

# **BHAGAVADGITA**

## **English translation of Sri Ramanuja's Sanskrit Commentary - Swami Adidevananda**

### **Chapter 4**

#### **RO**

4.1 - 4.2 The Lord said -- This Karma Yoga declared to you should not be considered as having been taught now merely, for creating encouragement in you for war. I Myself had taught this Yoga to Vivasvan at the commencement of Manu's age as a means for all beings to attain release, which is man's supreme end. Vivasvan taught it to Manu, and Manu to Ikshvaku. The royal sages of old knew this Yoga transmitted by tradition. Because of long lapse of time and because of the dullness of the intellect of those who heard it, it has been almost lost.

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4.3 It is the same ancient, unchanged Yoga which is now taught to you, who out of friendship and overwhelming devotion have resorted to Me whole-heartedly. The meaning is that it has been taught to you fully with

all its accessories. Because it is the most mysterious knowledge declared in the Vedanta, it cannot be known or taught by anyone other than Myself. In this connection, in order to know the truth about the Lord's descent correctly, Arjuna asked:

4.4 Arjuna said -- According to the calculation of time, your birth was indeed later, contemporaneous with our births. And the birth of Vivasvan was at an earlier time, reckoned as twenty-eight cycles of units of four Yugas each. How can I understand as true that you taught it in the beginning? Now, there is no contradiction here, for it was quite possible that He had taught Vivasvan in a former birth. The memory of what was done in former births is quite natural for great men. This should not be taken to mean that Arjuna does not know the son of Vasudeva, the speaker, as the Lord of all. Because he (Arjuna) says later on: 'You are the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Light and the Supreme Purifier. All the seers proclaim You as the eternal Divine Purusa, the Primal Lord, unborn and all-pervading. So also proclaim the divine sage Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa. You Yourself also are saying this to me' (10.12-13.) Arjuna had heard repeatedly from Bhishma and others during the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira, 'Krsna alone is the cause of creation and submergence of all the worlds. This universe, consisting of things both animate and inanimate, was created for the sake of Krsna' (Ma. Bha., 2.38.23) 'The entire universe is subservient to Krsna' is the meaning of 'For the sake of Krsna'. This apparent contradiction may be explained as follows: Arjuna surely

knows the son of Vasudeva as the Bhagavan. Though knowing Him as such, he questions as if he did not know Him. This is his intention. Can the birth of the Lord of all, who is antagonistic to all that is evil and wholly auspicious, omniscient, whose will is always true and whose desires are fulfilled --- can the birth of such a Person be of the same nature as that of the gods, men etc., who are subject to Karma? Or can it be false like the illusions of a magical show? Or could it be real? In other words, is the birth of the Supreme Being as the incarnate a real fact or a mere illusory phenomenon produced by a magician's art? If His birth is real, what is the mode of His birth? What is the nature of His body? What is the manner of His birth? What is the nature of this body of His? What is the cause of His birth? To what end is He born? The way in which Sri Krsna answers Arjuna's question, justifies the construing of his question in this way.

4.5 The Lord said -- By this, the reality of the Lord's birth is declared in the sentence, 'Many births of Mine have passed.' 'So is it with you' is added by way of illustration. The mode of incarnation, the reality of His body and the cause of His birth are explained in the following verse.

4.6 Without forsaking any of the My special qualities, as supreme rulership, birthless, imperishability etc., I am born by My free will. Prakrti means one's own nature. The meaning is that by employment of My own Nature and taking a form of My choice, I incarnate by My own will (Maya). The character of My own Nature becomes evident from the

following Srutis: 'Him who is of sun-like colour, beyond darkness (Tamas)' (Sve. U., 3.8), 'Him who abides beyond Rajas (active matter)' (Sama 17.1.4.2); 'This Golden Person who is within the sun' (Cha. U. 1.6.6); 'Within the heart, there is the Person consisting of mind, immortal and golden' (Tai. U. 1.6.1); 'All mortal creatures have come from the self-luminous Person' (Yaj., 32.2); 'Whose form is light, whose will is truth, who is the self of ethereal space, who contains all actions, contains all desires, contains all odours, contains all tastes' (Cha. U., 3.14.2); 'Like a raiment of golden colour' (Br. U., 4.3.6). 'Atma-mayaya' means through the Maya which belongs to Myself. Here the term Maya is identical with knowledge as stated in the lexicon of Yaska: 'Maya is wisdom, knowledge.' Further there is the usage of competent people: 'By Maya, He knows the good and bad of his creatures.' Hence by My own knowledge means 'by My will.' Hence, without abandoning My essential attributes which belong to Me the Lord of all, such as being free of sins, having auspicious attributes etc., and creating My own form similar to the configuration of gods, men etc., I incarnate in the form of gods etc. The Sruti teaches the same thing: 'Being unborn, He is born in various forms' (Tai. A., 3.12.7). The purport is that His birth is quite unlike that of ordinary beings. The dissimilarity consists in that He is born out of His own will unlike ordinary beings whose birth is necessitated by their Karma. Thus construed, there is no contradiction also between what was taught earlier and what is taught later as in the statements: 'Many births of Mine have passed, O Arjuna, and similarly yours also. I know them all' (4.5); 'I incarnate Myself' (4.7); and 'He who thus knows

in truth My birth and work' (4.9). [All this elaboration is meant to refute the doctrine of mere apparency of incarnations as taught by the Advaitins. Ramanuja, as stated in his Introduction to the Bhasya, upholds the absolute reality of incarnations.] Sri Krsna now specifies the times of His incarnations.

4.7 There is no restriction as to the time of My birth; whenever the Dharma taught by the Vedas that must be observed according to the arrangements of the four stations and the four stages of life declines, and Adharma, its opposite, increases, then I Myself, by My own will and in the manner stated, incarnate Myself. Sri Krsna gives the purpose of His birth.

4.8 The good are those who follow the Dharma, as defined above. They are the foremost among the Vaisnavas, who have taken refuge in Me. While My name, acts and form are inaccessible to speech and thought, these devotees cannot get support, sustenance etc., for themselves without perceiving Me. They regard even a moment's time without Me as a thousand Kalpas. They become broken in every limb because of the separation from Me. So I am born from age to age in the forms of gods, men etc., for protecting them by affording them the opportunity to behold My form and acts and to converse with Me. I am born also for the destruction of those who are opposed to such devotees and for the restoration of declining Vedic Dharma, which consists of My worship. The main purpose of incarnation is the revealing of His adorable form, so

that all may worship Him. The destruction of the wicked is secondary only. There is no specific restrictions of the Yugas like Krta, Treta etc., for the appearance of Divine Incarnations.

4.9 He who knows truly My life and actions, super-natural and special to Me, which are intended solely for the protection of the good and to enable them to take refuge in Me, --- Me who am devoid of birth, unlike ordinary beings whose birth is caused by Karma associated with Prakrti and its three Gunas producing the evil of bondage, and who is endowed with auspicious attributes such as Lordship over all, omniscience, infallible will etc., --- such a person after abandoning the present body will never be born, but will reach Me only. By true knowledge of My divine birth and acts, all his sins that stand in his way of taking refuge in Me are destroyed. In this birth itself, resorting to Me in the manner already described, and loving Me and concentrating on Me alone, he reaches Me. Sri Krsna speaks of the same thing:

4.10 Purified by the austerity called knowledge of the truth of My life and deeds, many have become transformed in this manner. The Sruti says to the same effect: 'The wise know well the manner in which He is born' (Tai. A., 3.13.1). 'Dhiras' means the foremost among the wise. The meaning is the wise know the manner of His birth thus. It is not that I protect only those who resort to Me in incarnations in the shapes of gods, men etc.

4.11 Whoever desirous of resorting to Me, in whatever manner they think of Me according to their inclinations and take refuge in Me, i.e., resort to Me --- I favour them in the same manner as desired by them; I reveal Myself to them. Why say much here! All men who are intent on following Me do experience, with their own eyes and other organs of sense in all ways, i.e., in every way wished by them, My form (including images), however inaccessible it might be to speech and thought of the Yogins. Now, after completing the incidental topic (with regard to divine incarnations), in order to teach the mode in which Karma Yoga itself acquires the form of Jnana, He begins to speak of the difficulty in finding persons who are qualified for Karma Yoga of this kind.

4.12 All men, desirous of the fruits of their actions, 'sacrifice', i.e., worship or propitiate Indra and other divinities only. But nobody worships Me abandoning attachment to fruits --- Me, who am the Self of Indra and other divinities and the real enjoyer of all sacrifices. Why is this so? Because in this world of men, fruits in the form of sons, cattle, food etc., follow soon from their performance of such sacrificial rites. The phrase, 'the world of men' implies heaven etc., also. Because the unending accumulation of evil heaped up from beginningless time has not been exhausted, all those worldly people lack discernment. Therefore they want rapid results and perform those rituals which consist of the worship of Indra and other divinities for the sake of sons, cattle, food etc., and for the sake of heaven etc. But none with his mind anguished by Samsara and aspiring for final release, practises Karma

Yoga of the kind described above. Real Karma Yoga is My worship. Sri Krsna now speaks of the cause which annuls the evil obstructing the starting of Karma Yoga.

4.13 The whole universe beginning with Brahma and ending with a cluster of grass, with the system of four stations divided according to Sattva and other Gunas and by actions like self-control corresponding to the Gunas, was created by Me. The mention of 'creation' is for illustration. The universe is protected by Me alone and is withdrawn by Me alone. Know Me to be the creator of his manifold actions of creation etc., but at the same time to be non-agent. Sri Krsna explains here how this is possible.

4.14 These actions of varied nature like creation etc., do not contaminate Me i.e., do not bind Me. For the distinctions of gods, men etc., are not brought about by Me, but by the particular Karmas, good and evil, of created beings. Therefore by the process of discriminating between the acquired and the inherent, it will be found that I am not the author of this varied creations etc. The created or embodied selves, who are endowed with bodies and organs at the time of creation in accordance with their own Karmas springing from attachment to fruits etc., experience all enjoyments available in creation. Thus for them (embodied selves) alone there is desire for the results of creation etc., and for the results of their Karmas. There is no desire in Me for it. The Sutrakara says to the same effect: 'No partiality or cruelty on account of

there being dependence (on the Karma of souls for inequalities' (Br. S., 2.1.34). Bhagavan Parasara also says so: 'He (the Lord) is only the operative cause in the creation of beings. That from which the creative forces spring constitutes the material cause. Leaving aside the material cause, the being that becomes embodied does not require the help of any other thing whatever. A thing is led into the condition in which it is, O best of ascetics, only by its own potentiality' (V. P., 1.4.51-2). The Supreme Person is only the operative cause with regard to the creation of those to be created, i.e., the selves in the bodies of gods etc. The material cause for the differences into gods etc., is the potentiality in the form of previous Karmas of the selves to be created. Therefore, leaving aside the operative cause, i.e., the Supreme Person, the creator, the embodied beings do not require anything else for causing difference into conditions of gods etc. For these selves are led to take the forms of gods etc., by the potentiality of their own old Karma with which they are connected. Such is the meaning. He who knows Me thus to be the agent of creation etc., and still a non-agent, i.e., as one who has no desire for the results of the acts of creation etc., --- such a person is not tied by previous actions, i.e., he is freed from the old Karmas which obstruct the undertaking of Karma Yoga by causing attachment to results. Such is the purport.

4.15 Actions of the kind described above were performed even by the aspirants of old for liberation, who have become free from evil after knowing Me in this way. Therefore, after having got rid of the sins by

knowledge of Me in the aforesaid way, perform actions in the same way as they were performed by those ancients like Vivasvan, Manu etc., in olden times, in the way in which their performance was taught by Me even then. I shall declare it again in what follows. Sri Krsna stresses the difficulty of undertaking the type of Karma that is going to be taught now.

4.16 What is the form of the action which should be done by an aspirant for liberation? And what is non-action? Knowledge about the true nature of the acting self, is spoken of as non-action. The wise, even the learned scholars, are puzzled, i.e., do not truly know, both these --- the proper form of the actions to be performed and the proper form of knowledge included in it. I shall teach you that action which includes knowledge within itself. Knowing, i.e., following it, you will be released from evil, i.e., from the bondage of Samsara. Knowledge about the work to be performed results in its performance. Why is it so difficult to know this Karma? Sri Krsna replies:

4.17 There is something which ought to be known in regard to action (Karma) which forms the means of attaining release. So also is the case in regard to 'multi-form or varied forms of action' (Vikarma). These are what have acquired variegation as obligatory, occasional and desire-prompted works requiring numerous requisites. There is also something to be known about non-action, i.e., knowledge of the self. Therefore, deep, i.e., difficult to understand, is the way of action to be pursued by

the seeker after release. What should be known as regards multi-form or variegated forms of Karma is that the attribution of differences leading to differences of fruits in obligatory, occasional and desire-prompted rites and acquisition of things required for their performance, etc., must be renounced, realising that the Sastras aim at only one result, i.e., release (and not several results said to accrue from these works). This has been declared in connection with the teaching, 'The resolute mind is one-pointed' (2.41) and is not elaborated here. Sri Krsna explains what must be known in regard to action and non-action.

4.18 Here by the term 'non-action', the knowledge of the self, which is distinct from action and which forms the subject under consideration, is meant. 'He who sees non-action in action and also action in non-action,' denotes him who can perceive knowledge of the self even while action is being performed and who can also perceive action while engaged in non-action, i.e., knowledge of the self. What is the import of this saying? What is taught here is this: One can perceive, by constant contemplation on the truth about the self, that the action that is being performed in itself is a form of knowledge. One can also perceive that this knowledge is also of the form of Karma because of its being contained in Karma Yoga. Both these (i.e., action in the form of knowledge and knowledge in the form of actions) are accomplished by contemplation on the true nature of the self, even while work is being performed. Thus, he who can see actions as included in contemplation on the reality of the self, is wise, i.e., he knows the full meaning of the

Sastras; he is fit among men, i.e., fit to attain release. He alone has fulfilled all actions, i.e., carried out the entire purpose of the Sastras. [The purport is that no contradiction between knowledge and action is felt by one who knows the philosophy of the self]. How is the form of knowledge accomplished through works which are obviously activities that are being performed? Sri Krsna explains:

4.19 In the case of an aspirant for release, all undertakings of actions in the form of obligatory, occasional and desiderative acts accomplished through the acquisition of materials for their performance as also other works, are free from desire, i.e., are devoid of attachment to fruits. They are devoid of delusive identification. If the mind identifies the self with Prakrti and its Gunas, it is Sankalpa, i.e., 'delusive identification.' Genuine Karma Yoga is free from such identification. Such identification is overcome through contemplation on the real nature of the self as different from Prakrti. Those who know the truth call him a sage, who acts in this way and whose previous Karmas are thereby burnt up by the fire of knowledge of the real nature of the self generated along with his actions. He is a true Karma Yogin. Thus that knowledge is involved in true Karma Yoga, is established. Sri Krsna elaborates this point again:

4.20 Whoever performs actions, renouncing attachment to their fruits and is satisfied with the eternal, i.e., satisfied with his own self, and dependent on none, i.e., devoid of dependence on transient Prakrti

(body and external nature) --- such a person, even though fully engaged in actions, does not act at all. He is engaged in the practice of knowledge under the form of action. Again, Karma, having the form of knowledge, is examined:

4.21 'Free from desire' means having no attachment to the fruits of actions. 'His intellect and mind controlled' means one whose intellect and mind are under control. 'Giving up all possessions' means one who, on account of his having the self as his primary objective, is devoid of the sense of ownership in relation to Prakriti and its derivatives. One who is thus engaged in bodily work alone as long as he lives, does not incur any sin, i.e., does not get engrossed in Samsara. He gets the vision of the self by Karma Yoga of this kind itself, and need not resort to any exclusive practice of Jnana Yoga in between liberation and the practice of Karma Yoga of the above description.

4.22 Content with whatever chance may bring for the maintenance of the body; 'rising above the pairs of opposites' means enduring cold, heat and such other experiences until one has completed the practice of Karma Yoga; 'free from ill-will?' i.e., free from ill-will towards others, seeing his own Karma as the cause of his adversity; 'even-minded in success and failure,' i.e., even-minded at success like victory in war, etc., and failure therein --- such a person 'is not bound,' i.e., he does not fall into Samsara, though devoted to action without any exclusive practice of Jnana Yoga.

4.23 Of a person whose attachment to all objects is gone because of his mind being established in the knowledge of the self, who is therefore liberated from accepting all worldly possessions and who is engaged in the performance of sacrifices etc., as described above --- in the case of such a person his beginningless load of Karma, which is the cause of his bondage, is completely dissolved, i.e., destroyed without leaving any residue. So far the nature of Karma as having the form of knowledge has been described as emerging from constant contemplation on the nature of the self as different from Prakrti. And now Sri Krsna says that all actions together with their ancillaries, have the form of knowledge because of constant contemplation by the aspirant on the Supreme Person who is the Supreme Brahman, as being his soul.

4.24 The expression '*Brahman* is the instrument to offer with' (It is to be remembered that in Ramanuja's system '*Brahman*' in the primary sense is the '*Whole*' with the Supreme Being as the Soul and Atmans and Matter (*Prakrti*) as His body in inseparable union with the Whole. So the word '*Brahman*' can, according to the needs of each context, be used to indicate the Supreme Being, the Atman, or *Prakrti*; In verse 24 it has been used in all these senses. We have therefore put it in italics. See Introduction.) is adjectival to '*the oblation*'. That by which an offering is given, such as a ladle, is an Arpana. It is called *Brahman* because it is an effect of *Brahman*, *Brahman* being the material cause of the universe. '*Brahmaarpanam*' is the oblation, of which the instrument is *Brahman*.

The oblation, just like the instrument with which it is offered, is also Brahman. It is offered by the agent Brahman into the fire of Brahman. He is the Brahma-karma-samadhi who contemplates thus on all acts as filled with the Supreme Brahman or as having the Supreme Brahman as the Self. He who contemplates on Brahman as the Soul of all actions, reaches Brahman alone, as his own self has the Supreme Brahman as Its Self. The meaning is that the individual self --- which is Brahman because of Its having Brahman as Its Self --- has to realise Its own real nature. All actions performed by an aspirant for release have the form of knowledge because of their association with the contemplation of the Supreme Brahman as their self. They are a direct means for the vision of the self without the meditation of Jnana Yoga. Thus, Sri Krsna, after explaining how Karma takes the form of knowledge, now speaks of the various kinds of Karma Yoga.

4.25 Some Karma Yogins resort to the sacrifice relating to gods, i.e., the sacrifice which takes the form of worshipping gods. The meaning is that they have steadfast devotion only in this. 'Others offer sacrifice into the fire of Brahman solely by means of sacrifice.' Here the term, 'sacrifice' is used in the sense of the oblation, the ladle etc., required for performing a sacrifice and therefore they are said to constitute 'sacrificing.' These are of the nature of Brahman. 'Offer by means of sacrifice' indicates the ladle and other implements for the accomplishment of sacrifice.

4.26 Others endeavour towards the restraint of the senses like ear and the rest, i.e., keep themselves away from the objects pleasing to the senses. Other Yogins endeavour to prevent the attachment of the senses to sound and other objects of the senses, i.e., they abstain from the sense objects even when they are allowed to be near, by the discriminative process of belittling their value and enjoyable nature.

4.27 Some again offer as oblations all the functions of the senses, the activities of the vital breath etc., into the fire of Yoga of restraint of the mind kindled by knowledge. They endeavour to prevent the mind from getting attached to the functions of the senses and vital breaths. That is, by contemplating on the self they sublimate these energies and overcome even the lurking subtle desires for them.

4.28 Some Karma Yogins perform the sacrifice of material objects. Some worship the gods with materials honestly acquired. Some practise charity, some engage themselves in sacrifices and in making oblations into the sacred fire. All these perform sacrifice with material objects. Some do the sacrifice of austerity by devoting themselves to Krcchra, Candrayana, fast, etc. Others perform the sacrifice of Yoga. Some devote themselves to making pilgrimages to sacred sanctuaries and holy places. Here the term Yoga means pilgrimages to sacred sanctuaries and holy places as the context relates to aspects of Karma Yoga. Some are devoted to recitation of Vedic texts and some to learning their meaning. They are all devoted to the practice of self-control and of strict

vows, i.e., they are men to steady resolution.

4.29 - 4.30 Other Karma Yogins are devoted to the practice of breath control. They are of three types because of the differences in inhalation, exhalation and stoppage of breath. Puraka (inhalation) is that in which the inward breath is sacrificed in the outward breath. Recaka (exhalation) is that when the outward breath is sacrificed in the inward breath. Kumbhaka (stoppage of breath) is that when the flow of both inward and outward breaths is stopped. The clause, restricting of diet, applies to all the three types of persons devoted to the control of breath. All these, according to their liking and capacity are engaged in performing the various kinds of Karma Yoga beginning from the sacrifice of material objects to the control of breath. They know and are devoted to sacrifices comprising obligatory and occasional rituals preceded by the performance of 'the great sacrifices' (Panca-Maha-Yajna), as alluded to in 'Creating men along with the sacrifices' (3.10). Because of this only, their sins are done away with. Those who are engaged in Karma Yoga by sustaining their bodies only by the ambrosia of sacrificial remains will go to the eternal Brahman. 'Go to Brahman' here means realise the self which has Brahman for Its soul.

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4.31 He 'who offers no sacrifices,' i.e., he who does not devote himself to obligatory and occasional actions, preceded by the performance of the 'great sacrifices' etc., will not be able to achieve human ends which are associated with the material world and are called by the names of virtue, wealth and worldly satisfactions. How then can the man's supreme end called release (Moksa), which is other than these, be attained? As Moksa, man's supreme end, has been mentioned, other objectives different from it, are named 'this world.' That is, indeed, the material world. [Perhaps the idea is that all types of sacrificers should perform the Panca-Maha-Yajnas, and take the remnants of it as their

daily food. Only in this way can we give some meaning to 'ambrosial food' connected with the performance of all the various kinds of sacrifice mentioned in the above verses.]

4.32 Thus there are many kinds of Karma Yoga, which are spread out for the attainment of the Brahman. That means, they lead to the realisation of the true nature of the individual self. Know that all these are forms of Karma Yoga, which have been previously defined and diversified, as born of actions. That means, know them as resulting from occasional and obligatory rites performed day by day. Knowing thus, observing them in the manner prescribed, you will be released. It has been stated that actions have the form of knowledge because of the inclusion of knowledge in them. Now Sri Krsna explains the predominance of the component of knowledge in such actions which include knowledge within themselves.

4.33 Karma Yoga has two aspects --- knowledge and material ingredients. Of these two, the component of knowledge is superior to the component of material ingredients. Knowledge is the culmination of all actions and of everything else, accessories and other things helpful. This knowledge alone, which is to be obtained by all means, is practised as comprehended in Karma Yoga. And this knowledge being regularly practised, reaches gradually what is ultimately attainable i.e., the vision of the self.

4.34 This is the knowledge concerning the self that has been taught by Me in the verses beginning with 'Know that to be indestructible' (2.17) and ending with 'this has been given to you' (2.39). So engaged in appropriate actions, you can learn, according to the maturity of your competence, this wisdom from the wise, who will explain it to you, if you attend on them through prostrating and questioning and by serving them. The wise are those who have immediate apprehension (or vision) of the true nature of the self. Having been honoured by you through prostration etc., and observing your mental disposition characterised by desire for knowledge which you have evinced by your questions, they will teach you this knowledge. Sri Krsna now speaks of the characteristics of knowledge concerning the nature of the self, in the form of direct perception.

4.35 Having which knowledge, you will not again fall into this delusion of mistaking the body etc., for the self, which is the cause of possessiveness etc. By this (knowledge) you will see in yourself all the beings which appear in diversity of forms such as gods, men etc.; for between you and other beings there is equality of nature when freed from the hold of Prakrti, as your self and all other selves have the form of knowledge as far as their essence is concerned. Sri Krsna will later on instruct that the nature of the self, dissociated from the evil of contact with Prakrti, is equal in all beings. 'For faultless Brahman (individual self) is alike everywhere; therefore, abide in Brahman' (5.19). And then you will see all beings without any exception in Me, because of the similarity

of nature of the pure selves with one another and with My nature. For Sri Krsna will teach later on: 'Resorting to this knowledge and partaking of My nature' (14.5). So the equality of the selves, devoid of name and form, with the nature of the Supreme, is known from the texts like: 'Then the wise, shaking off good and evil, stainless, attain supreme equality' (Mun. U., 3.1.3). Therefore all selves dissociated from Prakrti are equal in nature to one another and equal in nature to the Lord of all. [The idea is that blissfulness is the basic nature of all selves. Blissfulness (Ananda) is the nature of the Supreme Being also. Equality contemplated is in this respect only, but not in power of creation, which belongs only to Isvara]

4.36 Even though you be the most sinful of all sinners, you will completely cross over the sea of sins previously accumulated, with the boat of knowledge concerning the self.

4.37 The fire of knowledge concerning the real nature of the self reduces to ashes the collection of endless Karmas accumulated from beginningless times, just as a well-kindled fire reduces to ashes a bundle of firewood.

4.38 Nothing here in this world purifies like this knowledge; for the knowledge of the self destroys all evil. He who has reached perfection by practising Karma Yoga in its form of knowledge daily in the manner taught, in due time, of his own accord, attains it, i.e., knowledge

concerning his own self. Sri Krsna expounds the same lucidly thus:

4.39 After attaining knowledge through instruction in the manner described, he must have firm faith in it and the possibility of its development into ripe knowledge. He must be intent on it, i.e., his mind must be focussed thereupon. He must control his senses and keep them away from all their objects. Soon will he then reach the aforesaid state of maturity and obtain knowledge. Soon after attaining such kind of knowledge, he will reach supreme peace, i.e., he attains the supreme Nirvana (realisation of the self).

4.40 'The ignorant,' i.e., one devoid of knowledge received through instruction, 'the faithless' or one who has no faith in developing this knowledge taught to him, i.e., who does not strive to progress quickly, and 'the doubting one,' i.e., one who is full of doubts in regard to the knowledge taught --- such persons perish, are lost. When this knowledge taught to him about the real nature of the self is doubted, then he loses this material world as also the next world. The meaning is that the ends of man, such as Dharma, Artha and Karma which constitute the material ends or fulfilments, are not achieved by such a doubting one. How then can man's supreme end, release be achieved by such a doubting one? For all the ends of human life can be achieved through the actions which are prescribed by the Sastras, but their performance requires the firm conviction that the self is different from the body. Therefore, even a little happiness does not come to the person

who has a doubting mind concerning the self.

4.41 The countless ancient Karmas which constitute the cause of bondage, do not bind him who has renounced actions through Karma Yoga in the manner explained before, who has sundered all doubts concerning the self by the knowledge of the self in the manner explained before, and who is of steady mind, i.e., unshakable, with the mind focussed steadily on the meaning that has been forth.

4.42 Therefore, after sundering this doubt concerning the self, born of beginningless ignorance and present in the heart, by the sword of the knowledge of the self in the manner explained before, practise the Karma Yoga taught by Me. For that, rise up, O Arjuna.