

Teachings on Karma from “Orthodox” Indian Scripture

From *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*

According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good. The doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action.

But people say, “A person is made [not of acts but] of desires only.” [In reply I say] as is his desire, such is his resolve; as is his resolve, such is the action he performs, what action he performs, that he procures for himself.

Kausitaki Upanishad

“Who is he, called self, who, being overcome by the bright or the dark fruits of action, enters a good or an evil womb, so that his course is downward or upward and he wanders around, overcome by the pairs of opposites?”

“There is indeed another, different self, called the ‘elemental self’...This ‘elemental self’ is overcome by nature’s qualities....In thinking ‘This is I’ and ‘That is mine’ he binds himself with his self, as does a bird with a snare.”

From the *Bhavad-gita*

22. Just as a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, even so does the embodied soul cast off worn-out bodies and take on others that are new.

23. Weapons do not cleave this self; fire does not burn him; waters do not make him wet; nor does the wind make him dry.

24. He is uncleavable. He cannot be burnt. He can be neither wetted or dried. He is eternal, all-pervading, unchanging, and immovable. He is the same forever.

25. He is said to be unmanifest, unthinkable, and unchanging. Therefore, knowing him as such, thou shouldst not grieve.

Chapter 2

16. What is action? What is inaction? – as to this even the wise are bewildered....

18. He who in action sees inaction and action in inaction – he is wise among men, he is a yogin, and he has accomplished all his work.

19. He whose undertakings are all free from the will of desire, whose works are burned up in the fire of wisdom – him the wise call a man of learning.

20. Having abandoned attachment to the fruit of his works, ever content, without any kind of dependence, he does nothing though he is ever engaged in work.

21. Having no desires, with his heart and self under control, giving up all possessions, performing action by the body alone, he commits no wrong.

Chapter 4