

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 4: Jñāna-Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga

2/4 (Ślōka 11-20), Sunday, 05 November 2023

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/ybafmcdmqzw>

The Concept of Action and Inaction is Profound

The session started with prayers and lighting of the traditional lamp, *Deepa prajwalan*, to invoke Goddess Saraswathi's blessings.

The 4th chapter, **Jñāna Karma SaṁnyāsaYoga - The Yoga of Knowledge and Disciplines of Action.**

This chapter teaches one to do the karmas (actions) with focus on **Jñāna** karma (knowledge) and karma **Saṁnyāsa** (renunciation). It teaches the philosophy of doing karma without doing anything, and vice versa. Śrī Krishna explains how one can reach HIS supreme abode and unify with HIM, by doing the karmas in the right manner. In the previous session, HE revealed how HE manifests in this world at times of dire crisis. People who know HIS supremacy and are devoted to HIM reach HIM ultimately. In this session, HE explains more about HIS true nature, and how to reach HIM through the right way of doing karma.

In chapter 16, last shloka, HE told Arjuna '**Tasmat Śāstram pramanante karyakaryavyavasthitou**'- Śāstra is primary, and that one should do what the shastras say.

Śāstra means the Vedas, Upanishads, Gītā, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and the 6 philosophies. Śāstra or The Indian knowledge system has classified Hindu scriptures into 6 partitions.

- Śruti
- Smṛiti
- Itihāsa
- Purāna
- Āgama
- Darshana

Śruti: A single sentence/ sutra from the Vedas. It is comprised of Vedas, Upavedas and Vedangas.

Vedas are further classified into **Samhita** (deals with Mantras), **Brahmana** (deals with Yajnas),

Aranyaka and **Upanishads** like **karmakhand**, **jnanakhand**, etc. Bhagavān Adi Shankaracharya ji's Bhashyas on 10 main Upanishads covers all the topics of Vedas. These Upanishads are the direct Vani of Bhagavān and cover many shlokas from Gītā.

Each Veda has its own upaveda, as follows:

Veda – Upaveda

- **Rig – Ayurveda**
- **Yajur – Dhanurveda**
- **Sama – Gandharva veda**
- **Atharvana – ArthaŚāstra**

Before studying Vedas, one must study the **Vedangas**. One must know **Vyakaranas** (grammar) to read the vedas; **Chandas** for recital of the vedas; **niruktha** for the correct interpretation of any word in the right context; **jyothish Śāstra** for muhurta or correct timings of yajna, etc; **kalpa Śāstra** for all knowledge about the yajnas; and **shiksha** for correct pronunciation of the **sutras**. Not all rules of Bhagavad Gītā are taken from Panini's vyakarana. Some are specifically taken from the Shiksha Śāstra.

Smriti: explains the contents of the Vedas using simple language. It is more beneficial and useful than the Sruti part, as it is easy to understand. Our knowledge about Dharma and Adharma are contained in the Smritis like Manusmriti, Yajnavalkya, Parasara, etc. Bhagavad Gītā actually falls under the Smriti classification of the Śāstras, because it tells the concepts of Vedas in a simple manner.

Itihasa: This part comprises of stories of Mahabharata and Ramayana. The importance of these scriptures is highlighted in the saying '**Vina Vedam Vina Geetam Vina Ramayaneeyakatham, Vina Kavi Kalidasa, Bharata Bharatam nahin'**'. One must understand the Vedas, Gītā stories of Ramayana and poet Kalidasa's writing in order to understand know the real Bharata.

Purana: Purana means ancient/ pracheena. There are 18 main puranas (Markandeya, Matsya, Vayu, Shiva, Agni, etc.); 18 Upa puranas, one for each of the 18 Maha puranas, and several additional Upa puranas.

Agama: the different ways to approach HIM. This liberty is found only in our Indian culture. Other sampradayas have only one opinion, and everyone follows that one opinion. But in Hindu culture, no one is bound by a single entity. Anyone can choose to worship whoever he desires. A Shaiva will primarily worship Shiv ji; Vaishnava will worship Vishnu; and Saktha will worship Devi. However, they are not restricted to worship only that primary deity. They are free to worship any deity of their liking.

Darshana: covers the 6 types of philosophies – **Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Purva Mimamsa, and Uttara Mimamsa** (also called as Vedanta). Worldwide, **Uttara Mimamsa** is very famous and popular.

4.11

**ye yathā mām prapadyante, tāmstathaiva 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.

Bhagavān is telling that whoever worships HIM in whatever form, HE will reward them all in the same way. In whatever way they are worshipping, they are ultimately worshipping HIM only.

In chapter 9, shloka 26 HE said:

Patram pushpam phalan toiyam yo me bhaktya prayacchati

Whatever you offer me with faith, I will be there in Saguna roopa to accept it.

The Ultimate Reality is ONE although we have given different names to it. This is a beautiful concept that cannot be found anywhere else other than in our Hindu scriptures. This is unique to Bhagavad Gītā. Other dharmas focus particularly on only one God. But only our Hindu culture is open to worshipping any god in any form. Our rishis had such a broad mindset to deliver this concept of '**Vasudaiva kutumbakam**' - '**This world is one family**'. We should be proud that the Sanatana dharma has come from Bharatiya samskriti. **Hinduism is not a religion, but a philosophy, a Śāstra**. Anyone who follows it is called a Hindu.

4.12

**kāṅkṣantaḥ(kh) karmaṇām(m) siddhiṃ(m), yajanta iha devatāḥ,
kṣipram(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

People worship different deities in anticipation of specific fruitive results. Śrī Krishna says that such ritualistic acts of worship and austerities will yield quick results in this realm that is manushya loka.

In Kaliyug, fruition is believed to be faster than the other yugas. A simple act of chanting a small mantra with reverence can give immediate result of increasing one's good deeds - punya karma.

4.13

**cāturvarṇyam(m) mayā sṛṣṭam(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.

Bhagavān created four types of varnas - based on man's gunas (qualities) and karmas (actions).

The duties of each varna are explained in detail in Manusmriti and also in 18th chapter of Bhagavad Gītā. However, in today's world, the system has greatly deviated from the original concept. In ancient days, caste of a person was decided upon by the qualities he possessed and his activities. Sanjaya was a suth putra, born to a Shudra; but his intelligence was so immense, that he fell under the category of Brahmana varna according to the Śāstras. Hence, Vedavyas ji made him a Brahmana and assigned him as King Dhritarashtra's minister.

In today's society, caste is not classified according to one's activities, but according to the birth lineage. A person born in a Brahmin family will be called a Brahmin, even if he is involved in business which is an activity assigned to the Vaishyas. Likewise, a person born in the Vaishya family can take up activities pertaining to the Brāhmaṇa or Kṣatriya or Shudra, so on and so forth.

Bhagavān says that although HE is the creator of the classification, HE is actually the non-doer. In the last session, it was explained that the doership entity appears when the person's ego surfaces, and he feels '*Aham kartaram*' I am the doer. **But when one sees himself as a vehicle/ medium who is only doing the HIS duty, the feeling of doership does not arise.**

Everyone should try to be HIS medium of action. Everything is predetermined, and no one can escape HIS decisions.

In the 11th chapter, HE says to Arjuna '*nimitta-matram bhava savya-sacin*' The time of death has come for the Kauravas; You can be the *nimitta* (medium) and get all the *kirti* (credit).

4.14

**na māṃ(ñ) karmāṇi limpanti, na me karmaphale sprhā,
iti māṃ(m) yo'bhijānāti, karmabhirna sa badhyate. 4.14**

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.

Śrī Krishna reiterates that no actions taint HIM, nor does HE have any desire for the fruits of the actions. Those who know this as HIS real identity too will not get bound by the actions. Śrī Krishna is speaking here not as Bhagavān Krishna but as the **Supreme Reality ParaBrahmā**.

A person who realizes this is also aware about the **Vishuddha Atma**, and knows about his own real identity. HE is **Vishuddha Chaitanya**. A wise person knows that although HE is **Mayopahita Chaitanya**, and he is **antahkarana upadi Chaitanya**, both **Paramātmā** and he are **Chaitanya**. He **has realized his Oneness with the ParaBrahmā**.

Such a person is also aware that he is not a doer, and his body is just a medium. He is not the body. The body is separated from the Chaitanya, and hence he does not connect himself to the karma or action. Knowing this, he doesn't desire for the karma phalas, or fruits of his action.

4.15

**evaṃ(ñ) jñātvā kṛtaṃ(ñ) karma, pūrvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ,
kuru karmaiva tasmāttvaṃ(m), pūrvaiḥ(ph) pūrvataraṃ(ñ) kṛtam. 4.15**

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.

Ancient rishis/ sages were thoroughly aware of this concept of Oneness with the Supreme, and so did their karmas knowing that they were not getting bound to their actions. Seekers of liberation like Vishwamitra muni and Vashishta muni performed their actions with this knowledge. Shri Krishna urged Arjuna to follow the footsteps of his ancestors and perform actions just like them.

4.16

**kiṃ(ñ) karma kimakarmeti, kavayo'pyatra mohitāḥ,
tatte karma praVākṣyāmi, yajjñātvā 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.

Even **wise people get confused by what is Karma, Akarma and Vikarma**. Bhagavān assures Arjuna that he will tell these to him, by knowing which Arjuna can get liberated from the evil sansara world.

4.17

**karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyaṃ(m), boddhavyaṃ(ñ) ca vikarmaṇaḥ,
akarmaṇaśca 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.

- **Karma** is any action like sitting, talking breathing, etc.
- **Vikarma** is forbidden action following the rules of **Nishedha vidhi**, which emphasizes on what should not be done by us.
- **Akarma** is karma done with no desire attached to it – **kamana rahit karma**.

This concept can better be understood using the analogy of car and its engine. A car needs its engine to start the car and move forward. Engine is the desire (**kamana**) that drives the car (**karma**). But in some situations, as **on a slope, the car moves forward even when the engine is off, i.e. Karma happens without kamana. This is the state of all saints. The slope is our condition when we try to control our senses and actions and dedicate ourselves to HIM.**

Śrī Krishna tells Arjuna that he should know about Karma, Akarma and Vikarma because the path of action is very deep. Everything that happens to a person is solely dependent on his karma. Even seemingly unrelated matters like the quality of co-passengers travelling together are also results of previous karmas. Everything is predesigned by HIM. One can modify it to some extent by doing the rightful karma. **It is said that Puruṣārtha is stronger than Bhāgya (fate).**

There are 4 types of Puruṣārthas –

- **Dharma**
- **Artha**
- **Kama and**
- **Moksha.**

One can change his Bhāgya with his Puruṣārtha.

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.

A person who sees inaction (akarma) in action (karma) and sees action (thinking or breathing) in non-action (sitting idle, doing nothing), is indeed an intelligent person, and is a true Yogi, having accomplished all his duties.

4.19

**yasya sarve samārambhāḥ(kh), kāmasaṅkalpavarjitāḥ,
jñānāgnidagdha karmāṇaṁ(n), tamāhuḥ(ph) paṇḍitaṁ(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.

Arambah is the start of any action where all undertakings are devoid of any desire or purpose (**sankalpa**), and the karmas are burned in the fire of knowledge (**jnanagni**).

When a person moves towards HIM, his actions start burning in the fire of knowledge, and he is free from returning to this world. Like a drop of water mixed in the Ocean loses its own small identity, **the person too merges with the Ultimate Supreme. The wise men call such noble beings as Pandita (sage).**

4.20

**tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgaṁ(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 abandoned all connections/ attachments to the fruits of actions, and not depending on anything or anyone for his happiness, the wise person is not doing anything even when he is physically involved in activities.

The session ended with a 2 minutes sankeertan remembering Śrī Hari.

Questions and Answers

Shashi Gupta ji

Question: What can we do when our mindset doesn't match with our children's? We feel they are doing wrong, but they don't think so. How can we bring them back on track?

Answer: We don't have to tell anyone, especially children, how to be and what to do, what not to do, etc. Children don't listen to anyone; rather they learn by watching. So, adults should set a practical example by doing the right things. Children will definitely fall in line, trying to inculcate the same habits.



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Thank you-For reading the summary

You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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