II. KARMA YOGA

Karma Yoga is the unique technique shown by the BG to attain salvation by applying it to the practical level of daily life. The basic requirement for this, according to Lokamanya Tilak (1), is an intense desire to have the knowledge of the performance of karma action rightly while leading the worldly life. This can be termed as Karma-jijnāsā, like an ardent desire which is essential for the acquisition of knowledge (tattva-jijnāsa). Therefore, Tilak terms Karma Yoga as the science of Right Action" (2).

However, the attempt to understand the nature, scope and application of Karma Yoga for this purpose implies the necessity of knowing the term itself.

Etymology :-

The word karma is derived from the root kr — to do, and means “doing”, “affairs”, or “activity”; it is this same ordinary meaning which is intended in the BG.

Origin and Development of karma :-

Even in the Saṃhitās, karma denotes the same root meaning; but the connotation of the word becomes specific and specialized when we come to the Brāhmaṇas wherein we find the fullest development of the sacrificial ritual. Therefore, now karma denotes these sacrificial rituals or yajña. The Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā school holds that the purpose behind all the actions of man is yajña only, and that any action done for the purpose of the yajña cannot be the source of
bondage, for, it forms a means for this purpose. Jaimini says (3) that actions are of two kinds - (1) yajña-rtha - actions done for yajña, not giving independent fruit, and so are non-binding, and (2) puruṣārtha - actions performed for the benefit of the doer, such as the attainment of heaven, son, prosperity, etc., and so, are binding. In the Upaniṣads, the worth of the sacrificial karma is considered to be much lower than that of the knowledge of the Brahman; for, according to the Upaniṣads, the spiritual salvation can be had only through Brahma-jñāna, and not by the yajñas, whose fruit is heaven.

In the Smṛtis, karma not only regains its connotation of yajña (ṣrauta) but attains a wider scope. Thus the word is applicable to --

(a) the duty of a person as per his caste,
(b) religious actions such as fasting, austerities, etc.

Fasting, austerities, etc. which belong to the fourfold division of (1) nitya - daily actions, (2) naimittika - occasional actions and (3) kāmya - desire-prompted actions. These are smārta-yajñas. In addition, there were (4) niṣiddha or objectionable actions too.

The BG is the "Upaniṣad sung by the Lord" to urge Arjuna on the battle-field to follow the path of his sva-dharma or duty and to fight the war to uphold righteousness as a kṣatriya. As this advice is imparted by the Bhagavān / Lord, it can be called the Bhāgavata religion (Lord Kṛṣṇa is known as Bhagavān in the Bhāgavata cult).

Here, Tilak's statement is noteworthy: ".....the advice which has been given to Arjuna in the Gītā relates principally to the Energistic Bhāgavata religion" (4). This "Energistic Bhāgavata religion", therefore, briefly refers to the Karma Yoga.
Tradition:

According to Sant Jñāneśvara, Karma Yoga is expounded in the first six chapters of the BG. However, the first chapter and the initial verses of the second chapter provide the background of the commencement of the teachings to be given by the Lord. It is only in the II.39 that the subject of Karma Yoga is introduced and is elaborated from thereon.

During this discussion, the Lord refers to its tradition. This religion or Yoga, He says, is not new; it was preached by Him to Vivasvān, by the latter to Manu, and by Manu to Ikṣvāku (5). Thus, this Yoga was traditionally handed down and gradually lost; it was being revived by Him on the Kurukṣetra.

It is interesting to note that this tradition tallies exactly with that of the Bhāgavata religion into the MBh (6). Thus these traditions being consistent, one can logically conclude that this Karma Yoga and the Bhāgavata religion are the same (7). Further, twice again in the MBh we have references to the exposition of the Bhāgavata or the Nārāyaṇīya religion by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna (8). Moreover, the MBh specifies that the Nārāyaṇīya religion gives Release and is praṇātīpara, i.e. Energistic in nature (9).

Various commentators, in their bhasyas, advocate the moral or the central teaching of the BG differently:

(1) Śaṅkarācārya’s commentary is the most ancient available one on the Nivṛtti-mārga of the Vedic religion. Śaṅkara wrote his bhasya to show that the teaching of the BG is consistent with this path and is not the combination of knowledge and karma. Thus, according to him, karma is only a means to purify the mind and acquire jñāna; and so, it is inferior to jñāna. He also holds that mokṣa can be obtained by knowledge combined with the renunciation of karma.
The other commentators of the BG who belonged to this path, followed Śaṅkara’s view in their bhāṣyas.

(2) Rāmānuja (Viśistādvaita school of Vedānta) being an advocate of the Bhāgavata religion, believes that devotion to God is the main doctrine of the BG.

(3) Madhvācārya (Dvaita school) says that though nīkāma karma is extolled by the BG, it is merely a means, and bhakti is the ultimate doctrine here. Hence, according to him, on achieving perfection through bhakti, the performance of karma becomes redundant.

(4) According to the Śuddhādvaita school of Vallabhaśārya also, devotion is the central purport of the BG and forms the most significant means of obtaining release. For this, however, a complete surrender to the Lord and His grace are essential.

(5) Nimbārkācārya (Dvaitadvaita school) himself has not written a bhasya on the BG. However, Keshava Kashmiri Bhattacharya (a follower of this school) in his Tattvapraṅkāśikā, has used the doctrines of this school to interpret the BG. Accordingly, Ishvara is Supreme and the jagat and the jīva who are separate from Him are contained in Him and depend upon His desire. Here also, the devotional doctrine is upheld as supreme.

All the later four schools, thus, interpret the teachings of the BG on the basis of devotion, whereas Śaṅkara does so on the basis of Jñāna, the theory of Māyā, and advaita between the Brahman and the Ātman.

(6) The medieval saints more or less advocate the BG’s doctrine to be that of devotion, but without discarding Śaṅkara’s views. Thus, they say that the path of devotion based on the advaita is the principal teaching of the BG.
In short, different commentators have interpreted the BG in their own ways by declaring the *Karma Yoga* to be inferior to *jñāna* or *bhakti*.

*Karma Yoga as the main teaching of the BG*:

The applications of the seven logical factors to determine the purport of a text as applied to the teachings of the BG re-emphasize Lokamanya Tilak's view: "... the original *Gītā* did not preach the Philosophy of Renunciation (*nivṛtti*), but of Energism, *(Karma Yoga)*; and that possibly, the single word *yoga* used in the *Gītā* had been used to mean *Karma Yoga*" (10).

It is thus :-

(1) **Upakrama** i.e. Beginning. The BG commences with Arjuna's infatuation, confusion, and hence aversion to his duty as a warrior. Arjuna surrenders to the Lord, requesting Him to show him his course of action. Therefore, the Lord elucidates His teachings as the BG gradually removing Arjuna's infatuation and confusion about his dharma. Thus, the basic purpose of the BG about karma becomes evident.

(2) **Upasāṁhāra** i.e. End. Logically asserting the inevitability of karma in various ways, the Lord asks Arjuna at the end - *Kaccidajñānasammohah praṇaṣṭaste Dhananājaya* (11), which calls for Arjuna's famous answer of *Kariṣye vacanam tava* (12). It also asserts the point in question, i.e. the central teaching of BG is that of karma.

(3) **Abhyāsa** i.e. Constant repetition. This point, namely, performing his own dharma or karma is harped upon by the Lord again and again in each chapter, such as at 2.18, 2.37, 3.19, 4.15 and so on. This asserts that the principal teaching of the BG is *Karma Yoga*. 
(4) Apurvata i.e. Novelty or originality. Jñāna and sannyāsa were emphasized in the earlier scriptures; in fact, the belief was hi jñānā ye muktih. The BG is the first book laying down action - karma as the basis of attaining salvation, and hence it forms its central teaching.

(5) Phala - ie. Fruit. The fruit or the ultimate outcome of the teaching of the BG is 18.73 - naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdha etc. -- which shows that Arjuna's veil of infatuation is removed and he is ready to perform his dharma. Again, this is the fruit/purpose/phala aiming which Kṛṣṇa had started teaching him the technique of Karma Yoga.

(6) Arthavāda ie. Glorification. The BG repeatedly glorifies Karma Yoga in words such as - even the slightest adherence to this Yoga saves an individual from grave danger (13), its antiquity (14), Karma-Yogo visisyaete (15) etc. These statements and assurances reassert Karma Yoga to be the main teaching of the BG.

(7) Upapatti ie. Logical deduction. Expositions of several topics such as lokasamgraha, theory of incarnation, yajña, sannyāsa, etc. clearly form a part of the doctrine of karma. The BG also reiterates that the daily duties of an individual must be performed with the spirit of detachment which indicates that the adherence to Karma Yoga thus releases man from the bondage of karma, leading him to salvation.

All these prove that the central teaching of the BG is Karma Yoga, and it is consistent with that of the Bhāgavata religion expounded by the author of the MBh.

**Etymology and Meaning of the word Yoga:**

The word Yoga is attached to the term karma to coin the new technical term Karma Yoga by the BG. The word yoga is derived from the root yuj -- to join, and therefore, it means -- "the state of union", "combination" and later on, "device", "method", "technique". Lokamanya Tilak notes that in the BG, this
Accordingly, the word *yoga* is applied to the different terms like *sannyāsa*, *dhyāna*, *bhakti*, etc. as also to *karma* -- and we have the term *Karma Yoga*.

**Definition of Karma Yoga:**

*Yoga* is principally defined by the *BG* itself as - *Yogah karmasu kausalam* i.e. a special skill or device to perform *karma* or actions. In this sense, occasionally, it is used as a synonymn of *Karma Yoga* and it appears for the first time in the *BG* as *yoge buddhiḥ* - wisdom of the *Yoga*. This forms the beginning of the exposition of the *Karma Yoga*, which is, in turn, the justification of the war.

 Śaṅkara very aptly explains this phrase there in his commentary as the device of eliminating the natural tendency of *karma* to create bondage. The Lord illustrates this by referring to the irresolute people whose minds constantly engaged in the desire-prompted actions like *yajñā*, become “disintegrated” (17). To avoid this, one must become steeped in *yoga* (*yogasthah*) and perform actions (18). Here, the word *yoga* is defined as *samatvam yogah ucyate* i.e. equability or evenness of the mind towards success or failure (19). Thus, putting these two definitions together, we clearly get to know that *Karma Yoga* is the equability of mind or *samatvam* towards the success or failure or desirelessness for the fruits of actions. Thus the special technique called *Karma Yoga*. A person who lives in the world and performs *karma* skilfully in this way, is called a *yogi* by the *BG*.

Moreover, the *BG* distinctly separates the traditional *Jñāna-mārga* as *sāmkhyā buddhiḥ* from the novel *Karma Yoga* or *yoge buddhiḥ* (20), but harps upon their reaching the identical goal. With this point in view, the *BG* justifies the practice of any one of the *buddhis*. However, the superiority of the *Karma Yoga* as a method, over the path of *jñāna* or *sāmkhya* or *sannyāsa* is emphasized, in as
much as it being difficult to follow, whereas *Karma Yoga* being easy to be practised (21).

*Karma Yoga* being introduced as a novel doctrine, the Lord, in the tone and form of an assurance and a promise, glorifies it: "In this path no effort is ever lost (na iha abhikramanāsāh asti) and no obstacle prevails (pratyavāyāh na vidyate); even a little of this dharma saves one from great fear." Thus, each step and every moment in the practice of *Karma Yoga* are towards the gain of the ultimate goal. Further, the *Karma Yoga* bestows the *vyāsamartikā buddhī* (22) upon its follower which forms an excellent virtue in gaining this goal.

Stating that action is superior to non-action (*karma jyāyāhi akarmānāh*) (23), Kṛṣṇa beautifully and concisely explains the entire import of the *Karma Yoga* (called the *catuḥ-sūtrī* by Lokamanya Tilak) (24) as follows:

(a) *Karmane-eva adhikāraḥ te*, i.e. Your authority extends only to the performance of action;

(b) *Mā phalesu kadācana*, i.e. Obtaining or otherwise of the fruit of the actions may not be within your authority;

(c) *Mā karmaphala-heturbhūḥ*, i.e. Hence, one may not perform action with the motive of obtaining its fruit; and

(d) *Mā te saṅgaḥ astvākarmāṇi*, i.e. May you not insist on not performing action.

In other words, the essential import of the *Karma Yoga* is to necessarily perform actions without an eye on the fruits they yield (or, the longing or attachment—*saṅga* or *āsakti* for the fruits). Further, this intellect which leads to this state is
the vyavasāyamikā buddhiḥ or the "Discerning Reason" (25). Dr. S. Radhakrishnan terms this buddhiḥ as "resolute (decided) understanding" (26).

Another hypothesis prevalent in the days of the BG was that all the karmas have binding effects. When actions are performed in the above manner, according to the BG, they cease to create bondage. The state of performing actions by this technique is the state of Naīśkarmya (translated by Tilak as "Desireless Energism"). Desire, according to the BG, is required to be won over; for, Kṛṣṇa says that it is sinful (mahāpāpmaḥ) and insatiable (mahāśanah), enveloping all knowledge like fire covered by smoke, mirror by dust and embryo by the amniotic fluid. Resting in the senses, the mind and the intellect, desire overcomes a person like the wild fire (27). One who performs actions in a desireless manner is called the yogī and the BG says that he is the same as the sannyāsī - Anāśritaḥ karmaphalam kāryam karma karoti yah | Saḥ sannyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnih na ca akriyāḥ || Yam sannyāsam iti prāhuḥ yogam tam viddhi Pāṇḍava || (28). The BG clarifies a technicality here, that for the one who wishes to achieve the ultimate state of the Karma Yoga i.e. in his sādhanā avasthā, karma or action becomes a means (karaṇa) to do so; while when he achieves that state, i.e. during his siddhāvasthā, he performs actions with śama or serenity (29); in other words, the karmayogī performs actions merely for the sake of performing them with a serene attitude.

The BG never states or hints at inactivity by a person at any stage; for, the constituents or guṇas of Prakṛti compel every being, to perform action (30). Na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhati akarmakṛt | Kāryate hi avaśāḥ karma sarvāḥ prakṛtijāhaḥ guṇaiḥ || Each being, including a jīva, acts according to his prakṛti (Sadṛṣam ceṣṭate svasyaḥ prakṛteḥ jānavān api) (31), inspite of using any kind of curb upon it. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to perform the action inherently natural to him, i.e. to fight (32). This leads one to perform only one's own duty or dharma - which matches his prakṛti and not that of another i.e. para-dharma (33).
Acceptance of this intrinsic limitation of the nature of our very being requires the total understanding of the nature of *karma* and *akarma* as the path of *karma* is difficult to be comprehended (gahanā karmāṇo gatiḥ) (34). The *BG* paradoxically says that one who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction is the ṛṇāti, steeped in *Karma Yoga* and performs all actions properly (Karmaṇī akarma yaḥ paśyet akarmaṇicā karma yaḥ I Saḥ buddhiman manuṣyeṣu saḥ yuktah kṛṣnakarmakṛt II) (35). In other words, action becomes inaction (*akarma*) when the doer performs it desirelessly as it becomes free of its bondage. This kind of action is called the sāttvika *karma* by the *BG* (36); it is performed by the doer as his own duty and without love or hate for it. In contrast are the rājas actions performed with egoistic feeling and desire for their fruits (37) and the tāmasa actions performed disregarding their awareness and destruction or hiṃsā caused by them (38). In the like categories fall the performers or kartās of these respective actions (39).

The Lord glorifies this *Karma Yoga* eloquently. He says that *Karma Yoga* is the core of renunciation or sannyāsa; it makes sannyāsa easy to be practised (Sannyāsah tu mahābāho duḥkhamāptum ayogataḥ I Yogayukto muniḥ brahma na cireṇa adhigacchati II) (40). To the karma-yogi dedicating all his actions to Brahman and performing them with just his body, mind, intellect and sense-organs, without attachment -- for self-purification (atmaśuddhaye) sin does not adhere, like water to the lotus-leaf (Brahmaṇī adhāya karmāṇi saḥgam tyaktvā karoti yaḥ I Lipyate na saḥ pāpena padmapatram iva ambhasa II) (41). It is so because he has realised that he i.e. the Ātman does not do anything (naiva kiṃcit karomi) (42); thus realising, he stays happily in this “city” (i.e. body = pure) of “nine-doors” (nava-dvāre) doing nothing and causing nothing to be done (43).

The ultimate goal to be achieved by the karma-yogi is the same as promised in the *Upaniṣads*. The *BG*, through *Karma*, promises that the yogī, on reaching the state of perfection, becoming free from the transmigratory cycle (janmabandhavinirmitkataḥ), reaches the state where there is no unhappiness (anāmayam padam) (44). Thus performing actions detached does he attain the highest state (param āpnoti) (45). This state is called by the *BG* as the brāhmaḥ sthitih and
the fruit is the brahma-nirvāṇa, on attaining which there is no ignorance or moha left (46). However, the BG lays stress on a singular condition here, viz. the yogī must be in this state at the time of his death also (47).

The author of the BG is a master "synthesizer" of the old traditions in a visionary manner. He has taken up the traditional sacrificial ritual and amalgamated it into the Karma Yoga. Accordingly, yajña assumes a new comprehensive meaning of all actions to be performed in a twofold manner: -

(a) desirelessly,

(b) as fulfilment of one's obligations and duties towards the cosmos.

All the other actions, i.e. actions performed with a desire for the fruits thereof and therefore self-centred, are binding. The yajñārtha - karmas do not have any binding effect (Yajñārthā karmāṇaḥ anyatram lokāḥ ayam karmabandhanāḥ I) (48); thus, even sacrificial karma will enable one to obtain freedom from bondage. Brahmā created the cycle of yajña thus to maintain the order of the cosmos (49).

The BG calls a self-centred person a thief - a stena (50) and his life as futile (mogham pārtha saḥ jīvati) (51).

The obligation of a person towards the society and the cosmos to which he owes his very being is to be fulfilled even after achieving perfection; there is to be no inactivity ever. This is lokasaṅgraha or universal welfare which even the realised yogīs like Janaka Videha and others strove for (Karmaṇā eva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitāḥ Janakādayāḥ | Lokasaṅgraham eva api sampaśyan kartumarhasi II) (52). It serves the purpose of setting an example for the masses of the society to follow (Yat yat ācarati īśreṣṭhāḥ tat tat eva itaraḥ janāḥ | Saḥ yat pramāṇam kurute lokāḥ tat anuvartate II) (53). The avatāra of the Supreme Lord is the ultimate illustration to support this Karma Yoga (54); this is the mystery behind His divine birth and deeds (55).

The Karma-yogī stands out from the ordinary men due to his virutes developed in the entire process of sādhana. He is called sthitaprajña by the BG. Equanimity or samatva is the chief quality of the karma-yogī. Samatva
extends at two levels:

(1) Internal -- He rises above the dual experiences (dvandva) caused by the fleeting emotions of the empirical world because of the sublimation of his sense-organs and the mind; therefore, he remains self-satisfied.

(2) External -- His vision becomes equanimous towards all creatures; he looks upon a cow, an elephant, a dog, a pandatā and a brahmin with equanimity (paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ) (56).

This state, in fact, is that of being steeped in Brahman (brahma-bhūtaḥ) (57) as he knows the existence of the Supreme Principle in all. Therefore, he is like the steady and deep ocean which never overflows inspite of receiving enormous amount of water from all the rivers - Āpūryamāṇam acalapratistham samudram āpaḥ praviśanti yadvat I Ṛadvatkāmakāmāḥ yam praviśanti sarve saḥ sāntim āpnoti na kāmakāmī II (58).

It is creditable to see that the BG does not forget the human limitations during this exposition. It does accept the possibilities of accident and death during the sādhanā. Hence, it assures such a person (called yogabhrasta) (in the same note of its promise at the outset at 2.39-41) that being born in the successive births in a household having the atmosphere that is conducive to the practice of sādhanā, he is able to reach the goal of the yoga (59) (See the chapter on Eschatology). Therefore, the Lord asserts that the karmayogi is superior to the tapasvi, the jñānī and the karmī (60).

Hence, towards the end, Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna is to accept the path of Karma Yoga by renouncing all actions to God (cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparah), and fixing his mind thus upon Him (maccitam), he should resort to the yoga of equable reason (61).

Veda Vyāsa calls this Karma Yoga the mystery of the mysteries (param guhyam) and reveres it as it has been expounded by Kṛṣṇa - the Lord of Yoga (Yogam yogesvarat Kṛṣṇāt sāksät kathayataḥ svayam) (62).
Karma Yoga in the ŚBP:

The BG propagates the Bhāgavatī religion (63) as does the ŚBP. It stands to reason that the author of both the texts being Veda Vyāsa himself, the ideology presented in them must also be more or less the same. However, the very beginning of the ŚBP makes the author’s viewpoint clear — namely, to expound the Bhāgavata Dharma properly — the dharma which is dear to the Paramahaṁsas — as it was not made clear earlier (i.e. in the MBh and the BG) (64). The ŚBP itself narrates the circumstances of its composition thus: Once Vyāsa experienced the feeling of dejection (65). Nārada suggested that the cause of this mental anguish was that Vyāsa’s works lacked an adequate description of the glory of the Lord (66). He emphasized that pure knowledge as well as naiṣkarmya devoid of devotion for Kṛṣṇa (acyuta-bhāva-varjitam) and not dedicated to the Lord (Īśvare na arpitam) were useless (67). More significant was the devotion to Hari by the aspirant despite his failure to carry out his code of conduct or svadharma; in fact, no spiritual exaltation could be attained by one who followed merely the svadharma devoid of devotion (68). Moreover, only karma dedicated to the Lord destroyed the ātapatraya of man (69), generated knowledge combined with devotion (70) and such a person alone obtained samyag-darśana (71). This clearly shows that the original doctrine of the naiṣkarmya or Karma Yoga which formed the main preaching of the BG gained a shift of weightage in the ŚBP, and Bhakti Yoga attained supreme importance. Lokamanya Tilak’s observation is noteworthy here: “When the doctrine of Desireless Action to which importance had been given in the original Bhāgavata religion of the Bhārata lost its influence in course of time, and Devotion acquired importance instead, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa came to be written in order to expound this second Bhāgavata religion (that is, in which Devotion was predominant)” (72).

The above discussion implies that the Karma Yoga as presented in the ŚBP assumes the colour which is different from that of the BG.
The ŠBP expounds its philosophy by accepting the laws of Karma and Karma-vipāka. It says that Māyā of the Lord is the power behind this empirical world to which these laws apply. The Ātman which is really the Inner Ruler or Prabhu identifies Itself with this body due to Māyā, attaches Itself with it and thus starts rotating the cycle of transmigration governed by these laws (Gunaṁ guṇan saḥ bhuṁjānaṁ ātmapradyotitāṁ prabhuḥ) (73). It performs karmaḥ or actions with Its karmendriyas and generates new tendencies as well as enjoys the varied fruits of actions performed earlier (74). This karmagati or the transmigratory cycle on the basis of karma remains in motion till dissolution (75). Men of the household stage especially reap the fruits of contrary type also i.e. not the pleasant ones which they strive for (pākaviparyāsam), and thus they are bound by the laws of karma (76). The ŠBP notes, like the BG, that not only this world but the world beyond too being bound by karma, tends to end, i.e. it is impermanent (Evam lokam param vidyāt naśvaram karmanirmitam) (77). This fleeting nature of karmas and their co-existence with the transient world are reiterated during the discussion of jñāna and vairāgya: the Lord advises Uddhava that a discriminate person should look upon the enjoyments upto Brahmaloka as temporary and the cause of misery just as the enjoyments of this world, being the result of karma, are temporary and full of misery (78).

Further, this karma-vipāka-prakriya is also discussed again and again. Once the ŠBP discusses this topic at length while referring to the topic of the future of the dying person -Tvattāḥ parāvṛttadhiyāḥ svakṛtaiḥ karmabhīḥ prabhō | Uccāvacān yathā dehān gṛhaḥanti visṛjanti ca ॥ (79) (See the chapter on Eschatology).

The mendicant of the Bhikṣu-gītā puts up with the insults and sufferings inflicted upon him by the evil people to be the results of his own bad karmas (Vipākam nijakarmaqām and duṣkham bhoktavyam ātmanaḥ diṣṭam prāptam prāptam abudhyata) (80). Thinking thus he remains steadfast in his own dharma with sattviki forbearance (81). The Lord says that the aspirant for the ultimate (sreyaskāmāḥ) can uplift himself with this attitude alone (82).
A modified idea about the gradation according to *karmas* is given by the SBP. It accepts the BG’s thought that man works according to the three *guna* of *Prakrti* present in his nature (*ime nirjitah gunah jivena cittajah*) (83). However, while referring to the *karmas* based on these *guna*, it offers a different classification:—

i) If the *sattva guna* is predominant the *Atman* attains the body of the *rsis* or the gods.

ii) On *rajas* being the overpowering quality, It assumes the body of *asura* or man.

iii) While the form of spirit or creatures as animals is the fate of the *Atman* on having the *tamas* as the chief quality.

In this way, all these creations consisting of the three *guna* of *Prakrti*, are bound to them due to their *karmas* (*Ete saṁśṛtayah pūṣah guna - karma - nibandhanāḥ*) (84).

Like the BG, the words *karma* and *yoga* have different connotations in the SBP as well—

i) It refers to *siddhavastha* or the state of perfection when the Lord in the *Haṁsāvatāra* instructs Sanaka and others that the highest form of *Yoga* consists in drawing away the mind from all objects and concentrating it wholly in the Lord. The essence of the *Yoga* is to withdraw the mind from all the worldly objects and concentrate upon the Lord (*Etāvān yogah ādiṣṭāḥ mat śiṣyāḥ Sanakādibhiḥ Sarvataḥ manaḥ ākrṣya mayi yat vā āveṣyate yathālḥ*) (85).

ii) Most of the times when the SBP refers to the Vedic *Karmakanda*, it uses the word *karma*.

iii) *Yoga* denotes *Karma Yoga*, for examples:—

(a) while discussing the three paths of spiritual enlightenment (86). Of these, *Karma Yoga* is meant for those who have desires (*karmayogah tu kāminām*) and so, are enthusiastic about actions (*anirviṇṇacittānām*) (87).
(b) The Lord *Hamsa*, towards the end of His preaching, tells *Sanaka* and others that He has given the gist of the teachings of *Yoga* and *Sāṁkhyya*, and that He is the sustaining force behind these two schools of thought (88).

(c) On the other hand, *Kṛṣṇa* tells *Uddhava* that neither *Yoga*, nor *Sāṁkhyya* nor *Dharma* nor Vedic study, nor austerity, nor renunciation attracts Him as does the intense *Bhakti* (*Na sādhayati mām yogah na sāṁkhym dharmah* *Uddhava l Na svādhyāyāḥ tapah tyāgaḥ yathā bhaktiḥ māmaīṣurjitaḥ II*) (89). Also it is said here that those who adopt the path of *Karma* to attain the Lord out of pride in their own capacity are deluded by *Māyā*, whereas the devotees are at ease (*Sukham nu viśveśvara yogakarmabhiḥ tvat māyāyā ami vihatāḥ na mānināḥ*) (90).

Non-attachment or *asaṅga* for *karma* is important. The *ŚBP* upholds the *Vedas* with reverence and therefore, in the strain of the *BG* says that if the *karmas* laid down in the *Vedas* are done with detachment and dedication to God, they lead one to the state of *Naiskarmyā* (*Vedoktam eva kurvāṇah niḥsaṅgaḥ arpitam Īsvara l Naiskarmyān labhate siddhim ...*) (91). It is so because the *Vedas* ordain actions to enable one to be free from them (92). Further, the *ŚBP* also admits the difficulty in understanding the concepts of *karma*, *akarma* and *vikarma*; but it holds the view that these are to be settled only by the Vedic authority. For, these concepts being complex and the *Vedas* being divine, even the inspired seers (*sūravyāḥ*) are at a loss to understand them (*Karma - akarma - vikarma iti vedavaś다ḥ na laukikāḥ Vedasya ca Īśvarātmatvāt tatra mukhyanti sūrayāḥ II*) (93). Unlike the *BG*, the *ŚBP* does not explain these concepts or their inter-relations at all.

Moreover, like the *BG*, the *ŚBP* also associates the three *guṇas* with *karma*; but a modification here is that the *ŚBP* applies then to the stage of man’s life as a householder. It says that a man or a woman of *sāttvika* nature, i.e. a devotee adores *Him* by performing all actions he or she ought to undertake, without any self-centred desire; but a *rājasika* person does so with desires, whereas a *tamasika* person performs actions with the spirit of violence.
Like the BG, the SBP recognizes that the path of Bhakti is the easiest among all the paths leading the aspirant to moksha. Hence, it advises the aspirant to adhere to this path and perform all his actions in dedication to the Lord without any motive for their fruits (nirapeksha) (94); in fact, he should work transforming all his worldly pursuits for Dharma, Artha and Kama into His dedication (Madarthe dharma-kama - arthān - ācaraṇa madapaśrayaḥ Ṛ Labhate niścalāṁ bhaktim mayi Uddhava sanātane II) (95).

As the bhakti for the Lord can be developed and intensified in the human body only (96), Kṛṣṇa's concluding instruction to Uddhava to overcome death is as follows: the ardent aspirant being totally convinced and hence accepting the Bhāgavata Dharma preached by Him must resign his manas and citta to the Lord, remember Him and perform all his actions in dedication to Him. Kuryāt sarvāṇi karmāṇi madartham Śānakālīṁ śmaran | Mayi arpitamaṇḍaḥ cittaḥ maddharma - ātma - manorathī II (97). Further, it is only until one feels nirveda for the worldly life, (i.e., has come to feel Vairāgya), or has come to feel zealous faith (śraddhā) by hearing the stories about the Lord, must the aspirant perform actions (98); thereafter, the performance of actions becomes redundant. This idea, peculiar to the SBP, is not to be found in the BG because the purport of both are different as noted earlier. The point under discussion is asserted more emphatically while glorifying the Bhakti-marga. The SBP says that when love for God is enhanced by devotion, the ego-sense of the devotee forming the "knot" in the heart (ḥṛdaya-granthiḥ) is cut away, all his doubts are dispelled, and thus all his actions get attenuated (kṣīyante cāsyā karmāṇi mayi dṛṣṭe-akhilātmani) (99). Moreover, the reward of bhakti is easy to be obtained even if the aspirant always hears with diligence and faith the Bhāgavata Dharma as taught by the Lord as he will be free from the bondage of karma (mayi bhaktim param kurvan karmabhīḥ na saḥ badhyate) (100). This supremacy of bhakti over karma is re-emphasized thus: when the aspirant abandons all his self-centred actions (tyakta-samasta-karma) and resigns himself to the Lord (niveditaṁ) he becomes dear to Him. Thus being established in the immortality he becomes fit for attaining the ideal state – namely,
becoming one with *Brahman* (101). This state is identical with the *brahma nirvāṇa* of the *BG* (2.72).

Moreover, while the *BG* glorifies the *Karma Yoga* at the very outset of its exposition (2.39-41), the *ŚBP* exalts its *Bhāgavata Dharma* towards the end during the last re-iteration of the same (102). It is said here that when the *Bhāgavata Dharma*, in which all actions done in dedication to God without a desire for the fruits thereof is practised, there is no destruction (*na dhvānsaḥ*) in the aspirant’s efforts from the beginning (*upakrame*) - he can continue from where he has left; the reason is that the basis of this *Dharma* is purely spiritual and therefore, its effects are imperishable and it is ordained by the Lord Himself (*mayā vyavasītaḥ*) (103).

Just as the *Karma Yoga* was practised by the best among men like *Janaka* and others, and the supreme justification of it was given by the divine incarnations and actions performed therein, it is illustrated by God Himself in different incarnations including that of *Kṛṣṇa* in the *ŚBP*. The main purpose behind these illustrations is to work for the social and universal welfare. This is called specifically as *lokasaṅgraha* in the *BG*, where as it is not named so or in other terms in the XI *Skandha* of the *ŚBP*. All the actions performed by God in the various *avataras* are *Līlās* to be remembered, heard and sung by the aspirant devotees to awaken devotion for Him. Thus, for eg. incarnated as *Nara* and *Nārāyaṇa*, He taught the knowledge whose chief feature was *Naiṣkarmya* (104) and demonstrated in His life as *Kṛṣṇa*. He eliminated the evil tendencies and reduced the burden of the earth (105), and so on (106). Thus, performing actions devoid of the self-centred spirit, ungoaded for any gain (as He is the Lord of the universe Himself). He is constantly engaged in performing actions to guide the devotees to work by dedicating all their actions to Him. The supreme illustration of this is *Kṛṣṇa*’s act of entrusting *Duryodhana* the most important tasks, and Himself opting to wash the feet of the brahmmins as an act of respect (107). Thus, He Himself is the *Yogi*, and this is the act of *lokasaṅgraha* - *Kecit kurvanti karmāṇi kāmaṁ ahatacetasāh Tyajantāḥ prakṛtiḥ daivīḥ yathā aham lokasaṅgraham* (108).
## FOOT NOTES

2. Ibid.
5. *BG. 4.1-3.*
8. *MBh. Śān. P. 346.10 ; 348.8.*
9. *MBh. Śān. P. 347.80-81.*
11. *BG. 18.72.*  
12. *BG. 18.73.*
13. *BG. 2.40 a.*  
15. *BG. 5.2.*
17. *BG. 2.41 cd.*  
18. *BG. 2.48ab.*
19. *BG. 2.48 cd.*  
20. *BG. 2.39 ab*
21. *BG 5.4-6*  
22. *BG. 2.41ab.*
23. *BG. 3.8.*
24. *Gītā-Rahasya* (Commentary on 2.47) by Lokamanya Tilak
27. *BG. 3.37-41.*  
29. *BG. 6.3.*  
30. *BG. 3.5.*
31. *BG. 3.33 ab.*  
32. *BG. 18.60.*
33. *BG. 3.35.*  
34. *BG. 4.16-18.*
35. *BG. 4.18.*  
36. *BG. 18.23.*
37. *BG. 18.24.*  
38. *BG. 18.25.*
40. *BG. 5.6 cd.*
41. *BG. 5.10-11.*  
42. *BG. 5.8-9.*
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103 ŠBP. XI. 29.20.

104 ŠBP. XI. 4.6.

105 ŠBP. XI. 1.1.

106 ŠBP. XI. 4.

107 Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam ca (an article by Dr. V. Raghavan in the Dr. Raghavan Commemoration Volume).

108 ŠBP. X. 80.30.

How is this possible?

Can Dr. V. Raghavan write an article in the Vol. of his own Commemoration?