

Brief summary for Tuesday 8th March (4.14 - 4.15 session)

We must thank all our teachers for their contribution to what has been written below. These are things we have learned and heard from other gracious souls whose teachings are expressed in our own words/understanding.

If you missed part 48, [check out the notes here.](#)

You can find [all the previous notes here.](#)

Continuing from last time, in verse 4.14, Krishna continues to explain His position in relation to the activities of this world (karma).

Last time we saw Krishna explain He is the non-doer (akarta). From Arjuna's perspective though, Krishna seems to have appeared in a dynasty of kshatriyas and is performing the duties of a kshatriyas, so He seems to be doing something, even in relation to the varnasrama system He has explained originates from Him.

Krishna responds by pointing out that work does not bind Him and He has no desire for the fruits of action (such as going to heaven due to performing His duties nicely). Krishna, as we know from previous discussions, is full of six opulences (fame, fortune, beauty, knowledge, strength, renunciation) so fruits of this world are insignificant to Him. He is the complete Absolute Reality, composed of eternality, cognisance and bliss. Unlike us who are under maya's control, Krishna is the master of maya.

Krishna performs His actions on Earth to set an example and encourage mankind to also act dutifully in relation to the material energy. He is not touched by egoism and is unattached and desireless in relation to this world. This is the nature of transcendental consciousness.

This doesn't mean that Krishna doesn't want what is best for this world, but He is equipoised in relation to the material energy. He wills creation into existence and comes to protect dharma, and naturally wants the best for its development, but He is not attached to it and allows the desires of the participants of this material world to shape the story of the world according to their free will.

The example sometimes given is that Krishna's position is like rain. Different vegetation like mangoes, rice and bananas are supported by the rain, but the rain derives nothing from what it creates. The rain doesn't desire to taste and enjoy the fruits and so has no attachment, indiscriminately showering the various seeds.

Krishna sanctions various rewards but is self-satisfied and the various humans who can be righteous or unrighteous according to their desires shape what takes place.

Krishna wants to highlight that we are responsible for the shaping of this world even though the ultimate cause is Krishna. Being bound by independent desires for pleasure and acting based on those desires causes the modes of material nature to react, resulting in various activities and reactions to those activities.

So the distinctions of various bodies (some being born as men, women, demigods, etc) is not directly brought about by Krishna, but by the result of the karmas of the different jivas (living entities) according to their actions. Krishna is not the author of the varied creations. Therefore we can't say there is partiality or injustice coming from Him as every person creates their own karma and the system itself is a just one.

In his purport Srila Prabhupada quotes the Vedanta-sutra to emphasise this point:

"The Lord only gives them the proper facilities for such activities and the regulations of the modes of nature, but He is never responsible

for their past and present activities. In the Vedanta-sutra (2.1.34) it is confirmed, vaisamya-nairghrnye na sapekṣatvat: the Lord is never partial to any living entity. The living entity is responsible for his own acts."

The verse itself (along with the preceding verse is as follows:

“(There are) no inequality and cruelty (on the part of [Brahman](#)), because of (his) having regard (for the works of souls), for so (scripture) shows.”

“If it be objected that this is not (possible), on account of the non-distinction of works, (we reply:) no, on account of beginninglessness, and (this) fits in, and is observed also.”

[Vedanta-sutra 2.1.33-34]

If we understand that ultimately Krishna creates the universe, then it may seem He is responsible for inequality and cruelty, that is, He creates an unequal world with different types of bodies, and also, this world is one which has all kinds of suffering like old age, death, and disease.

The scripture rejects this idea and points out that these distinctions are beginningless. Krishna allows various desires to play out and respects the resulting karma, just like the rain example we discussed that produces different kinds of plants according to their respective seeds.

Inequality and cruelty depend on the works of the individual souls themselves, the seeds of desire, not the creator of the world who is like the rain or raincloud. So the Upanishads points out that **"one becomes good by good deeds or action and one becomes bad by bad action"**

[Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad 3.2.13]

Just as it is impossible to say whether the seed or the tree is earlier, it is similar with karma and samsara and so the Vedanta-sutra that Srila Prabhupada quotes points out they are beginningless. The works done by

individuals in previous creations shapes the diversities in subsequent creations.

For the conditioned soul, there is the desire for the results of their karma. This is why people act. Krishna points out that there is no desire in it for Him.

Some hope remains for the conditioned soul though and that is the point that mercy overrides justice. So Krishna can (and does) intervene when someone wants to break free from this cycle of karma. He doesn't force it on anyone, but we can choose to respond to that mercy when it comes.

Krishna points out in this verse (4.14) that one who understands Him is also not bound by the reactions to work. If one can appreciate this conception that Krishna is completely independent from the actions of the beings of this world and is unchangeable by material action and reaction, then such a person is also not bound by action. By gradually coming to the platform of pure devotional service, such a person will come to Him. They know Krishna is transcendental to prakrti (material nature) and so not implicated by any activity.

An important point brought out here is that detachment from the results of one's work can free one and so it is not action that binds us itself, but the consciousness behind that action. The desire to enjoy the fruits of action is what binds us.

It is not only Krishna who is not bound by action, but also His devotees. They know that Krishna is free from egoism, desire and attachment and so is untouched by action. As a result, the devotees also have their own egoism, material desire and worldly attachment destroyed and so are not bound by their actions. They perform bhakti with this knowledge that Krishna is all-powerful, independent, imperishable and free from all desire.

Krishna really emphasizes here this point that His own actions are different to the conditioned jiva. He engages in many activities but even while doing

so, He is materially desireless and aloof because really His activities are within the internal energy, not the external energy (as pointed out earlier in this chapter). Because His activities even here are without material desire, no reactions can attach themselves to His activity. This is also the case for those who have a similar approach to activity, such as His devotees. By understanding these facts and applying the same transcendental knowledge to one's own work, they also become aloof from the material world of action and reaction. Therefore they are above the varnasrama system, even though they also sometimes follow the prescribed duties to set an example.

After explaining these points, in 4.15 Krishna encourages Arjuna to act in such a state of consciousness. Krishna points out that all the great ancient personalities acted in this way, renouncing the fruits of action and instead performed their activities as an offering to Him.

These saintly persons Krishna refers to are those mentioned earlier in this chapter: Vivasvan, Manu and Ikshvaku, as well as Janaka and others. Krishna wants Arjuna to follow their example and adopt the path of selfless action to attain transcendence.

Krishna is again emphasizing action, even when in knowledge. To really "know" means to act. In earlier stages, one performs such detached action to purify the heart as Krishna has described, but even on attaining purity, one acts to set an example for others (recall chapter 3). So this kind of action is encouraged for all types of people, those seeking purity of heart, and those who already have it. Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport:

"There are two classes of men. Some of them are full of polluted material things within their hearts, and some of them are materially free. Krishna consciousness is equally beneficial for both of these persons. Those who are full of dirty things can take to the line of Krishna consciousness for a gradual cleansing process, following the regulative principles of devotional service. Those who are already cleansed of the impurities may continue to act in the same Krishna

consciousness so that others may follow their exemplary activities and thereby be benefited."

Previous personalities, understanding that Krishna acts without being bound, performed their prescribed duties to set an ideal for humanity, following what Krishna had taught at that time also (this detached action). Actions in such consciousness (without egoism) do not bind one to material nature. Once one realizes the eternally, transcendental position of Krishna, still the ancients performed actions without material desire as a matter of principle. They understood that although Krishna performs magnificent activities like creation of the worlds, He is never implicated by it.

Krishna wants Arjuna to fight in knowledge of His position and as an offering to Him. Krishna does not want Arjuna to give up his duty and remain inactive in the forest as Arjuna had previously suggested. This enlightened action will follow the example of other great devotees as Krishna refers to here. By acting in such a way, this will liberate Arjuna.

The next nine verses (16-24) will see Krishna explaining how work (karma) can be seen as inactivity (akarma). Krishna wants to show Arjuna that no karma will be attached to one who works in transcendental knowledge, so there is no need for him to leave the battlefield. We will begin with verses 4.16 - 4.18