

Why So Late with Love?

Ram (James Swartz)

2017-03-13

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3209>

Seeker: Hi, James.

A question came up in our Vedanta study group yesterday that I thought I'd ask you. Why bring up the topic of love in the thirteenth chapter? Why not earlier? FYI, I had no problem with the chapter's location in *The Essence of Enlightenment*, but I could not adequately share your intent and the group would love to know why, after all this talk of existence, consciousness and limitlessness, do you speak of love now, in Chapter XIII?

James: How can you speak of love without a context? The context is the quest for *moksa*. The first six chapters of the *Gita* are about *jiva*. They are about exercising your free will to get yourself out of your emotions. Krishna establishes the idea that the way out of an emotional response to life is to practice *karma yoga*, which is to surrender the fruits of your actions to *Isvara*. Once your emotions are under control, you need to understand who/what *Isvara* is because *Isvara* is the key to *moksa*. It's the link between *jiva* and the self. So the next six chapters deal with the nature of *Isvara*. Once it's clear who *Isvara* is and how important it is to realizing your goal, you will be comfortable investing your love in it. How can you love something you don't understand? So it is appropriate to introduce this topic at this point.

Another reason is to avoid the notion that *bhakti* is a special path, an idea that gained currency five hundred years ago and is alive and well today. The idea is that knowledge won't get you there, because it is "only intellectual," so you should chant and worship and somehow *moksa* will just drop out of the sky one fine day. People committed to this path don't grow holistically. Every human being has emotions, intellect and an ego. *Karma yoga* takes care of the ego. *Jnana yoga* takes care of the intellect, and *bhakti yoga* takes care of the emotions. But the emotions need to be channeled into the idea of gaining freedom. Otherwise a person who loves God remains in duality and suffers. So as I said above, the context that makes it possible to sublimate your emotions into devotion needs to be established before you set off to love something, in this case yourself.

~ Love, James