

Principles of Applied Karma Yoga

Based on chapter 3 and 4 of Bhagavad-Gita

{Summary of notes on Karma Yoga based on Balvikas classes during 2007-2008}

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Principles of Applied Karma Yoga.....	2
Capsule Summaries.....	2
Prescriptions for Action	2
Prescriptions for Knowledge in Action.....	2
Chapter Summaries	2
SELFLESS ACTION (Chapter 3)	2
AUSTERITY of WISDOM (Chapter 4).....	3
Descriptive Summary.....	4
References:.....	5

Principles of Applied Karma Yoga

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Capsule Summaries

Prescriptions for Action

- Dispassion and discrimination
- Righteousness and truthfulness
- Obligatory Duties and Service activities
- Diligence and hard work
- Appropriate leadership and taking ownership
- Self development with right attitudes
- Making sacrifices
- Giving up anger and extreme emotions

Prescriptions for Knowledge in Action

- Divine Values are self projected in universe
- When demoniac values predominate Divine values step in to stem the rot
- Actions in synchronism with these values are in-actions
- Getting rid of selfishness, fear and anger one can attain divinity in action
- Understand that Energy created power to act, not the 'action' per se
- True Knowledge is the understanding of nature of actions as above
- Doing work with a spirit of sacrifice is the ultimate knowledge sacrifice
- Actions rooted in knowledge sacrifice is termed austerity of wisdom
- Wise actions leave you in peace and tranquillity.
- Arise Awake and Act in Wisdom!

Chapter Summaries

SELFLESS ACTION (Chapter 3)

- Cultivate Discrimination (of the Intellect) (3)
- Be Righteous (of the Mind) (3)
- Be Active (as against No Action) (4)
- 'Nature' drives Man (5)
- Be true to self (as against hypocrisy) (6)
- Be Dispassionate (7)
- Do your Duty (obligatory actions) (8)
- Engage in Sacrifice (selfless service) (9)
- Use Wisdom (inherent in all) (10)
- Practice incessantly and devotedly (Sadhana) (11)
- Reward for hard work will follow (12)
- Unselfish work is good; selfishness is sin (13)
- Sacrifice is the basis of life (14)
- Sacrifice is Godly (15)
- Always perform obligatory and righteous work (19)
- Lead by example (leaders) (20)
- Set standards (leader's responsibility) (21)

- Inaction leads to decay (self and society) (24)
- Exhibit dispassionate non-attachment (25)
- Set example and inspire (26)
- Understand Natural attributes as impressions in the mind (28)
- Act with no egotism and selfish expectations (30)
- Practice continuously the right actions (31)
- Selfish desires and hatred are bad impressions (34)
- Aptitude is important; and engage in own duty (35)
- Selfish Desire and Anger are inherent enemies (37)
- Wisdom is covered by these two (38)
- Selfish desire is the prime enemy of Man (39)
- Body, Mind and Intellect are the seat of desire (40)
- Discipline the senses and destroy selfishness (EGO) (41)
- Understand the superiority of SELF (42)
- Control EGO by the SELF and attain perfection (43)

AUSTERITY of WISDOM (Chapter 4)

- Principles of right action always guided mankind, but over time these were lost. Hence it is being expounded again to Arjuna by Krishna (1, 2, 3)
- Self projected in nature, divine values appear from time to time and when needed, to strengthen righteousness and avoid chaos and disorder (5, 6, 7, 8)
- One who lives life by the divine values will attain liberation (9)
- Many have attained such liberation having rid of selfishness, fear and anger (10)
- As you sow so you reap! In this world actions carried out with purposefulness will result in appropriate result. (11, 12)
- Mankind was classified based on the nature and quality of work they do (13)
- Energy created power to act, not the 'action' per se; one who realizes / understands this is unbound! (14)
- All liberated souls performed work with this attitude and so it is required that all of us too follow suit (15)
- There are right and wrong actions. Even if subjective in nature, any action devoid of selfishness that is established in higher value systems is right action and is considered as 'in-action'. When right actions are motivated by selfishness it is said to create bondage. It is indeed difficult to comprehend the nature of actions. (16, 17)
- Realizing that 'in-action' also entails 'action' is the true meaning of gaining knowledge and wisdom. (18)
- He whose undertakings are all free from will of selfish desire, whose works are all burned up in the fire of Wisdom, him the wise call a man of learning. (19)
- Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of work, ever content, without any kind of dependence, he does nothing though he is ever engaged in work. Such people never commit wrong. (20, 21)
- What binds a person to the work is not the work, but the selfish attitude to it. (22)
- People engaged in unselfish sacrifices are released from bondage of actions. (23)

- He who understands that the action, attitude, actor and wisdom are all one and the same attains salvation (freedom from bondage). (24)
- Sacrifices could take various forms – as offering to productive potentials and as offering to the universal values. People of knowledge use restraint to rationalise actions whereas some others entertain the senses only in righteous ways. Yet others choose the path of discrimination, charity work, and physical austerities. Food control and breath control are adopted by some. The important thing is that some sort of sacrifice is needed and that restraint is the key to any sacrifice. (25-30)
- Sacrifice is a universal need for sustenance and all of these are rooted in actions. (31, 32)
- Knowledge sacrifice is considered the noblest form of sacrifice because cultivating wisdom is the ultimate goal. (33)
- Knowledge is to be obtained with reverence to teachers, cultivating inquisitiveness and carrying out actions with a spirit of sacrifice. (34)
- Having thus gained knowledge peace and tranquillity would prevail as we shall start seeing the presence of SELF in all. (35)
- Just as fire burns wood to ashes wisdom will burn away all bondage to results of actions. (37)
- Whoever engages in selfless action with devotion and focus will attain fulfilment in this world and thereafter. Others suffer hell. (38, 39)
- Therefore arise awake and act with wisdom and self confidence. (40, 41, 42)

Descriptive Summary

Man should never abstain from work, but should engage in **Obligatory duties** and **Righteous activities** using **Discriminative (Discerning) Intelligence**. **Selfishness** and **Hatred** are the two worst enemies of man and he should therefore avoid these two in all actions. One should understand that the **Body, Mind and Intellect are the seat of selfishness** and that the **SELF (Atman) is superior** to all these. **SELF is never tainted** by these tendencies or afflicted by the three basic characteristics of Nature (Knowledge, Activity and Ignorance). **Wisdom lies in understanding this truth.**

Therefore attaining Wisdom lies practically in elevating our actions to **synchronize with higher order value systems**. The way to do this is by practicing **Austerity of Wisdom!** Austerity of Wisdom entails understanding the true nature of actions and taking to **Selfless Actions** that are true sacrifices (Yajnas). There are three types of actions – Actions, ‘In-actions’ and Wrong Actions. **‘In-Actions’ are Actions that are selfless and in conformity with universal values. Understanding this is true Knowledge and practicing it is ‘Knowledge Sacrifice’.** Various mechanisms of control are enumerated to attain this knowledge and those include sense control, mind control, performing various physical and mental austerities and ultimately the control of the SELF. All these self controls entail some sort of restraint. **Thus restraint lies at the root of all sacrifices including knowledge sacrifice. Knowledge sacrifice is considered much higher than any material sacrifice.**

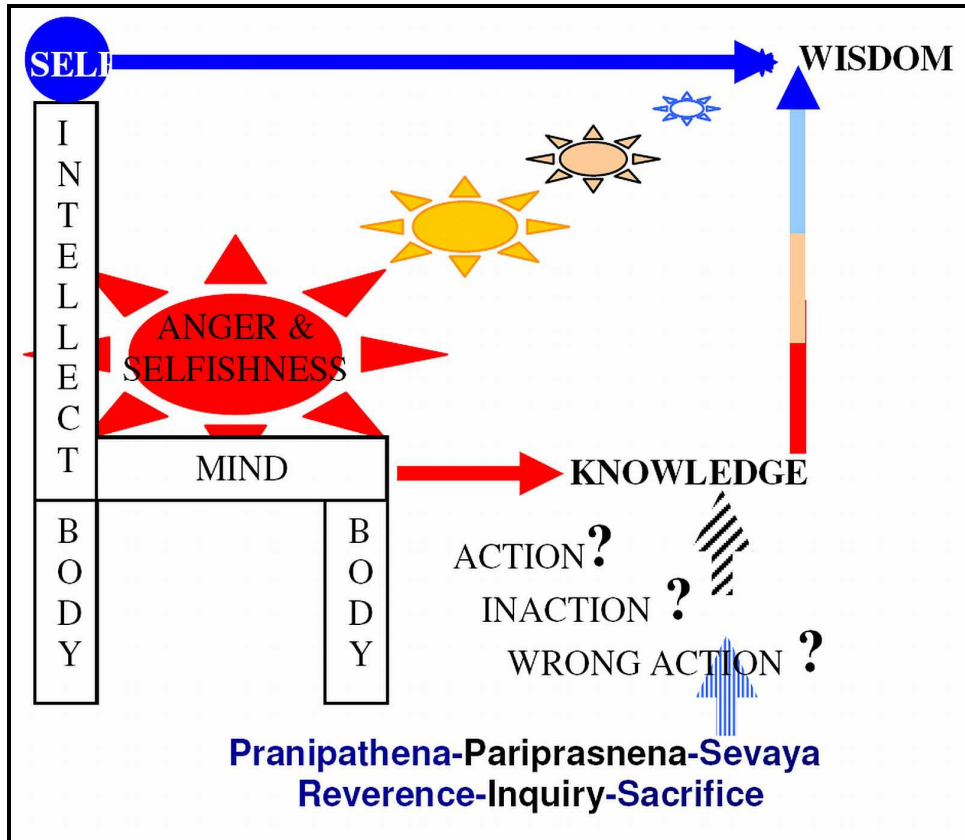


Illustration 1: Having gained knowledge of SELF through reverential enquiry and doing work with a spirit of sacrifice, one understands the nature of “*in-action in action*” thereby unseating anger and selfishness from his entire nature (BMI) and attains to Wisdom in existence!

Acquisition of this Knowledge, the highest transcendental Knowledge, is possible only through **reverential inquiry of learned, experienced and evolved teachers** and thereafter **carrying out sacrifices** in practice. Such people will not be subjected to any form of illusion and will be able to see **the same SELF in themselves, in others and everywhere**. Their bondage to reactions from actions will be reduced to ashes just as fire burns wood to ashes. The **knowledge of the SELF is the ultimate knowledge** that cleanses and releases people. Whoever acquires this **transcendental knowledge** through commitment and utmost focus will **attain absolute peace**.

Therefore Arise, Awake and Act!
Do your duties. Engage in Services
Be devoted and focused in those activities.
Have faith in SELF and banish all negative thoughts.
Do not worry about the fruits of your actions.

Aum Tat Sat!!

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