CHAPTER-IV
KARMA – YOGA

Karma in the sense of sacrifice (yajña) is the earliest form of sadhanā as prescribed by the Vedas. However, Karma-yoga as divorced from karmakāṇḍa is the gift of the Gītā and the Bhāgavatam (presumably under the influence of the Buddhism). The Bhāgavatam understands karma in the wide sense of all physical, verbal and mental activities.\textsuperscript{1247} It, however, bifurcates the karmas into Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti—the former for the men characterized by attachment to the worldly objects and the latter for those who have no such attachment; both are contradictory, hence can not be found simultaneously in a sādhaka.\textsuperscript{1248} The former begets transmigration, the latter, immortality.\textsuperscript{1249} The Pravṛtti-mārga as ordained in the Samhitās consists primarily of the ritualistic karma (karmakāṇḍa) performed in order to gain happiness here and a place in the heaven. On the other hand, the Nivṛtti-mārga as ordained in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads is performance of all karmas as upāsanā in the pursuit of salvation and in the spirit of dedication to God. Moreover, there are other duties for sādhaka in accordance with his class and the station. These are known as svadharma following which all men progress gradually towards Final Beatitude (apavarga).\textsuperscript{1250} It is one of the essential contents of Karma-yoga of the Bhāgavatam.

1. KARMA, AKARMA AND VIKARMA:

The ordained action (Karma), non-action (akarma) and prohibited action (vikarma or nisiddha karma) are to be defined through Vedic commandments only.\textsuperscript{1251} Vira Raghava defines karma as the prescribed act, akarma as a prohibited act and vikarma as an act giving various fruits (kāmya karma). According to Ekanatha, the notion of good and evil that a person develops as a result of forgetting the identity of his
soul with the Supreme Soul leads to the triad of karma, akarma and vikarma. He classifies Karma into four categories: daily (nitya), occasional (naimittika), desire-prompted (kāmya), and expiatory (prāyaschtta).

i. Inevitability of karma:

Just as Kṛṣṇa in the Cita stipulates karma as an indispensable means to get across the formidable ocean of karmas for all four kind of devotees: Ārta, Arthārthi, Jijnasu and Jñāni, so do the Bhāgavatam insists that none can live a moment without doing an action as long as the entity of jīvahood persists in an individual. As we know, the jīvahood persists until there is identification with body. It is neither the senses nor the objects that drive one to actions. It is gunas and the tendencies of the past births, of which the jīva is made up, which engage him ceaselessly in actions. “...Like a silkworm, the soul covers himself with cocoon of karma with no means to get out.” In the light of the fact that nobody remains without activity, karma may be defined as the performance of a good action, akarma as the non-performance of the same and vikarma as bad action. Man, under the dominance of rajas mixed with tamas in him, is prone to indulge in either non-action (akarma) – consequent of indolence, or bad action (vikarma) – consequent of his endless struggle for the sense-gratification. According to Sankara, the purification of being that is under the effects of rajas and tamas is possible only with movement (or actions).

ii. The consequence of non-action:

By non-action, a man only delays the exhaustion of fruits of the past actions. It is only body, in such case, which remains inactive; mind is always on the move. Non-action has all likelihood to degenerate into bad action. If an ignorant person who is also without the sense-control does not perform the duties (dharma) prescribed by the Vedas, he goes from death to death due to adharma-propelled bad ac-

1252 AITM, FN, XI, 7, 8
1253 AITM, FN, XI, 10, 1
1254 B.G., VII, 16
1255 VI, 1, 44 & 53; B.G., III, 5
1256 VI, 1, 52
1257 V, 5, 4
1258 Bhāṣya on Ch Up. as quoted by Brahma (p. 91)
Abandonment of action (svadharma) results into the perversions of dharma. Perversions of dharma, which look like dharma but are really adharma, are as follows:\(^{1260}\)

1. **Vidharma** is that by performing which one's dharma (duty) can be adversely affected.
2. **Paradharma** is the dharma meant for others.
3. **Upadharma** is the way of unbelievers and the vainglorious.
4. **Chala** is the convenient interpretation of dharma.
5. **Abhāsa** is the dharma undertaken disregarding what is prescribed for one's class (varṇa) and station (āśrama).

iii. **The Sattvika Actions:**

Therefore, the seeker after the salvation must refrain from the prohibited (nīsiddha karma or vikarma) and desire-oriented (kāmya) actions, and should develop sattva gruṇa by consciously performing customary (nitya) and obligatory (naimittika) good actions.\(^{1261}\) Kumarila, the well-known ritualist also agrees with this while concurring that knowledge destroys the accumulated results of karma whereas the performance of the customary and obligatory karmas prevents further accumulation.\(^{1262}\)

All actions, by nature, produce misery or an admixture of happiness and misery, and consequently, the bondage. However, performance of svadharma without attachment and with the sense of dedication to God fructifies into purity of being, that is, pure consciousness of sattva,\(^{1263}\) which begets knowledge and experience of the Divine and ultimately freedom from bondage of actions.\(^{1264}\) It is through sattva that one paves the path for the realization of Brahman.\(^{1265}\)

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\(^{1259}\) XI,3,45

\(^{1260}\) VII, 15,12-14 Transl. S.T.

\(^{1261}\) *Samavādā bhāgaprakāra*, verse 110 as quoted by Brahma (p. 94)

\(^{1262}\) cf. *Bhājapatistāṃsā*, p.57 (Varanasi edition)

\(^{1263}\) III,32,6

\(^{1264}\) XI,18,46

\(^{1265}\) I,2,24
iv. The definition of karma:
The path for the realization of Brahman is Yoga – union with God. Only an action that is conducive to yoga, is a part of Karma-yoga. The meaning of the karma as defined by the divinely inspired Vedas is often abstruse even unto the scholars. Therefore, the Bhāgavatam most simply and clearly defines real karma as that which pleases God. The supreme purpose of all activities of senses, scriptural studies, service to guru, holy men, elders and all living beings, austerity etc. is the propitiation of Śrī Hari. The right spirit of Karma-yoga is to perform obligatory and occasional actions without self-interest and with sole devotion for God. Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā as well as in the Bhāgavatam that the wise should perform desireless karmas just like God does, as He also performs karma even though He has no objective to achieve thereby; He abides by work for keeping the example for the world. Karma in order to be a means of yoga has to be performed in such a spirit.

2. PRAVRTTI-MĀRGA:
Everyone, under the sway of rajas, has an inherent preference for happiness at all levels. Pārśva-mārga is characterized by the actions, which are motivated by the sense of happiness here in the world and hereafter. It is also supported by the Vedas and promise rewards for various worships and rituals. Everything is believed to have a deity or the manes (piṭras) as a custodian over it. In order to gain pleasure from out of a thing, the respective deities in particular or the manes in general, have to be propitiated. All such actions are desire-motivated (sakāma) actions. They aim at the fulfilment of three puruṣārthas – dharma, artha and kāma. Limbs of the ritualism meant for such fulfilment are sacrifices (yajñas), vows (vratas), austerity, worship and certain holy deeds. The path of ritualism (Karmakāṇḍa or Pārvṛtti-mārga) consists
of several sacrifices classified into *Iṣṭa* and *Pūrta*. Iṣṭa is the sacrifice to gods. Pūrta is one's own good and religious deeds in the world.

The twice-born (*dvīja*) has three-fold debt in the world – a debt of gods, man and manes. These debts can be repaid respectively by *yajña*, study of the *Vedas* and begetting a progeny. A householder who evades these debts is liable to spiritual degradation. Hence, a pious householder is supposed to perform his five-fold sacrifices (*yajña*) to gods, sages, men, manes and other beings (*brahma*, *pitr*, *deva*, *bhūta*, and *nr* – *yajñas*). In addition, there are certain desire-prompted vows like *Payovrata* and *Pumsavatā* vratras and certain sacrifices, which protect through black magic. Nevertheless, the later are effective only if they are not intended towards the holy men.

**i. The utility of the *Pravṛtti-mārga*:**

Just like the cajoling of child to make him take medicine or as a thorn is required to pluck out another thorn, so are the Vedic karmas pursued in order to be free from other karmas. The promise of fruits of karmas of the *Pravṛtti-mārga* is meant to create interest in the karmas. Sridhara, in this reference, quotes the *Śruti* and shows that karma is an accessory of spiritual knowledge and the performer of karma realizes it and loses the zest and attachment for karmas and ultimately, attains the pure state of mind fit for the realization of *Brahman*.

**ii. The limitation of the *Pravṛtti-mārga*:**

The desire-prompted ritualism is always binding for *jīva*. They produce inexhaustible series of karmas. The learned in ritualism are often seen experiencing misery and the ignorant, experiencing happiness. So the learned have no reason to boast of suc-
cess.\textsuperscript{1283} Let such actions be aimed at happiness and they invariably bring suffering ultimately.\textsuperscript{1284} They can neither produce perfect happiness nor remove the cause of unhappiness.\textsuperscript{1285} Suffering is the shadow of happiness. Those who follow the path of \textit{Pravṛtti} pass through different spheres for some time and, at last, born again in the world.\textsuperscript{1286} With the help of such karmas, one can also attain to the realms of gods and manes only to return to this world at the exhaustion of the fruits of those karmas.\textsuperscript{1287} As the effects of a \textit{yajña} diminish, so do the pleasures that the \textit{yajña} yields; with the exhaustion of the effects of good karmas, one has to come back to the world of mortals;\textsuperscript{1288} for all rituals produce transmigration if not directed toward God (\textit{sarve kri-yāyogah samśritihetavah}).\textsuperscript{1289} Moreover, all heavenly or other regions are subject to dissolution.\textsuperscript{1290} The heavenly states are also subject to \textit{guṇas}. Therefore, they can also be vitiated by the same evils that vitiate this world; besides, like agriculture fruits of \textit{yajña}s are uncertain, as they are time-bound.\textsuperscript{1291} The ignorant that are themselves dominated by \textit{guṇas} worship different gods who are similarly dominated by \textit{guṇas}; they do not worship God who is beyond \textit{guṇas}.\textsuperscript{1292}

### iii. The attitude toward \textit{Pravṛtti-mārga}:

The \textit{Bhāgavatam} strictly asks a devotee to abjure the desire-prompted Vedic ritualism. For, desires are endless. Not even all food, animals, wealth and women on the earth can bring satiety to a man with inordinate desirous mind.\textsuperscript{1293} Fulfillment of desires only fans the craving for more desires of happiness. Hence, great man who know the Good, never prescribe karmas just as a good physician would not prescribe unwhole-
some food to the patient even if the latter wants it.\textsuperscript{294} They say that karmas of \textit{Pravrtti-marga} sow the seeds of \textit{samsāra}.\textsuperscript{295} Such efforts do not help attain the bliss of the Lotus Feet of God.\textsuperscript{1296} Therefore, the wise, being discriminating and unattached, should enjoy only that much quantity of objects as is essential for the sustenance of life even while being convinced that they are ultimately unreal; any extra endeavour to get them would entail labour.\textsuperscript{1297} Through various sacrifices, he fulfils three \textit{puruṣārthas}, whereas through the worship of \textit{Mahāviṣṇu} he attains to salvation.\textsuperscript{1298} A man of understanding should cogitate over his fate in the path of karma; withdrawing the outgoing tendencies of the organs in \textit{citta}, and \textit{citta} in the cavity of Heart, one must gradually renounce the \textit{grhaṭhāśrama}, thereby going into forest as a recluse and adore God who is the shelter of the discriminating \textit{sannyāsins} (\textit{hamsas}).\textsuperscript{1299} For, the home-life is like a dried up well.\textsuperscript{1300} The true dispassion generates the feeling that the glories of subterranean, celestial or the human worlds as well as the powers of Karma-yoga are all hellish.\textsuperscript{1301}

"One should understand that all the heavenly realms attained hereafter as a result of karma performed now, are likewise impermanent. Those heavenly regions are all relative like the principalities of petty chieftains, equalled by many and excelled by others, and all are liable to destruction like in the world."\textsuperscript{1302} Moreover, the attainment of heaven is deplorable since the remembrance of the lotus feet of God is wiped out in it under the excessive sensual pleasures.\textsuperscript{1303} The chain of action and bondage has no end until one comes to understand the real purport of Vedic injunctions.
iv. The purport of the Vedic ritualism:

The *Vedas* are divinely inspired but difficult even for great scholars to understand. The words of the *Vedas* have often indirect and mystic connotation. The Vedas are divinely inspired but difficult even for great scholars to understand. The words of the *Vedas* have often indirect and mystic connotation. Most people are dominated by rajas and tamas; indulgence in carnal activities is very much natural to them. Moreover, the most are not inclined towards Vedic studies. Given these circumstances, there is no reason that the *Vedas* would promulgate carnal pleasures among already sensuous people (*karma-mudha*). Who would misguide the blind man who is already astray? Neither would the divinely ordained *Vedas* urge a pious person of restraint to deviate, and indulge in sensual activities. For, verily the *Vedas* declare the futility of the worldly matters. All Vedic injunctions have the control of senses as the ultimate purpose; if those become obstruction in Yoga then they are as useless as the economic activities, which do not conduce to the spiritual upliftment. The injunctions that prompt man in carnal indulgences, meat eating and drinking of alcohols are really permissions given to him to regulate and control these desires, and gradually to eliminate them. The *Vedas* prevent him from licentiousness. For example, the commandment to get married is to exhaust ones desires and *sāṁskāras* ‘remaining in home just as a king overcomes the enemies remaining within the fortress;’ sacrifice of an animal and meat-eating in *yāga* aim at the gradual revelation that sacrifice of an animal (*paśu*) is nothing but the acceptance of one’s own self purified by mantra and sacrifice. Not knowing this the unscrupulous person kills animals, which in turn take vengeance in the hell. He, in vain, tortures himself and others in the ritualistic pursuits. Thus, it is only to make a man aware of the ephemerality of the worldly and heavenly felicities and eventually to draw him to God that the *Vedas* prescribe the *Pravṛtti-mārga*. The persons lacking in wisdom wrongly interpret the

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1304 XI,3,43-46; XI,5,14
1305 XI,21,24-25
1306 V,5,15 & 17
1307 VII,15,28-29
1308 XI,5,11; XI,21,23-26
1309 V,1,18
1310 IV,25,8; XI,5,14
1311 VI,16,42; VII,15,10
Vedas to justify their carnal desires; they disregard the real purport of the Vedas, which sing the glory of God as the eternal principle permeating everything and is the beloved-most soul of all. Not knowing, due to impurity, that the objective of all is Viṣṇu, those who indulge in actions for happiness are as if the blind led by the blind and tied with the rope of ritualism like cattle.

Vaidika and Tantrika forms of worships are potential to cultivate renunciation and devotion in the worshipper. Nevertheless, such forms of worship gradually disappear with the devaluation of spiritual concepts in the worshippers; what emerges is a distorted form of karma. In reality, not all Vedic karmas are meant for only worldly gains. They also aim at the worship of Brahman. Brahman and Māyā cohere on the manifestation level; hence, each karma bifurcates – one end going to Brahman due to vidyā or enlightenment, another to Māyā due to avidyā or ignorance. If an action is performed for the self, it is māyika in nature. Nevertheless, an action performed with a sense of dedication to God comes to have spiritual potency even if it were an ordinary action. Each sacrifice has two-pronged application – binding and liberating.

v. The purpose of good actions (satkarma):
We know that nothing is an end-in-itself. Hence, satkarma also aims at the attainment of the knowledge of Ātman. Satkarmas through life, wealth, work, mind and words for selfish ends are in vain; one should wisely offer all to God because just as water poured at the root reaches every leaf of the tree, the service offered to God reaches all. The Bhāgavatam reveals the real purpose of satkarma asking an aspirant, “Of what use is satkarma, if the bondage in form of the subtle body is not removed; if the intellect that wantonly assumes the shapes of objects being influenced by guṇas,
is not disciplined;\textsuperscript{1320} if \textit{jīva} who is oblivion of his transmigration due to his attachment to impure intellect, does not understand his reality;\textsuperscript{1321} if the contrary activities of \textit{Māyā} are not understood;\textsuperscript{1322} if it is not known that the purport of the scripture is the establishment of the knowledge of God as distinct from matter as well as of the knowledge of bondage and liberation\textsuperscript{1323} characterized by renunciation;\textsuperscript{1324} if the movement of the wheel of Time that destroys everything is not known;\textsuperscript{1325} if the Inner Light\textsuperscript{1326} that is the \textit{Purusa}, who is really the mirror of self-consciousness which provides matter with a self-conscious entity, is not visualized;\textsuperscript{1327} and if the Supreme \textit{Bhagavān} is not realized.\textsuperscript{1328}

In spite of the fact that the \textit{Vedas} deal with dharma, \textit{artha} and \textit{kāma}, the spiritual and ritualistic lore, logic, statecraft and various means of livelihood, it is the conviction of the \textit{Bhāgavatam} that the real teaching of the \textit{Vedas} is to dedicate oneself to God.\textsuperscript{1329}

3. \textit{Nivṛtti-Mārga}:

Any action that is performed for the enlightenment of the self and propitiation of God without any motive leads to liberation; such action is \textit{sāttvika}\textsuperscript{1330} untainted by \textit{rajas} and \textit{tamas}. It is characterized by sense-control and renunciation. The \textit{Bhāgavatam} categorically asks the devotee, whether a householder or otherwise, not to practise Vedic ritualism for any achievement other than \textit{mokṣa}. It also asks to abandon Vedic ritualism in favour of yogic disciplines, knowledge and devotion. While \textit{Vānaprastha} devotee may perform it for \textit{Karmaśuddhi} and \textit{mokṣa}, \textit{Sannyāsī} should completely abstain from it.\textsuperscript{1331} A sage of higher order (\textit{mahāmuni}) is not subject to the letter of the

\textsuperscript{1320} VI,5,14  
\textsuperscript{1321} VI,5,15  
\textsuperscript{1322} VI,5,16  
\textsuperscript{1323} VI,5,18  
\textsuperscript{1324} VI,5,20  
\textsuperscript{1325} VI,5,19  
\textsuperscript{1326} VI,5,13  
\textsuperscript{1327} VI,5,17  
\textsuperscript{1328} VI,5,12  
\textsuperscript{1329} VII,5,26  
\textsuperscript{1330} XI,25,10 & 23  
\textsuperscript{1331} XI,18,30
Veda, his ways are very different from those of convention. Although the sadhaka is to abstain from the desire-prompted actions, he should perform actions until he becomes desireless and cultivates unreserved devotion for God. “In this respect man is like a field repeatedly ploughed and cultivated until it reaches a stage of absolute infertility when it becomes unfit for the growth of any crop; seeds sown there perish.”

i. God is the Lord of all gods:
A devotee should contemplate on the source of the Vedas, viz., God in the form of Hiranyagarbha, out of whom the Vedas evolved through cosmic Prāṇa just as a spider evolves the web from its heart through the mouth. For him any action is a yajña dedicated to God. He sees God in all beings. Mokṣa is the only accomplishment for him. He does not offer sacrifices to the gods and manes that are subject to the guṇas and to the indomitable hand of time. Instead he offers everything to God, because, worship offered to all deities finally reach God who alone is the bestower of the fruits of sacrifices, and only devotion to the Supreme God is unfailingly fruitful. The all-inclusive cosmic shell (brahmāṅga) is like a tree, all souls are its branches and God is its root; hence, His worship results in satisfying all beings, just as the water poured into the roots reach every leaf of the tree. All from Brahma up to vegetation are pleased if Hari is pleased. By performing action as an offering to God, the devotee gradually attains to the transcendence of Karma.

ii. The Nivṛtti-marga leads to salvation:
Whatever karma man does in order to please God, goes to generate knowledge combined with devotion. Therefore, sadhaka should worship God, the Lord of all yajñas, through listening to God’s glory, realizing God in Atman and by dedicating
all karma to God; karmas in his case would lose its binding power as the fried grains lose the power to germinate, or just as ingredients like ghee that are normally harmful lose their negative properties if medicated. Even if the nature of action be the same, the action that is performed with sense of resignation at the Lotus Feet of God and dedicated to him, and the one performed without such dedication and devotion – both bring divergent results as in the case of devas and asuras – getting ambrosia and poison, respectively. Yajña, for sadhaka, is the form of Nārāyaṇa; he offers his self in that yajña. He should identify and visualize all limbs of yajña including his self as the limbs of Yajña-Varāha, the manifestation of Nārāyaṇa.

Nivṛtī-mārga includes holy association, service to guru and to sādhus, reading and listening to the scriptures, worship, and other disciplines, which contribute to the spiritual welfare. These karmas do not bind. They only lead God-ward. "Works of every kind whether charity, sacrifice, penance, austerity, become meaningful and worthwhile only if they are offered to God. For, only offerings made unto Him never perish." If the Veda-ordained actions are performed non-attached and in the spirit of dedication to the Lord, then they indubitably lead to Naiskarmya – the state of Ātman -consciousness. An action, if not dedicated to God, becomes fruitless or invites misery (kleśa), but even an action that is insignificant or imperfect attains greatness, if it is dedicated to God for, God loves such persons who work in this manner. The sage Dadhici and Ranti Deva, through the karma dedicated to God, attained to God. The true propitiation of God is the dedication of all activities of mind,
speech, sight and other sense-organs, without which one can not be free from the noose of Death in the form of great delusion (viz., the matter is Atman).  

The Bhagavatam shows sādhaka the ultimate way of perfection in Karma-yoga asking him to exactly follow the example of God who always works but is never bound by works because He is ever-satisfied with His inherent bliss, thereby seeking no fulfillment of His works; those who follow the example of God, never get into bondage.

4. Svadharma:

The Bhagavatam emphasizes the role of the performance of actions according to one's caste (varṇa), station (āśrama) and clan (kula) without motive and depending on God alone; performance of svadharma is virtue whereas its reverse is fault. Dharma that is observed by word, mind, body and intellect enable the man full of desires to attain to heavenly regions whereas, through the same dharma the desireless one attains to liberation. An action is impure by nature; the performance of actions according to the scriptural injunctions is prescribed for gradual abandonment of tendency to perform action and to attain non-attachment. A learned one who acts as prescribed, is not affected by his actions due to the knowledge regarding karma, the one, who indiscriminately acts out of egotism and under the influence of guṇas gets bound, loses intelligence and degenerates more.

The Indian Tradition defines four castes (varṇa) based on the quality that is dominant in a person and his actions. The four castes are, in descending order, the priestly class of Brāhmaṇa, the warrior class of Kṣatriya, the mercantile class of Vaiśya, and the proletariat Śudras. In addition, the tradition defines four stations (āśrama) of life, viz., the celibate student (Brahmacārī), the householder (Grhaṣṭha), the recluse (Vanaprastha), and the mendicant (Sannyāsī). (Āśrama is a broad set).

1352 V,5,27  
1353 VIII,1,15* transl. S.T.  
1354 XI,10,1  
1355 XI,21,2  
1356 IV,14,15  
1357 XI,20,26  
1358 IV,26,7  
1359 IV,26,8
Although specific set of duties have been prescribed for the respective castes and stations, the Supreme Dharma for all āśramas, containing all people belonging to all castes, according to the Bhāgavatam, can be thus explained with utmost simplicity: The presence of God should be realized in guru, fire, oneself and all beings by Brahmācārī, Grahastha, Vānaprastha and Sannyāsīn, respectively in order to attain to Para Brahma.\textsuperscript{1360}

1. \textbf{Svadharma to be accompanied by devotion to God:}

Adoration of God is dharma for all.\textsuperscript{1361} By adoration of God through the motiveless performance of \textit{svadharma}, one gradually attains to the purity of mind.\textsuperscript{1362} \textit{Svadharma} should necessarily be accompanied by total dedication and devotion to \textit{Hari}.\textsuperscript{1363} Devotion bereft of \textit{svadharma} does not invite any immediate fall; but \textit{svadharma} without devotion brings no spiritual exaltation.\textsuperscript{1364} Whoever worship \textit{Acyuta} through \textit{svadharma} are freed from all sins,\textsuperscript{1365} and gradually attain to the freedom from \textit{gūpas}.\textsuperscript{1366} Just as gold or silver is purified only by being heated in fire and not merely by washing, similarly, the darkness that has caused corruption of \textit{Ātman} can be removed only through God’s service.\textsuperscript{1367} The purpose of Karma-yoga, \textit{viz.}, to efface the karmas through karmas, is fulfilled by devoutly adoring \textit{Viṣṇu}, who is the Lord of all sacrifices, through those karmas.\textsuperscript{1368} Those wise ones, who perform \textit{svadharma} for the pursuit of dharma and \textit{mokṣa} only, who are unattached, serene, endowed with pure \textit{citta} due to \textit{sattva}, freed from the bonds of Karmas as a result of their being without the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, and devoted to \textit{Nivṛtti}-dharma, attain to \textit{Pu-}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1360} VII,12,15-16
\item \textsuperscript{1361} XI,18,43
\item \textsuperscript{1362} IV,20,9
\item \textsuperscript{1363} XI,10,1
\item \textsuperscript{1364} I,5,17
\item \textsuperscript{1365} V,10,23
\item \textsuperscript{1366} VI,11,32
\item \textsuperscript{1367} VIII,24,48
\item \textsuperscript{1368} X,84,35*
\end{itemize}
ruṣa. The one, who adores God unreservedly by the performance of svadharma and sees God in every being, attains to His devotion.

Vijayadhvaja and Visvanatha Cakravarty rightly observe that for self-purification, which means liberation from saṁsāra, mere performance of svadharma is not enough; it should develop into and combine with intense devotion.

ii. The duties of four castes:

Brāhmaṇa has six duties: study of the Veda, teaching it, performing sacrifices, officiating at sacrifices, giving charity and receiving gifts from the righteous.

Kṣatriya has all the above-mentioned duties except receiving gifts. His chief duty is the governance of the country and protection of the people.

Vaiśya should live in obedience to the Brāhmaṇas and make righteous earning through agriculture and trades.

Śudra should render service to the dvija.

iii. The duties of the celibate (Brahmacārī):

The principal dharma of Brahmacārī—a celibate student—is the service to guru. Brahmacārī should stay in the constant company and service to guru practicing celibacy and strict austerity. Thus living he should study and reflect on the meaning of the Vedas with its auxiliaries and Upaniṣads. Then he should embrace life of Grhastrha, Vana-prastha, or Sannyāsa if he aims for the highest or he may continue as a Naiṣṭhika Brahmacārī in accordance with the command of guru. A life-long Brahmacārī (Naiṣṭhika), who follows such intense austere life, will be endowed with devotion and shine like fire with his mind becoming purified. The Bhāgavatam unambiguously asks sādhaka for liberation to begin to follow the Bhāgavat dharma even

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\[\text{\footnotesize 1369 II,32,5-7}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 1370 XI,16,44}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 1371 AITM, PN, IV,24,53}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 1372 XI,17,40}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 1373 XI,18,42}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 1374 VII,12,1}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 1375 VII,12,13-14; XI,17,31 & 36}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 1376 XI,17,36}\]

151
while one is not yet adult, because the human life is rare and the life span is uncertain.\footnote{77}

iv. The duties of the householder (Grhastha):

The principal dharma of householder is service of all and performance of \textit{yajñas} particularly, the five daily sacrifices, \textit{viz.}, the sacrifices in the honour of the sages, the manes, gods, beings and man.\footnote{78} He should undertake the \textit{Pravṛtti-mārga} as prescribed above. He is supposed to follow celibacy, austerity, purity, contentment and friendliness to all creatures.\footnote{79} The livelihood of the \textit{Brāhmaṇa} householder consists in, in higher order, the acceptance of alms, teaching, conducting sacrifices or on fallen grains gathered from the fields after harvest or from bazaars.\footnote{80} The \textit{grhasthāśrama} is meant for overcoming three desires (\textit{esāna}) – desire for wealth (\textit{vittā}) through sacrifice and charity, desire for wife and progeny (\textit{dārā-suta}) through the life of householder, and desire for heavens (\textit{loka}) through cogitating over the ephemerality of such attainments; the great ones have renounced these three desires and resorted to a forest recluse.\footnote{81}

v. The pitfalls in the householder’s life:

The householder’s life is a field of kārmas wherein the seeds of kārmas are never destroyed as in the field seeds do not perish unless being burnt, or a box of camphor from which odour does not go.\footnote{82} The householder’s life is the root cause of passions, attachments, despondency, wrath, pride, desire, fear, humiliation, anguish and the continuation of \textit{sāṁsāra}.\footnote{83}

vi. The attitude of a householder \textit{sādhaka}:

By applying the analogy of dream to the phenomenal existence, the householder \textit{sādhaka} should arrive at the truth of the Essence.\footnote{84} Until this consciousness is well

\footnotesize{\textit{\footnote{77} VII,6,1 \footnote{78} VII,14,14-18; V,26,18; Manusmrīti, 3.70-71 \footnote{79} XI,18,43 \footnote{80} XI,17,41 \footnote{81} X,84,38 \footnote{82} V,14,4 \footnote{83} V,18,14 \footnote{84} V,11,3}}
founded, the householder should take to the Vedic karmas with the wealth that has come unexpectedly or by honest means; he should never oppress his dependents and servant. He should perform with commitment all duties pertaining to his body and family with detachment and as an offering to Vāsudeva remaining always in the company of holy ones; thus living he should gradually try to abandon the house. He should not be attached to the family or to the worldly pleasures, thinking of them as perishable happenings, as association with co-farers in caravanserai or as dream facts. If a householder lives in home like a guest totally unattached and without the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, he would remain unbound thereby, always remembering Hari as the Soul of all embodied beings, hence, dearer than everything. He should never Worship God with expectation. The life of the brahmaṇa householder (it should be noted that any householder who strives for liberation having cultivated sattva becomes brahmaṇa as the varṇa is determined by guṇa and not by birth) is meant for hardship and austerity here and for eternal bliss hereafter. A brahmaṇa is always contented with what he gets by chance, finding joy in his self-realization, serene, self-complacent and friend of all beings; such a brahmaṇa is like wish-yielding cow, capable of blessing all. Remaining indifferent to body and things connected to it, remaining equipoise in weal and woe, prosperity and adversity, ever finding joy in Atman, observing celibacy and keeping only God in mind, the householder can attain to Para Brahma.

vii. The greatness of the householder’s life:

In fact, the married life is like a vessel meant to negotiate the ocean of miseries taking with it the other three āśramas that are dependant on it. It is like fighting from
within the fortress. If a householder performs his dharma in this manner accompanied by deep devotion to God then, he also can attain to the Supreme State that is attainable by Sannyāsin, even while remaining a householder. If one who is perfect in Karma-yoga lives in home totally unattached and ceaselessly remembering God then, the home life is not bondage for him. He is never subject to infatuation, depression or elation; God enters into him in the form of the realization of Brahmān. To the one who has controlled the senses, and so enlightened who is absorbed in Ātman, the home life can do no harm. The one so devoted can remain in the home until death or he can take to the life of Vānaprastha or Sannyāsin.

Of course, the life in home, which is like a most fearful lake full of poisonous water in the shape of sensuous pleasures and robs of excellence, is proved hellish for the one with knowledge of Ātman and devotion for God; even the free souls renounce home and take to the life of Sannyāsin.

viii. The duties of the recluse (Vānaprastha):

The principal dharma of Vānaprastha is austerity and quest after the truth. Vānaprastha should stay in a secluded place like a Sannyāsin, but performing the daily yajñas. He can stay as a Vānaprastha in a way that would not impair the strength of his mind for as many years as his intellect permits. If death approaches, he should withdraw all fires of yajña in the self and leave the body. If life sustains

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1395 III, 14, 18; V, 1, 17
1396 VII, 15, 67
1397 VII, 15, 74
1398 IV, 30, 19
1399 IV, 30, 20
1400 V, 1, 16
1401 XI, 17, 55
1402 XI, 1, 22
1403 X, 87, 35
1404 XI, 18, 42
1405 VII, 12, 18-21
1406 VII, 12, 22
1407 VII, 12, 23-31; XI, 18, 11
he should embrace the life of Sannyāsin, because the best of men with renunciation and self-control go out of home as a mendicants keeping Hari in heart. However, prior to the attainment of the state of sannyāsa, one should perform actions according to one’s dharma and dedicate them to God. Such actions do not fructify in pleasure or pain, they generate pure knowledge and devotion for God. They become instruments of liberation.

When complete dispassion for the life here or hereafter that is attainable through karma dawns in a sādhaka, he is fit to sacrifice all duties in the fire of Sannyāsa and to embrace the life of a mendicant.

ix. The duties of the mendicant (Sannyāsin):

The principal dharma of Sannyāsin is settlement in God and universal love. Sannyāsin’s only duty is the realization of Ātman in everything and total resignation to Nārāyaṇa. Sannyāsin should be a loner, perfectly unattached, with control over senses, evanescent, established and sporting in Ātman alone, resorting in solitude, with mind purified by devotion for God and meditating the oneness of Ātman and God. Śuka says that whoever wants to be saved of mortality should abandon hearth and home and contemplate on the seed mantra of Brahman in solitude. Sannyāsin should remain alone, sporting in Ātman, supportless, with universal love, peaceful and resigned totally to Nārāyaṇa. This is the state of Naiṣkarmya.

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1408 I,1,16
1409 I,13,25-26
1410 XI,20,10-11
1411 XI,18,47
1412 XI,18,12-13
1413 Also see ‘Who is a sādhu’ and ‘Some imperatives for sadhaka’ in this thesis.
1414 XI,18,42
1415 VII,13,3
1416 XI,18,20*-21*
1417 I,1,16-17
5. Naiskarmya:

The original karma and its counteracting karma are both the products of avidyā, like a dream that occurs in another dream. It is only until one develops renunciation, and faith in the devotional practices such as listening to God’s excellences, that sādhaka performs action (with a view to gain fruits, i.e., not dedicated to God). Considering the prospect of miseries as well as of contrary results with regard to the worldly felicities, and the way to fearlessness in renunciation of such desires, the wise should abandon all resolutions. Therefore, the sages, for attaining to that bliss of transcendence of action, at first do work as an offering to Isvara. Through such dedicated action, man’s threefold miseries are destroyed and he gradually attains to transcendence of actions. The tendency of karma is effaced only through service to Hari and not through more karma. When the ignorance due to which a man sees diversity with reference to Ātman is removed by dint of critical investigation, and the pure mind is resigned to God, a sādhaka should withdraw from all activities.

No serious aspirant would exalt the life of karma and dharma in any other āśrama above sannyasa; God is sannyasa among āśramas and dharmas. By sannyasa, the Bhagavatam means the state of desirelessness and total dedication to God, not merely holding the staff and abandoning the house. The Bhagavatam clearly preaches the transcendence of karma (naiskarmya). Ekanatha defines naiskarmya as the karma dedicated to God; such karmas lead to realization of Brahmān. The one who engages self in karmas does not attain to the exalted goal of

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1418 IV,29,34
1419 XI,20,9
1420 VI,16,59
1421 I,5,32
1422 VIII,1,14
1423 VIII,24,47
1424 XI,11,21
1425 XI,16,19
1426 XI,16,26
1427 XII,13,18*
1428 Ekanathi Bhagavat, 3.793-802 as quoted by Tagare
those who are engaged in knowledge, austerity, Yoga and samādhi.\textsuperscript{1429} The Lord, who is the blissfulness of Nirvāṇa and the bestower of liberation (Kaivalya), is realized by the wise ones through purity (sattva) as developed by naїskarmya.\textsuperscript{1430} The meditation on God is higher a means to gain God’s grace than worshiping His limited forms – gods – through the Vedic mantras.\textsuperscript{1427} He is the best among the holy ones who abandons all actions for total devotion to God even while he knows the merit of actions and demerit of their abandonment.\textsuperscript{1432} Such a Sannyāsin with Peace and placidity of citta may adhere to, or abandon the injunctions regarding āśrama.\textsuperscript{1433} He is restful yet vigilant and bereft of sleep.

6. THE END OF NAЇSKARMYA IS ALSO GOD:

Ultimately, naїskarmya or sannyasa also has meaning only in its being dedicated to God because, the ultimate end of all dharmas pertaining to varṇa and āśrama is the attainment of the grace of God.\textsuperscript{1434} God is the highest excellence (śreyas) to be attained to. His vision makes knowledge, austerity and intuition fruitful.\textsuperscript{1435} Of what use are three-fold births (through sinless parents, initiation and consecration for the performance of sacrifice), ritualism, life-span of the celestials, knowledge of scriptures, austerity, mental powers, intelligence, physical power, high efficiency of senses, Yoga, knowledge of the One and the many, sannyasa, study, and other great disciplines if, they all are not devoted to Hari?\textsuperscript{1436} When a sādhaka abandons all actions and dedicates self totally to God then, he, becoming dear to God, attains the worthiness to be one with Him.\textsuperscript{1437}

Sādhaka should sacrifice all oblations of karmas in the fire of knowledge;\textsuperscript{1438} for, the

\textsuperscript{1429} II,2,23
\textsuperscript{1430} VII,3,11* & 16
\textsuperscript{1431} IV,29,45-46
\textsuperscript{1432} XI,11,32
\textsuperscript{1433} VII,13,9
\textsuperscript{1434} I,2,13
\textsuperscript{1435} X,84,21
\textsuperscript{1436} IV,31,10-12
\textsuperscript{1437} XI,29,34
\textsuperscript{1438} VII,15,52
path of knowledge is greater than that of karma.\textsuperscript{1439} Some worship God through various karmas (\textit{raj\=nas}) invoking Him in many forms and names of deities;\textsuperscript{1440} but the \textit{j\=j\=an\=i}, who has abandoned all karmas and reached the state of tranquility, adores God as the embodiment of \textit{j\=j\=ana}, through \textit{j\=j\=ana-yaj\=na}.\textsuperscript{1441}

\textbf{7. SUMMARY:}

Activity is an inseparable part of life. Karma-yoga aims to channelise man's natural urge for activity for his spiritual betterment. The path of ritualism as professed by the \textit{Vedas} could be followed by a limited number of people even among the upper castes. Moreover, its scope was more-or-less, limited to the attainment of happiness in this world and in the next. It laid little emphasis on the activities other than those, which are selfish and meant for the fulfillment of desires. Those actions do not guarantee happiness. Furthermore, the desire is considered as the root cause of the miseries. So, Karma-yoga of the \textit{Bh\=agavatam} (and the \textit{G\=ita}) aims to discipline man in cultivating unselfish actions and ultimately, to free him from desires. Good and unselfish actions mark the beginning of Karma-yoga. In addition, the duties pertaining to one's caste, class and clan are considered as the modes of Karma-yoga. However, such actions are not the end of Karma-yoga.

It is note-worthy that the shape that has been given to Karma-yoga in the form of service to mankind in recent years is alien to the original concept of Karma-yoga that finds detail elucidation in the \textit{Bh\=agavatam} as well as in the \textit{G\=ita}. The essence of Karma-yoga that both scriptures preach is \textit{nais\=karmya} – the actionless state. The \textit{essence of nais\=karmya} lies in dedicating the preferences of mind and ultimately, the results of actions to God. \textit{Kr\=s\=na} inculcates to Arjuna the nature of \textit{sthitapraj\=na} – the one whose \textit{c\=i\=t\=a} has attained total placidity – even before He preaches any other spiritual principles. The \textit{Bh\=agavatam} also preaches \textit{s\=ad\=hak\=a} first to overcome the separateness with regard to his self, others and God; then he should serve all living beings considering them as God Himself.\textsuperscript{1442} The knowledge imparted by \textit{Kr\=s\=na} to Arjuna in

\footnotesize{
\textsuperscript{1439} XI,10,4; B.G., IV,33
\textsuperscript{1440} X,40,5
\textsuperscript{1441} X,40,6\textsuperscript{*}
\textsuperscript{1442} III,29,27
}
the Gītā and to Uddhava in the Bhāgavatam bear great semblance; yet Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to act whereas to Uddhava, He asks to withdraw in to the wilderness of Badari. Thus, it is obvious that having attained to the state of sthitaprajñā, sādhaka should exactly follow God’s direct command unto him; by choosing the course of action himself, a sādhaka paves way to bondage, misery and transmigration. To make mind completely unconditional and free from the selfishness and eventually, to make it worthy to absorb the will or command of God, is the goal of Karma-yoga.

Just as Karma-yoga does not purport to be any action, naiṣkarmya does not purport to be termination of all activities. N.K. Brahma rightly quotes Jīvanmuktiviveka in this regard, ‘It is not to be thought, however, that all bodily movements must cease as soon as jhāna is attained, and that the jñānī, from the moment he attains jhāna, remains perfectly inert as a stone.’ Naiṣkarmya is a consciousness which remains unaffected by actions, because those actions are performed not with the sense of agency but being a witness only. The Gītā also conveys the same meaning. Sankara, in his commentary on the Gītā, conforms to this idea. Madhusudan Sarasvati also concurs with Sankara when he says that a jñānī remains unattached by the action although he performs them because he finds non-agency of the self in all actions.

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1443 XI,29,41
1444 Brahma, p.102
1445 B.G., IV,20-22; V,7; VI,31; XVIII,17 etc.
1446 Sankara’s commentary on B.G., IV,20
1447 Madhusudan Sarasvati on B.G., V,8