

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

BHAGAVAD GEETA – 4

*Renunciation of
Action in Knowledge*

“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”

**TEXT
28.04**

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA



Sandeepany's Vedanta Course

List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:

Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT	Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT
1	<i>Sadhana Panchakam</i>	24	<i>Hanuman Chalisa</i>
2	<i>Tattwa Bodha</i>	25	<i>Vakya Vritti</i>
3	<i>Atma Bodha</i>	26	<i>Advaita Makaranda</i>
4	<i>Bhaja Govindam</i>	27	<i>Kaivalya Upanishad</i>
5	<i>Manisha Panchakam</i>	28.04	<i>Bhagavad Geeta (Discourse 4)</i>
6	<i>Forgive Me</i>	29	<i>Mundaka Upanishad</i>
7	<i>Upadesha Sara</i>	30	<i>Amritabindu Upanishad</i>
8	<i>Prashna Upanishad</i>	31	<i>Mukunda Mala (Bhakti Text)</i>
9	<i>Dhanyashtakam</i>	32	<i>Tapovan Shatkam</i>
10	<i>Bodha Sara</i>	33	<i>The Mahavakyas, Panchadasi 5</i>
11	<i>Viveka Choodamani</i>	34	<i>Aitareya Upanishad</i>
12	<i>Jnana Sara</i>	35	<i>Narada Bhakti Sutras</i>
13	<i>Drig-Drishya Viveka</i>	36	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>
14	<i>"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6</i>	37	<i>Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)</i>
15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
16	<i>"Bhoomaiva Sukham" Chand Up 7</i>	39	<i>Aparoksha Anubhuti (Meditation)</i>
17	<i>Manah Shodhanam</i>	40	<i>108 Names of Pujya Gurudev</i>
18	<i>"Nataka Deepa" – Panchadasi 10</i>	41	<i>Mandukya Upanishad</i>
19	<i>Isavasya Upanishad</i>	42	<i>Dakshinamurty Ashtakam</i>
20	<i>Katha Upanishad</i>	43	<i>Shad Darshanaah</i>
21	<i>"Sara Sangrah" – Yoga Vasishtha</i>	44	<i>Brahma Sootras</i>
22	<i>Vedanta Sara</i>	45	<i>Jivanmuktananda Lahari</i>
23	<i>Mahabharata + Geeta Dhyanam</i>	46	<i>Chinmaya Pledge</i>

A NOTE ABOUT SANDEEPANY

Sandeepany Sadhanalaya is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramacharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– *The Author, February 2019, Shivaratri Day*

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text
28.04



ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यासयोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA – 4

“Renunciation of Action in KNOWLEDGE”

Sri Veda Yyasaji

Reflections

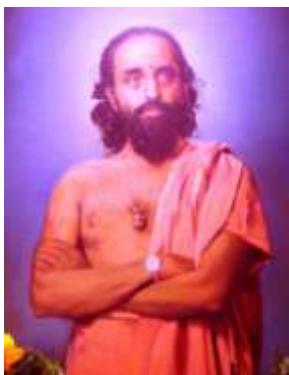
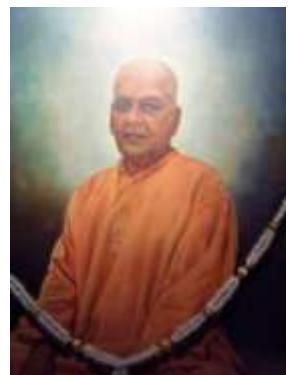
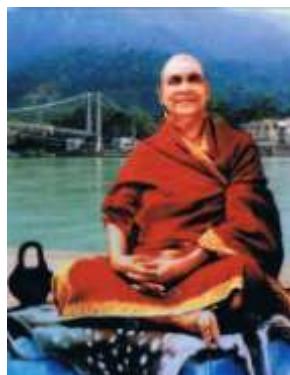
by Swami Gurubhaktananda

on the 18 Lectures delivered by Swami Advayanandaji

Acharyaji, 15th Batch Vedanta Course

at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai, Mumbai

March 2nd – March 22nd, 2012



Adi Shankaracharya Swami Sivananda Swami Tapovanji Swami Chinmayananda

SERVE • LOVE • GIVE • PURIFY • MEDITATE • REALISE

Copyright & Author's Details

Author:

Swami Gurubhaktananda (ex Krishna Chaitanya, born Bipin R. Kapitan in Durban, South Africa)

Email: gurubhakta.dls@gmail.com

© 2018 All Rights Reserved. Copyright held by Swami Gurubhaktananda.

About This Edition:

Web Edition: 21st March, 2019, Holi, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Jayanti Day
Website: Chinmaya International Foundation: www.chinfo.org
Series Title : **The Sandeepany Experience**
Series Subject: Vedanta & Supportive Subsidiary Texts

Declaration by the Author: *The material in this series is under inspiration of the Sandeepany Vedanta Course, but largely consists of the Author's reflections on the Course. He is deeply indebted to the Chinmaya Mission for its excellent presentation of the Course by their renowned and dedicated Acharyas.*

Personal Dedication

1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan

who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;

2. To Puja Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj

the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;

3. To Puja Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)

for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;

4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji

my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

BHAGAVAD GEETA - 4

“Renunciation of Action in Knowledge”

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

अथ चतुर्थोऽध्यायः
ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यासयोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA

Discourse – 4 (42 Verses)

“Renunciation of Action in KNOWLEDGE”

INTRODUCTION

THE EMPHASIS ON KNOWLEDGE comes through much more forcefully in this chapter. It now becomes quite clear that as far as Sri Krishna is concerned, He would like the *whole* Geeta to be treated as **Jnana Yoga**, which we have seen in Discourse 2 as Saankhya Yoga. Without the knowledge element, all Sadhana loses its most essential element. It becomes a journey without a destination.

In this chapter, Sri Krishna achieves three major changes in Arjuna's mind that firmly establish the Guru-disciple relationship and make the Teaching more appealing:

i) **Vedic Spiritual Culture:** The basis of what has been taught so far – on both Action and Knowledge – is here shown to be rooted in ancient Vedic spiritual culture. Sri Krishna assures Arjuna that He is not teaching anything new, but merely restating in a novel way what has already been accepted by all the great Masters before Him. The link to the past is made by introducing the idea of *Guru Parampara*.

ii) **Reverence and Respect:** The subject matter is taken to a level by which Sri Krishna is able to enhance Arjuna's respect towards His teaching as well as towards Him. The relationship between Him and Arjuna is taken well beyond just friendship, even beyond ordinary discipleship. There comes about through this chapter a great surge in Arjuna's *Mumukshutva* or desire to know who Sri Krishna really is. It inspires great reverence and love for Sri Krishna. That is a major factor in making him more receptive to the teaching.

iii) **Foundation of Reason & Universality:** Sri Krishna also achieves another breakthrough in this chapter. He is able to make Arjuna think deeply over what He is teaching. The appeal of this knowledge depends largely on its *scientific basis*. When Sri Krishna brings out the matter of the caste system in a universal manner, devoid of any bias towards any single group, he appeals to Arjuna's sense of reason. This sets a firm foundation of reason and universality in the approach to spiritual life. Arjuna is convinced that he is not being forced to believe anything that runs against his own reason.

BHAGAVAD GEETA – 4
“Renunciation of Action in KNOWLEDGE”

CONTENTS:

<i>Introduction to Chapter 4</i>	1
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black; margin: 10px 0;"/>	
4.1 THE GURU PARAMPARA	(Verses 1 – 3)
Verse 1: <i>The Guru-Disciple Lineage</i>	4
Verse 2: <i>The Royal Sages</i>	5
Verse 3: <i>“It’s Now Your Turn, Arjuna”</i>	6
<i>Chart: The Individual’s Progress in Sadhana</i>	7
4.2 AVATARAHOOD OF THE LORD	(Verses 4 – 12)
Verse 4: <i>Who Could Sri Krishna Be?</i>	8
Verse 5: <i>The Theory of Reincarnation</i>	9
Verse 6: <i>“This is Who I Am, Arjuna!”</i>	10
Verse 7: <i>“When am I Born?”</i>	12
Verse 8: <i>“What is My Work?”</i>	13
Verse 9: <i>“I Liberate the Jivas”</i>	13
4.3 VARIETIES AMONG DEVOTEES	(Verses 10 – 15)
Verse 10: <i>Threefold Route Taken by Devotees</i>	16
Verse 11: <i>I am Approached in Many Ways</i>	17
Verse 12: <i>Approaching the Lord with Desire</i>	17
Verse 13: <i>The Fourfold Caste System</i>	19
Verse 14: <i>The Perfection of Karma Yoga</i>	22
Verse 15: <i>The Great Karma Yogis of the Past</i>	23
4.4 WHAT IS ACTION & INACTION?	(Verses 16 – 18)
Verse 16: <i>The Syllabus – Action and Inaction</i>	25
Verse 17: <i>The Three Types of Action</i>	26
Verse 18: <i>What is Action in Inaction?</i>	27
4.5 KARMA YOGA’S GRAND PARADE	(Verses 19 – 23)
Verse 19: <i>The Pathway of Self-knowledge</i>	30
Verse 20: <i>The Pathway of Detachment</i>	31
Verse 21: <i>The Pathway of Desirelessness</i>	32
Verse 22: <i>The Pathway of Equipoise</i>	33

Verse 23:	<i>All Pathways Combined</i>	34
4.6 VARIETIES OF SACRIFICE		(Verses 24– 33) 36
Verse 24:	<i>The Perfect Yajna</i>	36
Verse 25:	<i>Daiva & Brahma Yajnas (No. 1 & 2)</i>	37
	<i>Table of Varieties of Yajnas</i>	38
Verse 26:	<i>Samyama & Indriya Yajnas (No. 3 & 4)</i>	40
Verse 27:	<i>Atma Samyama Yajna (No. 5)</i>	41
Verse 28:	<i>Five More Yajnas (No. 6 to 10)</i>	42
Verse 29:	<i>Pranayama Yajna (No. 11)</i>	44
Verse 30:	<i>Ahara Yajna (No. 12) – Restraint on Food</i>	45
Verse 31:	<i>The Yajna Prasada</i>	45
Verse 32:	<i>Common Purpose of the Vedas</i>	46
Verse 33:	<i>All Vedic Roads Lead to Knowledge</i>	47
4.7 MORE ABOUT SELF-KNOWLEDGE		(Verses 34 – 42) 49
Verse 34:	<i>How to Obtain Self-Knowledge</i>	49
Verse 35:	<i>The Permanent Solution for All Sorrow</i>	50
Verse 36:	<i>Even the Most Sinful Can Succeed</i>	51
37 & 38a:	<i>The Purifying Fire of Knowledge</i>	52
38b & 39:	<i>The Obtaining of Knowledge</i>	53
Verse 40:	<i>The Doubting-self Repels Knowledge</i>	55
Verse 41:	<i>Renunciation of Action in Knowledge</i>	56
Verse 42:	<i>“Take Refuge in Yoga and Arise!”</i>	57



4.1 THE GURU PARAMPARA

(Verses 1-3, 3 No.)

SRI KRISHNA SPEAKS FROM the absolute standpoint of His true Divine Origin, not as an embodied, limited Jeeva or human being. More details of this fact emerge as the text unfolds. “Arjuna, I have given this knowledge to others, too, in the past. They have all become great as a result of it, and so will you.”

Verse 1: *The Guru-Disciple Lineage*

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् ।
विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् ॥ ४-१॥

śrībhagavānūvāca |
imam vivasvatē yōgam prōktavānahamavyayam |
vivasvānmanavē prāha manurikṣvākavē:'bravīt || 4-1||

	<i>Shree Bhagavan uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>imam vivasvate yogam,</i>	<i>To Vivasvan was this (Saankhya) Yoga,</i>
2	<i>proktavaan aham avyayam;</i>	<i>which is imperishable, taught by Me;</i>
3	<i>vivasvaan manave praaha,</i>	<i>Vivasvan taught it to Manu;</i>
4	<i>manuh ikshvaakave abraveet.</i>	<i>and Manu taught it to Ikshvaku.</i>

1 Yoga: The knowledge Sri Krishna is speaking of is “*Saankhya Yoga*”, the overall theme and purpose of the Geeta, which was taught in brief in Discourse 2. Saankhya Yoga is the knowledge of the Self, by which man is cured of the disease of Ignorance once and for all. Through destruction of ignorance, he is freed from the power of delusion that clouds his intellect. This freedom enables him to view life from the standpoint of the supreme Truth, from which the world is seen to be unreal and illusory.

This universal vision frees one from the narrow, individualistic outlook on life. It broadens one’s outlook to encompass all creation. Endowed with this new vision based on anchoring oneself in his Self, his entire life becomes more meaningful. A prerequisite for this vision is to liberate oneself from desires and not remain bound by them. Liberation from desires leads to liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. That, in brief, is the great significance of the knowledge that Sri Krishna is referring to.

The “GURU PARAMPARA”

Vivasvan: The Lord imparted this knowledge from time immemorial. The knowledge was given first to the Sun, Vivasvaan (from root *Vivasvat*). The sun is an outstanding example of the ideal Karma Yogi. He works 24 hours a day to give light and warmth to this

world, totally selflessly. For that reason He was the most befitting person to be the first recipient of this knowledge. He is an ideal *Adhikari* or fit student.

The Sun became the channel to preserve this knowledge by passing it on to the next generation, even as a relay baton is passed on from one runner to the next.

2 Like the law of gravity which existed long before Newton discovered it, this knowledge of the Self existed long before the universe was created. As the universe came into existence, the knowledge came with it, being revealed by the Supreme Brahman to the realized Rishis and seers. That Supreme Brahman is represented here as Sri Krishna.

Since the Reality is unchanging and indestructible, so is the knowledge of It unchanging and indestructible. Unlike “*gossip*” which changes when passed on from one person to the next until it bears no resemblance to the original message, knowledge of the Truth cannot change when it is passed on. This is because it is not passed on in *words*, but as a direct *experience* of the Reality.

3 Manu: From Vivasvan, the knowledge was taught to Manu. Another name for Manu is Vaivasvata, since he received the knowledge from Vivasvan. There are 14 Manus, one for each Manvantara or Cosmic Cycle. The one referred to here is the 7th Manu. Other Manus were 1st Swayambhu, 2nd Surochita, 4th Tamasa, 6th Savarni, 10th Brahma Savarni, etc.

4 Ikshvaaku: Manu passed on the ‘knowledge-baton’ to Ikshvaku who was the originator of the Suryavamsha or Solar dynasty in which Lord Rama was born.

Verse 2: *The Royal Sages*

एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।
 स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परन्तप
 ēvam paramparāprāptamimam rājarṣayō viduh ।
 sa kālēnēha mahatā yōgō naṣṭah parantapa || 4-2||

1	<i>evam paramparaa praaptam,</i>	<i>Handed down thus in regular succession,</i>
2	<i>imam raaja rishayah viduh;</i>	<i>this knowledge, the royal sages knew.</i>
3	<i>sah kaalena iha mahataa,</i>	<i>This Yoga, by long lapse of time,</i>
4	<i>yogah naṣṭah parantapa.</i>	<i>has been lost here, O Parantapa.</i>

1 That is how it continued from time immemorial – a continuous succession bringing down the knowledge through time. Such a succession of knowledge is termed *Parampara*, and is recognized as the authoritative method in the Indian tradition to transfer knowledge from one generation to the next. The line or lineage of Gurus who convey this knowledge in this manner is called *Guru Parampara*.

2 Raja Rishayah: In ancient India, the rulers were invariably great sages themselves, as for example Lord Rama and King Janaka. The kings who possessed this great divine knowledge were known as the “*Royal Sages*”. Society was governed by these sages under the highest standards of Dharma, Law and Order.

3-4 Sri Krishna is reminding Arjuna of this noble tradition. Arjuna would also have been a recipient of this knowledge *by birth* had the line of succession not been broken at some point in time due to negligence.

Verse 3: “It’s Now Your Turn, Arjuna”

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः ।
 भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम् ॥ ४-३॥

sa ēvāyam mayā tē:dya yōgah prōktah purātanaḥ |
 bhaktō:si mē sakhā cēti rahasyam hyētaduttamam || 4-3||

1	<i>sah eva ayam mayaa te adya,</i>	<i>Today, to you by Me, That same</i>
2	<i>yogah proktah puraatanah;</i>	<i>ancient Yoga is being taught,</i>
3	<i>bhaktah asi me sakhaa cha iti,</i>	<i>for you are My <u>devotee</u> and My <u>friend</u>.</i>
4	<i>rahasyam hi etat uttamam.</i>	<i>This is a Supreme Secret.</i>

A very special historical moment is being highlighted in this verse.

1-2 When the continuity in the Guru Parampara gets broken at any time, the knowledge somehow gets restored once again by a fresh transference of the knowledge from God Himself. This is what is actually happening here, between Sri Krishna & Arjuna. We are witnessing such a special case of renewal of the succession.

Adya: “today”. This draws our attention to the circumstances of the Mahabharata war, in the midst of which the Lord is initiating Arjuna into this knowledge. Arjuna is uniquely privileged to receive the Divine wisdom on the battlefield itself, not in a secluded hermitage as is traditional.

It is Arjuna’s good fortune (and, through him, our good fortune) that Sri Krishna, as his Friend and Guide, is now giving him the same divine secret knowledge. Arjuna becomes the instrument to get ‘plugged’ once again into the Parampara line by the Lord Himself, to perpetuate the knowledge for the generations to come after him.

The knowledge should come from the Parampara or lineage, not otherwise. It gets handed down from father to son, Guru to disciple, and in no other way.

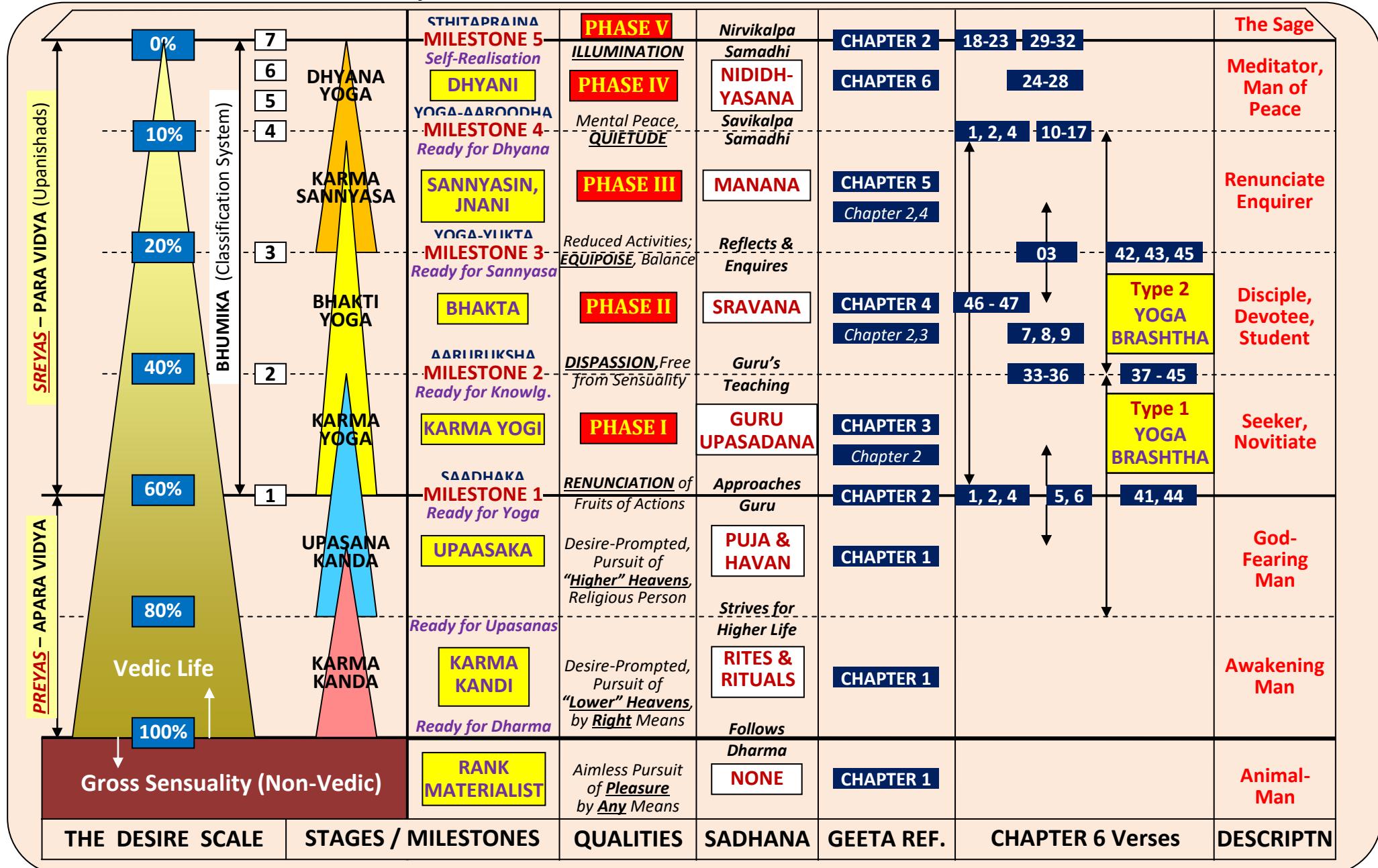
3-4 Sri Krishna places His faith that Arjuna will take up this responsibility when he realizes how valuable the knowledge is for humanity. “Arjuna, I am treating you on par with the great ones. I know you will do justice to it. That is why I am giving you this knowledge.”

There is a special relationship between Sri Krishna and Arjuna. They are not only friends but are also bonded in a Guru-disciple relationship. The love between them is something nothing will break. There exists a rapport between them from childhood. Sri Krishna already knows that Arjuna’s heart is pure; He does not demand any qualification.

At this point the stage is set to impart the full teaching on Action. However, from verse 4-15, we have an instructive diversion brought about by Arjuna’s question...



BHAGAVAD GEETA: Chapters 1 – 6 SUMMARY – The Individual's Progress in Sadhana Verses 1-47



4.2 AVATARAHOOD OF THE LORD

(Verses 4-9, 6 No.)

AVATARAHOOD IS CONCEIVED IN THE Hindu tradition as a special incarnation of a great spiritual Force or Power in whom is centred the requisite knowledge and power necessary to execute a certain specific task. The task has to be one that turns the history of mankind around. A much-needed change for the betterment of a large section of mankind is brought by the Avatar. Lord Krishna took birth for such a specific purpose at a specific time and place in mankind's history to curb the forces of unrighteousness that had taken the upper hand. Hence, He is identified as one of those Avatars.

As we had in the third discourse, we enter another diversion on the topic of Avatarahood, tied to the Theory of Reincarnation. The purpose of it is to show that Lord Krishna took birth to carry out a specific task in human affairs. Among the foremost requirement to fulfil that task was to get Arjuna to participate in the war against the Kauravas. Arjuna was destined to play a pivotal role in this war. He could not be allowed to step out of it for any reason. Arjuna was a key player in Lord Krishna's role as the Avatara.

An interesting fact is that both Sri Krishna and Arjuna are said to be 60 years old at the time of the Great War. At that age they were considered to be in the prime of their lives, the “youth” of their time! Times have changed – today, that is retirement age! After sixty years of knowing Krishna as a friend, now, for the first time he meets Krishna, the Avatar. Naturally, he would be very curious to know who this “new” Person is . . .

Verse 4: Who Could Sri Krishna Be?

अर्जुन उवाच ।
 अपरं भवतो जन्म परं जन्म विवस्वतः ।
 कथमेतद्विजानीयां त्वमादौ प्रोक्तवानिति
 || ४-४||

arjuna uvāca |
 aparaṁ bhavatō janma param janma vivasvataḥ |
 kathamētadvijānīyāṁ tvamādau prōktavāniti
 || 4-4||

	<i>Arjuna uvaacha:</i>	<i>Arjuna said:</i>
1	<i>aparam bhavatah janma,</i>	<i>Later was Your birth,</i>
2	<i>param janma vivasvatah;</i>	<i>and prior was the birth of Vivasvan (Sun);</i>
3	<i>katham etat vijaaneeyaaam,</i>	<i>how am I to understand that</i>
4	<i>twam aadau proktavaan iti.</i>	<i>You taught this Yoga in the beginning?</i>

1-4 Looking at Sri Krishna's words from a layman's level, Arjuna seems to be saying:

"How is this possible? What are you trying to tell me, Krishna? What am I to understand from this? Certainly, You could not have taught them in this body. It has to be in some previous birth. I cannot remember my past births; how is it that You remember Yours?"

"You say that You had taught this to Aditya? Aditya is himself a Deity. That means that You must be greater than him for you to have been his teacher. You must be a greater Divinity than him! Then who exactly are You, Krishna? Are You perhaps the Supreme Lord?

"O Krishna, if You are, then how could You have taken this embodiment and why? If You are the Supreme Being, then what is the secret of Your taking a human body? Oh, I really must know more about You, Krishna. You have been hiding Your real identity from me all these sixty years!"

When we begin to think in this manner of all such implications, we see that this simple response of Arjuna is packed with great depth. It is a *theistic* question, not an atheistic one. This question of Arjuna is going to unravel for us the secret of *Avatarahood*. From close friend to Avatara – that is the leap we are about to make with Arjuna in our own knowledge of Lord Krishna. Here it comes:

Verse 5 ***The Theory of Reincarnation***

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
 बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।
 तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परन्तप
 || ४-५॥

śrībhagavānūvāca |
 bahūni mē vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna |
 tānyaham vēda sarvāṇi na tvam vēttha parantapa || 4-5||

	<i>Shree Bhagavaan uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>bahooni me vyateetaani,</i>	<i>Many births of Mine have passed,</i>
2	<i>janmaani tava chaarjuna;</i>	<i>as well as yours, O Arjuna;</i>
3	<i>taani aham veda sarvaani,</i>	<i>I know them all</i>
4	<i>na twam vēttha parantapa.</i>	<i>but you know them not, O Parantapa.</i>

1-2 The **Theory of Reincarnation** is stated in this verse by the Lord Himself. Since Vedic times this view of the evolution of the human soul has been an established fact. Not that it is unquestioned and followed blindly, for there has been so much of overwhelming proof of it, that it stands in no need of further proof.

Proof of this may now be needed only for Westerners and those Indians who have strayed so far away from their indigenous cultural roots as to question every Truth proclaimed by their own scriptures. Here, we take it for granted that the human being moves from one birth to another in a cycle called **Transmigration**, until such time he liberates himself from it by means which we shall learn in the remainder of the Geeta.

Our present life could be complicated enough. Nature has in her wisdom carefully arranged for our memories to be obliterated at death so that we do not carry the burdens of past births with us into the next birth. What complications would there be if we did! It would be like adding insult to injury. Mother Nature has very kindly spared us this complication.

3 However, the Lord is in a different class altogether. He has the detachment to be able to remember all His births without any complications arising therefrom. What are some

of His past births? We know from the scriptures of the string of Great Avatars of which Lord Krishna was the eighth, and Lord Rama the seventh, with Lord Buddha being the ninth. These are not the only Avatars the Lord has taken. There are numerous other occasions when He has come down. In fact, His work of healing mankind is ongoing and continuous.

More facts about the Lord emerge in the verses to follow, but here we take up only His memory of His past births.

4 Why is it that He can remember them all and we cannot? Acharyaji explained that it was easier to understand this from the level of our forgetfulness of our past births. We have taken birth due to Karmas of the past, both good and bad. Prarabda Karma, allocated for us to work out in this birth, determines our present birth. There is much impurity that screens the Truth from us. We have become so used to thinking of ourselves as being limited to this body, that we do not remember ourselves in previous bodies. Our memories are so weak that even in this birth we are unlikely to remember many details. What then to speak of past births!

The Lord's case is very different from ours. He is not "born" due to Karma as we are. He has other reasons for taking up a Body. When He has a big job to do, He simply chooses to take a human birth and manifest Himself. He is pure Sattwa, and therefore His memory is unclouded. He is always conscious of Himself as Pure Consciousness alone, even though he has to work through a body which He instructs His Maya Power to prepare for Him. Being fully conscious of His true Origin, He remembers all His births.

Sri Krishna is telling Arjuna: "Arjuna, though you are strong; though you may be called a 'scorcher of foes', though you are such a great warrior, none of this qualifies you to know the Unlimited. The Avidya that is present in you disqualifies you.

"Arjuna, you are seeing through a hole in the wall, so you have a limited scope of vision. I am sitting on the wall and I can see both sides of it for miles around. I can even see you looking through the hole! I know what you did ten years ago, but you do not remember even what you ate three weeks ago. That is the difference between us.

"Now let Me answer your question about how and why I have taken this Body . . ."

Verse 6: "This is Who I Am, Arjuna!"

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
 प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया
 || ४-६||
 ajōःpi sannavyayātmā bhūtānāmīśvarōःpi san |
 prakṛtim svāmadhishṭhāya sambhavāmyātmamāyayā || 4-6||

1	<i>ajah api san avyaya aatmaa,</i>	<i>Though <u>unborn</u> and of <u>imperishable</u> nature,</i>
2	<i>bhooṭānaam eeshwarah api san;</i>	<i>and though I am the Lord of all beings,</i>
3	<i>prakritim svaam adhishthaaya,</i>	<i>yet, ruling over My own Nature,</i>
4	<i>sambhavaami aatma maayayaa.</i>	<i>I come into being by My own Maya.</i>

My: The first person, when used in this way in scriptures, should be understood as being the Supreme Brahman Himself. That is the Consciousness from which Lord Krishna operates at all times. That being His sole identity always, He uses "I" with reference to It.

1 *Avyayaatmaa*: We see firstly that Sri Krishna declares Himself that He is none less than the Supreme Brahman Himself, i.e. unborn and imperishable. Everything else in creation is born and dies.

2 *Bhootaanaam Eeshwarah*: He is automatically the “Lord of all beings”, as all beings arise from Brahman, the Causeless cause of all Creation.

3-4 *Prakriti* or *Maayaa*: This is the creative power of the Lord. Since He alone directs Maya’s creative energy, He is the designer of His own Body. There is nothing to limit Him. There is no Prarabdha to intervene in the design of His Body. Although the Lord’s Body will also be made of the same five elements, He is not under the control of the qualities of nature, but beyond them. He is ‘Maya-Pati’, not ‘Maya-Dasa’, i.e. He is Maya’s controller, not Her servant. Maya is at His beck and call. The Lord’s Body or Shareera is completely under His control; He can get into it and out of it at His own Will.

The Lord’s Avatar comes with a clean sheet; there is no taint of Karma in it. It is purely *illusory*, not *delusory*!

THE AVATARA – UNLIMITED BY HIS UPADHIS

This is a concept easy to understand from the Vedantic view. Philosophers always have a problem with the Birth of the ‘Birthless’. From the Vedantic point of view, this can easily be explained since the Lord controls His Maya, not the other way around. Other dualistic schools of philosophy have a problem about the Lord’s Avatar. They are compelled by their dualistic stand to hold that such an Avatar is bound to be limited due to the presence of Maya. They have given too big a status to Maya and are philosophically trapped by their own doctrine to access the Reality beyond Maya.

The Vedantin has no problem with an “illusory” body of Maya; he understands that *limitedness* belongs to the body, not to Consciousness. Since the real Avatar is the Consciousness dwelling in the human form, there is no limitation to the powers capable of manifesting in an Avatar.

Vedanta philosophy, so to speak, permits God to be as big as He chooses to be! Who are we to set limits to His powers?

Thus, even though apparently limited in a human form, the Lord has unlimited powers as He is one with that all-pervading Consciousness. He can work through all Upadhis, not just His own. Here we see Him working through Arjuna. The Avatar is very much like a human “Remote Control” that can operate any equipment (i.e. any body) linked to it. It is our limited intellect that is the limiting factor to our own understanding. The Avatar does not function under such limiting conditions.

This also explains his omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. As He is beyond His own Upadhis, He is able to know all His previous births. We cannot do that as we are restricted in our knowledge by the limitations of our individual mind and intellect. Prakriti cannot veil the Lord, She can only veil individuals by limiting their mind and intellect.

Such a concept of Avatarahood is unique to Hinduism. To Hindus it is not difficult to grasp that the Lord can come in flesh and blood to earth to do His Work.

Verse 7: ***“When am I Born?”***

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
 अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ ४-७॥

yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata |
 abhyutthānamadharmaśya tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham || 4-7||

1	<i>yadaa yadaa hi dharmasya,</i>	<i>Indeed, whenever the Rule of Righteousness</i>
2	<i>glaanih bhavati bhaarata;</i>	<i>is reduced to the point of decay, O Bharata,</i>
3	<i>abhi-utthaanam adharmaśya,</i>	<i>and unrighteousness takes the upper hand,</i>
4	<i>tadaa aatmaanam srijaami aham.</i>	<i>then I manifest Myself!</i>

Now the Lord answers **Why** He takes the trouble of coming in a human form.

1-4 The when of the Lord's birth is decided entirely by Him. It is not an answer to the prayer of any group of devotees. This is not to stop devotees from calling upon Him to come; they will go on doing that out of their love for the Lord. However, there are cosmic forces that determine when He has to embody Himself.

Acharyaji gave a simple example of how the Head of State functions. For 99% of problems, he sends his ministers to deal with the problem. Only when the problem is very major does he decide to go himself and sort out everything. In the same way, the Lord comes Himself when there is a major imbalance between the forces of righteousness and unrighteousness. To restore power into the hands of the righteous He takes birth.

“I decide when I shall come; I don't follow the whims of people. When it is time, then I create a body fit enough for My purpose. I create Myself (Srijaamyaham). I **descend** down to man's level. Not that I start living as men do, but I make Myself perceptible to them. That is what I mean by “My descent”. My descent does not mean a limitation of My powers.”

Examples of WHEN Avatars Descend to Earth:

i) Poorna Avatar: “full”. The Lord comes with all 16 Kaalas of His power. This is the full Avatar, with all the powers of the Lord. Lord Krishna Himself is an example of this type of Avatar. He was totally unrestricted in what He could do. He needed such power in order to execute His work to perfection.

ii) Amsha Avatar: “partial”. This is a partial Avatar. The work to be done does not need all the powers. Lord Rama was an example with 14 rays. His task was specifically to show how to lead an ideal life whilst living in the world under the limitations of the Upadhis.

iii) Avesh Avatar: “sudden”. This is an emergency call when the Lord has to manifest suddenly, as in the case of Narasimhan Avatar, to protect the devotee Prahlad.

iv) Nitya Avatar: “eternal”. The Lord incarnates Himself in all realized sages. The moment a saint realizes God, he automatically gets united with the unlimited Lord. Such a sage has the power or Siddhi to do extraordinary work in the world.

v) Personal Avatar: “personalized”. A realized sage who comes for our own specific need is called our Guru. He may or may not have a large following, but he is there specifically to help us with personal advice for our spiritual growth. For aspirants, this is the most important form of God to assist them. The Guru is the “customized” version of God ordered by the devotee. God comes “tailor-made” to meet his unique needs.

Verse 8: “What is My Work?”

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
 धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे
 || ४-८||
 paritrāṇāya sādhūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām |
 dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge || 4-8||

1	<i>paritraanaaya saadhoonaam,</i>	<i>For the protection of the good,</i>
2	<i>vinaashaaya cha dushkritaam;</i>	<i>for the destruction of the wicked,</i>
3	<i>dharma samsthaapana arthaaya,</i>	<i>for the establishment of righteousness,</i>
4	<i>sambhavaami yuge yuge.</i>	<i>I incarnate from age to age (as the Avatar).</i>

The Lord now answers **What Work** He comes to do when He is amongst men.

1-3 The word ‘work’, ‘mission’, ‘task’ or any other suitable word is only from our human point of view. There is no need for the Lord to protect, to destroy or to establish anything. He is Non-dual – there is nothing other than Him whom He needs to protect, destroy or establish. It would be hard for us to imagine what the Lord Himself would call His work: “Dharma-rising”? or “levelling the playing field” where the Gunas have become unequally distributed? Seen from our angle, that appears as establishing **Dharma** or the rule of Righteousness wherever it has fallen prey to unrighteousness.

God’s incarnations can assist individuals as well as whole communities. This may be done in the course of their major task of reinstating the social order. For example, Lord Rama satisfied His devotee Khevat the boatman, by permitting him to ferry Him across the Ganges River. He also fulfilled the wishes of Shabari-Mata by gracing her humble cottage and accepting her hospitality. Lord Rama also blessed Ahalya by removing the curse placed upon her by her husband. These were acts of personal service.

Yuge Yuge: “from age to age”. This can be interpreted to mean at any time, when it suits Him to come, not according to the demands of people. Whether needed or not is immaterial; He may opt to come whenever He wants to, by His choice, not ours.

More on the individual aspect of His birth is in the next verse . . .

Verse 9: “I Liberate the Jeevas”

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेति तत्त्वतः ।
 त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन
 || ४-९||
 janma karma ca mē divyamēvam yō vētti tattvataḥ |
 tyaktvā dēham punarjanma naiti māmēti sō:'rjuna || 4-9||

1	<i>janma karma cha me divyam,</i>	<i>My divine birth and action –</i>
2	<i>evam yah vetti tattvataḥ;</i>	<i>he who thus knows them in the light of Truth,</i>
3	<i>tyaktvaa deham, punar janma</i>	<i>on giving up his body, from taking another birth</i>
4	<i>na eti, maam eti sah Arjuna.</i>	<i>he is spared. He <u>comes to Me</u>, O Arjuna.</i>

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DHARMA

THE LORD COMES TO 'strengthen good people and destroy the wicked'. What does this actually translate as? We notice that no specific course of action to achieve this end is mentioned. How this reinstatement of Dharma is achieved is not described at all.

He *protects* the good; He *destroys* the wicked. Yet, we know how the good people have to bear suffering, and also how the wicked ones apparently thrive in wealth and power. Lord Jesus had to bear his Cross against an arrogant Roman Empire. There is great austerity required among the Lord's chosen instruments. Hence, 'protection' in the eyes of the Lord could mean something very different from what it means to us. If we are thinking that the good will be favoured, it may be wise for us to think again.

The interpretation as 'winning a war' against the evil ones is very symbolic, and certainly far too literal. Naturally, from our perspective we would want to see good-natured people rule the world, for they will be His proper instruments to maintain righteous rule. We would want to see them placed in responsible positions by the Avatar. That would be the literal meaning. But has that ever happened in history?

There are wicked people who, when they rise to power, consciously try to suppress goodness. Good people are jailed and tortured. Our wish would be that such people have to be toppled from power by the Avatar.

A Scottish proverb goes: "*If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.*" It means that if our wishes simply materialized, then there would never be beggars. It is the same for our wish for Righteous rule. The truth is that our *Karma* makes it happen, not our *wishing*.

At the times when Hindu civilization was at its zenith, we know of numerous cases when righteous rule literally prevailed. Righteous kings have been known to rule for long periods in Indian history, and of course, the same may be found elsewhere in the world. Such periods, when examined closely, would show up a very high content of "good collective Karma" among the people of that time. It is good Karma that brings about righteous rule. As a corollary, bad collective Karma brings about unrighteous rule.

Today we are seeing many cases of abuse of temporal power. This can happen among very capable, highly educated people, but wickedness reeks through every breath. They are capable of inflicting serious damage to society. When the rhythm of the universe gets upset by such people, an Avatar is needed to restore the balance.

Righteous rule can be established only by righteous people. That is the Lord's main method – to instill righteousness in people's hearts. That is where the Lord has to reach to restore righteousness. As examples we have Vibhishana and Sugriva who were restored to their kingships by Lord Rama. At the other extreme, the Lord toppled King Ravana and King Bali from power, for they were obstructing righteousness.

We see Sri Krishna demonstrating how a devotee can benefit spiritually from the life of an Avatar long after the Avatar has left His body. If that is possible, it makes us think all over again, "What is the real need to have an Avatar?" The truth that emerges is quite a startling one: We begin to see that the real Avatar is in our heart. If we listen to Him there, He is born to us; if we ignore Him there, He is dead to us. The logic is that straightforward.

1 This is perhaps what Sri Krishna would be saying: “Even as I stand here, I tell you, Arjuna, I am not born. I have to tell you who I really am. You cannot know from what you see. My birth is Alaukika, i.e. not of this world. I may appear with a body, but it does not limit Me. I still have unlimited knowledge and strength. To Yashoda I may appear as a baby, King Dasaratha was delighted with Me as a toddler. But I am not human. I accomplish stupendous things.

2-4 “If people know the real Me in this manner, they will be liberated from birth and death. They will come to Me, My real form of Pure Consciousness!”

Avatars are Impersonal. They come not for any particular race or country but for all mankind. They come without any “likes and dislikes”. This is due to their divine origin.

There is an Avatar in every one of us; by our life, we decide whether He is alive or dead!



4.3 VARIETIES AMONG DEVOTEES

(Verses 10-15, 6 No.)

Verse 10: *Threefold Route Taken by Devotees*

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः ।
बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः ॥ ४-१०॥
vītarāgabhaiyakrōdhā manmayā māmupāśritāḥ ।
bahavō jñānatapasā pūtā madbhāvamāgatāḥ ॥ 4-10॥

1	<i>Veeta raga bhaya krodaah,</i>	<i>Freed from attachment, fear and anger,</i>
2	<i>manmayaah maam upaashritaah;</i>	<i>absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me,</i>
3	<i>bahavah jnaana tapasaa</i>	<i>many, by the fire of knowledge</i>
4	<i>pootaah, mad-bhaavam aaagataah.</i>	<i>purified, have attained to My Being.</i>

Spiritual life integrates all three Yogas, viz. Karma, Bhakti and Jnana. These Yogas are seen by the Lord as progression on the same Path leading to the ultimate goal. They form consecutive overlapping stages of the same highway to the Divine.

1 Karma Yoga: The service activities of devotees dedicated to the Supreme Personality bring about a change in their nature. They become freed of “attachment, fear and anger.” Karma Yoga polishes one’s personality. Then other changes become possible. How are these changes brought about?

The Attractive Personality of Sri Krishna

2 Bhakti Yoga: People are enchanted by Sri Krishna. Even birds were captivated by His flute. The *Bhagavatam* describes how they stood transfixed when He played His music.

Sri Krishna’s form enchanted the Gopis and Gopas of Brindavan. They were completely absorbed in thoughts of Him. Many of the Gopis lost all consciousness of their homes and their duties when they became engrossed in thoughts of their Beloved Krishna. The Lord’s Personality is truly magnetic.

It is said in the *Kamba Ramayana* that Lord Rama was so enchanting that people who looked at Him, saw only one part of Him and their eyes got stuck there. They could not see Him as a whole. If they looked at His shoulder, their sight would remain on His shoulder. This is the poet’s way of saying how beautiful the Lord appeared to His devotees.

If His physical form was so enchanting, what would be the attraction of His Nirguna Nirakara Form (without attributes or qualities) to those immersed in meditation upon Him!

How Knowledge Arises Spontaneously

3 Jnana: When a Jnani’s mind gets riveted upon the Divine Personality, knowledge of His true nature arises in his heart. Just as fish cannot live without water; or as we cannot live without breathing; so, too, the Jnani cannot live without God.

In Bhakti Yoga, the only qualification the devotee needs is to want God. No other qualification is needed. All his weaknesses are not considered. Only the heart matters.

In the case of the Jnani, he feels that the Lord out there in flesh and blood is actually his very own Self. Those who are able to see this Truth, reap the maximum results from their association with the Avatara. The Avatara may leave His body but He never ceases to exist in the mind and heart of the devoted Jnani.

Jnana Tapasa: “the fire of knowledge”. This is **Jeeva-Brahma Aikya** itself, i.e. complete identification of the Jeeva with Brahman. Intense thought focused upon the Avatara has the power to take the devotee to this ultimate state of realization of Brahman.

4 The heart that closes with the Lord inside it, is like an oyster with the proverbial “drop of rain” in it. Purification starts taking place within such a heart.

In due course, the 'Pearl of Divine Vision' is formed inside such a heart. This is a certainty. It is the Lord's promise to His devotees.

The power of devotion is such that one feels that his Beloved is doing all the Sadhana for him. Everything is coming from God. It is impossible for such a one to become egoistic.

Verse 11: *I am Approached in Many Ways*

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।
 मम वर्त्मनुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥ ४-११॥
 yē yathā māṁ prapadyantē tāṁstathaiva bhajāmyaham |
 mama vartmānuvartantē manusyāḥ pārtha sarvaśah ॥ 4-11॥

1	<i>ye yathaa maam prapadyante,</i>	<i>In whatever way men <u>approach</u> Me,</i>
2	<i>taan tatha Eva bhajaami aham;</i>	<i>even so do I <u>reward</u> them;</i>
3	<i>mama vartma anuvartante,</i>	<i>My path</i> is followed
4	<i>manushyaah paarthaa sarvashah.</i>	<i>by men in all ways, O Partha.</i>

The universality of approach to the Lord, which is implied in the previous verse, is now especially highlighted in this verse.

1-2 Prapadyante: “they approach”. Regardless of how devotees may approach the Lord, He responds by rewarding them all. He has no partiality for the manner in which He is approached. Devotees of all types and in all stages of growth move towards Him, in whatever manner or capacity; He welcomes them to Him and rewards them accordingly.

No one who approaches the Lord is turned away from His gates. Whether it is the spiritual child or whether it is the wise sage, all are welcomed and given what they desire. This is the message conveyed in this verse.

Differences in approach may refer to two different categories altogether. They are:

i) Different Relationships with the Lord: The type of relationship the devotee chooses to have with the Lord could differ. The Lord may be approached as a parent, as a spouse, as a child, as a master, etc.

ii) Different Expectations from the Lord: Devotees may seek their own ends such as material prosperity, good health or knowledge; or they may love God unconditionally in a spirit of total surrender as a child towards its mother.

3-4 The Lord could be saying: “I do not force Myself on devotees. I let them be free to seek what they please. If they see Me in My true nature, they will be rewarded accordingly. If they see Me as being limited to certain worldly objects, I grant them their particular wish. It may not satisfy them for long, but the important point is that they will return to Me again and again with their small requests, until one day they will learn that I am Infinite, and of their own they will ask Me for something more substantial.

“I am like the Earth – what you sow in Me, that you will get back. I am like the Kalpataru cow, fulfilling whatever wish people approach Me with.”

Acharyaji said that this verse should teach us never to disturb other people’s faith. Devotees should never be asked to change their naturally preferred relationship to God. The Lord’s omnipresence and omnipotence permits all varieties in types of devotees. The only thing that matters to God is the love we bear in our heart.

Verse 12: Approaching the Lord with Desire

काङ्क्षन्तः कर्मणां सिद्धिं यजन्त इह देवताः ।
 क्षिप्रं हि मानुषे लोके सिद्धिर्भवति कर्मजा
 || ४-१२॥
 kāṅkṣantah karmaṇām siddhim yajanta iha dēvatāḥ ।
 kṣipram hi mānuṣe lōkē siddhirbhavati karmajā
 || 4-12||

1	<i>kaangkshantah karmanaam siddhim,</i>	<i>They who long for success via actions</i>
2	<i>yajante iha devataah;</i>	<i>in this world, try to appease the Gods,</i>
3	<i>kshipram hi maanushe loke,</i>	<i>because, in this world of humans, quick</i>
4	<i>siddhih bhavati karmajaa.</i>	<i>success is attained through actions.</i>

The idea of worshipping **Deities** is introduced here due to the universality of approach. A distinction is drawn between those who love the Lord for His sake and those who love Him for the sake of His gifts. The latter are described as worshippers of “*Deities*”.

Who are these Deities or Devatas? The Lord says, “They, too, are My forms. They are My agents. They grant many gifts to people. I have no problem to whom devotees go, because I know that they are all Me alone. I am not a jealous Deity! But when devotees want Me alone and not My gifts, then I go to them Myself, for they are very dear to Me.”

This distinction is made to help us understand the difference between pure devotion and motivated devotion. For our spiritual progress, pure devotion is what we should be striving for. However, those with motivated devotion are not turned away; they are simply being sent to another department which deals with such cases!

1 The majority of humanity has its mind set on material goals. They desire some success in material activities, having worldly pleasures as their goal. The Lord recognizes that this is the situation that prevails.

2 Sri Krishna’s attitude towards such devotees is: “In order to satisfy their little demands, I have set up a network of Deities or Gods whose special task is to meet the needs of all these people. There are *righteous ways* of satisfying them. They need not use cunning means, i.e. cheating, robbing, etc. If they perform the necessary sacrifice as prescribed in the Karma and Upasana Kanda of the Vedas, they will easily and quickly succeed in getting the material wealth they desire.”

3 Manushe Loke: “In the world of men”; the Deities can also be taken as those powerful men who hold positions of authority and power. If these people are appeased, they can grant the wishes of desirous people. They are like the sub-agents of the Deities, who in turn are agents of the Lord. The Lord alone works in and through all of them.

4 Material desires are obtained quickly through actions. However, as quickly as they come, so quickly do they also go. They are fulfilled in a short time; they also have a short life-span. They satisfy one only for a given period, a fleeting moment; then it leaves them more depressed than before. The yearning for more continues as before in an endless cycle. This experience is necessary in order to create a desire for permanent happiness in people.

Why Do People Go to Deities, not Directly to the Lord?

Acharyaji gave us a very logical reason for this. The Deities are forced to give what is asked of them; they do not have a choice. That is their job – they are “paid” to give what is asked of them.

In the case of the Lord, He is not bound by such requests. He will give what is good for us, which need not be what we ask for, nor do we need to ask for. The Lord is interested in our spiritual progress, so He will give what is most beneficial to us whether we ask or not. That alone will help us. At any given time, His concern is to take us to our next step.

This should not create in us a mentality of running down the Deities. It is all a matter of our own attitude. As is our vision, so is the response from the Divine. It is all happening in our heart, not outside. If we make our “Deities” are nothing more than gateways to our “Desires”, then however successful they may be in bringing results, they do not satisfy the need of the soul for lasting happiness. It is the way of least resistance, and brings only cheap pleasures. It is best to focus our minds on something that is more lasting, something that will change our life for the good permanently.

Verse 13: The Fourfold Caste System

चातुर्वर्णं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।
 तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्त्तरमव्ययम् ॥ ४-१३॥
 cāturvarṇyam mayā sr̥ṣṭam̄ gunakarmavibhāgaśah ।
 tasya kartāramapi mām viddhyakartāramavyayam ॥ 4-13॥

1	<i>chaatur-varnyam mayaa srishtam,</i>	<i>The fourfold caste has been created by Me,</i>
2	<i>guna-karma-vibhaagash;</i>	<i>according to differentiation of Guna and Karma</i>
3	<i>tasya kartāram api maam,</i>	<i>Though I am the author thereof,</i>
4	<i>viddhi akartaaram avyayam.</i>	<i>know Me as non-doer and immutable.</i>

1-2 This verse has been the cause of a lot of debate and even anger among people. People do not like being judged, and those who think that this verse judges them take offence to it. However, we only have to see that He that created the system Himself lived a simple life of service as a charioteer, looking after the horses.

3-4 Now for the anti-climax: Acharyaji, having taken great pains to explain the Caste System, said that this is not what this verse is all about. The main point of this verse has nothing to do with the Caste System – it is only to show the Lord’s detachment to action!

The Lord is really only using the Caste System as an example to illustrate the danger of holding on to the idea of “doership”. The Lord Himself is alert that the Ego does not come and take credit for what is being done by God through His body.

The concept of Non-Doership, so vital to Karma Yoga, is being introduced. It is the kingpin of the Karma Yoga as expounded by Lord Krishna.

CORRUPTION OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

There are two powers at work in society always. And for each of them, there are two types of people wielding those powers.

i) **Two Types of Power**: One is the power of knowledge and the other is the power of authority. The two are independent forces. Yes, it is desirable to see power in the right hands, in the hands of those who have knowledge, but in practice that does not happen always. Power often slips into the hands of those that do not use it for the proper purposes. This is due to the type of person holding the power.

ii) **Two Types of Persons Holding Power**: The first type is the one who has the community's interest at heart; the second is the selfish, ego-centred person who desires his own advancement.

With time the social structures in India came under the influence of people who abused their power for political ends. Knowledge and authority were in the hands of the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas respectively. When only birth began to determine one's caste, regardless of the qualities displayed by a person, there began the deterioration of the caste system in Hindu society from within.

Added to this initial cause, came forces from across the borders of India who used the caste system to their own advantage by dividing up the society even further. The Moghuls came. By giving positions of authority to people who supported them they began a campaign to split the loyalties of Hindu society. The worst impact of foreign influence came from the British rule in India. They hit at the Indian educational system, the very heart of the Hindu social structure. The Muslim invaders did not do that. The British crushed the existing educational system and replaced it with a totally alien one. Jobs were set up in such a manner that one had to work under the British to make progress financially.

These social forces, coming from all three sources as described – Hindu, Muslim and British – all contributed towards the downslide and disrepute of the caste system.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF PEOPLE

People are very self-conscious of their status and resist being classified. But, a system of classification of people is unavoidable for practical reasons. Everywhere in the world people naturally separate into their respective categories according to certain similarities of background, training, wealth, talent, and so on.

Wealth is the most common means to stratify people. Rich and poor is an age-old classification that has separated people.

Talent is another tool for classification which does not seem too harsh.

Race has had its turn, especially since the days of colonialism began. The indigenous races are considered inferior by the colonizing people, purely in order to dominate them.

Power is another way used for one group, usually the minority, to have the upper hand over the majority.

Acharyaji brought out the overall picture to show the value of the original Caste System as conceived of by Lord Krishna, when compared to other methods.

Classification by Birth

Janma is the criterion of birth. When other means are not available, then birth becomes the means that tells what type a person may be *expected* to be. It is not a safe criterion by any means, but there is some merit in it, as one's family background often gives one some idea to start with of what he is likely to be good at. At a certain period in Indian history, this alone was taken to determine one's caste. The idea was good – that a person born into an artist's family would have a good chance to learn art himself. But in practice, there were gaping flaws, far too many exceptions, in this method of classification.

Shreyas and Preyas

There is another classification which divides humanity into two categories – the spiritually oriented and the materially oriented. The former choose the path of **Shreyas**, which is the path of the good. The latter choose the path of **Preyas**, which is the path of the pleasant. The two paths lead to opposing results.

The joys of worldly life are attractive to the Preyas people; long-term spiritual development is attractive to the Shreyas person.

The Caste System

Compared to the above cases, God's means of classifying us into four categories or Castes, is most natural. It is to our advantage to be with others who share the same inborn nature as us. It also ensures that we are engaged in work that suits our temperament. It further ensures that the right person is allocated the right task. Governing people cannot be done by those who temperamentally do not qualify for the task.

The classification suggested by Sri Krishna is based on one's inherent predominant Guna or quality. Our inherent nature is a product of our own past actions. Over a long period of time we have established certain habits and tendencies. No one else is to blame for our present mental framework. Hence there is nothing unfair about this system. Any other means can be far more 'unfair' to us.

CASTE & ONE'S NATURAL PROFESSION

Acharyaji gave us a neat way in which we can see the great usefulness of the system created by the Lord. There are three Gunas in nature – Sattwa (S), Rajas (R) and Tamas (T), representing, clarity, activity and heedlessness. Combinations of these three yield four main types among people:

- i) ***The S-R-T Type:*** - These are Brahmanas; Sattwa predominates, Rajas is secondary.
- ii) ***The R-S-T Type:*** - These are Kshatriyas; Rajas predominates, Sattwa is secondary.
- iii) ***The R-T-S Type:*** - These are Vaishyas; Rajas predominates, Tamas is secondary.
- iv) ***The T-R-S Type:*** - These are Shudras; Tamas predominates, Rajas is secondary.

i) The **SRT** types, due to the predominance of Sattwa, are suitable for teaching, and religious work. Among them are the philosophers, poets, writers, religious leaders.

ii) The **RST** types, due to predominance of Rajas, are the 'go-getters' who can get things done. The secondary Sattwa in them makes them good leaders of people. Administration, military command, intelligence and planning services are their strength.

iii) The **RTS** types, as above, the Rajas makes them good at activity, but the secondary Tamas makes them selfish. They hoard their wealth. They are good for business enterprises.

iv) The **TRS** types, due to the predominance of Tamas, they are useful when commanded to do something by a higher authority. They are best when they are under authority of the other three groups. They cannot plan their own actions. Left to themselves, they will sleep until their money runs out! There is no incentive in them to work hard except for their own survival.

These categories exist at all times, universally. Today, we give them different names:

The SRT type is the Research & Development Officer;

The RST type is the Administrative Officer;

The RTS is the Business Executive; and

The TRS type are the clerics, servants, labourers, etc.

A healthy mix of all four types is needed in any organization.

Conclusion

Every method of classifying people has its drawbacks. The basic flaw in classification is that we are dealing with a very dynamic commodity. People change all the time. Constantly changing people require a flexible system of classification. In society, people sooner or later find their own level to function comfortably. This is by natural selection. Given time and opportunity, people find their own proper place in society.

“Birds of a feather flock together.” People are comfortable with others of the same type as them. This is natural.

Verse 14: *The Perfection of Karma Yoga*

न मां कर्मणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा ।

इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते

|| ४-१४||

na māṁ karmāṇi limpanti na mē karmaphalē sprhā |

iti mām yō:bhijānāti karmabhirna sa badhyatē

|| 4-14 ||

1	<i>na maam karmaani limpanti,</i>	<i>Actions do not taint Me,</i>
2	<i>na me karma-phale sprihaa;</i>	<i>nor do I have desire for their fruits.</i>
3	<i>iti maam yah abhijaanaati,</i>	<i>He who knows Me thus,</i>
4	<i>karmabhih na sah badhyate.</i>	<i>is not bound by his actions.</i>

A similarity between this verse and verse 10 may be drawn. Verse 10 indicates the culmination of overall spiritual perfection, via a combination of all the three major aspects of Yoga – Karma, Bhakti and Jnana. This verse is similar, but looks only at the culmination of Karma Yoga, which is to do an action in such a way that one remains unbound.

1 Limpanti: The root is *lip*, “*to anoint, besmear, stain, contaminate*”. While actions are unavoidable, we can take steps to avoid them ‘staining’ or ‘tainting’ us with Karma. This is an art which comprises the first principle of Karma Yoga, termed “Vyavasaayaatmika Buddhi” in the second Chapter.

2 This Pada gives the second principle of Karma Yoga, that is, “Prasada Buddhi” or accepting as the Lord’s Prasad whatever comes as the result of one’s actions.

Padas **1** and **2** together cover the entire field of Karma Yoga. Thus this verse clearly refers to the perfection achieved in Karma Yoga.

3-4 The verse strongly suggests to the seeking soul to do his best to move from the Gauna (preliminary) stage to the Mukhya (advanced) stage, by making spiritual progress. “He who knows Me thus” tells us that as soon as we get to the Mukhya stage of effortless non-doership, we will be free from bondage to actions.

A saint’s non-doership comes naturally to Him. This implies that the saint is in constant awareness of His real nature as the Supreme Being, which witnesses everything.

Verse 15: The Great Karma Yogis of the Past

एवं ज्ञात्वा कृतं कर्म पूर्वरपि मुमुक्षुभिः ।
 कुरु कर्मैव तस्मात्वं पूर्वैः पूर्वतरं कृतम् ॥ ४-१५॥
 ēvam jñātvā kṛtam karma pūrvairapi mumukshubhiḥ ।
 kuru karmaiva tasmāttvam pūrvaiḥ pūrvataram kṛtam ॥ 4-15॥

1	<i>evam jnaatvaa kritam karma,</i>	<i>Having known this science, Actions were done</i>
2	<i>poorvaih api mumukshubhiḥ;</i>	<i>by the ancient seekers after freedom;</i>
3	<i>kuru karma eva tasmaat tvam,</i>	<i>therefore, you too should perform action</i>
4	<i>poorvaih poorvataram kritam.</i>	<i>as did the ancients in olden times.</i>

The digression from verse 4 to 15, as mentioned above, is ended on a note that blends perfectly with the theme to follow in the next section. The key factor we shall be noting is **Non-Doership**, which is virtually the theme of this chapter and which occupies centre stage for the rest of this chapter.

1 Evam Jnaatva: These words mean “*having known this*”, and refer directly to non-doership.

2 In this concluding verse of the diversion, the focus is on inspiring Arjuna to take up this fascinating science of Karma Yoga by recalling the great Karma Yogis of the past who

excelled in it. These examples, which have already been quoted, are brought in here once again to tie up the text to verse 3 prior to the diversion.

Who were these past Masters? For this Pada, Acharyaji gave the reference as King Janaka. [See Pada 4, where we are taken to a period even before that of King Janaka.]

3-4 There is an art in the performance of action. And that is the art which Sri Krishna would like Arjuna to learn. Central to this art is to know how to act without that action leaving a stain on one's soul. The answer lies in **Non-Doership**. Once the secret of Non-Doership is learnt and mastered, Arjuna can then join the band of stalwarts of action who had perfected this art and made a name for themselves.

Poorvaih Poorvataram: “*the ancients in olden times*”. In **2**, the *immediate* ancient past, King Janaka is the example as just given. Now, for the *ancient* ancient past, we have the example of Vivasvan, Manu and Ikshvaku, as given in verse 1.

In the context of Non-Doership, all of these great Karma Yogis, without exception, felt that they were not the ‘doers’ of the actions, but that the Lord was doing the actions through them. They were untainted by their actions. How? There was no element of ego-sense in the performance of their actions. That rendered them immune to the binding power which is present in all actions.

The point made here is that this secret of performing actions has stood the test of time. It behoves Arjuna to follow the path and succeed himself. This is a great Science. It is a path trodden by the great luminaries of the past. It confirms Sri Krishna’s approach in His teaching: “I am not teaching you anything new, Arjuna. This Path is time-honoured.”

We shall learn more of Non-Doership in the coming verses.

The following section throws more light on how we have to perform our actions. They have to be done in such a way that they are as good as inaction, i.e. like writing in the air or on water, leaving no taint behind it.

Note on Thought-Flow: From verse 5-14, we digressed from the main topic of this chapter due to Arjuna’s question about the Avatarahood of Sri Krishna. The teacher is obliged to answer the student’s question, and hence Sri Krishna allows the digression. Now He is ready to go forward with the main topic. We pick up the thread as from verse 3.



4.4 WHAT IS ACTION & INACTION?

(Verses 16-18, 3 No.)

THE SYLLABUS FOR THIS Science may appear to be short in words, but it is very, very important. Sri Krishna is really whetting Arjuna's appetite for this knowledge. He is putting Arjuna in the proper frame of mind so that he receives this wisdom with full attention, and also appreciates the value of it.

We see the greatness of the Teacher in Sri Krishna coming through. If teaching be a craft, Lord Krishna is the Master craftsman.

Verse 16: *The Syllabus – Action and Inaction*

किं कर्म किमकर्मेति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिताः ।
 तत्ते कर्म प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात् ॥ ४-१६॥
 kim karma kimakarmēti kavayō:'pyatra mōhitāḥ |
 tattē karma pravakṣyāmi yajñātvā mōksyasē:'śubhāt ॥ 4-16॥

1	<i>kim karma kim akarma iti,</i>	What is <i>action</i> ? What is <i>inaction</i> ?
2	<i>kavayah api atra mohitaah;</i>	As to this, even the wise are <u>deluded</u> .
3	<i>tat te karma pravakshyaami,</i>	I shall teach you that “Action”
4	<i>yat jnaatvaa mokshyase ashubhaat.</i>	knowing which you shall be <u>liberated</u> from the evil (of transmigration).

Evaluating the Terms

1a Karma: is understood to be “action”. Akarma is a little more subtle to grasp.

1b Akarma: There are three ways of seeing this word:

i) Akarma could be seen as simply the "*absence of action*". This becomes an Abhava, i.e. non-existence of a particular thing. It is not possible *not* to do anything.

ii) Akarma could also be seen as "*negative Karma*", i.e. that which is not to be done. In this case Akarma is the same as Vikarma, which is forbidden or prohibited action, which certainly should *not* be done. Vikarma is the same as Nishiddha Karma, prohibited action.

iii) Akarma could also be taken as actions done in such a way that they are "*as if not done*". They leave no stain on one. This is actually the interpretation favoured by the Geeta. A great deal of attention is paid in this section to explain the correct attitude with which to work so that no Karma is accrued as a result of actions performed.

2 The two terms lead to three concepts that have to be addressed: Karma, Akarma and Vikarma. The understanding of these terms has confounded even wise men like Bhishma. Even he did not have an answer for Draupadi. The story of Bhishma and Draupadi was narrated to us by Acharyaji:

Story of Bhishma and Draupadi: A way had to be found by which the invincible Bhishma could be killed during the Mahabharata war. The all-knowing Sri Krishna found a way. He asked Draupadi to go to Bhishma and prostrate to him. "However, you must cover your face when doing so. Bhishma will bless you. He will give you a boon. Then ask him...."

Draupadi followed the instructions.

Bhishma blessed her, as predicted. He asked Draupadi to ask for a boon. Draupadi asked that she be a *Deergha Sumangali*, that is, one whose husband will live for a long time; and one who will die before her husband! Then she removed her veil. Bhishma was stunned to see that it was Draupadi. He immediately realized what he had granted to her – it meant that he could not kill Arjuna in the battle. Draupadi asked the inevitable question, “How is that possible?”

Bhishma had to give her an answer. He said, "Draupadi, ask Arjuna to put Shikhandi in front of him. I cannot kill her. (Due to a curse, Shikhandi was born as a woman, and later acquired his usual manly characteristics. A true warrior will not take the life of a woman.) I will be rendered helpless. Then Arjuna can kill me."

This is how the great Bhishma fell in the Mahabharata war.

The puzzle here is, of course, what defines an action to be right or wrong, good or bad, binding or not binding? That is answered in the verses that follow.

Verse 17: *The Three Types of Action*

कर्मणो ह्यपि बोद्धव्यं बोद्धव्यं च विकर्मणः ।
 अकर्मणश्च बोद्धव्यं गहना कर्मणो गतिः ॥ ४-१७॥
 karmaṇo hyapi bōddhavyam bōddhavyam ca vikarmaṇaḥ ।
 akarmanaśca bōddhavyam gahanā karmanō gatih ॥ 4-17॥

1	<i><u>Karmanah</u> hi api boddhavyam,</i>	<i>Verily, “right action” should be known;</i>
2	<i>boddhavyam cha <u>yikarmanah</u>;</i>	<i>also “forbidden action” should be known;</i>
3	<i><u>akarmanah</u> cha boddhavyam,</i>	<i>and “inaction” should be known.</i>
4	<i>gahanaa karmanah gatih.</i>	<i>Imponderable is the path of action.</i>

1-3 The three terms in the commentary for the previous verse are listed in this verse. They require to be defined. Then only will the secret of action be understood.

Acharyaji carefully distinguished for us two types of *Akartaaram* or Non-Doership:

i) ***Gauna Akartaram***: Gauna means “secondary” or “lower level”; this non-doer is the Karma Yogi who is a Sadhaka striving for perfection. He aims to act as the Lord’s instrument, but has not perfected it yet. He has to make an *effort* to feel that he is not the Doer.

ii) ***Mukhya Akartaram***: Mukhya means “primary”, “higher level”; he is the Karma Yogi who is a Siddha, a perfected one. For him, non-doership is effortless. A Self-realised sage is beyond Karma. In verse 14, Sri Krishna gives Himself as an example of this state. Non-doership in His case is of the primary type. He effortlessly practises it.

Acharyaji pointed out a grammatical feature in the verse. Each of the first three Padas contains a term that needs to be explained. These terms are all in the 6th case, which means that an object, X, has to be added to each one of them. But X is yet not known.

4 The following needs to be pondered carefully: As it stands, there is an unknown factor yet to be known. “X of action should be known; X of inaction should be known; and X of forbidden action should be known”. What is the X that has to be known? The answer is given in the next verse. This line prepares us to be attentive to the answer that follows.

Verse 18: *What is Action in Inaction?*

कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।
 स बुद्धिमान्मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥ ४-१८॥
 karmaṇyakarma yah paśyēdakarmaṇi ca karma yah |
 sa buddhimānmanuṣyēṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt ॥ 4-18॥

1	<i>karmani akarma yah pashyet,</i>	<i>He who recognizes inaction in action,</i>
2	<i>akarmani cha karma yah;</i>	<i>and (who recognizes) action in inaction,</i>
3	<i>sah buddhimaan manushyeshu,</i>	<i>he is wise among men;</i>
4	<i>sah yuktaḥ kṛtsna-karma-krit.</i>	<i>such a Yogi is a (true) performer of all actions.</i>

1-2 No direct answer is given by Sri Krishna. However, from knowledge of the science of Karma Yoga that has been taught so far, the riddle can be solved. Acharyaji gave us three interpretations of these lines; the first two of them are correct from the Vedantic viewpoint, whilst the third one is incorrect from the same viewpoint.

Before explaining the interpretations we need to grasp the key concept of “Doership” which we have come across first in verse 13, and again in verses 14 and 15. The concept itself did not need explanation in the context of those verses, but now a full treatment of it needs to be given.

Kartritwa – the Concept of “Doership” of Actions

What does Kartritwa or ‘doership’ really mean?

Kartritwa is the feeling “*I am the doer*” that usually accompanies all our actions. Normally we do not question this feeling, and consider that each person is entitled to think this way. Each person is responsible for his own actions. He is the doer of his actions. This goes unquestioned in the normal view of life.

Based on this approach, the end result is that we are bound by the actions we do. Every act we do with this feeling binds us further in the net of worldly existence. We get so used to this bondage that we even cease to think of it as bondage.

Kartritwa is invariably due to Desire. When the two combine, the following is the full chain that results from the ensuing action:

1	⇒	2	⇒	3	⇒	4	⇒	5	⇒	6
KAAMA +	KARTRITWA	⇒	KARMA	⇒	KARMA PHALA	⇒	BHOGA	⇒	BHOKTRITWA	
Desire +	Doership	⇒	Action	⇒	Fruit of Action	⇒	Enjoyment	⇒	Enjoyership	

From this we see the key role of Kartritwa in the whole chain leading to bondage.

Akartritwa – the Concept of “Non-Doership” of Actions

What would happen if we removed Kartritwa from the above chain? Firstly desire would then be selfless, not selfish. Once selflessness is present, the ensuing action constitutes Karma Yoga. There is no desire for the fruit of such an action so there is no Bhoktritwa or enjoyership in the chain. Everything happens as before, but the “*taint*” of the action is not there. There is no ego present in the chain. The action loses its binding power.

We are now ready to consider the three interpretations of the first half of the verse in the light of Doership and Non-doership.

<u>Pada 1</u>	<i>Karmani Akarma</i> – Inaction in Action
<u>Pada 2</u>	<i>Akarmani Karma</i> – Action in Inaction

i) **First Interpretation:** (Vedantically Correct – the *Siddha’s* view)

Karmani = In one who identifies with his *Atman*,

Akarma = there is no feeling of doing anything.

Akartritwa is present

Akarmani = In the Atman which stands aloof from action,

Karma = the superimposed *Upadhis* are doing all the actions.

Akartritwa is present

ii) **Second Interpretation:** (Vedantically Correct – the *Sadhaka’s* view)

Karmani = In one who feels he is only an *instrument*,

Akarma = the feeling is of being just an *observer*, not an actor.

Akartritwa is present

Akarmani = In the person who is *too lazy* to do anything,

Karma = the restless mind is busy *imagining* doing things.

Kartritwa is present in the mind

iii) **Third Interpretation:** (Vedantically Incorrect)

Karmani = In one who focuses only on doing his duty,

Akarma = there is no Karma to create any bondage.

Akartritwa is present as non-accrual of Karma

Akarmani = But if one abandons his rightful duty,

Karma = he ‘commits’ the sin of omission, Pratyavaya.

Kartritwa is present as accrual of Karma

Discussion of Interpretations:

i) This is the Vedantic interpretation, in which the Kartritwa is absent, rendering the action pure and free from taint. Akartritwa is the prime ingredient in pure action.

ii) This is also another acceptable Vedantic interpretation, given in Paisachya Bhashya. It is based on the snake and rope superimposition viewpoints.

iii) This is incorrect for the following reason:

The sequence given in verse 16 is “Karma Yoga \Rightarrow Knowledge \Rightarrow Liberation”. In this interpretation, the Karma Yogi is expected to go directly to liberation, bypassing the step of

knowledge. This is not possible. The truth is that by doing Karma Yoga alone, one can get the purity but not the knowledge. After purity, knowledge has to be sought from a Guru.

The Buddhmaan

3-4 The Buddhmaan or wise person acts ***without Kartritwa***. With this attitude, whatever action he is engaged in will bring him fulfillment. The fulfillment comes from his connection to the Self, not from the action. Hence, it is independent of the action and its fruit. Such a person's actions are like writing on water. They are like a bird flying through air, leaving no footprints; or like a fish swimming in water, leaving behind no trace.

Interpretation i) above is from such a Jnani's point of view. It is the Siddha's view. Akartritva is present in both steps (Padas). The Jnani is completely identified with the Atman. Hence he has the detachment to feel that he is not involved in the actions he performs. He is as good as not performing any actions, as he feels that the actions are done by the Upadhis which are his instruments.

Interpretation ii) is from the Sadhaka's point of view. He is practicing Sadhana as a means to attain perfection but has not reached the goal yet. This is also a valid stance. Akartritva is implicit in it. The person does not shirk actions nor has he risen above them; he performs them selflessly, feeling all the time that he is only an instrument of the Lord.

Further, he does not make any excuses for not doing actions through laziness or irresponsibility. He accepts that such avoidance of actions is a sin of omission which brings bad Karma upon him. Such an agent is also a Buddhmaan.

Interpretation iii) is from the Karma Yogi's point of view. This is fine as far as it goes to purify him of his baggage of Karmic debt. Karma Yoga is the best method to acquire purity of mind or Chitta Shuddhi. However, the expectation of attaining liberation through it is incorrect. Karma Yoga has to be followed at some stage by Bhakti Yoga and then by Jnana Yoga. It is the knowledge of the Self that liberates one from Samsara.

Having highlighted this limitation of Karma Yoga, Sri Krishna now takes us on a **Grand Parade** through Karma Yoga, intended to inspire us to begin the form of Yoga which He considers as being the best and safest spiritual practice for all seekers.

Sri Krishna's primary contribution to spirituality has been to put Karma Yoga back on the map of Sadhana at a time when it was being prematurely shunned and considered to be too lowly by "the spiritual elite"!



4.5 KARMA YOGA'S GRAND PARADE

(Verses 19-23, 5 No.)

IN THE NEXT FIVE VERSES, Sri Krishna glorifies the Karma Yogi who has perfected the technique of acting without Kartritva, i.e. in such a manner that he is untainted by actions. These verses take a look at the perfect Karma Yogi through different 'goggles', as follows:

- Verse 19: through the 'goggles' of **Self-knowledge**;
- Verse 20: through **Detachment**;
- Verse 21: through **Desirelessness**;
- Verse 22: through **Equipoise**;
- Verse 23: through **all the above** combined;

Verse 19: *The Pathway of Self-knowledge*

यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसङ्कल्पवर्जिताः ।
ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्मणं तमाहुः पण्डितं बुधाः ॥ ४-१९॥
yasya sarvē samārambhāḥ kāmasaṅkalpavarjītāḥ ।
jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇam tamāhuh paṇḍitam budhāḥ ॥ 4-19॥

1	<i>yasya sarve samaarambhaah,</i>	<i>He whose undertakings are all</i>
2	<i>kaama-samkalpa-varjitaḥ;</i>	<i>devoid of <u>desires</u> and <u>anxieties</u>;</i>
3	<i>jnaana-agni-dagdha-karmaanam,</i>	<i>whose actions are burnt by the <u>fire of knowledge</u> –</i>
4	<i>tam aahuh panditam budhaah.</i>	<i>him the wise call a SAGE.</i>

1-2 Desires and Anxieties: From earlier knowledge about Karma Yoga, we learnt that these two had to be eliminated by the Karma Yogi. To succeed in doing this required knowledge of the Self (Sankhya Buddhi) in our day-to-day actions. Actions combined with knowledge bring about these two key qualities of Karma Yoga.

Samaarambhaah: The “*undertakings*” referred to here can only be Nitya and Naimitika Karmas. Kamy Karma is ruled out due to absence of desire, and Nishiddha (forbidden) Karma is out of the question. The prefix ‘*Sam*’ in **Samaarambhaah** is especially placed to qualify these undertakings to mean well-performed, good actions, done in accordance with scriptural injunctions. These are dexterously executed, well chartered out, not haphazardly done. It reveals the natural skill and beauty of actions when done in the right spirit, i.e. without selfish desire.

Similarly, the word **Samkalpa**, “*anxieties*”, refers to fruits of one’s actions. That is what one is usually anxious about. In Karma Yoga one begins by renouncing the fruits of

one's actions. As there is no expectation, the defect of anxiety is not there. Such actions are always noble, right, glorious and beneficial to all.

3 The above two qualities can only exist in the presence of knowledge of the Self. This was also learnt at the end of Chapter 3. When knowledge and action combine in this manner, the action loses its power to bind the individual. The actions do not produce any Karma; they are like burnt seeds which cannot germinate.

4 The sage is one who has attained liberation. Thus, this Pada at once links Karma Yoga to Saankhya Yoga; or action to knowledge. That is the pre-condition for one to attain perfection or liberation. When knowledge is linked to action, the action becomes perfect, and leads one to liberation.

Verse 20: *The Pathway of Detachment*

त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासङ्गं नित्यतृप्तो निराश्रयः ।
 कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किञ्चित्करोति सः ॥ ४-२०॥
 tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgam nityatṛptō nirāśrayah ।
 karmanyabhipravrttōः'pi naiva kiñcitkarōti sah ॥ 4-20॥

1	<i>tyaktvaa karma-phala-aasangam,</i>	Abandoning attachment to the fruits of action,
2	<i>nitya triptah, niraashrayah;</i>	ever content, with no dependence on anything,
3	<i>karmani abhipravrittah api,</i>	though ever engaged in actions,
4	<i>na eva kinchit karoti sah.</i>	he does not really "DO" anything.

Once knowledge of the Self is acquired, the name of the pathway changes to "Detachment". Renunciation based on the knowledge becomes the central feature. In the early stages, renunciation means the renunciation of the fruits of action.

1 Ordinarily, the fruit of action is all that one works for; nothing else drives one to act. To give it up requires deep understanding of the purpose of life (liberation), as well as an understanding of how to remain as a witness to our actions while doing them, i.e. Akartritwa.

2 A person who is free from the expectation of fruits has to be one who has anchored himself in the depths of his inner Self. For this reason he is ***Nitya-Triptah*** or “ever content”. He does not depend on any external factor in his work. If people gather around him to assist, he sees in them the hand of God to assist the work; he does not see them as having a personal connection with him. They become collaborators of God with him, his co-workers or fellow-workers, not as working under him.

3 Work done in such a spirit does not make one tired. It can go on for life, without a trace of boredom or slackening of effort. The Karma Yogi feels no strain due to his actions. Normally, self-will saps out our energy. Without it, even enormous, hard work becomes effortless.

4 This segment of the pathway ends when one learns the lesson of Akartritwa or *Non-doership*. That is the terminal point of this segment.

There is a big difference between one who works with Akartritva Bhava and the Tamasic person who gives up actions due to laziness. Tamas is detected by carelessness in

one's work. Tamasic work is poles apart from the beauty of work that is meticulously performed in every detail with Akartritwa Bhava.

A Note for Students: Acharyaji pointed out how we should develop the skill to relate words in a verse. As an example, he showed that in this verse, 4 descriptions are related and placed in the correct sequence relative to each other. They are:

- i) **Karma-phala-aasangam** – When the fruit of action is renounced,
- ii) **Nitya Triptah** – one becomes ever content;
- iii) **Niraashrayah** – contentment leads to non-dependence on an outside factor;
- iv) **Na eva kinchit karoti** – the final outcome is the Akartritwa Bhava.

It was pointed out that this was the correct way of studying a scripture. One has to go deep into the words and link them intelligently to bring out the full meaning. Acharyaji has always been very alert to these finer points which cannot be learnt from a textbook.

Verse 21: The Pathway of Desirelessness

निराशीर्यतचित्तात्मा त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः ।
 शारीरं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन्नाजोति किल्बिषम् ॥ ४-२१॥
 nirāśīryatacittātmā tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ ।
 śārīram kēvalam karma kurvannāpnōti kilbiṣam ॥ 4-21॥

1	<i>Niraasheeh yata chitta aatmaa,</i>	<i>Without hope, one who controls his <u>mind and self</u>,</i>
2	<i>tyakta sarva parigrahaḥ;</i>	<i>giving up all sense of possessions,</i>
3	<i>shaareeram kevalam karma,</i>	<i>doing mere <u>bodily action</u>,</i>
4	<i>kurvan na aapnoti kilbisham.</i>	<i>he incurs no sin.</i>

Passing the Detachment segment of the pathway, we enter the segment called Desirelessness. Detachment brings with it the fruit of **Desirelessness**.

1 Desirelessness is really ego-lessness; it is the ego that desires. **Chitta Aatmaa** refers to the entire inner instrument, called the Antahkarana, and the Ahamkara or ego is the key component of it. As desire is entirely mind-born, one without desire is said to have controlled his mind perfectly.

2 A well-controlled mind is an egoless mind. Taking this logic a little further, an egoless mind is one that seeks no possessions of objects from outside as it is contented within. It gives up all sense of possessions.

3-4 Once this state is achieved, the person's actions are necessarily free from the taint of actions, i.e. he becomes filled with Akartritva Bhava. As we have learnt in the last section, a taintless act is free from all sin.

In this way, this verse takes us along the road of “Desirelessness” to the logical conclusion of arriving at perfect Actionlessness – i.e. acts which do not leave a mark of “sin” on our soul.

As the feeling of being an instrument of God gets strongly set in the person, his actions appear to him as being done mechanically, as though he were a robot. The mind is inwardly fixed on the Divine, though externally engaged fully in the activity.

An offshoot of such a “desireless”, or better still “egoless”, state is that the control of the mind and the senses becomes effortless. This is a sign that the Lord Himself has taken over the running of his Upadhis, and he remains just as an observer. The Lord takes over the whole operating system! Matpara gets firmly established in such a Karma Yogi.

An Illustration from the Yoga Vasishtha:

To illustrate this unusual 'take-over' of all the Upadhis, Acharyaji quoted an instance from the *Yoga Vasishtha*. The English rendering of the verse is:

“Which beggar gets liberated? – i) one who has no tongue (who is dumb); ii) one who is a eunuch (impotent); iii) one who is lame; iv) one who is blind; v) one who is deaf; and vi) a fool.”

There is a subtle, deep meaning to the apparent sarcasm in this verse. It actually refers to the liberated sage in the following way:

i) Whether something tasty is brought or something very bitter, he eats it without complaint, as though he were *dumb*;

ii) A *eunuch* is one who is neither male nor female, i.e sexually impotent. The sage, with all respects, having complete mastery over the sex impulse, is said to hold the same feeling towards a girl just born, towards a young woman in her prime drenched in water (to enhance her features), and to an old woman with a wrinkled face. Such is the state of a liberated sage.

iii) What about his lameness? He walks only to collect alms or to answer the calls of nature, otherwise he remains fixed in one place. This is his lameness.

iv) His blindness? – His eyes never get agitated. He never has an angry look. He is blind to any form of distraction.

v) His deafness? – He is indifferent whether people praise him or abuse him. It all sounds the same to him!

vi) And finally, his foolery? Placed in the most tempting of situations, in the midst of wealth, in the midst of women of beauty, or in the midst of garlands and applause – he remains the same, untouched by these. Things which have power enough to make the whole world go around, leave him unaffected. Surely, he must appear as a fool in the eyes of the world!

Thus, in this powerful verse from the text which Sage Vasishtha used to shape the future of Lord Rama, we see the exceptional qualities of the man of wisdom, utterly indifferent to all pleasures of the senses.

Verse 22: *The Pathway of Equipoise*

यदृच्छालाभसन्तुष्टो द्वन्द्वातीतो विमत्सरः ।
समः सिद्धावसिद्धौ च कृत्वापि न निबध्यते ॥ ४-२२॥
yadṛcchālābhasantuṣṭō dvandvātītō vimatsarah |
samah siddhāvasiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyatē ॥ 4-22॥

1	<i>yadrichhaa-laabha-santushtah,</i>	Content with what comes to him <u>without effort</u> ,
2	<i>dvandva ateetah vimatsarah;</i>	<i>free from the pairs of opposites and envy,</i>
3	<i>sama siddhau asiddhau cha,</i>	<i>even-minded in success and failure,</i>
4	<i>kritvaa api na nibadhyate.</i>	<i>(such a one) though acting, he is not bound.</i>

The previous two verses represent the Vyavasaayaatmika Buddhi of Karma Yoga. This verse represents Samatva Buddhi. The Pathway of perfect **Equipoise** is a razor's edge.

1 The verse begins with a beautiful expression of contentment – “content with what comes without effort”. The mind is sitting high up on the lap of the Lord, immersed in the joy of the Lord’s Presence! It is absorbed always in the Joy that comes from Him. It is completely contented with the Lord’s company.

2 The pairs of opposites barely touch the sage. They are like waves approaching him. He rides above them, as a speed boat that skims over the surface of the water, barely touching the waves.

3 There is another route to avoid the waves of opposites – it is the route taken by a submarine which travels in the deep waters where there are no waves, just water all around. The sage's mind is where there is only God all around. He has no interest in the waves of success and failure.

The description of a man of equipoise takes us to rare heights. We are spellbound imagining where his mind is. One who can remain indifferent to success or failure cannot be an ordinary person. To most of us that is virtually impossible. On the contrary we would rather avoid success and failure because our ego cannot handle them. The sage's even-mindedness is not so cowardly. He is not afraid of kicks and blows. In the midst of the highest applause or the biggest disappointment he can remain equally cool.

4 Indeed, Maya does not have a rope long enough to reach him, let alone bind him! The Karma Yogi who travels by Akartritwa Airlines flies beyond the reach of Maya.

Verse 23: *All Pathways Combined*

गतसङ्गस्य मुक्तस्य ज्ञानावस्थितचेतसः ।
यज्ञायाचरतः कर्म समग्रं प्रविलीयते ॥ ४-२३॥
gatasāṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthitacētasah |
yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagram pravilīyatē ॥ 4-23॥

1	<i>gata sangasya muktasya,</i>	<i>He is freed from the bondage of material attachments,</i>
2	<i>jnaana-avasthita-chetasah;</i>	<i>as his intellect is established in divine knowledge.</i>
3	<i>yajnaaya aacharatah karma,</i>	<i>He who acts only for the sake of sacrifice,</i>
4	<i>samagram pravileeyate.</i>	<i>is completely absolved from its Karmic effects.</i>

This verse closes the discussion of the actionless sage in grand style – by summarizing all the methods by which Akartritwa or actionlessness is attained.

1 Gata Sangasya: “attachment to material objects”. The Akartritwa journey begins with the pursuit of detachment from all sense objects. That lays the foundation for

development along this path. Freedom from attachment is a *sine qua non* for the Karma Yogi's success.

2 Jnana: "Self-knowledge". Success in detachment lies in being rooted in the Self. Self-Knowledge gives us anchorage to the Lord. That anchorage is what keeps us safe in the spirit of Akartritwa by which no actions can affect us.

3-4 Yajnaaya: "acts of sacrifice". The actionless saint does not sit doing nothing, but works tirelessly for the sake of others. Because of his selflessness, his actions do not contaminate him. This point is clarified in this verse.

Samagram: "completely". An egoless sage's actions are totally dissolved.

As birds do not leave footprints in the sky; as fish do not leave a trace in water; so too, the actions of a Jnani leave no scar of Karma on him.



BADRINATH SHRINE IN THE HIMALAYAS, UTTARAKHAND

4.6 VARIETIES OF SACRIFICES

(Verses 24-33, 10 No.)

THE CONCEPT OF SACRIFICE

PUJYA GURUDEV GIVES A general definition for the term Yajna or sacrifice: "*All actions performed without ego and not motivated by one's egocentric desires fall under the category of Yajna.*" In the present context, these are actions done with Akartritva Bhava, i.e. the attitude that one is not the Doer, and these conform to the principles of Karma Yoga.

The Yajna may be seen as the perfection of action. Verse 24 represents the ultimate Yajna, where everything pertaining to an act – the subject, the means, the object and the goal – are considered to be Brahman. What follows from verses 25-30, is a selection of another 12 Yajnas which may be considered as stepping stones towards the ultimate Yajna. These are summarized in the table after verse 25 for convenient reference. Verses 31 and 32 provide summary statements that apply to all the Yajnas, of which there is an infinite variety. The 12 given here are only examples that were common during Vedic times.

The concluding Verse 33, establishes the principle by which the order of superiority of these Yajnas may be determined.

Verse 24: *The Perfect Yajna*

1	<i>brahma arpanam brahma havih,</i>	<i>Brahman is the <u>act of offering</u>; Brahman is the <u>clarified butter offering</u>;</i>
2	<i>brahma agnau brahmanaa hutam;</i>	<i>Into the <u>fire</u> of Brahman is poured the <u>oblation</u> by Brahman;</i>
3	<i>brahma eva tena gantavyam,</i>	<i>Brahman verily shall be <u>reached</u> by him</i>
4	<i>brahma karma samaadhinaa.</i>	<i>who always sees Brahman in all actions.</i>

We begin with a verse which, using the symbolism of the physical Yajna, describes the most perfect act as it is seen from a Jnani's standpoint. 'Brahman' appears 6 times in this verse. The Jnani beholds every aspect of the Yajna as Brahman.

This verse is known as Samyak Darshana, meaning “*the correct, perfect vision*”. It is also a well-known Food Prayer in India, chanted in many Ashrams before taking meals.

Arpanam – the key Act of Offering

1a In this context, Arpanam has no fewer than five *Kaarakas* or contributing items:

- i) The **instrument** used to make the offering, i.e. the ladle used to offer the ghee – the *juhu, chamas* or *shruva*. This is a Karana Kaaraka, an instrumental cause.
- ii) The **Mantra** chanted while offering, usually 'Swaha', is also a Karana Kaaraka.
- iii) The **Devata** to whom it is offered, e.g. Lord Ganesha, Mother Kali, etc. This is the Sampradana Kaaraka, the causal means of the action.
- iv) The **Phala** or fruit of the offering, e.g. Swarga or the heavenly worlds.
- v) The **Desh and Kaala** (place and time) of the offering. These are the Adhikaranas, or the parameters within which the offering is made.

All the above five Kaarakas to the act of offering are seen as Brahman Himself by the sage who performs this Yajna.

Other Items:

- i) **1b** The ***Havih*** is the oblation offered, e.g. the *ghee*, the *samagri* and firewood.
- ii) **2a** The ***person*** by whom the offering is made.
- iii) **2b** The ***fire*** into which the offering is made.
- iv) **3** The ***goal*** to attain which the offering is made.

4 In all these is seen Brahman and Brahman alone.

The above uses the context of a Havan ceremony to describe the actual experience of a Jnani. We are dealing with the direct experience of God. It is Brahma Jnana itself.

This is not an Upasana. An Upasana superimposes a thought or a feeling onto something else, e.g. the attributes of God onto a *murti*. In this verse the person is not doing that; it is his actual vision of Reality. Every activity of his is regarded in the same way as an act of sacrifice, in particular, the act of eating.

Eating is a special act that we perform daily. It can become a perfect act of Yajna if it is done in the spirit of this verse. The act of eating is the Arpanam or oblation, the food is the havih, the eater is the person doing the offering, the stomach is the place of offering, digestion is the fire, and nutrition is the fruit of the offering. The goal towards which eating (living) should take us is the Supreme Brahman, our true spiritual Being.

Following this idea, the following Yajnas may be interpreted in the same way to signify the same purpose. *Even the attempt to make an act perfect is called a Yajna.*

Verse 25: Daiva & Brahma Yajnas (No. 1 & 2)

दैवमेवापरे यज्ञं योगिनः पर्युपासते ।
ब्रह्माग्नावपरे यज्ञं यज्ञेनैवोपजुह्वति ॥ ४-२५॥
daivamēvāparē yajñam yōginaḥ paryupāsatē |
brahmāgnāvaparē yajñam yajñēnaivōpajuhvati || 4-25||

1	<i>DAIVAM eva apare yajnam,</i>	Sacrificing to the Gods (Agni or Gayatri) alone, some
2	<i>yoginah pari-upaasate;</i>	Yogis (beginners) perform the <u>acts of sacrifice</u> ;
3	<i>BRAHMA agnau apare yajnam,</i>	Sacrificing to Brahman , others (advanced),
4	<i>yajnena eva upajuhvati.</i>	by sacrifice offer their Jeevatman as a sacrifice.

	Yajna No.	Verse No.	YAJNA NAME	YAJMAAN / PERFORMER	THE OFFERING/OBLATION	THE AGNI OR FIRE
		24	BRAHMA YAJNA	The Realised Sage	Every thought, word & deed	Brahman Himself
JNANA YOGA	1a	25	Standard Havan	The Beginner – Karma Kanda	All actions (Niyata & Kamya)	Agni Deva, God of Virtues
	1b		Gayatri Havan	The Beginner – Jnana Kanda	All studies (done under Guru)	Gayatri, Goddess of Knowledge
	2	25	Brahma Yajna	Nirvikalpa Samadhi	The “Ego-sense”, Jeevatman	Brahman
	3	26	Samyama Yajna	Shat Sampati – 1. Shama	The Sense Organs (Indriyas)	Restraint of the Mind
	4	26	Indriya Yajna	Shat Sampati – 2. Dama	The Sense Objects (Vishaya)	Restraint of the Indriyas
RAJA YOGA or PATANJALI YOGA	5	27	Atma-Samyama	Shat Sampati – 3. Uparati	All Functions of Life Force	Mastery over Mind, Knowledge
	6	28	Dravya Yajna	1. Yama – External Purification	Dravya (Wealth & Desires)	Renunciation
	7	28	Tapas Yajna	2. Niyama – Internal Purificn.	Tapas (Austerities)	Purification
	8	28	Swadhyaya	2. Niyama – Knowledge	Swadhyaya (Scriptural Study)	Purification
	9	28	Yoga Yajna	3. Asanas – Steady Posture	Yoga Practices	Self-Discipline
	10a	28	Apara Jnana	6. & 7. Dharana & Dhyana	All Thoughts	Concentration
	10b		Para Jnana	8. Samadhi (Savikalpa)	All Vasanas	“Brahmakara Vritti”
	11	29	Prana Yajna	4. Pranayama – Life forces	All Pranic Activity	Prana
	12	30	Ahara Yajna	5. Pratyahara – Food Regulation	Restraint on Food, Fasting	Mind Control

TABLE OF VARIETIES OF YAJNAS – (Verses 24-30)

No 1: Daiva Yajna

1-2 The first Yajna is literally the physical performance of the Havan or fire sacrifice itself. That is the most obvious starting point; other symbolic variations arise from that. The sacrifice is made to the **Daivam**, who is the deity or deities, the gods, being worshipped.

However, there are different interpretations possible as to whom the word **Yoginah**, the performer of the sacrifice, refers. In class, Acharyaji spoke of 'Yogis' as being the beginner in spiritual life. But what is the beginning of spiritual life?

At one time Class 1 was the beginning of one's education. These days, children are sent to school even before Class 1 to kindergarten or pre-school. Even before that is babysitting, which itself has developed into a kind of school! Any of these could be taken as the 'beginning' of one's education.

In the same way, two such possibilities for spiritual life are suggested:

a) **The Karma Kandi or Upasaka**: Acharyaji suggested the very beginning could be when a person has ceased to do forbidden acts (Nishiddha Karma), but is quite happy to continue with desire-ridden acts (Kamya Karma). Many, who are desirous of obtaining some tangible result from the Yajna such as a good job, or a partner in life, or success for their children, etc, resort to performing a Havan. The fact that they have turned to a higher power to obtain these is regarded as the start of "spiritual life".

In this case the **Daivam** would be any one of numerous Deities as discussed in verse 12, depending on the desire to be fulfilled. All that was said under verse 12 applies here.

b) **The Brahmachari**: Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji differs slightly in his view. Taking his hint from the word **Yoginah**, he takes the beginner to be the Karma Yogi like Arjuna in the Geeta, or the Brahmachari. Renunciation of the fruit of actions is the beginning of true spiritual life. This preliminary form of renunciation is essential for starting spiritual life. It is a level higher than the Upasana Kandi and two levels higher than the Karma Kandi. The Brahmachari is also under a Guru's guidance. He is at the start of the Nivritti Marga, the path of renunciation.

In this case, the **Daivam** would be Gayatri, the Goddess of the Intellect. The Havan would be the Gayatri Havan. Sandeepany students are taught to perform this Havan every Sunday on the Course. The Gayatri Havan launches the student on the path of study of the scriptures. It is a prayer for purity of the intellect.

No 2: Brahma Yajna

3-4 The "Perfect Yajna" of verse **24** can only be performed by the perfected sage to whom everything is Brahman. There cannot be a greater Yajna than that. The Brahma Yajna is very similar to it, but is performed by one who is a step before perfection is reached. The final traces of Ahamkara or egoism are being offered in this Yajna. The Yogi is on the verge of realisation. He offers his individuality (Jeevahood) into the fire of Brahman.

Advanced seekers on the path take their inspiration from this Yajna. They strive to attain the highest spiritual state through advanced forms of meditation in which they offer their Jeevatman or individuality into the fire of Knowledge of Brahman.

Acharyaji indicated to us that the **Brahmakara Vritti** would be the only connecting link between the Jeeva and Brahman. The seeker after realization would have to thin out his

thoughts down to this single Vritti in order to establish the contact with the Supreme Brahman. Meditations dealing with this Vritti would classify under this Yajna.

Yajnas 1 & 2 may be considered as the two extreme ends of the spectrum that envelopes all the 12 sacrifices. All other Yajnas yet to be described lie between them.

Verse 26: *Samyama & Indriya Yajnas (No. 3 & 4)*

श्रोत्रादीनीन्द्रियाण्यन्ये संयमाग्निषु जुह्वति ।
शब्दादीन्विषयानन्य इन्द्रियाग्निषु जुह्वति ॥ ४-२६॥

śrōtrādīnīndriyāñyanyē samyamāgniṣu juhvati |
śabdādīnvisayāñanya indriyāgnisu juhvati || 4-26||

1	<i>shrotra-aadeeni indriyaani,</i>	<i>Some offer hearing and the other <u>senses</u></i>
2	<i>SAMYAMA agnishu juhvati;</i>	<i>as sacrifice in the fire of restraint-of-mind;</i>
3	<i>shabda aadeen vishayaan anye,</i>	<i>Others offer sound and other <u>sense objects</u></i>
4	<i>INDRIYA agnishu juhvati.</i>	<i>as sacrifice in the fire of restraint-of-senses.</i>

No. 3: The Samyama Yajna

1-2 At quite an early stage in the spiritual life, the seeker has to learn to control his mind. The internal aspect of this control is to restrain the senses with the reins of the mind. Self-discipline or self-restraint is the fire into which the senses are offered to be burnt up and rendered harmless.

This is called **Shama** in Yogic terminology, meaning internal restraint of the sense organs. Shama is the first of the Wealth of Six Virtues (Shad Sampati) to be developed during the period of cultivating Sadhana Chatushtaya, the preliminary qualities.

The qualified person for this Yajna is one who has just entered the path of Karma Yoga and whose first hurdle is to put a check on all his sense activities, to rein in the horses of the senses from running wild. He offers all his sense organs into the fire of **Samyama** or self-restraint or self-discipline. This requires the application of one's mind with strong will-power to rule over the sense-horses.

Thus the senses get “burnt” as they are offered. The fire of self-restraint gets increased. The performer develops greater power of concentration through this practice.

No. 4: Indriya Yajna

3-4 Whilst internal control as described above is the key practice, the external restraint of the senses from the actual sense objects is not to be ignored. The horses have to be prevented from moving on the wrong road of pleasure-giving sense objects. The sense organs become the fire into which the sense objects are offered to be burnt up and rendered ineffective to tempt the senses any more.

This is the external counterpart of Shama and is called **Dama** in Yoga. It is the second of the Sixfold Wealth of Virtues in Sadhana Chatushtaya.

The qualified person for this Yajna is the same as above. The focus is on the sense objects rather than the senses. Shama and Dama work in tandem to gain full control of the

mind. The offerings made are all the objects of desire, i.e. Vishaya Grahana. He sacrifices these objects into the fire of his senses, the Indriyas.

What is the purpose achieved through these two Yajnas combined? The seeker's greatest difficulty in the beginning lies in attraction towards sense pleasures. These Yajnas are a sincere effort on his part to give up sense pleasures. He sacrifices all his pleasures at the level of the senses. He does not allow his senses to access them. The objects are "burnt" at the point of the senses, and the senses are burnt at their interface with the mind.

Such an effort will surely hold the seeker in good stead and would relieve him from the torments of temptations he would otherwise encounter from his senses.

Verse 27: Atma-Samyama Yajna (No. 5)

1	<i>sarvaani indriya karmaani,</i>	<i>All the <u>functions of the senses</u></i>
2	<i>praana karmaani cha apare;</i>	<i>as well as all the functions of the life-force are,</i>
3	<i>AATMA SAMYAMA yoga agnau,</i>	<i>into the fire of mastery of the mind (Uparati)</i>
4	<i>juhvati jnaana deepite.</i>	<i>kindled by knowledge, offered as sacrifice.</i>

Now we come to the net result of the above two Yajnas. When Shama and Dama are successful, conquest or mastery over the mind is achieved. This is called **Uparati**, and is the third virtue in Shat Sampati. Attaining Uparati, the seeker's mind can now give its full attention further inwards – into the tricky territory of more subtle internal Sadhana!

No. 5: Atma-Samyama Yajna

In the previous verse we had dealt with the sense objects and the sense organs and gained mastery over the mind. The next step is to work purely on the mind itself and clean up its contents that are already there in the form of old Vasanas or hidden tendencies. Atman here can be taken to mean the mind that is sufficiently free from the hold of the senses. Hence the name **Atma-Samyama Yajna**.

1-2 All external activity is withdrawn as a result of Shama and Dama. The Pranic forces have been brought well under the control of the mind.

3 These functions are offered into the fire of the mind that has been mastered (not the 'mind under restraint' as in Yajna 3). The entire Sadhana thus becomes internalised.

4 The Sadhaka is preparing himself to launch himself into a realm beyond even the mind. In order to do this successfully, he needs to have the support and understanding provided by deep **knowledge** of the regions beyond the mind. It is not possible to transcend the mind without first having knowledge of the workings of the intellect. This Yajna in effect takes one into the realm of the intellect. There are still steps that take one further.

One always has to move carefully from the known to the unknown. Some theoretical understanding is of great help at this stage. This Yajna offers all the external activities, which

up to this stage kept the mind engaged, into the fire of “Mastery over the Mind”. The meaning in common terms is that the mind is transcended and absorbed gradually into the inner regions leading to the Self. The kindling of this internal fire is possible only through a higher knowledge that dawns in the intellect.

ACHARYAJI'S EXPLANATION of this YAJNA

This Yajna marks such an important transition in Sadhana that Acharyaji gave us a brief introduction into the concepts of **Sabeeja Samadhi** and **Nirbeeja Samadhi**. The former is also named as Laya Poorvaka Samadhi, and the latter as Badha Poorvaka Samadhi. These are explained for readers who desire to have a firmer grasp of the purpose of this Yajna.

The first type of Samadhi is merely the absence of the mind. The mind is brought to a totally quiet state by means of Pranayama exercises. However, there is an inertness about this state. It is not due to any knowledge of the Self. It is a purely gymnastic feat of the mind. in combination with the breath. It is meant to serve as a platform for advancing towards the Self, provided one has knowledge of the Self to support it.

Sabeeja means “with seed”, i.e. the seed of desire or Vasana is still present. Sabeeja Samadhi is so named because of this inherent ‘inertness’. It does not achieve anything spiritually. When one comes out of this state one is the same person as before. No spiritual development has taken place. For this reason the alternate name for it is Laya Poorvaka Samadhi, which means it is simply a state when the mind is rendered dormant.

Nirbeeja means “without seed”. The purpose of the Sabeeja state is to serve as a platform for one to get into the Nirbeeja state, through knowledge. Nirbeeja Samadhi refers to the stage when all the seeds of Vasanas are eliminated or burnt. This is concrete spiritual progress. Desires are being overcome. The alternate term for it is Badha Poorvaka, which means “total destruction” of the mind, not just dormancy of the mind.

In this Yajna, the seeker has arrived at the Sabeeja state through complete control of the externalising tendencies of the mind-cum-senses complex. The Sadhaka henceforth is in a position to engage himself on eliminating the Vasanas in his subconscious mind.

To summarise, in this Yajna the seeker offers all outward-going Pranic forces into the fire of his well-controlled mind, using the help of Knowledge given to him by his Guru. He now becomes ready to progress towards the Nirbeeja Samadhi state.

Verse 28: Five More Yajnas (No. 6 to 10)

द्रव्ययज्ञास्तपोयज्ञा योगयज्ञास्तथापरे ।
 स्वाध्यायज्ञानयज्ञाश्च यतयः संशितव्रताः ॥ ४-२८॥
 dravyayajñāstapōyajñā yōgajñāstathāparē |
 svādhyāyajñānaya jñāśca yatayah samśitavratāḥ ॥ 4-28॥

1	<u>DRAVYA yajnaah, TAPO yajnaah,</u>	<i>The Yajna of wealth, and of austerity,</i>
2	<u>YOGA yajnaah, tathaa pare;</u>	<i>the Yajna of Yoga, is done by others;</i>
3	<u>SWADHYAYA JNAANA yajnaah cha,</u>	<i>the Yajna of study, and finally of knowledge,</i>
4	<u>yatayah samshita-vrataah.</u>	<i>is done by ascetics having self-restraint and rigid vows.</i>

Yajnas 1-5 are performed by those on the path of **Jnana Yoga**, bringing them to the threshold of Samadhi. We now shift our attention to students of **Raja Yoga** (Patanjali Yoga) who perform Yajnas 6-12, aiming to achieve the same result. In this manner, Lord Krishna brings about a harmonious synthesis of these two limbs of spiritual practice. There existed a time when these two were seen as opposed to each other. The Bhagavad Geeta aims to harmonise the two paths by mentioning how they achieve the same spiritual results.

By hastily adding, without much explanation, a further five Yajnas, the Lord is as though saying, "And there are many more such Yajnas, Arjuna."

The seven Yajnas from 6-12 cover the eight steps of Raja Yoga from Yama right up to the attainment of Samadhi. They are an alternative practice to Yajnas 1-5 by Jnana Yogis.

In this verse, five Raja Yoga Yajnas are covered. They are:

No. 6: Dravya Yajna

1a This falls under Step 1 of Patanjali Yoga, viz. **Yama**. Wealth is offered in charity into the fire of renunciation; gifts are given to the needy. The giving of wealth reduces the hold of desires over one's mind. Thus we can say desires are being given away.

No. 7: Tapas Yajna

1b This Yajna falls under Step 2, **Niyama** or internal purification. Life-energies are conserved from being scattered into objects through the sense organs. Balance, harmony and beauty in every part of the body and mind is the result of such conservation of energy through austerities. The austerities are poured into the fire of purification. Austerity is a remarkably efficient way of purifying the body. The mind is dealt with in the next Yajna.

No. 8: Swadhyaya Yajna

3a This also falls under **Niyama**. The systematic study of the sacred scriptures are also a form of austerity for the mind. Study 'poured' into the fire of purification means purification is gained through Swadhyaya. This is also called Rishi Yajna, as it is a way of paying our debt to the Rishis.

The acquisition of knowledge is considered to be an exercise in internal purification because knowledge purifies the mind of all its ignorant notions. The mind gets cleaned up of all false notions.

No. 9: Yoga Yajna

2 This falls under Step 3, Asanas. Any practice which brings about union is called a Yoga. In Raja Yoga, the first Yoga is to unite the body movements to the mind. Great skill and concentration of mind over body is required in the perfection of Asanas. One offers this Yoga practice as a sacrifice into the fire of self-discipline, i.e. discipline of the body is achieved through the practice of Asanas.

No. 10: Jnana Yajna

3b There are two levels of Jnana that this Yajna can apply to. They are:

a) **Apara Jnana** or "lower knowledge" – This is the knowledge of the arts and sciences obtained through sacrifice of pleasure and leisure. This study needs one's whole attention. Hence it is said that thoughts are poured into the fire of concentration in order to acquire this knowledge. In spirituality there is Apara Jnana which relates to the early stages of Sadhana, e.g. for Steps 1 to 5 in Patanjali Yoga.

b) **Para Jnana** or “higher knowledge” – In *Jnana Yoga* this knowledge would concern the offering of one’s individuality into the fire of universality; a seeker sacrifices his narrow ego existence in order to embrace a wider universal existence. This needs removal of ignorance of the false ego identity by obtaining knowledge of one’s true universal identity.

In *Raja Yoga*, higher knowledge would mean something different. In Patanjali Yoga, the Self is not spoken of. The mind is taken to be the highest entity. The state of Samadhi is considered to be the state when the mind is brought to a state of one-pointedness. Only one thought remains in the mind – that of the Supreme. This is equivalent to the Savikalpa Samadhi of the Jnana Yogis. To achieve it, all one’s subconscious Vasanas have to be offered into the fire of the single thought that remains, called “Brahmakara Vritti” in Jnana Yoga.

The Need for Self-Restraint and Rigid Vows

4 All these Yajnas in Raja Yoga require tremendous application of will on the part of the practitioner. A rigid determination, taking of firm vows (Vratas) or resolutions, and an inexhaustible enthusiasm to apply oneself consistently – all these are needed to succeed in making spiritual progress. Vratas supply the Will-power that is needed for all acts of sacrifice. They are the common requirement for all the Yajnas.

In Jnana Yoga, the emphasis is more on a spirit of surrender to the Supreme Brahman rather than on will-power. The surrender becomes the springboard for supreme will-power in one’s spiritual practice. There is a slight difference in approach between the two Yogas.

Verse 29: Pranayama Yajna (No. 11)

अपाने जुहति प्राणं प्राणेऽपानं तथापरे ।
 प्राणापानगती रुद्ध्वा प्राणायामपरायणः ॥ ४-२९॥
 apānē juhvati prāṇam prāṇēःpānam tathāparē ।
 prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāmaparāyānāḥ ॥ 4-29॥

1	<i>apaane juhvati praanam,</i>	<i>The outgoing is offered in the incoming,</i>
2	<i>praane apaanam tathaa apare;</i>	<i>the incoming in the outgoing by others;</i>
3	<i>praana apaana gatee ruddhvaa,</i>	<i>By restraint of these two courses of breath,</i>
4	<i>PRAANAAYAAMA paraayanaah.</i>	<i>one gets control over the life energies in the body.</i>

No. 11: Pranayama Yajna

We are dealing with Step 4 of Patanjali Yoga, namely Pranayama.

1 Apaana is the down-breath, i.e. the incoming breath, also called *Puraka*.

2 Praana is the up-breath, i.e. the outgoing breath, also called *Rechaka*.

3 Ruddhvaā is the restraint of these two breaths, i.e. holding the breath, also called *Kumbhaka* or retention of the breath. It is of two types – internal retention (following inhalation) and external retention (following exhalation).

4 Prana is also used as a general term for all the five types of Pranas. In this case it is translated as “life energy”. Thus the word Pranayama means “control of the life energies”. Through breath-control we gain mastery of our Pranas, the flow of energy in our body.

Verse 30: Ahara Yajna (No. 12) – Restraint on Food

अपरे नियताहाराः प्राणान्प्राणेषु जुह्वति ।
 सर्वेऽप्येते यज्ञविदो यज्ञक्षपितकल्मषाः ॥ ४-३०॥
 aparē niyatāhārāḥ prāṇānprāṇēṣu juhvati |
 sarvēःpyētē yajñavidō yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ || 4-30||

1	<i>apare niyata AAHAARAAH</i>	<i>Others, with well-regulated diet,</i>
2	<i>praanaan praaneshu juhvati;</i>	<i>offer as sacrifice the <u>life breaths</u> in the fire of <u>Prana</u>.</i>
3	<i>sarve api ete yajna vidah,</i>	<i>All these are knowers of sacrifice,</i>
4	<i>yajna kshapita kalmashaah.</i>	<i>whose <u>sins</u> are destroyed by Sacrifice.</i>

No. 12 Ahara Yajna – Restraint on Food Intake

1 The Regulation of Food is an important Yajna in the Indian tradition. Every vow observed by the devout Hindu is accompanied by some form of abstention in eating. Ekadashi and Pradosha fasts occur every two weeks. There are fasting months such as the annual Sravana month when devotees eat once a day. During the Adhika month, the additional month which comes every two and a half years, the whole month is observed in fasting. When Adhika month falls next to Sravana, two consecutive months are observed for fasting.

In this manner, regulation of food intake is a prominent part of spiritual practice in India. It rightfully deserves to be counted separately as a Yajna on its own.

2 However, in the context of this text, this Yajna could be taken as the 5th step in Patanjali Yoga, namely, Pratyahara or withdrawal of the life force from the senses.

3 The Lord has given in the above verses 12 examples of Yajnas. This is by no means the full list. We notice that the above selection is taken from the two main paths of Yoga. The Lord has no particular leanings towards any of these paths, but sees them as serving the same purpose of uniting the individual being to the Universal Being.

4 Whatever we choose to offer in sacrifice will eventually contribute to overcome the vast baggage of past Karma we have accumulated to get this human birth.

Verse 31: The Yajna Prasada

यज्ञशिष्टामृतभुजो यान्ति ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
 नायं लोकोऽस्त्ययज्ञस्य कुतोऽन्यः कुरुसत्तम ॥ ४-३१॥
 yajñaśiṣṭāmṛtabhujō yānti brahma sanātanaṁ |
 nāyam lōkōःstyayajñasya kutōःnyaḥ kurusattama || 4-31||

1	<i>yajna SHISHTAH amritah bhujah,</i>	<i>The eaters of the remnants of the sacrifice,</i>
2	<i>yaanti brahma sanaatanam;</i>	<i>i.e. the Nectar, go to the eternal Brahman.</i>
3	<i>na ayam lokah asti ayajnasya,</i>	<i>Even this world is not for non-sacrificers,</i>
4	<i>kutah anyah kuru-sattam.</i>	<i>how then the “other”, O best among Kurus?</i>

The Value of Yajna Prasada

1-2 Yajna-Shishtah: This is the “*Prasada*” of the Yajnas. The principle of *Prasada* *Buddhi* in Karma Yoga is being highlighted here. In all the acts of sacrifice, the performer is content to accept as *Prasada* whatever results the Lord decrees for the actions done. Having had no selfish motive in his sacrifice, he does not demand or insist on specific rewards for his actions, but takes what the Lord in His wisdom thinks fit to provide. This is called *Prasada* and is the *shishtah* or remnant of the sacrifice.

He who is quite content with the outcome of his actions as decided by the Lord, goes to the Supreme Brahman in due course. The explanation is that he becomes purer and purer by such selfless actions, performed without any sense of individuality in it, done in true Akartritva Bhava, and done entirely as an offering to the Lord. In other words, a Yajna is a pure act of sacrifice having all these ingredients. It is a perfect act of Karma Yoga. It cannot but take one towards the Supreme. Even if just one of these sacrifices is done, one is placed on the path that will eventually take him to the Eternal Brahman.

3-4 Usually, people perform sacrifices for the sake of ensuring a place in heaven when they leave this earth-plane. However, this line is saying that that should not be the expectation from a sacrifice. Acts of selflessness are needed on earth itself to promote harmony. If one does not have time to perform them, then “even this world is not for him”, what to speak of the next or heavenly worlds?

Verse 32: *Common Purpose of the Vedas*

एवं बहुविधा यज्ञा वितता ब्रह्मणो मुखे ।
 कर्मजान्विद्धि तान्सर्वानेवं ज्ञात्वा विमोक्ष्यसे ॥ ४-३२॥
 ēvam bahuvidhā yajñā vitatā brahmaṇō mukhē |
 karmajānviddhi tānsarvānēvam jñātvā vimōksyasē ॥ 4-32॥

1	<i>evam bahuvidhaa yajnaah,</i>	<i>Thus innumerable Sacrifices</i>
2	<i>vitataa brahmanah mukhe;</i>	<i>lie spread across the face of the Vedas;</i>
3	<i>karmajaan viddhi taan sarvaan,</i>	<i>Know them all as <u>born of action</u>,</i>
4	<i>evam jnaatvaa vimokshyase.</i>	<i>and thus knowing, you shall be liberated.</i>

The golden advice that Sri Krishna leaves us with is to do our best to perform Yajnas. The Lord's final advice on Yajna is "Know – Cooperate – Benefit." The formula is:

YAJNA = Knowledge + Sacrifice = **KARMA YOGA**

1-2 An interesting expression is used to refer to Yajnas – “*they are spread out across the face of Brahman*”. The Vedas are often referred to as the word of Brahman because Brahman is the ultimate purpose of the Vedas. All the practices, even the seemingly most desire-prompted ones, are intended to lead the human spirit Godward, every step of the way. The whole range of practices in the Vedas are to be done in the spirit of Yajna.

3-4 The key factor is to feel we are God's instruments only. We should remove the sense of individuality when doing them. That single internal attitude brings about enormous

purification of our mind, and paves the way for the higher Sadhanas to come into our life and propel us rapidly towards Liberation.

A person who does not give his co-operation to work within the Cosmic Cycle of Action (refer to Chapter 3) is regarded as a “thief” and is not worthy of his place on the planet! He does not contribute anything towards the maintenance of life on earth. He only takes but does not give back. That is why he is called a thief. That is how the Geeta views those who do not give in return for what they receive from nature, from the community or even from their own family. One who isolates himself from the cycle of benevolence set in motion by Nature, pays the price for his isolation in his own self-made 'Prison'. There is no hint of any Liberation for him.

Verse 33: All Vedic Roads Lead to Knowledge

श्रेयान्द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञानयज्ञः परन्तप ।
 सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थं ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ॥ ४-३३॥
 śrēyāndravyamayādyajñājjñānaya jñāh parantapa |
 sarvam karmākhilam pārtha jñānē parisamāpyatē ॥ 4-33॥

1	<i>shreyaan dravyamayaat yajnaat,</i>	<i>Superior to sacrifice with <u>objects</u></i>
2	<i>jnaana yajnah parantapa;</i>	<i>is sacrifice with <u>knowledge</u>, O Parantapa.</i>
3	<i>sarvam karma akhilam paarthaa,</i>	<i>All actions in their entirety, O Paarthaa,</i>
4	<i>jnaane pari-samaaptyate.</i>	<i>culminate in knowledge.</i>

1-2 In this concluding verse on the above topic, Sri Krishna stresses our actions must always be based on knowledge – of the Self, preferably, but even intellectual understanding will help take us forward. The combination of Self-knowledge, intellectual knowledge and action is the essence of Yajna. In this way Actions will not leave any taint upon us.

Dravyamaya: “with objects”. This refers to all Yajnas that are done without knowledge, not literally *with* objects! We have to note this point very carefully.

The point is stressed that knowledge is a key ingredient in Yajna; absence of knowledge renders a Yajna defective. There are Dravya Yajnas (which include use of some physical objects to be offered) which produce spiritual results when done with knowledge. Similarly, there are Jnana Yajnas (requiring no objects) which produce no spiritual merit at all if done without knowledge.

Thus Dravyamaya actually means “*yielding perishable results*”; whilst Jnanamaya means “*yielding permanent results*”. The distinction between the superior and the inferior types of Yajnas is the presence or absence respectively of knowledge, irrespective of the use or non-use of objects.

This touches on the very theme of this whole chapter – “The secret of renouncing actions is by performing them with true knowledge!” It sounds contradictory in terms but it is the only way to free ourselves from the binding effects of actions.

3-4 Here Sri Krishna clarifies that He is not asking us to abandon the Dravyamaya Yajnas simply because they are “inferior” to Jnana Yajnas. He is telling us that *all Yajnas*,

whether classified as Dravya or Jnana, have to be done with knowledge to produce spiritual results. We note here the care to be taken when interpreting the scriptures!

We can only do those Yajnas for which we have become eligible. Whatever we do in a spirit of sacrifice will help us go forward on the spiritual path. It is clear from this Pada that all Yajnas, whether inferior or superior, ultimately lead us to knowledge of the Self.

Where we are on the road to God, inferior or superior, nearer or further is not the point that matters; what matters is that the road leads Godward. With knowledge it will always lead us Godward and without knowledge it will always lead us into further bondage. That is Lord Krishna's clear assurance in this line.

The Karma and Upasana rituals, by bestowing their gifts of Chitta Shuddhi and Chitta Ekagrata respectively, play their role in leading us Godward. That all Yajnas lead us Godward is a very positive statement on which to close this important topic on Yajnas. It shows us the good intention implicit in every part of the Vedas.

There is a reason why Sri Krishna calls Arjuna twice by name in this verse. In all such verses there is something which the Lord wants Arjuna to take special note of. In this case it is as if He is saying to His dear disciple:

"Arjuna, I want you to understand this: Your enemy is Ajnana. By whatever means, you must get Jnana to finish it off. That is the task I give you. Your immediate need is Chitta Shuddhi. So you will do one of the Dravyamaya Yajnas, but My plan for you is to start very soon with the Jnanamaya Yajnas. Even this battle you are engaging in can become a Yajna if you do it with the right Karma Yoga spirit as I have been telling you."

So, if knowledge is so vital, the next item on the agenda is quite obvious...



4.7 MORE ABOUT SELF-KNOWLEDGE

(Verses 34-42, 9 No.)

THESE LAST NINE VERSES are devoted to give us the benefit of having more Self-knowledge. It is not only a glorification of the Knowledge, as it may appear at first. There is much useful information, inspiration and benefit in simply knowing what is being said here. These verses serve the purpose of whetting our appetite for the real thing. Every seeker knows how precious such inspiration is on this very difficult path.

Verse 34: *How to Obtain Self-Knowledge*

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ ४-३४॥
tadviddhi prañipātēna paripraśnēna sēvayā |
upadēksyanti tē jñānam jñāninastattvadarśinah ॥ 4-34॥

1	<i>tat viddhi pranipaatena,</i>	<i>Know that by long <u>prostration</u>,</i>
2	<i>pari prashnena sevayaa;</i>	<i>by <u>question</u> and by <u>service</u>,</i>
3	<i>upadekshyanti te jnaanam,</i>	<i>you will get instructed in that knowledge</i>
4	<i>jnaaninah tattwa darshinah.</i>	<i>by the wise who have realized the Truth.</i>

We go back to where we started this chapter – Lord Krishna spoke of the transfer of knowledge along a lineage of Masters, known as the Guru Parampara. The knowledge was taught once to Vivasvan, Manu and Ikshvaku; the same knowledge was learnt by King Janaka who became such a great Karma Yogi; and the same knowledge the Lord started teaching Ariuna in Chapter 2.

The knowledge is like the baton in a relay race – it is common from start to finish. Only the runners, like the disciples, keep changing as the race progresses. To obtain the knowledge, our task first and foremost is to qualify ourselves to become good “runners”.

How to Approach the Guru?

There are three practices that are advised to Arjuna by which he can approach his Guru and obtain the desired knowledge of the Self. These are:

1 i) *Pranipaatena*: “*by long prostration*”. Here is a good occasion to get to know how Samskrit words are constructed with such care and precision. There are two prefixes here, *ni* (down) and *pra* (well) added to the verb root *Pat* (to fall). This gives the meaning “to fall down well”, i.e. to prostrate fully. In the traditional manner this means Dandavat Pranam, or falling flat on the floor in surrender. In that position one is not even able to look at the teacher. The surrender is complete. The Guru can do anything he likes with a person in that position.

The purpose is, of course, symbolic. The disciple tells the Guru mentally, "Please do whatever you deem fit to me in order to make me worthy to receive the knowledge. You know what is best for me."

From that moment, the Guru becomes responsible for the disciple's growth.

2a ii) Pari-Prashnena: “*by questioning*”. The questions to be asked to one’s Guru should only be those which concern the spiritual path. A good example is verse 49 in *Viveka Choodamani*, wherein the disciple asks seven poignant questions by which he may be placed firmly on the spiritual path.

The disciple should not expect an immediate reply. The Guru has received the questions; he will decide when the time is ripe to give the replies. The questions asked are like *knocking* at the gate of the Guru's residence. It is for the Guru to grace you with entry into the spiritual life.

Before the Guru actually accepts the disciple, he has to check out if the disciple is fit for the journey. The only way he has of knowing where the disciple stands is by giving him some service to do, and through the service to get to know the disciple.

2b iii) ***Sevayaa***: “*by serving*”; through service, the Guru is able to study the disciple and observe his temperament. Through the disciple’s service the Guru is able to tune him to the spiritual path. He can track out the state of the disciple and then prescribe the proper Sadhana for him.

3 All this takes time. Hence, the ‘Future Tense’ is used in “the Guru will instruct”. This is to give time to the Guru to get to know the disciple thoroughly and plan out his Sadhana programme.

4 Jnaaninah: the wise ones. What qualifies the Guru to act as a guide to the disciple? Primarily, it is his direct realization of the Truth; this is called Brahmanishtha. Secondly, it is his ability to teach the Truths of the scriptures to the disciple; this is called Shrotriya. And thirdly, it is the Guru's experience and wisdom which he needs to bring to bear in the training process of the disciple; this is called Vijnana.

There is no possibility of the “blind leading the blind” in this relationship and with these qualifications. The relationship is one resembling father and son. There is love and trust at every turn. There is sincerity and openness from the disciple, and equal dexterity on the part of the Guru to conduct the spiritual operation on his patient, the student. Swami Sivananda called this operation “*Ego-dectomy*” or removal of the Ego!

As a scientist puts all his concentration on his observations in the laboratory; or as a sculptor chisels away a piece of stone to produce his artistic masterpiece; so also does a Guru pay the same careful attention on the progress being made by his chosen disciple.

Verse 35: *The Permanent Solution for All Sorrow*

यज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव ।
 येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥ ४-३५॥
 yajjñātvā na punarmōhamēvam् yāsyasi pāñḍava |
 yēna bhūtānyaśēsēna draksyasyātmanyathō mayi ॥ 4-35॥

1	<i>yat jnaatvaa na punah moham,</i>	<u>Knowing that, never again shall delusion</u>
2	<i>evam yaasyasi paandava;</i>	<u>ever cloud you over, O Pandava.</u>
3	<i>yena bhootaani asheshena,</i>	<u>And by that (knowledge), all living beings</u>
4	<i>drakshyasiaatmani atho mayi.</i>	<u>shall you see in your Self, and in Me.</u>

We are seeing a glimpse of the glory of Self-knowledge. This verse states in precise terms what is *removed* from the disciple and what is *added* to him – the very essence of the operation of “Ego-dectomy”.

A. What is Removed?

1-2 Delusion is removed. To the one who has come to know this knowledge of the Self (Sravana), and who believes fully in it without any trace of doubt (Manana), and who lives in its spirit fully by abiding in his own Self (Nididhyasana) – when these three stages of Sadhana have been completed, the disciple never again gets clouded by Delusion.

The cure is permanent, unlike most other solutions that are touted by the commercial community to unsuspecting clients. When once ignorance is removed through knowledge, it can never have any hold or sway over a person. The only cure for ignorance is knowledge, and this cure holds good for all students, in all conditions and in all parts of the world.

B. What is Added?

3-4 Actually nothing is added, but speaking in a conventional way, one can say that a new *enlightened vision* dawns in the student when ignorance is removed.

This new vision is so extraordinary that it breaks down all limited barriers between man and man. A new broad vision takes over the mind by which one sees oneself in all beings, something unheard of in ordinary life. It is a unique spiritual experience of Oneness. It is the pinnacle of achievement proclaimed by Vedanta.

Such a vision is called 'Sarvatma Bhava'. It makes one a totally changed person. One who lives in Self-knowledge sees all beings as superimposed upon *himself*, as we see our own arms and legs! Not only that, but he also sees that the same Divine Being is the substratum of all beings. That is, he sees the All in one, and the One in all. This is the most unique characteristic that is added to the seeker upon removal of ignorance.

The entire world is unified under the umbrella of Brahman. Truly does this have a most benevolent impact on this world. This is the foundation for unity and harmony among men all over the world. The great Vedic saying, *Vasudeva Kutumbaikam* – “the world is one big family” – has its origins in this divine vision.

Verse 36: *Even the Most Sinful Can Succeed*

1	<i>api chet asi paapebhyah,</i>	<i>Even if you are, among sinners,</i>
2	<i>sarvebhyah paapa krit tamah;</i>	<i>the <u>most sinful</u> of them all;</i>
3	<i>sarvam jnaana plavena eva,</i>	<i>yet, by the raft of knowledge, all</i>
4	<i>vrijinam sam-tarishyasi.</i>	<i>these sins you shall well <u>cross over!</u></i>

Now we are given the “fringe benefits” of this knowledge. What else does this knowledge do, as its side-effects? We are given another glimpse of this through the eyes of the Lord. And the Lord’s eyes are seen to be full of compassion.

The Removal of All Sins

1-2 There is no such thing as '*Eternal Damnation*' in the eyes of the Lord. Such ideas are alien to Hinduism, alien to all reason, and abhorrent to the human intellect. They do not stand the proof of Truth. Here, Sri Krishna gives promise and hope even to the one who is the worst sinner among all sinners in the eyes of men.

3-4 No matter how dark the darkness is in a cave, the moment the light is switched on inside it, all darkness vanishes instantly. That may perhaps be the best way to explain what happens as a result of spiritual enlightenment. The Divine knowledge is able to take even the worst among men, of any nationality or race, creed or caste, across the chasm of delusion and into perpetual freedom. However bruised and beaten the human individual soul is, when once it accepts the knowledge of who he really is, i.e. when he comes to know his total identity with the Lord Himself, he is pulled out of the ditch of human misery and into the safety and comfort of the all-pervading Truth.

It is then that we realize what divine Compassion really is!

Acharyaji quoted the lives of some well-known saints who had been moral wrecks in their early life. Valmiki emerged from the robber Ratnakar. There are many cases of such transformations amongst all peoples of the world. *“From sinner to saint”* is an oft-noted phenomenon when God enters a person’s life.

Knowledge is the raft that takes us across this ocean of worldly existence.

Verse 37 & 38a: *The Purifying Fire of Knowledge*

यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ॥ ४-३७॥
yathaidhāṁsi samiddhō:'gnirbhasmasātkurutē:'rjuna |
jñānāgnīḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasātkurutē tathā ॥ 4-37॥
न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।
na hi jñānēna sadṛśam pavitramiha vidyatē | ॥ ४-३८.१॥
na hi jñānēna sadṛśam pavitramiha vidyatē | ॥ 4-38.1॥

1	<i>yathaa edhaamsi samiddhah agnih,</i>	<i>As fuel, by the blazing fire,</i>
2	<i>bhasmasaat kurute arjuna;</i>	<i>is reduced to ashes, O Arjuna;</i>
3	<i>jnaana agnih sarva karmaani,</i>	<i>the fire of knowledge reduces all actions</i>
4	<i>bhasmasaat kurute tathaa.</i>	<i>to ashes, in the same way.</i>
5	<i>na hi jnaanena sdrisham,</i>	<i>Certainly, equal to knowledge, no</i>
6	<i>pavitram iha vidyate;</i>	<i>purifier is there, here in this world.</i>

Here is a beautiful simile on how effectively **Knowledge** does its work. Knowledge is compared to a blazing fire.

1-2 It is like fire. Not ordinary fire, but a raging, unstoppable fire that advances over an entire forest, decimating all the trees as it marches on uncompromisingly.

Acharyaji eloquently expressed the powerful might of such a fire: “It is like a raging, furious, wild forest fire. All that stands in its way, whether it be wet or dry, gets burnt. Everything ahead of it is incinerated to ashes. All is consumed in its fury. Everything gets digested by its unappeasable appetite!”

3-4 As fire acts on a forest ahead of it, so Knowledge acts on actions.

Paapa and Punya are two sides of the same coin. The ‘wet or dry’ in the simile applies to Paapa and Punya, good or bad, merit or demerit. As far as knowledge is concerned, even merit is considered to be a form of demerit only; it also has to get devoured or burnt in the fire of knowledge. It is just as binding as sin or demerit.

The first line of the next verse is taken with this as it is on the same theme.

5-6 The glory of this knowledge is further enhanced by telling us that of all purifying agents in this world, there is nothing more purifying than Knowledge. Every other purifier attacks Paapa only, and spares Punya, even glorifies it. But knowledge does not spare it. Punya has to be crushed out as well. Then the victory is complete.

The fire simile is extended beyond removal of ignorance to include this purification of merit and demerit as well. There is nothing more purifying than fire. When we finally see a heap of ashes only, we are left with no trace of all the rubbish that had been burnt to produce it. The purity of ash is symbolically glorified by the tradition of smearing ash over one’s forehead. Lord Shiva smears it over His entire body!

Verse 38b & 39: The Obtaining of Knowledge

तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति	४-३८.२॥
tatsvayam yōgasamsiddhaḥ kālēnātmani vindati	4-38.2
श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।	
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति	
śraddhāvāṁllabhatē jñānam tatparaḥ samyatēndriyah ।	
jñānam labdhvā parām sāntimacirēṇādhigacchati	
४-३९॥	
4-39	

7	<i>tat swayam yoga-samsiddhah,</i>	<i>He who is himself perfected in Yoga,</i>
8	<i>kaalena aatmani vindati.</i>	<i>finds it (Knowledge) in himself in good time.</i>

9	<i>shraddhaavaan labhate jnaanam,</i>	<i>The man of <u>faith</u>, obtains knowledge,</i>
10	<i>tatparah samyata-indriyah;</i>	<i>is <u>devoted</u> to it, and subdues his <u>senses</u>;</i>
11	<i>jnaanam labdhvaa paraam shaantim,</i>	<i>having obtained it, the Supreme Peace</i>
12	<i>achirena adhigacchhati.</i>	<i>'ere long he gets (or reaches).</i>

Karma Yoga is a Pre-Qualification

7 *Yoga-Samsiddhah*: By Karma Yoga, one becomes eligible for knowledge. The Yogyata or eligibility for knowledge is attained by doing Karma Yoga. The latter develops the capacity for knowledge.

8 *Kaalena*: “*in good time*”. The preparation takes time. There are a few other things necessary before knowledge itself comes to one. These are now explained.

Three essential steps are identified:

9 i) *Shraddha*: Acharyaji spent a lot of time on this quality as it has been given special importance by Lord Krishna Himself. How has it been highlighted? It is by attaching the verb ‘*Labhate*’ to it rather than to the other two qualities. This indicates that Shraddha has “top priority”. [In this way, Acharyaji taught us to see the importance of such placement of words; this is quite common in elegant Samskrit poetry.]

Faith is something that the seeker needs till the very end of the spiritual quest. It is the single most important quality that a seeker has to have. But it is not blind acceptance. This was made very clear to us, as we shall shortly see.

Why is faith needed? In ordinary life, when we realize that our vision has a defect such as colour-blindness, we accept that our judgement of colour cannot be trusted. We go to another person to verify the colour of a particular object. In spiritual life, the same situation exists. We have a defect called delusion or ignorance, by which we cannot trust our own ‘perceptions’ of life. Hence we have to go to someone who does not have that defect to tell us how to correct that defect. We have to have faith in his advice. Faith enables us to make the effort to correct our defect. Without it we will not even give it a try.

“Faith is trust pending self-discovery.”

That is how Pujya Gurudev describes faith. The difference between faith and blind faith is that in the latter, one blindly accepts and does nothing further to get enlightened himself. In the former, one takes it further through intellectual enquiry or through personal experience until it develops into *firm conviction*, until it becomes a fact to him. Faith is meaningful only if it leads us to our own conviction. If it does not do that it is of no purpose.

The *Upanishads* ask us to “trust and see for ourselves”, not just “trust”. The intent to discover must accompany our faith. Faith is the starting point of a journey that ends in *firm conviction* of the truth, independent of any external factor.

Before the sun rises, the eastern sky begins to get bright slowly. That brightening promises something; it gives us faith that the sun will rise soon. And sure enough out comes the sun of firm conviction!

A spiritual student has to make a leap into the unknown based on faith. It is not possible for that leap to be totally blind. The call from within beckons him to the Divine; the call combines with the words of the Guru and the two together propel him into action.

*Faith is the crest on which
rides the intellect of the seeker."*

The word Shraddha itself tells an interesting fact about faith. It comes from *Shrat* (Truth) + *Dha* (to hold) + the Astik Buddhi which says “Yes”. All three components – the truth, the ability to stick to it, and a yearning for it – are essential for true, abiding faith.

Once the truth has been experienced, one does not need faith. Then there will be others who will begin to have faith in *you*, in *your words*!

10a ii) Tatpara: This is devotion with dedication and sincerity. ‘Tatpara’ literally means “*in that which is Supreme*”; nothing matters to the devotee but the Supreme. This is the derivation. Next in importance to faith, comes devotion. In fact, many saints place the two on the same rung, as being equal in importance.

Even with these two, something else is still needed . . .

10b iii) ***Samyata-Indriyah***: This is the “*subdual of the senses*”. It requires practice and commitment. There must be a determination to bring the wild senses under control. All else being equal, the success of an individual in spiritual life depends on his ability to control his senses.

This is another long-term practice. Even towards the higher stages of Sadhana, a slackness in this regard can bring down the whole edifice so patiently built up. Everything can come crashing down if one is not alert to keep a watch over his senses.

11-12 With these three qualifications – namely, *faith*, *devotion* and *dispassion* – the knowledge can be received from the Guru. What thereafter? The verse says “ere long” success is a certainty. What is that “ere long” telling us? What is yet needed?

The answer is just patience and prayer for the Divine Grace to bless one with the Divine Vision, when it thinks fit!

Verse 40: *The Doubting-self Repels Knowledge*

अज्ञश्चाश्रद्धानश्च संशयात्मा विनश्यति ।
 नायं लोकोऽस्ति न परो न सुखं संशयात्मनः || ४-४०||
 ajñaścāśraddadhānaśca saṁśayātma vinaśyati |
 nāyaṁ lōkōःsti na parō na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanah || 4-40||

1	<i>ajnyah cha ashraddhadhaanah cha,</i>	<i>The <u>ignorant</u>, the <u>faithless</u> and</i>
2	<i>samshaya aatmaa vinashyati;</i>	<i>the <u>doubting</u> self goes to destruction;</i>
3	<i>na ayam lokah asti na parah,</i>	<i>There is neither this world, nor the other,</i>
4	<i>na sukham samshaya aatmanah.</i>	<i>nor happiness for the <u>doubting</u> self.</i>

As we have seen so often in the style of Sri Krishna, he now paints the picture opposite to the above verse. What happens when these three essential qualities are not there? Three cases are considered:

1a i) The Ignorant: In this case, the knowledge has not been received; the *Sravana* has not happened. He has not been exposed to the truth. He has to just wait until that stage arrives in his life. The vast majority of people are in this situation.

1b ii) The Faithless: This person gets the knowledge through Sravana, but he is without faith in its value. He simply discards it as some “cock and bull” story. His attitude is, “You are a fool, don’t make me a fool also. You have lots of time to waste; I have none.” Thus, with arrogance, he dismisses the glorious opportunity that falls on his lap.

2 iii) The “Doubting Thomas”: This is the person that Sri Krishna is very concerned about in this verse. He is neither here nor there. He is so uncertain he cannot make a positive step towards the Lord. Each time he tries, something in him throws up a doubt. He swings like a pendulum between doubt and action. And so he does not achieve anything.

3 The doubting man is successful neither in this world, nor in the “other” world. That is, he gains neither worldly joys, nor spiritual illumination, neither Bhoga nor Yoga! Doubt, like cholesterol in our veins, has ceased the flow of his life energies into useful channels. He gets a seizure, as it were, and not knowing where he stands, he dangles in mid-air!

4 Pitiable indeed is his situation. Doubt is a blockage that prevents one's faith from flowering into firm conviction. Is the Lord suspecting Arjuna to fall into this category?

Verse 41: Renunciation of Action in Knowledge

1	<i>yoga sannyasta karmaanam,</i>	<i>He who has <u>renounced</u> actions by Yoga,</i>
2	<i>jnaana samchhinna samshayam;</i>	<i>whose <u>doubts</u> are rent asunder by knowledge;</i>
3	<i>aatmavantam na karmaani,</i>	<i>who is <u>poised</u> in the Self (as the Self), no actions</i>
4	<i>nibadhanti dhananjaya.</i>	<i>can bind such a one, O Dhananjaya.</i>

Finally, we come to the verse which summarises the entire chapter.

This 4th Chapter is actually a combination of the **Jnana** of the 2nd Chapter and the **Karma Yoga** of the 3rd Chapter. Blending these two, the Lord has presented before us a comprehensive and integrated path, which He terms “**Jnana-Karma-Sannyasa Yoga**”, i.e. The Yoga of Renunciation of Action in Knowledge.

1 The essence of Renunciation is giving up the sense of doership in all our actions. We remove the individuality from our acts and render them free of all reactions. There is no resultant accrued when there is no doership in actions.

2 The proper place of Knowledge is discovered. It is the most essential ingredient in one's actions. The two have to go hand in hand. An act without conscious application of knowledge is blind. And knowledge that is not applied to our daily activities is mere theory.

3 When the two are blended together, we have the perfect situation of steady poise and are firmly anchored in our inner Self. Then every act we perform becomes imbued with consciousness.

4 When we act with a sense of individuality, we are answerable for all actions. We face the reactions of our actions as we were doing them out of ego-consciousness. Without this ego, our actions are rendered taintless, meaning that they are free from incurring any Karmic consequences. They take on a universal colouring.

Even as a river is not to blame when it comes down in a flood and destroys life along its path, so also actions done without any ego-sense become free of all blame. Only pure cosmic intention operates through such a person, and he is not bound by his actions.

Verse 42: “Take Refuge in Yoga and Arise!”

तस्मादज्ञानसम्भूतं हृत्स्थं ज्ञानासिनात्मनः ।
 छित्वैनं संशयं योगमातिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ भारत ॥ ४-४२॥

tasmādajñānasambhūtam hṛtsthām jñānāśinātmanah ।
 chittvainam samśayam yōgamātisṭhōttisṭha bhārata ॥ 4-42॥

1	<i>tasmaat ajnaana sambhootam,</i>	<i>In conclusion, Ignorance is born in the heart.</i>
2	<i>hritsthām jnaana asināa aatmanah;</i>	<i>With the sword of knowledge of the Self,</i>
3	<i>chhitvaa enam samshayam</i>	<i>cut asunder this doubt!</i>
4	<i>yogam aatishtha; uttishtha bhaarata.</i>	<i>Take refuge in Yoga. Rise up, O Bharata!</i>

1 Tasmaat: “therefore”; this word announces the conclusion of a text. Its significance depends on what portion is being summarized. It could be only a few verses, or it could be a sub-section of a chapter, or it could be a whole chapter; in rare cases it could even be several chapters. Here is one of those rare cases where the “Tasmaat” takes us right back to Chapter 2, to the beginning of Sri Krishna’s spiritual message.

The whole subject up to this point is being summarized in this verse. Whatever arises from Ignorance causes confusion and delusion in the mind of man. It is the source of Arjuna’s deluded state at the very beginning.

2-3 There is only one way out of the stranglehold of Doubt, born out of Ignorance – and that is to draw out the sword of knowledge and snap it at its very root so that it never rears its shoot again. This stringent surgical operation is the only solution.

When a cancer attacks the body, it has to be cut out with aggressive treatment. Doubt is the cancer that has attacked Arjuna. (The first two cases given in verse 40 do not apply to Arjuna). His disease has been diagnosed as Doubt which Sri Krishna considers to be the gravest of dangers on the spiritual path. It is doubt alone that threatens to hold back Arjuna from making progress.

Hence, it has to go – however painful the operation may be!

4 Arjuna has just received a thorough explanation of the whole process of Sadhana that he is expected to practice. Before even an inkling of doubt enters his mind, the Master Instructor gives the positive suggestion that would snuff out all doubt from his mind . . .

“Rise up, O Bharata, and FIGHT!”

This is Arjuna's Dharma, to fight. He is right there on the battlefield. It is now or never. The moment of decision has come, and the Lord gives the instruction that will take Arjuna's foot off the brakes and place it firmly on the accelerator!

This is his Dharma, his calling, and he cannot escape it. The Lord expects nothing less from him.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे
ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यासयोगे नाम चतुर्थोऽध्यायः ॥ ४ ॥

ॐ tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāśūpaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyāṁ yogaśāstrē śrīkṛṣṇārjunasāmāvadē
jñānakarmasāmnyāsayogaḥ nāma caturthōऽdhyāyah ॥ 4 ॥

Om Tat Sat!

END OF DISCOURSE 4
“RENUNCIATION OF ACTION IN KNOWLEDGE”

