Desire covers the knowledge of even wise people.
- Uncontrolled desire is described as an eternal enemy.
- Desire can never be completely satisfied through material enjoyment.
- Lord Krishna compares desire to an ever-burning fire.
- Attachment and desire disturb the mind and weaken wisdom.
- Self-control is necessary even for spiritually knowledgeable people.
- Karma Yoga helps purify selfish desires.
- Selfless action, devotion, and spiritual knowledge lead toward freedom.
- Mastering desire allows wisdom and inner peace to flourish.

Profound Spiritual Meaning

This verse reveals that the greatest obstacle to spiritual realization is not a lack of knowledge, but the desires that cover the knowledge already present within.

Desire constantly demands fulfillment and keeps the mind focused on temporary pleasures and achievements.

Like fire that grows stronger when more fuel is added, uncontrolled desire becomes stronger when repeatedly satisfied.

Lord Krishna therefore teaches that true spiritual progress comes from purifying desires, performing selfless actions, practicing devotion, and developing mastery over the mind.

When the veil of desire is removed, spiritual wisdom shines clearly, leading the seeker toward self-realization, inner peace, and ultimate liberation.

Word-by-Word Meaning

Āvṛitam – Covered, concealed

Jñānam – Knowledge, wisdom

Etena – By this

Jñāninaḥ – Of the wise person

Nitya-vairiṇā – Eternal enemy

Kāma-rūpeṇa – In the form of desire

Kaunteya – O son of Kunti, Arjuna

Duṣhpūreṇa – Never satisfied, difficult to fulfill

Analena – By fire

Cha – And

Message of the Verse

Lord Krishna teaches that uncontrolled desire is the eternal enemy of spiritual wisdom. It covers the knowledge of even wise people and behaves like an ever-burning fire that is never satisfied. The more material desires are pursued, the more they can increase, creating attachment, restlessness, and suffering. Through Karma Yoga, selfless action, devotion, self-discipline, and spiritual knowledge, a person can overcome the influence of desire. By mastering the mind and purifying one’s desires, the seeker uncovers true wisdom and moves toward inner peace, self-realization, and ultimate liberation.

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