

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 3: Karma-Yoga

1/3 (Ślōka 1-7), Saturday, 29 June 2024

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/e6jWoTztKnc>

## The Destination of Karma Yoga and Sāṁkhya Yoga is HIS Abode

The session started with the customary lighting of the holy lamp followed by prayers at the feet of Gurudev.

This chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is about **Karma yoga - The Yoga of Action** or path of selfless service. It describes performing one's duties according to one's Dharma in a detached way.

In the first chapter Bhagavān did not speak at all. In the second chapter when Arjuna surrendered to HIM and asked HIM to take him as HIS disciple, HE expounded the Sāṁkhya Yoga, the Yoga of knowledge of the Self.

यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे

शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥ 2.7॥

I am Your disciple, and am surrendered to You. Please instruct me for certain what is best for me.

Bhagavān began HIS discourse with Sāṁkhya Yoga because HE understood Arjuna's nature. Arjuna was not destined to renounce the world and become a Samnyasi (sage). HE knew Arjuna was a Karma Yogi, a valiant Kṣatriya, and an archer par excellence who had never been defeated in any of his battles. However, Arjuna was now overwhelmed with confusion upon seeing his own kith and kin arrayed on the battlefield. To test whether Arjuna was truly inclined to relinquish everything, Bhagavān quickly transitioned from Sāṁkhya Yoga to Karma Yoga.

In the final verse of the second chapter, Bhagavān stated that the soul who attains the state of God-realisation is considered liberated and dwells in the Supreme Abode.

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति ।

स्थित्वास्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति ॥ 72॥

O Parth, such is the state of an enlightened soul that having attained it, one is never again deluded. Being established in this consciousness even at the hour of death, one is liberated from the cycle of life and death and reaches the Supreme Abode of God.

This prompted Arjuna to ask HIM the following question.

### 3.1, 3.2

**arjuna uvāca :**  
**jyāyasī cetkarmaṇaste, matā buddhirjanārdana,**  
**tatkiṃ(ñ) karmaṇi ghore māṃ(n), niyojayasi keśava. 3.1**  
**vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena, buddhiṃ(m) mohayasīva me,**  
**tadekaṃ(ṽ) vada niścitya, yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām. 3.2**

Arjuna said :Kṛṣṇa, if You consider Knowledge as superior to Action, why then do You urge me to this dreadful action, Keśava!

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.

Arjuna addressed Bhagavān as **Janārdana, meaning one who knows all and wishes the welfare of all.**

Arjuna was confused by Bhagavān's statement and asked HIM that if knowledge is superior to action, then why should he perform the ghastly duty of waging the war? Why should he fight against his own Guru who had held him by the hand and taught him the nuances of archery? He said he could not shoot arrows at his Pitamah, in whose lap he had grown up, or even the other relatives fighting from the opposite camp.

Arjuna was on crossroads unable to understand what was best suited for him. So he pleaded to Bhagavān to be merciful and not baffle him with HIS contradictory statements; **instead help to dispel his doubts and show him the best path which would be beneficial for him.**

### 3.3

**Śrībhagavānuvāca :**  
**loke'smīdvividhā niṣṭhā, purā proktā mayānagha,**  
**jñānayogena sāṅkhyānāṃ(ñ), karmayogena yoginām. 3.3**

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

Bhagavān said that HE had previously enunciated two paths of Sādhana. **One is Sāṃkhya Yoga, where the seeker follows the path of knowledge, and the other is Karma Yoga, where the seeker follows the path of action.**

Bhagavān answered that it would not be the first time HE would explain Sāṃkhya Yoga and Karma Yoga. HE had revealed this transcendental wisdom long back. However, with the passage of time, it

was lost to the world. In chapter four HE explained in detail how HE had disclosed this Divine secret to the Sun God at the beginning of time. And in a continuous tradition, the same knowledge was passed to other saintly kings.

**श्रीभगवानुवाच ।**

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् ।

**विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् ॥ 4.1॥**

The Supreme Lord said: I taught this eternal science of Yoga to the Sun God, Vivasvan, who passed it on to Manu; and Manu, in turn, instructed it to Ikshvaku.

**एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।**

**स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परन्तप ॥ 4.2॥**

O subduer of enemies, the saintly kings thus received this science of Yog in a continuous tradition. But with the long passage of time, it was lost to the world.

Bhagavān presented Arjuna with two paths: Sāṃkhya Yoga and Karma Yoga. HE did not claim that one was superior to the other. Though these paths appear different, they ultimately lead to the same destination. The choice of path depends on the seeker's individual circumstances. Regardless of whether the seeker follows the path of knowledge or the path of action, they will reach the same goal: HIS Abode. Just as a door serves both as an entrance and an exit, the specific path one chooses is inconsequential.

Once, on the vast campus of Pune University, the vivechak got lost. He called his friend, a professor in the university for help, and the friend asked for his specific location to guide him. Without knowing his exact location, the friend could not provide directions to the destination. Similarly, a seeker needs to understand his exact position in his spiritual journey, to be able to decide the best-suited path for him.

Bhagavān elucidated the Bhagavad Gītā to offer guidance to seekers who, millennia later, would find themselves at crossroads similar to Arjuna's, unsure of which path to choose.

**Arjuna's destination, achieved through wielding arrows in battle, parallels that of Buddha's after attaining enlightenment. Arjuna followed the path of Karma (action), while Buddha followed the path of knowledge (enlightenment).**

We will also reach the same destination as Arjuna and Buddha if we understand our true nature.

Bhagavān in chapter 18 says:

**स्वे स्वे कर्मण्य् अभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।**

**स्व-कर्म निरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच् छृणु ॥ ४५ ॥**

When men remain attached to their respective work, they can attain complete perfection in the form of qualification for transcendental knowledge. Now hear how a person who is engaged in his prescribed duty attains perfection.

## **na karmanāmanārambhān, 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.

Bhagavān explained to Arjuna that mere abstinence from work does not lead to freedom from karmic reactions. Even if one appears to be sitting quietly and listening to this vivechan, he is engaged in the action of listening. Similarly, those who are not actively listening are still engaged in the action of sitting. Furthermore, those whose minds wander into fruitive thoughts are engaged in mental work, which also generates karma and binds them in karmic reactions, just as physical actions do.

Our daily chores are mere karma / action. **To convert our actions into karma yoga one is required to relinquish fruits of one's action. Thus, true freedom from karmic bondage requires more than physical stillness—it involves mastery over the mind and thoughts as well.**

Simple acts like sweeping the floor can be transformed into karma yoga by imbuing them with the intention that "I am cleaning the house to welcome the all-pervading Paramātmā." Similarly, if the lady of the house cooks food with the intention of feeding and nurturing her family, the action remains a simple karma. However, if the food is cooked with the sentiment of also feeding the cow, the birds, the dog, and offering it as bhog to the Almighty, then the action is transformed into karma yoga.

Offering bhog (food) to Bhagavān is often depicted as a formality. However, when offered from the heart, with a sincere plea for Bhagavān to taste the food, accompanied by tears of devotion, one can feel that HE is happy and smiling in response. The following lines depict that while offering Bhog one must do so with the same devotion as Shabari or Vidur ji.

**कौन कहता है भगवान खाते नहीं,  
बेरशबरी के जैसे खिलाते नहीं ।**

Sincere devotion to Paramātmā results in eternal happiness and tranquility, where all sorrows are vanquished. HE iterated the same.

**प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिकारकरस्योपजायते ।  
प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥ 2.65॥**

By divine grace comes the peace in which all sorrows end, and the intellect of such a person of tranquil mind soon becomes firmly established in God.

One is advised to express gratitude to HIM for the abundance one has been blessed with. We should be thankful for our house, our family, and the food we eat. When encountering a blind person, we should thank HIM for our eyes. Similarly, upon seeing a deaf person, we should express gratitude for our ability to hear. It's also important to be thankful for all the challenges and shortcomings in life, as difficulties come to us to help us grow and develop our capabilities. By thanking HIM for all the good and the challenges received in life, we cultivate a deeper sense of appreciation and humility.

Trees and clouds embody a sense of selflessness in their existence. They give without expecting anything in return, showcasing a natural form of generosity and balance. It is a profound analogy to Karma yoga, where actions are performed selflessly and without attachment to the outcome. We should take a lesson from them as they are the true Karma yogis.

**Realised knowledge does not appear in an impure heart by mere physical renunciation. It**

**must be accompanied by congruent action that purifies the mind and intellect.** Therefore, action is also necessary for success in sāṅkhya yoga.

This was further illustrated with the simple example of charity. When someone engages in charity, often due to the ego, they desire recognition and want the whole world to know about their action. It is seen that if one donates to a temple or public place, it is often accompanied by a big plate displaying the name and address of the donor for all to see.

However, charity should ideally be a private affair where no one knows what one has given. The act should be performed devoid of even an iota of ego, only then can it be characterised under Sāṅkhya Yoga.

The sense of "I" and "Me" arises due to ego, and results in classification of action done as simple karma, and **not karma yoga**. The moment the "I" and "Me" are dropped the action becomes **akarma (inaction)**.

आकाशात् पतितं तोयं यथा गच्छति सागरम् ।  
सर्वदेवनमस्कारः केशवं प्रति गच्छति ॥

Just as all the water falling from the sky eventually flows into the sea, and all salutations offered to various Gods ultimately reach Sri Hari, similarly, **both the paths of Karma Yoga and Sāṅkhya Yoga lead to the same destination: HIS Abode.**

### 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).

Bhagavān told Arjuna that **complete inactivity is impossible even for a moment**, since the body-mind-intellect mechanism is compelled by its own make-up of the three Guṇas (sattva, rajas, and tamas) to perform work in the world.

The universe is born from the union of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Our soul / atma is a fragment (**aunsh**) of Paramātmā the Puruṣa. Prakṛti is responsible for the gross body (**Sthula śarīra**) which is composed of the *Panchamahābhūtās*; and the subtle body (**sūkṣma śarīra**) constitutes the mind (manas), intellect (**buddhi**) and ego (**ahankar**).

Upon the death of the gross body, it merges with the five elements of the Panchamahābhūtās (earth, water, fire, air, and ether). The atma (soul) is freed from the gross body. If the subtle body (consisting of the mind, intellect, and ego) has not yet attained realisation or liberation, it continues to carry the atma through the cycle of birth and death (samsara).

Prakṛti binds every soul with Sattvik, Rajasik, and Tamasik Gunas. All three Gunas are equally important for us mortals, and a balance among them is imperative. Tamasik Guna, for example, facilitates sleep; without it, there would be no rest, only restlessness. True rest comes only when one attains the state of Gunatita, transcending these Gunas. However, achieving this state is a long and challenging journey.

Thus, under the influence of these Guns, no individual can remain without action even for a moment. **All beings are compelled to act by the qualities born of material nature (the three guṇas).**

Simply sitting down is an activity; lying down is also an activity. Even when we sleep, the mind is engaged in dreaming, and during deep sleep, the heart and other bodily organs continue to function. The sensory organs are in constant activity, and the mind is never free of thoughts. However, when the mind becomes still and devoid of any thoughts, it is freed from negative thoughts and sin.

This was illustrated with an example. Even when one is sitting still, a distant noise prompts action. The ears listen to the noise, and immediately, the eyes turn toward its direction, demonstrating how the mind is constantly engaged in thought and activity.

### 3.6

#### **karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya, 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.

Paramātmā stated in this verse that people who externally renounce the objects of the senses while continuing to dwell upon them in the mind delude themselves (**vimūḍhātmā**) and are hypocrites (**mithyācāraḥ**).

Bhagavān's remark appears to be for others, but it was directed at Arjuna. HE is a psychologist par excellence. **HE indirectly called Arjuna a vimūḍhātmā & mithyācāraḥ.**

Whereas in the earlier shloka **HE** had called him **Anagha, the sinless one!**

**लोकेऽस्मिन्द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ ।**

In our culture, many methods have been prescribed to free oneself from sins. One such example is bathing in the Holy Ganga. This act serves as a psychological treatment; after taking a holy dip in the Ganga, a person often feels cleansed of sin and is more likely to refrain from committing further sins. Similarly, if a child is consistently praised for their truthful nature, they are likely to avoid lying in order to maintain their positive image.

Likewise, Bhagavān first praised Arjuna as the sinless one and then indirectly called him a hypocrite. HE knew that Arjuna's decision to renounce the war and the world was momentary, and that Arjuna would never be able to reconcile with the disrobing episode of Draupadi. HE also knew that Arjuna would always harbour enmity towards Duryodhana and Dushhasana.

Shrouding untruth does not transform it into truth. What is the point of fasting if the mind remains entangled in the aromas emerging from the kitchen? Such behaviour is hypocritical. It is advised that during fasting, one should not even entertain thoughts like "Why are others eating my favourite food or why is my favourite food cooked today?"

Fasting, known as *Upvaas* in Hindi, derives its meaning from "Up" meaning beside, and "vaas" meaning to sit. Therefore, **Upvaas translates to "sitting beside God"** and immersing oneself in HIS thoughts. To avoid external distractions, one is expected to refrain from all other activities during fasting, focusing instead on steadfast contemplation of HIS names. On the contrary, many individuals consume more than their normal diet on fasting days. They often showcase their act of fasting (**dambha**), which can inflate their ego rather than subduing it.

### 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.

Herein Parameshwara listed another trait of a superior being. Such an individual HE said, has the will power to control his senses and to perform action with the mind attached to Bhagavān; while renouncing the fruits of action. He is said to be a Karma Yogi.

It is observed that beings are often driven into action by their sense organs, when ideally it should be the reverse. To train oneself to control the senses, we are advised to conduct a small experiment on ourselves. Each day, focus on one sense organ. For instance, decide not to get angry on one day and remain vigilant to observe if anger arises. Through conscious effort over several days, one will notice a reduction in anger. Similarly, one can resolve not to speak ill of anyone or refrain from using their mobile phone for a day. Such small resolutions (sankalp) cultivate steadfastness and determination. By relinquishing these minor habits, one experiences greater positivity within oneself. This practice of suppression (daman) is highlighted in the Daivi Sampatti by Bhagavān, as even a small amount of restraint can steer the mind towards a positive path.

### **श्रीभगवानुवाच**

**अभयं(म्) सत्त्वसंशुद्धिः(ः), ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः।**

**दानं(न्) दमश्च यज्ञश्च, स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम्॥१६.१॥**

We are encouraged to learn from Bhagavān's teachings and to steadfastly follow our resolutions (sankalpas). One should start today by offering Bhog to Paramātmā with utmost devotion. While doing charity too, it should be done with such reserve that even the other hand knows nothing about it. Every action we undertake should be for the welfare of all beings, dedicating them at HIS holy feet, thereby transforming all our actions into Karma Yoga.

A real life story of king Nekinabo of Japan was narrated.

One day, the king was deeply distressed. A saint noticed his state and approached him to inquire about the reason. Initially reluctant, the king eventually confided that his army had suffered defeat the previous day, and his commander had been killed. The remaining soldiers were returning, demoralized, and the enemy was poised to siege his kingdom, causing the king great anxiety.

The saint proposed a solution: he asked to be appointed as the commander of the army for just one day, promising to turn the situation around. The king, skeptical of the saint's ability to alter the outcome, initially hesitated but eventually agreed after the saint persisted. The saint assured the king that he being a samurai would be able to take charge of the situation. Next day dressed as the commander of the army he was introduced to the army.

As the demoralised army returned to battle reluctantly, the saint halted at a pagoda and instructed the soldiers to pray fervently for success. He then announced a ritual: tossing a coin three times. If it landed heads each time, they would win; if tails, they would lose. To everyone's delight, the coin landed heads up thrice consecutively. Encouraged by this apparent divine favor, the army's spirits soared, and they entered the battle with renewed determination.

During the fierce battle that ensued, they fought bravely and succeeded in slaying the enemy commander,



securing victory. The soldiers rejoiced, attributing their success to the saint's intervention and their newfound resolve.

The king was astonished upon hearing the news of victory. When he met the saint, he asked how such a turnaround had occurred. The soldiers attributed their success to prayers at the pagoda, believing that God had intervened to ensure their victory.

However, the saint revealed that the true catalyst for their success was the soldiers' newfound determination, instilled by the act of tossing the coin. He explained that the coin used had heads on both sides, symbolising that their victory was a result of their own resolve and courage, rather than any external divine intervention.

**Even the smallest or largest resolutions can guide us and bring us back to our purpose. By staying committed to our resolve, we stay focused and driven on our path of action, whatever it may be.**

With this ended today's very beautiful and thought provoking session.

## **Question and Answer Session**

### **Poonam ji**

**Question:** How to do japa with a mala (beads string)?

**Answer:** Start the japa with the first bead after the Meru (the big bead). Once the round is complete reverse the mala. Do not jump over the Meru.

### **Lalita Ji**

**Question:** My husband just expired due to cancer. What should I do for the sadgati of his soul?

**Answer:** Do Geeta Path every day. Take a resolve that and do a 100 Geeta parayan. Since he was a Shiva devotee you can do Rudra Abhishek.

**Question:** Due to a death in the family I cannot go to the temple or do puja upto one year.

**Answer:** This is a wrong practice. One does not do functions for a year but doing Puja or visiting temples is not prohibited in the scriptures.

**Question:** Please tell how can I begin meditation.

**Answer:** Sit comfortably even on a chair, with the back straight. Then focus the mind on one part of the body. This is known as Dharana. Once done, focus the mind on the breath - each inhale and each exhale. One can then turn the mind towards each part of the body. In the later stage you can focus on the thoughts.

### **Akhilesh ji**

**Question:** I want to become a Geeta Sevi? I have spoken to people but not got concrete information.



**Answer:** Keep doing your efforts / karma without expectation of results. Soon your karma will become karma yoga. Do not give up your efforts if others are not responding.

**Renu Didi**

**Question:** I am in level 3 and have given Tech Seva twice before. But in the last few weeks my mind is faltering and I am unable to concentrate on my classes. I have stopped Seva too. This makes me agitated through the day. What to do?

**Answer:** It happens with all of us that at times we are so burdened with our inherent duties that doing an extra duty here becomes impossible. That is just fine as long as you return to doing seva as and when you have time.

Also try to delve into the reason for the agitated mind, and work towards resolving the same. With a calm mind you can resume seva. However, never feel guilty. Maybe Bhagavān wants you to take rest. Just pray to HIM and leave things upto HIM.



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**Thank you-For reading the summary**

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.

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**Jai Shri Krishna!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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