ShrIgurubhyo namaH

A Study of three verses of the Bhagavadgita Chapter 4.

In the Gita Ch.4, the following three verses are of a special significance:

यस्य सर्वे समारम्भा: कामसंकल्पवर्जिता: ।

ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहु: पंडितं बुधा: ॥ १९ ॥

4.19 The wise call him a ‘man-of-knowledge’ whose actions are all devoid of desires and their thougts, [Kama-sankalpa is variously translated as 'desires and purposes', 'plans and desires for results', 'hankering for desires', etc. But Sankarcarya shows sankalpa as the cause of kama. -Tr.] and whose actions have been burnt away by the fire of wisdom.

Budhaah, the wise, the knowers of Brahman; ahuh, call; tam, him; panditam, learned, in the real sense; yasya, whose, of the one who perceives as stated above; samarambhah, actions-whatever are undertaken; are sarve, all; kama-sankalpa-varjitah, devoid of desires and the thoughts which are their (desires') causes (see 2.62)-i.e., (those actions) are performed as mere movements, without any selfish purpose: if they are performed by one (already) engaged in actions, then they are for preventing people from going astray, and if they are done by one who has withdrawn from actions, then they are merely for the maintenance of the body-; and jnanagni-dagdha-karmanam, whose actions have been burnt away by the fire of wisdom.

Finding inaction etc. in action etc. is jnana, wisdom; that itself is agnih, fire. He whose actions, karma, described as good and bad, have been dagdhaani, burnt away by that fire of wisdom, is jnana-agni-dagdha-karma.

However, one who is a perceiver of 'inaction' etc. [Perceiver of inaction etc.: He who knows the truth about action and inaction as explained before.-Tr.] is free from actions owing to the very fact of his seeing 'inaction' etc. He is a monk, who acts merely for the purpose of maintaining the body. Being so, he does not engage in actions although he might have done so before the dawn of discrimination. He again who, having been engaged in actions under the influence of past tendencies, later on becomes endowed with the fullest Self-knowledge, he surely renounces (all) actions along with their accessories as he does not find any purpose in activity. For some reason, if it becomes impossible to renounce actions and he, for the sake of preventing people from going astray, even remains engaged as before in actions-without attachment to those actions and their results because of the absence of any selfish purpose-, still he surely does nothing at all! His actions verily become 'inaction' because of having been burnt away by the fire of wisdom.

By way of pointing out this idea, the Lord says:

त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासंगं नित्यतृप्तो निराश्रय: ।

कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किञ्चित् करोति स: ॥ २० ॥

4.20 Having given up attachment to the results of action, he who is ever-contented, dependent on nothing, **he really does not do anything** even though engaged in action.

With the help of the above-mentioned wisdom, tyaktvaa, having given up the idea of agentship; and phala-asangam, attachment to the results of action; he who is nitya-trptah, ever-trptah, ever-contented, i.e. has no hankering for objects; and nirasrayah, dependent on nothing-. Asraya means that on which a person leans, desiring to achieve some human goal. The idea is that he is not dependent on any support which may be a means of attaining some coveted seen or unseen result.

In reality, actions *done* by a man of Knowledge are certainly inactions, since he is endowed with the realization of the actionless Self. Actions together with their accessories must be relinquished by one who has become thus, because they have no end to serve. This being so, api, even though; he remains abhi-pravrttah, engaged as before; karmani, in actions-getting out of those (actions) being impossible-, either with the intention of preventing people from going astray or with a view to avoiding the censure of the wise people; sah, he; eva, really; na karoti, does not do; kincit, anything, because he is endued with the realization of the actionless Self. [From the subjective standpoint of the enlightened there are no actions, but ordinary people mistakenly think them to be actions, which in reality are a mere semblance of it.]

On the other hand, one who is the opposite of the above-mentioned one, (and) in whom, even before undertaking works, has dawned the realization

of his identity with Brahman, the all-pervasive, inmost, actionless Self; who, being bereft of solicitation for desirable objects seen or unseen, has renounced actions along with their accessories, by virtue of seeing no purpose to be served by undertaking actions meant to secure some seen or unseen result, and makes effort only for the maintenance of the body, he, the monk steadfast in Knowledge, becomes free.

Hence, in order to express this idea the Lord says:

निराशीर्यतचित्तात्मा त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रह: ।

शारीरं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन् नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥ २१ ॥

4.21 One who is without solicitation, who has the mind and organs under control, (and) is totally without possessions, he incurs no sin **by performing actions merely for the (maintenance of the) body.**

Nirasih, one who is without solicitation-one from whom asisah [Asih is a kind of desire that can be classed under prayer, solicitations, have departed; yata-citta-atma, who has the mind and organs under control-one by whom have been controlled (yatau) both the internal organ (citta) and the external aggregate of body and organs (atma); (and) is tyakta-sarva-parigrahah, [Parigraha: receiving, accepting, possessions, belongings.-V.S.A] totally without possessions- one by whom have been renounced (tyaktah) all (sarvah) possessions (parigrahah); na apnoti, he does not incur; kilbisam, sin, in the form of evil as also rigtheousness-to one aspiring for Liberation, even righteousness is surely an evil because it brings bondage **kurvan, by performing; karma, actions; kevalam, merely;**

saarIram, for the purpose of maintaining the body-without the idea of agentship even with regard to these (actions).

Further, in the expression, 'kevalam sariram karma', do the words sariram karma mean 'actions done by the body' or 'actions merely for the purpose of maintaining the body?

Answer:….when the sense conveyed by ‘saariram karma’ is taken as actions merely for the purpose of maintaining the body, then the implication will be that he does not do any other work as can be accomplished physically, orally, or mentally, which are known from injunctions and prohibitions (of the scriptures) and which have in view seen or unseen results; while he appears to people to be working with those very body (speech) etc. merely for the purpose of maintaining the body, yet he does not incur sin by merely making movements of the body etc., because from the use of the word kevala, (merely) it follows that he is devoid of the sense of agentship implicit in the idea, 'I do.'

This verse is only a reiteration of the result of full illumination stated earlier. It becomes faultless by accepting the interpretation of sariram karma thus.

In the case of the monk who has renounced all possessions, since owning food etc. meant for the bare sustenance of the body is absent, therefore it becomes imperative to beg for alms etc. for the upkeep of the body. Under this circumstance, by way of pointing out the means of obtaining food etc. for the maintenance of the body of a monk as permitted by the text, 'What comes unasked for, without forethought and spontaneously.

What do we conclude from the above study?

- The Jnani, 'samyag-darshI', as Shankara calls him here, is alive and with a body-mind-sense organs complex.
- This 'samyag darshI' has realized himself to be the 'All-pervading' Brahman, as Shankara says here.
- This Jnani has a body which was born and is subject to growth, disease, decay and death. (In the Chandogya Upanishad Ch.VI, Shankara even describes the process of death of a Jnani, after establishing that the jnani will have to necessarily experience his prarabdha karma.)
- Shankara says in this above Gita bhashyam that such a Samyag darshi, with the realization of His All-pervading Brahman nature, is endowed with prArabdha.
- This Jnani's body requires maintenance.
- He, by virtue of his Self-knowledge, has transcended his erstwhile individuality. This is clear from the fact that he does not have any longing for any results of action in the here or hereafter. (By these actions what is meant is that the Jnani is no longer a candidate for the four-fold PuruShartha: artha, kaama, dharma and Moksha.)

- By 'transcending the individuality' is meant only the 'giving up/renouncing of the 'I-am-the doer-enjoyer' idea that is a characteristic of an ajnani. This does not mean that his limited body-mind-senses apparatus is also given up.
- Such a Jnani undoubtedly continues to be engaged in action, either for the benefit of others and/or for the maintenance of his body.
- Sucha Jnani, being a realized man 'while living', is a jivanmukta, having a body, and a prarabdha that is yet to be expiated.
- Such a Jnani, while engaged in the above kind of actions has necessarily to use his limited body-mind-sense organ apparatus which will inevitably involve interaction with other people and objects. This implies that his pramatru-pramana-premeya (knower-knowing-knowable) vyavahara is kept in tact with the only difference that the 'I am the doer/enjoyer' idea is absent.
- This is taught by the Lord in another verse (5. 8,9): नैव किंचित् करोमि इति मन्येत तत्त्ववित् । पश्यन् शृण्वन् ....इन्द्रियाणि इन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन् (५. ८,९) [The Jnani knows '*I do not do anything whatsoever'* (This is his pAramArthik state of realization) even when he is very much engaged in seeing, hearing, grasping, walking, dreaming, giving, taking, talking, eating, ejecting, etc. all the while bearing the firm conviction

that *only the senses are interacting with their objects*. (This is the concurrent vyavaharika state).

- The most significant message conveyed by the above three verses is that the Jnani's body and his actions are NOT the projection of ajnanis. It is Lord Krishna and Acharya Shankara who are teaching the humanity about the state and actions of a Jnani. Certainly it cannot be held that Krishna and Shankara have projected the body and actions on a Jnani out of Their ignorance.

- Nor can it be admitted that Krishna and Shankara have the mithyA pratyaya (erroneous notion of 'I am the doer/enjoyer' characterizing an ajnani) in Them when they are instructing about the Sthitaprajna Jnani and his actions. If such were not the case, the words of the Lord and Shankara will cease to be authoritative /revelatory/ pramANa.

- This also shows that a Jnani can and does very well see other Jnanis in flesh and blood and their actions as well. There are Upanishadic mantras using the plural number with reference to Jnanis. The famous 'na karmaNA na prajayA dhanena tyAgenaikE amRtatvam AnashuH..' is an example. In this line itself there is the plural number. The other words 'parimuchyanti..' too talk about the plurality of Jnanis.

- That the Lord and Shankara are teaching these things is also proof for the undeniable fact that They, the Jnanis, can and do very well recognize others who are in the throes of samsara, ajnanis.
- Such seeing others as Jnanis and ajnanis by a Jnani does not in any way militate against his Self-realization.
- If it is not this way, we cannot have a ShAstra, a system of Instruction aimed at redeeming ajnanis from bondage.
- Even the teaching of the Absolute, Paramartha, state where there is no bondage, no seeker, no Jnani, no ajnani, no teaching, no Shastra, etc. is known to us only from the teaching of the Jnanis who have given us their spoken and written words, very well recognizing us to be ajnanis and with unegoistic realization that they are Jnanis.
- The conclusion as above is unassailable. If such a conclusion were not to be arrived at, there will be the most serious consequence of contradicting the Shruti, Smriti, Anubhava (experience) and Reason.
- The following verses (12, 13 and 14) from the 6th Chapter of the Panchadashi of Swami Vidyaranya provide the understanding in a nutshell:

सदा विचारयेत् तस्मात् जगज्जीव-परात्मन: ।

जीवभाव-जगद्भाव-बाधे स्वात्मैव शिष्यते ॥ (६.१२)

[Therefore constantly enquire into the nature of the world, the individual soul (jiva) and the Supreme (Brahman). When as a result of this enquiry there comes about the sublation (bAdhA) of the world and the individual soul, what remains unsublated is one's own Atman.]

नाप्रतीतिस्तयोर्बाध: किन्तु मिथ्यात्व-निश्चय: ।

नो चेत् सुषुप्ति-मूर्च्छादौ मुच्येतायत्नतो जन: ॥ (६.१३)

[The *non-perception* of the world and the individual soul, jeeva, is *not what is meant* by their sublation, bAdhA; it is the firm conviction regarding their *unreal* nature, mithyAtva. If such is not the case, a person can become liberated without any effort in sleep, unconsciousness and the like (when the world and the jeeva are not perceived).]

परमात्मावशेषोऽपि तत्सत्यत्व-विनिश्चय: ।

न जगद्विस्मृति:, नो चेत् जीवन्मुक्तिर्न संभवेत् ॥ (६.१४)

[The 'remaining over of the Supreme Brahman' too means the firm conviction of Its reality; it does not mean the forgetfulness of the world. If this were not the case, jeevanmukti would be rendered impossible.]

This and this alone is the way to understand Advaita. If the above points are disregarded and rejected, what we will have is not Advaita but something else.

Om Tat Sat