

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 18: Chapter 2, Verses 42-47

(August 29 –September 4, 2018)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपश्चितः ।
वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः ॥ ४२ ॥

*yām imāṁ puspitāṁ vācaṁ pravadanty avipaścitaḥ
veda-vāda-ratāḥ pārtha nānyad astīti vādinaḥ*

कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम् ।
क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति ॥ ४३ ॥

*kāmātmānaḥ svarga-parā janma-karma-phala-pradām
kriyā-viśeṣa-bahulāṁ bhogaiśvarya-gatiṁ prati*

भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयापहतचेतसाम् ।
व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते ॥ ४४ ॥

*bhogaiśvarya-prasaktānāṁ tayāpahṛta- cetasām
vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate*

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।
निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥ ४५ ॥

*traiguṇya-viśayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna
nirdvandvo nitya-sattva-stho niryoga-kṣema ātmavān*

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः सम्प्लुतोदके ।
तावान् सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥ ४६ ॥

*yāvān artha udapāne sarvataḥ samplutodake
tāvan sarveṣu vedeṣu brahmaṇasya vijānataḥ*

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ ४७ ॥

*karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi*

TRANSLATION

- (42) Those with limited understanding, get attracted to the flowery words of the Vedas, which advocate ostentatious rituals for elevation to the celestial abodes, and presume no higher principle is described in them. They glorify only those portions of the Vedas that please their senses, and
- (43) perform pompous ritualistic ceremonies for attaining high birth, opulence, sensual enjoyment, and elevation to the heavenly planets.
- (44) With their minds deeply attached to worldly pleasures and their intellects bewildered by such things, they are unable to possess the resolute determination for success on the path to God.
- (45) The Vedas deal with the three modes of material nature, O Arjun. Rise above the three modes to a state of pure spiritual consciousness. Freeing yourself from dualities, eternally fixed in truth, and without concern for material gain and safety, be situated in the self.
- (46) Whatever purpose is served by a small well of water is naturally served in all respects by a large lake. Similarly, one who realizes the Absolute Truth also fulfills the purpose of all the Vedas.
- (47) You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Your actions should never be motivated by the results they would produce, nor should you be attached to inaction.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ig6uCUjHt6VJJhf94VDvDt3KU6roPOax/view?usp=sharing>

Commentary:

Verses 42 & 43:

The Vedas are divided into three sections. These are: *Karm-kāṇḍ* (ritualistic ceremonies), *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* (knowledge section), and *Upāsanā-kāṇḍ* (devotional section). The *Karm-kāṇḍ* section advocates the performance of ritualistic ceremonies for material rewards and promotion to the celestial abodes. Those who seek sensual pleasures glorify this section of the Vedas. The celestial abodes contain a higher order of material luxuries, and offer greater facility for sensual enjoyment. But elevation to the heavenly abodes does not imply a concurrent spiritual elevation. These celestial planes are also within the material universe, and having gone there, when one's account of good karmas gets depleted, one is born again. People with dull wits and limited understanding strive for the heavenly abodes, thinking that is the whole purpose of the Vedas. In this way, they continue transmigrating in the cycle of life-and-death, without endeavoring for God-realization. However, those with spiritual wisdom do not make even heaven their goal. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣhad* states: *avidyāyāmantare vartamānāḥ svayaṁdhīrāḥ paṇḍitaṁ manyamānāḥ jaṅghanyamānāḥ pariyanti mūḍhā andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ* (1.2.8) [v37]: "Those, who practice the ostentatious rituals prescribed in the Vedas for enjoying the celestial pleasures of the higher abodes, think themselves to be scholars of the scriptures, but in reality they are foolish. They are like the blind leading the blind." Why is it that the scholars who have studied the Vedas so fastidiously fail to possess the resolute intelligence? It is because they could not comprehend the essence of the Vedic scriptures and subsequently they missed understanding the true purport of

the Vedas. Lord Krishna emphasizes this fact with the word *avipashchitah* meaning the ignorant who are not knowledgeable are attracted to only the part of the Vedas that contain flowery descriptions of rituals to attain sensual pleasures and material rewards.

Verse 44:

People whose minds are attached to the material world and sensual enjoyment concern themselves with *bhog* (gratification), and *aiśhwarya* (luxury). They engage their intellects in enhancing their income and contemplating how to increase their material possessions and maximize their enjoyment. Bewildered in this manner, they are unable to develop the firm resolve required for traversing the path to God-realization. The spiritual understanding which leads to a fixed determination is not achieved by those whose minds are carried away by prospective heavenly pleasures and heavenly delights, which they believe are the highest goal of human existence.. They will never be able to attain the spiritual intelligence that leads to self-realization and comprehensive knowledge of the Supreme Lord and the total satisfaction of mind and senses that accompanies it. Verily this is the means for salvation. They fail to understand that the real essence and the objective of the Vedic scriptures is knowledge of the Ultimate, which is the Supreme Lord.

Verse 45:

The material energy binds the divine soul to the bodily conception of life, by its three constituent modes. These modes of material nature are *sattva* (mode of goodness), *rajas* (mode of passion), and *tamas* (mode of ignorance). The relative proportion of the three modes varies for every individual, due their *sanskārs* (tendencies) from countless past lives, and accordingly, everyone has different inclinations and tendencies. The Vedic scriptures accept this disparity and give suitable instructions for different kinds of people. If the *śhāstras* did not contain instructions for worldly-minded people, they would have gone further astray. So, the Vedas offer them material rewards for the performance of rigorous rituals, helping them rise from the mode of ignorance to passion, and from passion to goodness. Thus, the Vedas contain both kinds of knowledge—ritualistic ceremonies for the materially attached and divine knowledge for spiritual aspirants. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that he should not be attracted by the section of the Vedas that propounds rules, regulations, and ceremonies for material rewards. Instead, he should use the divine section of the Vedic knowledge to elevate himself to the level of Self-Realization (*Atman*) and Absolute Truth (*Paramaatman*).

Verse 46:

Lord Krishna states in this verse that all purposes which can be served by a well of water are easily served by a large reservoir of water as well. So similarly whatever rewards are given in the Vedic scriptures are easily available to the one established in spiritual intelligence of Brahman (*Paramaatman*) or the Ultimate Truth because in such a state of consciousness all benefits are inclusive. The Vedas contain >100,000 mantras, describing varieties of rituals, practices, prayers, ceremonies, and gems of knowledge. All these are given with only one aim: To help unite the soul with God. This fact is reiterated in *Shrimad Bhagavatam* (1.2.28-29; Verse 38): “The goal of all the Vedic mantras, the ritualistic activities, spiritual practices, sacrifices, cultivation of knowledge, and

performance of duties, is to help the soul reach the divine feet of God.” However, just as a medicine pill is often sugar-coated to make it more palatable, similarly to attract materially-minded people, the Vedas also give material allurements. The underlying motive is to help the soul gradually get detached from the world and attached to God. Thus, one who is attaching the mind to God is automatically fulfilling the purpose of all the Vedic mantras. In *Shrimad Bhagavatam (11.11.32; Verse 39)*, Lord Krishna advises Uddhav: *“The Vedas prescribe varieties of social and ritualistic duties for individuals. But those who grasp their underlying motive, wholeheartedly fulfill their duty toward Me, I consider them to be the highest devotees.”*

Verse 47:

This is one of the most popular, most recited and most quoted verses of the *Shrimad Bhagavadgita*. It offers deep insight into the proper spirit of work and is often quoted whenever the topic of *karm yoga* is discussed. The verse instructs to *“do your duty, but do not be concerned with the results of your actions.”* If we become anxious for results, we will experience anxiety whenever they are not according to our expectations. So Lord Krishna advises Arjuna to give up concern for the results and instead focus solely on doing a good job. The fact is that when we are unconcerned about the results, we are able to focus entirely on our efforts, and the result often turns out to be even better than when our mind and actions are result-oriented. There are two categories of consciousness, including (a) material consciousness, and (b) spiritual consciousness. Material Consciousness is characterized by the thoughts, *“I am the proprietor of all that I possess. It is all meant for my enjoyment. I have the right to enhance my possessions and maximize my enjoyment.”* The reverse of this is Spiritual Consciousness, which is characterized by thoughts such as, *“God is the owner and enjoyer of this entire world. I am merely his selfless servant. I must use all that I have in the service of God.”*

The second instruction by Lord Krishna in this verse is: *“do not be attached to inaction.”* This means that while we must perform all of our duties without being motivated by the fruit of our actions, we must also be detached from inaction. It may be proposed that instead of performing actions without motivation to reap rewards, perhaps it might be better to perform no actions at all. To this Lord Krishna says that we should not allow our egos to dictate to us that we rather be inactive. But then, we will incur the sin of not performing our natural everyday duties. One proceeds towards spiritual advancement by not only performing one’s duties without any concerns for rewards, but also by never performing prohibited actions and by never avoiding one’s duties prescribed in Vedic scriptures.