

The term 'api' (even or though) means, that such an enlightened soul does not perform an action at all, though he is fully engaged, in action. It is because of his detachment, that all his actions change into inaction.

When he does nothing, how could he be bound by the fruit of actions? Therefore, the Lord, in the twelfth verse of the eighteenth chapter, declares that a Karmayogī, who has renounced the fruit of action, does not reap the fruit of action i.e., becomes free from the bondage of action.

Prakṛti (nature) is ever-active. Therefore, so long as, a man has affinity for the modes of nature (actions and objects), he gets attached to them, even without performing action. If he has no affinity (attachment) for the modes of nature, he does nothing, even though, he is ever-engaged in action, as all his actions are performed, for the welfare of the world.

Appendix—So long as a man has the sense of doership, during the performance of action or non-performance of action, he remains a doer. But when the sense of doership is wiped out, he does nothing at all or his action or inaction never comes under the category of action at all.



Link:—Having described the detachment of an enlightened soul, in the nineteenth and the twentieth verses, now the Lord, in the twenty-first verse, describes the detachment of a striver who does not perform duties enjoined by the scriptures, while, in the twenty-second verse, He describes the detachment of a striver, who performs his duties.

निराशीर्यतचित्तात्मा त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः ।

शारीरं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥ २१ ॥

nirāśīryatacittātmā tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ
śārīraṁ kevalaṁ karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam

Having no desires, with his mind and body fully subdued, giving up all attachments and possessions, even though performing action necessary for the maintenance of the body, a Karmayogī, incurs no sin. 21

Comment:—

'Yatacittātmā'—A man, cannot keep his body, senses, mind and the self, under control, because of hope or desire. When he has no hope or desire, his body, senses and mind etc., automatically remain under his control, and then no futile action is performed by him.

'Tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ'— If a Karmayogī is a recluse, he renounces all worldly possessions. But, if he is a householder, he does not accumulate any worldly object, to derive pleasure out of it. He, by regarding it as the world's, uses it in rendering service to the world. It is inevitable for every striver not to hanker after, mundane pleasure.

[This is the only verse in the whole of Gītā, where there is description of renunciation, of all worldly possessions. In the tenth verse of the sixth chapter, there is an explanation of the renunciation of possessions, for a Yogī who practises meditation, while in the fifty-third verse of the eighteenth chapter, there is an account of the renunciation of possession, for a Yogī, who has attained the supreme state of knowledge. But here, in this verse, renunciation is superior to those renouncements, because only here, the adjective 'sarva' (all) has been used with 'parigrahaḥ' (possessions). The term, 'aniketaḥ' (homeless or having no fixed abode) has been used, for freedom from attachment to the abode, in the nineteenth verse of the twelfth chapter, for a Bhaktiyogī.]

'Nirāśīḥ'—A Karmayogī, has no hope, no desire and no lust. He does not hanker after worldly pleasure and prosperity. Even if, he is not able to renounce his hope or desire totally, he aims at their renunciation.

'Śārīraṁ kevalaṁ karma kurvan'—The actions expressed in

this term may be of two kinds— (i) actions which are undertaken by the body and, (ii) actions which are performed, for the maintenance of the body. The former, have been described, in the eleventh verse of the fifth chapter, when the Lord declares, "Men of action having abandoned attachment, perform actions only with the body, mind, intellect or even with the senses, for the purification of the self." But, this verse is pertaining to detachment of the striver, who does not even perform duties, enjoined by the scriptures. Therefore, here it is used in the latter sense i.e., actions (as eating, drinking, bathing, washing etc..) which are necessary, for the bare maintenance of the body, are performed, by a man of action, who has abandoned attachment.

'Nāpnoti kilbiṣam'—He, who is attached to the performance or non-performance of action, in the least, incurs sin i.e., follows the cycle of birth and death. But, the man of action, being free from hope or desire, is not attached to the performance or non-performance of action, so he incurs no sin, all his actions change into inactions.

Such a Karmayogī (man of action), does not indulge in indolence and heedlessness. These two are, also enjoyments. Lying idly in a lonely place is an enjoyment and indulgence in useless and forbidden actions, is also an enjoyment. Through such indulgences, a man enjoys himself. Thus he incurs sins. But a Karmayogī, who is given to performing some action, does not indulge in indolence and heedlessness. His mind, senses and body, are under his control. Moreover, he is free from hope, desire and a sense of possession etc. So, forbidden actions cannot be performed by him, and thus he incurs no sin. Had he indulged in indolence and heedlessness in the least, it could not be said of him, that he incurs no sin.

Now a doubt arises, why it has been said that he incurs no sin, when forbidden actions cannot be performed by him. The clarification is, that all undertakings are enveloped by defects

(sins). The Lord declares, "All undertakings are clouded by defects, as fire by smoke" (Gītā 18/48). The root of sins, is desire or a sense of mine or attachment. A Karmayogī (man of action), is free from desire, sense of 'mine' and attachment, or he has such an aim, so he has nothing to do, with the performance or non-performance of action. Therefore, he does not incur incidental sin, during the performance of his duty, nor does he incur sin, by the renunciation of his duty, enjoined by the scriptures.

A second doubt may arise here, that the Lord has directed even a wise man (who has attained perfection), to perform action for the welfare of the world (3/25-26). The Lord has also declared, "There is nothing in the three worlds, that should be done by Me, nor is there anything unattained, that should be attained, yet I engage Myself in action" (Gītā 3/22—24). Therefore, will a Karmayogī, who does not engage himself in action for the welfare of the world, not incur sin? The clarification is, that he will incur no sin, because he is free from desire, attachment etc., and a sense of mine. Though the Lord and wise men (enlightened souls), are totally free from desire and attachment etc., yet out of compassion (grace), they perform actions for the welfare of the world, even when it is not obligatory for them (Gītā 3/18). Such ascetic-Karmayogīs, as described in the verse, are also ideal for ascetic strivers of Karmayoga and are automatically, a source of inspiration for strivers and common folk.

The third doubt that arises, is that the Lord, in the thirteenth verse of the third chapter declared, "Those wicked people who prepare food for their own sake, verily eat sin", while here, He declares that he who performs action for the mere maintenance of body incurs no sin. Thus there seems to be a contradiction. The clarification is, that so long as there is desire for pleasure as well as attachment to actions, and materials, he incurs sins, whether he performs actions or does not perform these, but when he becomes free from desire and attachment, he incurs no sin.

Question:—Can this verse not be included in the verses

pertaining to the Discipline of Knowledge, as these reflect the marks of a man of knowledge?

Answer:—The first point is, that here the context is of Karmayoga. Secondly, a Jñānī (liberated soul), holds that he does nothing at all (Gītā 5/8) i.e., he sees inaction in action. So it cannot be said about him, that he incurs no sin while performing action, because he does not think he is a doer or he performs any action at all.

Though in the striver, who follows the path of action, discrimination is not clearly revealed, yet he has a determinate intellect, about three facts, that nothing is his, nothing is required for him, and nothing is to be done for him. Having resolved this, he remains detached, from actions in spite of performing these.

Generally, people believe that a Karmayogī leads the life of a householder, while a Jñānayogī follows the renounced order. But, in fact it is not so. A Jñānayogī (man of knowledge) is he, who can discriminate between self and body, whether he leads the life of a householder or of a renounced order. But, he who cannot discriminate self from the body, despite a determinate intellect about above-mentioned three facts, is only a Karmayogī, whether he is a householder or is of a renounced order.



यदृच्छालाभसन्तुष्टो द्वन्द्वातीतो विमत्सरः ।

समः सिद्धावसिद्धौ च कृत्वापि न निबध्यते ॥ २२ ॥

yadṛcchālābhasantuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsarah
samaḥ siddhāvasiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate

Content with what comes to him without desire for fruit, free from antithetic influence and envy, even-minded in success and failure, even though performing action, he (Karmayogī) is not bound by these. 22

Comment:—

'Yadṛcchālābhasantuṣṭaḥ'—A Karmayogī, performs action