



श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता
चतुर्थोऽध्यायः - ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यासयोगः

Chapter 4
Volume 1

श्री भगवानुवाच

इमं विवस्वते योगं, प्रोक्तवान् अहं अव्यगम् ।
विवस्वान् मनवे प्राह, मनुः इक्ष्वाकवे अब्रवीत् ॥ 4 - 1

एवं परम्परा प्राप्तं, इमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।
सकालेनेह महता, योगो नष्टः परंतप ॥ 4 - 2

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य, योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः ।
भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति, रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमं ॥ 4 - 3

अर्जुन उवाच

अपरं भवतो जन्म, परं जन्म विवस्वतः ।
कथमेतद्विजानीयां त्वं आदौ प्रोक्तवान् इति ॥ 4 - 4

श्री भगवान् उवाच

बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चाजुन ।
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परंतप ॥ 4 - 5

अजोऽपि सन् अव्ययात्मा भूतानां ईश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वाम् अधिष्ठाय संभवामि आत्ममायया ॥ 4 - 6

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानं अधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ 4 - 7

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥ 4 - 8



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

In chapters 2 and 3 भगवान् has told Arjuna that in order to gain श्रेयस् - total freedom from every kind of sorrow and distress, what is needed is ज्ञानं - आत्मज्ञानं, ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, ईश्वर ज्ञानं - knowledge about जीव-जगत् and ईश्वर - knowledge about absolute reality of all existence, and the means for gaining such knowledge is कर्म योग, which means doing one's duty as total dedication to परमेश्वर at all times.

After having said that, भगवान् could have added "Well Arjuna, I have told you what you wanted to know, and now, you do whatever you want "यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु - do as you like"; that is exactly what भगवान् tells Arjuna in chapter 18.

But chapter 18 is still far off. At this point, however, भगवान् does not say that, because, looking at Arjuna's perplexed face, it is obvious that Arjuna's mind is still in a confused state, and some more help, some more education, is needed to pull him out of the difficulty that he is in. भगवान्, in His infinite love for devotees, is willing to give this help to Arjuna.

Now, what is the state of Arjuna's mind at this time? Arjuna is still confused. If anything, he feels even more confused now, than what he was at the beginning of Chapter 3. While Sri Krishna has been talking about आत्म ज्ञानं and कर्म योग, Arjuna's mind is still concerned with कर्म itself, and that too, with the particular कर्म that he is facing at this moment. He seems to be thinking something like this:

I am faced with a particular कर्म which brings only sorrow and distress to my mind. Therefore I seek Krishna's help to solve my problem. What does Krishna say? He says "What you need is आत्म ज्ञानं, and in order to gain आत्म ज्ञानं, you need कर्म योग. Therefore do your कर्म as कर्म योग, and you will come out of your sorrow and distress".

I must admit that I have no real experience either with कर्म योग or आत्म ज्ञानं. At this moment, they just seem words to me. Accepting that, what I need is कर्म योग and आत्म ज्ञानं; still what Krishna says is confusing to me, because आत्म ज्ञानं is not the result of any कर्म, which means आत्म ज्ञानं is not a कर्मफल. That being so, why should I do कर्म to gain आत्म ज्ञानं ? What is the connection between कर्म and आत्म ज्ञानं ? Further, Krishna says that I need कर्म योग for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं. But कर्म योग is not a कर्म



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

either, and there is no कर्म योग without कर्म. Then, what is the connection between कर्म and कर्म योग?

When does a कर्म - any कर्म - every कर्म - become कर्म योग? Why should I worry about every कर्म anyway? Every कर्म is not my problem. My problem is immediate. It is with reference to one particular कर्म, and that particular कर्म is पाप कर्म, by any standard. Why is it that I should be facing this पाप कर्म situation? Why is it that I should be compelled to do this पाप कर्म against my own will? When I ask Krishna "What forces a person to do पाप कर्म against one's own will?", Krishna says "it is काम एष, क्रोध एष- it is काम and क्रोध - desire and anger" That answer does not apply to my situation.

I have no desire for this kingdom - that I have already told Krishna. I have no anger with भीष्म and द्रोण with whom I have to fight. I am angry with दुर्योधन, it is true. But I do not let that anger push me to fight with भीष्म and द्रोण whom I respect. I certainly do not want to fight with भीष्म and द्रोण. If that means that I must accept defeat in this war, I am willing to accept defeat. But Krishna won't let me do that. He tells me again and again that I must fight this war with my full force, and that is my duty.

Now, who is pushing me into this war? It appears to me that it is not my काम or क्रोध which is pushing me into this war, but it is this Krishna who is pushing me into this war.

What am I thinking? No, no, it is wrong on my part to indulge in such thoughts. It does not befit me to do so. Certainly Krishna did not bring me into this battlefield. It was I who brought Krishna into this battlefield. Therefore, it is not fair on my part to think that Krishna is pushing me into this war.

Then what is it that Krishna is doing now? He is only responding to my cry for help. He is only trying to help me. He is helping me. Because, in his presence, I somehow feel safe and secure. He is my **only** friend, the **only** strength, and the **only** one who can help me - **that** I am sure of, **that** is clear to me.

Still I am confused. I cannot understand why I should fight this war, and being what I am, how can I fight with भीष्म and द्रोण. I have already asked Krishna this question, and he has given his answer. Somehow his answer does not meet my needs. My mind is still full of sorrow and distress. I do not know what to do, and I do not know what more I can ask Krishna."



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

With such thoughts occupying his mind, Arjuna presents a blank, distressed, depressed and speechless face. That is the Arjuna we are seeing now.

Sri Krishna knows Arjuna's situation exactly. In spite of his continued depression, Arjuna is making progress. He needs some more help, and Sri Krishna is willing to give this help. At this moment, the immediate need is to make Arjuna change his thoughts, redirect Arjuna's mind towards परमेश्वर, and make him open his mind and talk, so that Arjuna regains his ability to listen, and absorb the meaning and practice of कर्म योग.

Through simple looking words of reassurance, Sri Krishna does exactly that. Sri Krishna uplifts Arjuna's mind and redirects it towards परमेश्वर, and makes him ask a simple-looking question, which becomes the starting point of an extraordinary exposition on कर्म योग, which is again the subject matter of this and the next two chapters. भगवान् initiates this exposition, saying

"Arjuna, there is nothing new in what I have been teaching you all this time. This knowledge has been there ever since creation itself. So many people have benefited by this knowledge. This knowledge is effective and ageless. However, it needs to be re-told to you, so that you can also benefit by it."

Let us now see how exactly भगवान् reintroduces the topic of कर्म योग in this chapter called ज्ञान-कर्म-संन्यास-योग - Renunciation of कर्म through knowledge.

श्री भगवानुवाच

इमं विवस्वते योगं, प्रोक्तवान् अहं अव्ययम् ।
विवस्वान् मनवे प्राह, मनुः इक्ष्वाकवे अब्रवीत् ॥

4 - 1

भगवान् says:

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवान् अहं अव्ययं

इमं अव्ययं योगं - This योग which I described to you in chapters 2 and 3, and which ever remains unchanged

अहं विवस्वते प्रोक्तवान् - I taught and explained it to विवस्वान् at the beginning of creation.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

This योग is अव्ययं, it ever remains the same. It is unchanging and unchangeable, because, what comes out of this योग is अव्ययम् -unchanging and unchangeable. This योग is nothing but a clear vision of oneself, the world and ईश्वर as it is. It's फल - its result is only मोक्ष - Absolute Freedom which is not subject to any change.

I taught this योग to विवस्वान्, until he became the very embodiment of this योग. विवस्वान् is सूर्य देवता, the presiding deity for eyes, who came into existence at the beginning of this creation. विवस्वान् may also be taken as the first king in the सूर्य dynasty.

In the old order of society, the king is the leader among क्षत्रियस. From among the क्षत्रियस, the most able and the most worthy emerges as the leader, who is called the King. It is the duty and the responsibility of the क्षत्रियस in general, and the king in particular, to establish, maintain and protect धर्म in society, so that everybody in society may progress in life without hindering others.

It is particularly important to impart Vedantic knowledge to the kings for giving them the strength to rule the kingdom. Every king has indeed an army which represents his physical power. Without spiritual power, every other source of strength soon becomes a source of greediness, which ultimately destroys both the king and the kingdom.

Therefore, the real strength for a king, and hence his kingdom, comes only from ज्ञानयोग and कर्मयोग - an enlightened approach to private and public life. It is for this reason that Sri Krishna imparted this योग knowledge - ज्ञानयोग and कर्मयोग to विवस्वान् at the beginning of creation.

विवस्वान् मनवे प्राह, मनुः इक्ष्वाकवे अब्रवीत्

विवस्वान् मनवे प्राह - विवस्वान् imparted this knowledge to his son मनु

मनुः इक्ष्वाकवे अब्रवीत् - मनु then imparted this knowledge to his son इक्ष्वाकु

There is also another reason why Vedanta should be taught to the kings. It is यथा राजा तथा प्रजा - as is the king, so are his subjects. If the king is good, the people also tend to be good.

In any society, as Sri Krishna said earlier, (3-21) यद्यत् आचरति श्रेष्ठः तत्तदेव इत्तरो जनः whatever the leader does, that is followed by other people. Therefore the people go by



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

the example set by the king. If the king is corrupt and bad, very soon the whole society becomes corrupt and bad. Therefore the proper education of the king is extremely important for the welfare of the society as a whole.

For a king who is strong by virtue of योगबल - spiritual strength, the best thing that he can do for his son, is to educate his son also in ज्ञानयोग and कर्मयोग, so that he can also enjoy योगबल. To give the kingdom to the son is easy but to give योगबल to the son is not easy. The son should be worthy of it, otherwise he cannot absorb it. Therefore भगवान् says

एवं परम्परा प्राप्तं, इमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।

स कालेनेह महता, योगो नष्टः परंतप ॥

4 - 2

एवं परम्परा प्राप्तं इमं (योगं) राज ऋषयः विदुः : - Transmitted in this manner from generation to generation, this योग (ज्ञान योग and कर्म योग) is already known to the राज Rishis (the king sages - the royal sages). योग is singular. On maturity all योगs become ONE. The योग knowledge, in fullness, has already been known to the enlightened kings like विचस्वान्, मनु, इक्ष्वाकु and later on जनक, विश्वामित्र and others. But all kings are not enlightened ones. Therefore,

परन्तप - O! Arjuna,

सः योगः इह (लोके) कालेन महता नष्टः - that योग in the course of long time has been lost and has become unavailable to the general population. The योग knowledge is still there in isolated places in persons like भीष्म, द्रोण, व्यास, शुक, विदुर etc. But the free flow of this knowledge into the society has stopped, because the political power now is in the hands of people like दुर्योधन, who has no योगबल. With दुर्योधन as the king, impropriety, अधर्म has permeated all aspects of this society and the benefits of the योगबल is now lost to the society as a whole

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः ।

भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमं ॥

4 - 3

स एव अयं पुरातनः योगः, अद्य मया ते प्रोक्तः - the same ancient योग knowledge has been taught to you today by me. Why? Because



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

भक्तः असि - you are my भक्त, you are my devotee

मे सखा च - you are also my friend

If you ask me "I have been your friend all along; why did you not teach me before", the answer is, until now, you have been just my friend. Only now you are my भक्त - devotee. Because only today you said

शिष्यस्तेऽहं, शादि मां त्वां प्रपन्नं - I am your disciple. I detach myself from everything that is binding on me and I commit myself to your advice totally. Please teach me.

यत् श्रेयः स्यात् - that which is श्रेयस्, the परम पुरुषार्थ - the highest goal of life. That श्रेयस् is आत्मज्ञानं, and the means for gaining आत्मज्ञानं is कर्मयोग. Thus, only today, you became fit for this योग knowledge. Therefore, I am teaching you

एतत् योगं उत्तमं रहस्यं - This Yoga knowledge which is the greatest of all secrets, is a public secret, in the sense that unless you are ready for this knowledge, you cannot gain this knowledge, even if it is told to you.

The free flow of योग-knowledge in the society got snapped because the families of क्षत्रियस became progressively weak and became incapable of absorbing this knowledge. These kings, intoxicated with power, without योगबल - spiritual strength, became दुर्बलवान् - mentally weak, with no control over their instruments of perception and action. The people began to emulate the weakness of the rulers. Therefore, धर्म - discipline, propriety and gratitude got lost in the society.

The अर्थ and काम pursuits without धर्म, endeavors for material prosperity and success without any sense of discipline, propriety and gratitude, can only destroy the entire society. Such is the situation today. That is why I am teaching you again the योग knowledge because you are fit for that knowledge and you are also ready for that knowledge. You as a क्षत्रिय have a responsibility to profit by this knowledge, and reestablish and cultivate धर्म in the society, so says Sri Krishna.

These words of Sri Krishna spontaneously prompt Arjuna to speak up again, and ask this question

अर्जुन उवाच

अपरं भवतो जन्म, परं जन्म विवस्वतः ।



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

कथं एतत् विजानीयां, त्वं आदौ प्रोक्तवान् इति ॥ 4 - 4

अपरं भवतः जन्म - Krishna - later was thy birth

परं जन्म विवस्वतः - earlier was the birth of विवस्वान्. That being the case

कथं एतत् विजानीयां - how am I to understand the statement

त्वं आदौ प्रोक्तवान् इति - that you taught this योग to विवस्वान् at the beginning of this creation?

विवस्वान् was born long time before you. You say that you taught this योग to विवस्वान्. How is this possible? Please make me understand your statement. So speaks up Arjuna.

Please note here that the plane of thought of Arjuna has already changed. Arjuna's mind has now been lifted from the thoughts about कर्म and कर्मयोग. Arjuna's question now is **not** about कर्म or कर्मयोग, Arjuna's question now is about Sri Krishna Himself, who is indeed परमेश्वर.

By seeking knowledge about Sri Krishna, Arjuna's mind is now directed towards परमेश्वर and he is now seeking ईश्वर ज्ञानं spontaneously, on his own initiative, whether he realizes it or not. That is the mark of spiritual progress of Arjuna at this time. From now on, Sri Krishna's teaching of कर्म योग is in a different plane. Before taking up the subject of कर्म योग, again Sri Krishna answers Arjuna's specific question, directly revealing himself as अवतार पुरुष and talks about the nature and purpose of his birth in the following words.

श्री भगवान् उवाच

बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि, जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।

तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि, न त्वं चेत्य परंतप ॥ 4 - 5

Answering Arjuna's question, भगवान् says

अर्जुन - O! Arjuna

मे जन्मानि बहूनि व्यतीतानि, तव च - Births for me, very many of them, have already gone by. So it is for you too. For me as well as for you, for both of us, many, many births have already gone by



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि - तानि सर्वाणि अहं वेद - I know all of them, I know all of those births, but,

न त्वं वेत्स्य - you do not know them

परंतप - O! Arjuna

Very many births have gone by for both of us, all of them I know, but you do not know. Why? Because (*here comes the whole meaning of अवतार - God incarnation*) Arjuna, like every one of us is a जीव, and Sri Krishna is an अवतार पुरुष. A जीव is कर्म-born. We are what we are because of our past कर्मस - past actions. Each one of us is just a result of one's own past actions - कर्मफल. Therefore, every जीव is just a manifestation of one's own कर्मफल.

Since every कर्म is different, every कर्मफल is also different. Since every कर्म is limited, every कर्मफल is also limited. Therefore, every जीव is different and is also limited - limited in powers, limited in knowledge, etc. Consequently, a जीव does not know all its previous births and manifestations.

On the other hand, an अवतार पुरुष is not a जीव. It is not कर्म-born. It is not a कर्मफल. An अवतार पुरुष is a manifestation of ईश्वर who is नित्य शुद्धः - eternally pure, free from कर्म, नित्य मुक्तः - eternally free from all limitations, and hence नित्य बुद्धः - eternally enlightened.

ईश्वर is सर्वज्ञः - All knowledge. Therefore ईश्वर knows all his manifestations, all his births.

कर्म, मोक्ष, and अवतार are three unique concepts arising from the Vedantic view of life. In अवतार, ईश्वर assumes the appearance of birth - a birth not caused by the force of कर्म, but then, there is still the appearance of birth, body, actions, etc. Such a birth belongs only to ईश्वर.

According to our पुराणाs, every अवतार is भगवान्'s answer to the prayers of the देवताs and also धार्मिका s - people committed to धर्म. Thus, prayers become the material cause for भगवान्'s appearance. The devotees of Sri Krishna can see Sri Krishna at any time, wherever they are, which means, through prayer, every one of us can see Sri Krishna



as भगवान्'s अवतार in any form, at any place, at any time. The next verse tells exactly what अवतार is.

अजोऽपि सन् अव्ययात्मा भूतानां ईश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वाम् अधिष्ठाय संभवामि आत्मायया ॥ 4 - 6

अजः अपि सन् - even though I am and continue to be unborn, similarly
अव्यय आत्मा अपि सन् - even though I am and I continue to be omniscient - all
knowledge at all times, and also, even though I am of imperishable nature
भूतानां ईश्वरः अपि सन् - even though I am and I continue to be the Lord of all that
exists, the Lord of all this creation
स्वां प्रकृतिं अधिष्ठाय - always keeping my प्रकृति, my माया power under my control
संभवामि आत्ममायया - I am born by the power of my own माया, by the power of my
inherent all-powerful nature.

For a जीव, there is only भवामि, birth by the force of कर्म - there is no choice. For an
अवतार, there is संभवामि - सम्यक् भवामि - birth by choice. Such a birth is only for
ईश्वर.

If all this creation is ईश्वर शृष्टि, an additional creation in the form of an अवतार makes
no difference to ईश्वर. Just as one can assume a thought and still continue to exist as
oneself, similarly, ईश्वर can assume a certain form at a certain time at a certain place
for a certain purpose, and still continue to exist as all-pervading, all-powerful, all-
inclusive, all-knowledge ईश्वर. That is the nature of the birth of भगवान्'s अवतार. When
does such birth take place and what for? भगवान् says

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानं अधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहं ॥ 4 - 7

भारत O! Arjuna

हि indeed, certainly,

यदा यदा धर्मस्य ग्लानिः भवति - whenever deliberate destruction of धर्म in the society
takes place, and also, as a consequence



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

अधर्मस्य अभ्युत्थानं भवति - अधर्म - impropriety increases and gains power and momentum in society

तदा अहं आत्मानं सृजामि - then, at that time, I create myself, I assume a माया शरीर with a form and a name. What for?

परित्राणाय साधूनां , विनाशाय च दुष्कृतां ।

धर्म संस्थापनार्थाय, संभवामि यगे युगे ॥ 4 - 8

साधूनां परित्राणाय - for the effective protection of all those who follow the path of धर्म

दुष्कृतां विनाशाय - for uprooting the powers of those who have no regard for धर्म, and hence who make the lives of धर्म-abiding people miserable, and

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय - for the firm re-establishment of धर्म in the society

संभवामि युगे युगे - I am born as an अवतार पुरुष in every युग, in every time cycle

Therefore, the purpose of भगवान्'s अवतार is to reestablish धर्म in the society so that everybody has an opportunity to uplift oneself and fulfill oneself.

Now, what is धर्म, and why is धर्म so important? As we have seen already, धर्म is duty, propriety and gratitude in action. The Vedic society is based on the Vedic vision of the overriding purpose of life. That purpose is मोक्ष - Absolute Freedom and Happiness, which is identical with आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge through Self-recognition and self-realization.

For gaining such मोक्ष, the essential pre-requisite is अन्तः करण शुद्धि - purity of one's mind and बुद्धि, and this is gained only through कर्म योग, and कर्म योग is possible only if one is governed by धर्म in all of one's actions.

That is why the Vedic society is a धर्म-based society. If one has no sense of duty, propriety and gratitude with respect to all of one's actions, कर्म योग is not possible. Thus धर्म becomes the means for any kind of पुरुषार्थ - any kind of progress or achievement in life.

Whether one is interested in अर्थ, काम or मोक्ष – material prosperity, personal achievements of various kinds, or freedom from any kind of bondage, धर्म - actions



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

governed by a sense of duty, propriety and gratitude, constitutes the only means for such accomplishment.

धर्म gives equal opportunity for everybody to progress. The one who destroys धर्म verily destroys oneself, and also the society. Such a destructive person is a दुष्कृत, and his powers of destruction are fit to be destroyed. That is what धर्म संस्थापनं means, and that is the purpose of अवतार - so says भगवान् Sri Krishna. We will continue next time.