



श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

चतुर्थोऽध्यायः - ज्ञानकर्मसंन्यासयोगः

Chapter 4

Volume 4

किं कर्म किं अकर्मति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिताः । तत्ते कर्म प्रवक्ष्यामि यत् ज्ञात्वा मोक्षयसे अशुभात् ॥	4 - 16
कर्मणो ह्यपि बोद्धव्यं बोद्धव्यं च विकर्मणः । अकर्मणश्च बोद्धव्यं गहना कर्मणो गतिः ॥	4 - 17
कर्मणि अकर्म यः पश्येत् अकर्मणि च कर्म यः । स बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु स यक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥	4 - 18

In today's verses, Sri Krishna talks about कर्म, its relationship with परमेश्वर, and what that relationship has got to do with one gaining श्रेयस् - the परम-पुरुषार्थ - The Supreme Goal of life - namely मोक्ष - Total Fulfillment in life.

Sri Krishna says

किं कर्म किं अकर्मति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिताः । तत्ते कर्म प्रवक्ष्यामि यत् ज्ञात्वा मोक्षयसे अशुभात् ॥	4 - 16
---	--------

किं कर्म - What is कर्म ? What is action?

किं स्वरूपं कर्म - What is the true nature of action? What is the तत्त्व or essence of action? Similarly,

किं अकर्म - What is अकर्म ? What is it which is not action, or what is it which is inaction?

What is the तत्त्व - the essence of the inaction?

इति - considering such questions

अत्र - in this matter, in the matter of कर्म and अकर्म, action and inaction

कवयः अपि मोहिताः - even the कविस, even those who have dexterity with words, even those who have skills to handle words effectively to bring out their full meaning, even such people are

मोहिताः - confused.



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Even well-read people, even those who have superior ability to understand words and their meanings, even those who have the ability to handle words effectively to convey the message, even they get confused as to what to say about कर्म and अकर्म - Action and Inaction in daily life, because for any human being, the entire life is nothing but a bundle of actions.

तत् ते प्रवक्ष्यामि - Therefore, I will teach you what कर्म really means

वक्ष्यामि means "I will tell you"

प्रवक्ष्यामि means "I will make it clear to you beyond doubt", which means I will teach you, I will teach you what exactly कर्म is.

यत् ज्ञात्वा मोक्षयसे अशुभात्

यत् ज्ञात्वा - knowing which, realizing which

मोक्षयसे अशुभात् - you shall be liberated from

अशुभ - everything that is not conducive to happiness

If only you realize the true nature of कर्म and अकर्म - Action and Inaction, that realization itself will release you from every kind of bondage, sorrow and distress. Therefore, I will teach you what exactly कर्म is, and also what अकर्म is.

The realization of knowledge about कर्म and अकर्म - Action and Inaction, is extremely important for gaining मोक्ष, because that realization itself brings you मोक्ष. You do not have to do anything else for gaining मोक्ष. But you must understand what realization means.

Here Sri Krishna is telling something very significant. The popular notion is any activity involving body, mind and/or intellect is कर्म and अकर्म is the opposite of कर्म, which means, for example, sitting quietly, doing nothing is अकर्म. Such being the case, one might think "What is there for one to know about कर्म and अकर्म, their nature is obvious". भगवान् says here "No, it is not obvious. There is something for you to think about it, because

कर्मणोऽपि बोद्धव्यं बोद्धव्यं च विकर्मणः ।

अकर्मणश्च बोद्धव्यं गहना कर्मणो गतिः ॥

4 - 17



हि - Indeed, in this matter about कर्म

बोद्धव्यं - There is something for you to know

There is indeed something for everyone to realize through all the three-fold means of realization namely श्रवणं, मननं and निदिध्यासनं

श्रवणं is listening and understanding the word of the Upanishads

मननं is reflecting on the knowledge communicated by the Upanishads by oneself, through repeated questioning of one's own understanding of the words of the Upanishads, keeping the mind and बुद्धि totally committed to knowledge and service at the highest possible level, and thereby clearing all of one's doubts by oneself, and finally निदिध्यासनं is absorbing that Upanishad knowledge in its entirety, ultimately becoming the very embodiment of that knowledge in one's own daily life through such Realization.

कर्मणः बोद्धव्यं विकर्मणः बोद्धव्यं, अकर्मणः च बोद्धव्यं - one must know what is कर्म - proper action what is विकर्म - improper action and what is अकर्म - inaction.

In order to understand beyond doubt what is कर्म, what is proper action, one must also understand what are विकर्म and अकर्म - improper action and inaction, because

गहना कर्मणो गतिः - the ways of कर्म are inscrutable, mysterious, not available for comprehension. Which action will bring about what results and when, one can never know. That is the nature of action.

After such an elaborate introduction, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna what कर्म is, in a simple looking and extraordinary way in the next verse, which is one of the famous verses in भगवत् गीता

कर्मणि अकर्म यः पश्येत् अकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।

स बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्न कर्मकृत् ॥

4 - 18

All the words here are important. Let us first see the word meaning of this verse.

कर्मणि अकर्म यः पश्येत्

कर्मणि - In कर्म - in action

अकर्म यः पश्येत् - the one who sees No Action where there is action, and at the same time



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

अकर्मणि च कर्म यः(पश्येत्) - the one who sees कर्म in अकर्म - the one who sees action where there is no action

सः बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु - that person is wise among people

सः युक्तः - that person has mastered the art of living a life of Total Fulfillment

सः कृत्स्न कर्मकृत् - that person has achieved all that there is to achieve in life

The one who sees No action where there is action, and at the same time sees action where there is no action, that person is wise among people. That person has mastered the art of living a life of total fulfillment and that person has achieved all that there is to achieve in life. All this achievement is not by doing anything but simply by seeing, which means, realizing what is already there, namely, अकर्म in कर्म and कर्म in अकर्म - No Action in Action and Action in No Action. That is the word meaning of the verse.

Ordinarily, one sees action where there is action and no action where there is no action. That is not wisdom, according to this verse. On the other hand, how can one be wise by seeing no action where there is action and also by seeing action where there is no action? That seems unnatural.

Therefore the word meaning of this verse makes no sense, which means, we must reflect on the words again and try to understand this verse in Upanishadic terms, in terms of लक्ष्यार्थ - the meaning indicated by the words as Pointers. Therefore, let us look at the words again.

In the previous verse, Sri Krishna talked about कर्म, विकर्म and अकर्म. In this verse Sri Krishna talks only about कर्म and अकर्म. What happened to विकर्म then?

कर्म means action. Whether the action is धर्म-कर्म - proper action or विकर्म - improper action, it is still कर्म, it is still action, which means that the word कर्म as an indicator or pointer, includes all कर्मs, including विकर्म. That explains how the word विकर्म got absorbed in the indicator word कर्म. That also means that विकर्म ceases to exist on realization of what कर्म is.

Now, let us reflect on the word अकर्म. अकर्म means "No action" or Inaction. Inaction means what? In our daily business of life, there are generally two kinds of actions, namely प्रवृत्ति कर्म and निवृत्ति कर्म.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

प्रवृत्ति कर्म is explicit action, which means doing something. निवृत्ति कर्म is deliberate withdrawal from action, which means not doing something, which is commonly looked upon as अकर्म or inaction. On the other hand, whether the action is a प्रवृत्ति or निवृत्ति, it is still a कर्म, it is still an action.

This must be understood. Suppose I say "I did this कर्म ". There is of course an action involved, I being the agent of the action. Every कर्म is centered on a कर्ता - a Doer as an agent for the action. A कर्म is a कर्म only because there is a कर्ता, there is a Doer for the action.

Suppose I say " I did not do this कर्म " even then an action is involved. This time, I as the कर्ता, the Doer, have been engaged in a निवृत्ति कर्म - an action which involves withdrawal from some activity. Thus, whether I do something or I do not do something, so long as I feel that I am the कर्ता, I am doing a कर्म, whether that कर्म is doing something or doing nothing. Therefore, anything that has a कर्ता is a कर्म.

Consequently, for a person who entertains the notion that "I am the कर्ता - I am the doer", for that person, कर्म is a कर्म, विकर्म is also a कर्म, and अकर्म is also a कर्म, which means a कर्ता has nothing but कर्म. A कर्ता is inseparable from कर्म at all times. For a कर्ता, there is no अकर्म independent of कर्म. For a कर्ता, there is no escape from कर्म at any time. That being the case, how does a wise man look upon कर्म in every day life? भगवान् says

कर्मणि अकर्म यः पश्येत् - सः बुद्धमान् - the one who is wise, sees अकर्म in कर्म - No action in action, which means, for a person who is wise, there is an अकर्म which is independent of कर्म. If that is so, what is that अकर्म ?

Whether a person is wise or not, the entire life of a person is only a bundle of कर्म. Such being the case, when is it that a कर्म is in fact an अकर्म ? When is it that an action is only an appearance of action, and it is, in fact, no action at all?



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

The answer to this question arises from the very nature of कर्म itself. As pointed out already, a कर्म is a कर्म only because there is a कर्ता, there is a Doer for the action. Consequently, anything that has a कर्ता is a कर्म. Likewise, then, anything that has an अकर्ता is an अकर्म. अकर्ता means non-existence of doership.

What is it that has अकर्ता - non-doership? Only That whose very nature is non-doership has अकर्ता, and that is indeed आत्मा-ब्रह्मन्-परमेश्वर.

As Sri Krishna said earlier मां विद्धि अकर्तारं अव्ययं (4-13). Please understand ME, the परमेश्वर as अकर्ता - Non-Doer, अव्ययं - Actionlessness Itself". परमेश्वर is अकर्ता because अहंकार अभावात् - there is no अहंकार in परमेश्वर. There is no notion of Doership in परमेश्वर, because, everything in this universe is already in परमेश्वर, and there is nothing independent of परमेश्वर.

Everything in this universe is only a manifestation of the माया of परमेश्वर. There is no doing involved on the part of परमेश्वर. We may recall Sri Krishna's words earlier (2-25). I am अविकार्योऽयं उच्यते - I am अविकार्य - I am not an object available for any change - I am free from all forms of action".

From this it is clear, अकर्म - Absence of doership is the very nature of परमेश्वर, the nature of आत्मा. Therefore, कर्मणि अकर्म यः पश्येत् means the one who sees in every action the action-free आत्मा, the unchanging, unchangeable, ever existing ब्रह्मन् with all its creative power – the माया, which means the one who sees परमेश्वर in all its infinite glory in every action.

Such a person will also see naturally अकर्मणि च कर्म यः - every action in परमेश्वर - as the very creative power of परमेश्वर, as the माया of परमेश्वर, as the very glory of परमेश्वर as ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं. Such is indeed the true nature of कर्म, and the very nature of परमेश्वर. Once that is understood, the meaning of the verse becomes clear.

कर्मणि अकर्म यः पश्येत्, अकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।

स बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु , स युक्तः कृत्स्न कर्मकृत् ॥

4 - 18



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

The one who sees परमेश्वर in every action and at the same time sees every action in परमेश्वर as the very Glory of परमेश्वर, that person is wise among people. That person has mastered the art of living a life of total fulfillment, and that person has achieved all that there is to achieve in life, which means that person is a ज्ञानी. Such is the true nature of कर्म. Such is the connection between कर्म and परमेश्वर. And such is the goal of life, gaining श्रेयस्.

To realize परमेश्वर in every कर्म, and to realize every कर्म as the very Glory of परमेश्वर, is indeed gaining श्रेयस् - gaining मोक्ष - gaining Total Fulfillment in life, and the means for gaining such श्रेयस् is कर्म योग and ज्ञान योग. Thus Sri Krishna projects another vision of कर्म योग as the means for gaining total fulfillment in life. Let us listen to the words of Sri Krishna again.

कर्मणि अकर्म यः पश्येत् अकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।
स बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्न कर्मकृत् ॥

4 - 18

The one who sees परमेश्वर in every कर्म and at the same time sees every कर्म in परमेश्वर as the very Glory of परमेश्वर, that person is

बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु - a wise person among people

युक्तः - that person has learnt the art of living a life of total fulfillment and

कृत्स्न कर्मकृत् - that person has achieved all that there is to achieve in life

In other words, that person is a unique person, a full person, a happy person. That person is a पूर्ण-पुरुष - an embodiment of Absolute Happiness, so says Sri Krishna. This is an extraordinary statement. This is Vedanta in its entirety. This is the substance of the entire Vedantic education. Therefore, what is pointed out by भगवान् in the above verse must be fully understood and assimilated.

There are three pointer words used in the second line of the above verse to indicate the state of being of that unique person, namely बुद्धिमान्, युक्तः and कृत्स्न कर्मकृत्.



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

बुद्धिमान् means one who has properly and fully utilized one's faculty of discrimination and judgment for the only purpose for which human beings are endowed with such faculty.

युक्तः means one who has used that faculty to uplift oneself from the human to the Divine State of Being, and

कृत्स्न कर्मकृत् means one who has fulfilled oneself, totally

These three attributes are not for three different persons. They are just three different visions of the same person, and the extraordinary state of being of that person. Vedanta calls that person a **योगी**, and the state of being of that person, the **योग**.

In order to uplift oneself to the state of **योग** and continue to be a **योगी** throughout one's remaining lifetime, two extraordinary conditions must be satisfied simultaneously so that one may not mistake oneself to be a **योगी** when one is really not. Only when these two conditions are satisfied simultaneously, can one truly realize the state of **योग**, not otherwise. What are those two conditions? In the words of Sri Krishna

कर्मणि अकर्म यः पश्येत् अकर्मणि च कर्म यः - The one who sees **परमेश्वर** in every **कर्म**, and at the same time sees every **कर्म** in **परमेश्वर**, that person alone is a **योगी**. **कर्म**s are many and **परमेश्वर** is one, and **कर्म**s and **परमेश्वर** together constitute one inseparable, indivisible total reality. It is that knowledge - knowledge of total reality, **पूर्ण ज्ञानं** that Sri Krishna points out here.

सत्यं and **मिथ्या** together, **ब्रह्मन्** and **माया** together, the changeless **परमेश्वर** and this entire creation with its ever-changing appearances together constitute the one inseparable, indivisible, absolute reality. That is the totality of knowledge - **पूर्ण ज्ञानं**. It is that **पूर्ण ज्ञानं** that is pointed out repeatedly in our Upanishads through the words **पूर्णं अदःपूर्णं इदं, ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं** and **प्रतिबोध विदितं मतं** which we have already seen in the **ईशावास्य उपनिषत्** and **केनोपनिषत्**.

To realize that **पूर्ण ज्ञानं** is indeed the overriding purpose of human life, and the means for realizing such **पूर्ण ज्ञानं** is **कर्म योग** and **ज्ञान योग**. We must also understand that if one can see **परमेश्वर** in every **कर्म** but cannot see all **कर्म**s in the same **परमेश्वर**, then one will end up with many **परमेश्वर**s, which can only promote various kinds of



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

fanaticism, and that is not पूर्ण ज्ञानं. Again, if one can only see some कर्मs in परमेश्वर but not others, that is not going to bring any enlightenment or happiness either. Therefore, that is also not पूर्ण ज्ञानं.

Therefore, पूर्ण ज्ञानं means being able to see the same one परमेश्वर in all कर्मs, and at the same time, see all कर्मs, without exception in the same one परमेश्वर. Only such पूर्ण ज्ञानं is योग, and the one who is the very embodiment of such योग is a योगी. In the style of Vedanta, the one who is in the process of uplifting oneself to that state of योग through कर्म योग and ज्ञान योग, is also called a योगी, as a लक्षण - as a distinguishing characteristic of the person involved.

Using different word pointers, all our Upanishads expound the philosophy of पूर्ण ज्ञानं - Total vision, leading to the unity of all that is comprehensible, and also all that is beyond comprehension - the unity of the world-external and the world-internal.

The Isavasya Upanishad, as we have already seen, tells us that to concentrate our attention only on the external world and neglect the inner world of आत्मन् is as good as pushing oneself into blinding darkness (अन्धं तमः), but on the other hand, to neglect this world, which we can see, touch, feel and handle, and to become involved exclusively in the incomprehensible world within is as good as pushing oneself into an even greater darkness.

What is needed is, to understand that absolute reality is ONE, untouched by the limitations such as the outer and the inner, "the Not-Self and the Self", the "many and the ONE", and to order and re-order one's life in the light of the All-inclusive Totality of knowledge – पूर्ण ज्ञानं.

If the many and the ONE are indeed the same, inseparable, indivisible reality, then, indeed, all modes of work, all modes of endeavour, all modes of creation, and all modes of worship naturally become the means for realizing That one all-inclusive reality through कर्म योग and ज्ञान योग. Such is the scope and content of Sri Krishna's message

कर्मणि अकर्म यः पश्येत् अकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।
स बुद्धमान् मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्न कर्मकृत् ॥

Let us contemplate on this message. We will continue next time.