

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 4: Jñāna-Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga

2/3 (Ślōka 11-28), Saturday, 14 December 2024

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/RYTpm2LaUA>

Paths of Devotion, Knowledge, and Sacrifice: The Harmonious Journey to Liberation

The fourth chapter of the Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā, titled *Jñāna-Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga*—The Yoga of Knowledge and Disciplines of Action and Knowledge—offers a profound discourse on the integration of wisdom (*jñāna*) and selfless action (*karma*). It reveals how the harmonious interplay of these two paths leads to liberation, emphasizing that true spiritual progress arises when knowledge and action are aligned with *Dharma*.

The session commenced with the auspicious lighting of a traditional lamp, a symbolic act that represents the dispelling of ignorance and the illumination of the inner self with the light of knowledge. This sacred ritual set a serene and focused tone for the gathering, cleansing the *Antaḥkaraṇa* (inner being) and preparing the minds to receive divine wisdom. Following this, heartfelt prayers were recited, invoking the grace of the Supreme and expressing reverence for spiritual masters and the eternal wisdom of the Gītā:

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः।
गुरुः साक्षात्परब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः।

*gururbrahmā gururviṣṇuḥ gururdevo maheśvaraḥ,
guruḥ sākṣāt parabrahma tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ.*

Salutations to the guru, who is Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, and who embodies the infinite Brahman.

कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने।
प्रणतः क्लेशनाशाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः।

*kṛṣṇāya vāsudevāya haraye paramātmane,
praṇataḥ kleśanāśāya govindāya namo namaḥ.*

Obeisance to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Soul, and destroyer of suffering, worshipped as Govinda.

ॐ पार्थाय प्रतिबोधितां भगवता नारायणेन स्वयं।
व्यासेन ग्रथितां पुराणमुनिना मध्ये महाभारते।

अद्वैतामृतवर्षिणीं भगवतीमष्टादशाध्यायिनीम्।
अम्ब त्वामनुसन्दधामि भगवद्गीते भवद्वेषिणीम्।

*om pāṛthāya pratibodhitām bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayaṃ,
vyāseṇa grathitām purāṇamuninā madhye mahābhārate,
advaitāmṛtavarṣiṇīm bhagavatīmaṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm,
amba tvāmanusandadhāmi bhagavadgīte bhavadveṣiṇīm.*

I meditate upon the *Bhagavadgītā*, revealed to Arjuna by Śrī Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa, compiled by Vyāsa, and showering the nectar of non-duality across its eighteen chapters.

Salutations were then offered to Swami Govind Dev Giri Maharaj Ji and to the dedicated *Gītā Sādhakas* present.

Śrī Bhagavān begins this chapter by proclaiming that the sacred knowledge of yoga was first imparted to Vivasvān, the Sun God, and then passed down through generations. Arjuna, puzzled, questions how Śrī Bhagavān, appearing contemporary in age, could have shared this knowledge with Vivasvān, who lived eons ago. Bhagavān responds by unveiling the divine mystery of His incarnations:

श्रीभगवानुवाच।
इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम्।
विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत्।।

*śrībhagavānuvāca
imaṃ vivasvate yogaṃ proktavānahamavyayam,
vivasvānmanave prāha manurikṣvākave 'bravīt.*

Śrī Bhagavān said: I imparted this imperishable yoga to Vivasvān; Vivasvān taught it to Manu, and Manu conveyed it to Ikṣvāku.

Arjuna, still perplexed, asks:

अर्जुन उवाच।
अपरं भवतो जन्म परं जन्म विवस्वतः।
कथमेतद्विजानीयां त्वमादौ प्रोक्तवानिति।।

*arjuna uvāca
aparaṃ bhavato janma paraṃ janma vivasvataḥ,
kathametadvijānīyāṃ tvamādaū proktavāniti.*

Arjuna said: Your birth is recent, while the Sun God's birth was long ago. How am I to understand that You taught this yoga in the beginning?

To this, Śrī Bhagavān explains:

बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन।
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परन्तप।।
अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन्।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया।।

*bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna,
tānyahaṃ veda sarvāṇi na tvam vettha parantapa.
ajo'pi sannavyayātmā bhūtānāmīśvaro'pi san,
prakṛtiṃ svāmadhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmyātmamayayā.*

Though I am birthless, imperishable, and the Lord of all beings, I manifest Myself by taking refuge in My own *Prakṛti* (divine energy).

He continues, revealing His purpose for incarnation:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्।।
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे।।

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata,
abhyutthānamadharmasya tadātmānaṃ sṛjāmyaham.
paritrāṇāya sādḥūnāṃ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām,
dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge.*

Whenever righteousness declines and unrighteousness prevails, I manifest Myself. To protect the virtuous, destroy the wicked, and re-establish *Dharma*, I incarnate in every age.

Śrī Bhagavān assures that He is ever-present, residing in every being as the indwelling Self:

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया।।

*īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ hṛddeśe'rjuna tiṣṭhati,
bhrāmayansarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.*

The Supreme Lord resides in the hearts of all beings, directing their movements as though mounted on a machine, through His divine energy.

In this *Kaliyuga*, it is said that Bhagavān manifests not as an individual form but as the collective strength of virtuous people:

संघ शक्ति कलौ युगे।

saṅgha śakti kalau yuge.

In this age, divine power emerges through the unity of the noble.

The chapter inspires yogis to purify their inner selves through *jñāna* (knowledge) and *tapa* (austerity), reminding seekers that Śrī Bhagavān manifests to them in the form in which they worship Him, reflecting His universal grace.

4.11

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

Completely rid of attachment, fear and anger, wholly absorbed in Me, depending on Me, and purified by the penance of wisdom, many have become one with Me even in the past.

Śrī Bhagavān highlights His universal nature, emphasizing that the Divine responds to each seeker in alignment with their faith, intention, and effort. This verse demonstrates the inclusivity of spiritual paths and Bhagavān's boundless grace.

- **ye yathā māṃ prapadyante:** Individuals approach Śrī Bhagavān in diverse ways, seeking material rewards, liberation, or pure devotion. Each path reflects the seeker's inner aspirations and understanding.

- **tāṃs tathaiva bhajāmi aham**: Bhagavān reciprocates in the exact measure of the seeker's devotion, fulfilling their desires while gently guiding them toward higher spiritual realizations.
- **mama vartma anuvartante**: Regardless of the form of worship or intention, all actions ultimately lead back to Śrī Bhagavān. Every effort to connect aligns with His cosmic plan.
- **manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ**: This inclusivity assures that no sincere effort is ever wasted, and all beings are inherently linked to the Divine path.

This verse reveals Bhagavān's impartiality, where He assumes the form most desired by His devotees, ensuring their spiritual progress.

Forms of Devotion

There are nine recognized forms of approaching the Divine, as exemplified in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa:

1. **Śravaṇa** (Listening): King Parīkṣit attained liberation by attentively hearing about Śrī Bhagavān.
2. **Kīrtana** (Singing): Śukadeva exemplified this devotion by narrating the Bhāgavatam.
3. **Smarana** (Remembering): Prahlāda constantly meditated on Bhagavān.
4. **Pāda-sevana** (Serving the Lord's Feet): Lakṣmī serves Śrī Bhagavān eternally.
5. **Archana** (Worship): King Pṛthu offered rituals and homage.
6. **Vandana** (Obeisance): Akrūra offered heartfelt salutations.
7. **Dāsya** (Servitude): Hanumān served Śrī Rāma with unwavering loyalty.
8. **Sakhya** (Friendship): Arjuna's companionship with Śrī Bhagavān embodies this devotion.
9. **Ātma-nivedana** (Complete surrender): King Bali's self-sacrifice exemplifies total submission.

Bhagavadgītā as the Literary Incarnation

The Bhagavadgītā is revered as Śrī Bhagavān personified in literary form:

जयतु जयतु गीता वाङ्मयी कृष्ण मूर्तिः ।

Jayatu Jayatu Gītā Vāṅmayī Kṛṣṇa Mūrtiḥ.

(Victory to the Gītā, the literary incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa!)

Surrendering to the Gītā, as one's spiritual mother, ensures guidance and protection through life's challenges.

Datta Jayantī and the Universality of the Guru

On Datta Jayantī, we honour the Guru principle embodied by Śrī Dattātreyā, who recognized wisdom in all aspects of creation. His 24 Gurus, ranging from natural elements to creatures, reflect the boundless sources of learning.

An anecdote about the **Bhrungi insect** offers profound insight:

The Bhrungi traps another insect in a mud house and persistently hums around it. Over time, the trapped insect, overwhelmed by fear and fixation, transforms into a Bhrungi. This transformation symbolizes the power of focused thought.

Similarly, meditating on Śrī Bhagavān with unwavering focus transforms the seeker into the Divine's likeness.

This is beautifully expressed in Marathi:

"एकरूपता परमात्म्याशी साधावी हो या उद्देशी।"

"Ek rūpatā Parmātmyāśī sādḥāvī ho yā uḍdeśī."

One should strive for complete unity with the Supreme.

Bhagavān's Divine Manifestations

Śrī Bhagavān appears in forms desired by devotees:

कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम्।

Kṛṣṇaṃ Vande Jagadgurum.

I bow to Kṛṣṇa, the Universal Guru.

In Kaliyuga, Śrī Bhagavān manifests collectively, as seen in organizations like Geeta Pariwar, which spread His teachings and awaken divine consciousness within individuals.

Key Insight

This verse emphasizes the universal accessibility of Śrī Bhagavān's grace. By approaching Him sincerely, seekers are assured of His response and guidance. Whether through devotion, service, or self-realization, every path ultimately leads to Him. This teaching inspires faith in the inclusivity and impartiality of Divine love, assuring that every effort toward the Supreme is meaningful.

4.12

kāṅkṣantaḥ(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.

Śrī Bhagavān explains the motivations behind human worship practices and their outcomes. He reveals how people, driven by worldly desires, often turn to specific deities for material success, which is quickly granted but remains confined to the realm of temporary gains.

- **kāṅkṣantaḥ karmaṇām siddhiṃ**: Those who desire success in their endeavors turn to paths that promise quick and tangible outcomes. These seekers are focused on fulfilling their material aspirations, such as wealth, power, or fame.
- **yajanta iha devatāḥ**: In pursuit of these goals, individuals worship different devatās (deities), each governing specific aspects of life:
 - **Goddess Lakṣmī** is invoked for wealth and prosperity.
 - **Hanumān** is revered for strength and courage.
 - **Lord Gaṇeśa** is sought for wisdom and the removal of obstacles.
 - **Goddess Sarasvatī** is worshiped for knowledge and creativity.
- **kṣipraṃ hi mānuṣe loke siddhir bhavati karmajā**: Success arising from actions aligned with these deities is achieved swiftly in the human realm, as each devatā facilitates results within their divine domain.

Śrī Bhagavān acknowledges the efficiency of this approach for those who seek material rewards. However, He subtly hints at its limitations, as these achievements are transient and bound by the material world. The devatās fulfill their devotees' desires, but their power originates from Śrī Bhagavān Himself. Therefore, ultimate fulfillment lies in surrendering to the Supreme.

This dynamic can be compared to consulting specialists for specific problems versus seeking a general

physician for overall well-being. While devatās address individual aspirations, surrendering to Śrī Bhagavān provides comprehensive and eternal fulfillment.

Key Insight

This verse highlights the practicality of worshiping deities for material gains but also directs attention to a higher path. Śrī Bhagavān encourages seekers to look beyond fleeting successes and focus on eternal rewards. By surrendering to Him, the Supreme Being, one transcends the limitations of material desires and aligns with the ultimate purpose of life—liberation and eternal bliss.

4.13

cāturvarṇyaṃ mayā sṛṣṭaṃ(ñ), guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ, tasya kartāRāmapi mām(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.

Śrī Bhagavān explains the divine origin of the societal framework, emphasizing that the Varṇa system is based on an individual's natural qualities (Guṇas) and actions (Karma), not by birth or hierarchy. He clarifies His transcendental role as a detached creator, unaffected by the material operations of this system.

- **cāturvarṇyaṃ mayā sṛṣṭaṃ**: Śrī Bhagavān declares that He created the four Varṇas for the harmonious functioning of society:
 - **Brāhmaṇas**: Guides of wisdom and spirituality.
 - **Kṣatriyas**: Protectors and administrators of order.
 - **Vaiśyas**: Providers of economic sustenance through trade and agriculture.
 - **Śūdras**: Supporters through diligent service and labor.Each Varṇa is integral to maintaining social and spiritual equilibrium, aligning individual tendencies with collective responsibilities.
- **guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ**: The classification is rooted in the dominance of three Guṇas:
 - **Sattva**: Purity and wisdom.
 - **Rajas**: Passion and energy.
 - **Tamas**: Stability and persistence.The Varṇa is determined by qualities and actions, not lineage, affirming that one's role in society is dynamic and shaped by their inherent nature and efforts.
- **tasya kartāram api mām viddhi akartāram avyayam**: Though Śrī Bhagavān initiated this system, He remains unattached to its workings. His transcendental nature ensures impartiality, reinforcing that He is beyond material entanglements.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj's Perspective

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj beautifully articulates the Varṇa system's foundation in actions:

"जे जे शेतात पेरावे, त्याविना दुसरे न उगवे।
किवा आरश्यात जे पहावे, तेच दिसे।

कर्मानुसार पार्था, झाली ही वर्णव्यवस्था।"

What is sown in the field grows accordingly. Just as a mirror reflects what is placed before it, the Varṇa system, O Pārthā, arises from one's actions.

This poetic explanation emphasizes that the system is fluid and grounded in individual effort and nature, not rigid or hereditary.

The verse dispels misconceptions of the Varṇa system as caste-based or hierarchical. Instead, it emphasizes its purpose as a framework that aligns individual tendencies with societal needs, fostering harmony and dharma. Misuse or rigid interpretation distorts its original intent, leading to inequality and discord.

Key Insight

Śrī Bhagavān inspires us to focus on qualities and actions rather than birth or lineage, reminding us of our responsibility to fulfill our duties sincerely. This teaching promotes societal balance and personal growth. Furthermore, Śrī Bhagavān's transcendence as a detached creator serves as a reminder of the divine impartiality guiding the cosmic order.

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 Bhagavān reveals His transcendental nature, emphasizing that detachment from the fruits of action ensures freedom from karmic bondage. This teaching serves as a guide for seekers striving to rise above the entanglements of worldly actions.

- **na māṃ karmāṇi limpanti:** Bhagavān's actions are untainted as they are performed without ego or selfish desires. His purpose is solely the maintenance of universal dharma and cosmic harmony.
- **na me karmaphale sprhā:** He remains entirely detached from the results of His actions, unaffected by success or failure, as His motives are rooted in selflessness.
- **iti māṃ yo'bhijānāti:** One who truly understands this nature of Bhagavān gains profound wisdom regarding the art of selfless action.
- **karmabhir na sa badhyate:** Such a person, acting with detachment and surrender, transcends the binding effects of karma and experiences liberation.

Bhagavān's earlier teaching, **tasya kartāram api māṃ viddhi akartāram avyayam** ("Though I am the initiator, I remain unattached and unaffected"), finds further elaboration here.

An analogy elucidates this concept: A lamp illuminates a room, enabling various actions to take place. However, the lamp itself does not perform those actions; it remains a passive enabler. Similarly, the **Ātman** within us enables all actions yet remains untouched by them. Humans, due to ignorance, identify with the body and mind, falsely assuming themselves to be the doers, thereby becoming bound by karma.

Mahākavi Dr. Śrīdhara Bhāskara Varṇekar ji humbly expressed this truth:

प्रभो! तव कृपां विना तृणकणोऽपि न स्पन्दते।
सहस्रकिरणोऽपि न क्षणशतांशमुद्योतते॥
न चेन्दुरपि राजते न खलु गीष्प्रतिर्भाषते।
कुतो जडमतेरितः स्फुरति काव्यगीर्वाण गीः॥

"O Lord, without Your grace, not even a blade of grass moves. Even the sun with its thousand rays cannot shine without Your will. The moon does not radiate on its own, nor do the planets speak. How, then, can poetry emerge from a dull intellect without Your divine inspiration?"

Dr. Varṇekar embodied the principle of **Nishkāma Karma** (selfless action), attributing all his literary achievements to Bhagavān's grace.

While Bhagavān remains untouched by karma, humans, influenced by **Māyā**, falsely perceive themselves as the doers. This identification binds them to the results of their actions, leading to cycles of joy and sorrow. Śrī Bhagavān teaches that liberation lies in acting selflessly, dedicating every action to Him, and recognizing the Ātman's true nature.

Practical Insights

1. **Act Without Attachment:** Focus on performing duties sincerely without attachment to results.
2. **Embrace Detachment:** Cultivate equanimity by seeing success and failure as transient.
3. **Offer Actions to the Divine:** Dedicate every task to Bhagavān, transforming it into a spiritual practice and dissolving the ego.

Key Insight

This verse encapsulates the secret to freedom through action. By understanding and emulating Bhagavān's detached approach to karma, one can transcend the bondage of actions and rise above life's dualities. Śrī Bhagavān inspires us to align every action with selflessness and spiritual purpose, achieving liberation while fully engaged in the material world.

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.

Śrī Bhagavān reminds Arjuna that the path of selfless action (Karma Yoga) is not a novel concept but an eternal principle practiced by sages and seekers who aspired for liberation. By following their example, Arjuna can fulfill his duties while aligning with dharma and progressing spiritually.

- **evaṃ jñātvā kṛtaṃ karma:** Ancient sages, realizing the profound truth of detachment, performed their duties without attachment to results, using Karma Yoga as a means to purify their minds and achieve liberation.
- **pūrvair api mumukṣubhiḥ:** These seekers of liberation (mumukṣus) understood that selfless action, performed in the spirit of service and surrender, leads to freedom from the bondage of karma.
- **kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam:** Śrī Bhagavān urges Arjuna to emulate this timeless practice, emphasizing that action aligned with dharma and performed with detachment is a sacred duty.
- **pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraṃ kṛtam:** The continuity of this practice from antiquity showcases its universality and relevance across ages, encouraging Arjuna to uphold this tradition with the

same dedication.

Śrī Bhagavān highlights the eternal wisdom of Karma Yoga, practised and perfected by enlightened beings through the ages. By emphasizing the lineage of this tradition, He reassures Arjuna that performing duties selflessly is a proven path to liberation.

A poetic sentiment encapsulates this teaching beautifully:

"करते हो तुम कन्हैया, मेरा नाम हो रहा है।"

This line reflects the humility of recognizing that all actions are orchestrated by Śrī Bhagavān. Though the devotee appears to perform the action, the credit rightfully belongs to the Divine.

Saint Kabir echoes this thought in his timeless verse:

"जो कुछ किया तुम किया, मैं कुछ किया नहीं।
कहो कही यह किया, तो तुम ही हो मुझमें मही।"

These words remind us that the ego dissolves when one realizes they are merely an instrument of the Divine's will.

Key Insight

This verse emphasizes the timeless relevance of selfless action. Śrī Bhagavān encourages seekers to follow the example of ancient sages, performing duties with detachment and devotion. By surrendering to the Divine and dedicating every action to a higher purpose, one transcends the bonds of karma, turning ordinary deeds into steps toward liberation and eternal harmony.

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.

Śrī Bhagavān introduces the intricate and multifaceted concept of karma, acknowledging its complexity and the challenges even the learned face in fully comprehending it. He assures Arjuna of providing clarity to free him from the binding effects of karma.

- **kiṃ karma kim akarma iti kavayaḥ api atra mohitāḥ:** Even the wise (kavayas), despite their intelligence and knowledge, remain confused about the nature of karma (action) and akarma (inaction). This highlights the subtlety of understanding karma beyond its superficial aspects.
- **tat te karma pravakṣyāmi:** Śrī Bhagavān promises to unravel the mystery of karma, offering guidance on discerning true action and inaction.
- **yajñātvā mokṣyase aśubhāt:** By gaining this knowledge, Arjuna—and seekers—can liberate themselves from aśubha (the inauspicious consequences of karma), thus breaking free from the cycle of bondage.

The verse underscores the layered nature of karma, which encompasses not only visible actions but also mental states, intentions, and even deliberate inaction. Misunderstanding these nuances can lead to

ignorance and bondage, making discernment essential for spiritual growth.

A person might refrain from outward actions, believing themselves inactive, yet their mind may be teeming with desires and plans, creating karmic ripples. Conversely, a selfless act performed without attachment aligns with akarma, freeing one from karmic consequences.

Key Insight

Śrī Bhagavān's teaching invites seekers to delve into the deeper truth of karma and akarma. He emphasizes that liberation lies in understanding the subtle interplay of action, inaction, and the motivations behind them. This knowledge empowers individuals to act with clarity, aligning their deeds with dharma while remaining unattached to outcomes.

This verse inspires a sense of humility and eagerness to seek divine wisdom, encouraging a mindful approach to life's actions and the pursuit of spiritual freedom.

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.

Śrī Bhagavān deepens His discourse on karma, emphasizing the intricate distinctions between action (karma), inaction (akarma), and prohibited action (vikarma). He highlights the subtle and often perplexing nature of karma, urging Arjuna to understand these concepts to navigate the spiritual path effectively.

- **karmaṇaḥ hi api boddhavyam:** One must comprehend the nature of karma—actions aligned with dharma that promote harmony and spiritual growth. These actions are guided by responsibility and righteous intent.
- **vikarmaṇaḥ ca boddhavyam:** It is equally essential to recognize and avoid vikarma—actions that violate dharma, leading to discord and negative outcomes.
- **akarmaṇaḥ ca boddhavyam:** Understanding akarma, or inaction, is crucial. It does not mean mere passivity but refers to performing actions with detachment and without attachment to their fruits, achieving selfless and harmonious results.
- **gahanā karmaṇaḥ gatiḥ:** The ways of karma are profound and often elusive, as the consequences of actions are not always immediate or predictable. Even seemingly righteous actions can yield unintended results, and abstaining from action in critical situations may lead to greater harm.

Karma is multi-dimensional, encompassing physical deeds, mental intentions, and spiritual awareness. Its effects can ripple across time, creating consequences far beyond immediate perception.

Consider a farmer tending a field. The seeds sown represent karma, the weeds that arise despite care symbolize vikarma, and the act of letting the soil rest to rejuvenate reflects purposeful akarma. Only with wisdom and discernment can the farmer cultivate a thriving harvest while managing these complexities.

Key Insight

This verse underscores the importance of discerning the nuances of karma to align one's actions with dharma. Śrī Bhagavān urges seekers to embrace righteous actions, avoid harmful deeds, and practice selfless inaction. This understanding empowers individuals to navigate the intricate pathways of karma,

ensuring spiritual progress and liberation.

By cultivating mindfulness, wisdom, and detachment, one can rise above the entanglements of karma, fostering harmony within and contributing to universal well-being. Śrī Bhagavān's teaching inspires us to approach every action with a discerning mind and a pure heart, transforming life into a meaningful journey toward liberation.

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.

Śrī Bhagavān imparts a profound teaching about the nature of karma, urging us to recognize the deeper interplay between action (karma) and inaction (akarma). True wisdom lies not in the superficial view of activity or inactivity, but in understanding their essence.

- **karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśyet:** Seeing inaction in action means understanding that actions performed selflessly, without attachment or desire for results (niṣkāma karma), do not bind the doer. Such actions, while externally visible, are spiritually liberating as they are free from selfish motives.
- **akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ:** Perceiving action in inaction involves realizing that even apparent inactivity can have consequences if the mind and intentions are engaged. For instance, avoiding duties out of laziness or fear is not true inaction but a subtle form of action.
- **sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu:** The one who grasps this distinction between action and inaction is wise among men, as they see beyond the external appearances of karma.
- **sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt:** Such a person is a true Yogī, perfectly balanced and spiritually accomplished, who has fulfilled all duties and transcended the binding effects of karma.

In this context, **Jñāneshwar Maharaj provides a beautiful example:**

**अथवा उदय अस्ताकडे पाहता, अचल सूर्य वाटे चालता
तैसे कर्मात निष्कर्मात जाणतो तो**

The Sun appears to rise in the east and set in the west, creating an illusion of movement. In reality, the Sun is stationary, and it is the Earth's rotation that causes this apparent motion. Jñāneshwar Maharaj, over 700 years ago, described this scientific fact poetically, long before Galileo faced persecution in the West for declaring that the Earth revolves around the Sun.

Similarly, when we observe actions, we must look beyond their external appearance to discern the deeper truth. A person who acts selflessly, knowing they are not the ultimate doer, experiences freedom from the bondage of karma.

Consider a farmer sowing seeds diligently (action) but remaining detached from the outcome. He understands that factors beyond his control, such as weather and soil conditions, will determine the result. His actions are aligned with dharma, and he remains inwardly free from attachment. Conversely, a person who appears inactive but harbors selfish or harmful intentions is still bound by the consequences of those mental actions.

Key Insight

This verse highlights the importance of intention and awareness in understanding karma. It teaches us that:

1. Actions performed with detachment and selflessness lead to liberation.
2. Even apparent inactivity can generate consequences if the mind remains engaged in impure intentions.
3. True wisdom lies in harmonizing one's inner state with dharma, regardless of external activity.

Śrī Bhagavān encourages us to adopt the perspective of a wise Yogī, performing our duties with sincerity and detachment. This approach transforms every action into a step toward self-realization, freedom, and inner peace.

4.19

yasya sarve samārambhāḥ(kh), kāmasaṅkalpavarjitāḥ, jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇam(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.

Śrī Bhagavān highlights the qualities of a true sage, emphasizing the transformative role of wisdom and detachment in freeing oneself from the binding effects of karma.

- **yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāma-saṅkalpa-varjitāḥ**: A sage's actions are devoid of kāma (desires) and saṅkalpa (worldly intentions). Their every undertaking is performed selflessly, free from personal gain or attachment. Such actions are rooted in a higher purpose, guided by dharma.
- **jñānāgni-dagdha-karmāṇam**: The fire of wisdom (jñāna) consumes the binding effects of karma. Actions performed with spiritual insight and awareness are purified, leaving no residue of attachment or consequence.
- **tam āhuḥ paṇḍitaṁ budhāḥ**: The enlightened (budhāḥ) recognize such a person as a true sage (paṇḍita), one who has transcended the dualities of success and failure and operates from a state of self-realization.

This chapter, titled **Jñāna-Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga**, explains how wisdom (jñāna) enables detachment (sannyāsa) from the binding effects of karma. It is through this wisdom that one transforms life's actions into steps toward liberation.

A true sage is like gold refined by fire—pure and untainted. The fire of wisdom transforms every action into a sacred offering, burning away attachments and desires. For instance, a farmer sows seeds not out of greed for a good harvest but out of a sense of duty aligned with dharma, remaining unaffected by the eventual outcome.

Key Insight

This verse underscores the hallmark of true wisdom: performing one's duties without selfish motives or attachment. Śrī Bhagavān teaches that by aligning actions with higher principles and allowing the fire of wisdom to consume desires, one attains freedom from the cycle of karma. Such an approach elevates life itself, transforming every action into a step toward self-realization and liberation.

4.20

tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgaṃ(n), nityatṛpto 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.

Śrī Bhagavān describes the state of a self-realized individual who, though active in the world, remains inwardly detached and unaffected by their actions.

- **tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgaṃ:** A self-realized person renounces all attachment to the results of their actions. They perform their duties without expecting rewards or personal gain, acting solely out of a sense of responsibility and dharma.
- **nityatṛpto nirāśrayaḥ:** Such an individual is ever content (nityatṛpta), finding satisfaction from within, and is independent (nirāśraya), relying on nothing external for happiness or fulfillment. Satisfaction arises when one's inner self is complete and no longer seeks anything more.
- **karmaṇy abhipravṛtto'pi:** Despite being fully engaged in various activities, this person acts without ego or self-interest, performing actions with a spirit of selflessness and detachment.
- **naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ:** From a higher spiritual perspective, this individual is considered to be doing nothing at all, as their actions do not bind them. Their karma is transformed into akarma because they act as an instrument of the Divine, offering all their actions to Śrī Bhagavān.

For such an individual, life becomes an act of devotion, where every duty is performed as a service to Śrī Bhagavān, free from personal attachment.

This verse can be compared to a lotus leaf, which remains untouched by the water around it. Similarly, a self-realized person, though immersed in worldly activities, remains unaffected by their outcomes, retaining inner peace and detachment. Their actions are like water rolling off the lotus leaf—leaving no trace.

Practical Insight

Śrī Bhagavān introduces a core principle of Karma Yoga: selfless action performed with inner detachment and equanimity. By following this teaching, one can transform worldly duties into a means of spiritual growth and liberation.

This verse inspires us to:

1. **Perform duties without attachment:** Act sincerely and wholeheartedly without being anxious about results.
2. **Cultivate inner fulfilment:** Draw satisfaction from within, rather than relying on external circumstances for happiness.
3. **Embrace detachment:** Recognize that true freedom lies in acting without ego or selfish desire, even amidst worldly responsibilities.

By living in this way, one transcends the bondage of karma, achieving inner peace and spiritual liberation while remaining fully active in the world. This path transforms life into a harmonious journey of self-realization and devotion.

4.21

nirāśīryatacittātmā, tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ, śārīraṃ(ñ) kevalaṃ(ñ) karma, kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam. 4.21

Having subdued his mind and body, and having given up all objects of enjoyment, free from craving, he who performs sheer bodily action, does not incur sin.

Śrī Bhagavān outlines the qualities of a truly self-disciplined individual who lives unattached to material desires and selfish motives. Despite engaging in necessary duties, such a person remains inwardly detached and spiritually liberated.

- **nirāśīḥ**: Free from cravings or expectations, this person performs actions without any longing for results or personal gain.
- **niyatacittātmā**: With a well-disciplined mind (citta) and self (ātman), they maintain complete control over inner impulses and emotions, acting from a place of clarity and balance.
- **tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ**: By renouncing all material possessions and dependencies, they lead a life of simplicity, unaffected by external gains or losses.
- **śārīraṃ kevalaṃ karma**: They perform only essential physical actions, engaging in duties as a responsibility rather than out of ego, greed, or attachment.
- **kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam**: Actions performed in this detached state do not lead to sin or karmic bondage, as the intent and mindset behind the actions are pure and selfless.

This principle can be better understood through a story:

A Guru and his disciple, both renunciates, were traveling and came across a river where a distressed woman needed help crossing. The disciple, citing his vow of renunciation, refused to help her, but the Guru, recognizing her plight, held her hand and guided her across. Later, the disciple questioned the Guru, saying that sanyasis are not supposed to touch women. The Guru replied calmly, “I left her hand at the riverbank, but you are still holding her in your mind.”

This story beautifully demonstrates that true detachment lies not in avoiding action but in letting go of mental and emotional entanglements. A truly disciplined person sees the body as an instrument and performs actions without identifying as the doer, freeing themselves from karmic consequences.

Key Insight

Śrī Bhagavān teaches us the profound art of detachment and disciplined action. This verse inspires us to:

1. **Act without attachment**: Perform duties sincerely but without craving for outcomes or personal gain.
2. **Renounce dependencies**: Simplify life by letting go of material attachments and the need for external validation.
3. **Cultivate inner mastery**: Discipline the mind and emotions to act from a place of selflessness and clarity.

When actions are performed with such detachment and purity of intention, they cease to bind us. By embodying this principle, one not only transcends the cycle of karma but also experiences profound inner peace and spiritual growth. Śrī Bhagavān’s teaching transforms life into a journey of liberation, where every action becomes an offering aligned with dharma.

4.22

yadṛcchālābhasantuṣṭo, dvandvātīto vimatsaraḥ, samaḥ(s) siddhāvasiddhau ca, kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate. 4.22

The Karmayogī, who is contented with whatever is got unsought, is free from jealousy and has transcended all pairs of opposites like joy and grief, and is balanced in success and failure, is not bound by his action.

Śrī Bhagavān outlines the characteristics of a true Karmayogī, emphasizing detachment, contentment, and equanimity. These virtues enable freedom from the binding effects of karma, even while actively engaging in life's duties.

- **yadṛcchālābhasantuṣṭaḥ**: Such a person is satisfied with whatever comes naturally or unsought. They do not chase material possessions or outcomes but accept life's offerings with gratitude and grace.
- **dvandvātītaḥ**: They have transcended dualities like pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, and remain unaffected by external circumstances.
- **vimatsaraḥ**: Free from jealousy or envy, they neither compare themselves with others nor harbor ill will, maintaining a pure and generous heart.
- **samaḥ siddhāvasiddhau ca**: They are equanimous in both success and failure, understanding that outcomes are part of the divine play and not entirely within their control.
- **kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate**: Despite engaging in actions, they remain free from bondage because their actions are selfless, without attachment to the results.

Key Insight

This verse highlights the profound freedom attained through contentment and detachment. A Karmayogī, by cultivating inner balance and relinquishing envy, expectations, and ego-driven desires, transcends the limitations of karma.

Practical Application

Śrī Bhagavān inspires us to:

1. **Embrace contentment**: Be satisfied with what life naturally provides, rather than striving endlessly for more.
2. **Transcend dualities**: Maintain inner stability and remain unaffected by the highs and lows of life.
3. **Let go of envy and comparison**: Focus on one's own path and progress, without jealousy or resentment toward others.
4. **Act selflessly**: Perform duties with sincerity and without attachment to outcomes, recognizing them as expressions of divine will.

By embodying these qualities, the Karmayogī transforms life into a harmonious journey of self-realization. Actions become offerings to the divine, and the individual remains free from karmic consequences, achieving peace, spiritual growth, and liberation. This teaching inspires us to cultivate a balanced mindset and become a source of harmony and detachment in the world.

4.23

gatasaṅgasya muktasya, jñānāvasthitacetasaḥ, yajñāyācarataḥ(kh) karma, śamagraṃ(m) praviliyate. 4.23

All his actions get dissolved entirely, who is free from attachment and has no identification with the

body and free from the feeling of mine, whose mind is established in the knowledge of Self and who works merely for the sake of sacrifice.

Śrī Bhagavān elaborates on the qualities of a liberated Karmayogī, whose actions, performed with detachment, selflessness, and spiritual wisdom, dissolve entirely, leaving no trace of karmic bondage.

- **gatasāṅgasya muktasya:** A liberated person is free from attachment (saṅga) and detached from worldly desires and dependencies. Their actions are not driven by self-interest or compulsion but arise from a sense of higher purpose.
- **jñānāvasthita-cetasah:** Their mind is firmly anchored in the knowledge of the Self (jñāna), recognizing their eternal identity beyond the physical body and ego, aligned with divine consciousness.
- **yajñāyācarataḥ karma:** They perform every action as a **yajña** (sacred offering), dedicating their work to a higher cause rather than personal gain, thus transforming work into worship.
- **samagram praviliyate:** As a result, their actions leave no karmic residue, as they are purified by detachment and selfless intent.

This principle is beautifully exemplified by **Param Pujya Golwalkar Ji**, who lived a life of complete selflessness and dedication to the nation. His actions embodied the essence of the mantra:

"राष्ट्राय स्वाहा, राष्ट्राय इदं न मम।"

"An offering to the nation; this is not mine."

He performed all activities with the spirit of sacrifice, seeing them as offerings for the greater good.

As householders, even if we cannot fully dedicate our lives to such lofty ideals, we can strive to incorporate this principle into our daily lives. Performing at least one selfless action for the betterment of society or the nation can elevate our deeds into a yajña, purifying them and aligning us with a higher purpose.

Key Insight

This verse underscores the transformative power of selfless action rooted in detachment and spiritual awareness. Śrī Bhagavān inspires us to:

1. **Detach from personal desires:** Perform your duties sincerely without attachment to outcomes or personal rewards.
2. **Anchor actions in spiritual knowledge:** Recognize your true Self and align your work with divine consciousness.
3. **Transform actions into yajña:** Treat every act as a sacred offering, dedicated to a higher cause, such as family, community, or nation.

By adopting this approach, even ordinary actions become spiritually elevating. Practicing **Niṣkāma Karma** (desireless action) purifies our intentions, dissolves karmic bonds, and brings us closer to liberation. This path not only fosters inner peace and growth but also contributes to the welfare of society and the greater good.

4.24

**brahmārpaṇam(m) brahma haviḥ(r), brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam,
brahmaiva tena gantavyam(m), brahma karma samādhinā. 4.24**

Brahman is the oblation; Brahman is the melted butter (ghee); by Brahman is the oblation poured into

the fire of Brahman; Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in action.

Śrī Bhagavān reveals a profound truth: that all elements of a yajña (sacrificial ritual) are manifestations of Brahman. This verse teaches the Karmayogī to perceive the unity of all actions, thus transforming them into sacred offerings.

- **brahmārpaṇam**: The act of offering itself is Brahman, representing the divine intention and purity behind the action.
- **brahma haviḥ**: The oblation (haviḥ), such as ghee or other sacred offerings, is also Brahman, symbolizing the sanctity of the means used in the offering.
- **brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam**: The sacrificial fire (agnau), the process of offering, and the one performing it are all Brahman. This reflects the interconnectedness of the doer, the act, and the recipient, all unified in the ultimate reality.
- **brahmaiva tena gantavyam**: He who realizes this unity attains Brahman, the highest truth, as their actions align with the divine essence.
- **brahma karma samādhinā**: Such a person acts with unwavering awareness of Brahman, maintaining a focus on the divine in every thought and deed, dissolving all sense of duality.

This teaching elevates yajña beyond the ritual to encompass all of life, emphasizing that every action, when performed with the awareness of Brahman, becomes an act of spiritual worship.

This verse can be seen as a metaphor for life itself. Just as every aspect of a yajña is sanctified, every action in life—be it small or significant—can be transformed into a sacred offering when performed with awareness of oneness and surrender to the divine. For example, preparing a meal for loved ones, when done with devotion and selflessness, becomes a yajña, where the food, effort, and intent are all imbued with divinity.

Key Insight

Śrī Bhagavān teaches the transformative power of recognizing the omnipresence of Brahman in all aspects of life. This awareness turns mundane activities into acts of worship, fostering spiritual growth and liberation.

Practical Applications:

1. **See divinity in all actions**: Cultivate the vision that everything you do, use, and experience is a manifestation of Brahman.
2. **Act selflessly**: Perform duties with devotion, free from ego and attachment, focusing on the higher purpose.
3. **Transform daily life into a yajña**: Approach every task, no matter how ordinary, as an offering to the divine, fostering an attitude of surrender and unity.

By embracing this perspective, one dissolves the ego, transcends the cycle of karma, and aligns with the eternal reality. This teaching underscores the essence of **Nishkāma Karma** (selfless action), showing how awareness of Brahman in every aspect of life leads to peace, liberation, and ultimate realization.

4.25

**daivamevāpare yajñam(m), yoginaḥ(ph) paryupāsate,
brahmāgnāvapare yajñam(m), yajñenaivopajuhvati. 4.25**

Other Yogīs duly offer sacrifice only in the form of worship to gods, while others perform sacrifice by

offering the self by the Self itself in the fire of Brahma.

Śrī Bhagavān highlights the diverse paths of sacrifice (yajña) that guide individuals toward spiritual growth. These paths reflect the varied inclinations and temperaments of seekers on their journey to liberation.

- **daivam eva apare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate:**

- Some Yogīs perform sacrifices by worshiping deities (devatās) through rituals, prayers, and offerings.
- This practice symbolizes Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion, where one seeks divine grace and strengthens their connection with the divine through external acts of worship.

- **brahmāgnau apare yajñam yajñenaiva upajuhvati:**

- Others take an inward path, offering their ego and individuality into the fire of Brahman (brahmāgni).
- This symbolizes Jñāna Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga, where seekers dissolve their sense of self through self-discipline, meditation, and the realization of oneness with Brahman.
- The fire of Brahman represents the ultimate truth, and the offering symbolizes the surrender of ignorance and ego to the light of knowledge.

This verse illustrates the inclusiveness of spiritual practices, emphasizing that both external rituals and internal self-offering are valid means of attaining spiritual evolution. Each path aligns with the individual's disposition, whether devotional, intellectual, or meditative.

Key Insight

Śrī Bhagavān teaches that there are many paths to approach the divine, each suited to the nature and inclination of the seeker. Both external sacrifices (devotion to deities) and internal sacrifices (self-realization) lead to spiritual progress when performed with sincerity and focus.

Practical Applications:

1. **Follow your nature:** Choose a spiritual path—be it Bhakti, Jñāna, or Dhyāna Yoga—that resonates with your temperament and inclinations.
2. **Offer yourself fully:** Whether through devotion or self-discipline, surrender your actions and ego to the divine, aligning them with a higher purpose.
3. **Respect diverse practices:** Recognize that all sincere efforts, regardless of their form, are valid steps toward liberation.

This verse inspires us to embrace an inclusive and harmonious approach to spirituality, encouraging seekers to stay true to their chosen path while honoring the diversity of others. By doing so, we move closer to realizing the unity underlying all spiritual endeavors, ultimately leading to liberation and eternal peace.

4.26

**śrotrādīnīndriyāṅyanye, saṃyamāgniṣu juhvati,
śabdādīnviṣayānanya, indriyāgniṣu juhvati. 4.26**

Others offer as sacrifice their senses of hearing etc into the fires of self-discipline. Other Yogis, again,

offer sound and other objects of perception into the fires of the senses.

Śrī Bhagavān describes two distinct forms of inner sacrifice (yajña) practiced by Yogīs to attain self-mastery and spiritual growth:

- **śrotrādīni indriyāṇi anye saṁyamāgniṣu juhvati:**

- Some Yogīs sacrifice their senses, such as hearing, into the fire of self-discipline (saṁyama).
- This represents the conscious withdrawal of sensory inputs, focusing energy inward to cultivate self-restraint and redirect attention toward higher pursuits. It is the path of detachment through control of the senses.

- **śabdādīn viṣayān anye indriyāgniṣu juhvati:**

- Other Yogīs sacrifice sensory objects, like sound and other stimuli, into the fire of the senses.
- This involves engaging with the world while maintaining detachment. They mindfully experience sensory inputs, using them as tools to transcend material desires rather than becoming entangled in them.

Both practices symbolize transformative methods to refine awareness and detach from material identification, whether through withdrawal or mindful engagement.

Consider a musician pursuing self-discipline. One approach might involve isolating themselves from distractions, focusing inward to perfect their art (offering the senses into the fire of restraint). Another approach could involve immersing themselves deeply in the sound of their music, experiencing it fully while remaining unattached to external rewards (offering sound into the fire of the senses). Both paths help refine their focus and elevate their awareness.

Key Insight

Śrī Bhagavān emphasizes that both withdrawal from sensory inputs and mindful engagement with them are valid paths for spiritual progress. The essence of these sacrifices lies in managing sensory experiences with awareness and purpose:

1. **Restrain the senses:** Practice self-control by limiting sensory indulgences and redirecting attention inward.
2. **Mindful engagement:** Interact with sensory inputs without attachment, using them as instruments for higher realization.
3. **Cultivate detachment:** Whether withdrawing from or engaging with the senses, maintain inner balance and purpose.

This teaching encourages us to choose a path suited to our temperament and circumstances while focusing on mastering the mind and transcending material desires. By harmonizing with or detaching from sensory experiences, one can progress steadily toward self-realization and liberation.

sarvāṇīndriyakarmāṇi, prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare, ātmasaṃyamayogāgnau, juhvati jñānadīpīte. 4.27

Others sacrifice all the functions of their senses and the functions of the vital airs (Prāṇa) into the fire of Yoga in the shape of self-control, kindled by wisdom.

Śrī Bhagavān reveals a deeper form of inner sacrifice performed by advanced Yogīs, combining wisdom, discipline, and mastery over the self.

- **sarvāṇi indriya karmāṇi:**

- All actions of the senses—seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling—are offered as a sacrifice.
- This reflects the restraint and conscious redirection of sensory energies toward higher spiritual pursuits.

- **prāṇa karmāṇi ca apare:**

- The activities of the vital airs (Prāṇa), including breathing, digestion, and circulation, are also surrendered in this sacrifice.
- This symbolizes mastery over the physical and energetic body, aligning it with spiritual discipline.

- **ātmasaṃyamayogāgnau:**

- These offerings are made into the fire of Yoga, representing the intense self-discipline and control required to harmonize the body, mind, and soul.

- **jñānadīpīte:**

- The fire of Yoga is illuminated by wisdom (Jñāna), highlighting that these practices are guided by deep spiritual understanding and awareness, rather than mechanical effort or blind adherence.

This verse emphasizes the transformative power of integrating spiritual knowledge with disciplined practices. The "fire of Yoga" symbolizes an inner purification process where sensory impulses and physical activities are refined and aligned with higher goals. Wisdom acts as the guiding light, ensuring that these sacrifices are meaningful and effective in fostering self-realization.

Key Insight

Śrī Bhagavān teaches that true Yoga transcends physical practices and rituals—it is the harmonization of body, mind, and spirit, driven by the light of spiritual wisdom.

Practical Applications:

1. **Control the senses:** Practice conscious restraint over sensory indulgences, redirecting energy toward inner growth.
2. **Master vital energies:** Regulate physical functions like breath and energy flow as part of a disciplined spiritual practice.
3. **Illuminate with wisdom:** Let spiritual knowledge guide your efforts, ensuring that self-discipline serves the higher goal of self-realization.

This verse inspires seekers to view every action—be it sensory or vital—as an opportunity for inner refinement. By sacrificing these functions into the fire of disciplined Yoga, illuminated by wisdom, one progresses steadily toward liberation and self-mastery.

4.28

**dravyayajñāstapoyajñā, yogayajñāstathāpare,
svādhyāyajñānayajñāśca, yatayaḥ(s) saṁśītavratāḥ. 4.28**

Some perform sacrifice with material possessions; some offer sacrifice in the shape of austerities; others sacrifice through the practice of Yoga; while some striving souls, observing austere vows, perform sacrifice in the shape of wisdom through the study of sacred texts.

Śrī Bhagavān highlights the diversity of paths to self-purification and liberation, emphasizing that different seekers choose distinct modes of sacrifice based on their inclinations and spiritual maturity:

- **dravyayajñāḥ**: Some sacrifice through material offerings, such as giving wealth, food, or resources, symbolizing generosity and detachment from material possessions.
- **tapoyajñāḥ**: Others engage in the discipline of austerities, enduring hardship and controlling desires to purify the mind and body.
- **yogayajñāḥ**: Some offer their energy through Yoga, which unites body, mind, and soul in disciplined action, self-control, and meditation.
- **svādhyāyajñānayajñāḥ**: Others perform sacrifices in the form of wisdom by studying sacred scriptures (Svādhyāya) and reflecting on spiritual knowledge, leading to higher understanding.
- **yatayaḥ saṁśītavratāḥ**: These sacrifices are undertaken by striving souls (Yatayaḥ) who observe firm and austere vows (Saṁśītavrata), reflecting determination and commitment to the spiritual path.

Each type of sacrifice represents a unique approach to self-improvement and spiritual growth. While some focus on external offerings, others emphasize inner transformation. Śrī Bhagavān acknowledges all these paths as valid and valuable when performed with sincerity and devotion.

A householder donates food and clothes to the needy (Dravyayajñā), while a monk observes fasting and silence to control his senses (Tapoyajñā). A meditator practices Yoga for self-discipline (Yogayajñā), and a scholar studies sacred texts to gain wisdom (Svādhyāyajñānayajñā). Each of them contributes to the greater goal of self-purification and societal harmony.

Key Insight

Śrī Bhagavān affirms that the path of sacrifice can take many forms, tailored to the seeker's temperament and stage in life. The essence of sacrifice lies in selfless intent, sincerity, and dedication to spiritual growth, uniting all paths toward the ultimate goal of liberation.

The session concluded with heartfelt prayers to **Datta Bhagavān**, followed by an enriching **question-and-answer session** addressing various spiritual queries with practical and profound insights.

Question and Answer Session

Bajrang Ji

Q: Can we consider Śrī Bhagavān as our father?

A: Śrī Bhagavān is the embodiment of both Mother and Father. This is beautifully expressed in the Sanskrit

verse:

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव ।
त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव ।
त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणं त्वमेव ।
त्वमेव सर्वं मम देव देव ॥

"You alone are my mother and father, my friend and relative. You are my knowledge, my wealth, my everything, O Divine One."

We can perceive Śrī Bhagavān in our parents. Serving one's parents is equivalent to serving Bhagavān. This is exemplified by **Bhakta Pundalik**, whose devotion to his parents was so profound that when Bhagavān Pandurang Himself came to meet him, Pundalik requested Bhagavān to wait as he was busy serving his parents. Bhagavān, respecting his devotion, stood patiently on a brick until Pundalik was free.

This teaches us that serving parents with love and sincerity is a direct way of serving Bhagavān.

Shriveni Didi Ji

Q: Is there a reference book for studying the Vivechan? Hearing the explanations is uplifting, but I want to study them in depth.

A: There are numerous commentaries on the **Bhagavad Gītā**, ranging from ancient to contemporary scholars. Here are some highly recommended works:

1. Swami Ramsukhdas Ji Maharaj

- *Sādhaka Sanjīvanī*
- Publisher: Gita Press, Gorakhpur

2. Swami Ranganathananda Ji

- *Universal Message of the Bhagavad Gītā* (Three Volumes)
- Publisher: Advaita Ashrama

3. Swami Chinmayananda Ji

- *The Holy Gītā*
- Publisher: Chinmaya Mission

Additionally, you can listen to **Swami Govind Giri Ji Maharaj's lectures** on YouTube, offering practical and spiritual interpretations of the Gītā.

These resources provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding and reflecting on the teachings of Śrī Bhagavān.

Meena Purohit Ji

Q: People often worship various devatās for specific results, and devatās derive their power from Śrī Bhagavān. Worshipping Śrī Bhagavān often means seeking union with Him without desires. I worship Bhagavān Śiva as my iṣṭa devatā. How can I reconcile this?

A: The one **Paramātmā** manifests in various forms such as **Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Rāma, Bhagavān Vithal, Gaṇeśa, and Śiva**. These are not separate entities but expressions of the same Supreme Reality.

The devatās mentioned in the **Bhagavad Gītā** (e.g., Varuṇa, Vāyu, and Agni) also represent forms of Paramātmā, serving specific roles in the cosmic order. This is akin to a government structure: the Prime Minister leads, while ministers handle specific departments, all working toward a unified purpose. Similarly, worshiping any form of Bhagavān is valid as long as the ultimate goal is union with Paramātmā.

For instance, when we face obstacles, we pray to Bhagavān Gaṇeśa:

निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव सर्वकार्येषु सर्वदा।

"O Deva, remove all obstacles in my endeavours, always and everywhere."

This concept is emphasized in **Bhagavad Gītā 4.12**:

**काङ्क्षन्तः कर्मणां सिद्धिं यजन्त इह देवताः।
क्षिप्रं हि मानुषे लोके सिद्धिर्भवति कर्मजा।।**

"Those desiring success in actions worship various gods, for success born of actions is quickly attained in the human world."

Even when worshiping **Mātā Sarasvatī** for knowledge, we are connecting with Paramātmā in the form of wisdom. The key is to remember that all forms lead to the same Supreme Reality.

Ashok M Sonawane Ji

Q: What is the definition of Tapas (austerity)? Is there a specific process for obtaining a Janeu?

A: Tapas is defined in the scriptures as:

तपः स्वधर्मवर्तित्वं।

"Tapas is fulfilling one's duties with dedication and perseverance, even amidst challenges."

Swadharma refers to one's responsibilities in life. The efforts, discipline, and endurance required to perform one's duties sincerely constitute Tapas.

Regarding **Janeu** (Upanayana Sanskār), it is a sacred initiation ceremony symbolizing the beginning of Vedic education and disciplined living. To undergo this, you can approach a knowledgeable **Vaidik Pandit**, who will guide you through the traditional process.



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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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