

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 33: Chapter 4, Verses 01-04

(December 19 –December 25, 2018)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

अथ चतुर्थोऽध्यायः

ATHA CHATURTHODHYAYAH

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

śrī bhagavān uvāca

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् ।
विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुर्िक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् ॥ ४-१ ॥

*imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ proktavān aham avyayam
vivasvān manave prāha manur ikṣvākave 'bravīt*

एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।
स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परन्तप ॥ ४-२ ॥

*evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ
sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa*

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः ।
भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम् ॥ ४-३ ॥

*sa evāyaṁ mayā te 'dya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanah
bhakto 'si me sakhā ceti rahasyaṁ hy etad uttamam*

अर्जुन उवाच ।

arjuna uvāca

अपरं भवतो जन्म परं जन्म विवस्वतः ।
कथमेतद्विजानीयां त्वमादौ प्रोक्तवानिति ॥ ४-४ ॥

*aparaṁ bhavato janma paraṁ janma vivasvataḥ
katham etad vijānīyāṁ tvam ādau proktavān iti*

TRANSLATION

CHAPTER 4

- (01)** The Supreme Lord Shree Krishna said: I taught this eternal science of Yoga to the Sun-god, Vivasvan, who passed it on to Manu; and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikshvaku.
- (02)** O subduer of enemies, the saintly kings thus received this science of Yoga in a continuous tradition. But with the long passage of time, it was lost to the world.
- (03)** The same ancient knowledge of Yoga, which is the supreme secret, I am today revealing unto you, because you are my friend as well as my devotee, who can understand this transcendental wisdom.
- (04)** Arjuna questioned the Lord : You were born much after Vivasvan. How am I to understand that in the beginning you instructed this science to him?

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Commentary:

Verse 01:

In this verse, Lord Krishna establishes the credibility and importance of the spiritual wisdom he is bestowing upon Arjuna. He informs Arjuna that the knowledge being imparted unto him is not newly created for the convenience of motivating him into battle. It is the same eternal science of Yoga that He originally taught to Vivasvan (Sun God), who imparted it to Manu, the original progenitor of humankind; Manu in turn taught it to Ikshvaku, first king of the Solar dynasty. This is the *descending process of knowledge*, where someone who is a perfect authority on the knowledge passes it down to another who wishes to know. By contrast, the *ascending process of acquiring knowledge*, where one endeavors to enhance the frontiers of understanding through self-effort. The ascending process is laborious, imperfect, and time-consuming. For example, if we wish to learn Chemistry, we could either try to do it by the *ascending process*, where we speculate about its principles with our own intellect and then reach conclusions, or we could do it by the *descending process*, where we approach a good teacher of the subject. The ascending process is exceedingly time-consuming, and we may not even be able to complete the inquiry in our lifetime. We can also not be sure about the validity of our conclusions. In comparison, the *descending process* gives us instant access to the deepest secrets of Chemistry. If our teacher has perfect knowledge of Chemistry, then it is very straightforward—simply listen to the science from him and digest what he says. This *descending process* of receiving knowledge is both easy and faultless. Nonetheless, merely imparting invaluable knowledge to someone is not enough. The recipients of that knowledge

must appreciate its value and have faith in its authenticity. Only then will they put in the effort required to implement it practically in their lives.

Verse 02:

In the *descending process* of receiving divine knowledge, the disciple understands the science of God-realization from the Guru, who in turn received it from his Guru. This tradition starts from God himself, who is the first Guru of the world. The saintly kings such as King Nimi and King Janak as well as royal sages at court were all knowledgeable of this *yoga* as instructed by their ancestors Ikshvaku and others. However, the nature of this material world is such, that with the passage of time, this knowledge got lost. Materially-minded and insincere disciples interpret the teachings according to their blemished perspectives. Within a few generations, its pristine purity is contaminated. When this happens, by his causeless grace, God reestablishes the tradition for the benefit of humankind. He may do so, either by Himself descending into the world, or through a great God-realized Saint, who becomes a conduit for God's work on Earth.

Verse 03:

Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that the ancient science being imparted to him is an uncommonly known secret. Secrecy in the world is maintained for two reasons: either due to selfishness in keeping the truth to oneself, or to protect the abuse of knowledge. The science of Yoga remains a secret, not for either of these reasons, but because it requires a qualification to be understood. That qualification is revealed in this verse as *devotion*. The deep message of the *Bhagavad Gita* is not amenable to being understood merely through scholasticism or mastery of the Sanskrit language. It requires *devotion*, which enables us to accept the humble position as His tiny parts and servitors. Arjuna was a fit student of this science because he was a devotee of the Lord. Arjuna worshipped God as his Friend, and so Lord Krishna speaks to him as his friend and devotee. Without a devotional heart, one cannot truly grasp the message of the Bhagavad Gita. According to this verse, if you are not a devotee, you cannot comprehend the true import of the supreme science that was revealed to Arjuna.

Verse 04:

Considering that Visvavan was instructed 120 million years previously by the same Lord Krishna as He is standing before him, Arjuna asks the Lord to explain just how it was possible that He taught this eternal *yoga* to Vivaswan while He himself has only been recently born in the world. Arjuna is puzzled by the apparent incongruity of events in Lord Krishna's statement. If Lord Krishna is the son of Vasudev and Devaki, then his statement that he taught this science to Vivasvan, the Sun god, appears inconsistent to Arjuna, and so, he inquires about it. *Arjun's question invites an exposition on the concept of the divine descension of God, and Lord Krishna responds to it in the subsequent verses.*