

Different types of the YajNa in Bhagavad-Gita

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Introduction - YajNa – Rituals, Harmony, Disciplines and self-knowledge

1. while performing any action or achieving the desired ends there are three factors involved.

1.1. Yatnam – the efforts on the part of limited individual, the doer.

1.2. KAlam – the time factor and

1.3. Daivam – the Lord, factors over which we have no say whatsoever.

1.1 Yatnam – It is said in SanskRt that even lion has to chase deer or pray to find its food. Simply keeping mouth open and sitting quietly deer would not enter in the mouth. It cannot expect that deer would enter in its mouth. The proper efforts at the proper time and place on the part of the doer are very important to achieve desired ends in the life. The effort also involved the know-how and the skill on the part of the doer.

1.2. So too there is a time factor involved to produce the desired end called KAlam in SanskRt. Even before embarking into any endeavour or undertaking this time factor has to be taken into account. The time calculation helps one to decide the direction and effort involved into it. So performing action required certain time as well as between action and the result of the action there is a period of the time, to be waited. What is the nature of the effort and the end accordingly one can plan the course of the actions. Such as one can plant a mango tree but cannot expect to have mangoes in few months. Nothing happens immediately.

1.3. Daivam – performing actions is in one's hands but the result of the actions is not in one's hands. IN Bhagvad Gita Lord KRSNa says that - karmaNi eva tava adhikraH – You have a freedom over action, with reference to the actions Human being has freedom. mA phaleshu kadAchan – never with reference to the result of the action. (2.38). That means the Lord is clearly presents the fact of the human life that one can choose the action but once the action is performed the result is not in his/her hands. There are number of factors involved in producing the results. In English this is commonly called third factor. In SanskRta it is called Daivam. It is a factor which makes big differences between the success and the failure. This factor is very important and can be called YajNa too.

2. Yaj - pUjane, devatAm uddishya dravya-tyAgaH

As per the sanskRt grammer the word yaj means to worship or to give up things keeping the deities in the mind. In this vast universe we as an individual are limited by our body-mind-sense complex. So with reference to body we have limited power, with reference to senses we have limited perceptions, with reference to mind limited emotionally and with reference to intellect we have limited knowledge. So to live our life, to perform any action and to achieve desired ends we need the blessings from the Lord in the form of various deities or DevatAs.

In Upanishad it is said – YajNa vai ViSNUH, the yajNa is Lord ViSNU because –

2.1. Lord ViSNU sustains and protects the universe by.

2.2. The Lord is also in the form of the Harmony in the universe because which the universe is functioning in order through various DevatAs, natural phenomenon like fire, air, etc.

2.3. The Lord is the giver of the result if the actions. Karma-phaladAtA.

2.4. Above all the word ViSNUH means veveSTi iti VuSNUH. One who pervades in and through entire universe including sentient and insentient. The Lord is the true nature of the universe.

3. As per Bhagavad Gita word YajNa has four meanings –

3.1. DevatAm uddishya dravya tyAgaH, Karma-kAnDa. Rituals to propitiate the deities for blessings Adhidaivika-yajNa (3.9-12)

These are the various actions enjoined or given by the Vedas in which particular deity is invoked for the grace or to fulfil certain desires. It helps us to see the connection between the human efforts and the hidden variables which has in turn their say over the result of the actions. It also reveals the connections between various means and desired ends.

3.2. Jagat-cakra, Universal Harmony, Order in the Universe, Adhibautika-yajNa (3.14-16)

Universal harmony is the appreciation of all-knowing Lord in the form of various laws and orders and hidden variables in the universe.

3.3. TapaH, SAdhanA Adi, Various Disciplines and austerity, etc. AdhyAtmika-yajNa (4.25-31)

The various disciplines are for the betterment of the life and also to become qualified seeker for the self-knowledge.

3.4. Brahma-yajNa, Self-knowledge, knowing self as non-dual Brahman. AtmajNana-yajNa (4.24)

The goal human life is to know the true nature of the self. Once the nature of the self is known there is nothing left to gain or to know. It helps for the freedom here and here after.

As per the Vedic vision the entire world is divided into three world namely Adhi-bhautika that is with reference to the external physical world we experience, perceive, AdhyAtmika that is with reference to our body-mind-sense complex and Adhidaivika that is with reference to the natural phenomenon over which we have no control whatsoever.

In this universe nobody is independent in any manner. The whole universe is interwoven from the micro-cosmic world to the macro-cosmic world of galaxies, star, etc. We live our life inter-dependent called symbiosis. This is true from the stand point of the inert object too. The inert objects, insentient and living being, sentient are influencing each other. So we are constantly in touch with the world and also creating impact on each other.

4. If so we need to be very alert in our actions, speech, emotions and thoughts

In this universe human beings are very special being endowed with the freewill. The freewill expressing itself as one can do, one need not do or do it differently. The freewill provides the freedom over the choice of the actions. Once the freewill is given the choices are in one's own hands. That means it is a choice-less choice, one has to make a choice. The other side of the freewill is that it makes one self-aware person and being so one cannot but make judgement about the self, people around and the world. Due to the freewill one can go against harmony of the universe too. Keeping this freewill, the choice over the actions in mind Lord KRSNa talks about the best of this freewill called YajNa. The word yajNa has multiple meanings in the Veda and Gita.

5. So we are presenting the life style of the human being based on the YajNa, which can mean rituals, harmony, peace, disciplines and happiness in the personal life and in the world. At the moment whole world is going through the big turmoil at every level of the life which has resulted into the anxieties, pain, hurting and competition. If a person live the life as per the life of yajNa one can bring about the changes required for the harmony, peace, pleasure and happiness in day to day life. We can also overcome the problem of the pollution by following the harmony in the universe and thus we can save our mother Earth which is the only habitable planet in the universe so far known to us.

(I) DevatAm uddishya dravya tyAgaH, Karma-kAnDa.

Rituals to propitiate the deities for blessings Adhidaivika-yajNa (3.9-12)

There are five factors involved in performing any YajNa namely life-style, YajmAna-the doer, DevatA and His anugrah-grace, Dravya-materials and BhAvanA-attitude.

I.1 Ishvara-arpaNa-buddhi, offering to the Lord. (Binding and non-binding actions) (3.9) –

YajNa is the Lord ViSNu therefore when the actions are not performed as an offering to the Lord it is binding in nature. So may you perform actions very well as an offering to the Lord which will make you free from the all kinds of the attachments? Thus you can enjoy the freedom from the attachments which is really inhibiting factor while performing action because we do not need to be freed from the action but free while performing the actions. Once we achieve this freedom while performing actions whole life is a fun for us whether external situation is conducive or not.

I.2 YajNa as a wish-fulfilling cow. DevatA-anugraH, Grace of the deities. (3-10)

Along with the creation of the human being our creator Brahmaji also created yajNa and advised people that may you prosper by performing yajNa, yajNa being the wish-fulfilling cow for you. Human beings mind being full of desires through Veda Lord Brahmaji is providing the ritualistic means various, different types of the yajNas

So human being's mind is full of desires and Vedas offers different types of the yajNa to fulfil our desires. Through Vedas only we come to know the relationship between our actions and the results of the actions; between means and the ends. Sometimes the ends, such as son, money is known to us but the local means are not enough then Vedas show us the means such as putra-kameSTi yajNa, etc. Sometimes the means such as charity, austerity is known the ends are not known then Vedas say that the ends are the heaven or pleasure hereafter. Sometimes both means and ends are not known and Vedas enjoin the actions such as agnihotra karma to achieve heaven or higher worlds. So Vedas show us the relationship between means, sAdhan and ends, sAdhya.

I.3 Parama shreyaH, Personal growth (3.11)

By propeciating devatA one can please the devatA and in turn devatA will please you by giving / inferring the desired objects or things. Here the Lord wants us to appreciate that we are not the sole doer for any action. The presiding deities are also required to grace our senses to perform any action therefore we need to appreciate the grace of the deities so by mutual pleasing (bhAvayanam) we can grow externally as well as internally.

(II)Harmony in the world – Jagat-chakra – Adhi-bhautika yajNa (3.14-16)

II.1 Jagat-cakra – Harmony in the world (3.14, 15)

The life cycle on this Earth is due to the yajNa in the sense of the harmony. The Lord says that all livings are born of the food and the food is because of the rain. This is the fact we can see ourselves. But now the Lord is telling something which beyond our perception that the rain is due to the yajNa and yajNa is due to the action performed by human being with the freewill.

Here the word action is technical word. Bhagavan says that actions are enjoined by Veda. The Veda prescribed different types of the actions called yajNa for the human being to fulfil his/her desires and for the personal growth of the person. The Vedas are born of all-knowing Lord, by nature who is the Brahman. Therefore all pervading Brahman, the Lord is eternally / always abiding in the yajNa.

II.2. Jagat-cakra-anusaranam, following the harmony, the universal order

Thus whole world is inter-woven and inter-dependent. One needs to appreciate this harmony in the universe. By not following the harmony and going against the harmony, the order one is harming oneself and also creating disturbance in the world which result into incurring papa, sin.

Even by going against this harmony one is wasting the beautiful opportunity given in the form of human life. Too much indulgence on the part of the human being create disturbance in the harmony of the universe. Thus it ends up into the turbulence in the universe and also harming oneself by incurring papa. It destroys the friendly habitat for the sustenance of the life on the mother Earth.

(III) sAdhanA, tapascharya – Discipline in the personal life – AdhyAtmika yajNa (4.25-31)

In this world the Lord has created beautiful five objects along with the five senses to perceive them and enjoy them. But this same set up can mislead person to the life of indulgences which result into the self-destruction. It also hurts other form of the lives and the environment, surrounding of the mother Earth.

Besides this, the prime goal of human life is not the enjoyments but to gain the limitless happiness and the freedom from the insecurity and sadness every human being is facing. To achieve this mind should be equipped and qualified to understand therefore in the forth chapter Lord KRSNa enlisted certain disciplines. They help for the healthy and happy-cheerful life. They are also necessary for the personal growth as a bloomed flower. These disciplines also pave the road for the self knowledge, knowing oneself as a limitless happiness. There are totally 16 disciplines enumerated in the verses 25-31. At the same time the Lord also shows the limitations of these disciplines being karma, actions. They are not the direct means for the limitless happiness, they being limited by time, place and efforts.

(III.1) Daiva-yajNa (4.25) – offering materials to Devata

(III.2) Brahma-agnau, yajNa (4.25) – offering one's ego into the fire of the self, Brahman

(III.3) Samyama-agnau, yajNa (4.26.1) – offering senses into the fire of the samyam, mastery over the senses (SamaH)

(III.4) Indriya-agnau, yajNa (4.26.2) – Offering the objects of the senses into the fire of Indriya, senses (DamaH)

(III.5) Atma-samyama-agnau, yajNa (4.27) – offering activities of the karmaendriyANi, organs of the actions and jNanedriyaNi, sense organs into the fire of Atma-samyam, self-control - into the fire of the form of meditation or contemplation illumined by the self-knowledge. (Dhyana-prayaNaH, contemplative life)

(III.6) Variiious yajNa (4.28) Four types of the yajNas

(III.6.1) Dravya-yajNa, Charity, Sharing the things like, foods, money, cloths, etc

(III.6.2) Tapo-yajNa, austerity, wilfully disciplined oneself with denying the objects of pleasures though enjoying is not against dharma

(III.6.3) Yoga-yajNa, practicing the ASTaNg-yoga – yama, Niyama, etc

(III.6.4) Swadhyaya-yajNa, regular study of the Veda, scriptures under the qualified teachers

(III.7) PrANAyAma-prAyaNaH (4.29) practicing daily prANAyAma – prANe apAnama- recaka, apAne prANam-pUraNA and prANAyAma- kumbhaka

(III.8) Niyata-AhArAH (4.30.1) – having discipline in the eating daily foods, offering the foods into the fire of the jaTHaRa-agni, digestive fire, which helps the person – both the seeker and the samsari to lead very healthy and happy life

(III.9) Purpose of the yajNa - yajNa-kSapita-kalmSaH, (4.30.2) destroying the impurities and the defects of the mind by the performance of these yajNAs, the Purpose of performing all these yajNas is to have a pure, calm and cheerful mind.

(III.10) Purpose of the yajNa (4.31.1) yajNa-shiSTA-bhujaH, one who enjoys the left over after performing the various yajNAs gains sanAtana Brahman, the limitless happiness being qualified for the self-knowledge

(III.11) Result of not performing the yajNa (4.31.2) one who does not lead the life yajNa, how is he going to have happiness here in this world or even the world above. He cannot be happy here or here after.

(III.12) (4. 32, 33) Limitations of the yajNa (4.32) though various such yajNas are enjoined by the Vedas still yajNa being the actions, any action is limited time-wise, place-wise and effort-wise so cannot give me limitless result. Really speaking all actions is resolved into the knowledge of Brahman being AtmA. Therefore the Brahma-yajNa is the one which liberates one from the bondage of life-death, sorrow and the ignorance.

(IV) Brahma-yajNa (4.24) (Atma-jNANam) in the form of the knowledge of the Brahman called jNana-yajNa too.

Among various yajNas jNana-yajNa is the real yajNa because it is the vision that liberates person from this on-going process of birth and death cycle of SamsAra. The person sees that everything here is one non-dual Brahman, which is non-separate from him. The doer is Brahman, the object of the action, karma is Brahman and all the kArakas are also Brahman. Finally the action itself is Brahman and the person who has gain this vision is also Brahman. In the verse 24 Bhagvan gives us this beautiful vision of - everything is Brahman by the illustration that wise-person sees various factors involved in the performance of yajNa as Brahman. So it is called Brahma-yajNa. This vision makes the life luxury. The freewill given to human being becomes the privilege for the wise-person due to this vision.