

Swami Dayatmananda on Bhagavad Gita Class 51 date 15/12/18

(Lecture is delivered online from Bangalore India)

Class begins with chanting of slokas and prayers

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् । देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥ 5॥

Vasudeva sutham devam kamsa Chanoora mardhanam,
Devaki paramanandam Krishnam vande Jagat Gurum ॥ 5

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दनः । पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥ 4॥

Sarvaopanishadho gaavo dogdhaa Gopala Nandana,
Parthoo vathsa sudheer bhokthaa dugdam Geetamritham mahath ॥ 4 ॥

मूकं करोति वाचालं पङ्गुं लङ्घयते गिरिम् यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्द माधवम् ॥ 8 ॥

Mookam karothe vaachaalam, pankhum lankayathe girim,
Yath krupa thaham vandhe Paramananda madhavam. ॥ 8 ॥

We are going to study the third chapter of Bhagavat Gita. It is called "'Karma-Yoga".

Recapitulation of Bhagavat Gita Class No. 50

In the last class, I had discussed a beautiful concept, it is called '**Sangati**' in Sanskrit.

Sangati संगति: What is the relationship between what has been done before and what we are going to do? In other words 'what is the relationship between the second and the third chapter?'

In the second chapter: a most marvellous, exhaustive description of the Atman has been given and the realisation of the Atman is emphasised. This Atman is nothing but our true nature. If we do not realise the Atman then all sorts of problems and sufferings will come, that has been described beautifully in the first chapter of the Bhagavat Gita.

The Lord says to Arjuna "There is no need for you to grieve at all."

So, He (Lord) describes two things. The nature of the Atman. Really, the Atman or our true nature can not be described, it is beyond all description. Yet, some verbal fuse helps or is necessary for us to contemplate the "Self " and go forward in spiritual life.

But, we have to start somewhere, we have to acquire the capacity and the fitness to even start to progress in spiritual life. That is where the **Karma-Yoga** comes in.

The first chapter describes the suffering.

The second chapter describes the way to get out of the suffering which is by God realisation or Self-Realisation or *Atma Sakshatkar*

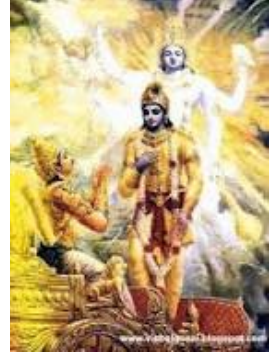
The third chapter is going to describe where we start from depending on where we are in life. That is why it is called Karma-Yoga.

What is Yajna?

We have also briefly described in our last class.

Karma-Yoga is a process by which we can convert our life into a life of sacrifice.

Then comes the question, what is Karma?



Karma-Yoga of Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda's beautiful and expansive treatment of the Karma-Yoga (which everyone must go through in order to understand, the essence, the meaning and the depth of the Karma-Yoga) is what we are going to discuss today.

Swamiji (Vivekananda) starts the book called Karma-Yoga .The first chapter is " **What is Karma and it's effect upon character**" which I am going to deal with shortly.

So, what is Karma?

What ever is done through thought, speech and action is called karma. Life mean - a manifestation of only action and the manifestation of *Prana*.

It is impossible for any living creature to be without activity or without action. So, inaction is impossible, even when a person thinks that I am not doing anything, Prakriti or Nature, that is to say "B&M complex / Body & Mind complex" is going on doing actions throughout our life. Only, when the body falls off, the mind is still going on and this process of activity will go on until it achieves it's purpose.

What is the purpose of karma?

To make our life into Karma-Yoga.

What does Karma-Yoga do?

It takes us to our ultimate goal through various stages.

Summary:

So, the third chapter also tells us that it is impossible to be without any activity so long as we are alive. **Akarma** अकर्म or Non-action is impossible for any living creature.

What does Karma do? How does it help us?

First, karma makes us into a mature person.

Second, karma makes us a fit person in order to undertake this particular spiritual *sadhana*.

Third, karma makes us acquire those qualities to progress successfully in our life.

***Sadhana Chatustaya Sampati* साधन चाटुष्टया सम्पत्ति**

There are four requisite qualifications called *Sadhana Chatustaya Sampati*. Karma-Yoga helps us to acquire these fourfold requisite qualities called:

- 1) Discrimination.
- 2) Dispassion.
- 3) Body and mind control.
- 4) An intense desire to realise God.

So, if we do not become a mature person first, we cannot acquire the ***Sadhana Chatustaya Sampati*** or fourfold requisite necessary qualifications.

If we do not become a mature personality then what is the loss?

So, the first goal of Karma-Yoga is to make us into a mature person. If we do not become mature personalities then what is the loss? This question may come to mind.

The **Answer**, is if we do not become a mature person then we become immature, in other words, a mentally sick person. At the moment, according to government statistics 40% are mentally sick because they have not acquired maturity.

So, what is a mature personality?

- 1) All mature persons have a unifying, clear philosophy of life.
- 2) Mature people have a clear sense of how they wish to live their life. Their goal is clear. Their motivation is clear. Their determination is strong and they know how to achieve it.
- 3) A mature person is able to keep long term commitments.
- 4) A mature person is unshaken by flattery or criticism.
- 5) A mature person possesses a spirit of humility.
- 6) A mature person's decisions are based on deep observation, right character and not on fleeting feelings.
- 7) A mature person expresses gratitude consistently.
- 8) A mature person knows how to prioritise others before themselves.
- 9) A mature person seeks wisdom before acting. Finally,
- 10) A mature person is teachable. A mature person does not presume that he has all the answers that life throws at him. The wiser people get, more they realise that they need much more wisdom than they already possess. They are not ashamed of seeking advice, help, council from adults, teachers, parents, coaches or from other sources. Shri Ramakrishna used to say "I learn so long as I live." Only wise people really seek wisdom.

What is Karma-Yoga? What are the *Pancha-Mahayajna* पंच महायज्ञ ?

Our scriptures tell us that from our very birth, we are all indebted to five beings. To get rid of these debts which we have incurred already by our very birth and living to five the beings is called "*Pancha-Mahayajna* or The great five sacrifices".

- 1) **Rishi Yjana ऋषि यज्ञ**: We are indebted to our sages for passing on knowledge to us.
- 2) **Dev-Yjana देव यज्ञ**: We are indebted to various God and Goddesses for making our life, not only possible but, positively happy and fulfilling.
- 3) **Pitru-Yjana पितृ यज्ञ**: We are very much indebted to our ancestors because most of us, are what we are today because of our ancestors.
- 4) **Nar-Yajna नर यज्ञ**: We are indebted to every human being where ever they may be. Without the help of other human beings, it is impossible to live a pure life.
- 5) **Bhuta-Yjana भूत यज्ञ**: We are also indebted to all other non-human living and non-living beings, for example to the rivers, to the mountains etc.

Getting rid of these five debts is called the sacrifice. Our life must be converted into one great sacrifice or yjana.

Three steps of Karma-Yoga

We also have to take into account how this Karma-Yoga progresses into two steps reaching the ultimate third step which is the goal.

- 1) **Sakama-Karma-Yoga सकाम कर्म योगा**: First of all, it is *Sakama-Karma-Yoga*. We pray to God, worship God for the fulfilment of our worldly desires.
- 2) **Atma-Kamas आत्म कामा**: Next stage, we become *Atma-Kamas* which means I want God and I will sacrifice my life, convert life into Yjana or sacrifice, for the sole purpose of realising God or

realising the Atman. Only, after this realisation,

- 3) **Nishkama Karma-Yoga** निष्काम कर्म योगा: The third type of Karma-Yoga starts which is called *Nishkama Karma- Yoga*, means absolutely desire less, motiveless action because a realised soul has attained everything, there is nothing for him to attain.
Brahmavit Brahmahav Bhavati " ब्रह्मवित् ब्रह्मोव भवति " & *Brahmoti apnoti param* ब्रह्मोति आप्नोति परम a knower of Brahman become Brahman, a knower of Brahman attains everything and enjoys everything.

Briefly, what is a sacrifice?

- It is travel from a lower state of life to a higher state of life.
- It is travel from a lower state of consciousness, from a lower state of sat-chit-ananda to a higher and absolute state of pure sat, pure chit and pure ananda, translated as existence absolute, knowledge absolute and bliss absolute.
- Sacrifice is a worship.
- It is to be grateful for everything.
- It is giving up the lower for the higher.
- It is a practice of thankfulness, being thankful to any help which we receive at anytime from anybody.
- Sacrifice is remembering our true nature as learned through the scriptures and the Guru that the goal of life is God realisation.

For example. **Recording time 12.41**

Five commandments of Holy-Mother

If we are the real devotees of Holy-Mother then we must practice the five commandments of the Holy-Mother. These commandments are:

If you want peace of mind:

- 1) Stop criticising or
- 2) Stop finding faults in others.
- 3) Start finding your own faults.
- 4) No one is a stranger.
- 5) Make the whole world your own.

This is the essence of all the Upanishads, so beautifully expressed in the very first mantra of Ishavashaya-upanishad

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् । तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

***Īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyāṃ jagat ।
tena tyaktena bhujjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasvidhanam ॥***

Meaning: The whole world is nothing but Brahman, realise it as such, with this knowledge live your life, do not covet any other wealth, other than this eternal infinite wealth of Brahman or Atman.

Few characteristics of Sacrifice

- Sacrifice is remembering one's true **mature**.
- Sacrifice is seeing good in every being.
- Sacrifice is doing good to all as much as possible.
- Sacrifice is meditating upon some good, we can find in everyone.
- Sacrifice/ यज्ञा Yjana is to perceive every event as good and what lessons we can learn from that event. Every event is tailor made for learning lessons.
- Sacrifice is saluting all creatures by seeing God in them. In north India there is a beautiful tradition. When two sadhus meet, they greet each other by saying '**Om, Namō Narayanayah ओम नमो नारायणः** Salutations to Narayana within you" . There is also another beautiful way, when one holy man meets another holy man then he will ask "**Dhristi Saaf Hai. द्रष्टि साफ़ है** Is your vision clear? Are you able to see God in everything and in oneself? "
- Sacrifice is not to get dispirited and fill the mind with positive thoughts.
- Sacrifice is ultimately to sacrifice the lower "I" and realise that " I am the All ".

These are briefly, few characteristics of Sacrifice. So, now comes a question.

How to convert our life into a sacrifice?

It can be done only through Karma-Yoga.

There are two life styles in this world.

One is called the Karma-Yoga and another is called Jyana-Yoga.

Arjuna's question:

So, Arjuna starts the this third chapter of Karma-Yoga by asking a specific question.

"O' Krishna, you are talking about the greatness of the Atman, that I am the Atman and I should realise the Atman. But, then why are you asking me to plunge into this world of activity, specially this terrible activity called the war, where we are going to kill each other, dismember each other, create only pain and suffering for each other."

Seven Yogas

One question, we have to clarify right now, is that, are there only two life styles or are there not four life styles? I would say that there are seven life styles or seven yogas.

The very popular four yogas are - 1) Karma-Yoga, 2) Bhakti-Yoga, 3) Raj-Yoga, 4)Jyana-Yoga.

Two yogas Shri Ramakrishna had added. One is called (5th yoga) **Vyakulta Yoga व्याकुलता योगा** or calling upon God with intense yearning and another he added (6th yoga) **Seva-Yoga सेवा योगा or Shiva Jyaney Jiva Seva**" looking upon everyman and every person as Shiva Himself.

To this Holy-Mother has added one more yoga rather, she brought it up and highlighted from the " Chandi " which is called (7th yoga) "**Smarana Yoga स्मरणा योगा**". You have a mother, remember that you have a mother and if you can remember, pray and surrender to Her. She is going to come to your rescue any time, any where, in any place and every where.

Karma-Yoga has got a preliminary, as well as a higher stage. Preliminary stage is for realising God and higher stage is after realising God.

Summary of third chapter;

Briefly, what is this third chapter of Bhagavat Gita called Karma-Yoga?

First: Keep the spiritual goal in mind, which is realisation of Atman or Self.

Second: Offer every action, all actions to the Lord.

Third: Do not be too much concerned about the result. It will come. The divine Lord will not leave you high and dry. He will give you everything you need. He will hold your hand and He will take you to His feet and He will make you one with Him. So, do not be concerned about the result.

Forth: Be free from the possessiveness. It does not mean that you should not possess. Possessiveness is a mental feeling that this belongs to me. **Possessing things but as a trusty, as a detached person. That is the essence of Karma-Yoga.** That is what Holy-Mother tells us and Shri Rama-krishna tells us that live in this world like a maid servant in a rich man's house.

Fifth: By becoming inactive...do not become a victim of laziness.

These are the essential points. Now, I will just read out very first and second slokas or verses from the third chapter.

अर्जुन उवाच - (*Arjuna is asking to Shri Krishna*)

ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन। तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव॥ C3/V1॥

व्यामिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे। तदेकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम्॥ C3/V2॥

Arjuna uvācha

jyāyasī chet karmaṇas te matā buddhir janārdana

tat kiṁ karmaṇi ghore māṁ niyojayasi keśhava

vyāmiśhreṇeva vākyena buddhiṁ mohayasīva me

tad ekaṁ vada niśhchitya yena śhreyo 'ham āpnuyām

Meaning: Arjuna said "If you hold, O'Janardana, O'Krishna, that self knowledge is superior to action, why then do you engage me in this terrible fighting action / fighting war."

Arjuna is apparently confused. He is telling Krishna that You are confusing me, not realising that really Lord can not confuse but disciple gets confused. Suddenly, Arjuna realises that I am confused.

So, he says that "O'Lord, you tell me exactly what should I do or not do. तदेकं वद निश्चित्य, tell me that one path, one process of activity, by following which येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम् I will finally reach my goal of God realisation."

The Lord's reply is also in conformity with the question.

Reply of Lord Shri Krishna to Arjuna

Lord says " I have propagated two yogas, the yoga of self knowledge and the yoga of action respectively called **Jyana-Yoga and Karma-Yoga.**"

We should not get confused that Lord is telling here about only two yogas.
As I mentioned earlier, the Lord really speaks about all the four yogas.

- Third chapter is called the **Karma-Yoga कर्म योगा** .
- Fourth Chapter is Called the **Jyana-Yoga ज्ञान योगा**.
- Sixth Chapter is called the **Dhayan-Yoga ध्यान योगा** and,
- Twelfth chapter is called the **Bhakti-Yoga भक्ति योगा**.

Recording 21.44 minutes

Every Yoga is involved in this Bhagavat Gita.

Why are so many people reluctant to adopt karma?

Now, I want to discuss briefly that why so many people are reluctant to adopt karma. One of the main reasons is, people think that Shankaracharya is dead against karma. Actually, he was not against karma.

In the past, when ever we used to hear the word karma, it meant that practicing and following the first part of the Vedas called Karma-Kanda. Karma according to the earlier part of the Vedas is called ritualism.

So, the Lord says that ritualism has it's usefulness but once you come out of that usefulness then you should not go back to it. That is why, He (Lord Krishna) is not talking about karma but He is talking about Karma-Yoga.

Book of Karma-Yoga by Swami Vivekananda

That is where, Swami Vivekananda's marvellous book on Karma-Yoga gives us a most successful idea about what is Karma-Yoga. This book is so marvellous, so exquisite that it brings all the finer aspects of karma and present it fore. I can tell without any hesitation that Swami Vivekananda's book on Karma-Yoga is the one and the only book which tells us all the aspects of karma, karma-yoga, the effect of karma in our life and why we should practice Karma-Yoga etc

I am going to summarise what he (Swami Vivekananda) had said so much (about Karma-Yoga).

Before, we go into Swami Vivekananda's exquisite explanation of commentary, we have to ask ourselves, why did swami Vivekananda emphasised this Karma-Yoga so much?

First of all, I will define: what is karma?

Whatever is done through the mind, speech and through action is called karma.

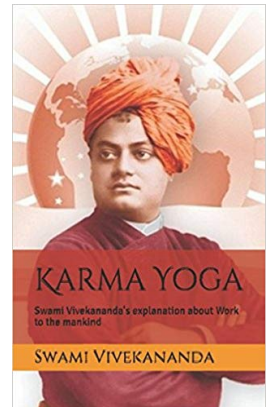
Karma inevitably does two things, firstly it brings it's own inevitable results.

Secondly, it also creates deep impressions called Sansakaras which make us bound or released.

Why is this Karma-Yoga so much necessary specially at the present age?

First: Because mind is restless.

Second: Restless mind is always thinking about action. A restless thought must express itself into some form of action.



Third: What does it usually do? A mindless action, a karma without converting into yoga, it brings us bondage.

What is bondage according to Rishi Patanjali?

Patanjali Rishi comes to our aid when he gives us a beautiful analysis about what is bondage and what is the relationship between the bondage and karma or action.

First he says "We have forgotten our real nature and we are mistaking ourselves as this individual or that individual, as man or woman etc.

This forgetfulness of our true nature is called **Avidhaya अविधा.**"

Avidhaya: means not knowing our true nature, is one side of the Avidhaya. But, to think that we are 100% somebody else is the second part of the Avidhaya. That second part is called **Asmita अस्मिता** or egotism. Ego means, I am so & so --- false identification.

This false identification with the body and with the mind, creates desires. When we try to fulfil our desires, they invariably give rise to two kinds of experiences – pleasant and unpleasant. If the result is pleasant, then we get attached to certain things – events or experiences. If it is the opposite, then we dislike things and develop hatred.

This is beautifully described in Sanskrit as **Raga & Dwesha**. Throughout our whole life, we are running after what gives us happiness and running away from what we understand as unhappiness. So, to fulfil our desires, to run away from undesirable things, we need an instrument - and that instrument is called **body**. So intense clinging to this instrument, through which we fulfil our desires, not wanting to separate ourselves from our body consciousness, for our whole life, life after life, is called **Abhinivesa [अभिनिवेश]**.

So, the mind is impure, full of worldly desires, it is restless, it is selfish, it is narrow and the only way out of this is through proper Karmayoga!

Another reason why work is so emphasised – we all can understand that as time progresses, work is only increasing, both in secular life and in so called spiritual places as well. Secondly, work increases work – the more work we do, it perpetuates itself and brings in more work. Thirdly, because we do not work in the right spirit or way, work is producing stresses and strains and unhappiness. So the wrong way of performing work alone brings mental stresses and strains. So Karmayoga can help us.

Work is also increasing selfishness, characterless-ness, immorality, self intelligence – all these lead inevitably to ignorance which lead to our misery.

So what is the solution :-

1. Work skilfully
2. Work intelligently
3. Work without attachment

The whole gist of this teaching is that one should work as a master and not as a slave. Work incessantly, anyway as Prakriti is behind all this, but do not do slave's work.

This is what Swami Vivekananda says, "Work through freedom, work through love". The word love is very difficult to understand – love never comes until there is true freedom. Thus, work done without attachment, gradually leads one to liberation. Until this age, until the advent of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji, most people, even those following the path of devotion etc, not to speak of the followers of Jnanayoga (followers of knowledge), they have a misnomer, a misunderstanding – that is, Karma cannot lead to liberation.

That is where Swami Vivekananda comes to our aid. So two questions :-

1. Is Karmayoga an independent yoga, or
2. Is it only a help to the other two yogas – Bhaktiyoga and Jnanayoga?

Can Karmayoga lead us to the realisation of God?

Here I have taken directly a quote from Swamiji in his conversation with his disciple, Sarat Chandra Chakravarty :-

“Regard work itself as a form of Tapasya. As on the one hand, the practice of Tapasya intensifies altruistic feelings in the devotee and actuates him to unselfish work. So also, the pursuit of work, for the good of others, carries the Karmayogin to the last fruition of Tapasya, austerities, namely the purification of the heart and leads him thus to the realisation of the Supreme Atman.”

Here is a crystal clear cut answer, that Karmayoga, by itself, independently, can lead one to the Realisation of the Self.

Swamiji continues, “ So long as man is in the realm of Consciousness, of action, agent and the result of action, he is powerless to be guided without doing some work. So, as work is thus ingrained in the very nature of man, why don't you go on doing such works as are helpful to the manifestation of the knowledge of the Atman?”

Now the disciple questions :-

Disciple : “After all, it comes about, that unless the state of Jivanmukti is attained, work for the sake of others, for the good of others, can never be pursued, in the truest sense of the term?”

Swamiji : “ Yes, that's what the Sastras say but they also say, that work or service for the good of others leads to this state of Jivanmukti, freedom while living. Otherwise, there would be no need on the part of the scriptures to teach a separate path of religious practice called Karmayoga.”

Clearly Swamiji has answered that Karmayoga is an independent path that can take us to the Realisation of God. Swamiji also is telling, clearly Karmayoga can give us Absolute self-Realisation, there is no doubt about it.

One small footnote I want to add – this was a question posed by Swami or a devotee to Swami Turiyananda, “whether Karmayoga can lead one to Realisation of God?”

Swami Turiyananda emphatically replied, “ If Karmayoga would not be taking one to the Self-Realised state, since this came out from the mouth of Swami Vivekananda, then from that day Karmayoga has become an independent yoga, there is no doubt about it!”

So now, how does Karmayoga really help us? That's what we need to discuss.

This is where Swami Vivekananda's marvellous explanation of Karmayoga comes handy.

According to Swami Vivekananda, to put it very briefly :-

1. It leads to the formation of wonderful character, and
2. Wonderful character leads to tremendous willpower, and
3. Tremendous willpower generates knowledge or the true nature of Jnana.

What we now call evolution is nothing but progress in dharma from Sakama (with material desires) to Atmakama (desiring emancipation) to Nishkama (free from material desires).

How does this work?

Swami Vivekananda's marvellous book is divided into 8 chapters. The very first chapter is called **Karma & Its Effects on Character**. I am going to bring certain key points in this talk :-

First – the definition of Karma.

The word Karma is derived from the Sanskrit root, Kri [to do]. Technically this word also means the effects of actions. Every mental and physical action is Karma, this word being used in its widest sense.

And what does this karma do – what is its purpose? And why did God introduce Karma into this world? Swamiji says, "You must remember, that all work is simply to bring out the powers of the mind that are already there, to wake up the soul. This power is inside every man, so is also all knowledge. Different works, different activities are like blows to bring them out, to cause these giants, for all of us to wake up."

Recording time 35.43.

Swamiji (Vivekananda) calls us giants but we are potential giants and potential divinities.

Second, earlier I said, Swamiji says that the purpose of every action is to bring wonderful character.

So what is the definition of character?

Swamiji says, "As pleasure and pain, pass before his soul, they have upon him different pictures. And the result of these combined impressions is what is called man's character."

If you take the character of any man, it is but the segregation of his tendencies, the sum total of the bend of his mind. You, me, anybody – we are nothing but the sum total of our samskaras. When you call someone good, he has an abundance of good samskaras. When we call a person evil, it means his mind is full of thoughts, evil imaginations and evil tendencies.

How does this character form?

Swamiji says, "you will find that misery and happiness are equal factors in the formation of that character. Good and evil have a founding share in founding character, and in some instances, misery is the greater teacher than even happiness."

A study of the great characters that God has produced, I daresay, the vast majority of whom will be found that :-

- it is misery that taught more than happiness.
- It is poverty that taught more than wealth.
- It was blows that brought out their inner fire more than praise.

What are the foundations of character?

Very briefly, Swamiji divides character into 5 characteristics :-

- Love – development of love. That means the tendency of a person, a man of character will be full of love.
- Truth – he is full of truth.
- He is full of unselfishness.
- He has tremendous self-control and self-restraint.
- He is chaste and he is pure.

When we find these 5 characteristics manifested in any person, then we know that person is a noble character.

Second : Judgement of character is the next topic.

If you really want to judge the character of a man, do not look at his great performances. Instead, watch him through his most common actions – those are indeed the things that will tell you the real character of a great man.

Third : Goal.

The goal of mankind is knowledge. That is the one ideal placed before us by Eastern philosophy.

Swamiji specifically says and please note, Eastern philosophy means Vedanta, “Pleasure is not the goal of man, but knowledge. Because happiness is knowledge, unhappiness is knowledge.”

If we can acquire that knowledge that everything is wonderful, that man is a blessed man.

Fourth : Knowledge and its Discovery.

Now this knowledge is inherent in man, no knowledge comes from outside, it is all inside. When we say a man knows, in strict psychological language we should say what he discovers, uncovers, unveils.

Remember Swami Vivekananda’s beautiful saying, “**each soul is potentially divine**”.

And what is education? “Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man.”

Fifth : Karmayoga must wait for the will of man.

So, knowledge must transform itself into tremendous willpower. What is the relationship between karma, thought and will?

Swami Vivekananda breaks it down, and I quote :-

“All the actions that we see in the world, all the movements in the human society, all the perks we have around us, are simply the display of thought; the manifestation of the will of man.”

Machines are instruments, cities, men of power, these are simply the manifestations of the will of man. This will is caused by character and character is manufactured by karma.

So let us see :-

- Karma makes a man of character,
- Character transforms itself into will.
- Will uncovers knowledge, any type of knowledge but ultimately Self-Knowledge.

So, as is one’s karma, so is the manifestation of the will. Swamiji says, “ The men of mighty will that the world has produced, have all been tremendous workers. Gigantic souls, they have wills powerful enough to overturn words, wills they got by persistent work through ages and ages.”

Recording time 41.40

This is only a brief summary so I’ll briefly explain it.

No man has become a giant in one life – how many hundreds of lives have to pass before a Buddha, a Christ, a Krishna can really be produced. Lord Buddha used to say, I had 500 births before and only in this life I could become a Buddha, an awakened soul.

Next, what is the purpose of Karmayoga? To make an ideal man, but who is an ideal man?

The ideal man, Swamiji says, is “ He who in the midst of the greatest silence and solitude, finds the intense activity, and in the midst of the intense activity, finds the silence and solitude of the desires. That man alone, has learned the secret of restraint; he has controlled himself; he goes to the streets of the big cities with all its traffic but his mind is as calm as if he were in a cave where not a sound could not reach him. And he is intensely working all the time – that is the ideal of Karmayoga.”

And if we have attained to that level, we have really learned the secret of work.

Next, be responsible for yourself.

Life is an opportunity to really become good. Swami Vivekananda says that the purpose of Karmayoga should be to assume responsibility for whatever a man has or is going to have. He himself is squarely responsible.

Swamiji says, “No-one can get anything unless he earns it”.

This is an eternal law. A fool may buy all the books in the world and will be in his library, but he will only read those that he deserves, and this deserving is produced by Karma! Our karma determines what we deserve and what we can assimilate. We are responsible for what we are, and whatever we wish ourselves to be – we have the power to make it happen.

If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in the future, can be produced by our present actions. So, we have to know how to act, as ultimately, we alone are responsible for whatever we are and whatever we are going to be in the future.

So now comes the crux – how to work?

“To work we have the right but not to the fruits thereof”, Swamiji’s quotes.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन / मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि || 2.47 ||

karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana

mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmaṇi

We have to begin, from the beginning, to take up the works as they come to us, and slowly make ourselves more unselfish every day.

We must do the work and find out the motive that prompts us for the work. Almost without exception, we shall find that our motives are always selfish. But, keep at it, and gradually this selfishness will melt by persistence, till at last will come the time when we shall be able to do really, unselfish work. We may all hope that someday or other, as we struggle through the paths of life, there will come a time, when we shall become perfectly unselfish. The moment we attain to that, all our powers will be concentrated, and the knowledge that is ours will be manifested.

We become free.

Four stages of progress

When we look at evolution in our lives, we see that there must be 4 stages of progress (and in order) :-

- Biological progress
- Intellectual progress
- Moral progress
- Spiritual progress

What is the secret of this progress? It is knowledge! Consciously or unconsciously, we are influenced, all of us, by Karma, not only are own but of everyone else around us. However, we alone are responsible for what we are, and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we can become.

So, we have to know how to act. You will say, what is the use of learning how to work? But there is such a thing as frittering away our energies. With regard to Karmayoga, the Bhagavad Gita categorically tell us that it is doing work, with cleverness and as a science, by knowing how to work, one can obtain the greatest results.

Firstly, I quote from the Gita :-

योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् [2.50]

yogaḥ karmasu kauśhalam [Dexterity in action is called yoga].

Second definition :-

समत्वं योग उच्यते [2.48]

samatvaṁ yoga uchyate

Equanimity, whatever be the result, good or evil, happiness or unhappiness, to keep the mind calm and serene, that is called yoga.

So, work for works sake. There are some Swamiji says, who are really the salt of the earth in every country, who work for works sake, who do not care for name or fame, or even to go to heaven. They work, just because good will come of it, and self control or self-restraint, is a manifestation of greater power than all outgoing actions. This self control will tend to produce a mighty will, a character which makes a Christ or a Buddha.

We may ask, what about rest? Swamiji deals with that subject, and I quote :-

“ We cannot live a minute without work. What then becomes of rest? The ideal man is he, who in the midst of the greatest silence and solitude, finds the intensest activity, and in the midst of the intensest activity, finds the silence and solitude of the desires. That man alone, has learned the secret of restraint; he has controlled himself.”

But, we have to begin from the beginning - to take up the works as they come to us and slowly make ourselves more unselfish every day. If we continue, at last will come the time, when we shall be able to do really unselfish work. At that moment onwards, all our powers will be concentrated and the knowledge that is ours will be manifest.

This is the essence of the first chapter of Swamiji's book on Karmayoga.

In a way, this is the greatest commentary on the 3rd chapter of the Bhagavad Gita called Karmayoga. If we have really heard and understood the essential, salient points of the first chapter, then we will be in a position to really understand what the Lord Krishna is trying to teach to Arjuna, who is none other than every sincere spiritual aspirant, that is to say, all of us.

We are very fortunate to listen to this Bhagavad Gita in the most modern way.

Now we are in a position to start the third chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, which I will take up from the next class onwards. But please remember whatever points we have discussed. I will not go through verse by verse, but I will only take up salient points, quote the salient verses, summarise them again, explain it in modern terms so that it also becomes very practical and we can get the essence of every chapter of the Bhagavad Gita soon, rather than mechanically go through every verse.

Class ends with these beautiful teachings and Slokas.

To be cont'd

**Vasudeva sutham devam kamsa Chanoora mardhanam,
Devaki paramanandam Krishnam vande Jagat Gurum.**

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् । देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

With kind regards

Mamta Misra & Hari Sundaresan.