

## **Fourth Chapter**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Lord, in the thirty-ninth verse of the second chapter, said to Arjuna, "This is the wisdom of Sāṅkhya given to thee, to attain equanimity, O Arjuna. Now listen; about equanimity to be acquired, through the Discipline of Action, in which a person by performing action for the welfare of others, without any selfish motive, attains equanimity." Thus according to the context, in response to Arjuna's question, Lord Kṛṣṇa having described the marks of a man of steady wisdom, completes this topic.

At the beginning of the third chapter, Arjuna asked Lord Kṛṣṇa, "If You think that knowledge is superior to action, why do You urge me, to do this savage deed (war)?" In response to his question, the Lord, from the fourth to the twenty-ninth verses, lays emphasis on the performance of actions, by which a man attains equanimity. In the thirtieth verse, He says that surrendering all actions to Him, with a discriminative insight, free from desire and egoism he should perform actions without mental agitation. In the thirty-first and thirty-second verses, He declares the sweet fruit of following His preaching (explained in the previous verse) and the harm in not following it. In the thirty-fifth verse, He declares, "Better is death in one's own duty." In the thirty-sixth verse Arjuna asks, "By what is a man impelled to commit sin?" The Lord replies, "It is desire, all devouring and most sinful, which is the enemy," and ordered Arjuna to slay this enemy.

Though, the Lord's teaching continues from the thirty-seventh verse, yet in the forty-third verse, when the answer to Arjuna's question is over, sage Veda Vyāsa concludes the third chapter, and begins the fourth chapter. It shows that the Lord

having answered Arjuna's question, takes a pause and then starts again, the Discipline of Action, which was being described in the forty-seventh and forty-eighth verses of the second chapter, by the term 'Imam' (This) in the first verse of the fourth chapter. Therefore, the fourth chapter is regarded, as an appendix to the third chapter.

There are two important factors pertaining to the Discipline of Action—(1) Performance of actions and, (2) special knowledge about action. Arjuna wants to renounce the performance of action, so he says to Lord Kṛṣṇa, "Why do You ask me to be engaged in this savage deed?" Therefore, the Lord, lays special emphasis on the performance of duty, specially in the third chapter, while in the fourth chapter, He imparts knowledge about actions. He declares, "I shall teach thee such action, (the nature of action and inaction), after knowing which, thou shalt be liberated from evil (the wheel of birth and death) (4/16).

This Karmayoga, in spite of being without beginning, was lost to the world through, a long lapse of time, because of the absence of scholarly teachers (sages), who could impart it. The Lord, in the first three verses, describing how Karmayoga was handed down from ancient times, proves how it existed from times immemorial.

श्रीभगवानुवाच

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् ।  
विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् ॥ १ ॥

*śrībhagavān uvāca*

imam vivasvate yogaṁ proktavān ahamavyayam  
vivasvānmanave prāha manurikṣvākave'bravīt

The Blessed Lord said:

I taught this imperishable Yoga to Vivasvān (the sun-god); who expounded it to Manu, and Manu proclaimed it to Ikṣvāku. 1

*Comment:—*

'**Imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ proktavānaḥamavyayam**'—The kings, such as Sūrya, Manu and Ikṣvāku, who have been mentioned by the Lord, were householders and they attained perfection, through the Discipline of Action, leading a householder's life. Therefore, here the words 'Imam, avyayam yogaṁ' (this imperishable Yoga) stand for 'Karmayoga', (the Discipline of Action).

Though Karmayoga has been described in the Purāṇas (historical records), and Upaniṣads (philosophical parts of the Vedas) also, yet it is not as thoroughly detailed, as in the Gītā.

The Lord is eternal, His fragment, the soul is also eternal and so is the affinity of soul for the Lord. Therefore, all the disciplines (of Action, Knowledge and Devotion) are also eternal.\* Here, the term 'Avyayam' shows, that Karmayoga is eternal.

The affinity of the soul for God is eternal. Just as a chaste wife does not have to make effort to be dear to her husband, in the like manner, a striver does not have to put in any effort, in order to belong to God. But, when he accepts his affinity for perishable actions, objects and incidents etc., he does not realize his eternal affinity for God. Therefore, a Karmayogī, in order to, renounce his assumed affinity for the world, utilizes his body, senses, mind and intellect etc., for rendering service to the world, by regarding them as the world's. He thinks, that just as the smallest particle of dust, is a fragment of the huge earth, so is the body, a fragment of the vast universe. By accepting this belief, 'Karmas' (actions) will be performed, for the world, but 'Yoga' (Nityayoga or eternal union) will be for himself i.e., he will realize his eternal union with God.

By the terms 'Vivasvate proktavān', the Lord wants to explain to the strivers that as the sun in the solar system while performing its action by providing heat and light, remains

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\* Lord Kṛṣṇa declares in the eighth chapter of the Gītā that the bright and the dark paths of the world are verily thought to be eternal (Gītā 8/26).

unengrossed; similarly, all the strivers should perform actions without attachment according to available circumstances, (Gītā 3/19). They should, also impart this teaching of Karmayoga, to others for the public welfare by remaining unengrossed (without desire for fruit, without a sense of 'mine' and without attachment).

The sun-god, was king at the beginning of creation. Lord Kṛṣṇa taught this imperishable Yoga to the sun-god. It means, that Lord Kṛṣṇa was the first preceptor in the beginning, and so has Karmayoga come from times immemorial. It seems that the Lord, tells Arjuna, "Whatever teaching about 'Karmayoga' I am imparting to you, is not new but eternal."

**Question:—**Why did the Lord teach this Yoga to the sun-god, at the beginning of creation?

**Answer:—**(1) The Lord taught it to him, because He knew that he was a deserving candidate.

(2) Such teaching is imparted to the first born, as Brahmā, the creator, who created man and imparted teaching to them (Gītā 3/10), in order to, inspire them to perform their duty. In the universe also, the sun-god was the first born, and then the entire universe was born of him. The Lord, taught this Yoga, first of all to the sun-god.\* He meant to get it imparted, through the sun-god to all his progeny, by way of transmission by succession.

(3) The sun, is the eye of entire creation. He imparts knowledge to all the people and when he rises, they wake up and are engaged in their work. He sets an example to them for the performance of their duty. He has been called, the soul of the entire world†. Therefore, teaching imparted to the sun-god

\* In the scriptures the sun-god has been called 'Savitā' which means the creator. The western scholars also regard the Sun as the creator.

† In the Mahābhārata it has been said addressing the sun-god, "O sun-god, you are the eye of the entire world and the soul of all beings. You are the birth-place and the inspirer of the good conduct of the followers of the path of action."

"You are the abode which should be attained by the Sāṅkhyayogīs. You

will also be communicated to all beings. Therefore, Lord Kṛṣṇa first of all, taught this imperishable Yoga to the sun-god.

In fact, this teaching imparted by Lord Kṛṣṇa (the manager of the world-theatre), to the sun-god, is a drama staged by Him, for the welfare of the world. As Lord Kṛṣṇa taught Arjuna, the incarnation of Nara, the wise sage, for the welfare of the world, so did He teach, this Yoga to the sun-god, the embodiment of knowledge, for the welfare of the entire world. This Yoga has done a lot of good to the world, is doing and will continue to do, in future also.

'Vivasvānmanave prāha manurikṣvākave'bravīt'—Karmayoga, is the main course of action for householders. Out of celibacy, household life, the retired and the renounced, orders—the four stages (orders) of life—household life is most important, because it is a householder that provides for the other stages of life. A householder, by performing his duty, can easily realize God. He need not change the order of life. Lord Kṛṣṇa in mentioning the names of the kings, such as the sun-god, Manu and Ikṣvāku, wants to say, that at the beginning of creation, they as householders, having slain desires, realized God. Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were also householders. Therefore, Lord Kṛṣṇa through Arjuna, teaches all householders that they can realize God, as householders, without leading a secluded life as ascetics by performing their duty.

In spite of being a householder, Arjuna thinks that it is better to live, in this world even by begging than to perform a savage deed, of slaying honoured teachers in war (Gītā 2/5) viz., he thinks that the renounced order of life is superior to the household life. Therefore, the Lord says to him that he is a

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are the base of Karmayogīs. You are the free gateway to salvation and you are the refuge for the salvation-seekers. You hold the entire world. This world is illumined by you. You sanctify it and it is preserved by you without any selfish motive (Vanaparva 3/36—38).

noble householder of the royal family. So performance of actions will lead him to salvation, in the same way, as renunciation leads an ascetic to salvation. Karmayoga, consists in the utilization of available circumstances. So Karmayoga (the Discipline of Action), can be followed by people of every caste, creed, country and order of life.

The Lord, has mentioned the names of noble and influential kings of the past, so that people may draw inspiration from them, in order to perform their duty.

### An Important Fact

Attachment (affinity) for actions and objects, is a stumbling block to Karmayoga. When a householder renounces pleasure, his zest also comes to an end. When a person starts enjoying pleasure, such as eating a sweet dish, he relishes it very much. But, as he goes on eating it, the taste diminishes and finally, it ceases. But, he commits an error, as he does not make that distaste permanent, by attaching importance to it. He regards this distaste as satisfaction, (reward). But the fact is, that is the state of deficiency in which he has no power of having pleasure.

The interest or desire which diminishes or perishes, cannot be the characteristic of the self and therefore, It (the self) has no real affinity for the objects etc., which he desires or wants. Our real affinity is, for God and therefore, devotion while following a spiritual path for God-realization, is ever enhanced. Even when, he realizes God, his devotion increases continuously, and it is transformed into love (devotion). The self, is also real, so no one has a desire in the least for one's own negation.

When actions, instruments (body, senses and mind etc.), objects and materials, are perishable how can these bear imperishable fruit? How can pleasure and satisfaction, be derived from the fruit of perishable things to match the pleasure and satisfaction, achieved on God-realization? Therefore, a striver has

to renounce his affinity for actions, instruments (such as body, senses and mind etc.,) and objects. He can renounce this affinity, only when he does nothing for himself, wants nothing for himself and regards nothing as his own. But he utilizes everything, by regarding it as of the world in rendering service, to the world.

A Karmayogī, performs actions scrupulously and lovingly, without desire, attachment and feeling of 'mine'. Desire, attachment and a sense of 'mine' pollute actions, while careful and loving nature, purifies these. When actions are performed with desire, attachment and a sense of mine, objects are destroyed, and man has a downfall. The thought of actions come to the mind, time and again i.e., affinity for those actions continues. But when actions are performed scrupulously, devotedly and lovingly, there is proper use of objects, and man is elevated and the thought of actions do not come to mind i.e., affinity for these is renounced. As soon as, this affinity for actions is totally renounced, a striver realizes the self or God, who is ever present and existent.

Everyone, can easily assume that whatever he possesses is not his own, but is acquired, just as he has acquired the body from parents, education and knowledge from preceptors and so on. It means that every man, even the richest one, has to depend on others, in one way or the other. So, it is his duty to render service to others, with all his possessions, because he has acquired them from others. This, is known as Karmayoga, no one is dependent and unable to follow it and for its practice.

In fact, duty is that which can be performed easily, which must be performed and by performing which a man certainly attains his aim. A man is not responsible for the performance of action, which he cannot perform. And, what is forbidden, must not be done. When a person does not perform forbidden actions, he either does nothing or he performs only prescribed actions.

Duty is always performed, for the welfare of others, without expecting any reward. Actions, with the expectation of reward,

should not be performed, because these lead to bondage. But, it does not mean that actions are performed, without any aim. An act without any aim, cannot be performed by anyone, except by insane person. There is a vast difference, between fruit (reward) and aim. Reward, is perishable while aim is eternal. A man's aim is to attain God who is ever attainable, and for which this human life has been bestowed upon him. He cannot realize God, without performing his duty, in a disinterested manner. He cannot perform his duty, so long as he indulges, in reward for actions, heedlessness and indolence etc.

In fact, performance of duty needs no effort, it is performed automatically. But when a man performs action for himself with egoism, attachment, desire and a sense of 'mine', it involves effort. Therefore, the Lord declares, "Action which involves strain (effort), is said to be of the nature of passion" (Gītā 18/24).

As the Lord, is ever engaged in the welfare of all beings, so is His power. As a news broadcast by a particular radio station, is received on the same frequency by radio-sets, similarly, when a Karmayogī performs all his actions for the welfare of the world without any selfish motive, his power, is identified with the all-pervading, benevolent power of God and his actions become uncommon. Thus, because of Lord's power, his actions are conducive to the welfare of the world. Therefore, there is neither any obstacle in the way of performing his duty nor does it involve any strain.

A man, can perform his duty without depending on any person or circumstance. According to Karmayoga (the Discipline of Action), giving help to others according to their need, is service. When the engine of a car goes out of order and the driver is trying to push it forward, if someone helped him, it is service. But, he who looks for service, does not render real service, but he performs actions, only because by doing so, his aim is mundane rather than spiritual. Service is rendered according to



available circumstances. Therefore, a Karmayogī neither changes circumstances nor does he seek these but utilizes these. The utilization of the available circumstances, is Karmayoga.



एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः।  
स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परन्तप ॥ २ ॥

evam paramparāprāptamimam rājarṣayo viduḥ  
sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa

This Yoga handed down thus, in regular succession, came to the royal sages. But through long lapse of time, it was lost to the world, O oppressor of the foes (Arjuna). 2

*Comment:—*

'Evaṁ paramparāprāptamimam rājarṣayo viduḥ'— The kings, such as the sun-god, Manu and Ikṣvāku, learnt the Karmayoga, followed it and also, inspired their subjects to follow it. Thus, it was handed down in regular succession to the families of the royal sages. This Karmayoga is a special lore of the kings (the warrior class). Therefore, every member of the warrior class should know it. Similarly, the heads and leaders of a family, society, village and town etc., must also know it.

In ancient days, the kings who knew Karmayoga, administered the affairs of state smoothly, without being attached to royal pleasures. They had a natural inclination for the welfare of the subjects. The great Samskr̥ta poet Kālidāsa writes about the kings of solar dynasty:—

"Those kings levied a tax on their subjects in the same way, as the sun sucks water from the earth, in order to supply it to the earth in the form of rain, a thousand times more."

It means, that the tax realized from the subjects by kings, was all used for public welfare. In order to, provide for their household expenses, they followed occupations, like farming.