

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 4: Jñāna-Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/QZ9fZyjXn00>

Performing Duty Without Attachment: The Science of Karma, Akarma, and Vikarma

The fourth chapter of Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā is called *Jñāna-Karma-Saṁnyāsa Yoga - The Yoga of Knowledge and Renunciation of Action*.

The session commenced with reverent prayers to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by the lighting of the auspicious lamp. This sacred act symbolises the dispelling of darkness and the illumination of the path of Dharma, invoking the blessings of the Paramātmā, the Sadguru, and the light of eternal knowledge.

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः।
गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः॥

कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने।
प्रणतः क्लेशनाशाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः॥

नमामि सद्गुरुं शान्तं सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहम्।
पूर्णब्रह्मपरानन्दम् ईशमाळन्दिवल्लभम्॥

रत्नाकराधौतपदां हिमालयकिरीटिनीम्।
ब्रह्मार्षिराजरत्नाढ्यां वन्दे भारतमातरम्॥

ॐ पार्थाय प्रतिबोधितां भगवता नारायणेन स्वयम्
व्यासेन ग्रथितां पुराणमुनिना मध्ये महाभारतम्।
अद्वैतामृतवर्षिणीं भगवतीमष्टादशाध्यायिनीम्
अम्ब त्वामनुसन्दधामि भगवद्गीते भवद्वेषिणीम्॥

नमोस्तुते व्यास विशालबुद्धे फुल्लारविन्दायतपत्रनेत्र ।
येन त्वया भारततैलपूर्णः प्रज्वालितो ज्ञानमयः प्रदीपः ॥

With these auspicious invocations complete, the discourse began with heartfelt prostrations at the feet of Param Pūjya Śrī Govinddev Giriḥ Maharaj, and warm greetings were extended to all the Gītā Sādhakas assembled for this sacred study.

It was noted with joy that the day coincided with the festival of Rakṣābandhan. The speaker reflected on the loving bond that the Gītā Pariwār shares with Gītā Mā, expressing the prayer that this sacred connection remain unbroken, and that everyone's bond with Gītā Mā continue to be steadfast and full of love.

The day was also observed as a special occasion dedicated to Sanskrit Mātā. Just as Bhārat Mātā and Gītā Mātā are revered, Sanskrit Mātā too is honoured, for it is through her that the nation's culture has been preserved over millennia. Sanskrit is not merely a language; it is the language of knowledge, Jñāna Bhāṣā.

Every year, Saṃskṛta Day is celebrated on Śrāvaṇa Pūrṇimā across India. The Bhagavad Gītā, currently being studied by the assembly, is composed in this divine tongue, called Devavāṇī, the language of the gods. Not only the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Rāmāyaṇa, and Mahābhārata, but countless works on philosophy, science, and various disciplines are found in Sanskrit.

Reference was made to books such as Science in Sanskrit, which reveal that many scientific principles were recorded in Sanskrit long before modern discoveries. For example, the Pythagoras Theorem was known and documented in India thousands of years before Pythagoras, as evidenced by Sanskrit verses describing it. Such examples highlight the depth of knowledge contained in this language.

It was emphasised that one who seeks complete knowledge cannot achieve it without Sanskrit. The study of the Bhagavad Gītā reveals only a fraction of the wisdom stored in this heritage, and Sanskrit Mātā is the key to accessing that vast ocean.

On this Saṃskṛta Day, salutations were offered to this divine mother with the prayer:

जयतु संस्कृतम् विश्व पोषकम्

Victory to Sanskrit, the nourisher of the entire world!

The following verses were recited in her honour:

पठामि संस्कृतं नित्यं
वदामि संस्कृतं सदा ।
ध्यायामि संस्कृतं सम्यक्
वन्दे संस्कृतमातरं ॥

संस्कृतस्य प्रसाराय ।
नैजं सर्वं ददाम्यहं
संस्कृतस्य सदा भक्तो ॥
वन्दे संस्कृतमातरं

संस्कृतस्य कृते जीवन्
संस्कृतस्य कृते यजन् ।
आत्मानं आहुतं मन्ये

वन्दे संस्कृतमातरं ॥

Finally, pranāms were offered to Sanskrit Mātā, Gītā Mātā, Bhārat Mātā, Gaṅgā Mātā, and Gau Mātā, marking the formal commencement of the day's discourse.

The discourse then turned to the eternal nature of the knowledge imparted in this chapter. It was emphasised that what Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa revealed to Arjuna was not something newly created, nor a recent discovery, it is wisdom that has flowed from sanātana-kāla (eternal time). As Kṛṣṇa declares in the opening of the chapter, **imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ proktavāny aham avyayam**, "This imperishable Yoga I imparted to Vivasvān."

This chapter is titled Jñāna-Karma-Saṁnyāsa Yoga, the Yoga of Knowledge and Renunciation of Action. While explaining how action, when offered in the right spirit, becomes a form of yajña, Bhagavān also expounds the principle of karma, which at first appears difficult to grasp. Yet, when one lives according to the conduct prescribed by the Bhagavān, the truth of this principle begins to be experienced directly.

In verse 18, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: **karmaṇy akarma yaḥ paśyed akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ, sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsna-karma-kṛt**, "One who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men; such a person is a yogī who has accomplished all action." This capacity to perceive in such a way, Kṛṣṇa explains, comes when all undertakings are free from desire: **yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāma-saṅkalpa-varjitāḥ**, "One whose actions are free from desire and personal motive..."

Such a person's actions are said to be burnt in the fire of knowledge: **jñānāgni-dagdha-karmāṇam**, and therefore, though acting, they are not bound by karma. Even what appears to be their "inaction" brings about great results.

To live this way, Kṛṣṇa advises adopting the spirit of yadṛcchā-lābha-nirvāṇa, accepting whatever comes naturally, without dependence or hoarding: **yadṛcchā-lābha-santuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsarah**, and performing only the necessary actions for maintaining the body (śārīraṁ kevalaṁ karma).

Such jñānīs act through body, mind, and intellect without attachment, and hence actions do not cling to them. This is the essence of making karma into akarma. The method is simple yet profound, performing actions and offering them entirely, as one offers an oblation into fire. Just as anything offered into the fire becomes ashes, so too, when actions are surrendered at the Bhagavān's feet or into the fire of yajña, they are purified and cease to bind.

In truth, every action can become a yajña. Kṛṣṇa declares: **brahmārpaṇam brahma haviḥ brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam, brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma-karma-samādhinā**, "The offering is Brahman; the oblation is Brahman; it is offered by Brahman into the fire of Brahman. Brahman alone is to be reached by one absorbed in Brahman as action."

Earlier, Kṛṣṇa also speaks of the one who is **gata-saṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthita-cetasah yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagraṁ praviliyate**, that is, a person who, free from attachment and liberated in mind, abides in knowledge (ātma-jñāna, the knowledge of the Paramātmān). Whatever such a person does is dedicated entirely to the Supreme, and all actions are transformed into yajña.

The phrase **samagraṁ praviliyate** means that everything is completely merged. Where does it merge? In the Supreme Brahman alone. This merging of all actions into Brahman is what the Bhagavān proceeds to explain further in the chapter.

The teaching then moved to the profound verse: brahmārpaṇam brahma haviḥ brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam, brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma-karma-samādhinā. Everything that is offered, whatever the act, whatever the instrument, whatever the recipient, ultimately is nothing but Brahman. This entire universe has arisen from the Supreme Being; therefore, apart from Brahman, there is truly nothing else. Every object, every instrument, every organ of action is, in essence, a manifestation of that same Supreme Reality.

When actions are performed, various sādhanas (means or tools) are involved. There are the karaṇas, the organs of perception and action, such as the eyes, ears, hands, and feet, through which deeds are carried out. Alongside these, there are external instruments and aids: spectacles for the eyes, vehicles for movement, be it a scooter, car, train, or aircraft.

Since all these have their origin in the Supreme, they too are Brahman. This is why, in the cultural tradition, the instruments used in one's vocation are honored. A surgeon venerates surgical instruments, a soldier venerates weapons, a writer honors the pen, and vehicles are worshipped. This is known as śāstra-pūjā or the veneration of tools. The reason is simple: all are forms of Brahman.

Thus, the act of offering (arpana) is Brahman, the oblation (haviḥ) is Brahman, the fire (agni) into which it is offered is Brahman, and the one making the offering is also a part of that same Supreme. Therefore, brahmaṇā hutam, the oblation is given by Brahman Himself, and brahmaiva tena gantavyam, it merges back into Brahman.

When a person performs all actions with the awareness that they are the work of the Supreme, brahma-karma-samādhinā, then every deed becomes a yajña. Ultimately, all such yajñas dissolve into that same Brahman.

Recognizing that nothing exists apart from the Divine is itself a great knowledge. Kṛṣṇa then proceeds to describe the various kinds of yajñas: some perform dravya-yajña (offerings of material substances), some perform jñāna-yajña (offering of knowledge), some engage in svādhyāya-yajña (offering through self-study), and so on. These different forms of sacrifice are explained in the following verses.

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.

Some perform daiva-yajñas, sacrifices offered to the deities. These are rites conducted to please the gods, often with the hope of receiving their blessings. Various yajñas are dedicated to different deities such as Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa, and Lakṣmī, each representing distinct forms of worship. This type of ritual is called daiva-yajña. The devotees who perform these sacrifices are themselves yogis, as a yogi is one who strives to unite with the Divine through some means or practice. Worshipping the deities is one such means of spiritual connection.

Others perform **brahma-yajña**, offering the yajña itself into the fire of yajña. In this understanding, every action becomes a sacrifice, and the offering, the oblation, the fire, and the one who offers are all Brahman. Each deed is dedicated to the Supreme Reality, transforming the entire life into an unbroken sacrifice. The act of offering (arpana) is Brahman; the oblation (haviḥ) is Brahman; it is offered by Brahman into the fire of Brahman. The fire itself is Brahman, and so is the offerer. Hence,

all merge into Brahman.

The entire process can be seen as performing yajña within yajña: *yajñam yajñena upajuhvati*, through yajña, yajña is born. Every action becomes an oblation, and the place where the offering is made is itself a yajña. All is dedicated and merged into the Supreme.

A striking example is found in the life of Veer Savarkar, who regarded the motherland not as mere soil but as the Divine Mother, the Goddess of Freedom (Svatantrate Bhagavatī). He dedicated everything to her.

माझे मृत्युपत्र (Maajhe Mrityupatra) – My Final Testament by Veer Savarkar

हे मातृभूमि तुजला मन वाहियेले
वक्तृत्व वाक्-विभव ही तुज अर्पियेले
तुंतेची अर्पिली नवी कविता वधूला
लेखां प्रति विषय तूची अनन्य झाला ॥ १६ ॥

*Oh Motherland! I have dedicated my intellect to you,
To you I have dedicated my oratory,
To you I have dedicated my new poem,
You have become the sole subject of my prose ॥ 16 ॥*

त्वत्-स्थंडिली ढकलली गृह-वित्त-मत्ता
दावानालात वहिनी नव-पुत्र-कांता
त्वत्-स्थंडिली अतुल-धैर्यनिष्ठ बंधू
केला हवि परम कारुण पुण्यसिंधू ॥ १८ ॥

*At your altar, I sacrificed my home, wealth and property
IN this raging fire did I sacrifice my new-born son and wife
At your altar, did my Elder brother go
the one who was embodiment of courage and dignity ॥ 18 ॥*

He surrendered his mind completely to the motherland and pledged to use his oratory skills solely for her cause. Every poem written, every article composed was dedicated to her alone. This total dedication exemplifies the principle of **brahmārpaṇam yajñena yajña upajuhvati**, offering sacrifice into the sacrifice.

There are also those who practice self-discipline and self-restraint, ātma-saṃyama-yogīs, who perform the yajña of self-control. This aspect is elaborated in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, entitled Ātma-Saṃyama Yoga, which teaches how to gain mastery over the body and senses, becoming jitendriya, conquerors of the senses. The practice of such mastery is itself a sacred yajña, an offering of the self through disciplined control.

4.26

**śrotrādīnīndriyāṇyanye, 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.

Some individuals engage in a particular type of yajña that involves the control and offering of the

senses (indriya) and their objects (viṣaya). The senses, such as **hearing (śrotra)**, **sight (cakṣu)**, **smell (nāsa)**, **taste (jihvā)**, and **touch (tvacā)**, serve as the gateways of knowledge and experience. Each sense has its corresponding objects: sound for hearing, form and color for sight, scent for smell, taste for the tongue, and tactile sensations for the skin.

In this form of yajña, the practitioner offers both the senses and their objects into the fire of self-discipline or restraint (saṁyama), metaphorically treating self-control as a sacred fire. The senses are restrained from engaging with their respective objects, thereby preventing sensory impressions from entering and binding the mind.

For example, the tongue (jihvā) is denied the desire for taste, the skin (tvacā) refrains from seeking touch, the ears (śrotra) do not receive sound, and the eyes (cakṣu) avoid visual stimuli. In effect, the senses do not allow their objects to come within their domain, thereby preventing their influence on the mind and intellect.

This practice manifests in various vows and disciplines such as fasting (vrata), silence (mauna vrata), and other austerities. The mauna vrata involves the tongue refraining from speech, thus blocking the reception of sound stimuli. Fasts such as Ekādaśī involve abstaining from food, and sometimes water (nirjala ekādaśī), further restricting sensory input.

Through this rigorous discipline, the senses and their objects are metaphorically “offered” or “burnt” in the fire of self-restraint, purifying the practitioner and strengthening control.

Furthermore, there are individuals whose senses have become so luminous and refined (tejasvī) that even when sensory objects come into contact with their senses, the effects are neutralized immediately. Though the senses may physically touch their objects, these impressions do not penetrate deeper into the mind (manas), intellect (buddhi), or inner consciousness (antahkaraṇa).

In other words, even if sensory contact occurs, it remains superficial and does not disturb the inner faculties. The “fire” of discipline burns the sensory impressions at the threshold of perception itself, preventing any further intrusion or bondage.

For such individuals, there is no need for external effort to block sensory objects because their senses are naturally impervious. The union or contact between senses and their objects causes no disturbance within, and thus they remain unaffected and undisturbed by sensory temptations.

4.27

**sarvāṇīndriyakarmāṇi, prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare,
ātmasaṁyamayogāgnau, 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.

All actions of the senses and all actions of the vital life forces (prāṇa) are illuminated by the yoga of self-restraint (ātma-saṁyama-yoga), which is described as the flame of knowledge.

All the activities performed through the senses, as well as those carried out by the vital breaths or life energies, the five prāṇas, constitute the totality of actions in the body and mind. The five prāṇas govern essential physiological processes and functions, many of which continue automatically without conscious attention. For example, breathing happens without one needing to will it consciously. Who

remembers to breathe constantly? It just happens naturally. These are prāṇa-kriyā-s, life-sustaining actions carried out by the vital forces.

Digestion, too, occurs without conscious effort. One may ask: who digests the food? It is understood that digestion happens on its own, regulated by the Supreme Being (Paramātmā) seated within. Thus, all actions performed by the prāṇas and the senses, whether voluntary or involuntary, are under the subtle control of the Divine.

All such actions are “offered” or “burnt” in the illuminating fire of ātma-saṁyama-yoga, the yoga of self-restraint. This self-restraint is the flame that kindles the light of knowledge and self-realization. Through this inner fire, all bodily and sensory activities become offerings, sacrifices performed in the light of supreme wisdom.

Many examples are seen of individuals who dedicate their entire lives to a noble and supreme cause. Their whole being, body, mind, and soul, is surrendered in complete devotion. Such a life itself becomes a continuous yajña, a sacred sacrifice.

For instance, one might recall the revered figure of Golwalkar Guruji, whose image is often depicted performing a havan (fire ritual), making offerings into the sacred fire. Inscribed beneath is the mantra: **'rāṣṭrāya svāhā, idaṁ rāṣṭrāya idaṁ na mama'**, meaning “I offer this to the nation.” He dedicated his entire life to the service of the nation, leaving nothing for himself. This exemplifies the various kinds of yajñas, including dravya-yajña, sacrifices involving material offerings.

Moreover, such spiritual discipline involves sādhana, a rigorous practice of self-control and austerity. This austerity (tapas) involves willingly enduring physical hardships to strengthen the body and mind. These are all different forms of yajña performed by people, each according to their nature and purpose.

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.

Dr̥vya Yajña: The offering of materials (dr̥vya) into the sacrificial fire (havan kuṇḍa) is known as dr̥vya yajña. This includes the donation of physical substances as offerings. Some individuals engage in rigorous austerities (tapas), self-discipline involving enduring hardships to fulfill their duties and perform their actions. Such austerities are also considered a form of yajña. The practice of controlling the senses through discipline is itself a tapasya, a sacred offering.

Yoga Yajña: Others practice the eightfold path of yoga (aṣṭāṅga yoga), which includes yama (moral restraints), niyama (observances), āsana (posture), prāṇāyāma (breath control), pratyāhāra (withdrawal of senses), dhāraṇā (concentration), dhyāna (meditation), and samādhi (absorption). These steps of yoga constitute a methodical spiritual discipline, and living according to these principles is itself a form of sādhana, a dedicated spiritual practice and yajña.

Thus, there are diverse forms of yajña performed by people according to their nature and goals, some engage in tapas yajña (austerity sacrifice), some in dr̥vya yajña (material offerings), and some in yoga

yajña (yogic practice).

Svādhyāya Yajña: Another important yajña is svādhyāya yajña, the sacred study of scriptures and self-knowledge. This involves continuous learning and reflection upon spiritual texts to attain self-realization. The study of the Bhagavad Gītā is a prime example of svādhyāya yajña. Many dedicate themselves to memorizing, listening to, understanding, and practicing the teachings of the Gītā. This constant engagement with sacred knowledge is itself a yajña of wisdom.

The ongoing efforts of Gītā Pariwar represent a grand yajña aimed at spreading the knowledge of the Gītā far and wide, bringing the Gītā into every home and heart. The workers and volunteers of such organizations participate in this yajña, each offering their efforts as oblations, contributing to the collective spiritual mission.

To participate effectively in this yajña, certain vows (vrata) and disciplines are required: self-restraint, dedicating specific time for study, and abstaining from distractions or worldly enjoyments. By temporarily giving up certain pleasures, greater spiritual fulfillment can be attained. Sacrifice of time and effort is necessary to partake in the yajña of the Bhagavad Gītā's knowledge.

On auspicious occasions, participants are encouraged to offer some personal contribution, whether time, effort, or discipline, as an offering to this great yajña. For example, setting aside a fixed time, such as from 7:00 PM to 7:40 PM, daily for study and reflection. This regular commitment functions as a vrata, a sacred vow, fostering spiritual strength.

Vows and fasts grant inner strength, ātma-bala, the power of the self. Fasting, for example, where one abstains from eating and drinking, cultivates this inner power. Even if nothing else remains, this ātma-bala enables one to reach the highest spiritual pinnacles.

This song, written by Śrīdhār Bhaskar Varnekar, conveys the idea of progressing despite obstacles. It is a patriotic anthem that promotes the themes of awakening and diligence.

चल चल पुरतो

चल चल पुरतो निधेहि चरणम्
सदैव पुरतो निधेहि चरणम्

गिरीशिखरे तव निज निकेतनम्
समारोहणं विनैव यानम्
आत्मबलं केवलं साधनम्

पथिपाषाणा विषमा प्रखरा
तिर्यन्चोपि च परितो घोरः
सुदुष्करं खलु यद्यपि गमनम्

जहीहि भीतिं हिदि भज शक्तिम्
देहि देहि रे भगवती भक्तिम्
कुरु कुरु सततं ध्येयस्मरणम्

("Move forward and always place your feet ahead, where your true dwelling is on the peak of the mountain.")

The metaphor of the mountain peak symbolizes the highest state of realization, union with the

Supreme Being (Paramātmān). **The Supreme Abode (Paramadhāma)** is the ultimate destination. There is no vehicle or conveyance to reach this summit, no chariot or horse. The only means of travel is the inner strength (ātma-bala) cultivated through vows, austerities, and spiritual practice.

This inner power, attained through observance of various vows, enables spiritual progress. Practices such as prāṇāyāma (breath control) in yoga are themselves considered a form of yajña, contributing to the purification and strengthening of the practitioner.

4.29

**apāne juhvati prāṇam(m), prāṇe'pānam(n) tathāpare,
prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā, prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ. 4.29**

Others offer as sacrifice the outgoing breath in the incoming, and the incoming in the outgoing, restraining the course of the outgoing and the incoming breaths, solely absorbed in the restraint of the breath.

Prāṇāyāma is a sacred practice of breath regulation and is itself a form of havan, a ritualistic offering or sacrifice. In prāṇāyāma, the vital energies known as prāṇa and apāna vayu are offered to each other in a cyclical process, symbolizing an internal sacrificial fire.

The main actions involved in prāṇāyāma include:

- **Pūraka** (inhalation),
- **Kumbhaka** (retention of breath), which is of two types, antara kumbhaka (retention after inhalation) and bahira kumbhaka (retention after exhalation), and
- **Rechaka** (exhalation).

Each of these actions is considered an act of havan or offering. Specifically, the **prāṇa vayu** (inward-moving breath) is offered into the apāna vayu (outward-moving breath), and vice versa. This mutual offering maintains the vital balance within the body.

During prāṇāyāma practice, the practitioner controls the flow of breath by creating deliberate pauses, retaining the breath inside (antara kumbhaka) and outside (bahira kumbhaka). This process involves regulating the prāṇa and apāna flows, creating temporary obstructions to stabilize and strengthen the vital energies.

Though prāṇāyāma may appear as a simple exercise of breathing, its effects are profound. Regular, disciplined practice of prāṇāyāma brings noticeable benefits in just a few days. It strengthens ātma-bala (inner strength), sharpens mental focus, and enhances overall vitality.

Those who perform prāṇāyāma as a spiritual practice engage in a sacred yajña, offering their breath and vital energies as

4.30

**apare niyatāhārāḥ(ph), prāṇānprāṇeṣu juhvati,
sarve'pyete yajñavido, yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ. 4.30**

Other Yogīs offer the act of exhalation into that of inhalation; even so, others the act of inhalation into that of exhalation. There are still others given to the practice of Prāṇāyāma (breath-control), who,

having regulated their diet and controlled the processes of exhalation and inhalation both, pour their vital airs into the vital airs themselves. All these have their sins consumed away by sacrifice and understand the meaning of sacrificial worship.

Niyata Ahāra, maintaining disciplined and controlled eating habits, is a form of self-restraint. This does not mean complete abstinence from food or eating at arbitrary times; rather, it means regularity and control in one's diet. However, āhāra (nourishment) is not limited to just food. The mind receives nourishment from everything perceived by the senses. For example, the images seen on a phone screen, the sounds heard by the ears, these too constitute āhāra. Therefore, control over what and how much is consumed through the senses, including sight and sound, is equally important. This entire regulation of sensory intake is part of niyata ahāra.

Similarly, there is niyata prāṇa, the disciplined regulation of the vital breaths. The great practice of mahākumbhaka (deep breath retention) is essentially offering the prāṇa (life force) as an oblation into the sacred fire within. The five vital airs (prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna, and samāna), collectively known as the pañchaprāṇa, are all offered and purified through this internal sacrificial ritual. These vital functions occur continuously within the body, and this process of offering and regulation constitutes a yajña (sacred sacrifice).

There exist many kinds of **yajña-vidh**, methods and rites of yajña, all distinct in practice yet united in purpose. All these practitioners are yajña-vid, those who understand and perform yajñas.

One common question often arises: **Why engage in these yajñas? Why perform prāṇāyāma yajña, dravya yajña (offering of material substances), tapa yajña (austerity yajña), or swādhyāya yajña (study and self-reflection yajña)? What is the benefit?**

The scriptures state that yajña destroys all sins and impurities, **yajña kṣapita kalmaśāḥ**; all stains of sin are burnt away and eradicated through yajña. Even a brief session of prāṇāyāma brings tangible effects, purifying the mind and body, removing subtle impurities. One can experience this cleansing effect within a single day.

During prāṇāyāma, the most crucial sense organ is not the external nostrils or physical lungs but the mind. The practitioner unites the mind with the element of air (vāyu). While inhaling and exhaling, the mind attentively observes the breath flowing through the nostrils, filling the lungs, and then exiting, merging with the external air. This mindful connection is the essence of prāṇāyāma.

Saint Jñāneśvar Mahārāj beautifully described prāṇāyāma as:

मन पवनाची खेळणी।

It is like a child playing with a toy; the mind and the breath are like playful toys given by the Divine. Through this play, the practitioner becomes absorbed, forgetting other sinful or distracting thoughts. When the mind is thus engaged, negative thoughts and sins do not arise.

Moreover, during swādhyāya (self-study), such as reading and reflecting on the Bhagavad Gītā, even if troubling thoughts arise, the awareness that one is performing actions as offerings to the Supreme (karma yoga) awakens a pure attitude. This mindset prevents sinful actions and thoughts from taking root.

Thus, these yajñas collectively serve to burn away all impurities and sins (kalmaśa), purify the individual, and confer spiritual benefits. The practitioner partakes of these benefits through sincere engagement in such spiritual disciplines.

4.31

**yajñaśiṣṭāmṛtabhujo, yānti brahma sanātanam,
nāyaṃ(m) loko'styayajñasya, kuto'nyaḥ(kh) kurusattama. 4.31**

Arjuna, Yogīs who enjoy the nectar that has been left over after the performance of a sacrifice attain the eternal Brahma. To the man who does not offer sacrifice, even this world is not happy; how, then, can the other world be happy?

What is obtained after performing yajña (sacred sacrifice) is immortality, amṛta. Those who partake in this amṛta, who consume it, savor it, and truly experience its essence, the ascetics and eternal sages, can reach the highest state. They can attain the eternal Supreme Brahman.

However, those who do not perform yajña, those who live their lives merely focused on “*I, my body, my enjoyment, my sleep, my food, my drink, my rest*”, those who follow the attitude of “**Eat, drink, and be merry**”, for them, there is no yajña at all. Such people cannot find true happiness even in this world.

As addressed to Arjuna, the greatest of the Kuru dynasty:

“There is no happiness here, nor in the next world, nor anywhere else at all.”

Thus, for those who live without yajña, there is no lasting happiness, neither in this life nor in the hereafter, nor in any other realm.

4.32

**evaṃ(m) bahuvidhā yajñā, vitatā brahmaṇo mukhe,
karmajānviddhi tānsarvān, evaṃ(ñ) jñātvā vimokṣyase. 4.32**

Many such forms of sacrifice have been set forth in detail in the Vedas; know them all as involving the action of mind, senses and body. Thus, knowing the truth about them you shall be freed from the bondage of action (through their performance).

There are indeed many kinds of yajñas (sacred sacrifices), and the examples given by the Bhagavān are just a few illustrations. He has explained various types of yajñas, but where are all these yajñas described? The Vedas themselves, which are called the very embodiment of Brahman, are considered yajñas. The Vedas are the mouth of Brahman, Brahmaṇa mukha, and their language, words, and verses convey the Supreme Brahman. These Vedic yajñas and many others are detailed within the Vedas.

How do all these yajñas happen? By action, karma. Without action, no yajña can take place. Yajña arises through the performance of karma, actions done according to prescribed methods. Thus, all these yajñas emerge from karma.

One must understand this well: by knowing this and performing yajña with such understanding and offering, a person attains liberation (mokṣa). Arjuna is addressed here as an example, but this teaching applies to all. Arjuna is merely the symbolic recipient.

What does jñātvā (knowing) mean? It is not just hearing or superficially knowing something, like a child who is told by his mother to bring salt from the market, but remains engrossed in other distractions and does not act. True knowing means understanding and then following through with action, bringing that knowledge into practice.

This is why the revered Swami always emphasizes how the Gita should be studied:

गीता पढ़े पढ़ाए जीवन में लाए।

“Read it, teach it, and apply it in life.”

Teaching helps deepen one’s understanding. One may know a lot, but unless it is taught and practiced, the knowledge is incomplete. The act of teaching strengthens one’s grasp of the text, and applying it brings transformation.

Therefore, jñātva means to understand fully and to put that understanding into practice. Whoever does this attains liberation. The Bhagavān assures Arjuna (and through him, all seekers): *“You too shall be liberated through your actions.”*

Among all the yajñas, what kind of karma should one perform? Which yajña is superior? There are many yajñas, so which one should be done?

4.33

**śreyāndravyamayādyajñāj, jñānayaajñah(ph) parantapa,
sarvaṃ(ñ) karmākhilaṃ(m) pārtha, jñāne parisamāpyate. 4.33**

Arjuna, sacrifice through Knowledge, is superior to sacrifice performed with material things. For all actions without exception culminate in Knowledge, O son of Kuntī.

Our goal is to make karma into akarma, to understand what this means. Here, the meaning is to transform action (karma) into inaction (akarma), to bring action to an end, and to become free from the bondage of karma. The sense of “I did this”, the egoistic feeling of doership, must be relinquished. Only then will we attain liberation.

It does not mean to stop performing actions altogether. If one simply stops acting, then what will I offer? Action must happen; only then will there be karma. And only then will one have the right to offer that karma to Bhagavān. Therefore, one must act, offer the fruits of actions, and also offer the feeling “I did it”, surrender that ego as well. This is the true yajña (sacrifice).

This must be understood, known, and the knowledge attained. One must know to whom the offering is being made. How is that Supreme Self (Paramātman)? Where is He? Who am I?

Why have I received this human body? I was not born as a dog, a cat, an elephant, a horse, or an ant. I have received the human birth. Since I have received this human birth, who am I? This human body is not “I.” Then who am I?

To know oneself, this is jñāna (knowledge). What does knowledge mean?

Samarth Rāmadās Swāmī gave a very beautiful explanation of this knowledge, a teaching you may not find elsewhere. He says:

“पाहणे आपणासि आपण हे खरे ज्ञान.”

That is, knowledge is to see oneself, ātmajñāna (self-knowledge). It is to know oneself, to see oneself clearly.

Do not think that just because I looked in the mirror and saw my face, I have gained knowledge. That was knowledge only of my outer face. It gave a little knowledge of who I am within. I can see my body in the mirror, but what is my true form inside, beyond this body? Who is the “I” that calls this body

“mine”?

This knowledge is ātmajñāna, self-realization.

The yajña performed to attain this knowledge is shreyaḥ, beneficial, and welfare-producing. It is superior to all material yajñas. This is the knowledge yajña (jñāna yajña).

śreyāṇdravyamayādyajñāj, jñānayajñaḥ(ph) parantapa,

(O Parantapa, I surrender to the knowledge yajña, which is superior to all material yajñas.)

Why is this superior? Because,

sarvaṃ(ñ) karmākhilam(m) pārtha, jñāne parisamāpyate

(O Pārtha, all actions indeed come to an end through knowledge. By controlling all actions through knowledge, one becomes a master of self-control.)

Where do all the actions merge or dissolve? They merge into knowledge, into self-knowledge, into the knowledge of the Supreme Self. Once this knowledge arises, all actions dissolve into it. Then, the actions cease to be binding karma. They become akarma, non-actions.

Even without doing anything consciously, all work continues to happen on its own. These are actions that are also akarma, actions performed without attachment.

This is the essence to understand from this chapter.

We saw the 18th shloka (verse) of Chapter 4:

karmaṇyakarma yaḥ(ph) paśyed, akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ,

sa buddhimānmanuṣyeṣu, sa yuktaḥ(kh) kṛtsnakarmakṛt.

One who sees action in inaction and inaction in action is wise; such a one attains immortality.

Thus, we need this buddhi (intelligence, wisdom). We need to understand how our karma can become akarma, and how akarma can become karma. All this happens through knowledge.

Bhagavān has said:

सर्वं कर्मा अखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ।

All actions, O Pārtha, come to an end through knowledge. All karma is dissolved and ends in knowledge.

Where will we get this knowledge? Bhagavān continues in the next Shloka.

4.34

**tadviddhi praṇipātena, paripraśnena sevayā,
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṃ(ñ), jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ. 4.34**

Understand the true nature of that Knowledge by approaching seers of Truth. If you prostrate at their feet, render them service, and question them with an open and guileless heart, those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that Knowledge.

Tadviddhi -Know this, understand this, attain this knowledge: Where will it be obtained from? Bhagavān says

Know that pranipāta means complete surrender, total refuge. It is not just a simple bow or greeting. There are many types of pranām (salutation):

- Folding hands and bowing,
- Lowering the head respectfully,
- Touching the feet,
- Touching the hands of the teacher,
- Full prostration called *ṣaṣṭāṅga prāṇipāta* (with eight limbs),
- Or *daṇḍavat prāṇipāta*, which means lying down fully stretched like a staff (*daṇḍa*) on the ground, symbolizing total surrender of body and mind.

This is *prāṇipāta*, a surrender with the entire being, a complete offering and refuge with utmost devotion.

To whom should this *prāṇipāta* be done? The question arises: it must be done to the *santos*, the saints, the realized sages who have perceived the ultimate truth, the *tattva*.

Jñānī means one who has attained *ātmajñāna*, self-realization. This *ātmajñāna* is not theoretical knowledge. It is the direct realization:

मनोबुद्ध्यहङ्कार चित्तानि नाहं
न च श्रोत्रजिह्वे न च घ्राणनेत्रे ।
न च व्योम भूमिर्न तेजो न वायुः
चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहम् शिवोऽहम् ॥१॥

- “I am not this body.”
- “I am the *jīva-ātman*, the soul.”
- “I am an eternal part of *Bhagavān*.”
- “I am *Chidānanda-rūpa* (the embodiment of consciousness and bliss), *Shiva-aham*, *Shivoham*.”

This is not mere singing of *bhajans* or chanting; it is the awakened sentiment from those whose speech arises from such realization. For example, the *bhajans* of *Ādi Śaṅkarācārya* come from such enlightened realization.

What does tattva-darśī (the one who perceives the ultimate reality) mean?

The word sounds simple but is often misunderstood: it is not merely a philosopher or theorist.

- ***Tattva*** means “that essence”, the ultimate, unchanging reality.
- ***Darśī*** means “the one who sees or knows.”

Dnyaneshwar Mauli says:

जे ज्ञानाचा कुरुठा । तेथ सेवा हा दारवंठा ।
तो स्वाधीन करी सुभटा । वोळगोनी ॥१६६॥

They are the home of all knowledge, and service to them is the threshold for entry; lay hold of it, O' Best of warriors,

Just as childhood is ***bālak-tva*** (the state of being a child), motherhood is *mātṛ-tva* (the state of being a mother), and old age is *ṛddhatva* (the state of being old), these states are truly known only by those who embody them. Only a mother can truly understand motherhood. Similarly, only one who has become one with *Bhagavān*, the One Supreme, can truly know the *tattva*.

Those who have realized *Bhagavān* and have had the experience of this knowledge, not mere oral or verbal repetition, are truly *tattva-darśī*. They have direct *Bhagavat-sākṣātkāra* (realization of *Bhagavān*). These are not mere miracle workers; they possess knowledge and oneness with *Bhagavān*, hence know the ultimate truth intimately.

Then, what happens after attaining this knowledge? What is gained?

Karma becomes akarma, actions become non-binding or inactive in their bondage.

What does this mean? With the destruction of the bondage of karma, one attains liberation.

4.35

**yajjñātvā na punarmoham, evaṃ(m) yāsyasi pāṇḍava,
yena bhūtānyaśeṣeṇa, drakṣyasiātmanyatho mayi. 4.35**

Arjuna, when you have achieved enlightenment, ignorance will delude you no more. In the light of that knowledge, you will see the entire creation first within your own Self, and then in Me (the Oversoul).

What will be seen? What is the vision of the jñānī (the realized one)?

Bhagavān has said something very beautiful here:

Having known this, after attaining self-knowledge (ātma-jñāna), you will no longer fall into delusion (moha), nor sorrow, nor distress. You will be free of dualities, free of doubts, and you will never again fall into delusion.

What is this delusion?

This delusion is the confusion arising from attachment in the mind, such as:

"I will fight the war, I will kill, they will die; these are my relatives, these are strangers; these are mine, those are others."

All this is moha, delusion. It is ajñāna, ignorance.

After gaining knowledge, you will never again fall into this ignorance or its mire.

What will you see then? What will be your vision?

The word **bhūtāni** here does not mean ghosts or spirits, but it is derived from bhavati, "that which comes into existence" or "that which is produced." Everything that has been created or manifested is called bhūta.

Look around you, the entire universe, everything you see, is all bhūtāni. Nothing exists that was not created or that is eternal in form. The Earth itself came into existence millions of years ago. Everything surrounding us, nature, planets, stars, sun, living beings, even microscopic organisms, all are bhūtāni (created beings).

Aśeṣaṇ means without leaving anything out, without exception.

The jñānī sees all these bhūtāni, everything, fully within his own self, within the Ātman. Here, dakṣaṣī means "the one who sees." The jñānī sees everything within himself. For the realized soul, there is no distinction, no "I" and "other."

This is the vision of non-duality, the all-pervading oneness:

There is only one supreme Bhagavān manifest everywhere. The realized one sees all beings and objects as expressions of that One.

Because of this, the happiness and sorrow of others become their own. There is no division between "mine" and "not mine." The distinction of "ayaṃ nijaḥ paro veti" (this is mine, that is others) is a sign of a narrow mind.

As the famous phrase says:

अयम् निजो परो वेति गणना लघु चेतसाम्।

उदार चरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्॥

This division into “mine” and “others” is the thinking of small-minded people. For the noble-hearted and great souls, the entire earth is one family.

The realized soul sees the whole universe as his own home,

सर्वं जगदिदं मम वत्सल्यं।

(Everything in this universe is my own, beloved.)

Dnyaneshwar Mauli says:

हे विश्वची माझे घर.

(The Universe is my Home)

He sees all as his own and merges himself in the One supreme Bhagavān.

This is the state of complete knowledge where only the One Bhagavān is perceived and nothing else appears as separate.

No matter how sinful a person may be, once he sincerely follows the path of knowledge and seeks refuge in the saints for realization, all his sins are destroyed.

Summary:

- The jñānī's vision is of total oneness, seeing all beings as manifestations of Bhagavān.
- There is no separation of mine and thine; all is one family.
- The confusion of duality and ignorance ends.
- This vision arises from attaining self-knowledge and surrender to Bhagavān.
- This realization removes all suffering and duality.

4.36

**api cedasi pāpebhyaḥ(s), sarvebhyaḥ(ph) pāpakṛttamaḥ,
sarvaṁ(ñ) jñānaplavenaiva, vṛjinaṁ(m) santariṣyasi. 4.36**

Even if you were the most sinful of all sinners, this Knowledge alone would carry you, like a raft, across all your sins.

Apiceta ceta means “even if” or “no matter how.” It conveys that no matter how sinful (pāpī) a person is, no matter how many sins (, pāpa) they have committed, even if they are the worst sinner, there is still hope.

Even a deeply fallen, sinful person, no matter how degraded or immoral, if they board the boat of knowledge (jñānarūpīplava), meaning the boat of wisdom, and embark upon the path of liberation, then their journey begins.

The gateway to knowledge is the door of the saints

To walk the path of knowledge, there is only one gateway: the door of the saints (**santoṁ kā dvāra**).

What kind of knowledge does one receive there?

As we have seen, the process involves:

- **tvaddha praṇipātena**, bowing sincerely to the saints,
- **pariṣṇena**, asking them questions to clarify doubts,
- **sevayā**, serving them selflessly.

By respectfully bowing to the saints, surrendering to them, asking them all doubts, and serving them with devotion, one proceeds on the path of true knowledge.

Service is the great gateway, according to Jñāneśvar Mahārāj. Jñāneśvar Mahārāj says that service (sevā) is the mahā dvār (great gateway) to knowledge.

He states:

संत ज्ञानाचे मंदिर, तेथे सेवा हे महा द्वार, ते स्वाधीन करावे सतत जा।

Meaning: The temple of the saints' knowledge is where service is the great gateway. Through continuous service, one attains freedom.

How to serve the saints?

One should first surrender oneself completely there, body, mind, and soul:

तरी तनुमनुजीवें । चरणांसीं लागावें ।

आणि अगर्वता करावें । दास्य सकळ ॥१६७

Meaning: One should touch the feet of the saints with body, mind, and life, fully surrender, and become their complete servant.

In Marathi, nigavī garva means pride or ego. One must relinquish all pride and ego and approach the Guru or saints with full humility, surrendering completely without ego.

True knowledge can only be attained by going to the feet of the saints and serving them. It cannot be obtained from anywhere else.

Once you get the boat of knowledge from the saints:

भजिनं संतसी

By devotion to the saints, Bhagavān says that this entire ocean of sin, no matter how vast it is, you will cross, O Arjuna.

This knowledge is atyanta pavitra, supremely sacred and pure.

Summary:

- No matter how sinful one is, by taking refuge in the saints and embarking on the path of knowledge, one attains liberation.
- The only gateway to knowledge is through the saints, by bowing to them, asking questions, and serving them selflessly.
- Ego and pride must be completely abandoned before one can receive this knowledge.
- This knowledge is the boat that carries one across the ocean of sin.
- Bhagavān assures that with this knowledge, even the greatest sinner can be freed.

**yathaidhāṃsi samiddho'gniḥ(r), bhasmasātkurute'rjuna,
jñānāgniḥ(s) sarVākarmāṇi, bhasmasātkurute tathā. 4.37**

For, as the blazing fire reduces the fuel to ashes, Arjuna, even so the fire of Knowledge turns all actions to ashes.

Just as eṣā means "this," similarly, eṣā agni refers to the fire to which we offer fuel, the combustible materials that burn in the fire.

What does fire do to these combustible things?

The samiti agni, meaning the blazing, kindled fire, when it receives whatever is offered to it (samarpita), the things thrown into the fire, the fire completely burns and reduces them to ashes.

Similarly, the agni of knowledge, the fire of wisdom, once ignited, burns away everything completely, reducing it to ashes.

When a person truly understands that all actions are not mine, that nothing exists apart from Bhagavān, then the fire of knowledge burns all illusions of ego and doership.

Kabir's beautiful doha:

ना कुछ किया न करि सक्या, नाँ करणे जोग सरीर।
जे कुछ किया सु हरि किया, ताथै भया कबीर कबीर॥

Translation:

Whatever is done, it is done by You (Bhagavān), not by me.

If anyone says, "I did it," then it is You who resides within me.

This doha beautifully express the truth that all actions are performed by Bhagavān alone. The individual ego is an illusion; true wisdom reveals that the Self and Bhagavān are one.

Thus, Bhagavān says, Arjuna, the agnī rūpī jñāna, the fire of knowledge, burns all karma completely. The actions become akarma, non-actions. This pure knowledge is the most sacred and powerful purifier, beyond all else.

4.38

**na hi jñānena sadṛśaṃ(m), pavitramiha vidyate,
tatsvayaṃ(m) yogasaṃsiddhaḥ(kh), kālenātmani vindati. 4.38**

In this world there is no purifier as great as Knowledge; he who has attained purity of heart through prolonged practice of Karmayoga, automatically sees the light of Truth in the self in course of time.

There is nothing in this world as pure and sacred as knowledge. This truth is expressed beautifully:

"hīm jñānan sadṛśyaṃ pavitramiha vidyate"

There is nothing as pure as knowledge.

To attain this supreme knowledge, certain actions are necessary, which have been explained. But where does this knowledge come from? Where does it exist? It must come from somewhere, right? Bhagavān reveals its source; it is obtained at the feet of the Satguru, the saints. When we go to them, serve them sincerely, and learn from them, the knowledge manifests.

Bhagavān says that this knowledge is present within oneself:

Tat sva-yam yoga-sam-siddha-kālen ātmā-natī

It arises in one whose inner self has matured through the disciplined practice of yoga.

The practice of karma-yoga is the way to purify the inner being. The karma-yoga is performed to cleanse the chitta (mind/heart). The chitta carries the accumulated dirt of countless past lives, the impressions of attachment (rāga) and aversion (dveṣa). This inner dirt clouds the clarity of the soul.

Karma-yoga is the method to purify this chitta, by performing actions without selfish desire, dedicating every deed to Bhagavān. One may initially feel, "What will happen if I do this? There seems to be no benefit." But without hesitation, performing every duty entrusted by Bhagavān purifies the mind gradually.

There is a story of a disciple who came to his guru and said:

"Guruji, I have been practicing this discipline for many years, yet I feel there is no benefit. It seems useless, without result."

The guru said, *"Alright, let's see."*

He pointed to a corner of the room where a tokana (a small vessel with holes) was kept, containing some coal inside.

The guru instructed, *"Take this vessel and fetch water from the well."*

The disciple replied, *"Guruji, what are you saying? Water will never stay in this vessel; it has holes."*

The guru insisted, *"Do as I say. Never question a guru's command once accepted."*

So the disciple fetched water and ran with the vessel, but water kept leaking out through the holes.

He repeated this several times, each time water leaked out.

Frustrated, the disciple finally placed the vessel before the guru, saying, *"No matter how many times I try, no water will remain in this vessel. This effort is pointless."*

The guru asked, *"When you first took this vessel, how did it look?"*

The disciple replied, *"It was black because of the coal inside."*

The guru said, *"And now?"*

The disciple answered, *"After washing many times, it is clean now."*

The guru explained, *"This is exactly like your spiritual practice. The coal's blackness is like the dirt of the mind. Your repeated efforts through karma-yoga are like washing water, cleansing the mind little by little. Gradually, the dirt disappears, and the chitta becomes pure."*

Thus, by steady practice of karma-yoga, the mind becomes purified. The *tat sva-yam yoga-sam-siddha*, the perfected state, arises naturally over time.

This knowledge is not outside; it is within ourselves. However, it is covered by layers of ignorance, like dust on a mirror. When the dust is removed layer by layer, the inner light of knowledge begins to

shine forth. This illumination occurs through the disciplined practice of karma-yoga, under the guidance and presence of a true Satguru and saints. With time (kālen), the wisdom awakens within.

Does everyone receive this knowledge? Bhagavān says yes, anyone who sincerely practices karma-yoga under the guidance of a Satguru and serves the saints with humility will attain it.

But certain conditions and qualifications are essential for this attainment. Bhagavān elaborates on these prerequisites for true knowledge acquisition.

4.39

**śraddhāvāṁ labhate jñānam(n), tatparaḥ(s) samyatendriyaḥ,
jñānam(m) labdhvā parāṁ(m) śāntim, acireṇādhigacchati. 4.39**

He who has mastered his senses, is exclusively devoted to his practice and is full of faith, attains Knowledge; having had the revelation of Truth, he immediately attains supreme peace in the form of God-realization.

Bhagavān says an important thing: only one who is śraddhāvān, one who has genuine faith or devotion, can attain true knowledge. Without śraddhā, knowledge cannot be attained by anyone. It is impossible.

You may wonder, “What kind of śraddhā is this? Today, many people speak of blind faith (andha-śraddhā). What is the difference? How do we understand true śraddhā and avoid blind faith?”

The key is viveka, discrimination or discernment. Even in science, without faith, we cannot learn or understand anything. Consider mathematics, for example. When we study geometry, we are taught the concept of a point (bindu). The definition is that a point is an entity that has no length, no breadth, and no thickness.

A student might object, *“How can something exist without length, breadth, or thickness? That is impossible!”*

But the teacher says, *“Just suppose it is so. To learn further geometry, you must accept this concept.”* This is faith or śraddhā, the willingness to accept certain premises for deeper learning.

Similarly, in atomic physics, scientists have never seen electrons, protons, or neutrons directly. They imagine, hypothesize, and test models. These models are based on faith in the scientific process. They say electrons orbit the nucleus, but no one has seen this directly. Yet we accept and learn it based on evidence and trust.

In everyday life, when we visit a doctor and take medicine, we don’t know the exact chemical composition of the pill. We trust the doctor’s knowledge. This trust is śraddhā. Without it, we would refuse treatment, and no healing would happen.

Thus, without śraddhā, nothing is possible, be it scientific knowledge or spiritual wisdom. The Bhagavad Gītā says:

śraddhāvān labhate jñānam(n),
The one with faith attains knowledge.

Therefore, the first essential qualification for acquiring true knowledge is śraddhā, genuine faith, trust,

and sincerity.

The second qualification is tatpara, being earnest and eager to follow the prescribed path sincerely. One must be ready to practice sādhanā diligently, with discipline and perseverance.

To practice this path, one must also develop saṁyata-indriya, control of the senses. Some things must be renounced; some rigorous practices must be undertaken. For example, getting up early for yoga and meditation is essential. One who says, “*I will wake up at 8 AM and then become a yogi,*” will never achieve true yoga. Sense control and renunciation are unavoidable.

If you want to attain ātma-jñāna, self-realization, you must be willing to put in hard work and discipline.

For example, the late Lata Mangeshkar Ji, who became the queen of music through her dedicated practice, once said that she never drank cold water her entire life. She avoided ice cream and anything cold. This was self-control, which helped her reach that extraordinary state.

So, the three prerequisites Bhagavān highlights are:

- **Śraddhā**, sincere faith and trust, not blind superstition.
- **Tatparatā**, eagerness and earnestness in spiritual practice.
- **Samyata-indriya**, disciplined control over the senses and renunciation of distractions.

And then, what will you gain by attaining knowledge?

Bhagavān says that true knowledge leads to parama-śānti, supreme peace.

No matter how much worldly happiness or pleasure one attains, it cannot compare to this supreme peace. Worldly pleasures give only temporary or fleeting peace, momentary comfort, or contentment. But the peace gained from knowledge is eternal (chira-sukha), imperishable, unchanging, and blissful (ānanda).

jñānaṁ(m) labdhvā parāṁ(m) śāntim

Knowledge brings supreme peace.

On the other hand, the ignorant person who doubts everything and has no faith (śraddhā) cannot attain this peace or knowledge.

4.40

**ajñāścāśraddadhānaśca, saṁśayātmā vinaśyati,
nāyaṁ(m) loko'sti na paro, na sukhaṁ(m) saṁśayātmanaḥ. 4.40**

He who lacks discrimination, is devoid of faith, and is at the same time possessed by doubt, is lost to the spiritual path. For the doubting soul there is neither this world nor the world beyond, nor even happiness.

One who doubts everything, who doubts the knowledge of the Gītā, who doubts the Sadguru, who lacks faith and trust, is truly ajñānī (ignorant). Such a person does not possess śraddhā (devotion or sincere faith), nor does he have the desire or capacity to truly know.

Bhagavān says that wherever doubt (saṁśaya) resides in the heart or mind, there the soul suffers. Doubt is like a poison that destroys. A person consumed by doubt cannot be redeemed, nor can he

achieve welfare or well-being.

Such a person will never find true happiness, not in this world (adhyātma loka), nor in the hereafter (paraloka). He remains restless and unsettled in both realms.

Bhagavān warns that the one with a doubting mind (saṁśaya-ātmanah) will never experience peace or liberation. Therefore, faith and trust are essential not only for spiritual knowledge but also for genuine well-being and happiness.

4.41

**yogasannyastakarmāṇaṁ(ñ), jñānasañchinnasaṁśayam,
ātmavantam(n) na karmāṇi, nibadhnanti dhanañjaya. 4.41**

Arjuna, actions do not bind him who has dedicated all his actions to God according to the spirit of Karmayoga, whose doubts have been dispelled by wisdom and who is self-possessed.

If you desire liberation from the bondage of karma, if you seek mokṣa, that is, freedom, then understand what this bondage really is. Mokṣa means liberation, freedom from all bondage. But what is this bondage? It is the bondage of karma.

We cannot exist without karma. As explained in the Third Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, no living being can live without performing karma. This is the very nature of karma-bondage.

So when will this bondage be destroyed? When will mokṣa be attained?

When one practices **yoga-saṁnyasta-karmāṇi**, the path of karma yoga, performing actions with complete renunciation, offering every action to Bhagavān, moment by moment, then that person becomes free from bondage.

One who has attained jñāna, knowledge that removes all doubts (saṁśaya), all suspicions, all uncertainties, has their doubts thoroughly and perfectly destroyed (saṁkṣinna saṁśaya).

Such a person is called ātma-vantaḥ, self-realized. Whose senses, body, mind, intellect, and entire inner being are fully under control, fully under the sovereignty of the Self. For such a person, karma never binds; karma becomes a pure instrument.

They see every action as the work of Bhagavān, and they perform it as an opportunity given by Bhagavān, offering it as an act of devotion.

For them, there is no longer the feeling “I have to do this action.” Once this vision dawns, actions become sources of joy and bliss.

The feeling of “having to do karma” or “being compelled to act” disappears. Instead, they feel blessed to have the opportunity to serve.

As Samarth Rāmadās Svāmī beautifully says:

धर्माच्या करिता आम्हांस जगती रामाने धाडीयले ॥
ऐसे जाणुनि राम भक्ती करण्या ऐश्वर्य हे लाभले ॥
आता धर्मसख्या तुझ्या पुढतिया नम्रत्वतेने असे ॥

इच्छा हो जशी मानसी करी तसे हा देह तुझा असे ॥

(Meaning: I have come into this world to perform my duty to Rāma, the embodiment of dharma. Now, understanding this, I engage in pure devotion. I have received the true wealth, divine grace.)

This body and all its faculties are the gift of Bhagavān. We are sent here by Bhagavān to perform our duties for Him.

Hence, the attitude should be:

"Hey Rāma! Hey Bhagavān! This body is Yours; I offer it to You. Whatever You desire to have me do through this body, please let it be done."

When this sense of surrender becomes firm, when the sense of 'I' and 'mine' fades, then one becomes truly ātma-vantaḥ, self-mastery is attained, and karma no longer causes bondage.

As Bhagavān says to Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the Bhagavad Gītā:

***"ātmavaṁtarasmitaṁ ca mām viddhi parasparam
jñānaya jñena cāpyakṣaram paramaṁ tapaḥ"***

Those who are full of Self-realization, their actions do not bind them. They have the vision that all work is Bhagavān's work, and they perform all karma as an offering, free from attachment and ego.

Thus, true karma yoga leads to the complete dissolution of karma bondage.

4.42

**tasmādajñānasambhūtaṁ(m), hr̥tsthaṁ(ñ) jñānāsinātmanaḥ,
chittvainaṁ(m) saṁśayaṁ(m) yogam, ātiṣṭhottīṣṭha bhārata. 4.42**

Therefore, Arjuna slashing to pieces, with the sword of knowledge, this doubt in your heart, born of ignorance, establish yourself in Karmayoga in the shape of even-mindedness, and stand up for the fight.

Whenever Bhagavān uses the word **tasmāt**, we must immediately become alert and attentive. The meaning of tasmāt is "therefore" or "for this reason." It signals that what follows is very important and instructive.

So, what does Bhagavān say to Arjuna?

Arjuna **ajñāna sambhūtam**, the doubts and confusion that have arisen within your inner self are born of ignorance (ajñāna).

These doubts, the questions like "I will kill them," "They will kill me," "These are my own relatives," "Those are strangers", all these difficulties and confusions have their root in ajñāna, ignorance. Because of this ignorance, you have developed these doubts (saṁśaya) and confusion regarding what is right and wrong.

Bhagavān instructs: attain true jñāna (knowledge) and cut down these doubts, chitvā enam saṁśayam. The word chitvā means "cut down," and enam saṁśayam means "these doubts." Use the sword of knowledge (jñāna-rūpi talvār) to sever all these doubts from your mind. Do not harbor these doubts within you.

Next, Bhagavān gives a vital command: **yogam ātiṣṭha uttiṣṭha**, "Be firmly established in yoga and

arise!" Here, yoga specifically means Karma Yoga, the path of selfless action, performing your duties with full surrender to Bhagavān.

To be established in yoga means to rise, take up your bow and arrows, and get ready to perform your duty as a warrior. Bhagavān commands Arjuna: uttiṣṭha, "Arise! Stand up!" Your duty, the task entrusted to you by the Supreme, must be done without hesitation. This duty belongs to Him, and you must perform it and offer the results to Him.

By following this command, all your doubts and hesitation will be removed. This final directive, the ājñāka śloka, is not just for Arjuna but is a timeless call for all of us. We, too, should understand it well, awaken, and take up our responsibilities with devotion and surrender.

When we sincerely perform our duties with this attitude, our citta (mind) will gradually be purified. Just as the glass of a lantern, when covered with soot and dust, blocks the light, but once cleaned, the light shines clearly, similarly, the impurities accumulated in our mind over many lifetimes will be cleansed.

As the mind becomes clear, jñāna (knowledge) will naturally manifest within us, bringing the blessings and the presence of Bhagavān, the Supreme Self, into our experience.

This beautiful union of knowledge, action, and renunciation, the Yoga of Jñāna, Karma, and Sannyāsa, culminates in surrender at the lotus feet of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa.

The discourse concluded with this offering at the divine feet of that Supreme Bhagavān.

Om Tat Sat. Śrī-Kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu.
(All is offered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.)

QUESTION AND ANSWERS

Dr. Shambu ji

Q: Can you explain the 42nd śloka again?

A: *Tasmāt ajñāna saṁbhūtam*, "Therefore, born of ignorance."

This means that the doubt and confusion in Arjuna's mind arose from ajñāna (ignorance). Arjuna was uncertain about who was friend or foe, troubled by the thought of fighting his own relatives, and questioned the righteousness of battle. This confusion caused him to forget his duty.

Bhagavān instructs him to cut through this doubt (saṁśaya) with the sword of knowledge (jñāna): chitvā enam saṁśayam, and to be firmly established in yoga (here, Karma Yoga).

Karma Yoga is the selfless performance of one's duty, offering every action to Bhagavān.

To be established in yoga, Arjuna must rise, take up his bow and arrows, and prepare for battle. As a warrior, he cannot avoid his duty. Even if the enemy has family, the duty to protect one's land is paramount. Thus, Bhagavān reminds Arjuna to act without hesitation and rise, uttiṣṭha, meaning "stand up" and get ready for action.

Q: Can you also explain the 4th caraṇa of śloka 39?

A: *Acireṇa adhigacchati hā jñānam labdhvā paramām śāntim ajayaḥ*

This means: Having attained knowledge (jñānam labdhvā), one immediately (acireṇa) attains supreme, eternal peace (paramām śāntim).

Acireṇa means "without delay" or "immediately," and adhigacchati means "attains" or "obtains."

As soon as a person gains true knowledge, their inner self (antaḥkaraṇa) becomes completely calm and peaceful at once, not just temporarily but eternally (chiran).

Thus, true knowledge leads to immediate and lasting peace.

Chandresh ji

Q: I want to know in detail about karma, vikarma, kartavya, and akarma, and especially within karma, how akarma arises. Please explain this to me a little in detail.

A: This whole chapter is about turning karma (action) into akarma (inaction). When you perform an action and then offer it sincerely to Bhagavān, like offering flowers, the action no longer belongs to you; it becomes Bhagavān's.

Letting go of attachment (mamatva) to the results is essential. When you act with the understanding, "This is Bhagavān's work through me," your karma turns into akarma.

Vikarma is often confused; it generally means actions that should not be done, prohibited or wrong actions. But some say it also refers to actions after which one feels no personal ownership.

The difference between karma and kartavya (duty) is important: all actions are karma, but only those actions which one ought to do, which are right and necessary, are kartavya.

In short, kartavya means the proper, obligatory duty, while karma includes all actions, right or wrong.

The session concluded with **prayers offered at the lotus feet of Śrī Hari**, followed by the recitation of **Hanumān Cālīsā**.

**Om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyām(m)
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde jñānakarmasannyāsayogonāma
caturtho'dhyāyaḥ**



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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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