



The Yoga of Renunciation

The Bhagavad Gita
“The Song of the Lord”



4:14 I am unaffected by all actions, nor do I desire any results.

Whoever experiences this quality in me is also free.

4:15 Even the ancients who realized this freedom from all duties, nonetheless continued to work in the world.

Like those sages, you too should continue to act.

4:16 Even the sages are sometimes confused about action and inaction.

However, I'll tell you now what action is and you'll be freed from evil.

With this assurance he goes to the next slogan.

4:17 Distinguish between right action, wrong action and inaction.

The way of karma is nearly impossible to understand.

- It's important to discriminate between appropriate action, forbidden action and inaction.
- Note the three:
 1. right action
 2. wrong action
 3. the actionless state

- Krishna here is speaking of:
 1. what is to be done,
 2. what is not to be done and
 3. what is doing nothing.
- This is explained in the next sloka.

4:18 The person is wise who sees the inaction in actions, and the action in inaction.

He or she is a yogi and can accomplish everything.

Commentary

- Sloka 4:18 says the one who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is a wise person, a yogi.
- Having reached this point, you have accomplished everything.
- You do, and at the same time, do not.
- You do not, and still you do.

- You sleep and sleep not.
- You eat, yet eat not.
- So on and on, two different things that look like opposites.
- But the wise person knows the difference.

- You see inaction amid all the actions.
- That means you know that there are two different things in the same experience, two sides of the same coin.
- One acts, the other observes.

- The observer is the witness.
- As a witness you don't act.
- As an actor, you don't witness.


Exercise


- If you are a wise person, you take both positions simultaneously.
- You know who is doing and who is observing.
- And because you know how to be the witness, then even though your body and mind may be doing things,
- you know it is not you who is acting.

- But in the previous sloka, Krishna finishes by saying,


“The way of karma is impossible to understand
- from the viewpoint of the onlooker who sees
somebody doing something.”
- The onlooker cannot tell whether the person is acting or not acting.

- Only the one doing the action will know.
- This is very deep.
- To understand karma one has to rise up to a certain level where it is possible to discriminate between correct action, wrong action and inaction.


- A simple example is that the lotus flower  which blossoms when the sun comes up.
- When the sun goes down, it closes.
- Is it the sun that causes the blossom to open in the morning and close in the evening?
- Ask the sun, “Why are you doing that?”

- The sun  says,
- “I don’t know anything.
- All I know is I’m here.
- I don’t even come and go.
- It’s you who says the sun rises and sets.

- I'm never up.
- I never set.
- I don't get upset.
- From your standpoint, you think I'm coming and going.

- Similarly, a yogi  appears to be doing things:
 - coming and going, accomplishing this and that.
- Sometimes he may even say he's doing things.

- But in fact it's Nature, making things happen.
- The yogi is a constant witness to it all.
- That way he or she understands the secret of karma.

- The yogi  perceives action from the state of inaction,
 - at the same time enjoying inaction in the midst of action.
- This may sound a little philosophical.

- It's nice to hear, but hearing is not enough.
- When you reach the stage where you experience this, then you'll say:
- “Yes, now I know what he means.”

Exercise

- *Prakriti*, the manifested universe, is controlled by the three *gunas*.
- Our minds and bodies are part of that *prakriti* which is constantly moved by these three *gunas*:
 - sattva (balance)
 - rajas (restlessness)
 - tamas (inertia)

- But who are you really?
- You are the Self;
 - you are the Knower.
- You are not affected by *prakriti*.
- You are completely different.

- That's why you say,
 - “my mind” or
 - “my body.”
- When you say,
 - “my mind has been disturbed,”
- you're really right.
- It's not you, but your poor mind that's disturbed.

- But if you immediately add, “and I’m really unhappy about it,” that’s not right.
- That’s not the real you.
- But you insist, “I’m unhappy because my mind is disturbed.”

- If you were unhappy, you wouldn't even notice that your mind was unhappy.
- An unhappy or sick person can't recognize another unhappy or sick person.
- Only the sane person can discern if another is insane.

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Om, Shanti