

GITA CLASS – CHAPTER 2, PART 10

We previously discussed how the mind becomes the instrument for realizing the Self. It is the mind that perceives the Self. How is this? ‘*sāstrāchāryopadeṣa śamadamādi saṁskṛtaṁ manaḥ ātma darśane kāraṇaṁ.*’ *manasaivānudraṣṭavyaṁ.*’ This means that the *darśanam* of the Self is ‘*manasā eva,*’ attained by the mind alone.

Therefore, there will definitely be *Jñāna*. The Knowledge of the *Ātman*, which is eternal, free, and Pure, will shine through the *pramāṇa* of the *śrutis*. This *Jñāna* will be experienced through hearing the *Vedāntic* truths.’ ‘*Iti ubhyupgantavyam.*’ ‘You will have to accept this.’

The darkness is only destroyed by light. Like this, it is enough if you accept that Ignorance is destroyed by Knowledge.’ *Tat cha ajñānaṁ darśitaṁ ‘hantā ahaṁ hataḥ asmi’ iti.*’ This Ignorance is being shown in *Arjuna*. How? ‘*Ahaṁ hantā.*’ I am the slayer. ‘*Hataḥ asmi.*’ I am the slain.’ Like this, Arjuna was revealing the Ignorance within him. This is the mental feeling, ‘I will be killed by my enemies, or they will kill me.’ What is this? This reveals the Ignorance of the *Jīva*.

‘*Ubhau tau na vijānītaḥ’ iti.* This is the *śloka*, ‘neither of them know the Self, who consider the Self the slayer or the slain.’ Taking *Arjuna* as an instrument, this group of *ślokas* is used to display the Ignorance of the *Ajnani*. The importance is not in the story, but the principle revealed.

‘*Atra cha ātmanaḥ hananakriyāyāḥ kartṛtvam karmatvāṁ hetu kartṛtvam cha ajñānakṛtaṁ darśitaṁ.*’ When a person performs action, he may have the feeling of doer-ship. This is the feeling, ‘I am doing this.’ Also a person may experience ‘*karmatvam,*’ the feeling that one is influenced by the action performed by someone else. Or, he may have the feeling that he is making someone perform action. In this way, *Arjuna* had superimposed this doership and *karma* onto himself, and imposed the action of making someone act onto the Lord.

First, *Arjuna* superimposed onto himself *kartṛtvam*, doership. How? This is the feeling of Arjuna, ‘I must kill them. I must fight this war.’ Then, second is

karmatvaṁ, the superimposition of being influenced by *karma*. How is this? This is the feeling, ‘They may kill me.’ Third, is *hetu karṭṛtvam*.’ This is the feeling, ‘The Lord is encouraging me to fight.’ Arjuna superimposed this third quality onto the Lord.

Where are these three qualities superimposed? It says, ‘*ātmanaḥ*,’ in the Self. In this way, *Arjuna* superimposed the doership of slaying, the *karmic* influence of being slain, and the causative quality of encouraging slaying on the *Atman*. How is this superimposition done? ‘*Ajñānakṛtam*.’ All of this occurs out of Ignorance. The Lord reveals this in the Gita, through this group of *ślokas*.

‘*Tat cha sarvakriyāsu api samānam karṭṛtvādeḥ avidyākṛtatvaṁ, avikriyatvāt ātmanaḥ vikriyāvān hi kartā ātmanaḥ*.’ Here it is explaining these three things; to have the feeling of doership in an action, to feel that one is experiencing the fruit of an action, and the feeling of making someone act. These don’t just apply to the action of war or fighting. It says that this applies to all actions. ‘*Sarvakriyāsu api samānam*.’ These three factors are in our every action. In a person’s each and every action, these three factors will be present in some way or another.

A person may feel that he is the doer of an action, or he may feel he is experiencing the result of an external action, or he may feel that he is causing someone to act. What are all of these? These are all products of Ignorance, *Avidyā*. ‘*Karṭṛtvādeḥ avidyākṛtatvaṁ*.’ These qualities are imagined in one’s Self through Ignorance. Why is that? It is because the Self is devoid of modification. ‘*Avikriyatvāt ātmanaḥ*.’ The Self is devoid of modification, and these do not take place in the Self. However, the individual thinks that they do.

‘*Vikriyāvān hi kartā ātmanaḥ karmabhūta manyam prajayati ‘kuru’ iti*.’ A person who performs action, ‘*vikriyāvān*, if he experiences modifications in the mind, he feels that he is affected by the actions of others, ‘*ātmanaḥ karmabhūtam anyam*.’ Here we can take *Sri Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* as an example. *Arjuna* considered that *Sri Kṛṣṇa* was the doer of action, the *kartā*. *Arjuna* then considered that he was being influenced by the *karma* of *Sri Kṛṣṇa*. Thus, ‘*vikriyāvān hi kartā*’ in this example refers to *Sri Kṛṣṇa*. *Arjuna* considered that *Kṛṣṇa* was encouraging him to act, by saying before, ‘*Arjuna*, perform karma!’ ‘*Prayajayati ‘kuru’ iti*.’ That is how we experience this situation.

Thus, in this situation, one person is considered the doer of action, and another person is thought to experience the effect of that action. So there are three types of superimpositions on the *Ātman* related to *karma*. These are the doer of action, the experiencer of the effect of another's action, and causing a person to perform action. In this example of *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna*, *Arjuna* had considered *Kṛṣṇa* as causing him to perform action. This is the part, '*vikriyāvān hi kartā.*' Then, *Arjuna* considered himself as being effected by the actions of the Lord. This is, '*ātmanaḥ karmabhūtam anyam prayojayati.*' How did the Lord cause *Arjuna* to act? It says the *śloka*, '*kuru,*' 'you should act.'

These are feelings of the *Avidvān*, the ignorant person. This is felt to be true by an *Ajñāni*, one who doesn't know the true nature of the *Ātman*. In Truth, these do not occur, because the nature of the Self is the absence of modification. '*Avikriyatvāt ātmanaḥ.*' Then *Shankara* develops this line of thought. '*Tat etat aviśeṣena viduṣaḥ sarvakriyāsu kartṛtvam hetukartṛtvam cha pratiśedhati bhagavān vāsudevaḥ, viduṣaḥ karma adhikāra abhāvapradaśanārtham 'vedāvināśinam . . . katham sa puruṣaḥ' ityādinā.*'

So, because of what was said before, there is neither doer-ship nor the causing of *karma* for the *Jñāni*. '*Viduṣaḥ sarvakriyāsu kartṛtvam,*' there is no doership, '*hetukartṛtvam,*' no causing others to act, '*cha pratiśedhati.*' These are refuted by the Lord, *Bhagavān* '*Vāsudevaḥ,*' *Sri Kṛṣṇa*. Why? It is because there is not the suitability for *karma* in the *Jñāni*. '*Viduṣaḥ karma adhikāra abhāvapradaśanārtham.*' For showing that, the Lord says this *śloka*, '*Vedāvināśinam nityam ya enam ajam avyayam.*'

The essence of what *Shankara* is saying, is 'the *Jñāni* is not suitable for the performance of *karma.*' That is the ultimate meaning of this. Then where is the suitability of the *Jñāni*? '*Kva punaḥ viduṣaḥ adhikāra?*' If the *Jñāni*'s suitability is not in the performance of *karma*, then where is it? *Shankara* says that the answer was already given, when the Lord said, 'There are two paths spoken of eternally by Me; *Jñāna Yoga* for the *Sāṃkhya*s, and *Karma Yoga* for *Yogis.*' '*Etat uktam pūrvam eva 'jñānayogena sāṃkhyānām' iti.*' Wasn't this said before? '*Jñāna Yoga* is for the followers of *Sāṃkhya*, the *Jñānis*.

Also, *Shankara* says that the Lord prescribes the renunciation of all *Vedic karma* for a *Jñāni*, with the 13th *śloka* of the 5th chapter. This is, 'Mentally

renouncing all works, and self-controlled, the embodied being dwells happily in the 9-gated city, neither working nor causing others to work.' *'Tathā cha sarva karma samñnyāsaiñ vakṣyati 'sarvakarmāñi manasā' ityādinā.'* Thus, this is said in the Gita itself. Therefore, *Shankara* concludes that the *Vidvān*, one who knows the true nature of the *Ātman*, has the suitability to be established in *Jñāna Niṣṭhā* along with the renunciation of all *karmas*.

Then there is a doubt raised by the *Pūrva Pakṣa*. It says, 'the Lord says in that *śloka* that *karmas* should be renounced mentally. Therefore, this renunciation surely doesn't refer to the renunciation of *karma* performed by speech and body.' *'Nanu manasā iti vachanāt na vāchikānām kāyikānām cha samñnyāsaḥ iti chet.'* So *karma* is primarily of three types, through speech, body, and mind. These three types of *karma* are primarily connected to the performance of *Vedic karma*. This is because there are these three kinds of *karma* in the performance of *yāgas*, etc. That's why '*karmas* through speech,' is shown in particular. Otherwise, the organ of speech is contained in the physical *karmas*. *Karmas* through speech means those through the tongue. So, the physical *karmas* include everything, from hands, feet, and so on. These *karmas* through speech should also be a part of physical *karmas*. However, a special place has been given that, as '*vāchika karmas*.'

Otherwise we don't specify into *karmas* of sight, or '*karmas* we hear.' Instead, only these three are mentioned. This is because this kind of *karma* is most important in the *Vedic karmas*.

The *karmas* performed by the mind were discussed before. These are the resolves one has during the rites, 'I am the doer.' 'I am the experiencer of the fruit of *karma*.' These are mental *karmas* performed in rites such as sacrifices. In these sacrifices, the *karmas* of speech include the chanting of the specific *mantras* required for the rite. This chanting of *mantras* during the sacrifice is a very important factor. For each section of the rite, there are specific *mantras* that must be intoned. Therefore, this kind of *karma* is also given importance.

The pronunciation of the *Vedas* depends on the functioning of the tongue. That is why this kind of *karma* is given special importance. Then there are actions performed by the body, such as with the hands, feet, etc. This division of

the three types of *karma* is primarily in reference to the *Vedic karmas*. Then later, this division has come to refer to our ordinary actions.

So, the questioner asks, ‘the Lord said to renounce *karmas* mentally. Isn’t that alone enough?’ This is a good question. It has a lot of logic and importance. This is because the Lord said, ‘renounce mentally.’ There is a verse in the *Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad*, ‘*Tyaktvā Bhunjīthā.*’ Some people interpret this as, ‘renounce everything mentally, and continue to experience the world. That is *sanyassa.*’ Some people say this. Here also, this is asked. ‘Isn’t it enough to renounce mentally, and continue actions through the body and speech?’ This concept is to experience everything with the body, while renouncing with the mind. This is a very pleasurable path, very easy. This is because one needs not renounce anything. If anyone asks, you simply say, ‘I am renouncing mentally.’ Very easy. This is also what is asked here.

Some prefer renunciation like this. Then they have the freedom to do anything, because they have the consolation, ‘I can renounce this mentally. This doesn’t affect me.’ That is an easy answer. Then one cannot blame anyone for doing wrong actions. If you try to catch them, they will say, ‘this doesn’t affect me. I have renounced mentally.’ This is an easy thing to say, but it isn’t practical.

Here, *Shankara* says that it is possible to renounce mentally. However, once *karma* is renounced by the mind, then there is no scope for *karma* in the body. Why? It is because the Lord says, ‘*sarva karmāṇi iti viśeṣitatvāt.*’ This means, ‘renouncing *ALL KARMAS* mentally.’ So, what if the questioner says, ‘ok, one can renounce the parts of the *Vedas* that is done mentally, and perform the parts done with the body and speech, no?’ To this, *Shankara* says that the person should again take a close look at the verse, because the Lord says, ‘renouncing *ALL KARMAS*, mentally.’ Included in ‘all *karmas*,’ are *karmas* performed by speech, the body, and mentally, all of these. It is said in this way, because it is only possible to renounce *karmas* of the body and speech once one has renounced *karma* mentally. That is the meaning. This is, ‘*na. Sarvakarmāṇi iti viśeṣitatvāt.*’

Then the questioner raises another objection. ‘What if the Lord means, ‘all *karmas* performed mentally? Then one can perform *karma* through the body and speech.’ ‘*Mānasānām eva sarvakarmaṇām iti chet.*’ This means that the words of

the Lord should be interpreted as meaning, all *karmas* performed mentally, not the *karmas* of the body and speech. Then this would mean that a *sanyassi* should renounce *karmas* mentally, and continue their performance in the body and speech. Isn't that correct?

Shankara says, 'No. That's not possible. This is because without the activity of the mind, the body and speech have no scope for action.' This is an important subject, because many, many commentators of the Gita say that the message of the Gita is, 'perform all actions with the body, while renouncing mentally.'

Shankara says that is a big mistake. '*Na. Manovyāpāra pūrvaktvād vākkāyavyāpārāṇām manovyāpārābhāve tadanupapatteḥ.*' So, if the body and senses must act, the mind must be active behind them. If the mind stops being active, then the actions through the speech, body, and senses cannot occur.' Therefore, if one renounces mentally, it goes without saying that the activities of the body will go.

Why? This is because the mind is the source of this activity. If there is no mind, action cannot occur. The body can be active only if the mind is active. If the mind stops all actions, then there can be no activity for the body. This is how *Shankara* proves that the Lord refers to the renunciation of all *karmas*.

What is the first thing a person does in the performance of *Vedic* rites, such as the sacrifice? The first thing one must do is to accept a mental resolve. The *dikṣa* in the beginning of the *yagna* is the resolve behind the *karma*. All of the other activities in the *karma* happen only after the performance of the *yagna dikṣa*. These are the actions of the body and speech. If one says, 'I renounce this mentally,' how then can one perform the *karma* with the body? Then that action will not occur for the body. That is what *Shankara* says.

Shankara says that if anyone says one can renounce *karmas* mentally, and perform them with the body, then that is wrong. He is telling us to think about this. When one performs *sanyassa*, renunciation, one has the resolve, 'I renounce this.' In the rite of *sanyassa*, one calls upon the 3 worlds as a witness, and firmly renounces *karma*. After that resolve of *karma* is renounced, a person can again perform *karma* only if he again mentally accepts that resolve of *karma*. Otherwise, the performance of *karma* is not possible. This is because a *sankalpa*, or resolve is needed. Thus, *Shankara* says, the activity of the body and speech

depends on the activity of the mind. ‘*Manovyāpāra pūrvakatvāt vākkāvyāpārāṇām.*’

All of the actions of the body, senses, and speech take place only when the mind is active. Then, if there is no activity of the mind, there can be no activity for the senses, body, and speech. ‘*Manovyāpāra abhāve tad anupapatteḥ.*’ That doesn’t happen. An example is sleep. There is no mental activity in deep sleep. There is not a single resolve about *karma* there. Therefore, *karmas* don’t take place in sleep.

We may then ask, ‘doesn’t a person perform inhalation and exhalation then? The answer is that at that time, the very subtle activities of the *Prana* meant for sustaining life will occur. That is a spontaneous activity of life. For this, the mind will be active in an extremely subtle way. The most subtle level of the *antaḥkaraṇa*, in the form of *Prāṇa*, sustains the life of the individual in this way. Therefore, only the actions that depend on this subtle level will take place at that time.

Then someone may ask, ‘what about people who sleepwalk?’ That is from the activity of the mind. They must have seen a dream or something. Therefore, this happens from the activity of the mind. If the mind functions in sleep, it becomes a dream. That is a different state of consciousness. Then, it is the same as the waking state. There will be activity in the body, etc. However, in deep sleep, *suṣupti*, what is there? There is not a single action of the body or speech. If any activity of the body takes place for the sustenance of life, it comes from the pulse of *Prāṇa*. *Prāṇa* and the mind are the same thing. Through the pulse of the *Prāṇa*, these life-sustaining activities continue in deep sleep. That is the best example.

Therefore, if a person says he renounces all actions mentally, it means that he will be in the state of deep sleep. Then, there will be no power to move the body as one likes. In that state, there is no will. But the questioner’s argument that one should renounce *karmas* mentally and perform them with the body is different from this. The person merely says this in words. However, it is not something that can ever be possible.

But the person will boldly declare this, if we ask ‘you shouldn’t do that. Why are doing that?’ They will say, ‘I am not doing anything mentally. Only the body is acting.’ However, once they are caught and punished, they will realize the mistake. Then when they feel pain, they will not think, ‘this pain only belongs to the body, not the mind.’ So, this attitude should be tested, if anyone claims this. They should be tested in this way immediately.

They will immediately realize, ‘the action is in the mind.’ If they claim that there is no *karma* in the mind, this is the best test. It can be done right away. If anyone touches their body, they feel pain. Where does that pain come to? It comes to the mind. After the pain is felt in the mind, it is felt in the body. Therefore, we can immediately prove false the claim; ‘there is only the body in *karma*, not the mind.’ If anyone claims this, there is no need for us to check in *Shankara’s* commentary for the answer. We can know right away without reading.

Therefore, we should examine the person who says, ‘*karma* exists for the body, not the mind.’ *Shankara* refutes this by saying, ‘the activity of the body and speech follow the activity of the mind.’ ‘*Manovyāpāra pūrvakatvāt vākkāyavyāpārāṇām.*’ Also, ‘*Manovyāpara abhāve tad anupapatteḥ.*’ This is true psychology. Where there is no activity of the mind, there can be no activity of the body.

There are three steps to *karma*; knowledge – desire – *karma*. This a generally accepted rule, not something only found in *Advaita*. This is found in all philosophies in India. If a person must perform an action, there must first be knowledge in the mind. This can be consciously or unconsciously. Either way, knowledge will be there. This knowledge develops into *iccha*, desire. This desire is what prompts the *Jiva* to perform the action. This desire can be gross or subtle. Sometimes the desire will be subtle, in the form of mental impressions (*vasanas*). Or it can also be grossly manifest.

When we are asleep, we continue to inhale and exhale. This life-sustaining activity comes from the subtlest desire in the individual. This will function in the form of the mental impressions. That is how these life-sustaining activities occur. Even there, there is a subtle consciousness. That subtle awareness controls these activities. Even though the gross awareness is absent, the subtle awareness

continues these activities in the body. In this way, life is sustained in the body. The connection of *Prana* with the body is also caused from subtle awareness and subtle will.

When we are in the waking state, these factors become grossly manifest. So, wherever there is activity, not just in the human being, but in all of Nature, there is a subtle or gross form of will (*iccha*), and behind, a form of awareness as well. That is what believers in the existence of God say is the proof of God's existence. This is because movement is seen, even in inert objects. Therefore, behind the movement of inert objects is the Will of God, and God's Awareness. This is what is referred to as the Universal Will, or Universal Consciousness. These are the *sankalpas* of God as *Hiranyagarbha* and *Vaiśvāyana*. This becomes the cause to all the movement in the entire Creation.

Therefore, behind every movement, and action, there will exist both will, and knowledge. This is said even in the *śrutis*. 'Tad aichata.' Then the Lord willed, in the beginning of Creation, may I, the One, become many.' This is the beginning of *karma*. The phrase, 'to become many,' refers to *karma*. Thus, behind every kind of *karma*, there must be a mental *sankalpa* behind it. Otherwise, there can be no *karma*.

When seen in this way, how is it that people have gained such a misinterpretation? Suppose we are speaking about *Karma Yoga*. It is said, 'when you perform actions as *Karma Yoga*, you can have attitude of the detachment of the Inner Self.' This is the remembrance that the *Ātman* is free from attachment and ego, detached, etc.' A person can have this mental attitude, or *bhāva*. Otherwise, he can meditate on the true nature of the Self. What happens for such a person who meditates like this? A *Karma Yogi* accepts several different mental attitudes, such as 'the senses are acting among their objects, but I am in truth the embodiment of the Self. These objects do not affect me.' Otherwise, the person can adopt the attitude of a Witness to the actions. Thus, these are the resolves a *Karma Yogi* accepts while performing *karma*. What are these *sankalpas*? They are not resolves about the activity of the mind. Instead, they are resolves about the true nature of the Self. There is no point in saying that a person has no *karmic* activity in the mind because of these resolves. This resolve itself is an activity of the mind.

That is where some have a misinterpretation. They think that this resolve is the renunciation of *karma*. This is a misinterpretation. They say, 'I renounce mentally.' Then what happens? The person doesn't have the attitude that there is no *karma*. He doesn't have the *bhāva* that activity doesn't occur. Instead, there, the mind is active. In all activity, the mind will be active. It is just that there is no activity for the *Ātman*. It isn't possible to think about the absence of activity in the mind. However, a person can mentally refute the existence of activity in the Self. 'None of this occurs in the Self.' When this happens, this refuting of *karma* in the Self is also an activity. Therefore, the mind is constantly active.

Misinterpreting this, some say, 'I renounce mentally.' This doesn't mean that activity in the mind is renounced. It merely means that activity doesn't occur in the *Ātman*, that's all. One cannot avoid the mental activity merely from this resolve. This resolve itself is an activity of the mind. So, without distinguishing between these, what does a person say? 'I renounce everything mentally.' These things aren't in the mind; they are only for the body.' That is not the Truth. Everything exists within the mind.

One can have the attitude that actions don't occur in the *Ātman*. Or, one can think about the nature of the Self. He can contemplate (*manana*). What is *manana*? It is an activity of the mind. One can have the *manana* that these activities don't belong to the Self. These don't take place in the Self, but in the mind.' This is what one can think. However, because of that thought, one cannot consider that there is no activity in the mind. That's not possible. We are constantly in activity, worldly actions.

For now, disregard the *karmas* of the *Vedas*. When we perform ordinary actions, the most we can think is, 'this action is produced from Ignorance. In the Truth, I am the embodiment of the Supreme Consciousness. In my true nature, the *Atman*, this action doesn't take place.' This is said in the Gita. '*Indriyānīndriyārtheṣu Vartante Iti Dhārayan.*' The Sage has the firm determination that the senses act among their objects, while the Self remains detached. This is the feeling, 'In truth, I have no relationship with this. This feeling 'I am doing' is caused from Ignorance.'

Here, the *sādhak* thinks, 'I am not the mind, body, or senses. In Truth, I am the Self.' In this way, no matter how we think, for how long we think, or in what attitude, the activity cannot be removed from the mind. This attitude can help strengthen our identification with the Self, as opposed to with the intellect and ego. It can help weaken the influence of Ignorance on us. It can weaken the attachment of the ego with the body and senses. Or, it can bring the ego in contact with the Self. Thus, through this *bhāva*, several things are possible. However, it isn't possible through this to eliminate the activity of the mind in *karma*.

Despite all of these practices and techniques, when the body is performing action, the mind will also have the necessary activity. This can be grossly or subtly manifested. Suppose we are immersed deep in thought, and we perform action. Even at that time, the mind is subtly behind the actions of the body. If the connection of the mind and body is disconnected, then the person will either enter deep sleep or samadhi. The body will become motionless. Then it won't become possible to move the body.

So for any kind of activity of the body, the mind must be behind it. Therefore, it is completely irrelevant to say, 'I have renounced everything mentally, and continue to act with the body.' This isn't possible for anyone. It is people who misinterpret the scriptures who say this. Just from having the *bhava* of the detachment of one's true Self while performing actions won't eliminate the activity of the mind. Through that *bhāva*, a person can strengthen his or her identification with the *Ātman*. Otherwise, he can prevent himself from becoming bound to the ego. Or, he can meditate that the limited ego is truly the embodiment of the Self. This can be in several ways. These are different ways that *Karma Yogi* trains the mind in the performance of *karma*. However, it isn't possible for these eliminate the activity of the mind during the performance of action.

Whether in *bhāva*, or contemplation, the mind will still be in constant activity. In general, all actions can be performed, only with the presence of the mind. Whenever our presence of mind is lost, we can tell the difference in the activity. In some actions, through constant practice, the mind will not need to function on the gross level. Then it will function on the subtle level. This refers

to actions that we perform constantly. So what happens when we perform actions without the gross presence of the mind? The actions become mechanical. Then, it is the subtle mind that is functioning. The activity of the mind is there as well. Therefore, *Shankara* says, ‘*manovyāpārābhāve,*’ it is impossible to renounce the activity of the mind, and perform actions externally.’

So, *Shankara* quoted the *Gīta* as saying, ‘Renouncing all *karmas.*’ In the view of the commentator, this refers to the renunciation of *Vedic* ordained *karmas.* He says that when these *karmas* are renounced mentally, then the external performance of them becomes impossible. These *karmas* must be renounced primarily through the mind. Therefore, it is resolve, *sankalpa*, which is of utmost importance in *Sanyassa.* It is the primary factor of the renunciation of *karma*, *karma tyāga.* What does it mean to renounce one’s *sankalpa*? This means to renounce the *karma* mentally. Then the action will cease to be performed by the body. That is the meaning.

Thus, these are the answers given by *Shankara* to the questioner in the commentary. I don’t know the reason for these questions in the commentary, but I have given my view of this. In summary, if anyone thinks that *Karma Yoga* is the renouncing of *karmas* mentally, while continuing their performance through the body, then that view is opposed by *Shankara* here. Don’t think that I am opposing. I am only saying what it says in the commentary. I am not saying my personal opinion.

Then again, a question will come from the *Pūrva Pakṣa.* The questioner asks, ‘*śāstrīyāṇām,*’ the *karmas* spoken of in the *Vedas*, *vākkāyakarmaṇām,*’ performed through speech and body, *kāraṇāni mānasāni,*’ the cause of these is mental. ‘*karmāṇi varjayitvā anyāni sarvakarmāṇi manasā saṁnyasyet iti chet.*’ So, ‘*śāstrīyāṇām,*’ of the *karmas* enjoined by the *Vedas*, ‘*vākkāyakarmaṇām kāraṇāni mānasāni karmāni,*’ the mental activity that causes the actions through speech and body, ‘*varjayitvā,*’ excepting these mental *karmas*, ‘*anyāni sarvakarmāṇi,*’ all other *karmas*, ‘*manasā saṁnyasyet,*’ should be renounced mentally, ‘*iti chet,*’ what if this is what the Lord meant?’

The questioner is trying to prove in some way that *sanyassa* is mental. He is aiming at proving that the Lord refers to *sanyassa* through the mind. When we normally talk about mental renunciation, we are talking about having the *bhava*,

or attitude of detachment. That is not *sanyassa*, renunciation. It is contemplation on the nature of our True Self. *Sanyassa* is not contemplation or having the attitude of identification with the *Ātman*. This can take place while performing actions, because it is not an obstacle to the performance of actions. The *karmas* will continue on their path. This is a *sādhana* performed for strengthening one's awareness of the Self.

All of that will help lead one to *sanyassa*. Even though these mental practices help lead one to mental renunciation, this is not of itself *sanyassa*. That is what it says here. *Sanyassa* is the renunciation of *karma*. There, the mental resolve is renounced, as well as the external performance. Therefore, the renunciation of *karma*, and identification with the *Ātman* are two different things. This is because in contemplating the Self, there is still the activity of the mind.

So, the questioner interprets the Lord's words in this way. He says that the *śloka* means to put aside the *karmas* done mentally in the performance of scripture-enjoined rites. Let those continue, and may all other *karmas* be renounced mentally. This means to renounce mentally all other ordinary *karmas*. What if this is the meaning? This is the question to *Shankara*.

Shankara says, 'No, again. The *Gita* cannot be interpreted in that way. Why? It is because the *Gita* itself says, 'Naiva kurvan na kārayan.' The *Ātman* neither acts nor causes to act.' 'Na. 'Naiva kurvan na kārayan' iti viśeṣaṇāt.' For whatever reason, the questioner is unable to accept that *sanyassa* is the renunciation of *karmas*. *Shankara* says that *sanyassa* is attained only through this renunciation of all *Vedic karmas*. The questioner has the doubt, 'is that possible?'

The sequence of *sādhana* according to *Shankara* is as follows; *karma - karma Yoga - Karma Sanyassa*. The questioner finds it very difficult to accept this order of stages. So, he again asks, 'Isn't it true that the renunciation of all *karmas* is possible only for a dead person, not a living one?' "*Sarvakarmasamīnyāsaḥ ayaṁ bhagavatā uktaḥ marīṣyataḥ na jīvataḥ iti chet.*' He asks, 'is this *śloka* referring to a person who is dying, or a dead person?' Then how can this renunciation of all *karmas* be possible?' These words by the Lord refer to a dead person, 'marīṣyataḥ,' not a living one, 'na jīvataḥ.' This is clear.

Shankara replies to this, ‘No, because the Lord also says, ‘while seated in the 9-gated city of the body, the Sage neither acts nor causes action.’ ‘*Na, ‘navadvāre pure dehī āste’ iti.*’ This means that *sanyassa* takes place in this body itself. It occurs while one still occupies the body. This *śloka* indicates the nature of the *Ātman*, as actionless. Therefore, this *sanyassa* isn’t meant for a dead person, but a living one. Just because there is no *karma* for a dead body, doesn’t mean that *sanyassa* occurs there. The person must be alive in the body for *sanyassa* to occur. ‘*Iti viśeṣaṇānupapatteḥ.*’ This means that *sanyassa* is only for a person alive in this body. It must happen while in the body. Next it explains in what condition this happens.

Shankara says, ‘if a person performs the renunciation of all *karmas*, and then dies, will he still be able to remain in the body after death?’ No, that’s not possible. It’s not possible to take *sarva karma sanyassa*, and remain in the body after death. ‘*Na hi sarvakarmasamnyāsenā mṛtasya tad dehe āsanam sambhavati.*’

Therefore, this renunciation of *karma* refers to a person who dwells in the 9-gated-city of the body, as mentioned before, but who is identified with the true nature of the *Ātman*, and not the body. Thus, for one who has accomplished this renunciation, after death, he is not associated with the body, but the Self.

Then, another question from the questioner. ‘What if the *śloka* doesn’t mean ‘seated in the body,’ but instead, ‘renouncing in the body the sense of acting and causing to act?’ This may sound confusing. If we look at the *śloka* we can understand this doubt. The shloka, ‘*sarvakarmāṇi manasā samnyasyāste sukham vaśī, navadvāre pure dehī naiva kurvan na kārayan.*’ The questioner asks if the construction could be interpreted as, ‘*sarvakarmāṇi navadvāre pure,*’ all of the actions in the body, ‘*manasā samnyasya,*’ having renounced these.’

In this way, the questioner says that this *śloka* could be interpreted that *karma sanyassa*, the renunciation of the *Vedic karmas*, is only at the time of death. This is the part, ‘*Akurvataḥ akārayataḥ cha dehe samnyasya iti sambandhaḥ na dehe āste iti chet.*’ In this way, the *śloka* can mean, renouncing all *karmas* in the body mentally.’ Then, it could mean that this occurs at the time of death. Then, the person remains as the embodiment of the *Ātman*. What if this is said?

Shankara again refutes the questioner's doubt. He says that the *śloka* should be interpreted as, 'while the embodied soul is in the body, he should renounce all karmas mentally, and abide happily and self-controlled.' It should not be interpreted according to the questioner, which, one should renounce all actions in the body and abide happily, etc.' So, what does *Shankara* say?

Shankara says that *sanyassa* must take place while the embodied soul is still in the body. And what about the questioner? He says that such *sanyassa* cannot happen.

So, *Shankara* says, 'Na, sarvatra ātmanaḥ avikriyatvādvadhāraṇāt.' Here it says that the *Ātman* is completely devoid of modifications and change, everywhere. Then *Shankara* says, 'the act of sitting requires a location, while renunciation does not.' This is, 'āsanakriyāyāḥ cha adhikaraṇāpekṣatvāt.' What is *sanyassa*? *Sanyassa* is not the act of setting aside a place. Instead, it is the act of renouncing all places. It is not the act of imposing *karma* onto the body, but the renouncing of *karmas*. *Sanyassa* is the renunciation of *adhikaraṇa*. Why? *Shankara* says that one shouldn't interpret the word 'samnyāsa' in the opposite meaning. The meaning of *sanyassa* given by the questioner was to deposit all *karmas* onto the body. However, *Shankara* points out that the word 'sanyassa' doesn't mean 'to deposit.' Instead, it has the meaning of *tyaga*, renunciation. This is complete renunciation, of speech, and body. This is *samnyāsaḥ*. This is, 'tad anapekṣatvāt cha samnyāsasya. Sampūrvaḥ tu nyāsaśabdaḥ atra tyāgarthaḥ.' The word *sanyassa* indicates *tyaga*, renunciation.

This is said in particular because the word 'nyāsaḥ' can sometimes mean 'to place, deposit.' There is the word, 'vinyāsa.' This means, 'to make a progression.' Taking the word 'nyāsa' like this, one may mistakenly say that *samnyāsa* means to place all *karmas* onto the body. However, because of the prefix, 'sam', the word *samnyāsa* has the meaning of rejecting, renouncing. This means to reject *karmas* of the body, speech, and mind. That is the meaning. Therefore, *Shankara* says that it is never possible to renounce mentally, and continue actions with the speech and body.

If someone says this, it simply means that they perform action, while have the attitude, (*bhāva*) of the detachment of the *Ātman*. That is what is meant. If it

is a *Jñāni*, then *karmas* do not occur. And what about the external *karmas* that we see? The commentator explained before, that we cannot see those as karma. Why? It is because all actions performed without the sense of doership cannot be considered as *karma*. *Karma* exists, depending on the feeling of doer-ship. If that doership is destroyed in an individual, then the actions performed by that person are not *karma*.

The *Gīta* will say in the 3rd chapter, ‘he who sees unaction in action, and action in unaction, is Wise.’ So, some people will ask, ‘isn’t it enough to simply do this, to perform *karma* while seeing unaction? If a person performs *karma* with the attitude that the True Self is unaffected and actionless, then is the renunciation of *karma* necessary?’ Some people think like this. This is the same as the question, ‘can’t a person renounce karma mentally, while continuing to perform with the body?’

We can perform *karma* while seeing unaction. How? While acting with the senses, body, and mind, we can have the attitude that the Self is actionless. There, we accept that in the performance of action, the mind, body, and senses are active. There the renunciation of *karma* doesn’t occur. There, *karma* will continue to occur. However, there is a difference between the *karma* of an *Ajñāni* and the *Karma Yogi*. What are the actions of the *Ajñāni*? The *Ajñāni* performs *karma* merely out of the feeling of doer-ship. He doesn’t have any identification with the True *Ātman*.

In truth, doer-ship doesn’t exist for the *Ātman*. This feeling of doer-ship exists only for the *Ajñāni*, one who is ignorant of the Self’s true nature. Therefore, the *Ajñāni* performs *karma* with the firm determination that the *Ātman* is the experiencer of the fruits of *karma*. And what about the *Karma Yogi*? His experience is ‘I am performing *karma*.’ ‘I experience the fruits of *karma*.’ Even though this is his direct experience, it is not the Truth. In the Truth, ‘I am not the doer of karma, and do not experience the fruits of karma. In the Truth, I am the embodiment of the Supreme Consciousness, the Self.’ With this determination, the *Karma Yogi* performs *karma*.

That is what is meant when it says that the *Karma Yogi* sees ‘unaction in action.’ This is because the *Karma Yogi* has the attitude that he is the

embodiment of the *Ātman*, the Supreme Consciousness. However, this doesn't mean that there is no *karma* for his mind, body, and senses. That is why such a *sādhak* is called a *Karma Yogi*. This means that for such an aspirant, 'karma exists.'

Then, is there a necessity of *karma sanyassa* for such a *sādhak*? Is it necessary for him to renounce externally? This is the question. Yes. This is because external renunciation is necessary even for a *Karma Yogi*. How? The *Karma Yogi* rejects the *kāmya* and *niṣidha karmas*, which are prohibited by the *Vedas* and are performed for attaining a result. Therefore, that is the *karma tyaga* of the *Karma Yogi*. The *Karma Yogi* renounces the *kāmya* and *niṣidha karmas*, and performs the other *Vedic karmas*, as an offering to the Lord, while renouncing the ego. Otherwise, we can say that this means the ordinary *karmas* that we perform now.

If the desire for attainment of a result comes into the *karma*, then the performer is not a *Karma Yogi*. If one performs actions with desire for their fruit, one is an *Ajñāni*. Such a person cannot be considered a *Karma Yogi*. A *Karma Yogi* must possess all of the qualities specified here in the *Gita*. Thus, a *Karma Yogi* must all have *Karma Tyaga*, the external renunciation of *karma*. It isn't enough for him to renounce mentally alone. The *kāmya* and *niṣidha karmas* must be renounced externally. After having renounced these *karmas* mentally, one cannot perform them physically. Thus, *karmas* performed for attainment of a result, as well as *karmas* that are prohibited by the *Vedas* are renounced by the *Karma Yogi*.

If it is in a *Vedic* background, the *Karma Yogi* renounces the sacrifices that are aimed at the attainment of heaven. These *karmas*, such as sacrifices, as well as prohibited *karmas*, are thus rejected. However, the *sādhak* at this point is still under the influence of the feeling of doer-ship. Therefore, he continues to perform the other 2 kinds of *Vedic karma*; *nitya* and *naimitta*. These are daily *Vedic* rights, such as the fire-sacrifice, and the *karmas* related to one's children. So *karma* is needed for a *Karma Yogi*. In the view of a *Vedic*-society, the person rejects the *kāmya* and *niṣidha karmas*, and continues to perform the *nitya* and *naimitta karmas*. While performing these remaining *karmas*, the person cannot

become influenced by desire. If desire comes into the performance of the *karma*, then he cannot be considered as a *Karma Yogi*.

The ego shouldn't enter into the performance of *karma*. Then he cannot be called a *Karma Yogi*. Likes and dislikes cannot enter. When any of these enter the performance of the *karma*, the person is not a *Karma Yogi*. That *karma* becomes the *karma* of an *Ajñāni*. Therefore, the phrase, 'to see unaction in action,' doesn't mean the external renunciation of *karma*. In that circumstance, *karma* will continue to be performed. However, that *karma* is performed in a controlled manner. That *karma* is not like the *karma* of the *Ajñāni*. How does that control come? It is because the person rejects the *kāmya* and *niṣidha karmas*.

Thus, the *sādhak* becomes established in *sadāchāra*, *dharmic* conduct. *Durāchāras*, *adharmic* conduct, will no longer be possible. If a person performs *adharma* and says, 'I am detached. These don't affect me,' then that isn't *Karma Yoga*. Such a person is not a *Karma Yogi*. So, when a *Karma Yogi* performs action while seeing the unaction of the *Ātman*, this is not *Karma Tyāga*, the renunciation of *karma*. It is true that in a certain sense, he renounces *karma*, because he renounces the *kāmya* and *niṣidha karmas*. However, he has not attained *Sarva Karma Sanyassa*, the renunciation of all *karmas*. A person who has this *Karma Tyāga* does not necessarily have *Karma Sanyassa*. He will be striving for that state.

Purity of mind (*chitta śuddhi*) is needed for *Karma Sanyassa*. For that purpose, the *sādhak* performs *Karma Yoga*. We should understand the differences between these terms clearly. This is said very clearly here. *Shankara* has made this very clear in the commentary. It shows in the commentary each and every level in the performance of actions.

Thus, we said that even a *Karma Yogi* needs external renunciation. Even for him, there are several *karmas* that must be renounced externally. It isn't possible to perform all *karmas* as *Karma Yoga*. What does it mean to perform one's *svadharma* as *Karma Yoga*? It means to externally reject all *karmas* that should be rejected, and perform the remaining *karmas* as one's *svadharma*. In that way, the person must perform these *karmas* without desire for their results, renouncing the ego, and as an offering to the Lord. Even when the person

performs *karmas* in this way as *Karma Yoga*, the feeling of doership will be deeply impressed in the mind. That is made weak through the *Karma Yoga*. Thus, when mental purity is gained through the practice of *Karma Yoga*, this feeling of doership will diminish. When that happens, these *karmas* drop away from the *sādhak*. If he so chooses, these *karmas* can continue externally, or they can be allowed to drop away externally as well. Both can happen.

Some *Yogis* feel that there is no need to continue, while others continue the performance of *karmas*. Both can happen. After *Karma Sanyassa*, some *Yogis* continue the performance of *karmas*, excepting *kāmya* and *niṣidha* *karmas*, while these are allowed to drop away for others. Both can happen. This *Karma Sanyassa* can be manifest externally, while some others continue to perform *karma* externally. This is how *Mahātmās* perform actions for the good of the world. In that case, the *karmas* will continue.

Therefore, we should understand clearly how and in who are the performance of *Karma Sanyassa*, *Karma Yoga*, and the *karma* of the *Ajñāni*. Otherwise, we will become confused. For us, if we must consider the ordinary actions we perform as *Karma Yoga*, what is necessary? We must externally reject the prohibited *karmas*, and *karmas* that are performed with desire for their result. These *karmas* create the defect of *karma*. So, we should know how and why *karma* must be renounced.

This is why *karma* is a very dangerous thing. Why? It is because a person without the suitability gained through mental purity (*chitta śuddhi*) cannot reject *karmas*. That is the danger. Even if a person desires to renounce *karma*, if he doesn't have the maturity for this, it is not possible. What about for a *Karma Yogi*? The *Karma Yogi* is forced to perform *karma*. Why? It is because he still has the feeling of doership in the intellect. He can only perform *karma*. He thus has to perform *karma*, discriminating between what is necessary and unnecessary.

If the *Karma Yogi* loses this discrimination and begins to perform unnecessary *karmas*, then he has fallen. Then he is not a *Karma Yogi*. All that he has done becomes useless in that moment. The Lord says in the Gita, '*svalpam apyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.*' 'Even a little of the performance of this *Dharma* will save one from great fear.' The Lord in the section about *Karma Yoga* says this. 'If you perform even a little of this, it will do you good.' Even if

this is said, once the *vasanas* take control of the *karmas*, then the person will fall. That has already been decided.

This is the harm, or defect of *karma*. It isn't possible for us to leave our likes, or desires. While experiencing that one is the doer, it isn't possible to avoid performing actions according to one's desire. The *Karma Yogi* constantly performs his *svadharma*. If in this situation, where he performs his *svadharma* along with the feeling of doer-ship, he may lose his discrimination, or become influenced by Ignorance, or laziness, then the inner force of *vasanas* will control his performance of *karma*. Then the person will turn to unnecessary *karmas*, and to *adharmic* acts.

Then the attention of the person will turn to *adharmic* actions, and prohibited *karmas*. That becomes the downfall of the *Karma Yogi*. This fall happens in an instant. It is true that the good actions he performed before that will help him. That is what is called a '*Yoga bhraṣṭan*,' one who has fallen from *Yoga*. That is the condition the person reaches. Therefore, a *Karma Yogi* is unable to renounce *Karma*. Then there is another danger in *karma*.

That which prompts one to perform *Karma Yoga* is the person's knowledge of *Karma Yoga*. Knowledge is a modification of mind, a *vṛtti*. This subject was discussed in the beginning of the commentary. This is, '*kāmobhavāt*.' *Shankara* said that *Dharma* had been faithfully practiced in a certain age in society. During this time, of the strict performance of *Dharma*, '*kāmobhavāt*.' 'Desire manifested, within the people.' That is the greatest danger in *Karma Yoga*. '*Kāmobhavāt*.' That can happen. The person's mind can turn to desire.

Then the *Yoga* of the *karma* becomes destroyed. The possibility of this is always in *Karma Yoga*. Then the *karma* we perform will be only to be recognized as *Karma Yoga*. What is the result? The *karma* will be influenced by likes and dislikes. That is the danger of *karma*. Bad desires may enter the performance of *karma*. Then this *Yoga* will be completely destroyed. *Samatvam*, or evenmindedness, will be destroyed. Then that *karma* itself will destroy the person. *Karma* can destroy the *Karma Yogi*. That is the greatest danger in *karma*.

The person becomes immersed in *karma*. He will forget everything else. That is a danger in *karma*, that can occur at any time. The person then forgets all of the principles behind the performance of *Karma Yoga*, and becomes madly

identified with the *karma*. He becomes immersed in *Karma*. His interest in spiritual matters will be lost. The possibility of those who perform *karma* having a downfall like this is very big. The person's taste in spirituality will diminish. More interest will come into *karma*. The interest in *karma* will multiply. That is why *Shankara* says, '*kāmobhavāt.*' 'Desire was born.' This is what can happen in *karma*.

Then, when one's interest in spiritual matters diminishes, one's interest will turn to other things; money, 'women and gold,' etc. When that happens, whether it is a *Sanyassi* or a *Brahmachari*, he will fall. He will have a downfall. He will fall from his position. Thus, there is a great danger lying within *karma*. This danger can make the *Karma Yogi* fall from *Yoga*. Therefore, only a person with great alertness and awareness can be saved through *Karma Yoga*.

But what do we think? 'We turned to the spiritual path. We entered the *aśram*, and perform work.' Or, we perform work while at the home. Whether it is in the *aśram* or the home is not that important. Some people, after joining the *aśram*, feel that they had more peace of mind at home. Then, what happens there? Sometimes that *karma* is not *Karma Yoga*. That *karma*, in truth, will continuously destroy the person. That *karma* will become a means for strengthening one's *vāsanās*.

It is enough if we are alert with ourselves. Some people say this. 'All of the enthusiasm we had when we came to the ashram is gone.' The alertness, faith, and spiritual one had after joining the *aśram* will slowly fade away. That is a very dangerous thing. If this same thing happens in society, it will destroy the society. The possibility of such a downfall is always present. Our *śraddhā* can diminish. Then, our interest will increase in *karma*, and our interest in other spiritual matters will diminish. One will perform *karma* with enthusiasm. We will think, 'that's a good thing. He's doing work with sincerity, isn't he?' We will thus praise the person. However, in truth, the person is being continuously destroyed. He will not have any interest in spiritual matters. He will have no interest in *satsang*, or in *mantra japa* or meditation. He will spend more and more time being immersed in *karma*.

Therefore, a person practicing *Karma Yoga* must find time for practicing meditation, *japa*, and other spiritual practices, such as contemplating the Self, etc. If the person doesn't find time for these, and simply becomes immersed in *karma*, there is no way that person can make the world better. If a person becomes destroyed like this, and tries to make the world good, it will culminate in danger. This is the danger of *Karma Yoga*. This fall, or *chyuti*, can happen at any time. This fall is lying within *karma*. Therefore, we must be aware of this. Then what is needed do avoid this? The mind must be constantly situated in *satsang*, and other spiritual matters. The mind must constantly have the taste for spirituality. Otherwise, in time, the person will gradually be destroyed.

There is an old song. '*Māyāmayam i prapancha kāryangalill peyavayi valanyu pokate nitanam.*' All things of the universe are products of *Māyā*, Great Illusion. This is true, whether it is *karma* or *Karma Yoga*. So, the prayer is, 'please don't let me become trapped crazily in *Māyā*, like a mad dog.' So while performing *karma Yoga*, the person may be thrown off the path, and be diverted. This is where the person becomes trapped in the madness of *karma*. That is like a mad dog. It will bite and harm others, and it will be destroyed.

So, the message is to not destroy oneself while stepping down to make the world good. This is matter of *Karma Yoga* that should be given one's utmost attention. Therefore, the *Upaniṣads* say, '*Shirasa dhārā niśudhat duratyayā.*' They say that the spiritual path is like walking on the razor's edge.' That requires great practice, and is also full of danger. So, we must all be very aware and alert about this matter. The Gita says, '*śraddhavān labhate jñānām,*' One with *śhraddha*, faith, attains Knowledge. This *śraddha* is always needed. Without *śraddha*, it isn't possible to progress in anything.

Therefore, the mind should be constantly situated in *satsang*. Constant wakefulness is necessary. Constant *śraddha* is needed. The mind should be constantly situated in *bhakti*, and faith. Only if the mind is situated constantly in this way, can the person proceed in *Karma Yoga*. Otherwise, the likes and dislikes of the mind will increase from *karma*. The mind will lose its tranquility. When that happens, the person will make other people lose their peace of mind. When everyone loses their mental peace like this, it becomes a big group. That is something that *Karma Yogis* must pay very close attention to.

Therefore, *Shankara* is concluding all of the things stated in this part of commentary. What is that? It says, ‘*tasmāt,*’ therefore, ‘*gītāsāstre,*’ in the Gita, ‘*ātmajñānavataḥ saṁnyāse eva adhikārah,*’ the *Ātmajñāni* is qualified for *sanyassa* alone. ‘*Na karmaṇi,*’ he is not qualified for the performance of *karma*. This means that the *Vedas* do not have the authority to order the *Jñāni* to again perform any kind of *karma*, whether it is the *kāmya karmas*, *niṣidha karmas*. In the state of the *Jñāni*, the injunctions of the *Vedas* cannot exist. The *Vedas* cease to be a *pramāṇa* for the *Jñāni*. The *Jñāni* is the *pramāṇa* of the *Vedas*.

The *Jñāni* is *Muktan*. Therefore, the *Jñāni* doesn’t have to consult with the injunctions of the *Vedas*, before performing action. Instead, for the *Vedas* to function, it must consult with the *Jñāni*. ‘*Iti tatra tatra upariṣṭāt ātmajñānaprakaraṇe darsayiṣyāmaḥ.*’ This means that this concept will continue in the Gita. ‘*Upariṣṭāt,*’ in the section after this, ‘*ātmajñānaprakaraṇe,*’ in the true nature of Self-knowledge, ‘*darsayiṣyāmaḥ,*’ will continue to be explained.

What then is *Shankara* saying? *Shankara* says that all of the matters said are *sapramana*, based on scriptural authority. All of the matters said are based in the authority of the *śrutis*, and not mere imagination. That is the meaning. *Shankara* says that through the authority of the Gita, all of the matters explained will be made clear. Therefore, we must clearly understand *Shankara’s* opinion of the meaning of what the *Gita* says about *Karma Yoga*, *Sanyassa*, and other matters.

There may be another book with a different interpretation than *Shankara*. That is fine. Each *āchārya* will have a clear opinion about the meaning of the Gita. However, here we should understand *Shankara’s* opinion, clearly. That is what we are trying to do. Now we can take a look at the *śloka*.

Vedā, avināśinam, nityam, yaḥ, enam, ajam, avyayam. This can start from the word ‘*yaḥ,*’ whoever, ‘*enam,*’ this, the Self, ‘*ajam,*’ as birthless, ‘*avyayam,*’ as immutable, ‘*nityam,*’ eternal, ‘*avināśinam,*’ as indestructible, ‘*vedā,*’ knows, ‘*pārtha,*’ O Arjuna, ‘*katham saḥ puruṣaḥ,*’ how can he, ‘*kam hanti,*’ who will he slay?, ‘*kam ghātayati,*’ whom will he cause to slay?’

The commentary said that this is not a question. The phrase, ‘*kam hanti?*’ means, ‘he does not kill.’ The phrase ‘*kam ghātayati,*’ means ‘he doesn’t cause anyone to slay.’ We should understand the *śloka* in this way. This sentence is not

in the form of a doubt, or question. The '*katham*,' here means 'na,' does not. It is meant for refuting. This means that the *Jñāni* doesn't slay or cause to slay.

This is because *Arjuna* thought, 'I will become their killer.' So, *Sri Kṛṣṇa* says, 'the *Atman* doesn't slay.' Because *Arjuna* also thought, 'the Lord is making me slay them,' *Kṛṣṇa* says, 'the *Ātman* doesn't cause to slay.' The statement, 'he doesn't cause to kill,' is not in the worldly level of experience. Instead, this is said from the level of the *Atman*. We should also understand that. If it is in the worldly level of experience, we will have to say that one does cause another to slay. We will have to say that the Lord gives *Arjuna* encouragement to perform *karma*.

What did Arjuna do? He rejected his *karma*. In that circumstance, it was Arjuna's *svadharma* to kill the opposing warriors. However, Arjuna desired to reject this duty. The *Smṛtis* say that the performance in a righteous war is a *nitya karma*, an ordained duty for the *kṣatriya*. A righteous war is neither a *kāmya karma*, nor a *niṣidha karma*. For a *kṣatriya*, fighting in a righteous war is a *nitya karma*, and these must be performed by the *Karma Yogi*. Therefore, *Arjuna* desired to reject that *karma* in the worldly level of experience. He had already rejected it.

Then what does the Lord do? The Lord makes Arjuna perform his *svadharma*. He encourages Arjuna. In the worldly level of experience, that encouragement is powerful. That's not all, we can go and look in the *Mahābhārata*. In many situations in the *Mahābhārata*, the Lord makes *Arjuna* kill. Even in situations where *Arjuna* wants to avoid killing, *Krishna* strongly encourages him. He says, 'cut his throat.' This is done without any show of kindness or formality. For that purpose, the Lord told several untruths.

In the end, we will ask, 'was what the Lord did to Arjuna correct? How many times did the Lord cheat in the war? With *Bhīṣma*, *Drona*, *Karṇa*, etc. How much did the Lord do in order to insure that they were killed? For that purpose, the Lord told several lies. However, without these, one cannot win in war. If one steps into war, one must win. For that, some cheating may be necessary. The Lord Himself says this. He says, 'I have made Arjuna commit these acts, but that is part of war.'

In several situations, such as the killing of *Bhīṣma* and *Droṇa*, whenever Arjuna was faltering, the Lord intervened like this. Only after this, would Arjuna doubt whether the Lord's action was correct, but in that situation, Arjuna was weak. When Arjuna saw *Dr̥ṣṭyadhymna* kill *Droṇa*, he couldn't bear it. This is because after *Droṇa* released his weapons, sitting in his chariot in *padmāsana*, *Dr̥ṣṭyadhymna* beheaded him with his sword. Arjuna couldn't bear it when he saw this. Again, Arjuna entered the same condition as before.

They killed the *Guru*. *Droṇa* was a *brāhmaṇa*, a *Guru*. How could they kill such a *Guru* in a cruel way? *Arjuna* yelled 'don't kill, don't kill,' but *Dr̥ṣṭadhymna* didn't hear. As far as *Dr̥ṣṭadhymna* was concerned, he had taken birth for killing *Droṇa*. Then how could he avoid killing him, if someone says, 'don't kill?' For him, there is no one who could prevent him from killing *Droṇa*, besides the Lord. This is because *Dr̥ṣṭadhymna* took birth for killing *Droṇa*. Therefore, he killed him. Then, Arjuna couldn't bear to see this. He couldn't accept it. Arjuna said, 'enough! I can't bear to see!' In that situation, the Lord says, 'no, it's only possible to kill.'

This also happened while killing *Karṇa*. When *Karṇa*'s chariot became stuck in the ground, the Lord didn't say to kill him. He said to cut his throat. That was the opportune time, because once he was back inside the chariot, it wouldn't be possible. So, these great warriors, *Bhīṣma*, *Droṇa*, and *Karṇa*, were all impossible to be defeated in battle. *Bhīṣma* and *Droṇa* were extremely aged. *Droṇa* was 400 years old in the *Mahābhārata*. However, it was impossible to defeat them because they possessed divine weapons. Thus, they could use these till the time of death itself, and the war would continue endlessly. If the Lord was not there to kill them, the war would not end. Therefore, the Lord says to Arjuna, 'cut his throat.' '*Chindasva*.' This means to shred to pieces, through Arjuna's divine missile.

Therefore, in the worldly level of experience, the Lord encouraged Arjuna to perform action, in an extremely strong manner. Despite all of this, what does the Lord say? '*Kaṁ ghātayati hanti kaṁ*.' Who can he cause to slay? Whom can he slay?' Then what is the meaning of the Lord saying, 'I do not cause to slay?' In the true Self of the Lord, neither slaying nor causing to slay occur. He neither

kills nor causes to kill. He simply abides in the true nature of the Self. In that state, there is neither slaying nor causing to slay. Thus, it is said in that level, 'there is nothing there.'

However, when we come down to the worldly level of *karma*, all of that exists. That is what we see. If we look in the *Mahābhārata* after the instruction of the Gita, we can see this, in each and every circumstance. That is what we should understand. Wherever the scriptures refute the existence of *karma*, it is only on that level of the *Ātman*. It isn't possible to refute the existence of *karma* on the worldly level of experience. That is what *Shankara* says. When the commentary speaks about *Karma Sanyassa*, we should understand on what level it is being explained. In that *sanyassa*, all of this will continue externally. However, internally, nothing is there. That is the experience of the *Jñāni*.

Externally, the state of the *Jñāni* is, '*indriyānīndriyārtheṣu vartante iti dhārayan.*' 'The senses act among the sense-objects, but the Self is unattached.' Thus, externally, *karmas* will continue. Therefore, the Lord says, 'I neither perform action, nor cause others to act.' That is the level of experience, the level of the *Jñāni*. We are in the realm of worldly experience. That is different. It is not the level of the *Ātman*. Only a few rare Souls can remain in that level of the Self, while viewing the worldly level and acting. Therefore, a person who is situated in the worldly level doesn't have the right to decide freely whether to fight or not. That is the difference between the two.

Therefore, we cannot think, because the Lord made Arjuna fight, and fought in the war, I can too.' When we are situated in the worldly level, we must follow the rules and regulations of fairness, conduct, etc. Therefore, an *Ajñāni* doesn't have the right to bypass the rules that are not applicable to the *Jñāni*. When we look in reference to the *Gita*, the subject of war, and other matters should be considered with great attention. This is not the ordinary discussion about war here. Here it is not discussing whether war is necessary or not. This is not the kind of discussion held in the *Gita*.

The *Gita* doesn't discuss, 'is war or peace needed?' Instead, this is explaining what the relationship between the level of the Self, and the performance in a war. This is not about justifications or refutations of war. 'Do we need war or peace?' That is not the subject. 'Where is the level of *svadharma*?'

Where is the level of the *Ātma Jñāni*?' What is the relationship between these two?' This matters are of primary importance in the discussion.

Therefore, we should be very careful when we discuss matters, like, 'should one encourage a war, or should one seek peace?' Here, the question of war and peace are in a different circumstance. These are all different. Therefore, there are two levels of experience; the worldly level, and the level of the Supreme Truth. Sometimes the scriptures will present matters in the worldly level of experience, while other times they will be presented in the level of the Supreme Truth. We should clearly understand these two levels, before we discuss about the subject of war in the Gita.

Therefore, *Shankara* concludes this *śloka*, '*tasmāt gītāśāstre*,' in the Gita, the *Ātma Jñāni* is suitable only for the renunciation of *karma*, and not for its performance.

Now we can look at *Shankara*'s preface for the 22nd *śloka*. It says, 'Now let us discuss what is immediately relevant. '*Prakṛtaṁ tu vakṣyāmaḥ*.' In the last *śloka*, the commentary discussed each word, the literal meaning, and then went into a long extended discussion about *karma* and the *Jñāni*. Here it says, 'we can come back to the subject now.' Then *Shankara* says, 'We have already discussed the imperishability of the *Ātman*. '*Tatra ātmanaḥ avināśitvaṁ pratijñātaṁ*.' 'What is that like, for example?' '*Tat kimiveti*.' This is a very famous shloka of the Gita.

***Vāsāṁsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti naro/parāṇi
Tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇānyanyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī. 2.22.***

This is a famous *śloka*. Its meaning is clear, so there is not a long commentary. *Shankara* says, '*vāsāṁsi vastrāni*,' clothes, '*jīrṇāni durbalatāṁ gatāni*,' used, worn out, '*yathā loke*,' like in the world, '*vihāya parityajya*,' having rejected, '*navāni abhinavāni*,' new ones, '*gṛhṇāti upādatte*,' accepting. So, in the same way that one discards used clothes and accepts new ones, '*naraḥ puruṣaḥ*,' man, '*aparāṇi anyāni*,' in this way of accepting new clothes, '*tathā tadvad eva*,' in that same way, '*śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāni*,' having rejected worn-out bodies, '*anyāni saṁyāti saṁgacchati navāni dehī ātmā*.' This *Ātman*, the Self, accepts new

bodies. In this way, the *Atman* accepts Its new clothes, which are bodies. That is the meaning.

So when a person changes his dress, his body doesn't undergo the change. So, '*puruṣavat*,' in the way that the man doesn't change with the changing of new clothes, in that same way, '*avikriya eva ityarthah*,' the Self remains devoid of change through the changing of bodies. Therefore, even if the bodies of *Bhīṣma*, *Drona*, and the other warriors are destroyed, in their true nature of the Self, they are Eternal. You Arjuna, are also so, and so am I.' That is the meaning. Now we can look at the shloka.

'*Yathā*,' in which way, '*narah*,' man, '*jīrṇāni vāsāmsi*,' worn-old clothes, '*vihāya*,' having discarded, '*navāni grhṇāti*,' accepts, '*tathā*,' like that, '*dehī*,' this *Atman*, the embodied Soul, '*jīrṇāni śarīrāṇi vihāya*,' having discarded worn-out bodies, '*anyāni navāni samīyāti*,' the Self accepts new bodies.

When the *śloka* says, 'worn-out bodies,' is it speaking only about the very elderly people, about to die, not about those who die in an accident? Then how can we explain the people that die in an accident? Here, it is referring to when the utility of the body is finished. Once the *Jīva*, the individual Soul, understands, 'this body is not fit for me,' the soul immediately discards it. Whether it is of old age, an accident, or in youth, once the body becomes useless, the *Jīva* discards it. After discarding that body, it accepts another. That is only like changing one's clothes.

This is where we accept the belief of reincarnation, *punarjanmam*. Then a doubt may come. For most of us, when we discuss matters like reincarnation, these things are beyond the scope of our knowledge. Despite this, we express our opinions about these things. Even people do this with *Advaita*. They may read something in a book, and then express that opinion, but it still remains unknown to them. However, there are others, such as the *Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa*, for which these matters are not unknown.

The Lord Himself says to Arjuna, 'I know all of this, but you do not.' This is in the 4th chapter. '*Bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava chārjuna*.' This means, 'I have lived many lifetimes before this, as have you. The only difference is that I know them, while you do not.' That is the difference of knowledge. *Yogis* will have the knowledge of their previous births, but ordinary humans do not. Several

things that are unknown to the *Ajñāni* will be directly revealed to the *Yogi*. That is what the Lord says. Thus, such a human, *Sri Kṛṣṇa*, speaks about reincarnation. We accept these words as a *pramāṇa*, and repeat these ideas. It is not that we are saying something we don't know. We are saying it because we accept the words of *mahātmās* as a *pramāṇa*. There is no meaning in saying that the Lord is speaking about matters that He is ignorant of.

Thus, some people say this about *Advaita*, that these are matters that cannot be justified; therefore, they shouldn't be discussed. There are some people who think that whatever limited knowledge they have is the same for everyone else. However, it's not like that. Self-realized *Mahātmās* are able to know about previous births and reincarnation. The Lord Himself gives the logical explanation of this in the Gita. *Sri Kṛṣṇa* says, 'you don't know, but I know all of them.' There is a difference in the knowledge of the *Jñāni* and the *Ajñāni*. Only a *Yogi* will be able to know this.

Therefore, when we discuss the scriptures, we are not just discussing our knowledge. The subject of discussion there is the knowledge that is opposite to ours. We think about the knowledge of *Mahātmās*, such as the Lord. If the subject of our spiritual discussion is the knowledge of us, who are ignorant, then there is no need for the scriptures. Then, it is enough if we have discussion by ourselves, without the scriptures. Then why do we have to rely on the scriptures? It is to accept the knowledge of the ancient *ṛṣis* and *mahātmās*. They had knowledge that is beyond the senses and world. That is what we discuss in scriptural discussion, and think about.

I'm saying this so that no one will have a misinterpretation and spread it to others. That is a different matter. Some commentate like that, saying that we cannot discuss things beyond our limited experience, because of lack of knowledge. What does the Lord say in the Gita? He says that previous births, as well as reincarnation, exist. The Lord says this as a firm decision. We are only discussing this generally now. This subject will be made clear in the coming sections. The Lord will say, 'I know all of this, but you don't, Arjuna.' We don't know these truths, but *Mahātmās* do. We can understand this. Now, the next *mantra*.

*Nainaṃ chindanti śastrāṇi nainaṃ dahati pāvakaḥ
Na chainaṃ kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ. 2.23*

*Acchedyoyaṃ adāhyoyaṃ akledyośoṣya eva cha
Nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthānur achaloyaṃ sanātanāḥ. 2.24.*

We can discuss this section in the next class.