

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 4: Jñāna-Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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YouTube Link: https://youtu.be/ZX4U1-_385s

The Creation Code: Intricacies of Karma

॥ श्री ॥

The **4th** chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is the **Jñāna-Karma-Saṁnyāsa-Yoga - The Yoga of Knowledge and disciplines of Action and Knowledge.**

We begin this enlightening session on the auspicious occasion on the eve of Makarasaṅkrānti with the traditional lamp lighting. May this light illuminate our life with knowledge as the Sun illuminates the darkest night. We offer our prayers to Yogeśvara and our Gurus, whose blessings have ensured that we have come in contact of the epitome of our Scriptures and the source of all knowledge, the Bhagavadgītā. Learning this ancient wisdom is our biggest of fortune as it is the gateway towards mokṣa, that frees us from all bondage.

Before we begin today's discourse, let us understand briefly the significance of the occasion of Makarasaṅkrānti.

A brief introduction

We have several festivals in India, however Makarasaṅkrānti is one of those that are celebrated across India. We call it by various names based on the different regions e.g., Makarasaṅkrānti in Maharashtra, saṅkrānti in Karnataka, Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Uttarayana in Gujrat, Magh Bihu in Assam, Lohri in Punjab, etc.

The Hindu Panchang, calendar are lunar based, while the Gregorian calendar is solar based. Hence, you find our festivals having different dates in different years. Makarasaṅkrānti is a significant day as the Sun enters Makar Rashi (i.e. Capricorn zodiac) . Thus, it represents the day the sun begins its ascent, therefore, we have the same date for Saṅkrānti atleast for 72 years.

We have in our lifetime, seen it shift from 14 of January to 15th, this change is to accommodate the leap years. To give an example, Swami Vivekananda ji was born on 12th of January 1863. There was

Makarasaṅkrānti that day. Every 72 years, there is an increase for one day in the Gregorian calendar. Also, all of our festivals do not give an exact time but it is specific to a place; thus, any occasion is specific for a specific place, it changes every 100 km. Therefore, each festival is marked differently every 100 km.

There are 2 activities that are given a very high importance for this occasion; **Donation and Kalpavaas**.

Donations of food, wealth, etc., are given; The shastras give details of what? When? How? and Whom of this Dānam.. **example**: Students are given books, the raw material for cooking like oil etc., or even food grains that could last for months are given. Hence, the festival is also called khichadi in some places.

There is also an importance given to bathe in the Ganga on the banks of Prayag, if one cannot go there then they can take a dip in their nearby rivers, sea or waterbodies. Prayag is also famous for another important activity during this time, Kalpa Vaas.

What is Kalpavaas?

To reside on the banks of Sangam. Starting from the eleventh day of *Paush Maha* (month) to the 12th day of *Magh Maha* (month). This period is considered to be equivalent to one day of Brahma ji, also known as kalpa and the *punya* (blessings accumulated by doing good deeds) is equivalent of this. However, some Kalpvaasi's start their kalpvaas from Makarasaṅkrānti also. According to the Mahābhārata, performing kalpvaas for a month is equivalent to offering prayers for a 100 years without consuming grain. By observing *kalpvaas* an individual can attain mental, physical and spiritual growth. Furthermore, it is said that an individual can have his wishes granted and get freedom from life ahead i.e, Mokṣa!!

In the Puranas it is even advised to the Devatās to take birth as ordinary humans just to do *Kalpvaas* in Prayagraj. In the epic Mahābhārata, Muni Markandeya advises the righteous Yudhiṣṭhira that *Kalpvaas* at Prayag not only rids you of all “*paap*” but ensures higher planes for the Jīvātman.

According to the shastras, the minimum period of *kalpvaas* is one night, three nights, three months, six months, six years, twelve years, or a lifetime. However, there are several dos and don'ts that one has to follow to get any benefits of this.

The traditions of *Kalpvaas* and its importance goes back eons; as it is also mentioned in the Ramcharitmanas in the conversation between Maharishi **Yājñavalkya ji** and Maharishi **Bharadvāja ji** in the Baal Kaand...

भरद्वाज मुनि बसहिं प्रयागा। तिन्हि राम पद अति अनुरागा ॥

तापस सम दम दया निधाना। परमारथ पथ परम सुजाना ॥

"The sage Bharadvāja lives in Prayag; he is extremely devoted to the feet of Sri Rām. A great ascetic and an embodiment of self-restraint, composure of mind and compassion, he is highly advanced in the quest for the Highest attainment towards the Divine."

माघ मकरगत रबि जब होई। तीरथपतिहिं आव सब कोई ॥

देव दनुज किंनर नर श्रेणीं। सादर मज्जहिं सकल त्रिबेनीं ॥२ ॥

In the month of Magha, when the sun enters the sign of Capricorn, everyone visits the chief of holy places, Prayag. Troops of Devatās and Danavas (lower beings), Kinnaras (higher beings) and men, all

devoutly bathe in the triple stream of the Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati.

पूजहिं माधव पद जलजाता। परसि अखय बटु हरषहिं गाता ॥

भरद्वाज आश्रम अति पावन। परम रम्य मुनिबर मन भावन ॥3 ॥

They worship the lotus feet of Bhagavān VeniMadhava (the presiding deity of Prayaag); and the touch of the immortal banyan tree sends a thrill into their limbs. The hermitage of Bharadvāja is a most sacred spot, exceedingly charming and attractive even to great hermits and the haunt of sages and seers who go to bathe at that holiest of holy places.

तहाँ होइ मुनि रिषय समाजा। जाहिं जे मज्जन तीरथराजा ॥

मज्जहिं प्रात समेत उछाहा। कहहिं परसपर हरि गुन गाहा ॥4 ॥

These Sages and Rishis who come to Prayag to take the dip in the Sangama (confluence of the 3 rivers) congregate in Bharadvāja's Ashram. At daybreak they all perform their ablutions with fervour and then converse together on the virtues of Sri Hari.

ब्रह्म निरूपन धरम बिधि बरनहिं तत्त्व बिभाग।

ककहिं भगति भगवंत कै संजुत ग्यान बिराग ॥44 ॥

They discuss the nature of Brahma (the Supreme Eternal), the precepts of Dharma and the classification of fundamental entities and explain and talk of the Devotion of Bhagavān which filled Jñāna, wisdom and Vairāgya (dispassion or renunciation).

एहि प्रकार भरि माघ नहाहीं। पुनि सब निज निज आश्रम जाहीं ॥

प्रति संबत अति होइ अनंदा। मकर मज्जि गवनहिं मुनिबृंदा ॥1 ॥

In this way they bathe for the whole month of Magha and then return each to his hermitage. There is a great rejoicing every year and having performed their ablutions while the sun stays in Capricorn the hosts of sages disperse.

Rishi Yājñavalkya had also once come at such a gathering, where Maharishi Bharadvāja had stopped him to gain some knowledge. This description reflects an ancient age that has long past; yet, reminds us of the civilizational memories and the sanctity of tradition. May we all gain the opportunity to perform such an auspicious and beneficial practice in our lifetime.

At this beneficial thought, let us continue our discourse on the 4th chapter of **Jñāna-Karma-Saṁnyāsa-Yoga**. Previously, we had seen that Bhagavān had revealed an ancient wisdom, this was the wisdom that helped a person walk on the path of Dharma. We had also seen various examples on how our actions and choices have a bearing on our future. HE described HIS form and the continuity of this knowledge that has been passed on from eons before. Yet, this ancient knowledge that lead one to HIM was not revealed to Jñānis, but to a devotee. A bhakta.

Swami Ramsukhdas ji Maharaj has termed the shlokas from 6 to 10th of the 4th chapter as *Nithya Pathniya Pañca shlok* (5 shlokas for daily recitals) He stated that those who cannot do anything else, should read these five shlokas everyday...

We shall now look into this secretive and mystical wisdom... From the 11th verse; Yogeśvara takes us back to the path of Karma, action. But, the nuggets of information and knowledge imparted here, are extremely unique. Some of the wisdom and knowledge that Bhagavadgītā teaches is beyond our scriptures. Let us now look at the nature of Karma and how it works, its classification and impact. It also resolves a lot of our confusion regarding the workings of this Saṁsāra.

4.11

ye yathā māṃ prapadyante, tāṃstathaiva bhajāmyaham, mama vartmānuvartante, manuṣyāḥ(ph) pārtha sarvaśaḥ. 4.11

Arjuna, howsoever men seek Me, even so do I respond to them; for all men follow My path in everyway.

In the previous verse, Bhagavān had affirmed that those became free of attachment, fear, and anger and became fully absorbed in HIM, sought HIS refuge, came to HIM.

Then, one might ask what was HIS ultimate form, what were HIS characteristics?

To this, Bhagavān clarified that whatever the **Bhāva** with which one seeks refuge in HIM; one obtains HIM the same way. Whatever may be the approach to seek HIM, that gets fulfilled. One cannot get Bhagavān if the Bhāva is absent. This Bhāva is the attitude or sentiment with which a devotee approaches his Bhagavān.

In Bhakti Yoga, there are 5 types of permanent attitudes (**sthāyi-bhāvas**) mentioned through which a devotee approaches HIM in devotion.

- **Shanta Bhāva:** Saṃnyāsi Bhaktas have Santa Bhāva. A Bhakta of Santa Bhāva type is not emotional. He does not exhibit much emotions. He cannot dance and weep and yet his heart is full of intense devotion. This is the approach of a Yogi.
- **Dāsya Bhāva:** They approach Bhagavān with the feeling of service; where, the devotee thinks that he is the servant and Bhagavān is his master. Sri Hanumān ji had this Bhāva.
- **Sakhya Bhāva:** The devotee takes Bhagavān as his friend. This Bhāva demands purity, boldness, understanding and courage. Ordinary people will find it difficult to have this Bhāva. But when Bhakti develops and matures, the Bhāva comes by itself. Arjuna had this Bhāva. There is equality in this Bhāva between the worshipper and the worshipped.
- **Vātsalya Bhāva:** The Devotee worships his object of devotion with the feeling of a parent; Bhagavān Krishna is worshipped in his child form, Bal Gopala.
- **Mādhurya Bhāva:** The Bhaktas entertain the idea of the lover and the beloved, as Meera bai and Radha ji sought HIM.

One approaches the same Divine with different attitudes, this also changes the way one sees the same reality. This truth is universal.

There is an **incident of a crow and a confectioner** that highlighted the importance of Bhāva in the way one perceives everything,

Once, there was a confectioner who was frying jalebis to sell along with some curd. Seeing this curd in the open air, a crow came and sat on its bowl.

The Halwai shooed away the crow and he would fly away; but after some time the crow realized that the sweet- maker would not be able to reach him. He sat on the bowl for some time to eat curd, the Halwai tried to scare the crow away by a stone in his hand. However, accidentally he threw this stone hitting the crow, resulting in his death!!

Now, remorse filled the Halwai; he was a kind hearted man and mourned the loss of an innocent bird. He sat right outside his shop crying.

Now, a sadhu was passing nearby; He saw a crying man and asked this Halwai his reason for such lament. The confectioner cried out the whole tale. His narration reflected his attitude towards the whole incident, "self blame!"

The sadhu perceived the irony of the incident; silently took a charcoal and wrote,

काग दही पर जान गवायो।

The crow lost his life over curd. Here *kaag* is crow, *dahi* is curd, *jaan* is life and *gavayo* meant lost.

Some time passed, a passer-by saw the confectioner and asked him, "what troubles you this morning?" The Halwai tearfully pointed at the wall. Now, this person had his own back story, due to this he read the writing as,

कागद ही पर जान गवायो।

(He) lost his life, just for a paper. A simple shift in a single letter changed the crow into a paper (*kagad* is paper)..

One of the reasons as to why the man perceived this sentence such was due to an incident he just faced; he had been fired from his job due to an incorrect signature. A single paper had changed his life.

Again he too sat down and now there were two people crying. Soon another youth passed by, he was directed to read the writing on the wall too..

But this one read it completely different,

का गदही (गधि) पर जान गवायो।।

Why did you lose everything for a donkey like Female!! (*gadhiya*: female donkey).

The poor boy had just met with a unfortunate situation. He had married out of love, but when he showed up at his family home, he was thrown out of his house by his father who had not been taken into confidence before he married this girl. The mother, was much more sympathetic and ecstatic that her child was married. She quietly filled her daughter-in-law with jewels that she had been collecting over the years. The couple went at a nearby Inn to rest for the night. When the groom woke up the next morning, he was shocked! For his so called "wife" had ran away in the night with the expensive jewellery!

Thus, the same writing was perceived differently by 3 different people due to their Bhāva or sentiment or intention at that given instant. But Bhāva is not limited to our own perception of the Divine; this verse confirms this as Bhagavān had proclaimed that the devotee shall attain HIM, with the Bhāva that he perceived HIM. But for that to happen, one must first approach HIM with the feeling of a Bhakta first. For, how could one be a Bhakta without Bhāva?

HE is most pleased with the correct intention, not opulence and grandeur in HIS worship. A beautiful Bhajan expands on this, where Bhagavān elaborated on HIS expectations of the devotees;

**भाव का भूखा हूँ मैं, बस भाव ही एक सार है |
भाव से मुझ को भजे तो, उसका बेडा पार है ||**

**अन्न धन अरु वस्तु भूषण, कुछ न मुझको चाहिए |
आप हो जाये मेरा बस, पूरण यह सत्कार है ||**

भाव बिन सुना पुकारे, मैं कभी सुनता नहीं ।
भाव की एक टेर ही, करती मुझे लाचार है ॥

भाव बिन सब कुछ भी दे तो, मैं कभी लेता नहीं ।
भाव से एक फुल भी दे, तो मुझे स्वीकार है ॥

जो भी मुझ मे भाव रख कर, आते है मेरी शरण ।
मेरे और उस के हृदय का, एक रहता तार है ॥

https://vivechan.learngeeta.com/vivechan_summary/?vivechan_summary_id=2274

Bhagavān explained here how HE was only concerned about the Bhāva of the devotee and nothing else. HE wasn't interested in the food and garments that were offered to HIM, but the intention of the Devotee. Just like, the ill intended Duryodhana was rejected by Bhagavān in favor of Vidura for his hospitality; No matter how Duryodhana tried to convince HIM, HE refused.

Similarly, HE couldn't hear those who called HIM devoid of any Bhāva, but was bound to those who cry from their heart! HE doesn't accept offerings no matter how grand they are! But, accepts even a single flower with greatest delight when offered with Bhāva, for those who seek refuge in HIM, absorbed in HIM, are bound to HIM with a single thread; just as Bhagavān rushed forth towards an elephant "gajendra" who offered HIM flowers and offered Mokṣa, the devotees too attain HIM as they are connected with the thread of this Bhāva.

4.12

kāñkṣantaḥ(kh) karmaṇām(m) siddhiṃ(m), yajanta iha devatāḥ, kṣipraṃ(m) hi mānuṣe loke, siddhirbhavati karmajā. 4.12

In this world of human beings, men seeking the fruition of their activities, worship the gods; for success born of actions follows quickly

But not all devotees seek HIM. Those who desire the beneficial fruits of their activities in this world worship the Devatās, because the results of their fruitive worship are quickly achieved. The Devatās are not concerned about whether a particular boon is a beneficial for the devotee in the long run. It is more of a transactional relationship; as there is no Bhāva between the Devotee and the Divine.

Bhāva changes this relationship dynamic; for now, Bhagavān is concerned about whether the devotee can benefit from any of HIS blessings in the long run.

Example:

A child may be refused by a father on utilising their own pocket money, if it is not beneficial for them; In contrast, the father may add more amount than the child has if needed; if it is beneficial. A shopkeeper on the otherhand, wouldn't care what were you buying, be it an expensive mobile or any other object.

We may worship the Devatās for material gains. But they do not care if the reward is good for us or the society. This is the reason, when many Asuras and other entities like Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakashuapu, Kumbhakaran asked for the absurd Boons, they were granted; but these blessings also became the reason for their deaths. Hence, one should seek HIM to know HIM, the rest HE takes care.

4.13

cāturvarṇyaṃ(m) mayā sṛṣṭaṃ(ñ), guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ, tasya kartāRāmapi māṃ(m), viddhyakartāRāmavyayam. 4.13

The four orders of society (viz., the Brāhmaṇa, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya and the śūdra) were created by Me, classifying them according to the Guṇas predominant in each and apportioning corresponding duties to them; though the originator of this creation, know Me, the Immortal Lord, to be a non-doer.

There is a lot of controversy that has been created around this verse; hence, it is important to understand its correct meaning and the correct context, to avoid such malicious narratives.

It is stated that HE has established a certain order in society by creating a **fourfold system** of Varnas (Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra) according to divisions of **quality (guṇa) and Actions (karma)**. Note, that the system is to establish "order" and not "hierarchy". Also, these divisions are not birth based, but are based on Guṇas and Karmas of a Jīvā.

Tremendous confusion is created because one thinks that this is restricted to humans. But, this classification is not limited to just humans but across species and dimensions. The entire creation is based on this principle, where based on your actions and inherent tendencies (generated due to impressions of these actions), one gets a certain birth in a certain body. This could be of any species; all of them are classified in the same 4 Varnas based on their qualities depending on if they Sāttvika dominant, Rājasika dominant or Tāmasika dominant. There is a micro and macro classification of all existing beings;

For example in birds,

- the **pigeon** is considered to be a Brāhmaṇa
- the **Eagle** the Kṣatriya,
- the **Vulture** the Vaiśya and
- the **crow** is considered to be a śūdra.

Similarly, at the macro level,

- The **Devatās** are considered Brāhmaṇa
- **Humans** are Kṣatriya
- The **Pitris** are considered to be the Vaiśya
- The **Triyak** (organisms, animals, etc., except humans) are considered to be a śūdra.,

One gets rebirth after death; where and in what species it takes rebirth depends on the actions and tendencies of a being. **Example**, one could become a bird or a tree, it is also possible that they become Devatās. However, even within other intra specieic beings there is classification,

For example: A Jīvātman born as a dog, could either be one with luxury or hardship. Similarly, a human birth is also classified in such a manner.

Where, the Brāhmaṇa have dominant Sāttvika, Kṣatriya has a mixture of Sāttvika and Rājasika, Vaiśya are a mixture of Rājasika and Tāmasika, and śūdra have a predominant Tāmasika. Note, everyone possess all 3 qualities, only in different amounts. Based on these qualities, their actions and paths become different. The Brāhmaṇas are predisposed toward teaching and worship. The Kṣatriyas are those who are inclined toward administration and management. The Vaiśyas are those who possess a knack for business and agricultural pursuits. Then, there are the śūdras who are

predisposed towards the service industry and hence form the working class. All 4 form an important component to run a society efficiently.

Classification is everywhere, even the stones are classified into 3: Masculine, Feminine and Non conforming (*Napusakaling*); this classification is used to aid in sculpture making. There is an incident of an artist who couldn't complete the correct expression of a lion as he had picked a wrong stone, a feminine form of stone. Thus, seeking progress per their aptitude is much beneficial than having a linear approach towards HIM.

But then, does that mean everything is set in stone; that everything is our destiny and nothing could be changed? Not true; The Law of Karma reigns supreme,

As stated in the Ramcharitramanas,

कर्म प्रधान विश्व रचि राखा । जो जस करहि सो तस फल चाखा ॥

Karma dominates the entire creation, whatever kind of actions one does, so shall be the consequences..

It is our Karma that put us in the current birth and circumstances, and it is also through our Karma that we shall be free of it. There is Order, and not Hierarchy in creation; at the essential level, we are all the Ātma-tattva..

The diversity of qualities and actions is seen everywhere; Even in one household, we may find that the children have different qualities, different paths. They also have different destinations; yet, for the father they are all the same. The Parameśvara is like that father who views all of HIS creation with the same compassion and seeks our benefit,

As stated in the Uttarakanda, where Kaak Bushundi ji revealed to Garuda, of Bhagavān Rām 's teachings to him, regarding this,

एक पिता के बिपुल कुमारा। होहिं पृथक् गुन सील अचारा ॥

कोउ पंडित कोउ तापस ग्याता। कोउ धनवंत सूर कोउ दाता ॥1 ॥

कोउ सर्बग्य धर्मरत कोई। सब पर पितहि प्रीति सम होई ॥

कोउ पितु भगत बचन मन कर्मा। सपनेहुँ जान न दूसर धर्मा ॥2 ॥

सो सुत प्रिय पितु प्रान समाना। जद्यपि सो सब भाँति अयाना ॥

एहि बिधि जीव चराचर जेते। त्रिजग देव नर असुर समेते ॥3 ॥

अखिल बिस्व यह मोर उपाया। सब पर मोहि बराबरि दाया ॥

तिन्ह महुँ जो परिहरि मद माया। भजै मोहि मन बच अरु काया ॥4 ॥

Bhagavān Rām said: "A father has a number of sons, each differing from the others in character, temper and conduct. One is learned, another given to austerities, a third spiritually enlightened, a fourth rich, a fifth possessed of valour, a sixth charitably disposed, a seventh all-wise and an eighth intent on piety; but the father equally loves all. A ninth son is devoted to his father in thought, word and deed and never dreams of any other duty."

"This is the son whom the father loves as his own life, though he be a perfect ignoramus. Likewise, all animate and inanimate beings, including the subhuman species, Devatās, men and Asuras-in short, the whole of this universe is My creation and I am equally compassionate to all. Of these, however, he

who adores Me in thought, word and deed, forswearing arrogance and wiles-

पुरुष नपुंसक नारि वा जीव चराचर कोइ ।
सर्व भाव भज कपट तजि मोहि परम प्रिय सोइ ॥४७ क ॥

Bhagavān Rām declared: "Be it man, woman or one lacking the characteristics of both, or, for the matter of that, any living being whatsoever of the animate or inanimate world-he who adores Me with all his being, giving up all guile, is supremely dear to Me. "

Thus, whatever might be our current situation; we can change it even within our lifetime through our actions. In the case of Varnas, they were never fixed; one could change them by demonstrating a change in their qualities and actions.

Sage Vishvamitra ji is the biggest example; he was born in a Kṣatriya lineage, was a king but became first a Brāhmaṇa by gaining Brāhmaṇattva, then a Muni, then a Rishi, Maha Rishi and Brahma Rishi by undertaking a conscious step in that direction and gaining those qualities by tapasya; all in the same lifetime.

Even the arrogant **Karna**, who is currently idolised due to incorrect knowledge of the original depiction in Mahābhārata, when wanted to perform in an arena that was reserved for the Princes, was made a King by Duryodhana allowing him to do so. No one objected this, so changing and transitioning in different classifications was done and recognised by the society, if it was recognised by others. Meaning one could practice whatever they liked, but the recognition came from others, even a person like Duryodhana had the authority to do so.

Kaak Bushundi ji called himself humbly as he was a crow, but yet, he was mentioned glowingly by Bhagavān and even received Mokṣa. **Hanumān** ji called Himself a monkey, self efficaciously; yet, we all know His glories and worship Him. Thus, the description in these texts cannot be looked at without proper context and knowledge about the speaker; making it different from its meaning; for HE makes no differentiation or Hierarchy for the devotees who seek HIM with guile less devotion. Even those with terrible Karma and who still don't seek HIM, still after traversing through the 84 lakh *Yonis*; regain the Human form, as this is the only form where one can perform Karmas. Even the Higher beings like Devatās cannot do so, and can only gain fruits of their previous merits.

Our birth and circumstances are due to our previous actions; yet we are free to course correct our current actions, and they determine our future course.

Then, what about the Paramātmā, is HE bound by the law of Karma?

Parameśvara transcends both the Guṇas and the law of Karma; as HE is does actions like an Akarta (non Doer); wherein HIS actions are without the sense of doer ship, neither is HE attached to them, HE is not directly involved in the Creation, for it is HIS Prakṛti that manifests and dissolves it. HE is immutable, non changing and Gunatita; hence, unaffected by the Saṃsāra. Thus, HE is free from this cycle of Birth and death.

Next, We explore the intricacies of Karma..

4.14, 4.15

**na māṃ(ñ) karmāṇi limpanti, na me karmaphale sprhā,
iti māṃ(m) yo'bhijānāti, karmabhirna sa badhyate. 4.14
evaṃ(ñ) jñātvā kṛtaṃ(ñ) karma, pūrvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ,
kuru karmaiva tasmāttvaṃ(m), pūrvaiḥ(ph) pūrvataraṃ(ñ) kṛtam. 4.15**

Since I have no craving for the fruit of actions, actions do not taint Me. Even he who thus knows Me in reality is not bound by actions.

Having known thus, action was performed even by the ancient seekers for liberation; therefore, do you also perform actions as have been performed by the ancients from antiquity.

Why is HE an Akartā? In answer to this, Śrī Bhagavān spoke this verse beginning with **na māṃ** (I am neither)

Not only does HE not have a sense of doer ship but HE also does not desire (**sprihā**) the fruits of HIS actions for there is no attachment to the body. Those who know this also become free from this bondage.

There have been ancients who knew of this and acted upon it. These were the Raja Rishi (Sage Kings) like the King Janaka. These were the seekers of Mokṣa (**mumukṣubhiḥ**). This, knowledge that we are not this material creation or body, did not hinder them from performing actions. For, even HE performed action. HE did them as if HE were a witness, without a sense of Doer ship or expectations from the performed action. But this was not only limited to HIM; Bhagavān reminded Arjuna that his ancestors in ancient times too, acted in a similar manner.

In the 9th verse of the 4th chapter, Bhagavān stated that HIS birth and Karma both are of Divine nature (when HE incarnates),

**जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥ ९॥**

Bhagavān stated: "Those who understand the divine nature of My birth and activities, O Arjuna, upon leaving the body, do not have to take birth again, but come to My eternal abode."

As a Jīvā, his birth was not Divine but, his actions could definitely become Divine. To achieve this, Yogeśvara asked Arjuna to act in a manner similar to his ancestors and perform his actions as he was performing them as a duty without a sense of doer ship. "Become a witness" to actions..

Our senses are associated with the material world. If one becomes attached to them, then they become attached to this Saṃsāra. One should not renounce actions, but renounce the attachment to the result and sense of doer ship. This is **Karma Saṃnyās Yoga**.

4.16

**kiṃ(ñ) karma kimakarmeti, kavayo'pyatra mohitāḥ,
tatte karma praVākṣyāmi, yajñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt. 4.16**

What is action and what is inaction? Even men of intelligence are puzzled over this question. Therefore, I shall expound to you the truth about action, knowing which you will be freed from its evil effects i.e., the shackles of karma.

We have studied this term "Karma". But what are its nuances? What is Karma? Akarma? Vikarma?

It is difficult to understand the intricacies of Consequences of Karma. Yet, we form opinions on others. Their motives, Actions are all judged; this is also a source of confusion because we tend to be judgemental, never focusing on Self evolution. But all this cannot happen unless one truly understands its essence as even the intellectuals fall for it due to Prakṛti's allure.

Even the wise should not perform prescribed duty (karma) simply by imitating the previous spiritual authorities. Rather, they should act only when they have understood its specific nature. For this reason, the complex subject of karma-tattva, the science of performing one's prescribed duty, is being explained.

4.17

karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyaṃ(m), boddhavyaṃ(ñ) ca vikarmaṇaḥ, akarmaṇasca boddhavyaṃ(ñ), gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ. 4.17

The truth about action must be known and the truth of inaction also must be known; even so, the truth about prohibited action (Vikarma) must be known. For, mysterious are the ways of action.

One of the most basic questions people ask is why do we not know the cause of our suffering? What was the action that led to the current consequence we face?

This is because the Karma forms the basic code of this Saṃsāra. The nuances, intricacies and what? When? How? Of a particular situation, our response to it and the resulting consequence is so vast, widespread and passes on large time scales; e.g., one could be facing a result of an action that had taken place several births ago on a time scale of millions of years. If one remembers all this, it would be impossible for them to function. They would be trapped in the past with no room for improvement or a fresh start.

The knowledge of Karma, Akarma, Vikarma is essential to understand the concept of consequence of actions.

Let us understand briefly on these intricacies of Actions, so that one is well aware of what and how to perform them, as the nature of it is **gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ** (profound is the science of Karma)

1. **Prakṛti** (primordial nature) that is the manifest is caused due to padartha(Matter) and kriya (action).

Both Matter and Action have a beginning and end, creation and dissolution

2. The **Kriya** transforms into **Karma** when there is a sense of doership with the action. "I ate this", "I worked on this" all of these come with a sense of doership. The moment a kriya transforms into karma, it has a consequence.

3. The action (both kriya and Karma) could be of 2 types

- **Vidhi**: "desirable actions" (as proscribed by shastras)
- **Nishedh**: "non desirable actions" (against the shastras).

Both of these actions whether they are desirable or undesirable could be of 2 kind,

- **Shubh**: Auspicious
- **Ashubh**: Inauspicious

Even if an action seems Inauspicious, **example**, going to funeral etc. But it is proscribed and hence, should be undertaken as **Vidhi**.

On the other hand, a seemingly auspicious activity like going to a temple, but if done without bathing; becomes **Nishedh**.

The Karmas occur in 3 different ways,

- **Kāyik**: Through body (physical action)
- **Vachik**: Through Words
- **Mansik**: Through thoughts

Tulsidas ji in the **Uttarakaand** of Ramcharitmanas had proclaimed that,

कलि कर एक पुनीत प्रतापा ।

मानस पुन्य होहि नहि पापा ॥4॥

The greatness of Kaliyuga is that the good thoughts create merits (*punya*) but bad thoughts do not result in demerits (*paapa*).

All the above types of Karmas are broadly classified into 3 types based on the Guṇas,

- **Rājasika**: those that originate due to passion, activity
- **Sāttvika**: those that arise out of stability and purity, balance
- **Tāmasika**: those that arise out of inertia, inactivity.

There is a misconception that Tāmasika Guṇa is completely bad and Sāttvika is the only one desirable. We act on all the 3 tendencies. The qualities themselves are not good or bad per se. **Example**, we need to sleep for proper recovery of the body. Inactivity then, becomes essential. This is **Tamas**. On the other hand, too much of it leads to laziness. The main point is to create a balance.

The Karmas performed through these 3 Guṇas have consequences. These consequences are carried forward by us in 3 forms,

- **Sañcita Karma**: Accumulated Karmas.
- **Prārabdha Karma**: Those Karma that fuel the current existence.
- **Kriyamāṇa (or āgāmi) Karma**: Those Karmas that are currently being made or getting accumulated.

To understand this, we can take the example of a money in the bank. We create a fixed deposit of 10 years, and other time intervals, we obtain a previous fixed deposit that has reached maturity and a current account.

The current account, that is what we using to deposit and perform our day to day actions is the **Kriyamāṇa**.

The FD which has reached maturity, and a source of our money is the **Prārabdha**.

The FD for 10 years is the **Sañcita Karma** that will mature later..

We only carry the Sañcita Karma, the accumulated consequences of these Karma (Karma-Phal) upon death with us. When we take rebirth, it depends on those consequences that have come to fruition (Prārabdha). We face these consequences, both good and bad in the current life, while also depositing new Karmas as Sañcita. They are also our or check-in accounts, where some of our actions bear

immediate results. This is the **Kriyamāṇa**.

Ideally, we can remain in control of our Karmas by doing these actions in 3 ways,

- **Karma-Yoga**: Doing action to attain HIM, where HE becomes the doer as we surrender all our actions to HIM.
- **NishKama Karma-Yoga**: One is doing action without any desire for the result.
- **Karma Samnyās Yoga**: Not renouncing action, but the sense of doer ship. Where one acts like a trustee and oversees the actions as a witness. An appointee to undertake the action and not a doer of the action.

Given below are the types of Karmas we perform,

1. **Nitya Karma**: Daily actions

The sense of doership should be renounced even whilst performing these daily actions as stated in the 5th chapter,

नैव किञ्चित्करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।

पश्यञ्शृण्वन्स्पृशञ्छिघ्नन्नश्नन्नाच्छन्स्वपञ्चसन् ॥ ४॥

प्रलपन्विसृजन्गृह्णन्नुन्मिषन्निमिषन्नपि ।

इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन् ॥ ५॥

Bhagavān said: Those steadfast in karma-yoga, always think, "I am not the doer," even while engaged in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking, excreting, grasping, and opening or closing the eyes. With the light of divine knowledge, they see that it is only the material senses that are moving amongst their objects."

These actions are intuitive and do not require intellect.

2. **Naimittik Karma**: The proscribed duties, that are dependent on the role we play in the society. Example: a student needs to study, a home maker takes care of the household duties, you must respect your parents, teachers, and other elderly and performing the last rights of your parents. There is no gain in performing Naimitya Karma, but not completing them has negative consequences.

3. **Kamyā Karma**: Actions to fulfill our desires; example: watching movies, doing good deeds like yajñas etc.

4. **Nishiddha Karma**: Those that are undesirable, against the shastras.

5. **Prayaschitt Karma**: we perform these with the intention of righting the wrong actions. To minimise the consequences of Nishiddha Karmas.

6. **Upasana Karma**: Those actions that lead us to HIM. The *sadhana* that requires being upright, in Asana in front of Bhagavān.

Next we see what is Karma? Akarma and Vikarma?

- **Karma**: Actions with a normal sense of attachment. The common actions we perform is Karma.
- **Vikarma**: Those actions that lead to an increase in the attachment; so much so that a person can do anything to obtain his desire. This includes lying, cheating, and other evil actions. This is Vikarma.
- **Akarma**: When the activity is devoid of the sense of both Karta (doer) and Bhokta(enjoyer) that is Akarma.

Let us understand this through an example of a car. If there is car in a garage, without desire to start the engine, the ignition, it appears stand still. Consider the engine as the causative desire (**kamana**) and the car running as **kriya** (activity). Without the starting of the gear, though one starts the engine (kamana happens) the car still does not move. Thus, Causative desire has occurred, but not the object

of that desire, Action. This is Kamana without karma. Once the gear is activated, the car too starts moving. Now, both the desire to move and movement of the car is happening. Thus, both kamana and karma are happening. Now, if one encounters a slope, the driver shall switch off the engine; yet, the car is still moving. Thus, the causation for moment is switched off, but the Action is still happening. Thus, karma is happening without kamana.

Those, devotees who in their Devotion seek HIM, HE becomes their shield. Thus, the causative desire to sustain and create action is no longer need; it gets eliminated from them and the actions happen as if they are self sustained; for, HE sustains the momentum. This is Akarma, where the action is no longer dependent on a causative agent.

The devotee neither has a sense of doership nor any desire for the fruits of action; all his actions are happening through HIM, he becomes a medium.

As beautifully elucidated in the Bhajan,

मेरा आपकी कृपा से, सब काम हो रहा है।
करते हो तुम कन्हैया, मेरा नाम हो रहा है॥

पतवार के बिना ही, मेरी नाव चल रही है।
हैरान है ज़माना, मंजिल भी मिल रही है।
करता नहीं मैं कुछ भी, सब काम हो रहा है॥

तुम साथ हो जो मेरे, किस चीज की कमी है।
किसी और चीज की, अब दरकार ही नहीं है।
तेरे साथ से गुलाम, अब गुलफाम हो रहा है॥

मैं तो नहीं हूँ काबिल, तेरा पार कैसे पाऊँ।
टूटी हुयी वाणी से, गुणगान कैसे गाऊँ।
तेरी प्रेरणा से ही, सब ये कमाल हो रहा है॥

मुझे हर कदम कदम पर, तूने दिया सहारा।
मेरी ज़िन्दगी बदल दी, तूने करके एक इशारा।
एहसान पे तेरा ये, एहसान हो रहा है॥

तूफ़ान आंधियों में, तूने ही मुझको थामा।
तुम कृष्ण बन के आए, मैं जब बना सुदामा।
तेरे करम से अब ये, सरेआम हो रहा है॥

मेरा आपकी कृपा से, सब काम हो रहा है।
करते हो तुम कन्हैया, मेरा नाम हो रहा है॥

The devotee sings that it is through his beloved Krishna that everything is happening. He only gets the name and fame for it, but the doer is HIM. His boat is floating and crossing the river without oars, he is achieving heights to the astonishment of his peers, yet he knows that he isn't the doer. HIS presence has freed him from the bondage. "Yet, I am unqualified to sing your glories, and can only do so with my broken speech." HE has been with him through the various obstacles every step of the

way; had transformed his life and have been favouring him through the stormy winds; Have guided him, befriended him in the form of Krishna, as HE did to Sudama. "This is known fact now, for all my actions are fulfilled through YOU." "HE is the doer, Kanhaiyya is the doer while I am reaping the benefits!!!"

Another beautiful composition by Potdar ji describes the state of Akarma,

कर प्रणाम तेरे चरणों में लगता हूं अब तेरे काज ।
पालन करने को आज्ञा तब मैं नियुक्त होता हूं आज ॥

अन्तर में स्थित रह मेरी बागडोर पकड़े रहना ।
निपट निरंकुश चंचल मन को सावधान करते रहना ॥

अन्तर्यामी को अन्तः स्थित देख सशंकित होवे मन ।
पाप वासना उठते ही हो, नाश लाज से वह जल भुन ॥

जीवों का कलरव जो दिन भर सुनने में मेरे आवे ।
तेरा ही गुनमान जान मन प्रमुदित हो अति सुख पावे ॥

तू ही है सर्वत्र व्याप्त हरि ! तुझमें यह सारा संसार ।
इसी भावना से अन्तर भर मिलूं सभी से तुझे निहार ॥

प्रतिपल निज इन्द्रिय समूह से जो कुछ भी आचार करूं ।
केवल तुझे रिझाने, को बस तेरा ही व्यवहार करूं ॥

Here, Bhagavān is looked upon as the doer. "I bow down to Your lotus feet as I undertake Your tasks. Please stay in my inner being as a guide who can reign in this unconstrained fickle mind. Caution it towards the correct path; for You are my inner witness, destroy the desires that could lead to *paap*. I only listen to Your glories, as I hear the sounds of different beings in their chatter. YOU are the all pervading Hari of this Samsāra!! May my senses be forever engaged in activities that please YOU as the all pervading essence."

When we go beyond mere karmas; forsake the Vikarmas as our desires are forever engaged in HIM. When the sense of doership gets relinquished with the knowledge that HE is the Doer. When there is no expectations towards the results of our action. Then such actions are **Akarmas**. This is the highest state of a Yogi. For now, he has transcended the bondage of Karma.

4.18

**karmaṇyakarma yaḥ(ph) paśyed, akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ,
sa buddhimānmanuṣyeṣu, sa yuktaḥ(kh) kṛtsnakarmakṛt. 4.18**

He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is wise among men; he is a Yogī, who has performed all actions.

One who sees action in inaction and inaction in action is truly wise among men. He is a yogī and transcendently situated, even though he performs all sorts of activities.

What is karma in Akarma? And what is Akarma in Karma?

To understand this, let us look at the tale of the **Ganika and Sadhu**. It is a story from the Upanishads that is also taken in the Guru Bani; It is the best illustration of this,

There was a Ganika (prostitute) who lived in a market in the center of a town. She often committed adultery and many other sins. Men were mesmerized by her beauty and youth. Every evening, her house was lit with candles, and she would dress up in all kinds of jewelry and beautiful dresses.

On the other side of the village, there lived an ascetic. This sadhu maharaj was very pious and had undertaken several vows. He stuck to them and was living the life of a hermit inside the forest. It had been several years, since he had seen civilization. Yet, one night the entire village was flooded due to thunderstorms, so he finally left the forest seeking shelter.

Now, this Sadhu along with a baby Parrot that he had saved, came across the hut of the Ganika. Seeing her decked in jewels; they started conversing. The Ganika too found inspiration from the guileless sadhu and asked him if he wanted to halt. She welcomed the Sadhu and offered food, but the Sadhu refused to consume any food cooked by her as she was a Ganika (prostitute). However, he would accept any raw material she could give.

The Ganika happily gave him the raw materials and they started conversation. By the time it was dawn, the Ganika insisted that she wanted to become his disciple. The sadhu stated that she needed more peity. She could take the baby parrot and teach him "Ram" so that as he chanted, she could gain merits as well.

Soon, one could hear the constant requests and threats of the Ganika who found that the parrot was too young to talk! Yet she persevered. The Sadhu too had become used to her sounds of "Ram" . So he started keeping a watch. But alas! Her reprehensible work still continued. The sadhu was disappointed that the she still took on customers. On the other hand, she was concerned about the parrot uttering "Ram"

One day, as he was still thinking about her, there came a cry of "Ram". The sadhu immediately understood her voice. He rushed to save her. But he too fell against a rock. Now both were going to die!

The irony was that the Ganika kept on pleading to the parrot to say "Ram" while the Sadhu was thinking about her!

As they both came to the Yama loka, the sadhu found the prostitute to be ahead of him. When the Chitragupta was asked by YamRaaj about them, he narrated the sequence of events. The Sadhu was sent to a good family for reincarnation but missed out mokṣa as his last thoughts were about the Ganika. While, the Ganika was sent to the higher lokas as she had taken HIS name in the end.

Thus, what looks like Akarma (the sadhu taught the Ganika) might actually be Karma (due to his attachment towards her); while what looks like karma (the Ganika continued to serve her customers) might be akarma (her thoughts only had HIM, whatever may be her actions). One cannot determine the other's action; instead when one constantly engages in this thought, his own karma could change.

Personalities such as Janaka Mahārāja, who were pure in heart, did not take sannyāsa, as in as one visualises with renouncing of the Saṃsāra, even though they were endowed with jñāna. Instead, they performed akarma by selflessly offering the fruit of their activity to Bhagavān (karma-yoga).

Those who can see that this is not really action (karma) are themselves not bound by karma. A person who looks like a sannyāsī whose heart is impure, who lacks real knowledge, and who possesses a mere intellectual knowledge of the scriptures, can only deliver exalted speeches.

An incidence, where a political party usurped the food donations during covid times by not crediting the actual doers of welfare had done wrong actions. But these couldn't be guessed by the others as how can one know the background and culmination of any action?

Akarma and Karma are extremely personal, we can only know about ourselves as only we know our motivation and intentions; thus, work on Self first.

4.19

**yasya sarve samārambhāḥ(kh), kāmasañkalpavarjitāḥ,
jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇaṃ(n), tamāhuḥ(ph) paṇḍitaṃ(m) budhāḥ. 4.19**

Even the wise call him a sage, whose undertakings are all free from desire and Sankalpa (thoughts of the world) and whose actions are burnt up by the fire of wisdom.

What happens to those who do their actions as Akarma?

The Jñānis who understand the concept of Akarma and apply this knowledge, to continue to do their duties without a sense of doer ship or attachment to the result, destroy the consequences of their previous actions; just as the fire burns the matter to smithereens. This is the fire of Jñāna.

Those who perform pre-scribed duties and at the same time become free from fruitive desires, as well as from their Vikarmas (forbidden acts), burn up all the results of those duties in the fire of transcendental knowledge. This results from their performance of **niṣkāma-karma-yoga**. Such exalted Jīvās are called **jñānāgni-dagdhakarmā**, 'those who have burned all their karma in the fire of transcendental knowledge'.

This is how one attains freedom from the bondage of Karma through Jñāna-yoga. Such a Yogi is a "pandit".

4.20

**tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgaṃ(n), nityatrpto nirāśrayaḥ,
karmaṇyabhipravṛtto'pi, naiva kiñcitkaroti saḥ. 4.20**

He, who, having totally given up attachment to actions and their fruit, no longer depends on anything in the world, and is ever content, does nothing at all, though fully engaged in action.

Having described him, Yogeśvara now appreciates this Yogi. Where the one who has renounced attachment to the fruits of his work, who is always satisfied by his own internal bliss, and who is not dependent on anyone for his maintenance; "performs no action," even though fully engaged in all types of action.

Here, **Nitya-trptaḥ** means that internally such a person remains blissfully content. **Nirāśrayaḥ** means 'not depending on anyone for one's maintenance'

Thus, the 3 types of Yogīs have different approaches to reach him as they perform their actions.

The **Karma Yogi** does his actions as a duty without any expectations of result. Attitude: "I don't want anything"

The **Jñāna Yogi** performs his actions with the knowledge of discernment, where he understands that there is a difference between him and the actions; that the actions represent the material nature and hence, separate from him. Thus, the sense of doership is lost through *Viveka*. Thus, he becomes a witness to the actions of the body. Attitude: "I am not the doer"

The **Bhakti Yogi** surrenders both his actions and result to HIM. Whatever he does is for Paramātmā, HE is the one that doer and through surrendering the results of their actions to HIM; it is HE who takes care of whatever may be the consequences of these actions. Attitude, "HE is the doer"

In the next session we shall continue the aspect of Karma in more detail.

We conclude our current session with HARI NAAM Sankirtan,

Let us now take a look at some of the Q and A in this session.

Manju ji

Question: How to generate Bhāva towards HIM?

Answer: Reduce your contact with those with negative tendencies. Engage in sadhana and satsang.

Rang Rao ji

Question: When does the manifestation of a Karma occur?

Answer: This cannot be known, as we might be facing some consequences that are several thousand births ago. We can prevent future Karmas by doing them without causative desire (kaamana) and Sankalp (with intention to gain results)

Govind Ekbote ji

Question: Is earning profit considered Vidhi Karma?

Answer: Yes, it is the duty of a merchant to earn wealth; however, profiteering through unreasonable and unethical means is considered nishedh



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Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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