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Is Niskāma Karma a Metaphor of Emancipation: An Analytical Study?

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Abstract

The present paper aims to explicate that how the Niskāma Karma (desire less action) which mainly disclosed in Indian sacred scripture the Bhagavad Gitā as well as others Schools of Indian Philosophy as a representation or metaphor of emancipation. The doctrine of Niskāma Karma (desire less action) and the doctrine of liberation (Moksā) in Indian thought is a very primordial and extensively discussed theme. It is generally said that we defined any performance which done by us can be treated as an action or Karma. All actions or performance may cause bondage. Bondage is the cause of cyclic order of birth and death. Question arise that if all of these actions can cause bonding, what kind of action can free from the cycle of birth and death? People how to know what types of action can remove reincarnation and what is the process or how to achieve liberation? In order to solve those questions, the paper has been divided into five stages. At the very beginning part of my research paper try to explain the etymological meaning of the term “Karma” and classification of “Karma”. In the next part, explain very briefly the nature of Yoga. In the third phase, elaborated the doctrine of Niskāma karma has been discussed. In the fourth part, try to explain concept of Moksā. In the last part, try to elaborate to connect the inter-relation between the doctrine of Niskāma Karma and the doctrine of Moksā.

Keywords: *Niskāma Karma, Salvation, Emancipation, Lokasangraha, karma yoga.*

1. Introduction

In Indian Philosophy, four types of Purusārthas (the goal of human life) are Dharma (Religion), Artha (Wealth), Kāma (Sex) and Mokshā (Liberation). Moksā or liberation is one and only absolute and ultimate goal of human life. It is very difficult for common people to achieve liberation or the absolute and ultimate goal of human life. In Indian philosophy, generally it is belief that the liberation is cessation from all kinds of suffering or grief. So that, normally common people want to be free from all kinds of suffering of our busy life. We are all concerned that bondage is a root causes all kinds of sufferings. So, the question: what is the path to relief from this bondage? If action is considered to be the cause of bondage then actionless-ness is the only path of salvation? The answer to these entire questions has been superbly interpreted in the Srimad Bhagavad Gitā. Naturally question can come and feel what kind of action has been mentioned in the Bhagavad Gitā which can be metaphor of emancipation? To reply such question that all the actions which desire less are the symbol or metaphor of liberation that is called Niskāma Karma.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the proposed study are as follows:

- The etymological meaning of Karma and classification of Karma.
- Explain the nature of yoga.
- Notion of Niskāma Karma.
- Concept of Mukti or salvation.
- The inter-relation between Niskāma Karma and Moksā.

2. The etymological meaning of Karma and its classifications

The word “Karma” derived from the Sanskrit word ‘kr’; which means doing or activity or movement or action or accomplishment or deed or going on etc. So that can be said to mean somewhat to do. It is generally believed that we are performed different tasks in our daily life. For example: talking, walking, thinking, go to the market, smoking, singing, watching movie, driving, daring etc. In this context, it should be remembered that any kind of disordered action cannot be accepted as actable. Therefore, it can be said that action is a kind of calculated and closely controlled act whereas there is a kind of causal connection. According to Biswas (2016) ‘Ethics discussed the rightness and wrongness of actions’. In this regards it can be said that liberation is the rightness of an action. Besides, bondage is the wrongness of an action.

There are various types of actions such as:

Firstly, Actions or Karma are traditionally classified into two categories:

- i) Sakāma Karma (Desire-full Action); a desire-full action or Sakāma karma is one of which done with a desire to produce a result, i.e. to obtain an object, to get rid an unwanted object already in possession, or to stop the possibility of being made to have an unwanted one.
- ii) Niskāma Karma (Desire-less Action); a desire-less action would be one in the doing of which no desire is involved. Desire less action, which is contrasted from Sākam Karma. But it does not mean an action done with a desire in the doing of which no desire is involved, but that in the doing of which there is no desire to produce a particular result, or, no attachment for any result producible by it.

Secondly, actions or Karma are also classified into four categories:

- i) Anārabddha Karma; it refers to the results of which have not yet started to be fruitful.
- ii) Prārobddha Karma; it refers to the present reaction of the past actions or the work that started to be fruitful.
- iii) Sanchita karma; it refers to a collection of past actions.
- iv) Sanchiyāmana Karma; it’s refers to the activities that are being sorted in the present life.

Thirdly, actions or Karma are also classified into four categories:

- i) Nitya karma; It which are to be done simply because a scripture requires that they be done simply because a scripture requires that they be done and no reason be asked to justify why they should be done. In this respect, by doing such an action an individual does not earn any reward or moral merit but by not doing it he does incur some demerit. These kinds of actions are taking daily bath, offering prayers at twilight and some specific occasion during child birth or death of relatives.

- ii) Naimittika karma; Naimittika actions which are to be performed when some special things happen, like the birth of child, or the death of someone in the doer's family, at the time of solar eclipse. Simply, these actions are ritualistic.
- iii) Kāmya karma; Kāmya Karma means are action which we very often perform because we desire a practical thing and for acquiring that thing we perform this type of action. For example, to have a son, to defeat an enemy etc.
- iv) Nisiddha karma; the Nisiddha karma means objectionable action such as drinking wine etc.

Fourthly, in the Bhagavad Gitā, there are three types of actions according to qualities:

- i) Swāttik Karma: In this case that there is no attachment of the doer in this action. In this action doer does not think of himself as the chief of action. The doer performs this task solely for duty for the sake of duty. Therefore, these types of action are called Swāttik Karma (Bhagavad Gitā: verse: 18.23).
- ii) Rājasik Karma: The second type of action is the Rājasik Karma. The exact opposite of Rājasik Karma is the Rājasik karma. In this case that the doer himself operates by his arrogance and performs duties and feel himself to be a chief. In this context that the doer performed deeds in the hope of getting the results of the action. Therefore these types of action are called Rājasik Karma (Bhagavad- Gitā; verses: 18.24).
- iii) Tāmasik Karma: Tāmasik karma is the opposite of Swāttik and rājasik Karma. The doer of Tāmasik Karma does not belong to a doer of Niskāma or does not want to engage to be rewarded for any fruitful purpose. In this regard the doer can only play action for the sake of selfishness. Therefore, these types of action are called Tāmasik Karma (Bhagavad- Gitā; verses: 18.25). According to De (2016) 'all ethics, all human action and all thought, hang upon this one Idea of unselfishness. The whole idea of human life can be put into that one word, unselfishness. (Vivekananda S. 2009).'

3. Nature of Yoga

To clarify the concept of Niskāma Karma, first of all need to explain the meaning of Yoga. The word 'Yoga' is even more complicated in its meaning than the word 'karma'. The word 'Yoga' derived from the 'yuj' which means 'to join'. As per Bhagavad-Gitā the word "yoga", yogi or other compounds from the word yoga have occurred so many times. The word 'yoga' means 'skillful device' or 'method'. It may be a means of renunciation or action (Karma) or mental control (Citta-nirodha) or release (Moksā) or of something else. For instances, the word yoga has been used in the Gitā itself, to signify the divine skill or wonderful power of the blessed Lord in creating the variegated perceptible creation (Gitā: 7-25; 9, 5; 7.11.8) and on that account, the blessed Lord has been referred to as Yoges'vara (Gitā: 18.75). Lord Sri Krishnā in the Bhagavad Gitā has given two verses regarding the definition of Yoga. Srimad Bhagavad Gitā Said in the lyrics of Lord Krishnā, clearly defining the meaning of Yoga:

“yogahkarmasu kauśhalam” (Bhagavad –Gitā; Verse: 2050)

The meaning of this verse can be explained and explained that yoga means some special skill, device intelligent, method, or graceful way of performing actions. In the Sankarbhasya on this phrase, the phrase 'karmasu kausalam' has been interpreted as meaning: “the device of eliminating the natural tendency of karma to create bondage.”

The other definition of Yoga given by Lord Krishnā is tha:

“yoga-sthahkurukarmānisāngamtyaktvādhanāñjaya
siddya-asiddhyohsamobhūtvāsamatvaṁyoga uchyate” .

(Bhagavad Gitā; Verse: 2.48)

The meaning of this verse can be explained and explained that it is said in this verse of how people will perform the act. The word 'yoga-sthah' contained in the verse different kind of meaning. The first meaning is that performed act only God satisfaction. The second meaning is that stays active and adds to work for desire less. The third meaning is that act only with all the intelligence. These are the root meaning of the word (yoga-sthahkurukarmani) of Karmayoga.

4. Nature of Niskāma Karma

In fact, we feel happy when we get our achievement thing, and feel sad when we find failure thing. A person, who has equal knowledge in the way of fulfillment of the fulfillment, is winning the loss of loss and doing the work of doing good by doing the same knowledge of happiness and sorrow called Niskāma Karma. Now the question is what are the characteristics of Niskāma Karma? These three characteristics of the Niskāma Karma are being seriatim in the given below:

1. The elimination of the desire for fruit,
2. Omission of authority &
3. Acquiescence of all action to Goddess.

In the Bhagavad Gitā (Verses: 2.47)), mystery of the doctrine of Niskāma karma is expressed.

“karmany-evādhikārastemāphalesukadācana
mākarma-phala-heturbhūrmātesaṅgao'stvakarmani”.

According to Annie Besant explain in his famous book “The Bhagavad Gitā” in the meaning of this verse, ‘Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits, so let the not the fruit of action be thy motive nor be thou to inaction attached.’ The meaning of this verse is that you have right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the result of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty. The four steps of this verse are said to be in ‘Chaturstuti’. This is called the essence of the doctrine of Niskāma Karma.

Now the questions may be that Niskāma karma is intentional or not since due to lack of desire and selfish desire. In response to such questions, it can be said only that the Niskāma karma must be intentional. It is said in Karmayoga of the Bhagavad Gitā that the Niskāma Karma is intended. The intention of the Niskāma Karma is Lokasangraha. The two objects of Lokasangraha are: -

The first object of Lokasangraha is that to be doing well. In this respect the Bhagavad Gitā (Verses: 18.46) observes that:

“yatahpravāntirbhūttānāmyenasarvamidaṁtatam
sva-Karmanā tam abhyarchyasiddhimvindatimānavah”.

The meaning of this verse can be explained that man attains accomplishment by worshipping the Lord through the performance of his individual obligation, that is, he becomes qualified for the dawn of Self knowledge.

And the second object of the Lokasangraha that the act can be only done for everyone welfare. The wise man will perform their work in their own lives and motivate to other for as an example. As a result, the ignorant people will all do disinterested action to guide them towards the path of spiritual progress for the intention of Niskāma Karma.

From the above discussion it is clear that the person who has the ability to attach intelligence, he adds to the doer of Niskāma karma yoga. Here, in addition to adding 'Niskāma Karmayoga' involves the term 'Yoga' refers to 'Karmayoga' and the term 'Yogi' refers to 'Karma yogi'. In connection with the concept of 'karma yogi', it has been said in the verse 18.26:

“mukta-saṅgaaham-vādidhrity-utsāha-samanvitah
siddya-asiddhyornirvikārahkartāsāttvikauchyate”.

The meaning of this verse is that there is no attachment to the action or the fruit of the doer of Swāttik. He does not seem to be the achiever of any actions. He only thinks that God has done all the work with him. Such a person is not ambitious by any sort of consequences, but purely by duties, he performing the task. Such a person victory-defeating success-failure is totally ineffective. There is no sorrow in the fulfillment or does not have grief in the failure. This is called Swāttik Kartā. This type of Swāttik Kartā is also known as Sthithapranja. In a word, the person who is the Swāttik Kartā is sthithapranja and that person is the Niskāma Karma yogi.

5. Nature of Moksā and its inter-relation with Niskāma Karma

Moksā is an alternatively known as Vimokshā. Generally, it is thought that in Hinduism the term “Moksā” refers to liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. It may be said that thinking a little deeper into the matter that Moksā means liberation from the atman or soul from the cycle of rebirth. The term “Moksā” is adopted in various meaning (like Death, Nirvana, Kaivalya, Apavarga etc.) in different Indian Philosophical schools. In the Bhagavad Gitā, the word has repeatedly echoed that all paths lead to Mokshā. There are two types of Moksā :JivanMukti and Videhamukti. Jivanmukti refers to get released in present life and Videhamukti refers to get released after the death of the body. People have been advised to deed in the Bhagavad Gitā, not abandonment from effort. It has been said that the binding action is to be abandoned. The only Niskāma Karma is not the cause of bondage. In this context, the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gitā (18.49) can mentioned:

“asakta-buddhihsarvatrajitātmanāvigata-sprihah
naishkarmya-siddhimparamāmsannyāsenādhighachhati”.¹

The meaning of this verse can be explained and explained that those whose intellect is unattached everywhere, who have mastered the mind, and are free from desires by the practice of renunciation, attain the highest perfection of freedom from action. Now Lord Shri Krishnā describes the state of actionlessness or naiskarmya-siddhim. It refers to abandonment of action. Fruit of action is the cause of the creation of human body. Further the human body is the cause of action. Liberation from the bondage of such action is called naiskarmya-siddhim.

6. Conclusion

In the context of the above discussion, in the conclusion Niskāma karma is a desire less although it is one type of action. In this case the doer who does not have to bind if he does so. Only Swāttik kartā do so, that can perform such responsibilities. Later this is known as Swāttik kartā, later known as Sthithapranja. Sthithapranja person is the doer of Niskāma Karma. Only sthithapranja person is able to achieved Moksā. As a result, it can be said that Niskāma Karma is called the metaphor of liberation.

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