

IV. The Yoga of Wisdom

Summary of Fourth Discourse

Lord Krishna declares that He is born from age to age, in order to raise man and take him to the Supreme. Whenever there is a prevalence of unrighteousness and the world is ruled by the forces of darkness, the Lord manifests Himself to destroy these adverse forces and to establish peace, order and harmony. Hence we see the appearance of the great saviours of the world.

What is the secret of Yogic action? This the Lord proceeds to explain to Arjuna. Even though one is not engaged in action, but if the mind is active with the idea of doership and egoism, then it is action in inaction. On the other hand, though engaged physically in intense action, if the idea of agency is absent, if one feels that Prakriti does everything, it is inaction in action. The liberated man is free from attachment and is always calm and serene though engaged in ceaseless action. He is unaffected by the pairs of opposites like joy and grief, success and failure.

One who has true union with the Lord is not subject to rebirth. He attains immortality. Such a union can only be achieved when one is free from attachment, fear and anger, being thoroughly purified by right knowledge. The Lord accepts the devotion of all, whatever path they may use to approach Him.

Various kinds of sacrifices are performed by those engaged in the path to God. Through the practice of these sacrifices the mind is purified and led Godward. Here also there must be the spirit of non-attachment to the fruits of actions.

Divine wisdom, according to Sri Krishna, should be sought at the feet of a liberated Guru, one who has realised the Truth. The aspirant should approach such a sage in a spirit of humility and devotion. God Himself manifests in the heart of the Guru and instructs the disciple. Having understood the Truth from the Guru by direct intuitive experience the aspirant is no longer deluded by ignorance.

The liberated aspirant directly beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self. He cognises through internal experience or intuition that all beings, from the Creator down to a blade of grass, exist in his own Self and also in God.

Arjuna is given the most heartening assurance that divine wisdom liberates even the most sinful. When knowledge of the Self dawns, all actions with their results are burnt by the fire of that knowledge, just as fuel is burnt by fire. When there is no idea of egoism, when there is no desire for the fruits of one's actions, actions are no actions. They lose their potency.

In order to attain divine wisdom one must have supreme faith and devotion. Faith is therefore the most important qualification for a spiritual aspirant. The doubting mind is always led astray from the right path. Faith ultimately confers divine knowledge, which removes ignorance once and for all.

Mere intellectual knowledge does not lead to liberation. It cannot grant one supreme peace and freedom. When one has achieved complete self-mastery and self-control, when one has intense faith and devotion, then true knowledge dawns within and one attains liberation and freedom from all weaknesses and sins.

The Lord concludes by emphasising that the soul that doubts goes to destruction. Without faith in oneself, in the scriptures and in the words of the preceptor, one cannot make any headway on the spiritual path. It is doubt that prevents one from engaging in spiritual Sadhana and realising the highest knowledge and bliss. By following the instructions of the Guru and through sincere service, one's doubts are rent asunder and divine knowledge manifests itself within. Spiritual progress then goes on at a rapid pace.

Sri Bhagavaan Uvaacha:

*Imam vivaswate yogam proktavaan aham avyayam;
Vivaswaan manave praaha manur ikshwaakave'braveet.*

The Blessed Lord said:

1. I taught this imperishable Yoga to Vivasvan; he told it to Manu; Manu proclaimed it to Ikshvaku.

*Evam paramparaa praaptam imam raajarshayo viduh;
Sa kaaleneha mahataa yogo nashtah parantapa.*

2. This, handed down thus in regular succession, the royal sages knew. This Yoga, by a long lapse of time, has been lost here, O Parantapa (burner of foes)!

COMMENTARY: The royal sages were kings who at the same time possessed divine knowledge. They learnt this Yoga.

*Sa evaayam mayaa te'dya yogah proktah puraatanah;
Bhakto'si me sakhaa cheti rahasyam hyetad uttamam.*

3. That same ancient Yoga has been today taught to thee by Me, for, thou art My devotee and friend; it is the supreme secret.

COMMENTARY: This ancient Yoga consists of profound and subtle teachings. Hence it is the supreme secret which the Lord reveals to Arjuna.

Arjuna Uvaacha:

*Aparam bhavato janma param janma vivaswatah;
Katham etadvijaaneeyaaam twam aadau proktavaan iti.*

Arjuna said:

4. Later on was Thy birth, and prior to it was the birth of Vivasvan (the Sun); how am I to understand that Thou didst teach this Yoga in the beginning?

Sri Bhagavaan Uvaacha:

*Bahooni me vyateetaani janmaani tava chaarjuna;
Taanyaham veda sarvaani na twam vettha parantapa.*

The Blessed Lord said:

5. Many births of Mine have passed, as well as of thine, O Arjuna! I know them all but thou knowest not, O Parantapa!

*Ajo'pi sannavyayaatmaa bhootaanaam eeshwaro'pi san;
Prakritim swaam adhishtaaya sambhavaamyaatmamaayaya.*

6. Though I am unborn and of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, ruling over My own Nature, I am born by My own Maya.

*Yadaa yadaa hi dharmasya glaanir bhavati bhaarata;
Abhyutthaanam adharmasya tadaatmaanam srijaamyaham.*

7. Whenever there is a decline of righteousness, O Arjuna, and rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself!

COMMENTARY: That which elevates a man and helps him to reach the goal of life and attain knowledge is Dharma (righteousness); that which drags him into worldliness is unrighteousness. That which helps a man to attain liberation is Dharma; that which makes him irreligious is Adharma or unrighteousness.

*Paritraanaaya saadhoonaam vinaashaaya cha dushkritaam;
Dharma samsthaapanaarthaaaya sambhavaami yuge yuge.*

8. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age.

*Janma karma cha me divyam evam yo vetti tattwatah;
Tyaktwa deham punarjanma naiti maameti so'rjuna.*

9. He who thus knows in true light My divine birth and action, after having abandoned the body is not born again; he comes to Me, O Arjuna!

*Veetaraagabhayakrodhaa manmayaa maam upaashritaah;
Bahavo jnaana tapasaa pootaa madbhavaam aagataah.*

10. Freed from attachment, fear and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, purified by the fire of knowledge, many have attained to My Being.

*Ye yathaa maam prapadyante taamstathaiva bhajaamyaham;
Mama vartmaanuvartante manushyaah paarthasarvashah.*

11. In whatever way men approach Me, even so do I reward them; My path do men tread in all ways, O Arjuna!

*Kaangkshantah karmanaam siddhim yajanta iha devataah;
Kshipram hi maanushe loke siddhir bhavati karmajaa.*

12. Those who long for success in action in this world sacrifice to the gods, because success is quickly attained by men through action.

*Chaaturvarnyam mayaa srishtam gunakarma vibhaagashah;
Tasya kartaaram api maam viddhyakartaaram avyayam.*

13. The fourfold caste has been created by Me according to the differentiation of Guna and Karma; though I am the author thereof, know Me as the non-doer and immutable.

COMMENTARY: The four castes are Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. This division is according to the Guna and Karma. Guna is quality. Karma is the kind of work. Both Guna and Karma determine the caste of a man.

In a Brahmana, Sattva predominates. He possesses serenity, purity, self-restraint, straightforwardness and devotion.

In a Kshatriya, Rajas predominates. He possesses prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, generosity and rulership.

In a Vaisya, Rajas predominates and Tamas is subordinate to Rajas. He does the duty of ploughing, protection of cattle and trade.

In a Sudra, Tamas predominates and Rajas is subordinate to the quality of Tamas. He renders service to the other three castes. Human temperaments and tendencies vary according to the Gunas.

*Na maam karmaani limpanti na me karmaphale sprihaa;
Iti maam yo'bhihaanaati karmabhir na sa badhyate.*

14. Actions do not taint Me, nor have I a desire for the fruits of actions. He who knows Me thus is not bound by actions.

*Evam jnaatwaa kritam karma poorvair api mumukshubhih;
Kuru karmaiva tasmaat twam poorvaih poorvataram kritam.*

15. Having known this, the ancient seekers after freedom also performed actions; therefore, do thou perform actions as did the ancients in days of yore.

*Kim karma kim akarmeti kavayo'pyatra mohitaah;
Tat te karma pravakshyaami yajnaatwaa mokshyase'shubhaat.*

16. What is action? What is inaction? As to this even the wise are confused. Therefore, I shall teach thee such action (the nature of action and inaction), by knowing which thou shalt be liberated from the evil (of Samsara, the world of birth and death).

*Karmano hyapi boddhavyam boddhavyam cha vikarmanah;
Akarmanashcha boddhavyam gahanaa karmano gatih.*

17. For, verily the true nature of action (enjoined by the scriptures) should be known, also (that) of forbidden (or unlawful) action, and of inaction; hard to understand is the nature (path) of action.

*Karmanyakarma yah pashyed akarmani cha karma yah;
Sa buddhimaan manushyeshu sa yuktaah kritsnakarmakrit.*

18. He who seeth inaction in action and action in inaction, he is wise among men; he is a Yogi and performer of all actions.

COMMENTARY: It is the idea of agency, the idea of "I am the doer" that binds man to worldliness. If this idea vanishes, action is no action at all. It does not bind one to

worldliness. This is inaction in action. But if a man sits quietly, thinking of actions and that he is their doer, he is ever doing actions. This is referred to as action in inaction.

*Yasya sarve samaarambhaah kaamasankalpa varjitaah;
Jnaanaagni dagdhakarmaanam tam aahuh panditam budhaah.*

19. He whose undertakings are all devoid of desires and (selfish) purposes, and whose actions have been burnt by the fire of knowledge,—him the wise call a sage.

*Tyaktwaa karmaphalaasangam nityatrito niraashrayah;
Karmanyabhipravritto'pi naiva kinchit karoti sah.*

20. Having abandoned attachment to the fruit of the action, ever content, depending on nothing, he does not do anything though engaged in activity.

*Niraasheer yatachittaatmaa tyaktasarvaparigraahah;
Shaareeram kevalam karma kurvannaapnoti kilbisham.*

21. Without hope and with the mind and the self controlled, having abandoned all greed, doing mere bodily action, he incurs no sin.

*Yadricchaalaabhasantushto dwandwaateeto vimatsarah;
Samah siddhaavasiddhau cha kritwaapi na nibadhyate.*

22. Content with what comes to him without effort, free from the pairs of opposites and envy, even-minded in success and failure, though acting, he is not bound.

*Gatasangasya muktasya jnaanaavasthitachetasah;
Yajnaayaacharatah karma samagram pravileeyate.*

23. To one who is devoid of attachment, who is liberated, whose mind is established in knowledge, who works for the sake of sacrifice (for the sake of God), the whole action is dissolved.

*Brahmaarpanam brahmahirbrahmaagnau brahmanaa hutam;
Brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamaadhinaa.*

24. Brahman is the oblation; Brahman is the melted butter (ghee); by Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman; Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in action.

COMMENTARY: This is wisdom-sacrifice, wherein the idea of Brahman is substituted for the ideas of the instrument and other accessories of action, the idea of action itself and its results. By having such an idea the whole action melts away.

*Daivam evaapare yajnam yoginah paryupaasate;
Brahmaagnaaavapare yajnam yajnenaivopajuhwati.*

25. Some Yogis perform sacrifice to the gods alone, while others (who have realised the Self) offer the Self as sacrifice by the Self in the fire of Brahman alone.

*Shrotraadeeneendriyaanyanye samyamaagnishu juhwati;
Shabdaadeen vishayaananya indriyaagnishu juhwati.*

26. Some again offer hearing and other senses as sacrifice in the fire of restraint; others offer sound and various objects of the senses as sacrifice in the fire of the senses.

*Sarvaaneendriya karmaani praanakarmaani chaapare;
Aatmasamyamayogaagnau juhwati jnaanadeepite.*

27. Others again sacrifice all the functions of the senses and those of the breath (vital energy or Prana) in the fire of the Yoga of self-restraint kindled by knowledge.

*Dravyayajnaas tapoyajnaa yogayajnaastathaapare;
Swaadhyayajnaana yajnaashcha yatayah samshitavrataah.*

28. Some again offer wealth, austerity and Yoga as sacrifice, while the ascetics of self-restraint and rigid vows offer study of scriptures and knowledge as sacrifice.

*Apaane juhwati praanam praane'paanam tathaa'pare;
Praanaapaana gatee ruddhwaa praanaayaamaparaayanaah.*

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

COMMENTARY: Some Yogis practise inhalation, some practise exhalation, and some retention of breath. This is Pranayama.

*Apare niyataahaaraah praanaan praaneshu juhwati;
Sarve'pyete yajnavido yajnakshapita kalmashaah.*

30. Others who regulate their diet offer life-breaths in life-breaths; all these are knowers of sacrifice, whose sins are all destroyed by sacrifice.

*Yajnashishtaamritabhujo yaanti brahma sanaatanam;
Naayam loko'styayajnasya kuto'nyah kurusattama.*

31. Those who eat the remnants of the sacrifice, which are like nectar, go to the eternal Brahman. This world is not for the man who does not perform sacrifice; how then can he have the other, O Arjuna?

COMMENTARY: They go to the eternal Brahman after attaining knowledge of the Self through purification of the mind by performing the above sacrifices. He who does not perform any of these is not fit even for this miserable world. How then can he hope to get a better world than this?

*Evam bahuvidhaa yajnaa vitataa brahmano mukhe;
Karmajaan viddhi taan sarvaan evam jnaatwaa vimokshyase.*

32. Thus, various kinds of sacrifices are spread out before Brahman (literally at the mouth or face of Brahman). Know them all as born of action, and knowing thus, thou shalt be liberated.

*Shreyaan dravyamayaadyajnaaj jnaanayajnah parantapa;
Sarvam karmaakhilam paarthaa jnaane parisamaapyate.*

33. Superior is wisdom-sacrifice to sacrifice with objects, O Parantapa! All actions in their entirety, O Arjuna, culminate in knowledge!

*Tadviddhi pranipaatenā pariprashnena sevayaa;
Upadekshyanti te jnaanam jnaaninas tattwadarshinah.*

34. Know that by long prostration, by question and by service, the wise who have realised the Truth will instruct thee in (that) knowledge.

*Yajnaatwaa na punarmoham evam yaasyasi paandava;
Yena bhootaanyasheshena drakshyasyaatmanyatho mayi.*

35. Knowing that, thou shalt not, O Arjuna, again become deluded like this; and by that thou shalt see all beings in thy Self and also in Me!

*Api chedasi paapebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ paapakrittamah;
Sarvam jnaanaplaavenaiva vrijinam santarishyasi.*

36. Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners, yet thou shalt verily cross all sins by the raft of knowledge.

COMMENTARY: One can overcome sin through Self-knowledge.

*Yathaidhaamsi samiddho'gnir bhasmasaat kurute'rjuna;
Jnaanaagnih sarvakarmaani bhasmasaat kurute tathaa.*

37. As the blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes!

*Na hi jnaanena sadrisham pavitram iha vidyate;
Tat swayam yogasamsiddhah kaalenaatmani vindati.*

38. Verily there is no purifier in this world like knowledge. He who is perfected in Yoga finds it in the Self in time.

*Shraddhaavaan labhate jnaanam tatparah samyatendriyah;
Jnaanam labdhvaa paraam shaantim achirenaadhigacchati.*

39. The man who is full of faith, who is devoted to it, and who has subdued all the senses, obtains (this) knowledge; and, having obtained the knowledge, he goes at once to the supreme peace.

*Ajnashchaashraddhadhaanashcha samshayaatmaa vinashyati;
Naayam loko'sti na paro na sukham samshayaatmanah.*

40. The ignorant, the faithless, the doubting self proceeds to destruction; there is neither this world nor the other nor happiness for the doubting.

*Yogasannyasta karmaanam jnaanasamcchinnasamshayam;
Aatmavantam na karmaani nibadhnanti dhananjaya.*

41. He who has renounced actions by Yoga, whose doubts are rent asunder by knowledge, and who is self-possessed,—actions do not bind him, O Arjuna!

*Tasmaad ajnaanasambhootam hritsthām jnaanaasinaatmanah;
Cchittwainam samshayam yogam aatishthottishtha bhaarata.*

42. Therefore, with the sword of knowledge (of the Self) cut asunder the doubt of the self born of ignorance, residing in thy heart, and take refuge in Yoga; arise, O Arjuna!

*Hari Om Tat Sat
Iti Srimad Bhagavadgeetaasoopanishatsu Brahmavidyaayaam
Yogashaastre Sri Krishnaarjunasamvaade
Jnaanavibhaagayogo Naama Chaturtho'dhyaayah*

Thus in the *Upanishads* of the glorious *Bhagavad Gita*, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, ends the fourth discourse entitled:

“The Yoga of Wisdom”
