

## GITA CLASS – CHAPTER 2, PART 2

We are discussing the first *śloka* that *Śaṅkara* comments on, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. This is where *Śaṅkara*'s commentary begins, and this also explains the significance of the sections that came before this. The sections before this were for showing the grief and delusion of the individual. Grief and delusion become a seed for *samsara* (the cycle of birth and death), and are therefore described as a defect of the *jīva*. The cause of this defect is ego and attachment, which are produced from *Ajñāna*, spiritual ignorance.

Lord *Vyāsa*, through the previous sections, is describing this process. *Śaṅkara* begins his *Bhāṣyā* by saying this. This section is further explained in the commentary.

*'Tathā hyarjunena rājyaguruputramitrasuhṛtsvajanasambāndhi  
bāndhaveṣvahameṣāṁ mamaite ityevaṁ pratyayanimitta  
snehavicchedādinimittāv ātmanaḥ śokamohau pradarsītau 'katham  
bhīṣmamahaṁ saṁkhye' ityādinā.*

So it says, '*Tathāpi Arjunena Rajya Guru Putra Mitra Suhṛt Svajana Sambandhi Bandhaveṣu 'Ahaṁ Eṣāṁ Mama Ete.' ityevaṁ Pratyaya.*' '*Ahaṁ Eṣāṁ. Eṣāṁ Ahaṁ.*' I belong to them.' This indicates bondage. '*Eṣāṁ,*' means 'theirs.' '*Ahaṁ*' means 'I.' 'I am bound to them.' Here, *ahaṁta*, ego is indicated. '*Mama Ete.*' '*Ete Mama.*' '*Ete,*' means 'they.' '*Mama*' means 'mine.' 'They belong to me.' So, it shows here *ahaṁta*, ego, and *mamata*, attachment. These two existed within Arjuna. He felt, 'They belong to me, and I belong to them.'

Arjuna was full of such ego and attachment. Then, it says, '*ityevaṁ pratyaya.*' *Pratyaya* means 'Awareness.' Arjuna's awareness was full of ego and attachment. What is this attachment towards? It says, '*Rājyaṁ,*' the kingdom; 'this kingdom is mine.' Arjuna was attached to teachers, sons, friends and allies.

Then, it says ‘*svajana*,’ and ‘*sambandhi*.’ This refers to relatives gained through marriage, and so on. Then, ‘*Bandhaveṣu*,’ which means other relatives. In this way, everyone standing on both sides of the battlefield is described. This shows how Arjuna is connected to all of the people in the war. Most of the people fighting the war are *kshatriyas*, the warriors. Arjuna has a bond with all of them. Because of that bond, Arjuna feels ego and attachment towards everything from the kingdom to his relatives. Because of that, it says, ‘*Ityevam Pratyaya Nimitta Sneham*.’ Arjuna’s attachment to these relations causes affection towards them. This is called *sneham*. Then it says, ‘*Sneha Vicheda Nimittau*.’ This love that Arjuna has experienced through these people and things is now being destroyed. This is called ‘*sneha vichedaṁ*.’

Here it says that the cause of worldly love is ego and attachment. We normally attribute great qualities to love. Everyone says, ‘love is great. Love is priceless.’ However, the basis of the ordinary person’s love is ego and attachment, *ahaṁta* and *mamata*. That’s why it says, ‘*ityevam pratyaya nimitta sneha*.’ This is love that comes from the feeling, ‘I am theirs, and they are mine.’ In this context, love isn’t in its purest form.

It is said, ‘love is God.’ Here, it is not speaking about that kind of love. This is not speaking about pure love. The love shown here is the love that binds the individual. That’s why it says, ‘because of love for the kingdom, teachers, sons, allies, friends, and so on.’ This is the love one feels out one’s ordinary nature. The basic cause of this love is Ignorance, and from that Ignorance, come ego and attachment. This is what the commentator is explaining.

A *Jiva* thinks that this worldly love is the greatest. But what is the highest form of love? The highest form of love comes from *Atma Bodha*, awareness of the Self. This love comes from the absence of ego and attachment, and from the destruction of Ignorance. That is the love of *Mahātmās*. This love is called ‘*Jiva Kārunyam*,’ compassion for all beings, or ‘*akāraṇa dāya*,’ causeless compassion. This kind of love is unlimited, not being limited by any objects. The love shown here is different. It is limited by objects. What are these? ‘*Rājya Guru Putra Mitra*’ – ‘The kingdom, teachers, sons, and allies.’ These objects are all limitations for love. They are particular objects through which love is

directed. This love comes from identification with the body, called '*ahaṁtā*.' The other factor that causes this love is attachment, called '*mamata*.'

What normally causes the love of the *jīva* is physical relationship. This is the love of the father and son, or the mother and daughter. This also includes the love of brothers, and so on. What causes this love? It is the physical relation. This kind of love binds the *jīva* to *samsāra*. Because of this, the spiritual scriptures take a very harsh stance against this kind of love.

Because external objects limit all worldly love, the scriptures do not give any value or importance to such love. Instead, the spiritual scriptures teach that true love comes from the destruction of this limited love.

The most common form of love stems from physical relationships, and binds the *jīva* to *samsāra*. A *jīva* in *samsara* fears the destruction of such love. This is called in the commentary, '*sneha vicheda*.' This is the destruction of the love one has experienced through external relations. The *jīva* is not able to end this love that binds him. The *jīva* is afraid to lose this love. This is also the cause of Arjuna's grief and delusion. Here, it says, '*sneha vichedādi nimittau ātmanaḥ śokamohau pradarsītau*.' 'Arjuna's grief and delusion are displayed as being caused by the fear of losing the love gained through ego and attachment.'

Throughout the first chapter, the *jīva*'s grief and delusion are shown. This kind of worldly love, which comes from ego and attachment, binds the *jīva*. That is what the commentator is showing here. Why is he showing this?

This kind of binding love is natural for everyone. This principle is explained here to inspire the renunciation of this limited form of love. That is what we call *sanyassa*. *Śaṅkara* says that the summation of this renunciation is *sarva karma sanyassa*. *Sarva Karma Sanyassa* is the destruction of the grief and delusion of the *jīva*. This comes about from the destruction of this binding affection, '*Sneha Vichedam*.' That is the only way that the *jīva* can attain freedom. Only through this destruction of limited love can a person proceed forward on the spiritual path, the path of *sādhana*.

Now, if you go and tell this to an ordinary, worldly person, you'll get a good beating. He will say, 'What you are saying is senseless! That is totally a mistake!' If we say, 'the love you have towards those you think are most dear and needed must be renounced,' that is something beyond the capacity of an

ordinary man to bear. The destruction of that love will create grief and delusion for him. That's why the commentator is showing this, by saying, 'śokamohau,' grief and delusion.'

However, this is true for all love based on physical relationships. We hear people talk about 'the bond of love.' The literal meaning is 'love that binds.' This limited love binds the jiva. Śaṅkara says that this limited love must be renounced. Then this limited love transforms into the love that arises from *Ātma Bodha*, the feeling that one's Self is the Self of all beings.

Śaṅkarāchārya is indicating that all other limited forms of love should be renounced. Why is this limited form of love shown here in the commentary? It is to show that this is the cause of the grief and delusion of the *jīva*. Even Arjuna forgot this truth in a particular situation. All living beings forget this. They forget that the cause of their grief and delusion is this bond of limited love that binds them to *saṁsāra*. Thus, Vyāsa is presenting this principle in the Gita through Arjuna.

Then the commentary says, '*Katham Bhīṣmaṁ Ahaṁ Saṁkhye' ityādinā.*' This means that through these sections of the first and second chapters, this principle of binding love is being presented. This is also to show that the Arjuna's decision to not fight doesn't come from real love and compassion towards all beings. It wasn't compassion from Arjuna's awareness of *ahimsa* that made him decide to not fight.

Śaṅkara shows this here to prove that Arjuna is not making a decision in the war based on his views about non-violence. Because of the grief and delusion arising from this binding love, what happens?

*Śokamohābhyāṁ hyabhibhūtavivekavijñānaḥ svata eva kṣatradharme  
yuddhe pravṛttopi tasmādyuddhādupurarāma. Paradharmāṁ cha  
bhikṣājīvanādikaṁ kartuṁ pravavṛte.'*

'Śokamohābhyāṁ hi abhibhūta viveka vijñānaḥ.' From the fear of the destruction of love, the jiva's awareness is destroyed. In this way, the grief and delusion that result from this destroy the *jīva's viveka and vijñāna*, discrimination and practical knowledge.

That is what happened to Arjuna. Arjuna's discrimination and practical knowledge were destroyed. What is *viveka*? In its most gross form, this is discrimination between *dharma* and *adharma*, and it was lost to Arjuna. 'What is *dharma*? What is *adharma*? What is my duty? What is not my duty?' Arjuna was unable to distinguish between these. The ability to do so is called *viveka*. If that is more subtle and pure, it is *ātmānātma viveka*, discrimination between the Self and the non-Self. That was also destroyed in Arjuna.

However, Arjuna is not thinking about discriminating between the Self and non-Self. Here, Arjuna is concerned with the loss of his *Dharma Bodha*, the ability to discriminate between *dharma* and *adharma*. He has lost that discrimination. Arjuna says to Sri Krishna, 'Yat śreyas syāt niśchitaṁ brūhi tan me.' Arjuna was unable to distinguish what is the right thing to do. That discrimination was destroyed for him.

In this way, both discrimination between the Self and non-Self (*ātmānātma viveka*), and discrimination between *Dharma* and *Adharma* were lost to Arjuna. The practical knowledge of that discrimination is what is called '*vijñāna*'. *Vijñāna* is knowledge that is firm and certain; true knowledge. Arjuna lost *Viveka*, discrimination, and *Vijñāna*, the certain knowledge without any doubt or misinterpretation about that discrimination. These were both lost to Arjuna. He thus became overcome by grief and delusion.

Because *viveka* and *vijñāna* were lost, what happens? '*Svataḥ eva kṣatradharme yuddhe pravṛttopi.*' That is very important. '*Svataḥ eva.*' So, no one forced Arjuna to take part in this *dharmaic* war. No one in particular had prompted Arjuna to take part in the war up to this point. Did the Lord prompt Arjuna? No. Why not? Well, it is true that Arjuna became ready for the war after all of the instructions by the Lord, but why is this? Was this because of the pressure from anyone? No. Then what is it? The commentary says, '*svataḥ.*' Arjuna acted from '*svataḥ*, out of his own nature.' This means that the *rajasic guṇa* in Arjuna made him act. The *rajas guṇa* inside Arjuna is what prompted him to fight in the war. Arjuna's readiness to fight before the *Gita*, and his readiness to fight in the war after the instruction of the *Gita* is from the *rajas guṇa* within him.

The Lord doesn't directly prompt Arjuna to fight. Why? This is because there is no need of such prompting. For a person whose *dharma* is that of a *kṣatriya*, an external prompting is not necessary for him to fight in a war. The Lord Himself says, 'The *guṇas* inside you will make you fight.' Even if you think, 'I don't need this war,' the *guṇas* will make you fight.' This is called '*guṇādhīna*' action; action influenced by the *guṇas*.

It is a law for the *jīva*, that his actions are determined by the *guṇas* within him. The *jīva* receives this law from birth itself. Acting according to that law, it says '*svataḥ*.' The *dharma* of the *kṣatriya* is influenced by the *rajas guṇa*. In that war, influenced by the *rajas guṇa* of the *Kṣatriya dharma*, it says, '*pravṛttopi*.' This means that Arjuna has acted up to now in this war from free will.

This is why you can't say that the Lord prompted Arjuna to a cruel, violent action. Then what is the Lord doing? The Lord says in the Gita, '*Kuru Karmaiva Tasmāt Tvam*' - 'You should perform *karma* only.' And didn't the Lord say to Arjuna, 'You fight the war!' Isn't that an external prompting for Arjuna? Aren't all of these promptings for Arjuna to act?

It is true that these are all external promptings. The words of the Lord are an encouragement for Arjuna. But what are those words of encouragement? They are to awaken awareness of *Dharma* in Arjuna. Here in the commentary, it said, '*Abhibhūta Viveka Vijñānah*' - 'Arjuna's discrimination and practical knowledge were destroyed.' Thus, the Lord's encouragements are to awaken the lost awareness of *Dharma*, and awareness of the *Ātman* within Arjuna.

This grief and delusion overpowered the *rajas guṇa* in Arjuna. Grief and delusion are *tamasic*. The *rajas guṇa* became overpowered by the *tamasic guṇa* in Arjuna. These encouragements are to awaken this destroyed *rajas guṇa*.

How do the Lord's instructions work? Arjuna's *rajas guṇa* was overpowered by the *tamasic* quality of grief and delusion. Thus, the inspiring words of the Lord destroyed the veil of *tamasic* grief and delusion, which cover the *rajas guṇa* in Arjuna. Arjuna utilized this *rajas guṇa* in the war.

In the sequence between the Lord's instruction and Arjuna's action, there is a chain of factors. In this way, it is a distant prompting, an indirect prompting. We cannot exactly say that it is not an encouragement. However, it is not how we normally think. It is not as if someone forces a person who has

no interest in fighting to engage in war. It's not like that. Instead, the Lord awoke the dormant *rajas guṇa* in Arjuna, gave him the awareness of his duty, stressing the importance of Self-Knowledge, and directed Arjuna to his *svadharma*. That is how the Lord's instructions and words became an encouragement for Arjuna.

It wasn't a direct encouragement. It occurred through a chain of events. That's why it is debated as to whether the Lord encouraged Arjuna to fight or He didn't. These debates happen because the subtle level of that encouragement is not truly understood. In truth, this *rajas guṇa* is part of Arjuna's nature. Thus, the Lord didn't prepare Arjuna for battle, or force him to fight.

Then, it says, '*svataḥ eva kṣatradharme yuddhe pravṛttopi.*' Arjuna's fighting in the war was caused by the *rajas guṇa* that is a part of the *Kṣatriya dharma*. What is being explained here happens to all *Jivas*. The commentator and Lord *Vyāsa* both say this. 'The actions of all *Jivas* are due to their *guṇa.*' Then why does a person run away from action? It says, '*Abhibhūta Viveka Vijñāna.*' It is due to the absence of discrimination and practical knowledge.

If this discrimination and practical knowledge are lost, a person may run away from action. That's why *Śaṅkara* says, '*Tasmāt Yuddhāt Upararāma.*' Even though the war has begun, and is under way, and even though Arjuna had the determination for this war, it says, '*Tasmāt Yuddhāt Upararāma.*' Arjuna is withdrawing from the war which he himself has helped to start. Had he stayed in his house and decided not to fight, that would have been a different case. In that case, one doesn't have the determination for war. Here, Arjuna has already had the *sankalpa*, the determination for war.

Now, the action is already underway. No one has forced Arjuna to act. Arjuna's own quality made him act. In this way, Arjuna is withdrawing from the war. Why is this? It is because his discrimination and practical knowledge are undermined and destroyed by grief and delusion. Here, the word '*uparamam,*' refers to *sanyassa*. This is the *sanyassa* that happens when one's discrimination and practical knowledge are destroyed by grief and delusion. *Shankaracharya* is saying here that this kind of *sanyassa* is not correct.

How is this? He says, '*paradharmam cha bhikṣājīvanādikam kartum pravavṛte.*' What is *Paradharma*? What is the difference between *Svadharmā* and *Paradharma*? *Paradharma* means to accept the *dharma* of someone else. A person who is *rajasic* by nature should not run away from the scene of action. If that person, due to lack of discrimination, makes the decision to withdraw from the field of action, he won't be able to hold that decision for long. He will again have to go back to *karma*. Why? This is because the predominant *rajas guṇa* inside him will make him act.

If such a person with a predominance of the active *rajas guṇa* were to decide to withdraw from action from the influence of grief and delusion, what is he doing? '*Para Dharma.*' He is accepting '*paradharma,*' the *dharma* of someone else. He accepts the *dharma* that is suitable for someone else. In Arjuna's case, the *paradharma* is *sanyassa*. That's why it says, '*Bhīkṣājīvanādikam.*' A life of *Bhīkṣa* refers to *sanyassa*. '*Kartum Pravavṛte*' - Arjuna became ready to accept a life of *bhīkṣha*, the renunciation of the kingdom, and a life in the forest.

This *paradharma* is the most dangerous thing in the *Jiva's* life. If a person accepts an unsuitable *dharma*, it will become the biggest obstacle in his journey through life. Thus, *Śaṅkara* is saying that this must not happen. A person who is predominantly *rajasic* must not accept this kind of *sanyassa*. What did Arjuna do? He accepted *sanyassa* of his own accord. He didn't seek the instruction of someone else for that.

What is *sanyasa*? The scriptures describe *sanyassa* as, '*Vividiṣa satīnyāsaḥ.*' *Sanyassa* is for knowing the *Ātma Tattva*, the Truth of the Self. This is also called *Karma Tyāga*, or *Karma Sanyassa*. This kind of *sanyassa* can only be accepted if it is the Guru's opinion that the aspirant is prepared. One cannot decide this by oneself. Even though the Guru was right in front of him, Arjuna didn't ask Krishna's opinion in that matter. In the end he asked Krishna, but initially, when he renounced karma and decided that he wouldn't fight, he didn't ask. Later, Arjuna asked. At that point, the Lord told Arjuna, 'this is not right for you.'

The Lord says, 'You are standing in the field of action, and this is where you must stay.' The Lord isn't aiming at some external form of *sanyassa*.

Suppose a person flees from the field of action and desires to sit in solitude. This kind of *sanyassa* is not what the Lord advises. True *sanyassa* doesn't depend on what kind of clothes you wear. *Sanyassa* must always be according to the Guru's instruction.

Why? This is because sometimes the disciple's discrimination and practical knowledge may be undermined. He won't be able to distinguish things by himself. That's why he is not suitable enough to make his own decision. That's why the Guru must give instruction. A person only has the right to this kind of *Karma Tyāga* after the Guru evaluates the disciple's maturity through subtle understanding and gives permission. That's why the *sāstras* say that one needs the permission of a Guru before accepting external *sanyassa*. This matter will be further explained. It says next,

***'Tathā cha sarvaprāṇinām śokamohādidoṣāviṣṭachetasām  
svabhāvata eva svadharmaparityāgaḥ pratiśiddhasevā cha syāt.'***

*'Tathā cha sarva prāṇinām.'* Here this means that Arjuna is merely a symbol in the Gita. Arjuna represents all living beings, *'Sarva Prāṇinām.'* *'Śokamohādi doṣāviṣṭa chetasām'* All living beings are controlled by *śoka*, *moha*, and other emotions. This refers to everyone, all *jivas*. Then, what happens? If one is overcome by these defects, emotions such as grief and delusion, then, *'Svabhāvataḥ Eva,'* by one's own decision, *'Svadharmaparityāgaḥ,'* he rejects his *svadharmā*, his inherent duty. He runs away from his duty.

That's not all. It then says, *'pratiśiddhasevā cha syāt.'* Here, the person will do what he should not do. In Arjuna's case, this would be to run away and sit in solitude. Here it is saying that for the ordinary man, turning away from action isn't a sign of spiritual progress. This is called *Karma Vimukhata*; turning away from *karma*. This applies to ordinary people, and more especially to spiritual people. Sometimes these people will desire *'karma tyāga,'* the renunciation of *karma*. The base of that *karma tyāga* will be laziness. It is a *tamasīc tyāga*, with laziness, and other *tamasīc* qualities.

Because of the person's liking and interest in being lazy, he will reject external actions. However, even if he rejects *karma* externally, the *guṇa* inside

of him will remain active. This may be *tamas*, in which his discrimination and practical knowledge has been destroyed. Or else, it may be *rajas*, which has overpowered the *tamas guna*. Or, it can *rajas* and *sattva* overpowering *tamas*. In any case, this kind of *tyaga* is mainly influenced by the *tamas guṇa*.

What does that *tamas guṇa* do? It is shown in the physical laziness of the person. Even if the person rejects outer actions because of this laziness, his mind will still be active. That's what Sri Krishna calls, '*mithyāchāra*.' In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, Sri Krishna says, '*Mithyāchāra Sa Uchyate*.' 'He is called a hypocrite, who rejects outer actions while his mind remembers the sense-objects, living in a world of his imagination.' That is a *mithyāchāra*.

That's what happens when one renounces one's *svadharma*. What does he become? He becomes a *mithyāchāra*, a hypocrite. He accepts a duty that is not his, '*pratiṣidhasevā*.' *Sanyassa* is not a *dharma* that Arjuna should have accepted. This is what the commentator is saying here.

The commentator doesn't accept in any situation, the *Tyāga* of someone who isn't suitable for that *Dharma*, who isn't a suitable *adhikāri*. Pay special attention to this. Everyone has the same thought and fear. What is that? This is that after listening to *Śaṅkarāchārya's* Commentary, we will reject all actions, become *Tattvajñānis*, and wander around like mendicants. Like that, there is this fear. So, some people say, 'you shouldn't study this.' After studying this, your mind will be affected.' But the philosophy of *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya* is not something that will make your mind go wrong.

If you truly convey *Śaṅkara's* meaning to someone living in a cave, in that moment, he will come out of the cave. If he has at least a little discrimination, he will understand his mistake and come out of the cave. He will come out and engage in his normal actions. He will understand, 'that isn't the right path.' In spirituality, there are other dangerous paths to follow, but the commentator doesn't accept any of that.

I have seen many people who have studied *Vedānta*. Some people, after studying *Vedānta*, renounce all *karmas* and wander as mendicants. But that is because of merely studying *Vedānta*. Like I said before, there is a difference between studying *Vedānta* and imbibing *Vedānta*. The problem comes when

you merely study *Vedānta*. You buy a book, or hear a *satsang*. If after this, you think anything you like, this problem will come.

When the knowledge becomes incomplete and objective, then certain defects will happen. This is not because people understood *Vedānta*. This isn't because they understood *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya's Advaita*. One who has grasped *Śaṅkarāchārya's Advaita* will first think about himself. 'What is suitable for me?' If a person really gains maturity, renounces *karmas* and practices the discipline of Self-Knowledge (*Ātma Niṣṭhā*), it won't cause any harm to the world. That can only be auspicious for the entire world. But for this, maturity is needed. In true *Sanyassa*, all of this laziness and sleep that comes from indiscrimination will not be seen.

However, this isn't something that an ordinary person can attain at once. According to the individual's suitability, he will have to stay in *karma*. The person must first become aware of himself. He must realize, 'what type of aspirant am I?' But that's not enough. One also needs the permission, the acceptance of the Guru. This is because Arjuna also thought he knew what *adhikāri* he should be, by himself. Arjuna said, 'I am fit for *sanyassa*.'

However, the Guru didn't come to this conclusion. The Lord said, 'you are not an *adhikāri* for *Sanyassa*.' In that situation, only Arjuna came to a conclusion about his suitability. However, both disciple and Guru must come to mutual understanding. If the Guru must accept someone for *sanyassa*, that person must have maturity. Such a mature aspirant may then reject all of these external actions.

So, this *Karma Tyāga* is something we will continue to discuss. What *Śaṅkara* means by this is not the giving up of all our normal external actions. This is the giving up of *Vedic* ordained *karmas*. These are different. So in this part of the commentary, *Śaṅkara* isn't speaking about the kind of *sanyassa* where one rejects all normal actions due to laziness. It says here that this is a prohibited duty, '*pratiṣidha sevā*.'

The commentary is speaking about an ordinary person who rejects all normal actions out of laziness, due to the grief and delusion produced by indiscrimination. How does an ordinary person perform *svadharma*? This is said next.

*‘Svadharme pravṛttānāmapi teṣām vāṅgmanaḥkāyādīnām  
pravṛtṭiḥ phalābhisaṁdhipūrvikaiva sāhaṁkāṛā cha bhavati.’*

When a spiritual aspirant comes to the path of spirituality, it says here, ‘don’t renounce *karma!*’ ‘You must perform *karma!*’ One may think after hearing this, ‘aren’t there countless ordinary people who have no interest in spirituality that perform *karma?* Then what’s the difference? Then there’s no difference between me and them!’ However, it is *karma* that makes one move forward on the spiritual path.

Some people ask, ‘Then what’s the difference between a Swami and a householder? What does a householder do? He takes care of the house. Swami takes care of the *āśram*. What’s the difference?’

Actually, most *sanyassis* do the same things that a householder does. The Swami must take care of the protection and sustenance of the *āśram*. He has to provide cash somehow. He has to get food for everyone, and must protect all the inmates. He has to protect them from their enemies, as well as their friends. (laughs) Thus, it is a big job for a *sanyassi*, even more so than a householder.

Some people ask, ‘so what’s the difference between the two?’ Isn’t it enough to just be a householder? We don’t see the difference.’ It shows the difference here in the *bhāṣyā*, ‘*svadharme pravṛttānām api.*’ We must clearly understand what a *gṛhastha* is. Everyone always says, ‘we are *gṛhasthas.*’

This is true for the literal meaning, but in its real meaning is not true. A person who gets married, has a few kids, and lives with his wife is never a *gṛhastha*. Why? It is because he doesn’t know the *dharma* of a *gṛhastha*. Since there is no way for him to understand the *dharma* of a *gṛhastha*, he doesn’t know. That’s why he can’t be called a *gṛhastha*. This is not the *gṛhastha* that’s spoken of in the *sāstras*.

Instead, he is a diminished *gṛhastha*. He is a householder who lives without knowing his *svadharmā*. For such people, it says, ‘*Svadharme Pravṛttānām api*’ – even though they are following their inherent duty..’ These people think that they are performing their *svadharmā*. They think, ‘I am looking after everything. I am looking after the wife. I am gaining money and

protecting the family.’ Even though they act like this, it says further, ‘*teṣāṃ vāṅgmanaḥkāyādīnām pravṛttiḥ.*’

Thus, what are the actions through mind, speech, and body of this householder, a normal worldly person? It says next, ‘*phalābhisaṁdhi pūrvika*’ – his actions are with desire for the results. Here is shown the difference between a *sanyassi* who takes care of an *āśram* and a householder who looks after the home. The actions of the householder will be, ‘*phalābhisaṁdhi pūrvika*’ – there will be desire for the results. He becomes bound by those. This is what is called ‘*phalābhisaṁdhi.*’

The word, ‘*abhisaṁdhi*’ can mean bondage. It can also mean attachment. This is the bondage to the results of one’s actions. The normal worldly person cannot free himself from this. This is because it’s not just external actions. It says, *Vāṅgmanaḥkāyādīnām.*’ Through the action of speech, of the mind, of the body and senses, he becomes bound every moment to *Samisāra.* ‘*Sāhamkāra.*’ The root of all of his actions will be the ego, *ahamkāra.*

And how will a *sanyassi* be? A *sanyassi*’s actions will be exactly opposite from this. There will be no attachment to the results of actions. The *sanyassi* doesn’t do anything for himself. He doesn’t desire the results of his actions. Along with this, having renounced ego, he performs all actions as an offering to the Lord. That is how actions should be performed by a *sanyassi.* There are also those who don’t act like that. *Pondana* has spoken about this.

‘*Kolakangalill sevakkarayitu kolam keti naliyeni tujita.*’ This is speaking about *sanyassis* who aren’t like this. ‘*Kolam keti*’ means the dress of a *sanyassi*, the ochre robe. He is saying that some people wear the ochre robe, while they keep a lot keys in their pockets. This means they have attachment to wealth. There are those who go around like that. These people have lost their discrimination and practical knowledge. However, we must not take that as a preconceived notion against *sanyassis.*

Instead, if we look at what *Śaṅkara* says, it is ‘*svadharme pravṛttānām api.*’ Such people are performing their inherent duty. But even though they are performing their duty, when acting with mind, body, and speech, it will be with desire for the result. For example, a *sanyassi* may become attached to fame and position. He may want to be in charge of a *Maṭh*, and so on. He may get into

arguments and tussles. That is another matter. So, it says, ‘*sāhaṁkāra.*’ *Ahaṁkāra*, the ego will enter into the performance of *svadharma*. This can happen to anyone.

On the other hand, a true *gṛhastha* can experience the real kind of *sanyassa*. By performing his duty without attachment to the results, and without ego, the *gṛhastha* can practice *sanyassa*. This can happen in any of the life-stages, which are *brahmachāri*, *gṛhastha*, *vanaprastha*, and *sanyassa*.

Here it says that if one merely acts according to his inherent duty, no matter what life-stage it is, he cannot say that he is travelling the correct path. Instead, he must perform his *svadharma* while renouncing ego and attachment to the fruit of the karma. Only if he performs *dharma* like this will it be truly auspicious for him. Only then will the *jīva* be led upwards. This principle isn’t dependant on any single life-stage. That’s the meaning.

I explained earlier about ‘*vividiṣa.*’ A *Vividiṣa*, one who desires *Ātma Vidyā*, will accept this path. How? He accepts the spiritual path. Then what does he do? He renounces. What does he renounce? He renounces the life-stage of the householder, the stage of *gṛhastha*. After renouncing like this, what is his *svadharma*? He must then lead a life according to the *sanyassa dharma* he has taken up. When he acts like this, as a *sanyassi*, he must renounce both ego and attachment to the results when he performs actions through body, speech, or mind. He is still in the realm of action. However, he cannot have any attachment to the results or ego. Why? Because he is a *vividiṣa*, one who desires *Ātma Vidyā*.

All of his actions are totally for realizing the Self, or God. Thus, his actions are on the path to Realization. After that, he will reach the state of *Vidvāt Sanyassa*. This is the true state of *sanyassa*. He becomes established in *Jñāna Niṣṭhā*. In that state, one has no duty. Because he is established in Pure Knowledge, there is no question of the performance or renunciation of *karma*. In the Gita, this is described as ‘*Dvandvātīto Vimatsara.*’ He is beyond all dualities and doesn’t compete with others.’ Here, the aspirant reaches this *bhāva*.

This is where the *sādhana* ends. In this context, the word ‘*svadharma*’ can mean *sādhana*. The attitude of a ‘*vividiṣa*,’ one seeking *Ātma Vidyā*,

indicates *sādhana*. However, this attitude of *Vidvāt Sanyassa* is not a *sādhana*. It says in the Gita, ‘*arurekṣor munir yoga karma kāraṇam uchyate. Yogārudhasya tasyaiva śama kāraṇam uchyate.*’

Thus, the *Vidvāt Sanyassi* becomes this ‘*Yogārudha*,’ one who has climbed the mountain of *Yoga*. It is only there that true *sanyassa* happens. Until one reaches the true *sanyassa*, one travels on the path of *sanyassa*. This means to follow the path of *karma yoga*, while renouncing the ego and attachment to the fruit of actions. That is what the commentator is saying. So, if the aspirant is a true ‘*vividiṣa*,’ one who desires God-Realization, then he will never be led to the *Karma Tyāga* that is caused by laziness and sleep. So, we cannot say that a person strays from the right path as a result of studying *Advaita*.

If after studying *Advaita*, a person still leaves the right path, then that means that there’s nothing that can save him. It’s not because of *Advaita* that this happens. It is unclear and incomplete knowledge that makes one stray from the right path. So, no one should be afraid.

The commentator is saying that merely performing one’s *svadharma* is not of greatest importance. What is more important is how one performs it. Now, if someone, whether a householder or *sanyassi*, doesn’t perform their *svadharma* with the proper attitude, what happens? It says, ‘*tatraivaṁ sati*,’ like this,

**‘*Tatraivaṁ sati dharmādharmopachayādiṣṭāniṣṭa  
janmasukhaduḥkhaprāptilakṣaṇaḥ saṁsāro ‘nuparato  
bhavatiyataḥ samsārabījabhūtau śokamohau.*’**

‘*Tatraivaṁ sati*,’ means one is performing one’s *svadharma*. This may be either a *sanyassi* or a householder. What is that person performing their *svadharma* doing? ‘*Tatraivaṁ sati*,’ If he performs this *svadharma* with ego and attachment to the results, then, ‘*Dharmādharmopachayāt.*’ He then gains *punya* and *pāpa*, merit and demerit. That’s what happens here. The *jiva* collects both merit and demerit. In desireless *karma*, these merits and demerits don’t exist.

However, in *Karma* performed with desire, one will obtain both merit and demerit.

We may think that we are doing *satkarmas*, good actions. ‘We perform good actions, such as helping the sick. Aren’t these *satkarmas* meritorious? What happens to one who performs these actions? Surely, service and other good actions are meritorious. Then, won’t that merit become a cause for bondage?’ People will also think this, but it doesn’t become a cause for bondage.

Only when the performer of these *satkarmas* has a desire to obtain merit does the action become a bondage. No matter what action one is performing, the mind will create *saṁskāras* according to the action. No action can be performed without creating *saṁskāras*. If the action is performed, these impressions will be formed in the mind. That is a law of *karma*.

If we perform our *svadharma*, the mind will also produce the suitable *saṁskāras* from this. Suppose a person performs *Vedic* rites such as *Agnihotra*, or *Jyotiṣtom*. These actions also create *saṁskāra* in the form of *punya*, merit. Now, suppose a person performs action as an offering to God, without attachment to the results, renouncing the ego. Even there, there is the *samskara* from performing the *karma*. It’s not possible to perform *karma* and avoid *saṁskāras*.

Then what is the difference between the two? One person has a *saṁskāra* of desire, and the other has a *saṁskāra* of renunciation. Both of these are connected to the merit of the action, the *punya*. When desire is connected to the *punya*, that merit will produce a fruit. It will produce the desired result. In other words, it will become a cause for a future birth.

Instead, if one obtains merit while avoiding desire, that *punya* will become a cause for *chitta śuddhi*, purity of mind. The modification of *punya* becomes a cause for *chitta śuddhi*. When the *bhāṣyā* says, ‘*dharma upachayam*,’ there is a difference between these two kinds of *karma*, with and without desire.

That action doesn’t become a cause for future births for a performer of desireless action. This is because there is no desire behind the *karma*. What causes future births is not just *punya*, merit, but *punya* combined with desire. But what happens here? Because the *karma yogi* performs *karmas* without

desire, they don't cause a future birth. Instead, they cause purification of mind within the aspirant. Then this helps the *yogi's* mind to become mature enough to reach the state of *Tattvajñāna*, Self-knowledge.

What happens in the other case? '*Tatraivam sati.*' If a person performs action with ego and pride, no matter who or what action, that becomes a cause for rebirth. We talked about *dharmic* actions and service activities before. If they are performed with desire, then the person will have to take another birth for the fulfillment of the desire.

Acting in this way, the person will gain both *dharma* and *adharma*. This is '*dharma adharma upachayāt.*' From this, comes '*iṣṭāniṣṭajanmā*' - This causes births that are either favorable or unfavorable to the *jīva*. The birth as a *deva*, etc., can be said to be an *iṣṭa janma*, a birth that is favorable. A birth as an inert object, as a bird, or as an animal are examples of *aniṣṭa janmas*, births that aren't favorable. A birth that is mixed between *iṣṭa* and *aniṣṭa* is birth as a human. Then from these births, whether favorable or unfavorable, happiness and sorrow, *sukha* and *dukha*, are produced. Thus, it says, '*sukhaduḥkhaḥprātilakṣaṇaḥ.*' This attainment of happiness and sorrow is the indication of *samsāra*.

As we said earlier, if a person acts with attachment to the results and ego, he may gain merit, through the performance of *dharma*. If he performs *adharma*, he will gain the modification of demerit in the mind. From the modification of merit come births as a *deva*, etc. If one gains the modification of demerit, one then attains birth as lower beings, and if one's mind contains a mix of merit and demerit, one attains a birth as a human. This is called *samsara*, and is described as, '*anuparato bhavati.*' This continues without an end.

'*Ityataḥ,*' because of this, '*samsārabijabhūtau śokamohau.*' The word *samsāra* indicates the attainment of birth. There, one's merit and demerit are combined together, causing one to experience happiness and sorrow, *sukha* and *dukha*. Then, again, one attains another birth. This continues endlessly. What is the cause of this? It says, '*samsārabijabhūtauśokamohau.*' The cause of *samsara* is grief and delusion, *śoka* and *moha*. The cause of these are ego and attachment, and the cause of these is Ignorance, *Ajñāna*. That's the meaning.

*Tayoścha sarvakarmasamnyāsapūrvakādātmajñānānānyatō  
nivr̥ttiriti, tad upadidikṣuḥ sarvalōkānugrahārthamarjunam  
nimittikṛtyāha bhagavānvāsudevaḥ – ‘asōchyān’ ity ādi.’*

‘*Tayōḥ cha*’ - What are these two? *Śōka* and *moha*, grief and delusion. How can one destroy this grief and delusion? How can they be totally annihilated? How can one ultimately destroy the seed of these?

‘*Sarvakarmasamnyāsapūrvakād ātmajñānāt.*’ Their complete destruction can only be caused through *Ātma Jñāna*, Self-Knowledge. Only through that will it be possible. How is this *Ātma Jñāna*? It is described as ‘*sarvakarmasamnyāsapūrvakāt,*’ ‘with the renunciation of all *karmas.*’ This is Self-knowledge, along with the renunciation of all *karmas.* This renunciation of all *karmas* is something that we will discuss in detail. This appears in several parts of the *Śaṅkara Bhāṣyā.*

Still, for now, you should at least understand that this doesn’t mean to reject all external actions. We are not saying that *karma* isn’t needed. That isn’t the kind of renunciation being spoken of here, as ‘*sarva karma sanyassa.*’ That’s why it says next, ‘*ātmajñānāt.*’ That’s what is primary. This is *sanyassa* along with Self-knowledge. It is renunciation in the form of *ātma niṣṭhā*, abidance in the Self. Only through this *Ātma Jñāna* can grief and delusion be completely destroyed.

‘*Na anyatho nivr̥tti.*’ There is no other way for them to be destroyed. Perhaps we can lessen these to a certain extent, but they will continue to remain in their seed form. In order to totally annihilate grief and delusion, it is only possible through *Ātma Jñāna.* ‘*Tat upadidikṣuḥ*’ - the Lord desired to instruct that. ‘*Sarva loka anugrahārtham*’ - This wasn’t just for Arjuna. Instead, it was for the entire world. It says, ‘*Arjuna Nimiti Kṛtya.*’ Here, Arjuna is merely an instrument for the Lord’s instruction.

Just as Arjuna was merely an instrument in the *Mahābhārata* war, here Arjuna is merely an instrument for the Lord’s instruction. The Lord’s instruction of the Gita was for blessing the entire world, ‘*Sarva Loka Anugrahārtham.*’ This is for all kinds of aspirants. All forms of *sādhana* and

spiritual principles are contained within the Gita. To say that the Gita was for blessing the entire world means that it accepts everything. ‘*Bhagavān Vāsudevaḥ āhaḥ.*’ The Lord *Vāsudeva* begins His instruction with the next *śloka*.

In this way, the commentator has expressed the essence of his philosophies through this part of the commentary. What comes next? It is the opposition to *Śaṅkara’s* ideas, called the *Pūrva Pakṣa*. If the listener isn’t the highest kind of aspirant, then he won’t gain the understanding of the śāstra by just one hearing. Then what is necessary? Repetition is needed.

When we hear a spiritual principle explained, we may have many doubts in the mind. ‘Is it like this? Or is it like that? Does it mean like this, or like that?’ Normally, such doubts will come in the mind of a seeker. There are only two kinds of people who don’t have such doubts. One is the highest kind of aspirant, the *uttamādhikari*. He won’t have a single doubt. Then, there is a fool. He won’t have a single doubt either. He will say ‘everything is very clear.’ (laughs) He won’t have any doubts. You can ask, ‘do you have any doubt?’ He will say, ‘no, not a single doubt.’ So, one must be either a fool or a *Jñāni* not to have any doubts.

Doubts will come for the medium level aspirant. For the *uttama ādikāri*, all of their doubts will be dispelled after hearing the Guru’s instruction once. They become established in the Self. Doubts have no relevance there. If it is a fool, he will grasp, and then forget. The words will go in through one ear and out the other. They will understand everything being said, but in the next moment, it will be lost. This knowledge is momentary. The words stay in the mind for a moment, and leave in the next. Where do they go? They disappear.

Sound is dissolved into the ether. Like this, knowledge has a greater ether, called the ‘*chittākāśa.*’ This knowledge will be dissolved into the *chittākāśa*. What is knowledge? It is a modification of mind. Where does that modification exist? In the *chittākāśa*, the ether of the mind. This is said by *rshis* such as *Vasiṣṭa*.

So, here is the *Bhūtākāśa*, the external space. This is where sound travels. The *Bhūtākāśa* is where sound functions. Like this, the modifications of mind are situated in *chittākāśa*, the mental ether. Both of these share a similar nature.

So, when we create sound, that sound cannot last more than a moment. It becomes dissolved into the ether. It cannot continue to exist. Fire and light can continue to exist, but not sound. What is this like? Knowledge. Knowledge is also active and then absorbed. Where is it absorbed? Into the *chittākāśa*, the ether of the mind. That is the nature of knowledge. Once we hear something, it will be forgotten. The knowledge will disappear. That's why the fool has no doubts at all.

But this doesn't happen with most of us. '*Ke chit āhuḥ.*' After hearing something for the first time, we will feel some doubts. It may be a disciple who accepts the principle. It may be an inquisitive seeker. So, here in the commentary, the person who asks the opposing questions is called the *Pūrva Pakṣa*. This *Pūrva Pakṣa* can be of two kinds. If the question is taking the stance of an argument, then it is not the attitude of a disciple. Then it is with the attitude of debating with logic. This simply shows a person who finds the principle hard to accept on hearing.

However, the same question can be asked in two ways. The question is only one. First, is through the attitude of debate, or *tarka*. The 2<sup>nd</sup> way is with the attitude of a disciple. Actually, it's enough if we see all of the questions as coming from the level of a disciple. How is this?

When *Śaṅkara* was writing the commentary, he would get many questions from his disciples, who had different natures. Sometimes, the questions in the commentary may have come from an inquisitive disciple. However, this same question would be presented by *Śaṅkarāchārya* in a very logical and debative manner, not in the attitude of a disciple. It will be as a person who opposes *Śaṅkara's* ideas.

These questions will then be in the attitude of someone who opposes the principles expounded by *Śaṅkarāchārya*. These questioners in the *bhāṣyā* will oppose his philosophy. That is why they ask such questions. If a question is used at the level of a disciple, it will be in order to provide more clarity to the principle instructed. That's why it's enough if we accept all of the questions as coming from a disciple. In this way, the *Pūrva Pakṣa* represents the disciple.

It is said, '*Uha Boha Vichakṣaṇam.*' This means a disciple with some knowledge of the scriptures. They have a *saṁskāra* for scriptures other than

*Śaṅkara's Advaita* philosophy. Such a disciple will be shown in the *Pūrva Pakṣa*. Naturally, these disciples will have doubts in the matters discussed. Here is the question in the commentary.

**(Objection) - *Tatra kechidāhuḥ, sarvakarmasamnyāsapūrvakād ātmajñānaniṣṭhāmātrādeva kevalātkaivalyaṁ na prāpyate eva. Kiṁ tarhyagnihotrādiśrautasamārtasahitājñānātkaivalyampratiriti sarvāsu gītāsu niśchitorthaḥ iti.***

So, a philosophy, or *siddhānta*, was discussed previously. This is that *Mokṣa* is attained only through abidance in *Jñāna*, Knowledge of the Self. We can see that generally, the disciple interprets instructions according to his own level of experience. So, this question can be seen like that, or as a question desiring to oppose that *siddhānta*.

‘*Sarvakarmasamnyāsapūrvakād ātmajñānaniṣṭhāmātrād. Śaṅkara* said that only through the abidance in Self-Knowledge is *mokṣa* attained. ‘*kevalāt,*’ ‘from this alone,’ ‘*Kaivalya,*’ Liberation, ‘*Na Prāpyate,*’ ‘Is not attained.’ This means that *Mokṣa* is not attained by abidance in Self-Knowledge alone.

Then it says, ‘*kim tarhi.*’ Then what must be said? Here the *bhāṣyā* is in the form of question and answer. ‘*Kim Tarhi,*’ means ‘then what?’ ‘If *mokṣa* doesn’t come from Self-knowledge alone, then what does it come from? The *Pūrva Pakṣa* answers this question. ‘*Agnihotrādi śrautasamārtakarmasahitād jñānāt kaivalyaprapṭiḥ iti sarvāsu gītāsu niśchitaḥ arthaḥ iti.*’

The questioner says, ‘*Agnihotrādi śrautasamārtakarmasahitād jñānāt.*’ Here we should pay special attention. When we hear the word ‘*karma,*’ we normally think of ordinary action.

When he hear about the combination of *jñāna* and *karma*, this is what we think of, our ordinary actions. That is not at all what is explained here. Then what is meant by ‘*karma* in the ‘combination of *karma* and *jñāna*?’ It says, ‘*Agnihotrād śrauta smārta karma.*’ This refers to *karmas* prescribed in the *Śrutis (Vedas)*, such as the fire-sacrifice, (*agnihotra*), as well as *karmas* in the *Smṛtis*.

For example, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, '*Kuru Karmaiva Tasmāt Tvam*' - 'You should perform *karma* alone.' This refers to the *Smṛtis*. War is a *karma* that is ordained in the *Smṛtis*. To fight a war is a *Smārta karma*. It says in the *Śrutis*, '*Agnihotra Jahūyād*' - 'You must perform the *Agnihotra*.' Because this is ordained by the *Śrutis*, it is called a *Śrouta Karma*.

Even though we call the Gita an *Upaniṣad* because of its greatness, the Gita is considered as a *Smṛti*. Thus, the *karmas* ordained by the Gita are *Smārta*, such as fighting in a war. In this way, there are *Smārta* and *Śrouta karmas*. The *Pūrva Pakṣa* says that *mokṣa* is attained through Self-Knowledge along with these *karmas*. According to this philosophy, Liberation is attained through Jñāna, along with these *karmas*.

Here the opposition is saying that Jñāna and karma must be combined. It says to have abundance in Self-knowledge and the performance of *karma* at the same time. Here, the performance of *karma* means the performance of *Karma Yoga*. The *Pūrva Pakṣa* says that these two combined together gives the attainment of *Mokṣa*.

What *karma* must be performed? One must perform ordained *karmas*. It's not enough to perform ordinary *karmas*. However, *Śaṅkara* says that this conclusion isn't true. We will explain this later. Here, the *Pūrva Pakṣa* says, '*ityataḥ Sarvasu Gītāsu Niśchitārthaḥ*.' This is the essence, the certain meaning of the entire Gita.' This is the *Niṣṭhā*, the decisive meaning of the Gita. '*Jñāpakam cha āhuḥ asya arthasya*.' It says this is proven through the words of the Gita. How is that?

***Jñāpakam chāhurasārthasya – 'Atha chettvamimam dharmyam sañgrāmam na kariṣyasi' 'karmaṇyevādhikārate' 'kuru karmaiva tasmāttvam' ityādi.'***

Krishna says to Arjuna, '*Atha chettvamimam dharmyam*' - 'If you don't fight in this *dharmic* war, you will be sacrificing your inherent duty and reputation, and you will also incur sin.' The next proof given by the *Pūrva Pakṣa* is, '*karmaṇyevādhikāras te' 'kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam' ityādi*.' 'Arjuna, you have the right to karma alone. Therefore, perform action.' Other sections of

the Gita are similar to these quotes. So, the Gita is clearly expressing its decisive meaning and basic principle. What does it say? If you don't perform in this *Dharmic* war, you will incur sin. '*Karmaṇi eva ādikārah te.*' 'You only have the right to *karma*. You don't have the right to *Ātma Niṣṭhā*, the abidance in Self-Knowledge.'

Then, '*Kuru Karmaiva Tasmāt tvam.*' 'You should do *karma* alone.' Sri Krishna says all of this in the Gita. When we take these and explain the fundamental principle of the Gita, can't we say that the Lord is instructing to perform all actions with abidance in the Self (*Ātma Niṣṭhā*) to attain *Mokṣa*? The *Pūrva Pakṣa* is asking this. 'Isn't that what is needed?' Normally, we will feel that this means that both are needed.

Because the Gita talks about both, we will think this. The *Pūrva Pakṣa* is saying that one should follow *Karma Yoga*, performing all of the *karmas* of the *Śrutis*, while at the same time, perform hearing, reflection, and contemplation to attain Self-Knowledge and *Mokṣa*. According to this argument, this is the way to *Mokṣa*. However, the commentator says that these two can never be combined together. According to *Śaṅkara*, it isn't possible to perform both at the same time. Now, what does the *Pūrva Pakṣa* argue?

**'*Himsādiyuktatvādvaidikam karmādharmāyetīyamapyāśāṅkā  
na kāryā.*'**

Here a doubt may come. Are the *Vedic* rites such as *yāgas dharmic* or *adharmic*? This is because there is *himsa* in the performance of these. They involve the slaughter of animals such as goats. Isn't the killing of living creatures *himsa*? Also, compared to this war that is about to happen, the *himsa* from that is relatively small. In a sacrifice, one is only taking the life of a small animal as a part of the rite.

Actually, there are two sides to this. One side says that in truth, there is no killing ordained in *Vedic yāgas*. They say that the *mantra* '*paśvālbhanam,*' and other parts of the Vedas don't mean to kill the animal. They explain that this means to touch the animal, along with the intoning of *mantras*. However, this isn't the view of the *Pūrva Pakṣa* here. The argument

here is that because there is sacrificing of animals in a *yāga*, there is *hiṃsa*. This is because animals like goats are killed in these rites. So, we may ask, ‘isn’t that *adharma*?’ And if that is *adharma*, then how much more *adharmic* is the fighting of a *kṣatriya* in this huge war? A *kṣatriya* kills so many people, so that must be *adharma*. Then there is no need to doubt that these *kṣatriyas* will attain the fruit of this sin in their next birth.’

To this doubt, the *Pūrva Pakṣa* replies, ‘That’s not correct.’ ‘*Himsādiyuktatvād,*’ from defects such as killing, ‘*vaidikam karma adharmāya,*’ that these *karmas* of the *Vedas* may be adharmic, ‘*iti iyaṃ api āśāñkā na kāryā,*’ in this doubt, you should have no fear. According to those who support *Vedic Karma*, there is no *hiṃsa* in such *karmas*. There is killing of goats, etc., but there is no *hiṃsa*. This shows their side of the debate here..

***‘Katham? Kṣhātram karma yuddhalakṣaṇam  
gurubhrātrputrādihimsālakshanam atyantakrūramapi svadharma  
iti krtvā nādharmāya.’***

‘What is war like? Even though a war is extremely cruel, if one engages in war as one’s *svadharma*, it is not *adharma*. Countless people are killed in a war. Still, that is *dharma*, not *adharma*. Like this, even though there is killing of animals in a *yāga*, that is *dharma*. Both of these examples are *dharma*, according to the *Dharma Śāstras*.’

‘When a *kṣatriya* fights in a war according to his *svadharma*, it is not *adharma*, but *dharma*. If the *kṣatriya* doesn’t do this, he will incur sin. Similarly, *yāgas* are ordained in the *Vedas*. If a person has been ordained by the *Vedas* to perform a *yāga* and doesn’t perform it, he will incur sin. Likewise, if a *kṣatriya* has been ordained to fight in a righteous war and does not, he will incur sin.’

There was a doubt before this. This is, ‘because there is killing in both a *yāga* and in war, aren’t both of these *hiṃsa*?’ The reply of the *Pūrva Pakṣa* was according to the *Dharma śāstras*. This is that though there is *hiṃsa* in these, there is no sin in them.

This side says, 'If you go outside of the *yāga* and kill a goat, then that becomes demerit. However, killing a goat as part of the *yāga* does not cause demerit.' Why? 'This is because that is ordained in the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* say that the performance of the *yāga* will give merit. Demerit is gained from *karmas* that are prohibited by the *Vedas*. It is true that *himśa* has been prohibited by the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* say that if a person commits *himśa*, he will gain demerit. But if *himśa* has been ordained anywhere in the *Vedas*, then it doesn't become demerit. If it is not ordained, then it becomes a sin (*pāpa*). This is the philosophy of the followers of the *Karma Kanda* of the *Vedas*.

If you perform *himśa* outside of a *yāga*, it becomes sin. The philosophy of those who follow the *Karma Kanda* is not simply, 'to kill is a sin.' Instead, they say, 'If killing is ordained in the *Vedas*, then it isn't sin. If it is prohibited by the *Vedas*, then it is sin.' That is the authority this group gives in deciding between sin and merit. 'Therefore, we should first know what is ordained in the *Vedas*. If something is ordained in the *Vedas*, then it doesn't become sin. Wherever a certain karma is prohibited in the *Vedas*, no matter what it is, it becomes sin.'

'Fighting in a war has been ordained for the *kṣatriya* in the *Smṛtis*. The Lord Himself says in the *Gita*, '*Tasmāt Yuddhasva*' - 'therefore, fight Arjuna!' Because this *karma* is ordained, it becomes *svadharma*, one's inherent duty. That is not sin.'

This is not the view of sin and merit that most worldly people have. Those with a worldly view will say, 'What? They killed, so isn't that sin? Isn't that *himśa*? Isn't there sin because of *himśa*?' The logic given before is the view of those who follow the *Karma Kanda* of the *Vedas*. These people are called, 'Pūrva Mīmamsakas.' They say, 'killing is a sin, but if that killing is ordained by the *Vedas*, then it is not a sin.'

A judge may give the death sentence to someone, but that's not a sin. But what about the one who was sentenced to death? He killed someone else, so he attained sin. What happens in this circumstance is that two people are killing. We see only the person sentenced to death as a criminal, and not the judge. What are both people doing? They are both killing. The judge is also killing,

but he won't be given the death sentence. The criminal will be killed. This is a law in the world. This is the same logic the Pūrva Pakṣa uses here.

Suppose enemies comes to attack a kingdom, and a warrior fights and kills the attackers. The warrior isn't punished afterwards. Instead of being punished, he will be given a reward and praise. At the same time, a normal killer won't get any praise or acceptance from society. This is a worldly rule.

Similarly, these Pūrva Mīmamsakas say that there are such rules in the Vedas. 'If there should be some form of *hiṃsa* in *karmas* ordained in the Vedas, then that is not *hiṃsa*. Therefore, no sin is attached to that.' It says, '*Himsādiyuktatvād,*' having the defect of killing, '*vaidikaṃ karma,*' these Vedic karmas, '*adharmāya,*' becoming *adharma*, '*iti iyaṃ api āśaṅkā na kāryā,*' don't even think that.'

'*Kathaṃ?*' How is that? '*Kṣātraṃ karma,*' the karma of a warrior, '*yuddhalakṣaṇam,*' which is war, '*himsālakṣaṇam,*' is full of killing, '*gurubhrātr̥putrādi,*' even one's teachers, brothers, and sons. '*Atyantakrūrām,*' This karma is extremely cruel, '*api,*' but still, '*svadharmah itī kṛtvā,*' if one performs this as his inherent duty, then, '*na adharmāya,*' it doesn't become *adharma*. That's not all.

***Tadakarāṇe cha 'tataḥ svadharmam kīrtim cha hitvā  
pāpamavāpsyasi' iti bruvatā yāvajjivādiśrutichoditānām  
paśvādihiṃsālakṣaṇānām cha karmaṇām prāgeva  
nādharmatvamiti suniśchitamuktaṃ bhavatīti.'***

'*Tad akarāṇe cha,*' if you don't perform in this war, '*tataḥ svadharmam kīrtim cha hitvā*' – you will thus reject your inherent duty and reputation. '*Pāpam avāpsyasi.*' You will also incur the sin of not performing your inherent duty.'

'*Iti bruvatā,*' the Lord said this. Since the Lord's opinion is that even this cruel war is not a sin, it says '*Yāvajjivādiśrutichōditānām paśvādihiṃsālakṣaṇānām cha karmaṇām prāgeva na adharmatvam*'. The ordinance of the *Smṛtis* says that if a *kṣatriya* doesn't act in such a cruel war, he

gains demerit. That is the Lord's ordinance. In this way, the Lord is saying that the killing in a *yāga* is not really *hiṃsa*.

'*Iti bruvatā.*' Because the Lord says that not performing in such a war is a sin, it says "*Yāvajjivādīśrutichōditānām.*" It is said in the *Vedas*, '*Yāvat jivām agnihotra juhūyād.*' This means, 'one must perform the fire-sacrifice as long as one lives.' '*Yāvat jivām.*' The *Śrutis* say that as long as one has the power to do so, one must perform the *Agnihotra*, the fire-sacrifice. In this sacrifice, sometimes the sacrifice of a goat is required.

So, '*śrutichōditānām,*' the karmas that are ordained in the *Śrutis*, '*Paśvādihimṣā lakṣaṇānām,*' which contain the killing of animals, such as goats, '*karmaṇām,*' these karmas, '*prāg eva na adharmatvam,*' don't become *adharma*. This is made clear. If a war is not *adharma*, then these *Vedic* rites are not *adharma*.

'*Iti suniśchitaṃ uktaṃ bhavati iti.*' This was made clear by the statement of the Lord. What is the circumstance of this debate? 'Should we practice *Jñāna* along with the performance of *Karma*, the *Vedic* rites and rituals?' Can a person also perform the karmas in the *Smṛtis*, such as fighting in a war, along with *Jñāna*? Can a person perform *Vedic* karmas which contain killing, such as the fire-sacrifice, along with *Jñāna*? This is the question.

The *Pūrva Pakṣa* says, 'Yes. The *karmas* of the *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis* must be performed. The performance of sacrifices that kill animals and the performance in a highly cruel war can be along with *Tattvajñāna*, Self-Knowledge. There is no defect in the *karmas* of the *śrutis* and *smṛtis*.' To show this, this side says that because the *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis* ordain these *karmas*, there is no defect of *hiṃsa*.

War is a *dharma* of the *kṣatriya*. If war is performed as one's *svadharma*, then there is no defect of *hiṃsa*. Similarly, one part that cannot be avoided in a *yāga* is the killing of a goat. Because it is ordained by the *Vedas*, this doesn't produce demerit. This is the belief of the *Pūrva Mīmamsakas*, those who follow the *Karma Kanda* of the *Vedas*.

They say that these *karmas* can be performed along with *Atma Jñāna*. Here it is the philosophy of the *Pūrva Pakṣa*, not *Śaṅkara*. The side of *Śaṅkara's* Advaita philosophy is called the *Siddhānti*. The question is, 'Can one perform

these kinds of *karma*?' The *Siddhānti* says that one can perform a *yāga* that involves the killing of a goat, or fight in a cruel war, but these *karmas* cannot be combined with *Atma Jñāna*. This is where the *Siddhānti* and the *Pūrva Pakṣa* come into conflict.

Because they are ordained in the *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis*, a person can perform these *karmas*. However, if one performs a *karma* in which desire for the fruit is necessary, then that *karma* will produce a result, and create *samsara* for the *jīva*. This won't help in attaining *Mokṣa*.

Because these *karmas* are ordained in the *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis*, the *siddhānti* doesn't say that one must not perform them. *Advaita* doesn't say that the *karmas* from the *Vedas* are *adharmic*. All of these *karmas* may be performed. Whatever is ordained for the classes and life-stages can be performed, whether it is a *yāga* or a war. However, this doesn't bring about *Mokṣa*. This is the argument of the *Siddhānti*. This is where Shaṅkara stands.

The *Siddhānti* says, 'these *karmas* won't help to attain *Mokṣa*.' After performing such *karmas*, one will be reborn according to the merit and demerit accumulated. For example, one can perform a *yāga* and goes to heaven after death. He is born as a *deva*. He will then live in *Svarga Loka*, heaven. Through the result of merit, the *jīva* obtains heaven.

However, the *jīva* must also experience the result of demerit, *pāpa*. Wasn't there killing in these *yāgas*? Because of the result of that demerit, demons will come and take the person away from heaven. He will thus experience suffering. This is the result of *hiṃsa*. The *Siddhānti* agrees on this. The *siddhānti* doesn't say that one must not perform this *karma*. He says, 'go ahead and perform. You will experience that *karma*'s merits and demerits.'

What does the *siddhānti* say? 'This kind of *karma* and *Atma Jñāna* cannot be combined together.' Therefore, the *Siddhānti* says to reject all actions that have desire for the result. What is the specialty of these Vedic *karmas*? This is that a person can only perform them with desire for their fruit.

To perform a *yāga* for the attainment of heaven, one must have within the desire for attaining heaven. Only with that desire can one perform that *karma*. Otherwise, it's not possible. Then what should a spiritual aspirant do? He should reject all of these desire-prompted *karmas*.

A spiritual seeker is one who has dispassion towards the attainment of heaven and other enjoyments. He doesn't aim to attain heaven, so there isn't that kind of desire in his mind. Therefore, he should renounce such *karmas*. He should renounce all *karmas* that must be performed with desire for the result. He should renounce these *karmas* that are impure and incur demerit. Then, he can perform ordinary *karmas*. That's what is said.

When performing such ordinary actions, it should be with the renunciation of the ego and as an offering to the Lord. That is the philosophy of the *Siddhānti*. A *Karma Yogi* is one who renounces *karmas* that have desire for the result and performs his normal, worldly actions. This should also be along with renunciation of the ego and as an offering to God. That is how *Karma Yoga* is described. In karma Yoga, one's actions must be performed with this awareness. To perform this *Karma Yoga*, a person will also need the necessary understanding of the Self, or *Ātma Bodha*. The *Siddhānti* says that *karma* must be performed like this.

The person who performs *yāgas* with the sacrifice of animals will also have *Ātma Bodha*, but his kind of *Ātma-Bodha* leads to bondage, not to *mokṣa*. Why is this? It is because his *Ātma-Bodha* isn't true, pure *Ātma Bodha*. This is because he feels that the Self is the doer and enjoyer. Therefore, the *Ātma Bodha* of a *Karmī*, a person identified with karma, will not lead to *Mokṣa*.

And what about the *Ātma Bodha* of a *Yogi*? That will take him to *Jñāna*, Self-Knowledge. The former is called '*kevala karmī*,' a person identified with *karma*. This person has *Ātma Bodha*, but it isn't true *Ātma Bodha*, and he performs *karmas*. What does he do? He continues in the cycle of *Samsāra*.

Now, what about a *Karma Yogi*? What does he do? He doesn't perform such ordained karmas. Instead, he renounces them. After renouncing *karmas* that give attainments like heaven, he performs ordinary *karmas*. He performs these ordinary actions with true *Ātma Bodha*, awareness of the Self. That's what the *Siddhānti* says.

This is a *Karma Yogi*. However, this *Karma Yogi* is also different depending on the level of his maturity. In the beginning, he will have the attitude; 'I am the doer of the *karma*, and the enjoyer of its result.' However, as

he gains more and more purity of mind through performing *karma*, this *Ātma Bodha* will shine forth within him more and more. Then, he realizes, ‘I do not act.’

Sri Krishna says, ‘*Indriyāṅindriyārtheṣu Vartante Iti Dhārayan.*’ ‘The *Yogi* has the constant determination that the Self is inactive, while it is the senses that act through the sense-objects.’ The *Karma Yogi* will gain this awareness. He will then perform action with this awareness, as an offering to God. In this way, he becomes a suitable aspirant for *Karma Tyāga*, the renunciation of karma.

The progression is as follows, ‘*Kevala Karmī, Karma Yogi, and Karma Sanyassa.*’ Thus, a *Karma Yogi* becomes a suitable aspirant for *Karma Sanyassa*. This *Karma Sanyassa* can be of two kinds; one is external, and the other is internal. One can renounce externally. Or, one can continue *karma* externally, while renouncing internally.

Through that *Tyāga*, the aspirant becomes fully suitable for the attainment of *Jñāna. Īśvara Bodha*, awareness of God, awakens within him. He will experience God-Realization. Thus, he becomes free from *saṁsāra*. That is the progression. That is indicated here.

Here, the *Pūrva Pakṣa* says to perform these ordained *karmas*, which require desire for their results, along with abidance in *Ātma Jñāna*. These two things can never happen together. This is the refutation of the combination of *Jñāna* and *Karma*. That is the meaning of the refutation. This is saying, ‘don’t even think that these two can be combined.’

According to the *Vedas*, a person can be initiated in the thread ceremony, then study the *Vedas*, understand what *Dharma* and *Adharma* is, and accept the life of a householder for the performance of *Dharma*. Then, he can perform the before mentioned ordained *karmas* of the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis*. But while performing these *dharmas*, he cannot attain *Ātma Jñāna* at the same time, according to the *Siddhānti*. One cannot combine the two.

One cannot combine the life-stages of *gṛhastha* and *sanyassa*. That’s the meaning. So, one must renounce these *karmas* which have desire for their result. What does it say here? The *Pūrva Pakṣa* says that because they are ordained by the *Vedas*, *Yāgas* involving the killing of animals are not *hiṁsa*.

Also, because war is ordained in the *Smṛtis* and is the *svadharmā* of a *kṣatriya*, it is not *adharmā*. Therefore, there's no harm in performing such karmas. It's enough if one performs such *karmas* with *Jñāna*. That's what the *Pūrva Pakṣa* said.

However, *Śaṅkara* doesn't accept the combination of both *karma* and *jñāna*. Next class, we will discuss *Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya*'s views on the combination of *jñāna* and *karma*.

## *2. Refuting of the Combination of Jñāna and karma*

Then, it says next, ‘*tat asat.*’ What did the *Pūrva Pakṣa*, the *Pūrva Mīmamsaka* say? The follower of *Pūrva Mīmamsa* also has a concept of the *Ātman*. He feels, ‘I am acting. I am that Self, which is separate from the body. I will experience the result of this *karma.*’ That is their view.

What kind of actions does the *Mīmamsaka* perform? He performs *karmas* ordained by the *Vedas*. Otherwise, it is *karmas* ordained in the *Smṛtis*. The *Pūrva Pakṣa* says that one can perform such *karmas* with *Ātma Jñāna*. However, the *Ātma Tattva* that the *Pūrva Mīmamsakas* are telling is not the same *Ātma Tattva* that *Śaṅkara* says.

The follower of *Pūrva Mīmamsa* is also thinking about the *Ātman*. However, his contemplation of the *Ātman* will be according to the ritual he is performing. *Śaṅkara* says to the *Mīmamsaka*, ‘The *Jñāna* that you are talking about is not the *Jñāna* that I mean.’ In this way, *Śaṅkara* reveals his principle of the *Ātman*, as being pure and free. So it’s not possible to perform this kind of *karma* along with this *Jñāna*. That’s what is said next,

(*Siddhānti*) - ‘*Tadasat, jñānakarmaniṣṭhayorvibhāgavachanād  
buddhidvayāśrayayoraśochyānityādinā bhagavatā yāvat ‘svadharmamapi  
chāveksya’ ityeta dantena granthena yatparamārthātmatattvanirūpaṇam  
kṛtam tatsāmkyam*

‘*Tat Asat.*’ ‘That is false!’ *Śaṅkara* said before that *Jñāna* and *Karma* cannot be combined together in the same person. Why not? ‘*Jñānakarmaniṣṭhayoḥ Vibhāga Vachanād Buddhi Dvaya Aśrayoḥ.*’ The Discipline of *Jñāna* and the Discipline of *Karma* have been said to be different from each other by the Lord Himself. *Jñāna Niṣṭhā* is one thing, and *Karma Niṣṭhā* something else. Why is that?

‘*Buddhi Dvaya Aśrayoḥ.*’ *Buddhi* means knowledge. These *Niṣṭhās* depend on two kinds of knowledge. One is knowledge for the performance of *karma*. The other is true awareness of the *Ātman* for the renunciation of *karma*. *Karma* and *Jñāna* depend on these two kinds of knowledge, which are

separate. The Lord Himself says this. ‘*Aśōchyān’ ity ādinā bhagavatā yāvat ‘svadharmam api chāvekṣya’ iti.*’

Beginning from the *śloka* in the second chapter, ‘you grieve for those who should be grieved for,’ till the 39<sup>th</sup> *śloka* of the second chapter, ‘Even if you consider your inherent duty..,’ ‘*yat paramārtha ātmatattva nirūpaṇam kṛtam*’ – the elucidation of the Supreme Truth of the *Ātma Tattva* is given through this section.

This is to show that the *Ātma Tattva* of the Gita is not the *Ātma Tattva* of the other philosophies such as the *Pūrva Mīmamsakas*. That’s why it says ‘the Supreme Truth of the *Ātma Tattva*.’ This section elucidates the true nature of the *Ātma Tattva*. ‘*Tat Sāṁkhya*’ – ‘that is *Sāṁkhya*.’

The word *Sāṁkhya* here means ‘*Advaita*.’ In the Gita, this *tattva* isn’t called *Advaita*, but *Sāṁkhya*. Why is it called this? This is because the *Sāṁkhya* expounded by *Sage Kapila* has similar characteristics to *Advaita*. Some of the most important things that *Śaṅkarāchārya* accepts in his *Advaita* philosophy are agreed on by the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy. These are concepts that were expounded by *Sage Kapila*. One of these ideas is that the *Ātman* is unaffected by anything. Followers of *Sāṁkhya* also say this concept. However, one view that *Śaṅkara* doesn’t accept of *Sāṁkhya* is that the *Ātman* is several.

Another thing that *Sāṁkhya* says is that the *Ātman* is not a doer. In *Sāṁkhya* philosophy, some people accept that the Self is the enjoyer, and others don’t accept this. However, one thing that is accepted by both philosophies is that *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, the Soul and Nature, are completely separate from each other.

*Sāṁkhya* says that the connection of the Soul and Nature is the cause of the *Jiva*’s bondage. It also says that when the *Puruṣa* can step aside, or discard the *Prakṛti*, this causes *Mokṣa*. *Śaṅkarāchārya* agrees on all of these matters. However, *Śaṅkara* expressed his *Advaita* philosophy to further develop the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy.

We can see the explanation of this *Sāṁkhya* philosophy in several parts of the *Mahābhārata*, not just in the *Gita*. Here, also, in the *Gita*, when all of the divisions of Creation are explained, such as the mind, body, senses, etc., the explanation is mostly based on the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy. This second

chapter was named, ‘*Sāṁkhya Yoga*,’ because the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy has a big place in the principle of Self-knowledge.

However, *Śaṅkarāchārya* doesn’t fully accept the philosophy of *Kapila’s Sāṁkhya*. He accepts the parts that are acceptable to him. In *Mahābhārata* and other scriptures, we can see the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy explained. In the time of the *Mahābhārata* and other *granthas*, the primary philosophy dealing with the principle of *Ātman* was the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy. *Śaṅkarāchārya* came much later after the *Mahābhārata*.

When we come to the time of *Śaṅkara*, he made some changes to the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy. However, in the Gita and other scriptures, the philosophy of the *Ātma Tattva* is called as *Sāṁkhya*. That’s why this chapter is called, ‘*Sāṁkhya Yoga*.’ *Śaṅkara* comments here according to the *Advaita* Philosophy. However, the followers of *Sāṁkhya* philosophy commentate on this according to their philosophy. They say that the subject of the Gita is the *Sāṁkhya darśana*. That is their opinion.

Now why is the importance of *Sāṁkhya* in *Advaita* so big? Actually, *Śaṅkara* doesn’t fully accept the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy. However, he sees the section called ‘*Sāṁkhya*’ in the Gita as referring to the *Advaita* philosophy. The *bhāṣyā* says, ‘the supreme truth of the *Ātma Tattva*.’ Here, this is called ‘*Sāṁkhya*,’ or *Advaita*.

*tadviṣayā buddhirātmano janmādiṣaṭvikriyābhāvādakartāsmeti  
prakaraṇārthanirūpaṇādyā jāyate sā sāṁkhyabuddhiḥ sā yeṣāṁ  
jñānināmuchitā bhavati te sāṁkhyāḥ.*’

So, when it says the word ‘*Sāṁkhyāḥ*’ here, it shouldn’t be interpreted as a follower of the *Sāṁkhya* tradition. According to the commentary, the word ‘*Sāṁkhyāḥ*,’ refers to an *Advaiti*. Because *Śaṅkarāchārya* is an *Advaiti*, he can only see *Advaita* in everything. Let it be *Sāṁkhya* or any other *darśana*, but an *Advaiti* cannot accept anything else. He will see only *Advaita* everywhere. That’s why *Śaṅkara* comments in this way.

From the 11<sup>th</sup> *śloka* till the 39<sup>th</sup> *śloka* of the second chapter, it says, ‘*Paramārtha Ātma Tattva Nirūpaṇam*.’ All of this is the elucidating of the

Supreme Truth of the *Ātma Tattva*. That is *Sāṁkhya*. It says in the Gita, ‘*Eṣā te bhīhitā Sāṁkhye*’ – ‘what you have heard from Me, Arjuna, is *Sāṁkhya*.’ So, the Lord describes this *Tattva* with the word ‘*Sāṁkhya*.’

‘*Tad Viṣayā Buddhiḥ*,’ This knowledge of the Supreme Truth of the Self.’ ‘*Buddhiḥ*,’ here means knowledge. This is knowledge about the Supreme Truth of the *Ātman*. This means that the Self is One, pure, free, and eternal.

That knowledge is then explained, ‘*ātmanō janmādi śhaḍ vikriyābhāvād*.’ The *Ātman* is not subject to any of the six modifications, such as birth, growth, decay, death, etc. When we discuss the Self, don’t think that we’re discussing some separate object. The *Pūrva Mīmamsa* philosophy says, ‘these six modifications exist in you.’ Even the *Sāṁkhyas* accept this somewhat. One section of the *Sāṁkhyas* believes that the *Ātman* is the *bhokta*, the experiencer of the results of actions.

Here, *Śaṅkara* says the Supreme Truth of the *Ātma Tattva* is ‘*ātmanō janmādi śhaḍ vikriyābhāvād*.’ What are these six modifications? Birth, sustenance, growth, decay, destruction, etc. *Śaṅkara* says that these *ṣaḍ vikriyas*, the six modifications, are not in you, the Self. That is why the Self is called ‘*Akartā*,’ the non-doer. The *Ātman* doesn’t act. The *Ātman* doesn’t perform karma. The *Ātman* doesn’t have the *sankalpa* to attain heaven through *karma*, like the *Mīmamsakas* believe. The Self doesn’t have any *sankalpa* for *karma*. The Self is a non-doer.

In this way, it says next, ‘*iti prakaraṇārtha nirūpaṇād yā jāyate*.’ In this situation where the *Ātma Tattva* is elucidated, ‘*yā jāyate*.’ What kind of knowledge is gained? The knowledge that is gained in this section, where the Lord elucidates the *Ātma Tattva* in the Gita is called, ‘*Sā Sāṁkhya Buddhiḥ*.’ That is the knowledge of *Sāṁkhya*, the knowledge of *Advaita*.

‘*Sā eṣāṁ jñānināṇ učitā bhavati*.’ For those *Jñānis* of which this knowledge is suitable, those who possess this knowledge, ‘*te sāṁkhyāḥ*.’ They are *Sāṁkhyas*. They are *Advaitis*, according to the commentator.

Whoever has true knowledge about the Self, which is their own Self, is accepted as a *Jñāni*, one with the knowledge of *Advaita*. Then there is another group. This is next in the commentary.

*‘Etasyā buddherjanmanah prāgātmano  
dehādivyatiriktatvakartṛtvabhōkṛtvādyapekṣō  
dharmādharmavivekapūrvakō mōkṣasādanānuṣṭhāna  
nirūpaṇalakṣaṇō yogaḥ, tadviṣayā buddhiryogabuddhiḥ. Sā  
yeṣāṃ karmināmuchitā bhavati te yoginaḥ’*

‘*Etasyāḥ buddheḥ janmanah prāg.*’ The knowledge explained before is correct knowledge of the Supreme Truth of the *Ātman*. ‘*Janmanah prāg*’ - ‘before the birth of this Advaita *Bodha*, a person thinks about the *Ātman*. Who is this? The *Mīmamsakas* and others think about the *Ātman*. How do they know the *Ātman*? It says, ‘*ātmanah dehādivyatiriktatvam*’ - the *Ātman* is separate from the body. The Self is beyond the gross body, the senses, the mind, etc. It then says this *Ātman* has ‘*kartṛtvam and bhōkṛtvam*, doership and enjoyership. They believe that the Self is the doer, the performer of *karma*. Also, they believe the Self is the enjoyer, the experiencer of the results of *karma*. These *Pūrva Mīmamsakas* know the Self in this way. In this way, ‘*kartṛtva bhōkṛtvādyapekṣo.*’ These *Mīmamsakas* regard the Self as the doer and enjoyer. When they think of the Self, they consider that It has a *dharmā* of action and a *dharmā* of experience. That’s not all.

It says next, ‘*dharmādharmā viveka pūrvaka.*’ Thinking of the *Ātman* in this way, how do they perform *karmas*? It is with discrimination between *dharmā* and *adharmā*, righteousness and unrighteousness. They say that because *karmas* like war and *yāgas* are ordained by the *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis*, one must perform them as a part of one’s *svadharmā*. This is *dharmā*. However, actions like drinking alcohol and other prohibited actions are considered *adharmā*.

In this way, the aspirant performs *karma* with discrimination between *dharmā* and *adharmā*. When he acts thus, what does he desire? He desires *mokṣa*, release from the cycle of *Samsāra*. So, it says that a person who performs actions while desiring Liberation and with the discrimination between *dharmā* and *adharmā* is a *karma yogi*. It says, ‘*mōkṣa sādānānuṣṭhānam*’ - he performs *karma* as a means to Liberation. So, the *yoga* that elucidates this

performance of *karma* is *Karma Yoga*. Here it is speaking about a *Karma Yogi*. What does a *Karma Yogi* know? He knows that the Self is separate from the body. He performs *karma* with the desire for Liberation. What determination must he have in this *karma*? ‘I am the performer of this *karma*, and I must obtain the result of this *karma*.’ That is what he has to think. How is this? This is because this is the performance of *karmas* ordained in the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis*.

This person knows that the *Ātman* is separate from the body. Then why does he use this kind of *karma*? He uses this *karma* as a *sādhana*, a means to the attainment of *Mokṣa*. Because he uses *karma* as a *sādhana* to *Mokṣa*, he is called a *Karma Yogi*. He will perform *karma* as an offering to the Lord and without pride. Only such an aspirant of *karma* can perform *Karma Yoga*. That is what is said.

However, if the aspirant already has the awareness, ‘the Self is not the doer. The Self is not the enjoyer,’ then he doesn’t have to use this ordained *karma* as a means to *Mokṣa*. Only a person who has the understanding that the Self is the doer and enjoyer of the fruits of *karma* must use the performance of ordained *karma* through *Karma Yoga* as a *sādhana* for the attainment of *Mokṣa*. This is not speaking about ordinary *karma*. *Tad viṣayā buddhiḥ*,’ in this way, those who have this understanding that the Self is the doer and enjoyer are *Karma Yogis*, and that understanding is ‘*yoga buddhiḥ*.’ That is the knowledge of *Karma Yoga*. ‘*Sā eṣāṁ karmināṁ učitā bhavati te yoginah*’ Among whoever has this kind of *karma*, they are *Karma Yogis*.’

However, we must not ever think that this refers to our practices such as *japa* and meditation. That is not what is being talked about here. Here it is speaking about *Karma Yogis*. When we perform *japa*, meditation, and other spiritual practices, we gain *Tattva Bodha*, awareness of Truth. We will gain understanding of the *Ātman* through this awareness. However, this doesn’t have relevance to the combination of *Jñāna* and *Karma* being discussed here by the commentator.

The question, ‘does this cause a combination of *Jñāna* and *Karma* or not?’ does not arise here. This is because that has no relevance to the combination of *Jñāna* and *Karma* being discussed by *Śaṅkarāchārya*. What he is saying doesn’t refer to this. What is said here doesn’t refer to the practice of

certain *sādhanas* that lead to the attainment of *Mokṣa*. This doesn't refer to the practice of *Yoga*.

Here, when it says *Yoga*, it says, 'Sā eṣāṁ karminām učitā bhavati.' For those who perform *karma*, this understanding is suitable.' 'Te yoginaḥ' - they are *Karma Yogis*. Here it is differentiating between *Jñāna Yoga* and *Karma Yoga*. Don't connect this to our condition and create confusion for yourself. There is a possibility of getting confused after reading the commentary. That's why I am saying this in particular. We must understand these things. 'What is *Karma Yoga*? Where is the relevance of *Karma Yoga*? Who is an aspirant for *Karma Yoga*?' We must clearly understand all of these matters.

We normally call those people who are constantly engaged in action *Karma Yogis*. According to what *Śaṅkara* says, we cannot say that. There's nothing wrong with saying this as we do normally. However, this is *Śaṅkara's* explanation of *Advaita*. So, apart from how it is explained in *Śaṅkarāchārya's Advaita*, *Karma Yoga* is usually explained as performing action selflessly, as action for the good of the world. However, this is not the kind of *Yogi* being described. Here, what is said? It says that he has the idea that the Self is the doer and enjoyer, *kartā* and *bhoktā*. His understanding is that the Self is separate from the body, and he performs actions with discrimination between *dharma* and *adharma*. He desires *Mokṣa*, Liberation. He performs *karmas* that are ordained in the *śrutis* and *smṛtis*. This kind of person is called a '*Karma Yogi*,' in the commentary.

This is said according to the philosophy of *Advaita*. 'Tathā cha Bhagavatā vibhakte dve buddhī nirदिष्टे.' What did the Lord do? He taught two different kinds of knowledge. How is this? 'Eṣā tebhīhitā sām̐khye buddhīryōge tvimāṁ sṛnu' iti.' This is the 39<sup>th</sup> *śloka* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. The Lord says, 'up until now, I have instructed *Sām̐khya Buddhi*, the knowledge of *Sām̐khya*, to you.' According to the commentary, this means *Advaita Bodha*, the knowledge of *Advaita*. The Lord says, 'This was instructed to you. Now hear *Yoga Buddhi*, the knowledge of *Yoga*.' This indicates *Karma Yoga*. So, the Lord makes a clear distinction between these two *Yogas*.

*‘Tayōścha sām̐khyabuddhyāśrayām̐ jñānayōgena niṣṭhām̐  
sām̐khyānām̐ vibhaktām̐ vakṣyati – ‘Purā vedātmanā mayā  
proktā’ iti. Tathā cha yogabuddhyāśrayām̐ karmayogena niṣṭhām̐  
vibhaktām̐ vakṣyati – ‘karmayogena yoginām̐’ iti.’*

‘*Tayōh cha,*’ of these two kinds of knowledge, the knowledge needed for *Karma Yoga*, and the knowledge needed for *Jñāna Yoga*, ‘*Sām̐khyā buddhyāśrayām̐*’ – dependant on *Sām̐khyā Buddhi*, the knowledge of Advaita, ‘*Jñānayogena niṣṭhām̐,*’ is the Discipline of *Jñāna Yoga*. This is the *Niṣṭhā* of awareness of the Supreme Truth of the *Ātman*. Who is this for? ‘*Sām̐khyānām̐.*’ This is for followers of *Sām̐khyā*. Then, ‘*vibhaktām̐ vakṣyati.*’ This is divided. In other words, this isn’t for followers of *karma*. Then, Lord *Srī Kṛṣṇa* says in the *Gita*, ‘*Purā vedātmanā mayā proktā’ iti.*’ I, who am the embodiment of the *Vedas*, said this before.’

Like this, *Yogis* practice the Discipline of *Karma Yoga*. This is said in particular. The word, ‘*Yogabuddhi,*’ here means the knowledge of *Karma Yoga*. This is the knowledge that the *Ātman* is the doer and enjoyer. This Discipline of *Karma Yoga* is spoken of in particular and separately, through the śloka, ‘*karmayōgena yōginām̐’ iti.*’ This means, ‘the Discipline of *Yogis* is *Karma Yoga.*’

In other parts of the *Gita*, it speaks about a different kind of *Yoga*, connected to the *Yoga* of *Paṭañjali*. This includes the steps of *Dhāraṇa*, concentration, *Dhyāna*, meditation, and *Samādhi*. This comes in a different section of the *Gita*. However, in this part, it says, ‘*Karmayogena Yoginām̐’ -* This is the *Yoga* of the *Karma Yogis*. Next, it says,

*‘Evam̐ sām̐khyabuddhiṃ yogabuddhiṃ chāśritya dve niṣṭhe  
vibhakte bhagavataivokte jñānakarmaṇoḥ  
kartṛtvākartṛtvaikatvānekatvabuddhyāśrayayor  
ekapuruṣāśrayatvāsambhavam̐ paśyatā.’*

Thus, there is *Sāṁkhya buddhi* and *Yoga Buddhi*. This is the Self-knowledge needed for *Jñāna Yoga* and the Self-knowledge needed for *Karma Yoga*. Relying on these two kinds of knowledge, ‘*dve niṣṭhe*’ - there are two different Disciplines.

Why is *Karma Yoga* given so much importance in this part of the Gita? It is because at this point, Arjuna is preparing for *Karma Tyāga*, the renunciation of *Karma*. That is why it is especially said. These two Disciplines, ‘*vibhakte*,’ were divided, ‘*bhagavatā eva*,’ by the Lord Himself.

‘*Jñānakarmaṇōh*,’ There is the Discipline of Knowledge, and the Discipline of Karma. What is one like? ‘*karṭṛtvam*’ - the *Karma Yogi* needs the knowledge that the Self is the doer. And what about the *Jñāni*? ‘*Akarṭṛtvam*.’ The *Jñāni* rejects this, saying the Self is a non-doeer. Then it says, ‘*ekatvam*’ - the *Jñāni* will have this *ekatva bodha*, knowledge of the One Self. And what about a *Karma Yogi*? ‘*Anekatvam*’ - the *Karma Yogi* sees the Self as being many, through the philosophy of *Pūrva Mīmamsa*. In that philosophy, the Self is not One. For them, each Self is performing *karma* is separate from each other, and must experience the fruits of those *karmas*. That’s why they have the understanding that the Self is many, *aneka*. So, the *Karma Yogis* have the knowledge that the Self is many, while the *Jñānis* know that the Self is One.

In this way, it says, ‘*Buddhi aśrayayoh*,’ having these two kinds of knowledge, ‘*yugapad*,’ at the same time, ‘*Eka puruṣāśrayatvam*,’ in the same person - is this possible? ‘*Asambhava pashyatā*’ - ‘No, this is impossible. So, is that understood?’

We must understand this very clearly, ‘what is the Discipline of Knowledge, which is separate from Karma?’ To understand this, *Śaṅkarāchārya* has presented this debate here in the commentary. This debate will reappear in some other sections. Wherever this occurs, the aim of the commentator is for an aspirant to understand the Supreme Truth of the Self. This *Ātman* has no doership, enjoyership, or any kind of *Dharma*. That *Ātman* is *nitya śuddha buddha mukta svabhāvaḥ*.’ By it’s very nature it is eternal, pure, intelligent, and free. So, *Śaṅkara* repeatedly refutes the combination of *Jñāna* and *Karma* for revealing the Supreme Truth of the *Ātman*. This idea is not just in the Gita. It says next that this idea is also in the *śrutis*.

*Yathaitadvibhāgavachanam̐ tathaiva darśitam̐ śātapathīye  
brāhmaṇe – ‘evameva pravrajino lokmicchanto brāhmaṇāḥ  
pravrajanti’ iti sarvakarmasam̐nyāsam̐ vidhāya tacceṣeṇa –  
‘kim̐prajayā kariṣyāmo yeṣāṁ noyamātmāyam̐ lokaḥ’ iti.*

The *Śātapathīye brāhmaṇa* is found in the *Bṛhadaraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. There also, this division is discussed. It says, ‘*etameva pravrajino lokam̐ icchanto brāhmaṇāḥ pravrajanti.*’

The phrase, ‘*pravrajinaḥ lokam̐,*’ means the world of *sanyassis*. This is to show the difference between followers of *karma* and *sanyassis*. Here, *Śaṅkara* is separating the householder who performs *Karma Niṣṭhā* from the *sanyassi*, who is established in *Jñāna Nishta*.

What is the world of the householder, who is in *Karma Niṣṭhā*? We don’t mean the world here. The world that he attains after death is *Svarga Loka*, heaven. But, it says, ‘*pravrajinaḥ,*’ those who have renounced everything, ‘*brāhmaṇāḥ*’ - What is the world for the *Brāhmanas*? That is *Ātma Niṣṭhā*, abidance in the Self, or *Mokṣa*. That is their world. What does the *Brāhmaṇa* who desires *Mokṣa* do? It says, ‘*pravrajanti,*’ he accepts *sanyassa*, renouncing all of these *karmas*.

In other words, he renounces the *Pūrva Mīmamsa* philosophy which holds the idea that the Self is the doer and enjoyer. He renounces the attitude, ‘I am the doer and the experiencer of the fruits of *karma.*’ Along with this, all of his external *karmas* fall away from him.

‘*Iti sarvakarmasam̐nyāsam̐ vidhāya,*’ he then renounces all of these ordained *karmas*. Then another quote is given. Renunciation is both inner and outer. To show a part of that renunciation, the *śruti* is quoted here, ‘*kim̐ prajayā kariṣyāmo yeṣāṁ naḥ ayamātmāyam̐ lokaḥ’ iti.*’

Remember that there is a difference between ordained *karmas* and ordinary *karmas*. If a follower of *Pūrva Mīmamsa* must perform these ordained *karmas*, there are some very strict rules he must follow. First, he must obtain

*upanayanam*, the thread ceremony for a *Brāhmaṇa*, and then he must study the *Vedas*, with the contemplation according to *Pūrva Mīmamsa* philosophy. Then, he can accept the life-stage of the *gṛhastha*, the householder.

Some *karmas* must be performed along with one's wife. So he must perform *karma* along with his *patni*, his wife. Then he truly accepts the life-stage of *gṛhastha*, householder. This stage of *gṛhasthāśrama* is what is indicated here with the word *Karma Yogi*. This doesn't refer to *Sanyassa*, or a person on the path to *Sanyassa*. This person accepts the life of householder.

However, for such a person, when he is in the situation of accepting this life-stage, or before entering, he may think. '*Kim Prajayā Kariṣyāmo?*' He may think also when he is performing these *Vedic* ordained *karmas* as a householder, with the attitude that the Self is the doer and enjoyer. He may think before that, or when entering, or after. What does he think? 'What is the use of children for me?'

It says this because when one accepts the life-stage of *gṛhastha*, the most important reason for doing so is for obtaining children, *praja*. The quote from the *Upaniṣad* says, 'What benefit will I obtain from children?' One accepts the stage of *gṛhastha* for obtaining children. So, what is the benefit? It says, '*yeṣāṃ no ayamātmāyam lokaḥ.*' Before he accepts the stage of *gṛhasthāśrama*, or as he is entering, this person thinks about the Self. '*Yeṣāṃ naḥ,*' 'For me,' the *brāhmaṇa* thinks, '*ayamātmāyam lokaḥ,*' 'What is the real fruit to be obtained?' This *Ātman*, the Self, is the real fruit of *karma*, not Heaven. It is not heaven, nor sons, nor wealth. The word 'son' refers to all of these. These sons and wealth are not my world, my *loka*. *Loka* means the fruit of *karma*. Instead, it says '*ayam ātmā.*' The fruit of works is not these, but the Self.' The *Brāhmaṇa* thinks like this.

***'Tatraiva cha – 'prāgdāraparigrahātpuruṣa ātmā prākṛto  
dharmjijñāsottarakālam lokatrayasādhanam putram dviprakāram  
cha vittam mānuṣam daivam cha, tatra mānuṣam vittam  
karmarūpam piṭṛlokaprāptisādhanam vidyām cha daivam vittam  
devalokaprāptisādhanam sokāmayata' ityāvidyākāmayata eva***

*sarvāṇi karmāṇi śrautādīni darśitāni. 'Tebhyo vyutthāya pravajanti' iti vyutthānamātmānameva lokamicchato 'kāmasya vihitam.'*

The commentator continues quotes from the Upanishad; '*tatra eva cha prāk dāra parigrahāt puruṣaḥ ātmā prākṛtaḥ.*' It says, '*prāk dāra parigraham,*' before the acceptance of a wife. The person is thinking before accepting the life-stage of *gṛhastha*. Who is this? '*puruṣaḥ,*' this person. Though in truth, he is the *Ātma*, it says he is '*prākṛtaḥ,*' someone without true knowledge of the Self.

'*Dharma jijñāsa uttarakālam,*' This same person has attained interest in *Dharma*. This means that he has had the thread ceremony performed, has studied the *Vedas*, contemplated according to *Pūrva Mīmamsa* philosophy, and understood the nature of *karma* and its results. Then what does he do? He then accepts the life-stage of *gṛhastha*.

This life-stage is described as '*lokatrayasādhanaḥ,*' – a means for attaining the three lokas. '*Putram dvi prakāraṁ cha vittam manuṣam daivam cha.*' What does he desire? Remember, it said, 'before the acceptance of a wife.' After studying the *Karma Kanda* and contemplating according to *Pūrva Mīmamsa*, before accepting the life of a householder, he has desires. This is after he has attained interest in performing *Dharma*. He desires the three worlds, which mean the three fruits of actions. Here, *loka* means fruit of action. The means to the first *loka* is '*putra,*' a son. Then second is '*vittam, dvi prakāram.*' *Vittam* is a means, a *sādhana*. This is of two kinds. One is '*manuṣam,*' of man, and second is '*daivam,*' of the *devas*. So, he thinks of these three kinds of means to the attainment of the fruits of action, after gaining interest in *Dharma*. These are thus the three means for attaining the three types of karmic fruits, '*lokatrayasādhanaḥ.*'

The first of these means for attainment the fruits of action is '*putra,*' a son. If you need a son, what must you do? You must accept the life of a householder. Next are the two kinds of *vittam*, or *sādhana*. '*Manuṣam Daivam cha.*' These are the *sādhana* of man and the *sādhana* of the *devas*. So, the *manuṣa vitta*, the *sādhana* of man is *karma*. It says, '*Karma rūpam*

*pitṛlokaprāptasādhana.*’ This means that *Karma* is the means for the attainment of *Pitṛ Loka*, the world of the ancestors.

So, here, the word *Vittam*’ means the *sādhana* of *karma* that one performs for the attainment of *Pitṛ Loka*, the world of the ancestors. He thinks of *karma* for the attainment of this *Loka*. This is also possible only through the acceptance of the life-stage of householder.

Then, next it says, ‘*vidyām cha daiva vittam.*’ There is another *sādhana*, a means for the attainment of *Deva Loka*, the world of the *devas*. What is that? It is *Vidyā*, worship. *Vidyā* here doesn’t refer to *Ātma Vidyā*, Self-Knowledge. Some Malayalam commentators have written that it means *Ātma Vidyā* here. *Vidyā* here means ‘*upāsana*,’ worship. This is the combination of *karma* and worship, *upāsana*. Śaṅkara says that a person cannot combine *karma* and *Jñāna*, but one can combine *Karma* and *Upāsana* (worship).

This kind of *upāsana* is the *sādhana* for the attainment of *Deva Loka*. It says that the person desires this, ‘*Sa akāmayata.*’ This is in the *Bṛhadaraṇyaka Upaniṣad*.

Here it is telling the desires that make one accept the life-stage of *gṛhastha*. Having studied the *Vedas* and *Pūrva Mīmamsa* philosophy, he understands that there are three *sādhana*s, or means for the attainment of the three kinds of *karmic* fruits. One is ‘*putra*,’ a son, then *karma*, and last is *Vidyā*, worship. He thinks that these three must be attained in order to gain *Mokṣa*. This is what an ordinary person thinks.

But who is thinking this? ‘*Avidyā kāmavataḥ eva.*’ He is spiritually ignorant, and full of desire. He desires these three worlds, or results of *karma*, because of Ignorance. He desires a son. He desires the performance of *karma*. He desires *Upāsana*, the rituals of the *Vedas*. Why is this? It is because of *Kāma*, desire, and Ignorance, *Avidyā*.

That’s why it says, ‘*sarvāṇi karmāṇi śroutādīni darśitāni.*’ Who are all of these *karmas*, in particular the ordained *karmas* of the *śrutis*, advised for? They are for one who is spiritually ignorant and has desire. After studying *Pūrva Mīmamsa*, because of ignorance and desire within, he thinks that he must obtain these three fruits. First, is a son. Through the acceptance of a wife, he can obtain a son. Then is *karma*, the performance of *Vedic* ordained rites.

Then, is the *upāsana*, the rituals and worship ordained in the *Vedas*. This is not ‘*upāsana*’ as we use this word today. It refers to *upāsana* ordained in the *Vedas*. This *Upāsana* is for the attainment of *Deva Loka*. So, he desires all of these *sādhanas* for the attainment of the three fruits.

So, for this, he accepts a wife and the life-stage of a householder. He then performs *karma*. If he desires *Mokṣa*, he will perform this *karma* without desire and as an offering to the Lord. He rejects *Kāmya* and *Niṣidha karmas* and performs *Nitya* and *Naimitta karmas*. In this way, he gains *chitta śuddhi*, purification of mind.

Then, another person, either while in the life-stage of householder or before, due to the impressions from previous lives and due to purification of mind, what happens? ‘*Tebhyaḥ Vyuthāya pravrajanti.*’ ‘*Tebhyaḥ,*’ from these desires, ‘*Vyuthāya,*’ having completely rejected, ‘*Pravajanti,*’ they renounce, taking *sanyassa*. That is the meaning.

So, from the desires coming from *Avidyā*, Ignorance, what does he do? He becomes free of these thoughts and desires. He fully renounces these, ‘*Pravajanti.*’ Then it says, ‘*iti vyuthānam ātmānameva lokam ichato akāmasya vihitaṁ.*’ So, just from studying the *Vedas* and thinking according to the *Pūrva Mīmamsa* philosophy, one will not gain true *Ātma Bodha*, Self-Knowledge. That’s why it says, ‘*vyuthānam,*’ the renouncing of all these desires born of *Avidyā*. Then it says, ‘*Ātmanām eva lokam.*’ The *Ātman* is the only fruit of *karma*. It is not a son, nor *Pitr Loka*, nor *Deva Loka*.

Having known this, he desires the *Ātman*. However, it says he is truly, ‘*akāmasya,*’ one without desire. When the word ‘*kāma,*’ is used here and the *Vedas*, it doesn’t refer to the normal ‘desire’ that we think of nowadays. There is a specific meaning that is given to that word here. Here, ‘*kāma,*’ means the desire for the fruit of action. It is not merely desire. So, we see that it says, ‘*ātmānām lokam ichataḥ,*’ – they desire the world of the Self. But then next, it says, ‘*akāmasya,*’ one without desire. So, how can one who desires something be desireless? We may ask this. If it says, ‘*īcha,*’ wishing for something, how can a person be desireless, *akāma?* Isn’t he desiring something?’

Why is this? It is because the *Vedas* use the word ‘*kāma*’ in a specific manner. It means, ‘*phalakāma,*’ the desire for the result of actions. That is how

the word '*kāma*' is used. However, besides this kind of desire, there may be different kinds of desire in man's mind. One example here is the desire for the *Ātman*, the Self. He desires the Self, or *Mokṣa*.

That is not *Kāma*. Why? This is because that isn't a result of *karma*. *Mokṣa* is not a result of anything. It isn't a result of *karma*, of *Jñāna*, or anything. So, because *Mokṣa* isn't the result of anything, the word '*iccha*' is used, 'to desire.' That isn't *kāma*, desire for results of action. Therefore, one who desires *Mokṣa* is *Akāmī*, one without desire for the results of action.

Why is that? It is because *Mokṣa* is not a result of anything. Only a person who desires the results of action can be called a *Kāmi*. Only this desire for the results of *karma* is *Kāma*. This desire can be heaven, the world of the ancestors, a son, or anything. However, the wish of a person to attain the Self, to attain *Mokṣa*, is not *Kāma*. This is the specific meaning given to *Kāma* in the *śāstras*. In other places, it may be used as general desire, but we must normally think of this word in this way.

Otherwise, you will become confused. You will think, 'It says he desires the Self, but is desireless.' How is that?' Isn't that a desire?' This happens because of not distinguishing between the two words, *iccha* and *kāma*. This happens to both *paṇḍits* and fools.

It says, '*Ātmanām Lokam Ichataḥ Akāmasya.*' The Self is the fruit of *karma*. Actually, it's not a fruit of *karma*. It isn't in the form of a result. Why is this? This is because the person who wishes to attain this isn't a *Kāmi*, one with desire for the result of action. So, what does he do? It says, '*Vyuthānam.*' He rejects all these desires, and becomes free of them.

In this way, the *śruti* has clearly distinguished between *Karma* and *Jñāna*. A person who desires the Self is not influenced by *Kāma* or *Avidyā*, desire and ignorance. But a person who desires the three worlds through a son, *karma*, and *upāsana*, is controlled by *Kāma* and *Avidyā*.

*'Tadetadvibhāgavachanamanupapannam syādyadi  
śrautakarmajñānayoḥ samuchayobhipretaḥ syādbhagavataḥ.'*

‘*Tat eva vibhāgavachanam,*’ these words which divide *Jñāna* and *Karma* in the Gita, ‘*Anupapannam Syād.*’ These words of the Lord would become incorrect. If it were the Lord’s opinion that the same person could perform *Jñāna* and *Karma* at the same time, these words would become incorrect.

What was the Lord’s opinion about combination of *Vedic karma* and *Jñāna*? The Lord didn’t have the opinion that both the performance of that kind of *karma* and *Jñāna* could exist in the same person at one time. Therefore, we must differentiate between these two and understand in this way.

Because *Śaṅkarāchārya* saw that the previous commentators were explaining the meaning of the Gita in this way, he sought to refute this idea, of the combination of *śrouta* and *smārta karma* with *Jñāna*. This explanation also helps to develop *Ātma Bodha*, awareness of the Self, and to clearly understand the *Ātman*’s true nature. That itself is what is explained next.

There is one thing that we must understand. When we talk about the combination of *Karma* and *Jñāna*, we must know that this is relevant only for a person who lives in a *Vedic*-based society, and who is performing *Vedic* rites and rituals. Either the performance of this *karma*, or the refuting of these *karmas* has no kind of relevance for those who are not born and raised into such a society, and who do not practice these rites and rituals.

This doesn’t apply to our ordinary actions. Those actions aren’t specifically ordained by the *Vedas*. They are dependant on the individual’s *saṁskāra* and the society in which he lives. So, when we perform these ordinary actions while remembering the *Ātma Tattva*, this kind of refuting of *Jñāna* and *Karma* has no relevance at all.

Also, when we say that *Karma Tyāga* is needed for the Discipline of Self-knowledge, we must understand that this *Karma* refers to the same *karma* mentioned before, that of the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis*. This isn’t the *tyāga* of ordinary actions. If this isn’t clearly understood, it will create confusion for an aspirant on the spiritual path, the path of *sanyassa*.

After hearing the commentaries of *Śaṅkara* dealing with the combination of *Jñāna* and *Karma*, some people have even rejected *sanyassa*. Why? This is because after taking the *sanyassa* they had in mind, they had to perform *karma* again. This is a very dangerous matter. First they accept *sanyassa*, and then they

renounce *sanyassa*. Some are like this. They can neither really accept *sanyassa*, nor can they renounce *sanyassa*.

Why is this? It is because they don't clearly understand these ideas. We may naturally have a doubt. You may think, 'This person must be the only person who understands. No one else in the world understands this.' That's not what I am saying. There have been many people who have understood this. There are also people who don't understand. That is what I'm referring to. Many people have explained these concepts according to their own interpretations in Malayalam commentaries. However, their interpretations are completely unrelated to the meaning of *Śaṅkara's Bhāṣyā*. Such people comment from mere scholarship in *Sanskrit*. Without studying these texts in the traditional manner, by using mere scholarship of *Sanskrit*, these people comment on these *Bhāṣyās*.

This is true for Malayalam commentaries, and in other languages also. In this way, without understanding the essence of the commentary, or the viewpoint of the commentator, they change the meaning of the original text. Reading this kind of translation will not be good, whether it is in Malayalam or any other language. This will disfigure the original language. This happens because people write books without clearly understanding these matters.

Reading these things can be dangerous. These will give the wrong ideas about *sanyassa* and other things. That is what is wrong with this. In the past, it wasn't like that. One would first be initiated with the thread ceremony, and then study the *Pūrva Mīmamsa* section of the *Vedas*. Then, one would study the *Uttara Mīmamsa* of the *Vedas*, which is the *Vedānta*. After understanding all these matters, one would take *sanyassa*. That is why they didn't experience this confusion.

Here, it's not like that. Instead, people today take *sanyassa* first, and then try to understand all the other matters. Because there is no means to truly understand these, one will interpret in whatever way one feels like. That creates a danger. Then, one will renounce *Sanyassa*. That is why people are afraid of *Advaita*.

People are afraid of *Advaita* in this way. They think, '*Advaita* is what makes people stray from the right path.' In spite of all of this, the fact that we

have an opportunity to discuss and contemplate these things here is very great. When *Advaita* is understood correctly, it will help to clear many of the confusions on the spiritual path, and help us to move forward on the correct path. However, if *Advaita* is not understood properly, it will create confusion and lead a person off the right path.

This isn't finished just through hearing. This is an important matter. Here, one person sits, explains and discusses, while everyone listens. If these matters discussed simply end after the class, then the listener won't imbibe this. This subject is not something that can be discussed with the general public, because these are principles that can only be grasped by a person with one-pointedness and spiritual interest.

For ordinary people to study the Gita, there are TV programs. There is no problem in studying that way. Then there's no need to study the *Śaṅkara Bhāṣyā*. For them, it's enough for them to turn on the TV, and watch the programme on the Gita. But this subject is something different. I'm not criticizing, but the TV program is enough for ordinary people. That's not enough here.

What we are discussing here is a part of our life and something that must lead our life. That's why we must discuss and think about this very seriously. A serious spiritual seeker is someone who surrenders his life to know and search for this knowledge. For us, we will discuss this very seriously. It is important to solve the doubts in the path and clearly develop this *Tattva Bodha*, true knowledge. We can't let these things go in through one ear and out of the other.

This is a very serious discussion, a contemplation. This contemplation, or *manana*, cannot be done by oneself alone. Only a person with a great amount of *purva samskara*, spiritual practices from previous lives, can live in solitude without anyone else's support and practice this contemplation.

Those without this *pūrvā saṁskāra* can only perform this contemplation with the support of others. Therefore, we have this discussion together. Only if we go forward clearing all of our doubts will this kind of discussion be of benefit to us. If you cannot find the time or convenience for this, it will be good for you to watch the Gita program on TV. Then you don't need to waste

your time here. That will be enough. With that, you can go forward in life. But if you are going to continue this, we must have seriousness. Only if these matters are discussed seriously will it be of benefit to us. In the next part, the commentator will continue to refute the *Pūrva Pakṣa*'s claim of combining *Jñāna* and *Karma*.