

Bhagavad- Gita

Extracts from Sri Sankara's Bhashya dealing with some concepts in the Gita, with explanatory notes by S.N.Sastri
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Abbreviations

GSB---Gita-Sankara Bhashya
 Br.up---Brhadaranyaka upanishad
 Ch,up.---Chandogya upanishad
 Sv.up---Svetasvatara upanishad
 Tai.up—Taittiriya upanishad

Adhyasa- Superimposition

GSB 13-26 Kshetrakshetrajnayoh vishayavishayinoh -----
 ----apagacchati mithyajnanam.

The body, which is referred to as the field and the Atma, the indwelling Self, referred to as the knower of the field in this verse are wrongly looked upon by us as equally real, though the body has no reality in the absolute sense. The Self [Brahman] is alone real. The body appears to be real in the same manner as, when a rope is mistaken for a snake, the illusory snake appears to be real. The snake is said to be superimposed on the rope. This is known as superimposition or Adhyasa. Similarly the identification of the body and the Self and looking upon the two as forming one entity is due to superimposition of the body on the Self. They are the object and the subject, respectively, and are of different natures. Their relationship is of the form of superimposition of each on the other as also of their qualities, as a consequence of the absence of discrimination between the real nature of the field and the knower of the field. This is like the association of a rope, nacre, etc, with the superimposed snake, silver, etc, owing to the absence of discrimination between them. The association of the field and the knower of the field in the form of superimposition is described as false knowledge [mithyajnanam]. After having known the distinction between, and the characteristics of, the field and the knower of the field according to the scriptures and having separated, like a stalk from the munja grass, the above-described knower of the field from the field whose characteristics have been shown earlier, he who realises the knower of the field, which, in accordance with 13.12 is devoid of all distinctions created by adjuncts-- as identical with Brahman and who has the firm realisation that the field is surely unreal like an elephant created by magic, a thing seen in dream, an imaginary city seen in the sky, etc. though it appears as real-- for him false knowledge becomes eradicated, since it is opposed to the right knowledge described above.[For further elucidation see 'The three levels of reality' on page21]. .

Ahankara

GSB.3.27—Ahankara is looking upon the aggregate of body and organs as “I”.

Atma- The Self

GSB-2.18- The Self is self-established. It is not revealed by any pramana, including the scriptures—Atma svatahsiddhah-----na tu ajnatarthajnapakatvena...

The scripture becomes a Pramana or valid means of knowledge regarding the Self only by helping to eliminate the superimposition {on the Self} of the attributes alien to it, and not by revealing the Self directly as an object previously not known, [as Pratyaksha or direct perception does].

GSB.2.19---The object of the Gita is to remove the cause of Samsara {transmigration}, such as grief and delusion and not to enjoin action for its own sake. {Action is to be performed only as a means to the attainment of Self-knowledge through the purification of the mind.}

GSB.2.21---The Self, while remaining immutable, is imagined to be the knower of objects such as sound, which are actually perceived by the intellect and the organs of sense. This is because the Self is not distinguished from the mental states, due to nescience.

Similarly, the Self is spoken of as having become enlightened only because of avidya {nescience} associating it with that intellectual perception- which is also unreal- which takes the form of discrimination between the Self and the not-Self, while in reality the Self has undergone no change whatever. { That is to say, neither ignorance nor its opposite, enlightenment, pertains to the Self. Both relate only to the intellect {or mind} and are wrongly attributed to the Self, which, however, is ever free from avidya or ignorance.}.

G-2.18-The Atma cannot be known through any of the pramanas {means of knowledge}---see Sankarabhashya on ‘ aprameya’ in Vishnusahasranama. Being devoid of sound, form, taste, smell and touch, Atma cannot be known by pratyaksha pramana. Nor can it be known by anumana{inference} as it has no mark {linga} which can be the basis of inference. It cannot be known by upamana {analogy} as it has no parts and as analogy functions by comparing one part of a thing with the corresponding part of another thing.

Arthapatti {implication} too cannot apply. Atma cannot be known by the criterion of abhava {negation} because it is always existent and is the witness of all negation. Nor can Atma be known by means of the scriptures, because it is devoid of any peculiar features that can be deduced from the scriptures. Then it may be asked, how is it said {in Brahma sutra 1.1.3,} that the scriptures are the valid source of knowledge of Brahman? The answer is- The Atma is the witness of all pramanas, being the Supreme light and so it cannot be the object of any means of knowledge; yet nescience superimposes on Brahman something which it is not. What the scripture does is only to remove

this superimposition. Then Brahman {or the Atma} shines in its own light.

GSB-2.25—As the self is inaccessible to any of the senses, it is not manifest.

GSB-4.25—The offering of the self in Brahman means the realisation that the indwelling self which is associated with the limiting adjuncts such as the body is identical with the supreme Brahman devoid of all limiting adjuncts. In this verse the word yajna is used in the sense of Atma.

GSB-5.13—The Self, by nature, is not an agent {doer}, nor does it make the body and senses act. See also Gita 2.25, 13.31, and Br. Up. 4.3.7 -

Bhakti - an essential requisite for liberation.

GSB-2.39---The Lord says-“ You will get rid of your bondage by the attainment of Self-knowledge through God’s grace.

GSB-15.1-{Introduction}- Yasmat madadhinam-----moksham gacchanti.—those who worship Me with devotion attain liberation by My grace.

SB—18.62—Tam eva Isvaram saranam ----sasvatam nityam. –Take refuge in the Lord alone with your whole being for getting rid of the sufferings of this transmigratory existence and to attain the eternal supreme peace.

GSB-18.65---Here also the importance of devotion is stressed.

Brahma-sutra—2.3.41. –SB thereon—Tadanugraha hetukena-----bhavitum arhati. –Only through Self-knowledge attained by His grace does one become liberated.

The extracts from Sri Sankara's commentaries given above disprove the contention of some western scholars that there is no place for devotion to a personal God in Sri Sankara's philosophy.

Brahma-sakshatkara - Self-realisation

GSB-18.50---Purvapakshah—nanu vishayakaram -----atmakaram
jnanam iti anupapannam.---

Objection—Knowledge takes the form of its object. But it is not admitted anywhere that the Self is an object, or even that it has form.

Pseudo-vedantin—Do not such texts as –‘radiant like the sun’{Sv.3.8}, ‘of the nature of effulgence’{Ch.up.3.14.2} and ‘self-effulgent’{Br.up.4.3.9} say that the Self has form?

Objection—No, because those sentences are meant to refute the idea that the Self is of the nature of darkness. ---There is specific denial of form in ‘formless’ {Katha up.1.3.15} and also in Katha-2.3.9, Sv.4.20, etc, which indicate that the Self is not an object of perception. Therefore it is illogical to say that there can be knowledge which takes the form of the Self.

Siddhanta {Vedantin}—Na, atyantanirmalatva-svacchatva-sukshmatvopapatteh atmanah -----atmadrishthih kriyate. -----No. Since it is established that the Self is supremely taintless, pure and subtle and that the intellect also can have taintlessness etc, like the Self, it stands to reason that the intellect can take a form resembling the Self, which is consciousness itself. The mind becomes impressed with the semblance of the intellect, the organs become impressed with the semblance of the mind and the body becomes impressed with the semblance of the organs. {In other words the intellect, the mind, the organs of perception and action and the entire physical body, which are all really insentient matter, appear to be sentient because of the Self which is pure consciousness} This is why everyone identifies himself with his body-mind complex.

Atah atmavishayam jnanam -----grhyamanatvat.---Hence, knowledge about the Self is not a matter for injunction. What has to be done is only the eradication of the superimposition of name, form, etc, which are not the Self and not the {acquisition of} knowledge of the Self. Knowledge of the Self means only the realisation that the Self {or Brahman} alone really exists and that all objects experienced are only superimposed on it, just like the illusory snake on a rope.

Tasmat avidyaadhyaropana-----prasiddhatvat. ----Therefore it is only the elimination of what has been superimposed on Brahman due to ignorance that has to be done. Since Brahman is self-luminous, it becomes manifest when the superimposition is removed with the help of the scriptures. It is therefore said here that no effort is necessary to attain knowledge of Brahman. All effort is only for removal of the wrong notion that the universe is absolutely real.

Avidya-kalpita-nama-rupa----avivekinam.-----It is because the intellect is distracted by the names and forms which are conjured up due to nescience that Brahman, even though self-evident, easily realisable, nearer than all else and identical with oneself, appears to be concealed, difficult to realise, very far and different from oneself to the unenlightened.

-Bahyakaranivrtta-buddhinam tu-----svasannam asti. But to those whose mind has been withdrawn from external objects and who have received the grace of a teacher, as well as acquired purity of mind, there is nothing more blissful, manifest, well-known, easily realised and nearer to oneself than the Self.

Tasmat bahya-akara-bheda-nivrttih.eva karanam. ----Therefore, the cessation of the perception of differences in the form of external objects is alone the means for being established in the Self.

Tasmat yatha svadehasya ----iti siddham-----Therefore, just as for knowing one's own body there is no need of any other {external} means of knowledge, so also there is no need of any other means of knowledge for the realisation of the Self which is innermost. Hence it is established that steadfastness in the knowledge of the Self is a fact very well known to discriminating people.

Yesham api nirakaram jnanam-----abhyupagantavyam---

Even to those who hold the view that knowledge is formless {the Bhatta- mimamsakas}, and not cognised by direct perception, cognition of an object is dependent on knowledge. Hence it has to be admitted that knowledge [of the Self] can be as immediate as the experience of happiness and other states of the mind.

Paramahansa-parivrajakah---This term is found to be applied in the Gita-bhashya only to one who has attained Self-realisation—See 13.31, 18.53 and 18,66,

Karanam – Karyam--Cause and Effect

GSB-2.16---Vikarah ca vyabharati-----anupalabdheh asan. ---
Every effect is temporary .For instance, an effect such as an earthen pot, presented to consciousness by the eye, is not real, for it is not perceived apart from clay. Thus every effect is unreal, since it is never seen as distinct from its cause. An effect is not perceived before its production and after its destruction.

Dhyanam---Meditation

GSB-13.24-----Dhyanam nama -----Dhyanam.
Meditation means—contemplation {on the Self} after withdrawing into the mind the organs of hearing etc, from their objects such as sound and then withdrawing the mind into the indwelling self. It is a constant and uninterrupted current of thought like a line of pouring oil.

Jivanmukti

GSB-2.51--5.24,--6.27--- 18.25---Liberation consists in remaining identified with the changeless Self even while living in the present body. Liberation is not something to be attained after death..

Jnanam---Knowledge

Cannot be combined with karma—
GSB-2.11---Sankhyabuddhim yogabuddhim ca asritya dve nishthe vibhakte -----pasyata-----Thus, on the basis of the Sankhya and yoga standpoints, two distinct paths have been laid down by the Lord {in Gita-3.3}, considering the impossibility of Jnana and Karma being conjoined in the same person simultaneously, Jnana being based on

the idea of non-agency and unity and Karma on the idea of agency and multiplicity.

Yasya tu ajnanat ragadidoshatah va ----yena buddheh samuccayah syat.---A person, who, having undertaken an action {with the sense of doership}, because of ignorance {of the Self}, or due to defects like attachment, and having{even before the action has been completed} attained purity of mind{and consequently detachment-vairagya} as a result of the performance of sacrificial rites, the giving of gifts and the practice of austerities,{yajna,dana and tapa,-which lead to vividisha, the desire to know the Self-see Br. Up.4.4.22}, realises the supreme Truth that he is Brahman, the non-doer, may still continue to perform the action {which he has been doing} in the same manner as before, solely with the object of setting an example to the world, in spite of having nothing to gain thereby. This is however only a semblance of action. {It is really akarma- inaction, since the notion of agency is no longer there—see Gita-4.18}. It cannot therefore be said that there is a combination of Jnana and Karma here. {The doctrine of Jnana-Karma-samuccaya of the Mimamsakas and others is refuted here.}.

Liberation is due to knowledge alone-----

GSB.2.11---Tasmat Gitasu kevalat -----iti niscitah arthah---The definite conclusion of the Gita is therefore that liberation is attained by the knowledge of the Reality alone and not by knowledge combined with action. {Once the knowledge of the Reality has arisen, liberation follows immediately and action or karma is no longer necessary}.

GSB-2.21---‘Manasaivanudrashtavyam ‘ iti sruteh-{Br. Up. 4.4.19}. ---karanam.---The sruti says- ‘It can be known by the mind alone’. The mind, refined by sama , dama, etc, and equipped with the teachings of the scripture and of the guru is the means for the realisation of the Self.

GSB- Introduction-----Tasya asya Gitasastrasya -----dharmat bhavati.---The aim of the Gita is the attainment of supreme bliss, a complete cessation of samsara , along with its cause. This is attained by being established in the knowledge of the Self., preceded by the renunciation of all works{by the knowledge that the Self is not an agent and that all action pertains only to the body-mind complex}.

GSB-2.11----Panda atmavishaya buddhih -----iti sruteh.-----‘Panda’ means ‘knowledge of the Self’. Those who have it are Panditah—vide the sruti—‘securing the status of knowers of the Self—{Br. Up. 3.5.1}.

GSB-2.16—Tattvadarsinah—The word ‘Tat’ is a pronoun, known in Sanskrit as sarvanama, which also means ‘the name of the “all”’. Brahman is ‘all’ and so the name of Brahman is ‘Tat’. The real nature of Brahman is therefore ‘Tattvam’. Those who see that Brahman are therefore ‘Tattvadarsinah’.

GSB—2.69—Tatra api pravartaka-pramana-abhave ----- sambhavati.----{the validity of all pramanas holds good only so long as knowledge of the Self has not arisen}.

Pramatrtvam hi atmanah ---iva prabodhe. ---Once the Self is realised, it is known as bereft of all limiting adjuncts and is therefore no longer looked upon as a seer, etc. The Self is just pure consciousness. It becomes a seer, hearer, etc, only when looked upon as associated with the limiting adjuncts in the form of the body, etc. After the eradication of this wrong association by the knowledge of the real nature of the Self, attained through the teachings of the Vedas, the Vedas themselves cease to be authoritative for such a person. This is like the objects seen in a dream becoming non-existent on waking up. The sruti which is valid in the state of ignorance {of the Self}, and whose injunctions and prohibitions are binding, loses its validity in the case of a person who has realised the Self, even though the realisation was achieved only with the help of the sruti.

GSB-3.1--- Tasmāt kevalat eva jñānat-----sarvopaniṣatsu ca. --- Hence, the definite conclusion in the Gita and all the Upanishads is that liberation follows from knowledge of the Self alone.

GSB-3.3----Jñānam eva yogah jñānayogah----Jñāna itself is the means {to liberation}.

In the words Jñānayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Karmayoga, the word ‘yoga’ signifies—‘the means to unity’—yujyate anena iti yogah.

GSB-3.3---Jñānanishtha tu karmanishthopaya-labdhatmika ----anya-anapeksha--.

Steadfastness in knowledge {of the Self}, having come into existence through the means of steadfastness in action [karma], leads to liberation independently, without depending on anything else.

GSB-3.4---Naishkarmyam--- svarupena eva avasthanam—‘Freedom from action’ is the state of being established in the knowledge of the Self and abiding as the action-less Self.

GSB-3.4---Karmayogopayatvam-----pratipadanat---Karmayoga is the means to the yoga of knowledge characterized by freedom from action, as has been established in the Upanishads as well as in the Gita-----

GSB-3.4---Na kevalat karmaparityaga-matrat-----prapnoti---By the mere renunciation of action without the knowledge {of the Self}, steadfastness in the yoga of knowledge, characterized by freedom from action {naishkarmya} cannot be attained.

GSB-3.41--- Jnanam sastratah ----avabodhah. –Jnana means knowledge about the Self derived from the scriptures and one’s teacher [intellectual knowledge].

Vijnanam viseshatah tadanubhavah---Vijnana means the realisation as an actual experience of that intellectual knowledge, the realisation in the form ‘I am Brahman’.

GSB-4.19---Karmadau akarmadi-darsanam jnanam---Seeing action as non-action [i.e. knowing that the Self does not perform any action], is ‘jnanam’. See Gita 4.18.

GSB-4.28---Jnanam sastrartha-parijnanam—Here the word ‘Jnana’ is used in the sense of mere book knowledge.

GSB-5.12---Sattvasuddhi---nishthakramena iti vakyaseshah. – Liberation is attained through the stages of purification of the mind, acquisition of knowledge [paroksha-jnanam], renunciation of all action [which really means, looking upon all action [karma] as non-action [akarma], since they are performed by the body and not by the Self] and remaining as the pure Self devoid of all adjuncts.

GSB-6.8---Jnanam sastrokta-padarthanam-----svanubhavakaranam-- -Jnana is intellectual knowledge of what is taught by the sruti. Vijnana is making that knowledge the subject of one’s own experience. To know Brahman is to be Brahman, that is, to realise that one is Brahman.

See also GSB-6.46 and 16.1 for the meaning of the word ‘Jnana’.

Kama and Raga

See GSB-7.11 for the meanings.

Tulapurushadih

GSB-11.48---The reference here is to ‘Tulabharam’, well known in Kerala temples.

Karma—Action

Sri Sankara takes the word 'karma' in the Gita as meaning generally the various rites laid down in the srutis and smrtis only and not secular activities. In some verses where he considers that both religious and secular activities are meant, he specifically says so.

GSB-2.11---Iti avidyakamavata eva sarvani karmani srautadini darsitani--.Thus the Vedic rites are intended only for him who has not attained knowledge of the Self and who has therefore desires to be fulfilled.

GSB-2.21---*Vidushah karma-asambhava-vacanat-----avagamyate*—*From the assertion of the impossibility of action in the case of an enlightened man, the conclusion of the Lord is evident that the acts enjoined by the scriptures are intended only for the unenlightened.*

Difference between knowledge and action.

GSB-2.21---*Agnihotradi-----anushtheyam bhavati*---There remains something for the unenlightened man to do, after having understood the meaning of the injunction regarding Agnihotra, etc. This action, namely Agnihotra or other sacrificial rites, requires the acquisition of many necessary accessories. The unenlightened man, while performing such actions, has the idea "I am the performer, this is my duty". Nothing, however, remains to be performed subsequent to the realisation of the truth of such teachings as are contained in 2.20,etc, regarding the real nature of the Self.

GSB—Introduction---*Abhyudayarthah api-----phalabhisandhi-varjitah*---Though the rites laid down in the Vedas are intended to confer on the performer various benefits, such as worldly prosperity, enjoyment of the pleasures of heaven after the present life and the like, the performance of the same rites without desire for these benefits and in a spirit of dedication to God brings about purity of the mind and makes the person fit for Self-knowledge.

Suddhasattvasya-----pratipadyate---Since such work purifies the mind and makes it fit for the dawn of knowledge, it is also indirectly the means to the attainment of liberation.

GSB-2.46---*Tasmat prak jnananishtha-adhikara-prapteh -----kartavyam*---Therefore, for a man who is ignorant of the Self it is necessary to perform action before he becomes fit for the path of knowledge.

GSB-2.47--- *Karmani eva adhikarah-----avasthayam ityarthah*---You [Arjuna and all others who have not yet become fit for the path of

jnana] are qualified for action alone. And, while performing action, let there be no craving for the fruit. [This verse is very often misinterpreted as laying down the performance of action for its own sake. From the context it is however clear that what is brought out is the contrast between the paths of knowledge and action. As long as one has not attained purity of mind, that is to say, one has not developed total detachment, one has to practise Karmayoga. The path of Jnana is only for those who have acquired total detachment towards all enjoyments. This is reiterated in different words in Gita-6.3].

Yada hi karmaphala-trshna-prayuktah-----bhavet---When a person performs action with desire for the fruit thereof, then he will be subject to rebirth in order to experience the fruit of that action, [because the fruits of all actions cannot be experienced in the same life].

[This verse makes it clear that karmayoga, or the performance of all actions without desire for the fruit and as an offering to God, is meant only for those who yearn for liberation. The argument is often heard that all action is motivated by the expectation of reward in some form or other and so it is unrealistic to expect people to work without desire. This argument overlooks the fact that Karmayoga is not advocated for everyone, but only for those very few who are not interested in the pleasures of worldly life, but yearn only for liberation. Of course, performance of action in the spirit of Karmayoga is good even for the purely worldly-minded, as thereby they can enjoy mental tranquillity and freedom from tension.].

GSB-2.48---Yogasthah san kuru -----tyaktva Dhananjaya---

Steadfast in yoga, perform action merely for God's sake, casting off even such thoughts as –“May God be pleased”, and being equanimous in success and failure.

Kah asau yogah----yoga ucyate---What is this yoga which Arjuna has been advised to practise while performing action? The answer is—Yoga is evenness of mind in success and failure. Here yoga means karmayoga.

GSB-2.50---Buddhiyuktah----yujyasva ghatasva---A person who has evenness of mind casts off in this world both punya [merit] and papa [sin] by the attainment of mental purity and, as a result, knowledge of the Self. Therefore devote yourself to Karmayoga, the wisdom of equanimity.

GSB-2.50---The correct meaning of the statement-‘Yogah karmasu kausalam’ is, according to the Bhashya—Yoga is skill in the

performance of action. The evenness of mind in success and failure arising from the mental attitude of surrender of the fruit of all work to God is what is here described as skill in action. This is because by such evenness of mind actions which are by nature the cause of bondage are converted into an effective means for the purification of the mind and the attainment of Self-knowledge.

[This is another verse which is often wrongly interpreted as meaning that efficiency in the performance of any action is Yoga. This interpretation will be found to be totally untenable if it is remembered that performance of action is advocated in the Gita only as a means to the attainment of liberation and not as a means for worldly success. It is another matter that such an interpretation can be used to urge people to perform their duties efficiently, but that would be tearing the verse out of context].

GSB-2.69---Atah karmani----- karmahetutvopapattih-----See translation given under Sthitaprajna.

GSB-3.1---Na tavat nityanam-----sajjanma-asambhava-sruteh-It cannot be imagined that sin, which is a positive entity, can be generated from the mere non-performance of obligatory duties [nitya and naimittika karma], because of the Upanishadic text, “How can existence come out of non-existence?” [Ch. Up. 6.2.2], which speaks of the impossibility of the birth of existence from non-existence.

GSB-3.3---Karma-nishthayah-----na svatantryena---Action is a means to liberation only

by virtue of being the cause of the attainment of knowledge and not independently. [Knowledge of the Self is alone the direct and independent cause of liberation].

In the words Karma-yoga, Jnana-yoga and Bhakti-yoga, the word ‘yoga’ is used in the sense of ‘the means to union’—yujyate anena iti yogah.

GSB-3.4---Yajnadnam iha janmani-----jnananishtha-hetunam-----Vedic rites, such as sacrifices, performed in the present life or in past lives are the cause of the purification of the mind. Thereby they become the cause of steadfastness in Self-knowledge.

Jnanam utpadyate pumsam -----atmani-----Knowledge arises in a person after the attenuation of sins. One sees the Self in oneself like the reflection in a clean mirror.

GSB-3.9---Karmayoga is the performance of action without desire for the fruit and as an offering to God. This verse contains a complete

definition of Karmayoga. It is clear from this verse that there is the sense of agency [doership] in Karmayoga.

In Gita verses 3.4 to 3.8 it has been emphasized that a person should engage himself in the path of action till he attains Self-knowledge. The evils arising from non-performance of action are brought out in verses 3.9 to 3.16.

GSB-3.17---The ideas contained in Br up 3.5.1 are brought out here.

GSB-3.19---Asaktah----- ----sattvasuddhidvarena ityarthah----By performing actions without attachment and as an offering to God a person attains purity of mind. Then he attains liberation through Self-knowledge.

GSB-3.30----Mayi Vasudeve-----buddhya-----Dedicating all actions to Me, who am Vasudeva, the omniscient supreme Lord, the Self of all, with the mind intent on the Self, with discriminating wisdom, with the thought 'I am an agent and I do this action for God as His servant' and being free from expectation of any reward-----It is clear from this that in Karmayoga there is the sense of agency.

GSB-4.14----Iti evam yah anyah----bhavanti ityarthah-----Anyone else, too, who knows Me as his own Self and knows 'I am not the performer of action and I do not hanker after the fruit', does not become bound by actions. For him actions cease to be the cause of further bodies.

GSB-4.15---Tasmat tvam purvaih ----nirvartitam---- Till the attainment of Self-knowledge actions are necessary for the purification of the mind. After the dawn of knowledge also actions should continue to be performed in order to set an example to others and to prevent them from taking a wrong path.

GSB-4.17---Karma is action enjoined by the scriptures, Vikarma is prohibited action and Akarma is inaction, which means action performed with the realisation that the Self is not the doer.

GSB-4.18---Na api nityanam ---darsitam.----- No evil, which is a positive entity, can arise from the non-performance of nityakarma, which is negative. See also Tai. Up. 1.1-Introduction—Nityanam ca akaranam abhavah----

GSB-4.20---Sah kutascit nimittat----A person who has already attained Self-knowledge may continue to perform action, but that is really Akarma, inaction and is only for the welfare of the world. .

Vidusha kriyamanam karma -----In reality, actions performed by a Jnani are akarma since he is the actionless Self.

GSB-4.22----Loka vyavahara-samanya-darsanena-----akarta eva-----
Seeing similarity with common human behaviour, agency is attributed to a Jnani by ordinary people; but from his own point of view he is not a Karta, performer of action. [See examples given in Pancadasi—7.259].

GSB-5.1----{Introduction]- Atra ucyate atmaavidah-----asambhavah syat----For the knower of the Self, since mithya-jnana—nescience--has been eradicated, karmayoga, which is based on nescience, becomes impossible. [This again establishes that karmayoga involves the notion of agency.]

Janmadisarvavikriya-rahitatvena-----uktam syat-----It is clear from this passage that Atmajnananishtha is the same as Sarvakarmasannyasa—that is, all Karma becomes in reality Akarma. In other words, Sarvakarmasannyasa is not giving up all action, but it is the realisation that all Karma is performed only by the body-mind complex and that the Self is only an uninvolved witness.

In 2.17, 2.19 and 2.21, it has been stated that the Jnani is not an agent, since he has realised that he is not the body or the mind, but he is the action-less Self.

Anatmavitkartrka-karmayoganishthatah-----prthak-karanat-----In this passage karmayoga which is applicable only to those who are ignorant of the Self is distinguished from Jnanayoga, characterised by dwelling in the state of identity with the actionless Self.

GSB-6.3---- Here it is made clear that karmayoga is not applicable to one who has attained Self-knowledge. Here Yogarudha means one who has attained Self-knowledge.

GSB-5.3----Karmayogi nityasannyasi---- A Karmayogi who is free from attachment and aversion is considered to be a Sannyasi, a man of renunciation, even though engaged in action. [This is actually said as a praise of karmayoga].

GSB-5,10----Yah tu punah atattvavit -----sarvakarmani-----One who is ignorant of the Self and is engaged in karmayoga, who surrenders all actions to God with the idea 'I am working for Him, as a servant for his master' and renouncing attachment even to liberation, does not incur any bondage because of his actions, just as a lotus leaf, even while remaining in water, does not become wet.

GSB-5.11----Mamatvavarjitaih-----sattvasuddhaye ityarthah-----Here also it is clear that there is the sense of agency, though there is no craving for the fruit.

GSB-5.13---- Sarvani karmani-----tishthati sukham-----Having given up all karma—nitya, naimittika and kama—through discriminating wisdom, that is, by looking upon karma as akarma---- here also it is clear that giving up all actions only means realising that one is the Self which does not act and that all actions are done only by the body. This is the meaning of Sarvakarmasannyasa.

GSB-6.1 [Introduction] ----Nityasya ca karmanah-----We have said that since the nityakarmas are laid down by the Vedas, they must produce some result. [The result is purification of the mind or heaven].

GSB-6.3---Dhyanayogasya-----darsayati-----Since karmayoga is the means to make the mind fit for dhyanayoga, it is praised as Sannyasa.

GSB-12.12---Kamah ca sarve---santih iti---‘All desires’ means the fruits of all rites and duties enjoined in the Srutis and Smritis. From the renunciation of these, peace comes immediately to the enlightened man.

GSB-12.13---Atra ca atmesvarabhedam-----samuddharta iti-----The yoga consisting in the concentration of the mind on God as the Cosmic Person, as also the performance of actions etc, for God have been spoken of by assuming a difference between God and Self. Karmayoga is not possible for the meditator on the Immutable, who is aware of the identity of the Self with God. The Lord is similarly pointing out the impossibility of the karmayogin’s meditation on the Immutable. In verse 12.4, having declared that those who meditate on the Immutable are independent so far as the attainment of liberation is concerned, the Lord shows in 12.7 that others are dependent on God.

GSB-13.31----Ata etasmin---bhagavata---- It has been declared by the Lord in various places that there is no duty enjoined on those who have attained to the discriminating knowledge of the supreme Reality, who remain steadfast in that knowledge, who have rejected all actions arising out of nescience [presumably all desire-prompted actions] and who are Paramahansa-parivrajakas. [In this Bhashya this term seems to mean only a person who has become a Jivanmukta and not necessarily one who belongs to a particular order of Sannyasis].

GSB-18.3----Ye tu paramarthadarsinah-----The enlightened ones who have realised the supreme truth are alone competent for steadfastness in knowledge, or Jnanayoga, which is characterized by

the renunciation of all action [which means realising that one is the actionless Self, the uninvolved witness of all the actions done by the body]. The path of action or Karmayoga is not for such a person.

GSB-18.6---Etani api tu karmani-----uttamam-----Even the actions such as sacrifice, charity and austerity have to be performed without attachment to the result.

GSB-18.9---Nityanam karmanam----- phalam ca iti-----We said that the Lord's utterance is proof of the fruitfulness of nitya and naimittika karma. Or, even if these are considered to be devoid of any fruit, since no fruit is mentioned in the Sruti, still the ordinary, unenlightened man does certainly imagine that these produce a result in the form of purification of the mind or avoidance of evil. The Lord indicates by the words 'giving up the fruit' that even this thought should be given up. This giving up of attachment and fruit in respect of Nityakarma arises from Sattvaguna. [See commentary of Anandagiri on Br.up.1.3.1].

GSB-18.10----In this verse the term 'Akusalam karma' has been interpreted by Sri Sankara as meaning 'Kamyakarma' and 'Kusalam karma' as 'Nityakarma'. This is in conformity with his interpretation of the word 'kausalam' in Gita 2.50. The gist of this verse is—The man of renunciation does not hate Kamyakarma on the ground that it will lead to bondage and further birth. Nor does he become attached to Nityakarma, thinking that it is the means to liberation. In short, he is totally free from likes and dislikes.

Kada punah asau-----samyuktah ityetat----- When is it that a person becomes free from aversion towards 'Akusalam karma' or Kamyakarma and attachment towards 'Kusalam karma' or Nityakarma? That happens when he has become imbued with Sattvaguna, which is the means to the knowledge that discriminates between the Self and the not-Self.

GSB-18.10---- Yah adhikrtah purushah-----slokena uktam-----The person, who, being competent to perform rites, practises Karmayoga attains purity of mind and realises that he is the Self which does not act and is free from all modifications such as birth, growth, etc. This is the state of 'Naishkarmya'.

GSB-18.11-----Yah punah adhikrtah san -----na tattvage-----On the other hand, for the unenlightened person, who identifies himself with the body and has the firm conviction that he is the doer, it is not possible to give up actions totally. He should perform actions without desire for the fruit.

GSB-18.46---God is the Antaryami.

GSB-18.66---Nityanam ca karmanam-----The Sruti says that Nityakarmas have heaven as their result. See also Ch.up. 2.23.1 and Br.up. 1.5.16. See also Note no. 5 on page 6 of Mahesh Research Institute edition of Br. upanishad where it is said that heaven is the result of Nityakarma.

Madhusudana Sarasvati says in his commentary on Gita 18.6—Kama karma also produces purity, but that is only the purity necessary for reaping the result of that karma and not the purity necessary for attaining Self-knowledge. The Vartikakara [Suresvara] says- Even for enjoying the pleasures of heaven purity is necessary; a pig cannot enjoy heavenly joys.

Krishna is Atma

GSB-4.14----Iti evam yah anyah ----bhavanti-----Anyone else too, who knows Me thus, as his own self, and realises that he is not a doer and has no craving for the fruits of actions [performed by the body] incurs no bondage. His actions cease to be the cause of further birth. In verses 4.9 and 9.11 also, what is said about Krishna should be taken as applying also to every individual [contd. on p.21].

For the meaning of the word 'Krishna' see GSB-6.34. See also Narayaneeyam-Dasaka 44, verse 5. 'Krs' stands for Existence and 'na' for Bliss. The union of the two is Krsna, the Supreme Brahman.

In Gita 4.9 the Lord says that any one who knows the truth about His birth and action will be liberated. The truth is that He is the Atma, which has no birth and does not act. The real meaning of this verse, therefore, is that one who realises that he too, like Krishna, is really the Atma and that he has neither birth nor any activity will become liberated. The interpretation that by merely hearing the accounts of the Lord's incarnations and the deeds performed by Him one can get liberation ignores the significance of the word 'tattvatah' which means 'in reality.'

In Gita 9.11 the Lord says that fools disregard him, taking him to be just an ordinary human being. Interestingly, an almost identical statement is made by Kapila, another incarnation of the Lord, in Srimad Bhagavatam, Skandha 3, ch.29, verse 21. There Kapila says that he, as Brahman or Atma, dwells in every living being, but

unaware of this, people worship only images, thinking that God is only there. A comparison of these two verses shows that the meaning of both is the same. The real meaning of Gita 9.11 is not that people do not recognize Krishna as the Lord, but that they do not realise that Krishna, as the Atma, dwells in every living being. Gita verses 9.12 and 13 are comparable in their real import to verses 22 to 25 of ch.29 of Skandha 3 of the Bhagavata. The real meaning of the Gita verses 4.9, 4.14 and 9.11 is thus much more profound than what appears on a superficial reading.

Vairagyam—Detachment

GSB-6.35----Vairagyam nama-----vairshnyam-----Vairagyam means being free from any hankering after enjoyments because of the realisation of their evil consequences.

GSB-15.1 [Introduction] Viraktasya hi -----na anyasya-----Only a person with complete detachment can realise God.

Mumukshutvam—Yearning for Liberation

GSB-4.11----Na hi ekasya ----sambhavati-----It is impossible for the same person to be a seeker of liberation and also a seeker of the fruits of action at the same time. The idea is that only a person who is totally free from any desire for the pleasures of this world as well as of higher worlds can be termed a mumukshu.

Sri Sankara says here that God's grace is necessary for attaining Self-knowledge and liberation. This disproves the contention of some that there is no place for devotion in Sri Sankara's Advaita.

GSB-4.21-----Dharmah api mumukshoh---- Even Punya is an obstacle to a seeker of liberation because it also causes bondage and further birth.

Omkarah

GSB-8.12---Parasya Brahmanah-----arabhyate-----Om is presented as a name of the supreme Brahman and also as Its

symbol, like an image. Meditation on Om leads to liberation in course of time. [Kramamukti].

GSB-8.13---Om iti ekaksharam -----mriyate-----Uttering the single syllable Om, which is the name and the symbol of Brahman, and thinking of Me, at the time of death, one attains the supreme Goal.

Prakrtih—The nature –of a person

GSB-3.33---Prakrtih nama-----abhivyaktah---Nature means the impressions of virtue, vice, knowledge, desires, etc, acquired in past lives which become manifest at the beginning of the present life.

Svabhavah

GSB-5.14---Svabhavah tu svo bhavah----maya-----Nature—one's own nature, characterized as ignorance, or Maya.

GSB-7.20---Svabhavah----viseshah-----Nature—the particular tendencies gathered in past lives.

GSB-8.3---Here 'svabhava' means the presence of the supreme Brahman in every body as the indwelling self.

GSB-13.29---Here Prakrti means God's Maya, constituted of the three Gunas.

Paramam padam

GSB-2.51---Padam---mokshakhyam---the supreme state of Vishnu, called Liberation.

GSB-8.21---Dhama sthanam---padam----that supreme state of Vishnu.

See commentary of Madhusudana Sarasvati on Gita 2.51—'My state' means Vishnu's own real nature. The expression "My state' is used by making an imaginary difference between Vishnu and His state as in the expression 'the head of Rahu'. Rahu being the head alone, the expression 'Rahu's head' implies a difference between Rahu and his head, which is really not there.

Prarabdha karma

GSB-4.37---Samarthyat yena karmana -----kurute-----The result of the past karma which produced the present birth gets exhausted only through being experienced. Self-knowledge destroys only the actions of past lives which have not begun to take effect and the actions performed in this life up to the dawn of knowledge. 0Actions performed after the dawn of knowledge do not produce any result at all.

GSB-13.23—Tesham mukteshuvat-----Prarabdha karma has already begun producing results, like an arrow that has been shot. Other karma is rendered unproductive by knowledge.

Prana, apana, etc

GSB-4.29—Mukhanasikabhyam----The outgoing of breath through the mouth and nostrils is the movement of Prana; the movement of Apana is the going in of breath. Prana is exhalation and Apana is inhalation.

Purusha

GSB-8.4—Purnam anena-----sayanat va-----He by whom all things are pervaded, or he who dwells in everything is the Purusha.

GSB-8.22---The same as the above.

Samadhih

GSB-2.44—In this verse Samadhih means the mind.

GSB-2.53---Samadhiyate-----That in which the mind is fixed is Samadhih. Here it means the Self.

GSB-2.54---Here the word Samadhisthah means one who is absorbed in the Self.

Sankhyam/Sankhyah

GSB-2.11---Asocyan ityadina-----The real nature of the Self as expounded in verses 11 to 30 of chapter 2 by the Lord is known as Sankhya and the intellectual conviction of the truth expounded therein--that the Self is not a doer, because of the absence in It of such changes as birth—is known as the Sankhya-buddhi. Those who have this knowledge are called Sankhyas.

GSB-2.21—Tasmat viseshitasya-----adhikarah-----Therefore the enlightened man and the seeker after liberation [one who desires liberation alone and not anything else in this world or other worlds] who know that the Self is not a doer are called upon to renounce all actions. [‘Renouncing actions’ should be taken to mean only giving up the notion of agency [doership] in actions performed by the body-mind complex and looking upon oneself as a mere witness]. It is however added here that the Mumukshu should perform the actions enjoined on him by the scriptures, these actions being not prejudicial to his goal, which is the attainment of Self-knowledge.

The idea is that, while a person who has already become a Jnani can give up even the actions enjoined by the scriptures, since they are not obligatory for him, a person who is in the stage of a Mumukshu is bound by the injunctions of the scriptures and should therefore perform the enjoined actions, but without the notion that he is the doer. A Jnani may also perform karma, but that is only to set an example to others, since he has nothing to gain thereby. Sri Sankara generally takes the word ‘karma’ as referring only to those spoken of in the Srutis and Smritis, namely, Nitya, Naimittika and Kamya , the obligatory daily and occasional duties and the actions laid down to fulfill specific desires . In certain contexts, where he considers that secular activities also come within the scope of the word ‘karma’ he specifically says so.

The scheme of the Gita, as of the Upanishads, is that there are three stages. The first is that of the Karmayogi, who performs all actions without craving for the fruit, but has the sense of doership. This is the Arurukshu, mentioned in Gita 6.3. The next higher is that of the Mumukshu, who looks upon himself as the action-less Self and a mere witness of the actions performed by the body-mind- complex. This is the Yogarudha stage Here an effort is necessary to keep the mind fixed on the Self. This is what is spoken of as Sama in Gita 6.3, which is the same as Jnanayoga. As stated in Gita 6.4, this stage is reached when there is total detachment and the only desire is for

liberation. This is the Vividisha mentioned in Br up.4.4.22. The highest is that of the Jnani, to whom the conviction that he is the action-less Self has become natural, having been acquired by the assiduous practice of the disciplines such as control of the mind and senses, etc. See also GSB-2.55 where it is said that the characteristics of the Jnani are to be acquired by the aspirant by effort. While Sri Sankara takes the word 'Karma' to mean only the actions laid down in the Srutis and Smrtis, Swami Vivekananda, Lokamanya Tilak and other modern expounders take it as including all secular activities also. This has the advantage of making the teaching fully relevant to the present-day social conditions and applicable to all human beings, irrespective of religion, caste and other considerations. The three stages mentioned above hold good with this interpretation also.

GSB-2.21—Tasmat Gitasastre----- na karmani-----.For the knower of the Self renunciation is prescribed and not action.

Sannyasa and Tyaga

GSB-18.2—Kamyam asvamedhadinam-----Some learned people are of the view that Sannyasa means the giving up of Kamy karma alone and that Tyaga is the abandonment of the fruits of the nitya and naimittika karma.

Madhusudana Sarasvati, in his commentary, says—One view is that in the statement—Tametam vedanuvacanena-----anasakena—[Br. up. 4.4.22]- the duty of the Brahmacari is indicated by the word 'vedanuvacana' the duty of the householder by the words 'yajna' and 'dana' and the duty of the vanaprastha by the words 'tapa' and 'anasaka'. These refer only to the obligatory duties of each of these categories of persons. According to this view, an aspirant for mental purity as a means to knowledge and liberation should perform only the obligatory duties laid down for his Asrama, as an offering to God and should completely abandon all Kamy karma.

Another view is that all the Nitya, Naimittika and Kamy karma laid down should be performed, without desire for the fruit. Even those karmas laid down for the fulfillment of specific desires, such as the attainment of heaven, will lead to mental purification and fitness for knowledge of the Self if performed without desire. [This is according

to what is known as Samyoga-prthaktva-nyaya. See also Samkshepasarirakam-1.64].

To sum up—the first view is that, since obligatory duties alone lead to the desire to know Brahman [vividisha], Kamyā karma is to be completely abandoned. The second view is that Kamyā karma should also be performed, but without desire for the fruit.

Sattva

Increase of Sattvaguna leads to increased manifestation of Consciousness.

Gita-10.41—Why is it said here that whatever is great, prosperous or powerful is a product of a part of His splendour, while the Srutis say that everything is Brahman? The answer is found in GSB-15.12.

GSB-15.12—Adityadishu hi-----adhikam iti----Since, in the sun etc, the Sattva is very much in evidence, they are specifically mentioned. It does not mean that Consciousness [or Brahman] is only there.

Yatha hi loka-----Indeed, as a face is reflected only in a polished surface like a mirror and not in wood or in a wall, Consciousness [or divinity] is more manifest in some [where Sattva is in abundance].

Sthitaprajnah

GSB-2.54---Sthita pratishthita-----One whose realisation of the form 'I am the supreme Brahman' remains steady is a Sthitaprajna, a man of steady wisdom.

GSB-2.55---Sarvatra eva hi-----bhavanti tani-----In all the scriptures dealing with spirituality, the characteristics of the man of realisation are themselves presented as the disciplines for an aspirant. It is by assiduously practising these disciplines that the man of realisation has attained that state.

Svadharmah—what is it?

Brahma sutra bhashya-3.4.40---Yo hi yam prati vidhiyate-----sakyate--
-One's own duty is that which has been prescribed [by the scriptures]
for one and not what one can perform well, since duty is determined
by scriptural injunction. [This definition obviously applies only to the
actions laid down in the Srutis and the Smrtis].

In Gita 18.46, the performance of one's own duty is considered as
worship of God. The word used here is Svakarma and not
Svadharmah. The performance of secular duties can also therefore be
taken as worship of God, in accordance with the modern
interpretation of the word 'Karma'.

Pratibimba-vada and Avaccheda-vada

GSB-15.7—Yatha jalasuryakah-----Both these Vadas are used here.

GSB-15.12—Yasya ca padasya----Avacchedavada is applied here.

See also Br.up. 1.4.7-Bhashya---Pratibimbavada.

Vedas—the sphere of their validity

GSB-18.66---Pratyakshadi----pramanyasya----The Vedas have
authority only in matters which cannot be known through the other
Pramanas such as direct perception.

Na hi srutisatam api-----Even a hundred Vedic texts cannot become
valid if they assert that fire is cold or non-luminous. If there is any
such assertion in the Vedas, it should be taken that the intended
meaning is different.

Vedic rituals—their ultimate purpose

GSB-18.66—Na ca karmavidhisruteh-----The Vedic rituals are
intended to turn the mind away from purely worldly activities They

help to purify the mind and turn it towards the indwelling Self. [They are not an end in themselves, but only the means to the ultimate goal of human life, which is Self-realisation and freedom from bondage].

Yogah/Yogi

GSB-2.11-- Etasyah buddheh----yogah, Yogavishaya -----yoginah----
 ---Yoga is that state prior to the dawn of the conviction that the Self is not a doer. This is characterized by the performance of action as a means to liberation, such performance being accompanied by discrimination between virtuous and non-virtuous deeds. It is based on the understanding that the Self, though distinct from the body, is the doer and the enjoyer. [The ordinary man does not see any distinction between the body and the Self. Actions performed by such a person cannot be considered as Yoga within the meaning of the word as used in the Gita. The word 'Yoga' is used in the sense of 'the means to liberation'. It is only when a person begins to look upon his actions as a means to ultimate liberation that his actions become fit to be described as 'Yoga'. This is why it has been specifically stated here that the Self should be understood to be different from the body]. Those who perform action with this knowledge are called 'Yogins'.

GSB-2.39—Yoge tu ----buddhim srnu---Now listen to the teaching concerning Yoga, which is the means of attaining the wisdom concerning Sankhya. This Yoga, which constitutes the worship of Isvara, consists in practising samadhi or in performing actions without attachment, remaining unaffected by all pairs of opposites [such as heat and cold, success and failure and so on].

GSB-2.39---Here Sri Sankara says that the knowledge of the Self can be attained only through the grace of God.

Different meanings of the word 'Yoga'---

GSB-3.3—Yogi here is one who is devoted to rituals,

GSB-4.41—Here 'Yoga' means 'knowledge of the supreme Reality'.

GSB-4.42—'Yoga' means 'performance of action as a means to the attainment of Self-knowledge'.

GSB-5.5—Jnanapraptyupayatvena----yoginah----Yogis are those who perform action as a means to the attainment of Self-knowledge, without desire for the fruit and as an offering to God.

GSB-5.11—Here the word 'Yogi' is used in the sense of 'Karmayogi'.

GSB-16.1—Avagatanam -----yogah---Yoga here means making the knowledge acquired from the scriptures and the teacher a matter of personal experience through concentration of the mind by withdrawing the sense organs from external objects.

Yogakshemah

GSB-2.45—Anupattasya upadanam yogah. Upattasya rakshanam kshemah-----The acquisition of what one does not possess is called Yoga. The protection of what has been acquired is called Kshema.

Yogakshema-pradhanasya---dushkarah---For a person whose sole or main concern is about Yoga and Kshema in the above sense practice of the means to liberation is impossible.

But if one surrenders oneself to the Lord, He will take care of one's Yoga and Kshema.

--See Gita-9.22.

Yogabhrashtah

GSB-6.44—Na krtam cet ----If he had not committed any unrighteous act, the effect of which is more powerful than the effect of the Yoga he has practised, then he is carried forward by the latter effect. In the contrary case the effect of the unrighteous act, which is more powerful, prevails. But when, in course of time, the effect of the unrighteous action has got exhausted, the tendency born of Yoga begins to take effect by itself. The idea is that the good effects of the practice of Yoga are never destroyed, though they may be suppressed for some time.

According to Madhusudana Sarasvati's commentary on the Gita-18.12, the Yogabhrashta must have been a Vividisha Sannyasi in his previous birth.

The three levels of reality

Advaita Vedanta recognizes three levels of reality. A person, seeing a rope in dim light, mistakes it for a snake. He is as much frightened as he would have been if there had been a real snake there. The snake is said to have 'pratibhasika' reality. In Vedanta the illusory snake is described as a superimposition [Adhyasa] on the rope. The snake is not real, because, it is found on examination with a light, that it never existed there. At the same time, it was not absolutely unreal like the horn of a hare because it was experienced. Similarly, this world is not unreal, because it is actually experienced by us. But on the dawn of Self-knowledge it is known to have no existence apart from Brahman. The world is therefore said to be superimposed on Brahman. The world is said to have 'vyavaharika' reality, because it is real until the attainment of Self-realisation. Brahman alone has absolute or 'paramarthika' reality, because It is absolutely changeless and is never sublated.