

Link:—In the thirty-ninth verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to listen to the discourse on an even mind. In the next verse He orders him to perform his duty in order to attain that equanimity (evenness of mind).

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ ४७ ॥

**karmaṇyevādhikāraṣte mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karmaphalaheturbhūrmā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi**

Your right is only to perform your duty, but never to claim its fruit. Do not be the cause of the fruit of action nor let your attachment be for inaction. 47

Comment:—

'Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣte'—Your right is to perform your duty, you are free in it, because no other bodies as those of animals and birds etc., are free to perform new actions. Only human beings are eligible to perform new actions. The gods can perform new actions and can bestow money and material upon human beings, according to the ordinance of the Lord but they are so steeped in enjoyment, that it is not possible for them to perform new actions. They are destined only to reap the fruit of their meritorious deeds. The creatures in hell also cannot perform new actions as they suffer the fruits of their actions. God has bestowed this human birth, the very last of all births so that by performing new actions in the form of selfless service to others, a person may achieve salvation and be freed from the bondage of the cycle of birth and death. If he remains engaged in selfish actions, these will result in bondage. In case he is given to indolence and heedlessness, he will follow a cycle of birth and death. Therefore, the Lord advises human beings, to render selfless services for common good.

The term 'Karmaṇi' has been used in singular number, to emphasize the fact that though man has to perform several

duties in his life, he can perform only one at a particular time. Arjuna, belonging to the warrior class, has several duties, such as fighting, generosity and bravery etc., but presently he could perform only one of these—to wage the war.

A Vital Fact

In the births of others i.e., those of birds, animals, insects and even gods, the creatures can reap the fruits of their actions but cannot perform new actions. However there are two things about human life viz., reaping the fruits of deeds of earlier lives, and secondly performing new ones. God has bestowed upon man this human body, so that by performing new virtuous actions without having a desire for their fruits, he may attain God-realization or salvation. As far as the fruit of his previous actions is concerned, it may come in the form of favourable and unfavourable circumstances. He cannot change those circumstances, but can make proper use of these and these can lead him to salvation, if he uses these properly.

An important fact, which needs attention, is that favourable or unfavourable circumstances cannot make a man happy or sad. It is merely his ignorance, which makes him happy or sad as he identifies himself with those circumstances and becomes the experiencer of happiness or sadness. If he gives a serious thought, he will come to know that the external circumstances cannot make his internal self, either happy or sad. He should make proper use of the favourable circumstances by serving others and of the undesirable ones, by renouncing the desire to enjoy pleasure.

In unfavourable circumstances, a man should not be perturbed but should think that the sins committed to get pleasure, are perishing in the form of unfavourable circumstances and this thought is a kind of repentance for the sins committed. Secondly, it is a fore-warning to us that we shall have to face adverse consequences if we commit sins again. So, we should perform actions for

the welfare of all creatures, rather than for our own pleasure.

For insects, birds and animals etc., the fruit of past actions and also the present actions are only to work out their destinies. But in case of human beings the fruit of past actions as also the present activities, are the means for their salvation.

'Mā phaleṣu kadācana'—You cannot claim the fruit of action, because you are not free in getting it, which is dispensed by the Lord. If you perform actions with a desire for fruits, you will get into bondage (Gītā 5/12). It is the desire for fruit which makes a person an agent for actions. With the passing away of desire, a sense of doership is gone. Obliteration of the sense of doership, does not lead a man to bondage. It means that a man is much more entangled in desires.*

Secondly, all actions are performed with the help of worldly objects and persons. So it is dishonest, to desire the fruit of those actions, for only one's own self.

The desire for fruit of actions is not beneficial for human beings. 'Never lay claim to its fruit'—this expression proves that it is upto a man whether he lays claim to the fruit of an action or not. He is free in this respect. The term 'Phaleṣu' has been used in the plural, because a man by performing an action desires several fruits such as riches, respect and reputation etc.

The means to be free, from the desire for fruits of actions are as follows—(i) Desire causes a feeling of lacking something. Its fulfilment makes one a slave. Its non-fulfilment causes suffering. The pleasure derived out of fulfilment of desire, gives birth to new desires and a man goes on getting interested in performing new actions, in order to reap their fruit. By understanding this fact in the right perspective, a man becomes free from the desire for the fruit of action.

* Actually God-realization does not depend on actions but on feelings and knowledge because He is ever attained. It is the desire for fruits which is an obstacle to God-realization.

(ii) Actions have a beginning and an end, these are not eternal. So, how can their fruits be eternal? But the self is eternal. How can the eternal get any benefit from the perishable? By understanding this fact, one becomes detached from the world and attains God-realization.

In order to be free from the desire for fruits of actions, an aspirant should have discrimination as well as feelings to serve others. Discrimination will be helpful to an aspirant in renouncing his comforts, while the feelings of service to others, will enable him to do good to others. By doing so a striver can follow the Discipline of Disinterested Action, in the right sense.

'Mā karmaphalaheturbhūh'—Let you not be responsible for the fruits of action. It means, that you should not have the least attachment for the body, senses, mind and intellect etc., because attachment for these will make you responsible for the fruit of action. In the eleventh verse of the fifth chapter also, Lord Kṛṣṇa by using the term 'Kevalaiḥ' (only) wants to say that the follower of the Discipline of Disinterested Action, should abandon feeling of mineness for the body, mind, intellect and senses.

If a striver becomes the agent (doer) of a virtuous action, even without having a desire for its fruit, he is held responsible for the fruit of the action, because by doing so he has accepted his affinity for the mind, intellect and senses etc., which are unreal. Actually, we have no affinity with them, they have their affinity with the world. When anybody else performs action for the good of others, we do not accept our affinity for the action and its fruit and so are not held responsible. We should adopt the same attitude in the case of our own actions also, so that we may not be held responsible for the fruit of actions.

'Mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi'—Let your attachment not be to inaction, because by leaning towards inaction, you will become lazy and idle, and like the desire for fruit it will also mislead you to bondage. The reason is that, indolence and prolonged sleep

etc., also give pleasure viz., Tāmasika joy, (Gītā18/39) which misleads either to the lower births of insects, birds and beasts etc., or to infernal regions (Gītā 14/18). It means that, attachment misleads to bondage and is the cause of birth in good and evil wombs (Gītā 13/21).

You should not be attached to inaction by thinking that it will lead you to progress, here and hereafter, because the real essence is beyond action or inaction.

In this verse, the Lord means to say that a striver should remain detached from objects, men, action, incidents, circumstances and physical, subtle, causal bodies etc., without having the least affinity for them.

In this verse there are four points which need attention—(i) Your right is to perform your duty (action) only. (ii) Never lay claim to its fruit. (iii) Do not be the cause of the fruit of action. (iv) Let your attachment be not to inaction. Out of these four points, the first and the fourth, have the same theme as both of these lay emphasis on the performance of duty or action. Similarly, the second and the third points have the same theme, as in both of these it is mentioned, that you should not desire or be the cause of the fruit of action.

It means that, by leaning towards inaction you will have affinity to tāmasika temperament, such as idleness and laziness. By having attachment for action and its fruit you will have affinity for rājasika temperament. But when a striver is free from laziness, idleness, actions, fruit of actions, etc., he gets the joy born of knowledge and light and having attachment for it, he has affinity to sāttvika temperament. Affinity with these is the cause of birth and death. Therefore, a striver should not have attachment for either of them. Doing one's duty without having any attachment to them, is called the Discipline of Disinterested Action.

Appendix—One is the division of actions and one is the division of fruit (result). A man's right is in the division of

actions (performance of duty), not in the division of fruit. The reason is that performance of duty is under the control of a man while awarding the result of past actions is ordained by destiny viz., 'Prārabdha'. If we perceive from the view-point of Karmayoga whatever material (thing, ability and power) we have obtained, that is 'Prārabdha' and their proper use viz., by assuming them not as ours or for us, but by assuming them as others' and for them, and rendering service with them to others is 'Puruṣārtha'.

The important fact about Karmayoga is—protection of the rights of others by performing one's duty and renouncing the fruit of action viz., renouncing one's right. By protecting the right of others, old attachment is wiped out and by renouncing one's own right, new attachment is not born. Thus when old attachment is wiped out and new attachment is not born, a man becomes 'vītarāga' (free from attachment). By becoming 'vītarāga' one realizes the self. The reason is in attaining Self-realization, attachment to the unreal things is the only obstacle—

**rāgo liṅgamabodhasya cittavyāyāma bhūmiṣu
kutah śādvalatā tasya yasyāgniḥ koṭare tarah**

It means that attachment (attraction) of the mind to objects, persons and actions is the main sign (mark) of ignorance. As when the hollow of a tree catches fire, it does not remain green any more but it is dried up, similarly he who has caught fire in the form of attachment, can't attain peace.



Link:—After asking Arjuna to perform his duty, in the preceding verse, the Lord describes how he should remain even-minded, while performing actions.

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ ४८ ॥