

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 3: Karma-Yoga

1/4 (Ślōka 1-10), Sunday, 19 March 2023

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/HxPOd4ZQGho>

Synthesis of Knowledge and Action

The third Chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* is about the Yoga of *Karmā* (action) which describes how one can connect with *Śrī Bhagavān*. Hence it is termed as '*Karmā-Yoga*' (way to connect with HIM through action). *Lokmanya Tilakji* considered this chapter as the most important because every person has to perform *Karmā* till his last breath. Tilakji, from the prison of Mandalay, wrote his views on Karma Yoga chapters 3, 4 and 5 to give direction to masses for further action in the struggle for freedom.

We have seen that how *Arjunā* was filled with *moha* (delusion) and did not want to fight. He abandoned his weapons saying he cannot use them to kill Bhisma Pitamah or Acharya Drona. *Śrī Bhagavān* directed Arjuna to give up his weakness and act like a warrior.

क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते । क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप ॥2.3 ॥

It does not befit you to yield to this unmanliness. Give up such petty weakness of heart and arise, O vanquisher of enemies.

Swami Vivekanand was also inspired by these words and he coined a message for our Nation and its people at that time saying

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Get up, awaken and work towards attaining your goal.

The actual teaching of *ŚrīmādBhagavadgīta* starts from verse 11 of chapter 2 after Arjunā takes *Śaranāgati* (complete surrender) of *Paramēśvara*.

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसम्मूढचेताः ।

यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥ 2.7॥

Arjunā said to *Śrī Bhagavān*, "I don't know what is *Śreyās* (superior) for me. I am your disciple and have completely surrendered to you. Please guide me what to do". We all should learn from *Arjunā* that how

one should surrender oneself to **Paramātma** and then only one can attain the true knowledge.

To shed Arjuna's delusion, **Śrī Bhagavān** disclosed the true knowledge of the Self (Sankhya Yoga), wherein HE explained the immortal, eternal and imperishable nature of the Self, The Atma Tattva.

नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥ 2.20॥

Atma is not born, nor does it ever die; after having been it does not cease to be, unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient, it is not killed when the body is destroyed.

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥ 2.23॥

No weapon can cut the soul into pieces, nor can it be burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind.

HE further put forth characteristics of a **Sthitaprajña** (a person with steady wisdom). Initially Śrī Bhagavān used very harsh words to awaken the pride in Arjun by saying to him that such action of impotence ill behove a Kshatriya warrior of his caliber. HE explained to Arjuna that he would only be killing their bodies as the soul is imperishable and eternal. HE asked Arjuna to come out of his despair and get up to fight in the war as it was his duty.

The answers to questions like - Who am I? What relation do I have with the Supreme? How a Sthitaprajña gets connected with **Śrī Bhagavān** - are provided in the previous chapter wherein Sri Bhagwan also praised Gyan-Yoga as a better way to attain Brahman than Karma Yoga. Arjuna is confused and asked in that case why YOU are asking me to follow Karma Yoga?

3.1

arjuna uvāca :

**jyāyasī cetkarmanāste, matā buddhirjanārdana,
tatkiṃ(ñ) karmaṇi ghore māṃ(n), niyojayasi keśava. 3.1**

Arjuna said :

कृष्ण, if You consider Knowledge as superior to Action, why then do You urge me to this dreadful action, Keśava!

Arjuna wondered, "If Bhagavan HIMSELF says that a yogi who becomes selfless, apathetic and unassuming by practicing Jnana Yoga attains supreme peace, then why are they urging me to do the terrible deed of war against my own relatives instead of asking me to do sadhana for attaining knowledge"?

One thing Arjuna failed to realize was that Bhagavan's instruction was meant to urge Arjuna to face the conflict in his own mind instead of running away from it. There are many conflicts to be faced in life and the human mind is the biggest battlefield in the world. That is why Tukaram Maharaj has said:-

रात्रंदिन आम्हां युद्धाचा प्रसंग ।

अंतर्बाह्य जग आणि मन ॥

3.2

**vyāmiśreṇeva vākyaena, buddhiṃ(m) mohayasīva me,
tadekaṃ(ṽ) vada niścītya, yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām. 3.2**

You are, as it were, puzzling my mind by these seemingly conflicting expressions; therefore, tell me the one definite discipline by which I may obtain the highest good.

Arjunā asks **Śrī Bhagavān**: if HE considers knowledge to be superior to action, then why is HE engaging him in this terrible war.

In Chapter 1, Arjun had decided that he would not fight in the war but after his complete surrender to Sri Bhagwan in Chapter 2, now he is asking permission from Sri Bhagwan to not fight in the war. He says he does not know what is **śreyās** - the right thing for him to do. HIS saying that both the Gyan Yoga and Karma Yoga are two paths to reach Paramatma, then why does HE insist that he should adopt the Karma Yoga path. Arjuna wants HIM to tell him which path would be **śreyās** -right path for him to follow.

Sant Dnyaneshwar's couplet was quoted here wherein he depicts the confused mental state of Arjuna where he says:-

वैद्यु पथ्य वारूनि जाये । मग जरी आपणचि विष सुये ।
तरी रोगिया कैसनि जिये । सांगैं मज ॥

If a physician, after prescribing a diet, himself gives poison, how will the patient survive?

मी आधीचि कांहीं नेणें । वरी कवळिलों मोहें येणें ।
श्रीकृष्णा विवेकु या कारणें । पुसिला तुज ॥

As I lacked understanding and was moreover confused, O Krishna, I sought your advice.

तंव तुझी एकेक नवाई । एथ उपदेशामाजीं गोवाई ।
तरी अनुसरलिया काई । ऐसैं कीजे ? ॥

"But you surprise me with an advice, which is confusing. I solely depend upon your instruction. In the first place I am ignorant and you are confusing me more. Should you behave like this with your disciple? I have asked for your discretion. Tell me then decisively one thing, by which I would attain what is good for me."

Preyas means what we like and the way of living which gratifies our senses. On the other hand, **śreyās** means something which is superior and better for us. In order to attain **śreyās**, we have to give up **preyas**. For example, if a person is diabetic, then he has to give up eating sweets.

We can connect with our **śreyās** through Gita. The way to go about is " GITA PADHE PADHAYE JEEVAN MEIN LAYE " As we all are learning **Gīta**, teaching **Gīta**, but the question is how to bring it in our lives? The answer is **Śaranāgati** (surrender).

3.3

Śrībhagavānuvāca :
loke'smindvividhā niṣṭhā, purā proktā mayānagha,

jñānayogena sāṅkhyānām(ñ), karmayogena yoginām. 3.3

Śrī Bhagavān said:

Arjuna, in this world two courses of Sādhanā (spiritual discipline) have been enunciated by Me in the past. In the case of the Sāṅkhyayogī, the Sādhanā proceeds along the path of Knowledge; whereas in the case of the Karmayogī, it proceeds along the path of Action.

A person who is deeply saddened cannot quickly process practical matters. Sometimes one may have to be prepared to listen to our understanding by scolding and getting angry.

Accordingly Bhagavan had earlier reprimanded Arjuna but now Arjuna has completely surrendered to HIM, he is ready to listen to the things of interest, even the unpleasant ones, therefore the HE addresses him as anagha meaning sinless.

वधारीं वीरश्रेष्ठा । ये लोकीं या दोन्ही निष्ठा ।
मजचिपासूनि प्रगटा । अनादिसिद्धा ॥
एकु ज्ञानयोगु म्हणिजे । जो सांख्यीं अनुष्ठिजे ।
जेथ ओळखीसवे पाविजे । तद्रूपता ॥
एक कर्मयोगु जाण । जेथ साधकजन निपुण ।
होऊनियां निर्वाण । पावती वेळे ॥
हे मार्गु तरी दोनी । परी एकवटतीं निदानीं ।
जैसी सिद्धसाध्य भोजनीं । तृप्ती एक ॥

Lord Krishna was surprised at this speech of Arjuna and said: “O Arjuna, this is what is implied in my instruction. While explaining to you buddhiyoga, I broached the Sankhya doctrine, which arose out of it. But you did not grasp this point and so you have become confused. Now please note that I have declared both these paths. Know, O Arjuna that these two traditions have been revealed by me of yore. One of them known as the path of knowledge is followed by the Sankhyas, who after realising the Self, become one with him. The other is called the path of action in which the seekers perform their duties skilfully and eventually achieve emancipation. Although these two paths are different, they lead to the same result, even as one derives the same satisfaction by eating food cooked by himself or by another.

Śrī Bhagavān answers that HE has already explained the two paths that lead to emancipation of a human being: Sāṅkhyā-Yoga (the path of Knowledge) and Karmā-Yoga (the path of Action). The person has to decide, which path he has to choose, that will undoubtedly depend on the pravritti (way of thinking) of a person.

Although the final destination is same for all, but there are different methods that can be employed to reach there. For example, if someone has to go to Delhi, he can go by bus, car, train or plane. The person will decide according to his capability. Similarly, from the various means to attain HIM, Śrī Bhagavān advises Arjunā to follow the path of karmāyoga as that is the most superior for him.

Śrī Bhagavān feels Arjunā has predominant Rājasika Guna and being a Kshatriya, his pravritti (way of thinking) would be more suitable for a Karma Yogi.

Here the difference between provisions and food was used to explain the concept of both these Yogas. The Gyan Yogi had prepared his food in his several previous births but a Karma Yogi would have to use the provisions and cook the food in this birth before he can eat that.

Besides even if he left the war and went to meditate, his mind would keep wondering what was going

on in the war and whether his brothers were loosing the war!

This *pravritti* (way of thinking) of a person, was further illustrated by an example of Sant Gondavlekar who was a great believer of Naam Japa and would encourage all who came to visit his Ashram to join him in Chanting 'Shree Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram'. There were some construction workers working in his Ashram for some repair work. Seeing Maharaj constantly using the Japa Mala (rosary) and chanting, the workers felt that this Maharaj had a very easy life where as they had to work hard to break stones to earn their living. Maharaj heard them and invited them to sit for the whole day with Japa Mala and Chant the name of God and Maharaj offered to pay them without working. The workers did so for the first day but the very next day refused and told the Maharaj that it was easy for them to break stones than chanting the name of God the whole day.

It is not possible for everyone to sit in **dhyāna** (meditation), although it might seem to others that it is quite easy. But when it comes to concentrating on the Supreme, not everyone can do it.

3.4

na karmaṇāmanārambhān, naiṣkarmyaṃ(m) puruṣo'śnute, na ca sannyasanādeva, siddhiṃ(m) śamadhigacchati. 3.4

Man does not attain freedom from action (culmination of the discipline of Action) without entering upon action; nor does he reach perfection (culmination of the discipline of Knowledge) merely by ceasing to act.

Śrī Bhagavān clarifies that salvation cannot be attained by not performing any actions or by renouncing the current responsibilities and attaining seerhood. Without bringing **karmāyoga** in life, one cannot attain the state of **naishkarmyam** (freedom from **kārmic** reactions). This is achieved when the practitioner does not realize or take into consideration the results of performing **karmā**. But in order to attain the state where the person does not believe himself to be doing anything, he has to do many things.

Most people give up on action as they are afraid of the result but to attain Brahman the mind needs to reach the condition where it does not want to do anything, does not want to know anything and even does not want anything at all in life. Till the time this condition is achieved by the mind, a person has to keep working and training his mind not to worry about the result.

3.5

na hi kaścitkṣaṇamapi, jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt, kāryate hyavaśaḥ(kh) karma, sarvaḥ(ph) prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ. 3.5

Surely, none can ever remain inactive even for a moment; for, everyone is helplessly driven to action by modes of Prakṛti (nature born qualities).

There is no one who can remain without action even for a moment. All beings are compelled to act by the three gunas (**Rājasika**, **Sāttvika**, **Tāmasika**) obtained from **prakṛiti** (Nature). Our actions of eating, sleeping, sitting even breathing is considered as action. So as per our **prakṛiti** (Nature), we all are engaged in various activities all the time.

The steering of car was compared to **sattvaguna** which takes the car in the correct direction, petrol was compared with **rajoguna** as it allows the car to move forward and the brakes with **tamoguna** as it stops the car from moving. As all the three are equally important for driving a car, in the same way, all have vital role in our lives too. They impel us to work and engage in useful activities.

3.6

karmendriyāṇi saṃyamyā, ya āste manasā smaran, indriyārthānvimūḍhātmā, mithyācāraḥ(s) sa ucyate. 3.6

He who outwardly restraining the organs of sense and action, sits mentally dwelling on the objects of senses, that man of deluded intellect is called a hypocrite.

Those who restrain the external organs of action and do not seem to perform any action, while at the same time continue to enjoy the sense objects, are best called as **mithyā-āchārah** (hypocrite).

An elderly Guru had advised his two young disciples to not touch Kanchan (Gold) and Kamini (a Woman). Once the two disciples were walking in the Himalayas to go back to their hermitage. On their way to the hermitage; they had to cross a branch of river Ganga.

There was a young maiden sitting close to the river, whose village was just across the river. Scared as she was to cross the river by herself, she approached them to help her cross the river. “Sure” said the elder disciple, lifted her up in his arms and carefully crossed the river. The young maiden went on her way, after thanking the monk for his timely help. The younger disciple couldn’t accept this gesture by the elder one and soon his face wore a pensive look.

They reached their hermitage but the younger disciple looked very perturbed, sensing it the Guru asked him what the matter was. The disciple complained, “Master, we have sworn not to touch a woman, but he carried her in his arms! You tell us not to think of women but he touched her!” The Guru asked the other disciple about the incident and he replied that he had helped a woman cross the river but had forgotten all about it. Guru said to the younger disciple with a smile, “He **carried her across the river and left her on the other side, but you are still carrying her.**”

Quoting the above story, it was explained that **the most essential thing is to have control on organs of perception and mind.** If a person controls the activities outwardly but do not restrain the desires which impel him, then he is a hypocrite.

3.7

yastvindriyāṇi manasā, niyamyārabhate'rjuna, karmendriyaiḥ(kh) karmayogam, asaktaḥ(s) sa viśiṣyate. 3.7

On the other hand, he who controlling the organs of sense and action by the power of his will, and remaining unattached, undertakes the Yoga of selfless Action through those organs, Arjuna, he excels.

However, those Karmā yogis who control their senses with the mind and are engaged in the activities without any attachment are certainly superior.

The mind gets immersed in sensual pleasures of Gyanendriyas (nose, eyes, tongue, skin and ears) and

Karmendriyas (organs of action). It has to be brought under control so it will use the senses for śreyās and not preyās.

A child is attracted to a TV program and not ready to work has to be trained to complete his homework first before he is allowed to watch the TV program. Similarly, slowly **the mind can be trained to use all senses for right actions without attachment to either the activity or its result.**

3.8

niyataṃ(ñ) kuru karma tvaṃ(ñ), karma jyāyo hyakarmaṇaḥ, śarīrayātrāpi ca te, na prasiddhyedakarmaṇaḥ. 3.8

Therefore, do you perform your allotted duty; for action is superior to inaction. Desisting from action, you cannot even maintain your body.

One should perform all the prescribed duties, as action is superior to inaction. The activities should never be ceased as the mind gets purified by performing actions. One cannot sustain with inaction, as even to live, one has to perform the action of breathing, eating etc. But, if every action is performed as a duty towards HIM, it becomes **yajña**.

Two types of Karmas - Actions were explained here.

(i) **Vihit Karma** - are general actions to be performed by a person or broad spectrum of duties.

(ii) **Nihit Karma** - are specific duties.

These were illustrated with the example. A mother takes care of the household doing all the chores (Vihit karma), but if on a particular day her child is sick her Nihit Karma would be specific duty for that day like to take the child to a doctor and give medicines for the child's recovery.

Similarly Arjun's Vihit Karma or general duty was to protect his people but now when the War had become a reality his Nihit Karma was to fight. Even if Arjun left the War he would not be able to leave all his actions so it would be better for him to fight and do his required duty.

3.9

yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra, loko'yaṃ(ñ) karmabandhanaḥ, tadarthaṃ(ñ) karma kaunteya, muktasaṅgaḥ(s) samācara. 3.9

Man is bound by his own action except when it is performed for the sake of sacrifice. Therefore, Arjuna, do you efficiently perform your duty, free from attachment, for the sake of sacrifice alone.

Work must be always done as a **yajña** (sacrifice) to the Supreme; otherwise it will cause bondage in this material world. In return, that **yajña** will bestow upon the performer, all his wishes.

For a **yajña** (sacrifice) there are usually three fires lit in the center of the offering ground. Oblations are offered into the fire. Among the ingredients offered as oblations in the yajna are Ghee, Milk, Grains etc. The fire has the authority to make these sacrifices reach different Devas who are the energies of the Universe like Varun Deva - Deva for Water, Vayu Deva - Deva for winds etc. These Devas in turn take care of smooth working of this world and beyond. By offering various sacrifices to them we are eligible to seek their blessings and boons as per our scriptures.

Everyone is required to contribute as per their capability for these **yajña** (sacrifice) as these are for community welfare and with everyone participating in these **yajña** (sacrifice) the work can be done smoothly and properly.

3.10

sahayajñāḥ(ph) prajāḥ(s) sṛṣṭvā, purovāca prajāpatiḥ, anena prasaviṣyadhvam, eṣa vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk. 3.10

Having created mankind along with Yajña, at the beginning of creation, the creator, Brahmā, said to them, "You shall prosper by this; may this yield the enjoyments you seek.

Tapas (control over mind and body) and **dāna** (charity) can be done alone but **yajña** is always a teamwork. **TEAM - Together Everyone Achieves More**. No one can survive alone in this world as we all are dependent on each other.

GOD stands for Generator, Operator and Destroyer. This **śrishti** (Creation) has been created by Brahmaji through a **yajña**.

All the activities like shining of the Sun or flowing of rivers, show the spirit of sacrifice without any selfish motives. We benefit when we work as a team.

I studied in a school which I didn't build, I walk on the roads, I didn't make, I read the books from a library I didn't build, I eat the food given by trees and plants I didn't grow ! Just like I am using things done by others I too have the **duty to work for others in whatever capacity I can as my oblation to this yajña of inter-dependent mankind**. Only working with cooperation we are assured the benefits from this **yajña** of Mankind.

One needs to look at our own revered Gurudev Govind Dev Giri ji Maharaj who is holding the responsibility of the treasurer of Sri Ram Mandir, he has prepared countless volunteers to reach the Gyana Ganga of the Gita from house to house and this Ghar Ghar Gita Gyan Yagya is being completed. Many such Karma Yogis are still performing Yagna Karma. If One performs the duties assigned according to their nature, the desires of the heart will automatically be fulfilled.

Lord Brahma, the creator, also assigns to the living beings the actions of the previously mentioned sacrificial system which are interdependent. All living things in creation are interdependent.

The session ended with obeisance to the Supreme followed by a question answer session.

Question and Answer session

Prem Lata Tukaram ji

Question: What is Stithprajna?

Answer: Stithprajna is to be steadfast in wisdom. In the last 18 verses of the second Chapter HE has showcased HIS self portrait... the qualities of a role model. These qualities lead one to the epitome of knowledge and make him a true Jñāni. One needs to strive to reach this goal.

Dolly Ji

Question: What is the easiest way to rid oneself of all vices like kaam, krodh, moh, lobh etc.

Answer: Naam japa is the best way to rid oneself of these vices. One needs to be in company of the Supreme and other saints who are free from these vices. Naam japa illumines the *antah karan* and purifies one from all vices. Tulsi Das ji also prays to Ram ji to seat in his mind and heart so that there is no room for bad thoughts.

Shailaja Ji

Question: I would like to know more about Gulab Rao Ji Maharaj

Answer: He is one of the highly acclaimed saints of India. He was born in Vidharva. He is known as 'Prajnashakshu' as he was blind since childhood. He lost his mother at an early age and was ill treated by his step mother. In spite of his blindness and a difficult childhood, he read many scriptures with the help of others and then wrote 130 texts to enlighten the world. He had predicted that *Bhagavadgītā* will be the best text to guide mankind in his spiritual endeavors.



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You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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