

CHAPTER 4

TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE

Connection between Chapter 3 and Chapter 4

- ❖ In Chapter 3 Krishna explained that lust covers knowledge and that ignorance binds us to the material world. Dutiful detached work, or *karma-yoga* is the means given to attain **transcendental knowledge**
- ❖ Chapter 3 thus glorifies **transcendental knowledge** as
 - Being able to elevate us from *sakama karma-yoga* to *niskama karma-yoga*
 - Being able to award our intelligence the strength to overcome all lusty desires
 - Having the power to purify our consciousness from passion to goodness
- ❖ Now Chapter 4 emphasizes on what is **transcendental knowledge** and how it is received
- ❖ Also *Bg. 3.30* mentions that, to perform the highest level of *karma-yoga* – surrendering all works to Krishna – one must know who Krishna is. Chapter 4 provides this knowledge.

BREAKDOWN OF CHAPTER 4

SECTION I (4.1 – 4.10) — TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT KRISHNA

- Transcendental knowledge about Krishna should be received by disciplic succession
- This reveals the truth about Krishna's form, His birth and His activities
- Knowing these truths, one who takes shelter of Krishna becomes purified and attains Krishna

SECTION II (4.11 – 4.15) — APPLYING TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE

- Krishna is neutral and sanctions the awarding of fruits of everyone's work
- Awards the fruits according to the living entity's desire and past deeds
- Understanding Krishna in this way, keeps one free from material bondage

SECTION III (4.16 – 4.24) — UNDERSTANDING KARMA ON THE PLATFORM OF JNANA

- One can perform detached actions in Krishna's service by applying 'transcendental knowledge' They are called *akarma*
- *Akarma* refers to actions without reactions and such actions are on the absolute platform
- Krishna explains how in this way *karma* can be seen as *jnana*

SECTION IV (4.25 – 4.33) — SACRIFICES LEAD TO TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE

- Fruit of all kinds of Vedic sacrifices is 'transcendental knowledge'
- This leads to liberation and ultimately to pure devotional service

SECTION V (4.34 – 4.42) — CONCLUSION

- Acting on 'transcendental knowledge' received by disciplic succession destroys the sinful reactions to all work
- Therefore one should do his duty fixed in transcendental knowledge

SECTION I (4.1 – 4.10) TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT KRISHNA

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SECTION I

Krishna is Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who comes to the world to protect eternal *dharma*. One who knows this is factually liberated

Texts 4.1 – 4.3

COMMON THEME: Ancient origins of *Bhagavad-gita* and qualifications to receive

- ❖ The Lord explains that science of work, explained in Chapters 2 and 3, is very old and authorized; and He gave this knowledge to Vivasvan and then the Supreme science was received through ‘disciplic succession’ (Answer to how it was received) but in the course of time the succession was broken.
- ❖ Who is qualified to receive the transcendental mystery of this science?
 - Devotee
 - Friend (Devotee can be in one of the five primary rasas, e.g. Arjuna is a friend)
 - *Other references on Qualifications Ref. 4.34, 4.39, 9.1, 18.67-68*

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF TEXTS 4.1 – 4.3

The presentation of *Bhagavad-gita*’s history is a precursor to Krishna’s revelation of His transcendental nature

- Learning the tradition of this knowledge will give Arjuna faith in what he is hearing
- Additionally, Krishna’s claim to be the original proponent of knowledge that is more than 2 million years old sparks a conversation that allows Krishna to reveal His supreme transcendental position

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORTS 4.1 – 4.3

- (a) **Importance of *Bhagavad-gita* for Royal order. Why? (4.1)**
 - To rule the citizens and protect them from material bondage to lust
 - To impart “Krishna consciousness” and “value of human life” to citizens by education, culture and devotion
 - Thus helps them pursue a successful path of human life
- (b) **Importance of *Bhagavad-gita* being given to the sun-god as the first disciple (4.1)**
 - This indicates that *Bhagavad-gita* is not a speculative treatise for insignificant mundane scholars but a standard book of knowledge from time immemorial
 - Krishna did not give this knowledge to any ordinary person
 - He selected sun god because the sun is the king of all planets and controls all planets and is rotating under Krishna’s order (*Ref. Brahma Samhita 5.52*)
- (c) **History of *Bhagavad-Gita* (4.1)**
 - Exists in human society since Maharaj Iksvaku (2,005,000 years)
 - Given to Vivasvan at least 120,400,000 years ago
 - Again spoken to Arjuna 5000 years ago. Why? – Because original purpose was scattered by motives of unscrupulous commentators (4.2 purport)

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORTS 4.1 – 4.3 continued...


- (d) **Bhagavad-gita is 'Apaurusheya'** (Superhuman) (4.1) Because
- Spoken by Supreme Personality of Godhead who is beyond the four defects of conditioned human being
 - **WARNING!** One should accept without mundane interpretation, "as it is"
- (e) **What is demoniac spirit to approach Bhagavad-gita (4.2 purport)**
- Not follow parampara
 - Whimsical interpretation and thus they dissipate its value for no one's benefit
 - Using God's property to make money
 - To accept it as a treatise of philosophical speculation – This is simply a waste of time
 - Not to accept Krishna as He is and concoct something about Krishna
- (f) **Importance of this edition** (4.2 purport)
- Most of the present editions are not according to authorized disciplic succession
 - Need of an edition in line with parampara
 - To revive the original purpose of *Bhagavad-gita*
- (g) **Arjuna's qualification** (4.3)
- Arjuna is devotee and friend
 - Accepts Krishna as Supreme Personality of Godhead
- (h) **What is real "devotional service to the cause of Bhagavad-gita"** (4.3) – Any commentary on *Bhagavad-gita* in footsteps of Arjuna – This is the only way to benefit from *Bhagavad-gita*

Text 4.4

THEME: Arjuna's doubt: How can Krishna, born as son of Devaki, instruct Vivasvan who is millions of years older

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.4


- (a) **Why does Arjuna question about this doubt**
- To defy demoniac and atheistic people who say that 'Krishna is ordinary'
 - Wants Krishna to speak authoritatively
 - Benefits of Krishna's speaking
 - Krishna's speech is auspicious for the whole world
 - Devotees heartily welcome and worship such statements
 - They are always eager to hear more and more about Krishna
 - Wants demons to know that Krishna is superhuman, transcendental and above modes, time and space
- (b) **Is Arjuna convinced of Krishna's position** – Yes, as evident from Chapter 10 mentioned in this purport
- (c) **What is demoniac standpoint about Krishna's position?** (*These points are similar to those mentioned in Purports of 4.1 – 4.3*)
- Not like the idea that Krishna is Supreme Personality of Godhead
 - Reject Him as 'Supreme Authority'
 - Distort Him according to their understanding
 - Find such explanations strange, because they study from their own standpoint

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.4 & 4.5:** This question in Text 4.4, asked for the benefit of others, gives Krishna the opportunity to speak directly about Himself in the next few verses

Texts 4.5 – 4.10

COMMON THEME: Krishna reveals His transcendental position about His birth and activities

- ❖ **Text 4.5 and 4.6 talks about ‘His appearance and disappearance’**
 - **Text 4.5:** My birth and death are not like yours
 - **Text 4.6:** I appear in My original transcendental form which is unborn and never dies , I appear by My own will
- ❖ **Texts 4.7 – 4.8 talks about ‘His activities.’** It explains when and why Krishna appears – **reasons of descent:**
 - **When**
 - Decline in religion
 - Predominant rise in irreligion
 - **Why**
 - To annihilate the demons
 - To deliver the devotees (from anxiety to see the Lord)
 - To re-establish the principles of religion
- ❖ **Text 4.9 – 4.10 talks about the result of understanding the knowledge of ‘transcendental birth’ (Texts 4.5 & 4.6) and ‘activities’ (Texts 4.7 & 4.8)**
 - To be absorbed in Krishna
 - Become purified
 - Freed from attachment, fear and anger
 - Attain love for Krishna
 - Go back to Krishna (Transcendental abode)
 - No re-birth in material world

 **PLEASE NOTE:** All Themes of Texts 4.5 – 4.10 are described above under the common theme and their purports are described in their respective Focus of Learning sections below. Only some points of the purports of Texts 4.5 and 4.6, are described under the Summarsized Theme 4A.

SUMMARISED THEME 4A

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN KRISHNA AND THE CONDITIONED LIVING ENTITY (4.5 – 4.6 purports)		
S.No	Krishna	Conditioned Living entity
1	• Eternal and remembers past, present and future (<i>Acyuta</i> : never forgets – infallible)	• Eternal but forgets
2	• Remembers all births because body does not change or deteriorate (<i>Avyayam</i>)	• Forgets because body changes and deteriorates
3	• Appears by own will	• Forced to appear by karma
4	• Body is transcendental	• Body is material
5	• No difference between body and self (<i>Adwaita</i>)	• The soul acquires an external body (gross and subtle)

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORTS 4.5 – 4.6*

(a) Peculiarity of Lord's birth

- Lord appears like an ordinary person
- But remembers many many past births
- Common man cannot remember past few hours, therefore no-one can claim to be God

(b) Lord has many incarnations but He is original

- *Ref. Vedas – Analogy:* Lord is like the *Vaidurya* stone which changes color but still remains one (Lord manifests so many innumerable forms)
- *Ref. Brahma-Samhita 5.33; 5.39*

(c) Qualification to understand these multi-forms – and example of such a qualified person

- Only by pure unalloyed devotion and not by simple study of the Vedas, can one understand
- *e.g.* Arjuna incarnates as one of the associate devotees in all incarnations

(d) Difference between 'devotee forgetting the nature of Lord' and 'demon not understanding'

- Devotee may forget but by His divine grace, one immediately understands the infallible nature of the Lord
- Non-devotee never understands

(e) Living entity can never equal the Lord (4.5)

- Lord is Achyuta (Infallible) – Never forgets Himself and His previous births even in material contact
- Lord is Advaita – There is no distinction between His body and Self, therefore He does not change His spiritual body and never forgets His past births
- Living entity, however great, spiritually liberated or materially great, can never equal the Lord, *e.g.* Arjuna
 - Materially – He is famous as '*Parantapa*' (Subduer of enemies)
 - Spiritually – is one of the liberated associates

(f) 'Atma-maya' (4.6) – means

- Lord descends by 'internal potency' and not by 'external potency'
 - Lord's body and intelligence never deteriorates ('*avyayam*') and is never contaminated by material nature (thus it defeats Mayavada teaching)
 - Prakriti means nature or '*svarupa*' (own form)
 - *Analogy:* His appearance and disappearance are like the sun's rising and setting
 - He is always the "Lord of all living entities" – evident by wonderful and superhuman acts on Earth
- '*Atma-maya*' also means that Lord descends by 'causeless mercy' so that we can concentrate on His form as He is and not on 'Mental concoctions and imaginations'
 - *Ref. Amara-kosa dictionary*

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.7

- (a) **How the Lord incarnates** – By His internal potency – This is indicated by the word ‘*Srjami*’
- Meaning of ‘*Srjami*’ – Lord is not created or born but “manifests” as per free will
 - ‘*Srjami*’ is mentioned as “manifests” because Text 4.6 refutes the Lord being born or created, by calling Him as ‘*aja*’
- (b) **When does the Lord incarnate** – Usual schedule of Lord’s appearance
- End of *Dvapara-yuga* of 28th millennium of seventh Manu of a day of Brahma
 - But no obligation to rule
- (c) **For what purpose does the Lord descend** – Lord comes to establish “principles of dharma”
- What are the ‘principles of dharma’ – Direct orders of Supreme Personality of Godhead
 - Ref. *SB 6.3.19* “*Dharmam tu...*”
 - What is ‘Highest dharma’ – Surrender unto Him only
- (d) **Certain facts about ‘*Avatara*’**
- Mission: Comes with mission, e.g. Lord Buddha came to establish Vedic principles of ‘Non-violence’
 - Sanctioned: Mentioned in scriptures – criteria to accept
 - Place: Can appear anywhere, not only on Indian soil
 - Message: Speaks as per audience, e.g. higher and lower mathematics
 - Common mission:
 - To lead people to God-consciousness,
 - Obedience to the principles of religion
- (e) **Bhagavad-gita is for highly advanced people**, e.g. Arjuna (higher principles of religion begin with *Varna-asrama*)

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.8

- (a) **Definition of *Sadhu*** – A man in Krishna consciousness, apparently may be irreligious but if he is wholly and fully Krishna conscious, he is a *sadhu*
- (b) **Definition of ‘*Duskrtam*’** – Does not care for Krishna consciousness
- (c) **Prime purpose of any *Avatara***
- To appease His unalloyed devotees e.g. Prahlada Maharaja and Devaki
 - Otherwise the athiests can be dealt with by the Lord’s agents
- (d) **Ref. *Caitanya-caritamrta* on (Principles of Incarnation)**
- The *avatara*, or incarnation of Godhead, descends from the kingdom of God for material manifestation
 - And the particular form of the Personality of Godhead who descends is called an incarnation, or *avatara*
 - Such incarnations are situated in the spiritual world, the kingdom of God. When they descend to the material creation, they assume the name *avatara*
- (e) **Why specifically does Lord Krishna descend (Prime purpose)** – To mitigate anxieties of pure devotees who are anxious to see His Vrindavana pastimes

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.8 continued...

(f) Who is the 'Avatara' for Kali-yuga – Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu

- How does he spread religion and deliver miscreants – Propogated Sankirtan Movement throughout India
- Sastric proof – This *Avatara* is mentioned secretly and not directly in Upanisads, *Mahabharata* and *Srimad Bhagavatam*
- Mission
 - He does not kill but delivers by causeless mercy
 - Predicts the broadcast of Sankirtana movement all over the world

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.9*

(a) Liberation of living entity from material bondage is not very easy – Two paths are possible:

- Path of impersonalism and yoga
- Path of devotees

(b) Path of Impersonalists and yogis

- Endeavor – Not very easy - many, many births
- Goal – Only partial success, *brahmajyoti*
- Safety – Risk of fall-down

(c) Path of Devotees in Krishna consciousness

- Endeavor – Very easy, one has to simply understand the transcendental nature of Lord's birth and activities (4.9)
- Goal – Abode of Krishna – Thus complete success is assured
- Safety – Lord protects from falldown again into the material world

(d) Who can attain 'Perfection of liberation'

- A faithful devotee, who accepts Krishna's protection with faith
- One who accepts Krishna as Supreme Personality of Godhead
 - He has many transcendental forms
 - These forms have relations with unalloyed devotees
- One who does not waste time in philosophical speculations
 - *Ref. Brahma Samhita, Vedas, Svetasvatara Upanisad (study purport)*

(e) Fate of other processes like empiric philosophers and puffed-up mundane scholars

- Waste of time
- May get important roles in material world, not liberation
- *Analogy*: licking the outer surface of a bottle of honey

(f) What is the hope for these speculators etc. – 'Only causeless mercy of devotee of the Lord'

(g) Conclusive suggestion – Cultivate Krishna consciousness with faith and knowledge and attain perfection

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.10

- (a) **Problem: They are too materially affected** – They cannot understand personal nature of Lord as per Text 4.9
- (b) **Different degrees of affliction**
- ‘*Raga*’: Strong attachment to material life – leads to negligence of spiritual life
 - ‘*Bhaya*’: Fear of personal spiritual identity – For them merging into impersonal is highest,
 - Because they are too absorbed in material bodily concept, concept of retaining personality after liberation from matter frightens them
 - *e.g. Analogy*: Impersonalists compare living entities to the bubbles in the ocean which merges into the ocean
 - ‘*Krodha*’: Conception of void resulting from frustration of life
 - Become angry at all sorts of spiritual speculation out of hopelessness
 - Takes to intoxications
 - Accept hallucinations as spiritual vision
- (c) **Solution to get freedom from these three:**
- Take complete shelter of Lord
 - Under the spiritual master’s guidance
 - Follow disciplines and regulative principles of devotional life
- (d) **Different stages of bhakti** – This is a progression to higher levels of purity, free from any of the above mentioned three diseases
- *Śraddha to prema (study purport) (Ref. Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu 1.4.15 – 1.4.16)*
 - This explains the ‘Science of devotional service’

SECTION II (4.11 – 4.15)
APPLYING TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SECTION II

Actions are transcendental when executed in full knowledge that Krishna is the Supreme goal of all paths and the awarder of the results of all work

Text 4.11*


THEME: By hearing about Krishna many, many persons in the past became purified and attained love for Krishna. They attained love for Krishna because this was their desire and Krishna fulfilled it. What if someone takes shelter of Krishna with something other than a desire to achieve transcendental love for Him? Text 4.11 explains Krishna’s reciprocation with such category of souls

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF 4.11

People on different paths are not realising different things.
They all realise different degrees and aspects of Krishna

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.11

- (a) **Everyone is searching for Krishna in different aspects of 'His manifestation'**
- (b) **3 levels of realizing Absolute Truth** – *Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan*
- (c) **Who realizes Krishna fully** – Only pure devotees
- (d) **Krishna is the object of everyone's realizations** – Anyone and everyone is satisfied according to one's desire to have Him.
 - Examples of Lord's reciprocation to various degrees:
 - With Fruitive workers: Lord as *Yajnesvara*
 - With Impersonalists: Lord as *Brahmajyoti*
 - With *Yogis*: Mystic powers
 - With Devotees: 5 primary *rasas*
- (e) **Without coming to highest perfection of Krishna consciousness all attempts remain imperfect**
 - Everyone depends upon on His mercy for success
 - All kinds of spiritual processes are but different degrees of success on the same path
 - *Ref. Srimad Bhagavatam 2.3.10: "Akamah sarva kamo..."*

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.11 & 4.12:** One could then ask: "If Krishna, the Supreme Lord, gives a soul whatever he wants, why don't more persons surrender to Him? Why do they worship others to fulfill their desires?" Krishna answers this question in Text 12.


Text 4.12

THEME: They worship demigods or some powerful man of this world because they want quick results in their fruitive acts

- ❖ One who worships Krishna for material benefit, does obtain his desire, but first Krishna purifies his heart. Purification may take some time. Also when reward is achieved devotee no longer wants it e.g. Dhurva Maharaja
- ❖ *Analogy:* Boons of demigods are like bubbles in Cosmic Ocean

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.12

- (a) **Are demigods equal to God?** – No, To consider so is "*Pashandi*" or atheist mentality
 - They are parts and parcels – *Ref. Brahma-samhita / Vedas*
 - They are living entities with material powers
 - Even Brahma and Siva worship Vishnu
 - Meaning of '*Iha-devatah*' – Any powerful man or demigod in this material world
- (b) **Narayana or Visnu does not belong to the material world** – *Ref. Sankaracharya*
- (c) **Madness of human society**
 - Mad after temporary things
 - Worship temporary leaders – Kowtowing to so called big-guns
 - Not interested in Krishna consciousness for permanent solutions
- (d) **Conclusion: People are rarely interested in Krishna consciousness**

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.12 & 4.13:** Some worship demigods, some worship Brahman, some worship Krishna. Thus Krishna the Supreme *Isvara* controls everyone's desires. Is He responsible for the suffering and enjoyment of everyone in this world? How can such people become free from excessive attachment?


Text 4.13*

THEME: Krishna creates *Varnashrama* dharma so that people could purify themselves by regulating desires

- ❖ *Varnashrama* system is the process of purification for one whose material desire inhibits him from directly approaching Krishna

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.13

- (a) **Basis of 4 divisions** – ‘*guna*’ and ‘*karma*’
- (b) **Different modes of 4 *Varnas***
 - ‘*Brahmana*’ – Mode of Goodness
 - ‘*Ksatriyas*’ – Mode of passion
 - ‘*Vaisyas*’ – Mode of passion and ignorance
 - ‘*Sudras*’ – Mode of ignorance
- (c) **To which class does Lord Krishna belong**
 - He is the creator of the four divisions
 - He does not belong to any of these divisions because He is not one of the conditioned souls
- (d) **Why did the Lord create this system**
 - To elevate from animal status to human status
 - To systematically develop Krishna consciousness
- (e) **How is a ‘*Vaisnava*’ higher than a ‘*Brahmana*’**
 - A ‘*Brahmana*’ by quality is supposed to know about *Brahman*, the Supreme Absolute Truth but most of them approach only the impersonal *Brahman*
 - One who transcends this limited knowledge and reaches the knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is a ‘*Vaishnava*’
 - Krishna consciousness includes knowledge of all different plenary expansions like Lord Rama, Nrsimha etc.
- (f) **Krishna and one in Krishna consciousness are both transcendental to all divisions (community, nation or species) of society**

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.13 & 4.14:** In the next verse, Krishna will further explain how He is the non-doer, or how He acts but does not act and the value of thoroughly understanding these subtle truths

Text 4.14

THEME: Since Krishna is free from all fruitive attachments:


- ❖ He has no personal interest in *Varnashrama* dharma
- ❖ He creates it only to help the living entity fulfill their desires and get purified

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF TEXT 4.14

Krishna is not responsible for our position in *Varnashrama* and for right and wrong activities

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.14

- (a) **Krishna creates but is unaffected by the activities of the material world**, living entities are entangled because of the propensity to Lord over
- *Analogy*: King not subject to state laws
 - *Analogy*: Proprietor not responsible for activities of workers
 - Similarly Lord is not interested in any kind of material happiness, even heavenly planets just like a proprietor is not interested in the low grade happiness of the workers
- (b) **Lord is aloof from material actions and reactions**
- *e.g.* Rains not responsible for different types of vegetations, although without rains, there is no possibility of vegetative growth
 - Lord only gives facilities through material nature, living entity is responsible
 - *Ref. Vedic Smṛti*: Lord is only the Supreme cause, the immediate cause is material nature
 - *Ref. Vedānta Sūtra*: Lord is never partial to any living entity, but living entity is responsible for his own acts; Lord only gives the facilities through material nature
- (c) **Who is an experienced man in Krishna consciousness**
- One who understands this transcendental nature of the Lord is an experienced man
 - Such a person fully conversant with all the intricacies of the '*law of karma*', does not become affected by the results
- (d) **Who becomes entangled by misunderstanding the Lord**
- One who does not know the transcendental nature of the Lord
 - To think that the activities of the Lord are aimed at fruitive results like ordinary living entities

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.14 & 4.15:** As will be mentioned in the next verse, when the *jīva* understands these facts about Krishna and applies this transcendental knowledge to his own work and becomes a servant of Krishna, he also becomes aloof from the material whirl of action and reaction.

Krishna has no attachment for the fruits of work. Knowing this, Arjuna should fight with faith, for Krishna's pleasure, if he desires to become liberated. Krishna wants Arjuna to fight in knowledge of Krishna's position and as an offering to Him. In this way Arjuna should follow the example of previous great devotees.

Text 4.15

THEME: Previous liberated souls perform their *Varnasrama* dharma for Krishna's pleasure, knowing Him to be the transcendental creator of *Varnasrama*. Krishna advises Arjuna to do the same


FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.15

- (a) **Two classes of men**
 - Those that are ‘materially polluted’
 - Those that are ‘freed from material contamination’
- (b) **Krishna consciousness is equally beneficially to both classes**
 - ‘Materially polluted’ – They take to Krishna consciousness as a gradual cleansing process
 - ‘Freed from material contamination’ – They may continue to act in Krishna consciousness to set a perfect example
- (c) **Foolish plans of retirement (escaping attitude)**
 - Neophytes in Krishna consciousness want to retire from activities without having knowledge of Krishna consciousness
 - *E.g.* Arjuna’s desire to retire from battlefield
- (d) **Advice to Arjuna**
 - To retire from battlefield and sit aloof making a show of Krishna consciousness is less important
 - Follow in the footsteps of the Lord’s previous disciples such as sun-god Vivasvan
 - Lord knows all His past activities as well as of persons who acted in Krishna consciousness in the past – Therefore He recommends the example of the sun-god
- (e) **Who are referred here as ‘past liberated souls’** – All the previous students of Lord Krishna who engaged in the discharge of duties adopted by Krishna

SECTION III (4.16 – 4.24)
UNDERSTANDING KARMA ON THE PLATFORM OF JNANA

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SECTION III

Acting in pure devotional service is *akarma*, free from reactions. This is because *karmic* reaction is a result of fruitive consciousness and not activity itself

 **LINK BETWEEN SECTION II & SECTION III:** In the next nine verses (4.16 – 4.24), in pursuance of Krishna’s description of His own work, Krishna will explain how work (*karma*) can be seen as inactivity (*akarma*). Arjuna previously said he wished to leave the battlefield and avoid the results of his *karma*, like a *jnani*, through inactivity. Krishna will show him that no *karma* accrues to one who works in transcendental knowledge and that properly performed *karma* can thus be seen as non-different from the process of *jnana*


Text 4.16

THEME: Must follow liberated souls – Without following liberated souls one is sure to be bewildered in discovering *karma*, *vikarma* and *akarma*

- ❖ This verse mentions the need to avoid independent work – Action has to be executed in accordance with the example of previous bona-fide devotees
- ❖ Therefore Lord offers to explain *karma*, *vikarma* and *akarma*

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.16

- (a) **Whom to follow** – Leadership of authorized persons in parampara
- (b) **Why does the Lord instruct Arjuna directly?**
 - Because even the most intelligent person gets bewildered on this path
- (c) **Why follow Arjuna footsteps?**
 - Because of direct instruction of Lord to Arjuna, anyone who follows in the footsteps of Arjuna is certainly not bewildered
- (d) **Imperfect speculators can't help**
 - Lord Himself lays down religions
 - Understand this science through *Mahajanas* – (study purport for all the names)
- (e) **Lord's causeless mercy**
 - Lord is explaining directly to Arjuna so that His devotees can understand
 - Only action performed in Krishna consciousness can deliver a person

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.16 & 4.17:** In the next verse Krishna adds the principle of *vikarma*, or forbidden action, to His presentation of *karma* and *akarma*.


Text 4.17

THEME: Intricacies of *karma* are difficult to understand

- ❖ Distinguish very carefully between the three subjects of *karma*, *vikarma* and *akarma*
- ❖ This verse explains “Why such actions should not be independent”
 - Because they are very intricate

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.17

- (a) **Why learn this subject**
 - If one is serious about liberation from material bondage, one has to understand the distinctions
 - Applied to such analysis because it is such a difficult subject matter
- (b) **What is the conclusion that *Bhagavad-gita* is directed towards**
 - To know every living entity as an eternal servitor of Krishna
 - Action in Krishna consciousness is the action free from three modes
- (c) **How to learn this subject** – Associate with authorities in Krishna consciousness; this is as good as learning from the Lord directly


 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.17 & 4.18:** Having introduced the term *vikarma*, Krishna returns to the distinction between *karma* and *akarma*

Text 4.18

THEME: Seeing ‘action in inaction’ and ‘inaction in action’ – Freedom from reaction can result from proper action and sinful reaction can result from improper renunciation


FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.18

- (a) **This verse explains one who is intelligent and one who is in the transcendental position**
- One who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction is intelligent although engaged in all sorts of activities
- (b) **Immunity to all sorts of reactionary elements of work** – How to achieve?
- By sense of “Eternal servitorship to Krishna”
- (c) **Krishna consciousness – status of ‘akarma’**
- For whom – All acts done for Krishna
 - Attitude
 - No desire for sense gratification
 - Acts as eternal servitor
 - Result – Enjoys transcendental happiness (not available to impersonalists)
- (d) **Vikarma**
- For whom – Work with attachment
 - Attitude – Against scriptural injunctions
 - Result – Bad reaction (4.17)
- (e) **Karma**
- For whom – work with attachment
 - Attitude – according to sastras
 - Result – good reaction
 - Facility – Krishna creates *Varnasrama* according to quality and work
- (f) **What is “renunciation of work”**
- It is action in inaction
 - Result – Get reaction
 - Short explanation – “Action in inaction” is the opposite. A sannyasi without transcendental knowledge of Krishna may appear not to be performing work, but as a soul, he can’t avoid either activity or the entangling results of that activity. Devoid of transcendental knowledge about Krishna, he must act, but he cannot act in Krishna’s service, for he has no knowledge of Krishna. He is thus liable to all reactions
 - *E.g.* The sannyasi must breathe. He also must eat. He steps on living entities as he walks. Without Krishna consciousness all these activities have no transcendental basis for him, and thus reactions accrue to him


 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.18 & 4.19:** Every soul is unavoidably active. Artificial attempts at inactivity lead to a further danger; that of unengaged senses coupled with an impure mind. Anyone who attempts spiritual practices while the mind meditates on sense enjoyment will fall down, even if such an unfortunate “renunciant” appears to be less involved in the world than a devotee. Krishna further explains this verse in Text 19

Texts 4.19* – 4.24


COMMON THEME: “Akarma in Karma” (inaction in action)


 **PLEASE NOTE:** Points of the translations of these verses have been covered below under the heading ‘Symptoms of one working in transcendence’ followed by links between the verses. Thereafter Purports are covered in a single ‘Focus of Learning’ section


SYMPTOMS / QUALITIES OF ONE “WORKING IN TRANSCENDENCE”


 **PLEASE NOTE:** For ease of memorization the points below are given a pneumonic with 4 D’s, 4 F’s and 4 S’s

1. Main characteristic – Works without attachment (Detached) to sense gratification (4.19)
2. Detached from fruits – Acts without fruitive attachment, although engaged in all undertakings (4.20)
3. Ever-satisfied and independent (4.20*)
4. Self-control – Mind and intelligence fully controlled (4.21)
5. Freedom from sense of proprietorship (4.21)
6. Desires only bare necessities (4.21)
7. Self-satisfaction – Satisfied with whatever comes by providence with no over-endeavor (4.22*)
8. Freedom from duality – nothing can hamper his service (4.22*)
9. Steadiness – Steady in success and failure (4.22*)
10. Freedom from envy (4.22*)
11. Detached from the modes (4.23*)
12. Fully situated in transcendental knowledge (4.23*)
13. Such kind of work merges into transcendence (4.23*)
14. Absolute quality of a sacrifice performed in Krishna consciousness has no reaction (4.24)

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.20 & 4.21:** Text 4.20 describes *sadhaka* stage. Texts 4.21 – 4.22 describes *siddha* stage.

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.21 & 4.22:** Text 4.21 speaks of a highly advanced, perfected devotee who is constantly greedy for Krishna’s service. He considers himself insignificant and gives no importance to anything outside that service. His qualities will now be further described

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.22 & 4.23:** Text 4.23 introduces *yajna* which will be expanded upon in Texts 4.25 – 4.33

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 4.23 & 4.24:** Krishna summarizes His teachings on *akarma* by next describing the absolute quality of a sacrifice performed in spiritual consciousness

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF TEXTS 4.23 – 4.24

- Acting in a devotional mood with freedom from the desires of sense gratification uncovers the spiritual nature. In this way, acts of sacrifice connect one with transcendence.
- Sacrifice uncovers spiritual nature and reveals *Brahman* as follows
 - *Maya* (illusion) is that which covers spirit
 - Desire for sense gratification invokes *maya*
 - Detachment from sense gratification dissolves *maya* and thus reveals spirit (*Brahman*)

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORTS 4.19 – 4.24

- (a) **Definition of “one in full knowledge” (4.19)**
- Every endeavor is devoid of desire for sense gratification and thus,
 - The reactions of work have been burnt up by the fire of knowledge
 - *Analogy:* “fire” of “knowledge” burns up reactions to work
- (b) **Which knowledge is referred to in Text 4.19 – “knowledge” of eternal servitorship**
- (c) **Freedom from sense of proprietorship (4.21)**
- *Analogies:* Hand as a part of body / Living like animal (*study purport*)
- (d) **Desiring only basic necessities (4.21)**
- *Analogy:* As a machine part needs oiling (*study purport*)
- (e) **Texts 4.23 – 4.24 explain** how working in consciousness as per Texts 4.19 – 4.23 reveals Brahman
- (f) **Text 4.23 introduces “*yajna*”** which is the topic for next section
- (g) **Text 4.24 tells “perfect cure” for a materially entangled soul** – Krishna consciousness is the perfect cure
- Activities of the material world, when performed in Krishna consciousness becomes spiritualized by complete absorption
 - *Analogy:* Indigestion caused by milk products is cured by another milk product *i.e* yogurt or curd
- (h) **Krishna consciousness – a process of converting illusory consciousness into *Brahman* (4.24)**
- The word “*Brahma*” (*Brahman*) means “spiritual” – The Lord is spiritual and the rays of His transcendental body are called *Brahmajyoti*
 - Everything is situated in that *Brahmajyoti* but when the *jyoti* is covered by illusion or sense gratification, it is called material
 - How to remove this material veil – by Krishna consciousness
 - Offering for the sake of Krishna consciousness, the consuming agent, the process of consumption, the contributor and the result are all combined together “*brahman*” or the Absolute Truth
- (i) **Mind in Samadhi refers to the mind fully absorbed in Krishna consciousness**
- Anything done in such transcendental consciousness is called “*yajna*”
 - All the components involved in the sacrifice becomes one with the absolute

SECTION IV (4.25 – 4.33)

SACRIFICES LEAD TO TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS SECTION III & SECTION IV:** Having explained that sacrifice uncovers *Brahman*, Krishna now lists different types of sacrifices

**SUMMARIZED THEME 4B
SACRIFICES**

- A) **Goal** – Variety of sacrifices are described in Texts 4.25 – 4.33, because these sacrifices have “transcendental knowledge” (The theme of this chapter) as their ultimate goal
- 1st goal: Control senses – This purifies one of all sins and makes one happy
 - 2nd goal: Gain transcendental knowledge – Texts 4.19 – 4.24 explain how sacrifice uncovers *Brahman* (spiritual nature) and reveals transcendental knowledge
 - 3rd goal: Devotional service
- B) **Why variety of sacrifices** – different types are appropriate for different types of workers (according to one’s position in *Varnashrama* and their level of realization) (4.32)
- C) **How to do** – Perform sacrifices in consciousness of Texts 4.19 – 4.23, then the result will be “realization of Brahman (4.24)”



PLEASE NOTE: All the translations and some points of the purports for Texts 4.25 – 4.29 are covered below under the Common Theme. The Remaining points of the purports (Texts 4.25 – 4.27 & 4.29) are covered in their respective Focus of Learning sections thereafter.

Texts 4.25 – 4.29

COMMON THEME: Varieties of sacrifices which lead to transcendental knowledge, are explained:

1. **Demigod worship** (4.25)
2. **Sacrifices into Brahman** (4.25)
3. **Hearing process and senses in the fire of mental control** – The unadulterated *brahmacaris* (4.26)
4. **Objects of senses in the fire of the senses** – Regulated *grhastas* (4.26)
5. **Astanga-yoga → ‘Patanjali’ yoga system** (4.27)
 - Offers the function of all the senses and of the life breath, as oblations into the fire of the controlled mind
 - Goal: Merging into existence of Absolute
6. **Charity** – *Dravyamaya-yajna* (study examples) (4.28)
 - Charitable institutions, old-age homes etc.
7. **Austerity** – *Tapomaya-yajna* (e.g. *Caturmasya* and *Chandrayana*) (4.28)
8. **Yoga-yajna** – Sacrifice for a certain perfection in material world (4.28)
 - E.g. *Patanjali* system – For merging into the existence into the Absolute
 - *Hatha-yoga* or *Astanga-yoga* – For particular perfections
 - Holy pilgrimage
9. **Study of scriptures** – *Svadhyaaya yajna* – Upanisads and Vedanta Sutras, or the Sankhya philosophy (4.28)
10. **Hatha-yoga and Pranayama** (4.29)

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.25

- (a) **Who is perfect *yogi* or a first class mystic** – a person engaged in discharging duties in Krishna consciousness
- (b) **Varieties differ superficially, but one factual aim**
- Different categories of sacrifices by different types of performers only superficially demark the varieties
 - One factual aim of all sacrifices is to satisfy the Supreme Lord, Vishnu who is also known as *yajna*
- (c) **Two primary divisions to classify sacrifices**
- Sacrifice of worldly possessions
 - Sacrifice in pursuit of transcendental knowledge
- (d) **Comparison of sacrifices performed by different worshippers –**
- **Krishna conscious devotee:** sacrifices all material possessions and own self for Krishna's satisfaction
 - *e.g.* Arjuna sacrifices everything for satisfaction of Krishna
 - Thus Arjuna is a first class yogi, without losing his individual existence
 - **Demigod worshipper:** Sacrifice material possessions for material enjoyment
 - They worship demigods for various material benefits and are called '*Bahu-isvara-vadi*' (believers in many Gods)
 - **Impersonalist:** Sacrifices own self into fire altar of "Supreme Brahman"
 - They regard the forms of demigods as temporary
 - They sacrifice their material designations and end their individual existence by merging into the existence of the Supreme
 - Sacrifice their time in philosophical speculation

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.26

- (a) **What all the *varnas* meant to achieve?**
- They are all meant to become perfect yogis or transcendentalists
- (b) ***Brahmacaris***
- What does he hear – Only words concerning Krishna consciousness; especially engaged fully in "*harer namanukirtanam*" (Chanting and hearing the glories of the Lord)
 - What he does not hear – Restrains himself from vibrations of material sounds
 - How does he controls the mind – Stays under the care of a bona-fide spiritual master and abstains from sense gratification
 - How a pure *brahmacari* engages fully – '*harer namanukirtanam*'
 - "Basic principle of understanding" – Hearing is the basic principle for understanding
- (c) ***Grhastas*** – Restricted unattached sex life (under marriage) is a kind of '*yajna*' – how?
- It is a *Yajna* because the restricted householder sacrifices his general tendency towards sense gratification for higher, transcendental life

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.27

- (a) **What is 'parag-atma' and 'pratyag-atma'**
- 'Parag-atma' – the soul attached to sense enjoyment
 - 'Pratyag-atma' – the soul unattached to sense enjoyment
- (b) **What is the principle and goal of this yoga system**
- Principle – The soul is subjected to the functions of ten kinds of air at work within the body and this is perceived through the breathing system
 - *Patanjali* system instructs one how to control the functions of the body's air in a technical manner so that ultimately all the functions become favorable for purifying the soul of material attachment
 - Goal – *Pratyag-atma*
 - Different functions of the airs
 - 'Prana-vayu' – Interaction of senses with sense objects and their engagements in activities outside the self
 - 'Apana-vayu' – Goes downwards
 - 'Vyana-vayu' – Acts to shrink and expand
 - 'Samana-vaya' – Adjusts equilibrium
 - 'Udana-vayu' – Goes upwards
 - Status of enlightenment – One engages all these airs in searching for self-realisation

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.29

- (a) **Pranayama** is the system of yoga for controlling the breathing process
- In the beginning it is practiced in the *hatha-yoga* system through different sitting postures
- (b) **Goal of 'hatha-yoga' and 'pranayama'**
- To control senses
 - To increase longevity – Intelligent *yogi* wants to achieve spiritual perfection in one life only; therefore needs increased life span for perfection in spiritual realisation
 - To help in spiritual advancement
- (c) **Practicing pranayama** – This practice involves controlling the airs within the body so as to reverse the directions of their passage (*Study purport for details of the air currents*)
- (d) **Conclusion 4.25 – 4.29:** Krishna consciousness is transcendental to all types of sacrifice – Why?
- **Because it is direct service to the Lord (4.28)**
 - Automatically controls all the senses and one is transcendental from the very beginning (4.29)
 - *e.g.* Controlling senses is done by honoring Krishna *prasadam*
 - All the senses are thoroughly engaged and naturally transferred at the end of life to Krishna's planet – therefore no need to increase longevity (4.29)
 - *Ref. Bg. 14.26* By Devotional Service, one immediately transcends the modes and elevates to Spiritual Kingdom (4.29)
 - **It is attained only by mercy of the Lord and devotees (4.28)**
 - Krishna consciousness cannot be attained by any of the above mentioned methods in Texts 4.25 – 4.29

Text 4.30

THEME: Summarizes the purpose of all sacrifices

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.30 – Purposes of all sacrifices – *These purposes are similar to the goal mentioned in the Summarized Theme 4B*

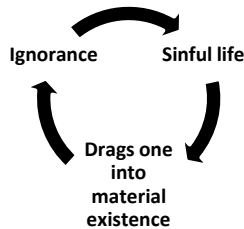
- (a) **Common aim** – To control the senses
 - Sense gratification is the root cause of material existence
- (b) **Freedom from sinful reaction**
- (c) **Gain transcendental knowledge and gradually devotional service** (4.33 purport)
- (d) **One tastes the nectar in this life and the next** – Happy in this life and later enters into Supreme eternal atmosphere – Kingdom of God

Text 4.31

THEME: Sacrifice is essential – Without that, no happiness in this life or next

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.31

- (a) **Material entanglement** – a loop difficult to escape:



- (b) **Only loophole:** Human life
- (c) **Role of Vedas to help us escape**
 - Vedas gives us a chance for escape by pointing out Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha
 - Dharma give Artha – Path of religion, or different kinds of sacrifices, automatically solves our economical problems – By *Yajna* we get enough food, milk etc.
 - After Artha comes Kama – When the body is fully satisfied, next stage is to satisfy the senses, therefore Vedas prescribe sacred marriage for regulated sense gratification
 - Gradually one is elevated to the platform of Moksha; All this starts from performance of *Yajna*, therefore *yajna* is very important for happiness
- (d) **Life of Krishna consciousness** – only solution to all problems because there is higher level of happiness

Text 4.32

THEME: Why variety of sacrifices are recommended – As different medicines are prescribed for different diseases; different varieties of sacrifices are prescribed to suit different types of workers

- ❖ **Principle:** Because the conditioned soul is in deep bodily concept – Work with body, mind or intelligence, in the form of different sacrifices, is recommended to ultimately get liberation (4.32 purport)

Text 4.33

THEME: Sacrifice must be performed with the knowledge of their purpose and goal

- ❖ Sacrifice performed in knowledge is better than mere sacrifice of material possessions
- ❖ All sacrifices of work culminate in transcendental knowledge

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.33

(a) **Without elevation of knowledge sacrifices are simply material activities – how?**

- **Purpose of all sacrifices:**
 - To achieve complete knowledge
 - To gain release from material miseries
 - To engage in loving transcendental service to the Supreme Lord
- **Mystery behind all these different sacrifices**
 - **Different types of sacrifice** –Sacrifices sometimes take different forms according to the particular faith of the performer
 - **Sacrifice with knowledge is better** - When one’s faith reaches the stage of transcendental knowledge, the performer should be considered more advanced than those who simply sacrifice material possessions without such knowledge
 - **Sacrifice without knowledge is material** - Without attainment of knowledge, sacrifice remains on the material platform

(b) **Two divisions of sacrificial activities** – depending on “differences in consciousness”


- *Karma-kanda* (Fruitive activities)
- *Jnana-kanda* (Knowledge in pursuance of truth)

SECTION V (4.34 – 4.42)

CONCLUSION

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SECTION V

Transcendental knowledge, and its resultant liberation, is only possible by faithful, sincere inquiry and service at the feet of a spiritual master

 **LINK BETWEEN SECTION IV AND SECTION V:** Duty and sacrifices must be done in knowledge (4.33). How to acquire such knowledge? – answered in Text 4.34 onwards.

Text 4.34*

THEME: Approach bona-fide spiritual master – Acquire transcendental knowledge by enquiry, submission and service

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.34

- (a) **Bona fide path of religion**
 - Only that religion which comes from Lord and His disciplic succession (*Ref. SB. 6.3.19* “*dharmam tu...*”)
 - Manufacturing one’s own process is the fashion of foolish pretenders
- (b) **Non bona fide paths** – mental speculations, dry arguments, independent study of books
- (c) **Secret of progress** – Satisfaction of self-realized spiritual master
- (d) **Proper combination for spiritual understanding** – Inquiry and submission
- (e) **How inquiries are effective** – By submission and service
 - One must be able to pass the test of the spiritual master, and when he sees the genuine desire of the disciple, he automatically blesses the disciple with genuine understanding
 - When the student is submissive and always ready to render service, the reciprocation of knowledge and inquires become perfect
- (f) **Text 4.34 condemns** blind following and absurd inquiries

Text 4.35 – 4.38

COMMON THEME: Rewards/Glories of transcendental knowledge thus attained from spiritual master

Text 4.35*

THEME: One will obtain knowledge and realization that all living entities are a part of *Brahman*. With such vision one will never fall into illusion.

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.35

- (a) **Result of receiving knowledge from a self-realized soul**
 - One learns that all living entities are parts and parcels of the Supreme Personality of Godhead
- (b) **What is ‘*Maya*’**
 - Sense of an existence separate from Krishna is called ‘*maya*’
 - Also to think that we have nothing to do with Krishna who is just a great historical personality and Absolute is only the impersonal *Brahman*
 - Refutation:
 - Impersonal *Brahman* is the effulgence of Krishna (*Based on Bg. 4.27*)
 - Krishna is the cause of all causes, even the cause of millions of incarnations and all the living entities (*Ref. Brahma Samhita 5.1*)
- (c) **Material thought of *Mayavadis***
 - Argument: Wrongly think that Krishna loses His own separate existence in His many expansions; This thought is material in nature
 - Refutation: Failure of *Mayavadis* to understand the meaning of the Absolute
 - Material understanding is that, when a thing is fragmentally distributed, it loses its own original identity
 - But “Absolute Truth” means: “1+1=1” and “1-1=1”

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.35 continued...

- (d) **Example of “Maya”** – Arjuna’s thoughts of temporary bodily conception
 - To think oneself separate from Krishna under illusion
 - To come under the bodily conception and recognize with the bodily relationships
- (e) **What does liberation / freedom from illusion mean** – to know constitution as eternal servitor
 - Only way to get such pure knowledge – Only from bona-fide spiritual master
 - Meaning of ‘Mukti’ – Ref. SB 2.10.6
- (f) **What is the entire teaching of the Bhagavad-gita targeted towards** –
 - Living entity is an eternal servitor
 - Cannot be separated from Krishna at any time
 - Any sense of identify apart from Krishna is *maya*
- (g) **What is the level of perfect knowledge** – Supreme soul Krishna, is the supreme shelter of all living beings

Text 4.36*

THEME: By that knowledge you will cross over the ocean of miseries, even if you are the most sinful of all sinners

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.36

- (a) **Analogies:**
 - Knowledge compared to boat – Material world is compared to an ocean, even an expert swimmer cannot swim across the ocean but has to be lifted out of the ocean by a suitable boat
 - Material world is also compared to blazing forest fire

Text 4.37*

THEME: By that knowledge of self and Supersoul and their relationship, one burns all sinful reactions

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.37

- (a) **Analogy: Knowledge compared to fire** – burns all reactions to material activities
- (b) Two types of reactions: pious and impious; priori and posteriori (Ref. *Brhad-aranyaka Upanisad*) – both burnt
- (c) **4 stages of reaction** – All are burnt by transcendental knowledge
 1. Reaction in the making
 2. Reaction fructifying
 3. Reaction already achieved
 4. Reaction a priori

Text 4.38*

THEME: One achieves self-realization as the mature fruit of all mysticism and finally gets devotional service

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.38

- (a) **There is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge**
 - Ignorance is the cause of bondage
 - Knowledge is the cause of liberation
- (b) **Knowledge is the mature fruit of devotional service**
 - Such a person enjoys peace within himself
 - Does not search for peace elsewhere
- (c) **The last word in *Bhagavad-gita*:**
 - Knowledge and peace culminate in Krishna consciousness

Text 4.39

THEME: Who can acquire transcendental knowledge – The faithful, with dedication and sense control

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.39

- (a) **Defines “faithful”** – One who thinks that simply by acting in Krishna consciousness, one can attain the highest perfection
- (b) **How to attain faith** – Discharge of devotional service and chanting Hare Krishna (cleanses the heart of material dirt)
- (c) **Who can attain perfection in Krishna consciousness without delay** – One who is faithful to Krishna and controls the senses

Text 4.40*

THEME: Faithless cannot attain the perfection of God consciousness

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.40

- (a) **Best of all standard and authoritative revealed scriptures** – “*Bhagavad-gita*”
- (b) **Different categories of disqualified people**
 - Persons who are almost like animals have no faith or knowledge of standard revealed scriptures
 - Even if they have knowledge, or can sight passages from, the revealed scriptures, have actually no faith
 - Even if they may have faith in scriptures, they do not believe in, or worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead
- (c) **Who is the worst** – Those who have no faith and is always doubtful, make no progress at all
- (d) **Solution to success**
 - Follow the principles of revealed scriptures with faith and rise to the platform of knowledge
 - Only this knowledge will promote one to the transcendental platform of spiritual understanding
 - Follow in the footsteps of great *acharyas* who are in the parampara and attain success

Text 4.41

THEME: No sinful reactions can affect one who performs his duties with transcendental knowledge

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.41

- (a) **Result of following instruction of *Bhagavad-gita*** – one becomes free from all doubts by the grace of “transcendental knowledge”
- (b) **Result of action in full Krishna consciousness**
 - He is well established in self-knowledge
 - He is undoubtedly above the bondage to action

Text 4.42*

THEME: Armed with yoga, O Arjuna, stand and fight!

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 4.42

- (a) ***Sanatana-yoga*** taught in Chapter 4 refers to the eternal activities performed by the living entities
- (b) **Two divisions of sacrificial action**
 - Sacrifice of one’s material possessions – Such sacrifice, if not dovetailed for spiritual realisation, then such sacrifice becomes material
 - Knowledge of the self, which is pure spiritual activity – to perform a sacrifice with a spiritual objective is the perfect sacrifice
- (c) **Two divisions of spiritual activity**
 - Understandings of one’s own self
 - Truth regarding the Supreme Personality of Godhead
- (d) **Who can understand these two divisions of spiritual activity** – One who follows the path of *Bhagavad-gita* as it is
- (e) **Benefit of such understanding**
 - Such a person can easily understand the transcendental activities of the Lord as discussed in the beginning of this chapter
 - One who does not understand *Bhagavad-gita* is faithless and is misusing his fragmental independence
 - In spite of such instruction one who does not understand the real nature of the Lord is a fool number one
- (f) **How to remove ignorance** – By gradual acceptance of the principles of Krishna consciousness
- (g) **How to awaken Krishna consciousness**
 - By different types of sacrifices (4.25 – 4.29)
 - Common basis of all sacrifices – “regulated action” based on one important factor – “Self realization”
 - **Real student of *Bhagavad-gita*** – One who seeks that objective of self-realization
- (h) **How to study *Bhagavad-gita***
 - Under a bona-fide spiritual master, with service and surrender
 - Follow the path as expressed in the *Bhagavad-gita* itself
 - Beware of self-interested people after personal self-aggrandizement
- (i) **Who is liberated from the very beginning of the study of *Bhagavad-gita***
 - One who understands Lord as the Supreme Person and His activities as transcendental

SUMMARISED THEME 4C

- A) **How to achieve knowledge** (4.34 and 4.39):
- Submissive surrender to *guru* – no absurd inquiries
 - Relevant inquiries – no blind following
 - Service, without false prestige, in menial mood
 - Goal – to please guru
 - Faithful (4.39)
 - Control senses (4.39) – How? – by regulation and by intelligence (from *Guru, Sadhu* and *Sastra*)
- B) **Who is disqualified for knowledge** (4.40)
- Ignorant
 - Faithless
 - Doubting soul
- C) **Qualification of Guru** (4.34)
- Self-realized (Jnaninah)
 - Has seen the truth (*Tattva-darsinah*)
 - Can impart knowledge unto you
- D) **Glories / Fruits of that Transcendental knowledge** (4.35 – 4.38)
- **What is the result of that knowledge** (4.35) – One sees as follows:
 - All living entities are part and parcel of Krishna
 - Any sense of identity apart from Krishna is Maya
 - By that knowledge he will never fall into illusion
 - By that knowledge you will cross over the ocean of miseries, even if you are the most sinful of all sinners (4.36)
 - By that knowledge of self and Supersoul and their relationship, one burns all sinful reactions (4.37)
 - Self-realization – mature fruit of devotional service (4.38)

END OF CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 4 Appendix
Selected Texts extracted from “Surrender unto Me”

Text 4.6

To defeat the Māyāvādī teaching that Kṛṣṇa is in contact with the modes of nature, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the transcendental nature of Kṛṣṇa’s body: “Kṛṣṇa appears in this material world in His original eternal form, with two hands, holding a flute. He appears exactly in His eternal body, uncontaminated by this material world.”

Text 4.9

Kṛṣṇa describes the result of realizing transcendental knowledge: A devotee achieves liberation and never has to take birth again in this material world. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura comments that such a devotee becomes free from matter even before leaving his body.

Text 4.11

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura comments:

[One may say:] “Certainly Your exclusive devotees consider Your birth and activities to be eternal. Others, however, don’t. In that category are jñānīs and others who approach You to perfect their own processes of jñāna and so on, and they do not consider Your birth and activities eternal.”

Kṛṣṇa responds to this consideration in the verse beginning ye: “In whatever manner persons approach Me (bhajanti), I reciprocate with them by giving them the fruits of their service. To those who think, ‘My Lord’s birth and activities are eternal,’ and who worship Me with desires centered on My personal pastimes, and in this way experience great happiness, I reciprocate in kind. Being the Supreme Lord, capable of doing anything, undoing anything or making anything otherwise, I make such devotees My own pārśadas, or perfect devotees, in order to make their birth and activities eternal.

“Descending to this world at suitable times along with these devotees and subsequently disappearing, I thus show My favor to them at every moment. I bestow on them pure love of God as the fruit of their reciprocation with Me.

“To those jñānīs and others who consider My birth and activities temporary and My personal form a product of māyā, yet still try to reciprocate with Me, I respond in kind by making them accept temporary births and activities again and again. I cause them to fall into the noose of māyā’s illusion. In this way I give them the reward they deserve: the miseries of birth and death.

“Different are those jñānīs, however, who consider My birth and activities eternal and My personal form a manifestation of perfect eternity, knowledge and bliss, and who approach Me to worship Me for the sake of perfecting their own process of jñāna. Those persons simply want to destroy their gross and subtle bodies and obtain liberation. I thus arrange for their attainment of eternal brahmānanda and bestow on them as the fruit of their worship an end to birth and death in the realm of ignorance.

“Thus not only My devotees reciprocate with Me, but in all different ways all kinds of human beings follow My path—jñānīs, karmīs, yogīs and worshipers of demigods. In other words, because I incorporate in Myself all identities, all the processes of jñāna, karma and so on constitute the path toward Me.”

Text 4.13

The varṇāśrama system's purpose is to assist in elevating everyone from material consciousness to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Although the varṇāśrama system was created by Kṛṣṇa, it is not He who placed the jīvas within that system. This fact was mentioned in text 11—ye yathā māṁ prapadyante: Kṛṣṇa, as the impartial Supersoul, reciprocates with the desires of the living entities. He always remains the non-doer, and He does not directly reward anyone the fruits of work. In addition, Kṛṣṇa Himself is always transcendental to the varṇāśrama system despite the fact that He, while in this world, follows the prescribed duties of His varṇa and āśrama. Even while acting as though He is under varṇāśrama, He does not act within it. In that sense, Kṛṣṇa is also the non-doer or non-actor in relationship to varṇāśrama. As He is already transcendental and therefore is not elevated by following the system, He is also unchangeable. Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms this by saying, "In spite of His creating the four divisions of human society, Kṛṣṇa does not belong to any of these divisions."

Logically, if I were to award you the fruits of your work, I must be transformed, at least on some level, because I have reacted to what you have done. Kṛṣṇa directly says that He is "the non-doer" and "unchangeable" to show that He, the Absolute Truth, is aloof. Although He is the creator of the varṇāśrama system, He awards neither results nor reactions. Thus He is neither contaminated nor transformed.

This is inconceivable. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the supreme controller and the cause of all causes, yet He will not accept responsibility for everything that happens to the jīvas. We each must take responsibility for what happens to us, even though everything ultimately depends on Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa only sanctions—against His own desires—our wayward and rebellious activities and their subsequent results because those activities are products of the expression of our free will. Kṛṣṇa is undoubtedly the cause of all causes—nothing happens without His sanction—yet for our rectification He allows us to act as we like. In the meantime, He awaits the time we will turn to Him and offer Him loving service. Material nature awards to those who do not turn to Him the pious and impious fruits of their activities.

In this verse, Kṛṣṇa explains that He is akartā, the non-doer. Kṛṣṇa has previously explained, prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ/ ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate: "The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature." (Bg. 3.27)

Our thinking of ourselves as the cause of the results of our activities, Kṛṣṇa said, indicates that we are bewildered. Now Kṛṣṇa tells us not only that we are not the doer, but that He is not the doer either. Who, then, is doing everything?

Kṛṣṇa sometimes takes one side of this issue and sometimes the other. At times He wants to emphasize our position as tiny souls who should not be falsely proud of our prowess or think ourselves rightfully attached to the fruits of our activities. At such times, He emphasizes that we are not the doer, that we do not cause the fruits of our activities and that the results of our activities are awarded to us by material nature. At other times, He emphasizes our culpability. He then wants us to take full responsibility for our actions and their reactions. Thus, at those times, Kṛṣṇa stresses Himself also as the non-doer.

Kṛṣṇa, the material nature and the living entities are all doers. The living entity desires to act, Kṛṣṇa (as the Supersoul) sanctions it, and the material nature facilitates the activity. Yet the weight of responsibility for the action rests solely upon the living entity. Although the living entity has no inde-

pendent power to act, he initiates actions by his desires, while both the Supersoul and the material nature, being neutral, facilitate their fulfillment.

Text 4.19

A devotee in transcendental knowledge never desires sense enjoyment because He knows Kṛṣṇa as his Lord and master and himself as Kṛṣṇa's servant. He is thus freed from material desires, and his actions (akarma) produce no reactions.

Text 4.20

We should not give up work; we should be satisfied by dutiful work. We should give up attachment to the fruits of work. This verse describes a sādḥaka, one endeavoring for perfection. The perfection of this consciousness (siddha) is explained in verses 21 and 22.

Text 4.22

A devotee on this platform does not even endeavor to beg for his sustenance. He depends on Kṛṣṇa, who looks upon such an exalted soul with great affection. Śrīpada Mādhavendra Purī is an example of a devotee on this level. Mādhavendra Purī neither worked nor begged for his food. He ate only when someone was prompted by Kṛṣṇa from within to offer him food.

When Mādhavendra Purī traveled in Vraja-dhāma, he refrained from begging. One day, Kṛṣṇa saw his faith, affection, and detachment and personally brought Mādhavendra Purī milk, as the saint sat at Govinda-kuṇḍa near Govardhana Hill. The devotional consciousness of such a materially detached, spiritually attached soul is so sweet that it even attracts Kṛṣṇa.

Endowed with this consciousness, the devotee's mind is freed from the dualities of the material world. All day the conditioned soul sees good and bad. He yearns for pleasure and tries to avoid distress. The devotee is above such considerations because he sees Kṛṣṇa's hand in everything that occurs.

Text 4.23

Kṛṣṇa will describe a variety of sacrifices in the following verses because these sacrifices have transcendental knowledge, the theme of this chapter, as their ultimate goal.

We should not underestimate the importance of acquiring transcendental knowledge. Knowledge about Kṛṣṇa, the jīvātma, the material world and the process of devotional service solidifies our devotional practices. Tāhāṅ vistārita hañā phale prema-phala ihāṅ māli sece nitya śravaṇādi jala: "The [devotional] creeper greatly expands in the Goloka Vṛndāvana planet, and there it produces the fruit of love for Kṛṣṇa. Although remaining in the material world, the gardener regularly sprinkles the creeper with the water of hearing and chanting" (Cc. Madhya 19. 155).

Cultivating Kṛṣṇa conscious knowledge is, therefore, essential. Only then can knowledge and work be combined so that one's work becomes a sacrifice to Kṛṣṇa.

Text 4.34

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī explains that accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a spiritual master is the first item of devotional service (adau gurupādāśraya). The knowledge one receives from his spiritual master will now be described.

Text 4.35

Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa comments that one result of knowledge is that we no longer fall into illusion. Arjuna should not think that his relatives will die. He should understand that all living entities, whether animal or demigod or human, are different from their bodies. In addition, he should understand that all living entities are nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa and situated within Him.

Text 4.36

In Chapter One, Arjuna feared sin and its resultant suffering. Kṛṣṇa herein tells Arjuna the cure is transcendental knowledge, not fleeing the battlefield.

The words *api cet* (“even if”) are used when one accepts the occurrence of an unlikely or apparently self-contradictory event. Three questions could be asked, as posed by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura: If someone is acting so sinfully, how can his heart become purified? And without such purification, how can he develop knowledge? And if he has developed knowledge, how can he act with such impropriety?

Kṛṣṇa is thus describing this “*api cet*” situation to glorify the purifying effects of transcendental knowledge.

Text 4.37

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura comments: “Kṛṣṇa says, ‘For one whose heart has become purified, I destroy completely whatever karma has already been generated with the exception of his *pārabdha-karma*.’” Transcendental knowledge thus destroys all reactions, both pious and sinful; all, that is, except *pārabdha-karma*, or matured reactions, such as one’s present material body.

Text 4.38

Kālena means “in course of time.” Kṛṣṇa uses the word *kālena* to warn against premature renunciation—simply adopting the outer garb of a *sannyāsī*, as is sometimes done by *Māyāvādīs*—as if that will automatically fix us in knowledge and free us of sin. Kṛṣṇa also uses the term *kālena* to encourage detached work, which truly bestows transcendental knowledge. “In course of time” indicates that transcendental knowledge is gradually revealed in the heart of one practicing *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*. By work, not by renouncing work, it manifests.

Text 4.40

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura differentiates between the faithless and the doubters. He explains that Kṛṣṇa has mentioned three classes of people who fail: the ignorant (*ajñāḥ*), the faithless (*aśraddadhānaḥ*) and the doubters (*saṁśayātmanah*). “The *ajñā* is foolish like the animals. The *aśraddadhāna* has knowledge of *śāstra*, but having seen the mutual disagreements of proponents of various theories, he has no trust in any of them. Although the *saṁśayātmā* has faith, he is swayed by the doubt, ‘I don’t know whether this process will be effective in my case’.”

Doubters have some faith, but they nevertheless doubt that following *śāstra* will truly award results. They thus follow, but without full faith, hope and optimism. Such doubters achieve happiness neither in this world nor the next. Even fools attain some material happiness. Doubters attain none.

Text 4.42

Arjuna, sitting on his chariot, is determined not to fight. Kṛṣṇa wants him to stand, fixed in transcendental knowledge, detached from all results, and fight. Work and knowledge combined will free Arjuna from the sinful reactions he fears.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to this verse summarizes the chapter. I have divided the purport into sections and added headings to categorize the different topics:

The goal of sacrifice (part one)

“The yoga system instructed in this chapter is called sanātana-yoga, or eternal activities performed by the living entity. This yoga has two divisions of sacrificial actions: one is called sacrifice of one’s material possessions, and the other is called knowledge of self, which is pure spiritual activity. If sacrifice of one’s material possessions is not dovetailed for spiritual realization, then such sacrifice becomes material. But one who performs such sacrifices with a spiritual objective, or in devotional service, makes a perfect sacrifice.”

The two levels of spiritual knowledge

“When we come to spiritual activities, we find that these are also divided into two: namely, understanding of one’s own self (or one’s constitutional position), and the truth regarding the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One who follows the path of Bhagavad-gītā as it is can very easily understand these two important divisions of spiritual knowledge. For him there is no difficulty in obtaining perfect knowledge of the self as part and parcel of the Lord. And such understanding is beneficial, for such a person can easily understand the transcendental activities of the Lord.”

Learning of the Lord’s transcendental activities

“In the beginning of this chapter, the transcendental activities of the Lord were discussed by the Supreme Lord Himself. One who does not understand the instructions of the Gītā is faithless, and is to be considered to be misusing the fragmental independence awarded to him by the Lord. In spite of such instructions, one who does not understand the real nature of the Lord as the eternal, blissful, all-knowing Personality of Godhead is certainly fool number one.”

The goal of sacrifice (part two)

“Ignorance can be removed by gradual acceptance of the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is awakened by different types of sacrifices to the demigods, sacrifice to Brahman, sacrifice in celibacy, in household life, in controlling the senses, in practicing mystic yoga, in penance, in foregoing material possessions, in studying the Vedas, and in partaking of the social institution called varṇāśrama-dharma. All of these are known as sacrifice, and all of them are based on regulated action. But within all these activities, the important factor is self-realization. One who seeks that objective is the real student of Bhagavad-gītā, but one who doubts the authority of Kṛṣṇa falls back.”

Properly learning transcendental knowledge

“One is therefore advised to study Bhagavad-gītā, or any other scripture, under a bona fide spiritual master, with service and surrender. A bona fide spiritual master is in the disciplic succession from time eternal, and he does not deviate at all from the instructions of the Supreme Lord as they were imparted millions of years ago to the sun-god, from whom the instructions of Bhagavad-gītā have come down to the earthly kingdom. One should, therefore, follow the path of Bhagavad-gītā as it is expressed in the Gītā itself and beware of self-interested people after personal aggrandizement who deviate others from the actual path. The Lord is definitely the supreme person, and His activities are transcendental. One who understands this is a liberated person from the very beginning of his study of Bhagavad-gītā.”