

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 3: Karma-Yoga

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Do your duty selflessly, and set an example to others

The 3rd Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is "**Karma Yoga**" - **Yoga of Action**. In this chapter, Bhagavān explains the concept of "**nishkaam karma**" or "selfless service".

The third session on this chapter began with the Auspicious Lighting of the traditional lamp that lights the steadfast flame, guiding us towards the path of Dharma, cleansing our Antaḥkaraṇa with the light of knowledge shedding the path of Ignorance, followed by salutations to Pūjya Swami ji.

In the second session, Śrī Krishna highlighted the importance of performing one's actions without any attachment to the results or outcomes. HE continues to explain why and how an intellect should perform his prescribed duties.

In Sloka 22, Śrī Bhagavān says:

"na me pārthāsti kartavyaṁ triṣhu lokeṣhu kiñchana

nānavāptam avāptavyaṁ varta eva cha karmaṇi"

In the three Lokas, there is no work prescribed for HIM, neither is there anything for HIM to attain, and yet HE remains engaged in performing prescribed duties.

In the following shlokas, HE explains the necessity of performing HIS duties.

3.23

**yadi hyahaṁ(n) na varteyaṁ(ñ), jātu karmaṇyatandritaḥ,
mama vartmānuvartante, manuṣyāḥ(ph) pārtha sarvaśaḥ. 3.23**

Should I not engage in action scrupulously at any time, great harm will come to the world; for, Arjuna, men follow My way in all matters.

Śrī Bhagavān explains that if HE does not engage HIMSELF in performing HIS prescribed duties relentlessly, people will follow HIS actions, and will neglect their duties. Śrī Bhagavān is constantly involved in creating, maintaining, and dissolving the creations, without any desire for gain from this world.

HE expects the same selfless attitude towards prescribed duties from others, in order to inspire the common man. There is a chain reaction, where enlightened people emulate Śrī Bhagavān; these enlightened people are imitated by intelligent people; the intelligent people are then imitated by educated people with some knowledge; and finally, these educated people are imitated by common people. This cycle would continue only if everyone performed their prescribed duties. Unfortunately, many people do not follow this principle, which causes suffering for common people at large. However, according to the Theory of Karma, they cannot escape the consequences of neglecting their prescribed duties.

In society, many people preach one thing but act contrary to their words. For example, a father tells his son not to smoke and to focus on his studies, and to also spend his spare time studying religious scriptures like the Gita. But if the father himself smokes, his words are contradicted by his actions, making them hollow, and his son is likely to follow suit. **Because words are hollow, and actions are solid, Śrī Bhagavān sets an example through HIS actions to be emulated by common man**, through the described chain system.

3.24

**utsīdeyurime lokā, na kuryāṃ(ñ) karma cedaham,
saṅkarasya ca kartā syām, upahanyāmimāḥ(ph) prajāḥ. 3.24**

If I ever cease to act, these worlds would perish; nay, I should prove to be the cause of confusion, and of the destruction of these people.

Śrī Bhagavān says that if HE stopped working, there would be anarchy in this whole Samsara. This would cause the growth of uncultured, immoral people worldwide, leading to ruin. People would imitate HIS actions, not HIS words. In society, selfish people set morally bad precedents, even sometimes in the name of religion. An action by any renowned person would generate a chain reaction.

This is an indirect answer to Arjuna's question - why is he being pushed to such ghastly karma to fight? Arjuna's action was bound to initiate such a chain reaction, with others imitating him. **It is incumbent upon an enlightened person to make efforts to tell others what is right** on time without worrying about its implications. When Draupadi's modesty was being enraged, it was Vikarna who raised his voice against it. Although he had to face humiliation, he raised his voice on time.

3.25

**saktāḥ(kh) karmaṇyavidvāṃso, yathā kurvanti bhārata,
kuryādvidvāṃstathāsaktaḥ(ś), cikīrṣurlokasaṅgraham. 3.25**

Arjuna, as the unwise act with attachment, so should the wise man, with a view to maintain the world order, act without attachment.

Ignorant individuals work with a narrow perspective for personal gain, while a knowledgeable person understands the temporary nature of such accomplishments and works for the betterment of the world without being attached to the outcomes. Ignorant people work with intensity and attachment in performing their duties. Enlightened persons also work with the same intensity but in a detached manner, without any desire for results, to set an example for common people to follow. It is the social

responsibility of enlightened people to be active and work with full vigor. Chanakya said, '**The downfall of a country is not caused by active bad people but by the inactive good people.**' All good people should continue to do selfless work.

The book 'Life After Life,' authored by Raymond A. Moody, compiles observations of people who had near-death experiences. When interviewed as to what the experience taught them, all of them had the same answer: it taught them that **one should do selfless service in the lifetime.** This teaching has been present in our scriptures, including the Bhagavad Gītā, since time immemorial.

3.26

na buddhibhedam(ñ) janayed, ajñānām(ñ) karmasaṅginām, joṣayetsarVākarmāṇi, vidvānyuktaḥ(s) samācaran. 3.26

A wise man established in the Self should not unsettle the mind of the ignorant attached to action, but should get them to perform all their duties, duly performing his own duties.

An enlightened person and an ignorant person may work with the same zeal, but the difference is in attitude. The enlightened person works selflessly for the welfare of the world, whereas the ignorant person remains focussed on self-benefits and material gains. An ignorant person does not mean a dull person; he may be sharp at worldly activities, but will be ignorant spiritually. Śrī Bhagavān advises that a knowledgeable person should not create any discord in the intellect of an ignorant person performing prescribed duties for material gains, as it may distract them from doing the work. The wise person should continue to perform the prescribed duties unattached and inspire ignorant people to realize gradually the futility of work for sense gratification only. Realization that material gains are short-lived will come sooner or later, and a wise person knows it.

If a spiritually ignorant person visits temples and prays for selfish gains, a wise person should not preach to him that such a practice is useless and give lectures about moksha. It will discourage the ignorant person from visiting the temple. There was an instance in the life of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu when he was camping in a temple with his disciples. A villager regularly visited the temple to recite the Gita, offer Prasadam to Shri Bhagavān and only after that he would take food. On that particular day, a disciple of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu overheard the villager reciting Sloka 8-9, chapter 5

***Naiva kiñchit karomīti yukto manyeta tattva-vit
paśhyañ śhriṅvan spriśhañjighrann aśhnangachchhan svapañśhvasan
pralapan visṛijan grihṅann unmiṣhan nimīṣhann api
indriyāñdriyārtheṣhu vartanta iti dhārayan***

The disciple noted that there were errors in pronunciation, and asked the poor villager to stop as he was hurting Śrī Bhagavān with such erroneous pronunciation and would be subjected to HIS wrath. The villager stopped reciting the Gita, and started crying that unknowingly he had hurt Bhagavan. As he skipped reading the Gita, he couldn't offer Prasadam to Śrī Bhagavān and didn't take his food either. The day passed and everybody, including Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, slept. In the dream, Śrī Bhagavān told Chaitanya Mahaprabhu that HE was hungry because of one of his disciples. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu woke up and enquired from his disciples. The disciple narrated the event, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu asked him to apologize to the villager. The disciple saw the villager still sitting in the corner with tears in his eyes, and brought him to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He consoled the villager saying his devotion to Śrī Bhagavān was far superior, and requested him to continue reciting the Gītā and offer Prasadam as his practice all these years; it is acceptable to Śrī Krishna.

In this Sloka Śrī Bhagavān advises the same - **not to unsettle a performer to modify him**, and create

any discord with a performer though his actions may not comply with scriptures.

3.27

prakṛteḥ(kh) kriyamāṇāni, guṇaiḥ(kh) karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ, ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā, kartāhamiti manyate. 3.27

In fact all actions are being performed by the modes of Prakṛti (Primordial Nature). The fool, whose mind is deluded by egoism, thinks: "I am the doer."

All actions are performed by the three Gunas of nature (sattva, rajas, and tamas). The bewildered soul nurtures a false ego and misidentifies itself with the body. It perceives itself as the doer of all activities, even though these are carried out by the modes of material nature. Prakṛti is an intelligent power. Unless a person rises above this ego, he remains ignorant and cannot distinguish between Prakṛti and the soul. **One has to rise above the Ahankar to remove ignorance.** The soul is an inactive observer.

3.28

tattvavittu mahābāho, guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ, guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta, iti matvā na sajjate. 3.28

However, he who has true insight into the respective spheres of Guṇas (modes of Prakṛti) and their actions, holding that it is the Guṇas (in the form of the senses, mind, etc.) that move among the Guṇas (objects of perception), does not get attached to them, Arjuna.

An enlightened person understands that karma is created through the interaction between the senses and objects of perception and that the soul is separate from these and therefore not entangled with them. Verses 28 and 29 highlight the differences in nature and thought processes between an enlightened and ignorant person.

The enlightened person remains detached from karma, understanding the true nature of actions, while the ignorant person falsely believes himself to be the doer and becomes attached to karmic results. An analogy can be drawn to a player of a computer game who thinks he is in control, when in fact it is the software, created by a genius, that is directing the actions. Similarly, it is Prakṛti, a creation of Paramātmā, that is responsible for all actions. An ignorant person becomes a mere tool in the hands of Prakṛti, or Maya, while an enlightened person works for Paramātmā and is free from the bondage of karmic influences. In practical life, people fluctuate between different moods and reactions, akin to dancing to the tune of the Gunas of Prakṛti.

3.29

prakṛterguṇasammūḍhāḥ(s), sajjante guṇakarmasu, tānakṛtsnavido mandān, kṛtsnavinna vicālayet. 3.29

Those who are completely deluded by the Guṇas (modes) of Prakṛti remain attached to those Guṇas and actions; the man of perfect Knowledge should not unsettle the mind of those ignorants of imperfect knowledge.

The underlying message of Sloka 26 and this Sloka is the same. Ignorant individuals are deluded by

the modes of nature, and they remain attached to the outcomes of their actions. Enlightened individuals should not force their ideas upon these ignorant people, but rather allow them to learn gradually from the actions of enlightened individuals.

In Chapter 14, **Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga**, Śrī Bhagavān reveals the three Gunas of Prakṛti, which bind each person to their specific attributes:

- **Sattva Guna**: pride in knowledge, brightness
- **Rajas Guna**: pride in success in actions
- **Tamas Guna**: pride in inertia, ignorance, and hypocrisy

It is not easy to change a person's behaviour, nature, and mental attitudes through words alone, as these are developed over a long period. Wise people focus on their own enlightenment, and others may emulate them as an example.

3.30

**mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi, sannyasyādhyātmacetasā,
nirāśīrnirmamo bhūtvā, yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ. 3.30**

Renouncing all actions in Me, with the mind centred in the Self, free from hope and egoism, and from (mental) fever, engage in battle.

Śrī Bhagavān advises Arjuna to surrender his ego and carry out his duties. HE encourages Arjuna to focus his mind on HIM and to engage in battle without any desire or mental inhibitions, as war is a duty of a Ksatriya, and not a crime. **Actions performed without attachment to their fruits pave the way to liberation**, freeing individuals from the bondage of desire. By keeping the mind fixed on the divine, one can attain equanimity and remain unaffected by success or failure. It is emphasized that performing one's duties without selfish motives, for the well-being of the world, leads to both personal and global welfare. Gratitude should be shown to those who accept selfless service.

3.31

**ye me matamidaṃ(n) nityam, anutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ,
śraddhāvanto'nasūyanto, mucyante te'pi karmabhiḥ. 3.31**

Even those men who, with an uncavilling and devout mind, always follow this teaching of Mine, are released from the bondage of all actions.

Those who follow the teachings of Śrī Bhagavān with unflinching faith are freed from the bondage of material world. śraddhā or unwavering faith, has special importance in the Bhagavad Gītā. It holds magical power in life, as emphasized in a story. A villager sought Siddhi and approached a fake Sadhu for help. The fake Sadhu agreed to help, stating that the villager would attain Siddhi if he served him for 12 years, which the villager diligently did. After 12 years, the fake Sadhu claimed that the villager had achieved Siddhi of walking on water. The villager, with true śraddhā, attempted to walk on water, and to everyone's surprise, he succeeded. The fake Sadhu was surprised, and thought that he too would be able to do the same. He attempted to walk on water, failed and drowned.

The main message in these verses is that everything belongs to Paramātmā, and our actions are determined by Prakṛti, the creation of Paramātmā. Therefore, one should work for Paramātmā without

any desire or lust, surrendering the fruits of karma unto HIM. Chapter 7, Slokas 4 and 5 further emphasize that everything in creation, including our bodies, is formed by HIS energy, and thus, we cannot claim ownership over anything.

***bhūmir-āpo 'nalo vāyuḥ kham mano buddhir eva cha
ahankāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā (7.4)***

***apareyam itas tvanyām prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām
jīva-bhūtām mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat (7.5)***

Our soul is Para Prakṛti and our body is Apra Prakṛti; these are formed by the energy of Paramātmā. The soul in every living being is fragmented part of HIM, as said by Śrī Bhagavān in chapter 7 “mamaivānśho jīva-loke”.

Unflinching faith in HIS teachings that are revealed by HIM out of compassion, alone can lead to liberation.

3.32

**ye tvetadabhyasūyanto, nānutiṣṭhanti me matam,
sarvajñānavimūdhāmstān, viddhi naṣṭānacetasaḥ. 3.32**

But they, however, who, finding fault with this teaching of Mine, do not follow it, take those fools to be deluded in the matter of all knowledge as lost.

An ignorant person, who doubts and searches for faults in HIS teachings causes his own ruin. Such deluded persons are bereft of discrimination and knowledge. As per the scriptures, **the main purpose of this human life is to advance spiritually to attain Paramātmā finally**, the prerequisite for this is Shraddha with an unsuspecting mind. The ignorant person is not spoiling this life alone, but future lives too, getting mired in the cycle of death and birth. Such ignorant people tend to spoil the society spiritually. It is to be noted that Paramātmā is not vindictive or threatening those who doubt HIS teachings. HE says so out of compassion, wishing to see the welfare of all HIS creatures.

3.33

**sadrśaṁ(ñ) ceṣṭate svasyāḥ(ph), prakṛterjñānavānapi,
prakṛtiṁ(ṡ) yānti bhūtāni, nigrahaḥ(kh) kiṁ(ñ) kariṣyati. 3.33**

All living creatures follow their tendencies; even the wise man acts according to the tendencies of his own nature. Of what use is restraint by force.

The enlightened and the common people both perform their karma, or actions, according to their innate nature or Saṁskāra. Therefore, using force to restrain the senses and the mind will not help. Saṁskāra or tendencies are formed from past lives; every action or karma we perform, whether sattvic, rajasic, or tamasic, leaves an imprint on our antahkarana-our mind, intellect, and subconscious. At the end of our life, we do not carry money or property; instead, we carry three baggages: the sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic karmas that we have accumulated in the form of imprints. Those who have performed more sattvic karma will carry a larger baggage of sattvic karma, and similarly for rajasic and tamasic karmas. These baggages form our Saṁskāra or innate nature in our next life.

Enlightened ones too act in accordance with their innate nature. This demonstrates the indomitable power Prakṛti or Saṃskāra has over our nature. However, it does not imply that someone born with a larger baggage of tamasic or rajasic karma cannot overcome it. Prakṛti is powerful, but Purusha is even more powerful as Purusha creates Prakṛti.

Liberation comes through practice or sadhana (spiritual disciplines that lead to perfection). Those who diligently follow divine teachings can successfully overcome the bondage of Prakṛti and purify their past Saṃskāras.

When Arjuna refuses to fight, Bhagavān Śrī Krishna says that even though he does not want to fight, his innate nature will force him to fight.

***yad ahankāram āshritya na yotsya iti manyase,
mithyaiṣha vyavasāyas te prakṛitis tvām niyokṣhyati (18.59)***

You may declare, driven by your ahamkara or ego, that you will not fight. Yet, your own innate nature will compel you to act.

This highlights Śrī Krishna's teaching on the inevitability of acting according to one's innate nature, despite personal preferences or initial reluctance. The underlying message is that **while the senses and mind can be refined and improved, they cannot be forcibly controlled.**

Prakṛti means innate nature, which comes as a result of past Saṃskāras. Determined efforts and faith in divine teachings are the only things that will help ward off the effects of old Saṃskāras. The Gītā teaches **Indriya sanyama**, or restraining the senses. This does not mean forcefully stopping the senses. In meditation, one restrains thoughts, but thoughts keep coming continuously, often the negative ones. Swami Vivekananda says that thoughts must be allowed to come freely, including bad ones. If dirty water flows from a tap, shutting off the tap won't stop the dirtiness. The best way is to let the dirty water flow, clean water will surely follow. This is also true for our mind and thoughts.

3.34

**indriyasyendriyasyārthe, rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau,
tayorna vaśamāgacchet, tau hyasya paripanthinau. 3.34**

Attraction and repulsion are rooted in all sense-objects. Man should never allow himself to be swayed by them, because they are the two principal enemies standing in the way of his redemption.

It is the law of nature that the 5 senses - Shabda, Sparsha Rasa, Roopa, Gandha (Sound, Touch, Taste, Form and Smell), will have attraction or aversion for the respective sense objects. Appealing objects will attract them and unappealing objects make them rebel. Eyes like to see what is pleasant and dislike what is unpleasant. This applies to all the sense organs and is common to everyone. Perceptions such as likes, dislikes, favorable, and unfavorable are the real enemies of human beings. We keep experiencing these dualities or the **dvandvas** such as profit or loss, sukha or dukha etc. Innate tendencies affect the characters of the individual. People therefore find it difficult to think and act beyond this cage of dualities. For them, whole life gets wasted in likes and dislikes. Śrī Paramātmā advices us to keep away from these dualities and avoid their influence.

The scriptures and the gurus have the answer for this challenge. It is possible to come out of dualities through Sādhanā guided by one's Guru. Punctual and regular practice will help in addressing dualities. Those wanting spiritual gains cannot deviate from this path. To liberate oneself from the shackles of

dvandva or duality, one must attain equanimity.

samatvaṁ yoga uchyate: equanimity is the principle.

Many other verses in the Bhagavad Gītā, also reiterate this principle:

vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini, śhuni chaiva śhva-pāke cha paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ (5.18)

speaks of external equanimity. The one who is truly learned and has divine knowledge, will see a Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater all as same.

na prahṛiṣhyet priyaṁ prāpya nodvijet prāpya chāpriyam, sthira-buddhir asammūḍho Brahmā-vid Brahmāṇi sthitaḥ (5.20)

speaks about Internal equanimity. It says, Do not dance with joy when something favourable happens, and do not start shedding tears when something unfavourable happens. Learn to accept both with equanimity, Joy and sorrow both. The only answer to duality is external and internal equanimity. The only answer for this duality is that, one must remain equipoised in all contradicting situations.

traī-guṇya-viṣhayā vedā nīstrai-guṇyo bhavārjuna, nirdvandvo nitya-sattva-stho niryoga-kṣhema ātmavān (2.45)

Sri Paramātmā tells Arjuna to rise above the three modes to a state of spiritual consciousness. Freeing oneself from dualities, being fixed in Truth, and detached from material gains.

na dveṣṭy akuśhalaṁ karma kuśhale nānuṣhajate, tyāgī sattva-samāviṣṭo medhāvī chhinna-saṁśhayaḥ (18.10)

Those who neither evade disagreeable work nor desire agreeable one's are persons of true renunciation. They are bestowed with clarity and goodness.

In dramas or movies, actors display all kinds of emotions. However, these emotions are not real. The enlightened ones have a similar mindset. When traveling in the dark, we may take a companion to help us if we face trouble. Similarly, while marching on the path to moksha, we must have the companionship of our **viveka buddhi** (discriminatory wisdom), **Jnana** (knowledge) and **nishkama karma** (selfless actions). These are important to drive away **raga** (attachment) and **dvesha** (aversion).

3.35

śreyānsvadharmo viguṇaḥ(ph), paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt, svadharme nidhanaṁ(m) śreyaḥ(ph), paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ. 3.35

One's own duty, though devoid of merit, is preferable to the duty of another well performed. Even death in the performance of one's own duty brings blessedness; another's duty is fraught with fear.

Arjuna was on the verge of despondency and was unable to follow his Svadharma, the Kṣatriya dharma, that is to fight in the battlefield. He finds that his Svadharma is fearsome. Hence Sri Paramātmā assures him that it is not Svadharma, but paradharma that is fearful.

Bhagavān Sri Krishna is telling the entire human world, through Arjuna, that **one's own dharma, even though imperfect, is holier than another person's dharma**. Dharma of others is fraught with fear and is dangerous. Hence it is important one follows one's own Dharma.

For eg. A soldier failing to attack an enemy crossing the boarder, thinking of non-violence is not dharma.

His Svadharma is to follow the Army command and kill the enemy. Another connotation of this Svadharma is the dharma of the soul/Jeevatma, which is a fragment of Paramātmā. Our Svadharma is to reunite our soul with Paramātmā, of which it is a part.

If the soul is our jeevatma, our body, mind, intellect and the senses are para or external. They are always involved in sense gratification. Whatever they do for sense gratification should be considered as paradharma.

In chapter 2, Sri Paramātmā tells Arjuna, that he will accrue no sin by performing his Svadharma, and fighting the war. Rather the performance will liberate himself. If he does not fight the war, which means if he fails in his Svadharma, he will incur sin. Therefore, following ones Svadharma is very important. By doing karthavya karma or Svadharma with nishakama Bhava, one will be liberated.

3.36

arjuna uvāca :
atha kena prayukto'yaṃ(m), pāpaṃ(ñ) carati pūruṣaḥ,
anicchannapi vārṣṇeya, balādiva niyojitaḥ. 3.36

Arjuna said :Now impelled by what, Kṛṣṇa, does this man commit sin even involuntarily, as though driven by force?

Arjuna asks Paramātmā, what propels a person to perform a papa karma despite his unwillingness to do it. It is as though he is being forced to do it. For example, A well behaved gentleman, who is also very respected in the neighbourhood is arrested one fine morning and was taken to police custody. To everyone's surprise, it comes out that the person was involved in a financial fraud in his company. The question here is what propelled the person to do the papa karma?

3.37

Srībhagavānuvāca :
kāma eṣa krodha eṣa, rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ,
mahāśano mahāpāpmā, viddhyenamihā vairiṇam. 3.37

Śrī Bhagavān said :It is desire begotten of the element of Rajas, which appears as wrath; nay, it is insatiable and grossly wicked. Know this to be the enemy in this case.

Sri Paramātmā answers that Love and lust born out of Rajo Guna are the driving factors. They can never be satisfied. Kamana is like a never ending tissue box, when one is removed, another one will come out attached to it. Sri Krishna says, that one should treat desire and lust as the most deadly and destructive enemy on the path of spirituality. Amongst the three gunas, Rajo guna generates ambition and a wave of unfulfilled desires. Kamana is a double edged sword. If fulfilled it creates greed in the person; If not fulfilled it will generate anger. It kills both ways. Hence Sri Paramātmā calls it an enemy. Kamana cannot be suppressed, it pops up all the time till the end of life.

A person who was an expert in stock market, and earned in thousands everyday by trading, took ill and went into coma. When his blood pressure was being measured, he heard the doctor saying 180,185, 190 and so on. The old man in coma suddenly woke up and exclaimed 'sell it off if it crosses 200'. Even in coma, he was thinking about his shares and stocks he was holding. Kamana is such that it will not leave the person till the end of life. Besides, the person will be born with the same kamana in the next life, because of the imprinted Saṃskāras.

Sri Paramātmā asks to do away with this kamana, and to maintain a distance from Rajoguna. If kamana is coming out of Rajo guna how can one bring down this Guna or tendency?

A story: There was a saint who traveled from place to place giving lectures. One day, a thief heard his discourse and was drawn in. He started attending the daily discourse where the saint spoke about nama japa (chanting the name of God). The thief, impressed, confessed to the saint and asked for advice. The saint advised him to do nama japa, and follow a policy of not stealing from a house which had provided him with food. The thief could not find a single house where he hadn't eaten, so decided to go to a distant city. There, he broke into a rich man's house and stole many valuables. On his way out, he saw a bowl of raisins on the table, and ate some. He then remembered his promise to the saint, and decided to leave behind the items he intended to steal. The next day, the rich man was surprised to find all his valuables outside his safe, but nothing was missing. He sought the king's help to unravel the mystery.

The king makes an announcement that the thief who tried to steal from his friend's house has been caught and he will be hung the next day. The real thief was disturbed on hearing that an innocent person would be suffering on his account. He confessed to the king, and explained about his promise to the saint. Surprised, the king and the rich man visited the saint and they asked him why he did not stop the thief from stealing. The saint explained that had he told the thief to stop stealing outright, the thief would have stopped attending the lectures. It was crucial for the thief to keep attending his discourse and hear the good things, and eventually change for the good on his own accord. This approach led the thief not to steal in the rich man's house and also to repent and confess about his mistake, saving an innocent life.

The change towards the good became possible because the guru was successful in bringing down the Rajo guna of the thief. It is not possible to suppress the kamana or the desire; when one gets suppressed another will pop up. The only way is to act on the Rajoguna, bringing about a change in the heart. This is the significance of having a guru in changing one's Saṁskāras.

3.38

dhūmenāvriyate vahniḥ(r), yathādarśo malena ca, yatholbenāvṛto garbhaḥ(s), tathā tenedamāvṛtam. 3.38

As fire is covered by smoke, mirror by dust, and embryo by the amnion, so is knowledge covered by desire.

Sri Paramātmā explains the power of lust in covering a person's spiritual knowledge, through three examples. As the fire is covered by smoke, the mirror by dust, and the embryo by womb, the true knowledge is covered by kamana.

It is futile to think that lust, anger and desire can be easily controlled. It cannot be, as its roots are very deep in human psyche. In fact, the desire enters the embryo right from the conception, because conception itself is a consequence of desire and satisfaction. Even after death, being part of our astral body, the desire does not leave the body. It remains hidden in the baggage of Saṁskāra.

Sri Paramātmā gives the example of clouds. Although covering the sun, clouds fail to blacken it. Similarly, true knowledge or Atma jnana or Paramātmā Jnana remains covered by kamanas or desires. As long as kamanas are there, true knowledge will not be visible. The central idea is that just as roots of all sins are present in all hearts, knowledge also is present in everyone's heart. However, it is latent, and needs to be awakened. By learning Gītā, we are awakening that knowledge so that the

desire and the lust can be restrained.

In the 2nd chapter verse 54 Arjuna Asks, Sri Paramātmā:

***sthita-prajñasya kā bhāṣhā samādhi-sthasya keśhava
sthita-dhīḥ kim prabhāṣheta kim āsīta vrajeta kim*** (2.54)

what are the characteristics of the one who is established in divine consciousness? How does such a person behave?

Sri Paramātmā answers,

***prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha mano-gatān
ātmany-evātmanā tuṣṭhaḥ sthita-prajñas tadochyate*** (2.55)

all kamanas that enter your mind must be killed then and there. Such a person is the one with a steady mind.

3.39

**āvṛtaṃ(ñ) jñānametena, jñānino nityavairiṇā,
kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya, duṣpūreṇānalena ca. 3.39**

And, Arjuna, Knowledge stands covered by this eternal enemy of the wise, known as desire, which is insatiable like fire.

Bhagavān says that the fire of desire and lust is insatiable, and is the perennial enemy of the jnanis/ the enlightened ones. It makes the innate knowledge inaccessible. Desire mixed with lust keeps man's discriminatory faculties covered. No amount of lust will satisfy a person. An alcoholic may say I will stop drinking, a smoker may say I will stop smoking, but will continue indulging in the same.

The Rajo guna does not allow the fire of Kamana to get extinguished. **Before kamanas begin to rule the senses, it must be driven away from the intellect** itself. Only then the hidden knowledge will get revealed.

3.40

**indriyāṇi mano buddhiḥ(r), asyādhiṣṭhānamucyate,
etairvimohayatyeṣa, jñānamāvṛtya dehinam. 3.40**

The senses, the mind and the intellect are declared to be its seat; covering the knowledge through these, it (desire) deludes the embodied soul.

Now that we know that the enemy is kamana or desire, we should also know where it is hiding, only then we can drive it away. **Senses, mind and intellect are the places where the desires hide.** Through them Kamana or desires binds and deludes the person.

3.41

**tasmāttvamindriyāṅyādau, niyamyā bharatarṣabha,
pāpmānaṃ(m) prajahi hyenaṃ(ñ), jñānavijñānanāśanam. 3.41**

Therefore, Arjuna, you must first control your senses, and then kill this evil thing which obstructs Jñāna (Knowledge of the Absolute or Nirguṇa Brahma) and Vijñāna (Knowledge of Sākāra Brahma or manifest Divinity).

Bhagavān urges Arjuna to control the evil kamana by restraining and controlling the senses. Sri Paramātmā says, senses, mind and intellect are the places where the kamanas hide. These are also the three means at the disposal of human kind to acquire knowledge. Through five jnanendriyas, one can watch, hear, observe the sense objects differently. Through mind and intellect, man thinks, feels, imagines and takes decisions. Sense organs, mind and intellect do their work diligently. When these are covered by lust, they lose Viveka, the ability to think, and the person becomes deluded.

Senses can be controlled through wisdom and science. Jnana or wisdom is learned through Sādhanā from a guru, and also from sastras, scriptures and Vedas. Bhagavadgītā is Jnana. Vijnana is true knowledge acquired through practice of those techniques learnt through Śāstras, Sādhanās, vedas and from Gurus. Jnana is the theory and Vijnan is the realisation of that theory. Both are covered by Kamanas.

3.42

**indriyāṇi parāṅyāhuḥ(r), indriyebhyaḥ(ph) paraṁ(m) manaḥ,
manasastu parā buddhiḥ(r), yo buddheḥ(ph) paratastu saḥ. 3.42**

The senses are said to be greater than the body; but greater than the senses is the mind. Greater than the mind is the intellect; and what is greater than the intellect is He, the Self.

Sri Paramātmā speaks about the hierarchy connecting the senses to the jeevatma.

- Senses are superior to gross body
- the mind is superior to senses
- intellect is superior to mind
- the Jeevatma is superior to intellect.

At the lowest is the gross body; above this is senses; above the senses is the mind; above that is the intellect, and at the highest level is the soul.

Matter - body - senses - mind - intellect - soul - ParaBrahma. This is the order or the hierarchy of Sentient and insentient or **samvedansheel and asamvedansheel** tattva. When we say Om tat sat, Om is the tangible, Tat is the abstract knowledge and Sat is the Parabrahma.

In short, the soul is superior in hierarchy, and is above the intellect. A person can always rise and liberate oneself. Hence one should never lose hope even if he is gripped by kamanas continuously, he should know that one day he can evoke the soul that is superior of all and cut down on kamana and rise above these. This basic knowledge is necessary for through our soul we can attain Paramātmā.

3.43

**evaṁ(m) buddheḥ(ph) paraṁ(m) buddhvā, saṁstabhyātmānamātmanā,
jahi śatruṁ(m) mahābāho, kāmarūpaṁ(n) durāsadam. 3.43**

Thus, Arjuna, knowing the Self which is higher than the intellect and subduing the mind by reason, kill this enemy in the form of desire that is hard to overcome.

Sri Paramātmā tells Arjuna that the enemy appears in the form of desire/lust/kamana and though difficult, it should be killed. Senses, mind and intellect are the hiding places of kamana. Once the hiding places are known, they should be conquered. Slaying the desire is a subtle psychological process which needs to be tried and endured. Once the self-realisation happens the kamana becomes insignificant. Soul is superior to intellect, mind can be made firm through the intellect, These are

possible through the control of mind (*manonigraha*) and senses (*indriya nigraha*).

Therefore one should establish chittha in the soul, and disconnect the mind from the material world. When the mind is connected with the material world, it gives rise to kamas. With Intellect stabilised, and the buddhi firmed up, restraining the sense organs becomes a possibility. This enables one to progress on the path to liberation/moksha.

Thus concluded the discourse on chapter 3, *karma yoga*. It was followed by Questions and Answers session.

Questions and Answers:

Rabindranath Ji

Q: How to differentiate between Svadharma & Paradharma, and Viguna Svadharma & saguna Svadharma, as defined in verse no 35?

A: A hidden meaning is that, dharma of the Swa or the Jeevatma/the soul is reuniting with Paramātmā. For 'Swa' or the Jīvātmā, the body, mind and intellect are 'Para'. Activities of the Para or Paradharma, are the activities of the body, mind and the intellect. Their activities are dangerous, because of their predisposition to the material world. The profession you are in also becomes your Svadharma. By caste one may be a brahmin following non-violence, but if the person joins army, she or he becomes a Kṣatriya and protecting the country becomes one's Svadharma. Following the duty of a brahmin is paradharma to them. If people in society follow someone else's Svadharma, there will be confusion in the society. People should perform their own prescribed duty or dharma for the smooth functioning of the society.

Viguna is performing one's dharma or prescribed duty with limitations, without perfection. Sri Paramātmā says fire also is covered by smoke, and hence is not perfect. Similarly one's ability to perform Svadharma may not be perfect, there could be smoke like in the fire, even then, though imperfect one should still perform one's own prescribed duty.

Kalpana Ji

Q: As per verse 37, If we move from Rajo guna to sattva guna, kama and krodha will also vanish. Verse 33 says, there is nothing in my hand, if I am in Rajo guna I will be in Rajo guna, I can not to move to sattva guna or become gunatheet and transcend all 3 gunas.

A: We discussed in the discourse that we can cleanse our Saṁskāras. We are in this life to cleanse our Saṁskāras. Though Prakṛti (nature or tendency) is powerful, and it can pull one to one's innate nature, Purush (conscious energy) is more powerful. Through regular Sadhana (disciplined practice) we can overcome Saṁskāras or get detached from Karma bandha. Nishkama karma (selfless action) is the best way to cleanse the Saṁskāras. Motivation to do Selfless service will also come from regular sadhana, it will not come from one's tendencies or Prakṛti. Doing selfless service will remove all our bondages.

Anonymous

Q: You said we should control the mind and intellect through sadhana or practice. I find it very difficult to cope with a close relative's abuse, despite my kindness towards them. Though it happened long ago and I have forgiven them, the painful memory keeps resurfacing. How can I overcome this?

A: These experiences come to us through our intellect, mind and our senses. Relationships can sometimes pose a challenge in one's on spiritual journey. There is a need to develop inner peace and detachment from worldly distractions to attain higher spiritual states. Hence, it is essential to do

Sādhanā and regularly practice meditation even if it is for 10 minutes a day to start with. We should regulate our breath with a calm mind, and allow thoughts to come and go. If the mind becomes thoughtless even for a second, that is sufficient energy for one to live the entire day. Thoughtless mind is the biggest power house which can be attained by meditation.

**Om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyām(ṡ) yogaśāstre śrīkrṣṇārjunasaṃvāde
karmayogo nāma tṛtiyo'dhyāyaḥ**



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Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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