

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 5: Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/YwArCdjiY6I>

Karma Yoga and Sāṅkhya Yoga: The Path of Action, Knowledge, and Inner Detachment

The **fifth chapter** of the Bhagavad Gītā, *Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga -The Yoga of Renunciation of Action and the Yoga of Knowledge*

The discourse begins with the ceremonial lighting of the Dīpam (lamp) at the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān, invoking divine grace and filling the gathering with devotion and reverence.

Bowing in Reverence to Our Guru, The Eternal Source of Wisdom

गुरु ब्रह्मा गुरु विष्णु, गुरु देवो महेश्वरा
गुरु साक्षात् परब्रह्म, तस्मै श्री गुरुवे नमः

ॐ कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने ॥
प्रणतः क्लेशनाशाय गोविंदाय नमो नमः ॥

ॐ पार्थाय प्रतिबोधितां भगवता नारायणेन स्वयं
व्यासेन ग्रथितां पुराणमुनिना मध्ये महाभारते
अद्वैतामृतवर्षिणीं भगवतीमष्टादशाध्यायिनीं
अम्ब त्वामनुसन्दधामि भगवद्गीते भवद्वेषिणीम्

श्री गुरुवे नमः
ओम श्री कृष्णाय नमः
हरि ओम

As the session began, the speaker extended a very warm welcome to all the sādhakas. Today, we have gathered here to understand a very beautiful chapter, to truly know it, and to reflect on why this chapter is special. It is a crucial aspect of Karma Yoga. From the perspective of seekers, the Gītā is immensely significant. This is something everyone here already knows very well.

Yet, what is it that makes this Gītā so extraordinary? What is the feature in it that makes one feel that life would be much more difficult without it, and conversely, if the Gītā is received and fully assimilated, life becomes profoundly easier? This special quality of the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā becomes clearer as one studies this chapter carefully.

A little while ago, in the prayer recited, it was noted that the tendency to view the Gītā merely as a book or a literary text has never been cultivated in us. The Gītā is always perceived as a Devi, a motherly presence. In Maharashtra, the saints even call Her “Gītāī,” where in Marathi the suffix -āī means mother. Why is she given the form of a mother? Because she shows us the path. What does the first teacher, a mother, do? She teaches us how to live life, how to conduct ourselves. Similarly, the Gītā provides the most precious lessons of life.

Life is valuable. Human birth is extraordinary, not ordinary. And this extraordinary opportunity must be properly appreciated, lived correctly, and utilised to achieve something meaningful. The text that guides us in this highest valuation of life is none other than the Bhagavad Gītā. This is why she is rightly called a mother and teaches us thus.

However, this mother does not instruct one to renounce the world and flee, to take sannyāsa and abandon all responsibilities. Many have at some point thought, “Let me take sannyāsa and leave everything behind.” But the Gītā is not a text that encourages escapism.

When some children used to come for study with the speaker, they often asked, “*Didi, when you teach all this, will it make us lose interest in life itself?*” The answer is clear: studying the Gītā does not lead to such a thing. However, this kind of hesitation or doubt did arise in Arjuna’s mind.

In the first and second chapters, Arjuna expressed, “*I have nothing of my own to do. I am a warrior, yet I wish to renounce all action. I desire to take saṁnyāsa. I do not want to fight.*” Here, the most exalted warrior of his era, the supreme Arjuna, lays down all his weapons and refuses to act. Yet he declares his wish to pursue renunciation.

At this moment, one may ask: Does he truly understand what saṁnyāsa means? The chapter that is about to unfold explains precisely this. The essence of the chapter is that though Arjuna speaks of renunciation, his understanding of duty, action, and renunciation is incomplete. Vyāsa has presented this in a distinct form to illustrate the subtleties of karma and knowledge. Arjuna says he wants saṁnyāsa; he says he wants to avoid all worldly enjoyment, bhoga, but what he means is he does not wish to gain pleasure by killing his own kinsmen. The subtle implication is that he desires enjoyment, but not at the cost of adharma or by harming the virtuous.

This reflects a common human tendency: when faced with difficulties in life, one instinctively seeks an escape. Likewise, Arjuna seeks to avoid the immediate burden of war. Bhagavān points out that fleeing is not saṁnyāsa. True renunciation can be attained while performing action. This is the profound insight that this chapter seeks to convey: karma, when performed with the right consciousness, leads to saṁnyāsa.

Thus, this chapter reveals a deep and astonishing principle: karma yoga and saṁnyāsa yoga are intimately related. There are two approaches: performing action and attaining renunciation through it, or renouncing action and pursuing knowledge directly. Both paths converge in the realisation of the Self. While this may initially appear complex or difficult, it is a subtle philosophical truth.

The preceding chapters, third, fourth, and fifth, each address karma yoga in various forms. Karma yoga is the process of performing duties in the world while remaining consciously connected to the

Supreme Power, the Paramātma. To act in this way, while maintaining union with Bhagavān, constitutes karma yoga.

A deeper exposition of this principle appears in the third chapter, showing how ordinary action becomes a medium for spiritual union. In the fourth chapter, the emphasis shifts to jñāna, the knowledge of karma, which clarifies the philosophy of knowledge (jñāna) and action (karma). The fourth chapter is titled Jñāna-Karma-Saṁnyāsa Yoga, indicating the intricate relationship between knowledge, action, and renunciation.

In this context, Arjuna's confusion becomes apparent. He perceives knowledge as superior to action. In the second chapter, a śloka creates an impression:

dūranyatvārthaḥ karma dūranyatvārthaḥ buddhi-yoga-dhanaṁjaya

Here, action seems ordinary, even trivial, when compared to knowledge. Yet elsewhere, Bhagavān commands action. Arjuna experiences cognitive dissonance: "If knowledge is superior, why am I being asked to engage in severe action? If karma is trivial, why am I compelled to act?" This confusion is the natural human response when the subtleties of dharma, karma, and jñāna are juxtaposed.

The same tension continues in the third chapter. Arjuna, while understanding the supremacy of knowledge, questions why he should act if knowledge alone is the goal. He wonders: "Should I not pursue jñāna for the sake of jñāna itself? Why must I engage in action?" Bhagavān clarifies that knowledge must be accompanied by śraddhā, a sincere faith and conviction in the path of action. One cannot cultivate jñāna without a rooted commitment to dharma and karma.

***vyāmiśhreṇeva vākyena buddhiṁ mohayasīva me
tad ekaṁ vada niśchitya yena śhreyo 'ham āpnuyām***

Thus, Arjuna's mind becomes increasingly entangled in doubt. This confusion reflects a deeper lesson: intellectual understanding alone does not resolve the question of duty. Action, knowledge, and renunciation are interwoven, and only through practice and devotion does one reconcile these paths. Arjuna repeatedly returns to his initial concern, echoing the very doubts he expressed at the beginning of the third chapter.

5.1

**arjuna uvācha
sannyāsaṁ(ñ) karmaṇāṁ(ñ) kṛṣṇa, punaryogaṁ(ñ) ca śaṁsasi,
yacchreya etayorekaṁ(n), tanme brūhi suniścitam. 5.1**

Arjuna said :Kṛṣṇa, you extol Sāṅkhyayoga (the Yoga of Knowledge) and then the Yoga of Action. Pray, tell me which of the two is decidedly conducive to my good.

Karma Yoga and Jñāna Yoga: Their Unity and Misunderstanding

Here, once again, Arjuna recalls the earlier teachings of Śrī Krishna and remarks that karma, the path of action, is a comparatively simple matter in contrast to the subtlety of jñāna yoga. He reflects on what was said earlier in Chapter 3, particularly the second verse:

***vyāmiśhreṇeva vākyena buddhiṁ mohayasīva me
tad ekaṁ vada niśchitya yena śhreyo 'ham āpnuyām***

Arjuna perceives a kind of mixed or conflicting instruction and feels that the teachings are inconsistent. However, the essential truth is different: Bhagavān does not intend to present karma and jñāna as separate or opposing paths. Both ultimately lead to the same realisation of Paramātmā.

Bhagavān emphasises that karma yoga, when performed with understanding and surrender, also leads to the attainment of the same knowledge that one gains through sāṅkhya yoga or jñāna yoga. The difference lies only in the disposition of the listener. Each individual approaches the teaching from their own perspective and capacity. Some may hear primarily about the necessity of action, while others focus on the subtler teachings of knowledge.

Here, one can draw an analogy from everyday life: when a customer goes to a shop to purchase something, he may say, *“I want this item at this price.”* The shopkeeper responds, *“No, it cannot be sold for so little.”* The customer insists, *“Please give me a final price. Tell me one price.”* The shopkeeper may have already offered multiple options, but the customer’s mind has not yet settled. He is asking for clarity, for a single definitive answer that aligns with what he truly wants. In essence, the customer is saying, *“Speak what my mind seeks. Give me one clear response.”*

Similarly, Arjuna’s mind is restless. He wants clarity from Bhagavān: *“What is the one action I should take? Should I renounce and pursue knowledge, which is superior, or should I act?”* He seeks one decisive word that aligns with his dharma and spiritual welfare.

This question carries a deeper philosophical lesson, articulated in terms of shreyas and preyas. **Shreyas** refers to that which is truly beneficial, ultimately conducive to liberation, while preyas refers to that which is merely pleasant or gratifying in the moment. What is immediately attractive, **preyas**, is not always beneficial, and what is truly good, **shreyas**, may require effort or renunciation. Arjuna’s question reflects this discernment: he desires guidance on what is truly best for him, beyond temporary pleasure.

Understanding Arjuna requires more than reading the slokas superficially. One must appreciate his qualities, his sincerity, his clarity-seeking mind, his dedication, which made him extraordinarily dear to Bhagavān. To genuinely study, teach, and live the teachings of the Gītā, one must internalise not just the words of Bhagavān but also the qualities of Arjuna, the ideal disciple, whose mind sought the highest good above all.

What is the nature of Arjuna’s vision? What is the quality of his disposition?

Arjuna’s disposition is such that he always inclines toward shreyas, the path that is ultimately beneficial. He may hear what is immediately attractive or pleasant, preyas, but what he truly seeks is what is truly proper for him, what will lead him toward liberation and Paramātmā. For instance, he may hear, *“Renounce and pursue knowledge; action can be abandoned.”* That might seem pleasing to him in the moment, yet he asks for what is genuinely shreyas, that which ensures his ultimate upliftment and mokṣa.

This is not the first time Arjuna expresses this inclination. In Chapter 2, Verse 7, he already said:

**yach-chhreyaḥ syānniśhchitaṁ brūhi tanme
śhiṣhyaste 'haṁ śhādhi mām tvām prapannam**

Here too, he emphasizes the same principle: *“Tell me what is shreyas, what is truly beneficial for me.”* Even amidst his lamentations, doubts, and the intense emotional turmoil of the viśāda yoga, Arjuna’s sincere question remains constant: which path, knowledge or action, truly serves his highest good?

At that stage, Arjuna had already witnessed and spoken of enormous consequences in the battlefield, reflecting deeply on dharma, destruction, and the weight of his duty. Yet, his distress does not prevent him from seeking guidance. Once he submits himself as a disciple, accepting Bhagavān fully, Bhagavān opens the doors of HIS heart and allows the Gītā Ganga to flow, imparting the profound teachings in full.

The dialogue in Chapter 2, popularly known as Sāṅkhya Yoga, elegantly combines the importance of knowledge and the significance of action. Yet Arjuna, attentive and discerning, struggles to integrate these teachings. *“Sometimes knowledge is emphasised, sometimes karma is emphasised, what truly is shreyas for me?”* he asks again and again. His repeated questioning reflects the human need to internalise a teaching, to settle it firmly in the mind.

Because of Arjuna’s sincerity, discernment, and unwavering pursuit of the highest good, Bhagavān, who loves him dearly, responds by presenting the same essential teaching in a renewed and beautiful manner, ensuring Arjuna grasps the true path for himself.

5.2

śrībhagavānuvāca sannyāsaḥ(kh) karmayogaśca, niḥśreyasakarāvubhau, tayostu karmasannyāsāt, karmayogo viśiṣyate. 5.2

Śrī Bhagavān said :The Yoga of Knowledge and the Yoga of Action both lead to supreme Bliss. Of the two, however, the Yoga of Action, being easier of practice, is superior to the Yoga of Knowledge.

Even though the subject may seem previously addressed in Chapters 3 and 4 regarding karma yoga, Bhagavān now expresses it in new terms. Both sannyāsa (renunciation) and karma yoga (selfless action) are inherently shreyas, beneficial for liberation. Yet Bhagavān adds a clarification:

The word nishreyaḥ refers to mokṣa, liberation. But liberation here is not merely freedom after death; it is also attainable while living, even here on earth. Mokṣa means being freed from bondage and experiencing spiritual freedom in one’s lifetime.

The Gītā, as a text, explains exactly how one can attain this mokṣa while living, enjoying the liberation of body and mind without waiting for the next life. Both sannyāsa and karma yoga are paths leading toward this mokṣa; they are yogas that result in ultimate freedom.

Yet Arjuna, seeking clarity and fixated on a single decisive answer, asks repeatedly: *“Tell me one thing.”* Bhagavān, accommodating Arjuna’s disposition, responds in a focused way: while both are indeed shreyas, karma yoga is superior and special in its efficacy:

“Tayostu karma-sannyāsāt karma-yogo viśiṣyate.”

Why is karma yoga superior? Why is it considered viśiṣṭa, special? Because through karma yoga, one engages in the world with discipline, devotion, and detachment, transforming ordinary action into a path of liberation. It is not merely renunciation of action but a conscious, engaged practice that leads to both spiritual knowledge and freedom, making it the most practical and complete path for those like Arjuna who must act in the world while aspiring for mokṣa.

Karma Yoga: The Boat Across the Ocean of Samsāra

To understand this, consider a simple analogy. Recently, there has been heavy rainfall not only in

India but across the world. Imagine a river swollen by floods, flowing swiftly, which one must cross.

Suppose there are two strong, capable young men who can swim easily; they could leap and cross the river on their own. But alongside them are women, children, the elderly, and young people who cannot swim. How will they cross?

At this critical moment, a boat arrives, and a skilled boatman says, “Come, all of you, sit in my boat.” Everyone boards joyfully, and the river is crossed together safely and effortlessly. Which is the easier path? The river-crossing by the two strong youths alone, or the safe, collective passage in the boat? Clearly, the boat offers a smoother and more inclusive path.

In the same way, karma yoga is like that boat. It is a path accessible to all, flowing and inclusive. It does not require abandoning the body or renouncing natural attachments completely. From birth, certain relationships, habits, and tendencies naturally form, and it is not feasible to abandon all of them. For most people, total renunciation is impossible.

So how can one attain Paramātmā under such circumstances? Karma yoga provides the solution. One does not need to master swimming alone (Sāṅkhya philosophy or austere tapas). One does not need extreme intellectual understanding or harsh austerities. By making subtle inner transformations in daily life, one can cross the ocean of samsāra, the river of worldly existence.

This is why karma yoga is considered superior (viśiṣṭa). It is practical, accessible to ordinary people, and enables everyone to progress spiritually together.

Now, what about the term yoga in karma yoga? It is not merely sitting in rituals or practicing austerities. Yoga, here, is intimately connected with the inner being. From birth to death, one remains attached, clinging to identity, desires, ego, and habitual patterns. True karma yoga requires detachment from the fruits of action, from ego, and from attachment itself. Without this inner detachment, karma remains ordinary action; it does not become yoga.

When action is thus transformed, karma becomes karma yoga, and the practitioner reaches the same spiritual state as a Sāṅkhya yogi or jñāna yogi. Bhagavān emphasises: it is simple, accessible, and profoundly important. Its greatness lies in its universality; anyone can practice it and attain liberation while living.

The next verse will further explain how action becomes karma yoga and why it is superior.

5.3

**jñeyah(s) sa nityasannyāsī, yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati,
nirdvandvo hi mahābāho, sukhaṃ(m) bandhātpramucyate. 5.3**

The Karmayogī who neither hates nor desires should ever be considered as an ever renunciant. For, Arjuna, he who is free from the pairs of opposites is easily liberated from bondage.

The Characteristics of a Karma Yogi: Inner Detachment and Sannyāsa

How does a karma yogi remain free from all attachments? How does one recognise that a person, while performing actions, has truly become a karma yogi? It is not merely by performing actions that one attains this realization, there must be certain inner qualifications, subtle signs that reveal the attainment of this yoga.

Śrī Bhagavān explains that the most essential characteristic of a karma yogi is inner detachment (nisaṅgatā). One must cultivate a state of mind where the self is unattached to the fruits of action, entirely free from ego. This was also emphasised in Chapter 15:

asaṅga-śhastreṇa dṛiḍhena chhittvā

Detachment must be firm, established, and resolute like a weapon.

Bhagavān then enumerates the key traits of a karma yogi:

- **Nitya-sannyāsa** – Constantly renounced, yet active.
- **Na dveṣṭi** – Free from hatred or envy.
- **Na kāṅkṣati** – Free from selfish desire.
- **Nirdvandvaḥ** – Unshaken by dualities, whether pleasure or pain.
- **Sukham bandhāt pramucyate** – Naturally liberated from all bonds, experiencing happiness without attachment.

When Bhagavān speaks of sannyāsa, it is not the external renunciation of leaving home, wearing ochre robes, or abandoning society. Here, sannyāsa is psychological and inner, a detachment from the internal impulses, attachments, and identifications. The real sannyāsa is a transformation of inner tendencies. Only when the inner attachments are relinquished does true sannyāsa occur.

A karma yogi must detach from three principal types of attachment to action:

- Attachment **to the act itself** – Believing, “I am doing this work; I will do only what I am qualified to do.”
- Attachment **to results** – Expecting praise, profit, or recognition for the work performed.
- **Egoistic** attachment – Claiming credit and feeling self-important: “I did this; I deserve honour.”

When one overcomes these attachments, realising “*I act, but it is Paramātmā who works through me*”, the karma becomes yoga. The karma yogi acts but is inwardly detached from both action and result.

We must have heard the lyrics of,

सद्गुणों की साधना में ध्येय ज्योति नित जले

Here, if you notice Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is described as Karma Yogi

कर्मयोगी कृष्ण जैसे वीर हों हम पार्थ से।

The highest example of this is Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. Even as the son of Nanda, playing with cowherds or performing mundane tasks, He remained free from ego, attachment, or preference. When needed, He performed every duty, herding cows, driving Arjuna’s chariot, managing sacrifices, without claiming credit. This inner detachment, combined with effortless action, defines the karma yogi.

A karma yogi also exhibits nirdvandvaḥ, equanimity amidst dualities such as pleasure and pain, gain and loss, praise and insult. The person remains unstirred, balanced, and joyful, unaffected by the opposites of worldly life. This inner equality ensures freedom from bondage.

Another critical trait is **na dveṣṭi, na kāṅkṣati**. The karma yogi neither envies nor desires selfishly. The subtle difference here is that while one may act for the welfare of others, this is not selfish desire; it becomes a noble action, gradually transforming into yajña.

Ultimately, the inner state of a karma yogi and a jñāna yogi (Sāṅkhya yogi or renunciant) is essentially the same. Both have elevated consciousness, detached from the pull of ego and personal gain. The outward methods, karma yoga or jñāna yoga, may differ, but the inner disposition is

identical. Both have their minds raised above worldly entanglements and act or reflect from a higher plane of awareness.

Śrī Bhagavān acknowledges that people may label them differently, karma yogi, jñāna yogi, or sannyāsi, but in essence, the inner state is one. Both paths lead to the same goal: liberation while living, freedom from attachment, and union with Paramātmā.

In the next verse, Bhagavān further addresses Arjuna, guiding him toward understanding this essential inner unity and how karma yoga manifests in practical life.

5.4

sāṅkhyayogau pṛthagbālāḥ(ph), pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ, ekamapyāsthitaḥ(s) samyag, ubhayorvindate phalam. 5.4

It is the ignorant, not the wise, who say that Sāṅkhyayoga and Karmayoga lead to divergent results. For, one who is firmly established in either, gets the fruit of both which is the same, viz., God-realization.

The Unity of Sāṅkhya Yoga and Karma Yoga: The Perspective of the Wise

Śrī Bhagavān observes that those with an immature intellect (bāla-pravṛtti) tend to perceive Sāṅkhya yoga (specialised knowledge) and karma yoga (yoga of action) as entirely distinct and separate paths. This is, in essence, a childlike misunderstanding, a superficial view that arises from inexperience and lack of discernment. Such a perspective, Bhagavān notes, is not the view of the truly learned (paṇḍita).

To the wise, the distinction between these two paths is seen as illusory. Bhagavān states:

“Ekam-pyāshitaḥ-samyag ubhayer vindate phalam”

When practiced correctly, both paths yield the same result. The fruit attained by a karma yogi is the same as that attained by a Sāṅkhya yogi. The ultimate outcome, liberation (mokṣa), inner freedom, and union with Paramātmā, is identical for both.

Yet, the human mind, particularly in its early stages of understanding, often resists this insight. It insists on separation: *“No, these are different; knowledge is one thing, action is another.”* Bhagavān, aware of this tendency, patiently clarifies the perspective of the learned, showing that a mature intellect perceives the essential unity underlying these apparent differences.

For those with true insight, Sāṅkhya yoga and karma yoga are not competing paths but complementary expressions of the same truth, both leading to the same ultimate goal. Understanding this requires discernment, experience, and inner maturity, qualities of the wise (paṇḍita), who see beyond superficial distinctions.

In subsequent explanations, Bhagavān expands on this view, demonstrating how a person who sees with the vision of the wise can reconcile apparent differences between knowledge and action, realising that both are instruments leading to liberation.

5.5

yatsāṅkhyaiḥ(ph) prāpyate sthānaṃ(n), tadyogairapi gamyate, ekaṃ(m) sāṅkhyam(ñ) ca yogaṃ(ñ) ca, yaḥ(ph) paśyati sa paśyati. 5.5

The (supreme) state which is reached by the Sāṅkhyayogī is attained also by the Karmayogī. Therefore, he alone who sees Sāṅkhyayoga and Karmayoga as identical so far as their result goes, sees truly.

The Essential Unity of Sāṅkhya Yoga and Karma Yoga: The Vision of the Wise

Śrī Bhagavān now makes the core teaching explicit: Arjuna perceives Sāṅkhya yoga (knowledge-based yoga) and karma yoga (action-based yoga) as distinct and separate. This is why he repeatedly asks for a single choice, wanting to select one over the other. Yet Bhagavān clarifies that both paths lead to the same ultimate destination.

Wherever a Sāṅkhya yogi reaches through knowledge, the same goal can be attained through karma yoga. Arjuna has not yet understood this; hence, his insistence on separation is like a child's misunderstanding. Bhagavān emphasises: one who perceives knowledge and action as essentially identical has truly grasped the principle (tattva). Such a person, who sees the underlying unity, is called **paśyati-sapaśyati** he or she comprehends the essence accurately, without distortion.

To illustrate, the speaker gives the analogy of coal and diamond. To an ordinary person, they appear entirely different: coal is coal, diamond is diamond. But a scientist or expert recognises that both are made of the same element, carbon. The difference arises only due to conditions, temperature, pressure, and formation. Similarly, the Sāṅkhya yogi and the karma yogi appear different superficially, but their essential nature and the liberation they attain are identical. The one who sees this unity is truly a knower of reality (tattvajña).

Thus, Bhagavān exhorts Arjuna (and all aspirants) to become tattvajña: to see karma yoga and Sāṅkhya yoga as two paths of the same truth, leading to the same goal. The liberation attained by the wise, whether through knowledge or action, is the same as that attained by the great jñānīs of the past, such as Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, Mahājñānīs, or Rāmānuja.

However, Bhagavān also cautions that while both paths are ultimately equivalent, the practice of karma yoga is more accessible, especially for the majority of aspirants. Knowledge alone (Sāṅkhya yoga) requires exceptional discernment, rigorous study, and deep internalisation. Karma yoga, in contrast, is a practical, achievable path that integrates action with detachment, making liberation attainable even for those engaged in worldly duties.

Having clarified the unity of the two yogas, Bhagavān prepares to explain the challenges and subtleties in practice, which he elaborates in the next shlokas.

5.6

sanyāsastu mahābāho, duḥkhamāptumayogataḥ, yogayukto munirbrahma, nacireṇādhighacchati. 5.6

Without Karmayoga, however, Sāṅkhyayoga i.e., renunciation of doership in relation to all activities of the mind, senses and body is difficult to accomplish; whereas the Karmayogī, who keeps his mind fixed on God, reaches Brahma in no time, Arjuna.

The Path of Knowledge, Karma Yoga, and the Muni: Sunyasa as the Foundation

Now, let us first consider the aspect of knowledge. Here Bhagavān emphasises: Saṅyāsastu mahābāho duḥkham āpnoti yogataḥ. Without sanyasa (renunciation), neither Karma Yoga nor Jñāna

Yoga can truly succeed.

In the context of knowledge, it must be understood that knowledge cannot manifest without renunciation. ***Saṅyāsastu mahābāhu duḥkham āpnoti yogataḥ***, if one has not relinquished attachment inwardly, if one remains clinging to every object and experience, then no matter how much the external senses are disciplined or controlled, and no matter how exemplary the outward behaviour may appear, true realisation will not occur. Knowledge will remain incomplete.

Why? Knowledge does not merely mean having read several scriptures or attained scholarly learning. True knowledge, in its deepest sense, is experiential; it must manifest as direct insight and internal realisation. One cannot simply declare someone a great Jñāni based on their words alone. The authenticity of a Jñāni becomes evident through behaviour, conduct, and the inherent qualities that reflect inner realisation.

Bhagavān provides a means to test this authenticity. Just as a student sits for an examination, and only upon passing is recognised as proficient in a subject, similarly, the signs of a Jñāni indicate whether knowledge has truly borne fruit. Among these signs, the foremost is the absence of ego (nirahaṅkāra).

This does not mean that the discussion will now enumerate all the qualities of a Jñāni; those are described in detail in Chapter 13. The point here is: knowledge is not merely about verbal scholarship or intellectual comprehension; it is about inner experiential realisation. Until such knowledge manifests internally and is reflected in behaviour, it cannot be said to be fully established.

The same principle applies to Karma Yoga. Whereas a Jñāni must painstakingly study, reflect, and internalise the scriptures to attain wisdom, the path of Karma Yoga is relatively more accessible. The essential requirement for the Karma Yogi is first to become ***yoga-yukta*** united in conscious alignment with Bhagavān.

Once a person attains the characteristics of a Karma Yogi, they enter a state described as yoga-yukta, meaning they have cultivated detachment, dispassion, and non-attachment to the fruits of action, which we previously examined as the essential signs of inner detachment. A person in this state proceeds naturally and efficiently along the path toward Jñāna Yoga.

Thus, the gradual progression unfolds as follows:

- **Through Karma**, one cultivates Karma Yoga — by performing duties selflessly, without attachment to results.
- **From Karma Yoga**, one becomes Yoga-yukta — fully established in inner detachment and union with Paramatma.
- **From Yoga-yukta**, one naturally advances toward Jñāna Yoga — realising knowledge experientially and attaining the state of a Jñāni.

This progression highlights how selfless action serves as a bridge from the realm of worldly engagement to the heights of spiritual wisdom.

Here, Bhagavān introduces another significant term: Muni.

What is a Muni, and how does one become a Muni through Karma Yoga?

A Muni is one who is ***mananashīla***, contemplative, reflective, and constantly engaged in self-examination. The Muni continually investigates:

- To what extent have I reduced my ego?
- Have my desires diminished?
- Am I truly acting selflessly, or is some attachment remaining?
- As I progress in knowledge, is my sense of 'I' and 'mine' diminishing or growing?

One who persistently observes and regulates their inner tendencies, examining whether the self is increasingly free from selfishness and ego, qualifies as a Muni.

Through sustained Karma Yoga, one cultivates these contemplative tendencies, becoming a Yoga-yukta Muni, a being fully established in union with Paramatma. Such a Muni ultimately attains Brahman, realising the supreme eternal truth.

The Story of the Dhundhikari and the Wisdom of Muni

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares:

“yoga-yukto munir brahma na chireṇādhigachchhati”

One who is a Muni, established in contemplation and reflection, naturally attains Brahman.

To understand this, there is a very illustrative story from the Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa that exemplifies how reflection (manana) leads to liberation.

Once, Gokarṇa Rṣi was narrating the Bhāgavata to a group of villagers, including a person known as the Dhundhikari. The entire village listened attentively to the story. However, Vishṇudūtas (messengers of Bhagavān) arrived with their chariot, intending to take the Dhundhikari to liberation immediately.

Gokarṇa Rṣi was surprised and asked them: “The entire village has listened to the same story. Why, then, are you coming only for the Dhundhikari? Why is liberation being granted solely to him?”

The Vishṇudūtas replied: *“Though the story was heard by all, only the Dhundhikari engaged in true reflection (manana). He pondered deeply over his past misdeeds, examined his conduct, realised his faults, and earnestly resolved not to repeat them. He reflected upon his previous nature, understood his errors, and performed sincere prāyaścitta (atonement). Only such genuine contemplation prepares the mind for liberation. Hence, liberation is granted to him alone.”*

Following this, Gokarṇa Rṣi resumed the complete narration of the story.

This narrative beautifully illustrates the essential role of inner reflection. Hearing alone does not lead to liberation; it is the process of conscious reflection, introspection, and correction of one's actions that transforms knowledge into experiential realisation. This is precisely the inner work of a Karma Yogi.

In the context of Karma Yoga, Bhagavān emphasises that:

- A Karma Yogi **must diligently perform actions**, cultivating **detachment** from their fruits, until they become a Yoga-yukta Muni, **a reflective, contemplative person who internally examines the ego, desires, and attachment.**
- Once established in this reflective and detached state, the Muni naturally attains Brahman, which means:
 - The **realisation of Paramātma**
 - The **acquisition of all siddhis** (spiritual accomplishments) that are conducive to the attainment of the Supreme

- **Liberation** from all bondage

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa presents Karma Yoga as a self-sufficient and independent means for attaining Paramātmā. Through Karma Yoga, combined with inner reflection and detachment, a practitioner gradually becomes a Muni, Yoga-yukta, and finally attains Brahman.

Furthermore, Bhagavān goes on to describe additional beautiful qualities of the Karma Yogi, highlighting not only the mechanics of practice but also the inner states and virtues that define such an accomplished practitioner. These qualities will guide aspirants in identifying and cultivating the inner disposition necessary for union with Paramātmā.

5.7

yogayukto viśuddhātmā, vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ, sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā, kurvannapi na lipyate. 5.7

The Karmayogī, who has fully conquered his mind and mastered his senses, whose heart is pure, and who has identified himself with the Self of all beings (viz., God), remains untainted, even though performing action.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes the characteristics of the consummate Karma Yogi:

A **yoga-yukta person**, a true Karma Yogi, possesses a pure self (viśuddhātmā). His inner being is immaculate; there are no impurities or inner disturbances. Such a person is a vijitatma, one who has conquered the mind and the heart, and a jitendriya, one who has subdued all the senses.

To understand the depth of these qualities, consider ordinary human experience:

When a person reads, works, or observes, various distractions constantly arise. A compelling advertisement catches the eye, sparking desire: *"I must have this!"* A tasty delicacy, a beautifully displayed object, all can lead to subtle attachment. The mind fluctuates, tempted by these sensory appeals. Despite efforts to control the senses, the ordinary mind is not fully victorious over them.

In contrast, a vijitatma, jitendriya person remains entirely unaffected. Even if the most enticing objects appear before them, they remain steadfast on their spiritual path. For example, on an Ekādaśī, if sweets like gulab jamuns or mango juice are prepared, an ordinary person's mind may experience subtle envy or craving. Yet a true Karma Yogi, grounded in yoga, is completely detached; the temptation does not even arise. Their inner discipline and mastery over the senses allow them to remain unaffected, no matter the situation.

Sarvabhūtātmā bhūtātmā, the Karma Yogi perceives the same self in all beings. He understands that all living entities share the same Atman, the same divine essence (Paramātmā). Therefore, he is not entangled in actions. While ordinary people become caught in the cycle of karma and desire, a Karma Yogi acts but does not cling to the fruits of action. The inner unity and realisation of the Atman in all beings free him from attachment, even while performing duties.

Thus, through self-purification, conquest of the senses, and perception of oneness with all beings, the Karma Yogi remains detached yet active.

Now, Bhagavān emphasises a profound point: Karma Yogis and Jñānis (Sāṅkhya Yogis) share the same essence. The Karma Yogi demonstrates non-attachment, mastery of the senses, and equality of vision toward all beings. Similarly, the Sāṅkhya Yogi, through knowledge and discernment, attains the same detachment.

The difference lies only in the means:

- The Karma Yogi attains this through **action performed with detachment and awareness.**
- The Sāṅkhya Yogi attains it through **discriminative knowledge (viveka) and introspection.**

Yet, both achieve identical inner freedom (mokṣa), and neither remains entangled in karma. This demonstrates the unity of the paths: the path of disciplined action (Karma Yoga) and the path of wisdom (Sāṅkhya Yoga) converge in their outcome.

Bhagavān is about to elaborate further on the methods and attainments of the Sāṅkhya Yogi, describing how such knowledge leads to siddhi and the same detachment as the Karma Yogi.

5.8

naiva kiñcitkaromīti, yukto manyeta tattvavit, paśyañśṛṅvanspṛśañjighran, naśnangacchansvapañśvasan. 5.8

However, the Sāṅkhyayogī, who knows the reality of things, must believe that he does nothing, even though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating or drinking, walking, sleeping, breathing,

5.9

pralapanvisṛjangṛhṇan, nunmiṣannimiṣannapi indriyāṅindriyārtheṣu, vartanta iti dhārayan. 5.9

speaking, answering the calls of nature, grasping, and opening or closing the eyes, holding that it is the senses alone that are moving among their objects.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains the subtle yet profound principle of detachment in action and the shared essence of the Karma Yogi and the Sāṅkhya Yogi.

In a Karma Yogi, there is no sense of ego in action (karmaka ahankāra). As seen in the earlier verse, a yoga-yukta, viśuddhātmā, vijitatma person is free from attachment and unaffected by actions. Their acts do not bind them; they remain entirely detached.

This same principle applies to the Sāṅkhya Yogi. For a Sāṅkhya Yogi, whatever actions occur through them, even the smallest of activities, are not claimed as their own. In their mind arises the deep awareness:

naiva kiñchit karomīti yukto manyeta tattva-vit

“These actions do not happen by me; they are all the result of the grace of Paramātmā.”

This is beautifully consistent with the declaration in Bhagavad Gītā 3.27:

ahankāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate

The self-deluded person, blinded by ego, believes: “I am the doer.” But the Karma Yogi and the Sāṅkhya Yogi perceive the truth differently. Their intellect is refined; they recognise that they perform no action whatsoever on their own. All actions, from the smallest to the largest, occur by the will and grace of Paramātmā.

Bhagavān describes these minute actions meticulously: even seeing (*paśyati*), hearing (*śravana*), touching (*sparsā*), smelling (*gṛhṇana*), tasting (*āśnāna*), walking (*gacchana*), sleeping (*svapna*), breathing (*śvāsa*), talking (*pralāpana*), or discarding/accepting objects (*visarga/āśraya*), all of these,

even the opening and closing of the eyes (unmīṣa-nimīṣa), are performed by Paramātma.

The Sāṅkhya Yogi observes:

“All these activities of the senses are carried out by Paramātma; I am not the doer.”

Similarly, the Karma Yogi, through detachment and purity of mind, experiences the same awareness. Every act, whether voluntary or seemingly trivial, is recognised as functioning through Paramātma’s grace, not through individual ego or desire.

Thus, Bhagavān demonstrates the unity of Karma Yoga and Sāṅkhya Yoga:

- The Karma Yogi acts in the world, **performs duties with detachment, and remains unaffected**, seeing Paramātma as the ultimate doer.
- The Sāṅkhya Yogi cultivates knowledge and discernment to realise the same truth: **that all actions occur independently of the self.**

In both cases, ego and personal attachment are dissolved, and the yogi attains inner purity, mastery of the senses, and the vision of Paramātma in all beings.

Bhagavān continues to elaborate on this principle in the next and final verse of the chapter, before shifting the topic slightly. This concluding sloka will tie together the discussion of the attainments, detachment, and shared essence of both Karma Yogis and Sāṅkhya Yogis.

5.10

**brahmaṇyād dhāya karmāṇi, saṅgaṃ(n) tyaktvā karoti yaḥ,
lipyate na sa pāpena, padmapatramivāmbhasā. 5.10**

He who acts offering all actions to God, and shaking off attachment, remains untouched by sin, as the lotus leaf by water.

The Inner Detachment of the Karma Yogi and Sāṅkhya Yogi: The Lotus Leaf Analogy

We are now observing the innermost state of consciousness of the Karma Yogi and the Sāṅkhya Yogi. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa reveals that their inner condition is such that they have relinquished all sense of control or ownership. Every action that occurs, every movement of the senses, every activity of the body or mind, is performed purely by Bhagavan’s grace (Paramātma’s will).

In this state:

- Every act is offered to Bhagavān; nothing is performed out of ego.
- Any sense of “mine” or “I am the doer” is completely nullified.
- The mind of such a yogi is established in Brahman (Brahmya-ād dhāya karma), that is, it is perpetually situated in the Supreme Self.

मैं नहीं, मेरा नहीं,
यह तन किसी का है दिया ।
जो भी अपने पास है,
वह धन किसी का है दिया ॥

They live perpetually in this state of total surrender, Sri Krishnarpanamastu, maintaining absolute detachment (alīptatā). This detachment is possible only because they are non-attached to anything in the world (saṅga-mukta). Nothing binds them; they do not cling to objects, sense pleasures, or even

their own thoughts. Even the arising of the sense of “I” or “mine” is recognized as itself granted by Paramātma. Thus, they remain completely untouched and unbound.

To illustrate this, Bhagavān provides a vivid example from the Padma Purāṇa:

“Padma patra bhāsā nāspr̥ṣṭe, na pāpena padma patra bhāsā”

This analogy compares the yogi’s mind to a lotus leaf floating on water:

- The lotus leaf is continuously immersed in water, yet it never becomes wet.
- Though it remains in contact with water constantly, the water does not cling to it, nor does it alter its purity.

In contrast, the ordinary mind behaves like a sponge:

- Even a small contact with worldly objects or desires is absorbed,
- The mind gets “wet,” it is easily influenced and becomes entangled in karma, attachment, or sin.

The Karma Yogi and Sāṅkhya Yogi, however, have a mind like the lotus leaf:

- Always engaged in the world yet never attached to it.
- Their viewpoint toward the world is inherently detached.
- They remain uninvolved in sin, even if actions occur through them; they are not bound by karma, as they perceive that all events happen by Paramātma’s will.

In this state of **alīptatā**, all their actions, whether worldly or ritualistic, do not produce binding effects. Their inner detachment ensures that no sin, no karma, no worldly influence touches them, while simultaneously fulfilling their duties naturally and without ego.

Thus, Bhagavān presents a profound vision of yogic consciousness: the Karma Yogi and the Sāṅkhya Yogi, though active in the world or contemplating knowledge, remain internally free, like the lotus leaf on the water. This detachment is the foundation for their ultimate realisation of Paramātma and liberation (mokṣa).

A beautiful analogy, also emphasised by Swami Vivekananda, further illustrates the inner condition of the Karma Yogi.

Imagine a boat or a ship floating on the ocean. How long can it remain afloat? It stays above water only until there is a hole, through which water can enter. The moment water begins to fill the boat, it gradually starts to sink.

Similarly, the human mind resembles this boat:

- In the ordinary person, the world enters through the many ‘holes’ of desire and attachment.
- These openings allow worldly influence, passions, and disturbances to penetrate the mind.
- Consequently, the mind gradually sinks into worldly entanglement, much like a boat taking in water.

In contrast, the Karma Yogi and the realised, noble souls possess an inner condition akin to a watertight boat:

- Even while floating amidst the waves of the world, water (symbolising desires, attachments, or disturbances) cannot enter.
- They remain above worldly influence, navigating life while maintaining complete inner purity

and detachment.

- As a result, they progress steadily toward liberation, unaffected by external circumstances.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa urges that our own inner disposition (antargata-vṛtti) must evolve in the same manner:

- Like the watertight boat, our inner mind must remain detached and unpenetrated by worldly desires.
- The ultimate aim is for our inner state, by ears, mind, and intellect, to become steady, pure, and anchored in the Supreme.

In the forthcoming verses, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa further describes the exact condition of our senses, mind, and intellect, and how this inner stability can be shaped into the true form of renunciation (sannyāsa), which we will discuss in the next session.

This entire discussion, all insights shared, and reflections on Karma Yoga and Sāṅkhya Yoga are offered at the feet of the most venerable Gurudev and Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with deep reverence.

Hari Om, Śrī Kṛṣṇapraṇamastu, Om Tat Sat.

The session concluded with an engaging Question and Answer session, where thought-provoking queries were addressed with practical wisdom and deep spiritual insights.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Sanjay ji

Q: Did Sanjaya begin narrating the events of the war to Dhṛtarāṣṭra on the tenth day from the battlefield?

A: It is mentioned in Sadhak Sanjivani that Sanjay started narrating the events of the battlefield on the tenth day.

Q: Did the dialogue between Śrī Krishna and Arjuna happen in the form of ślokas, or did Vedavyāsa later present it that way?

A: The Gītā as we see it today was edited by Vedavyāsa. While Sanskrit was the conversational language of that time, it is unlikely that the dialogue originally occurred entirely in śloka form. Vedavyāsa's grace is immense, as he presented the conversation in the precise śloka form for our understanding. The Gītā is part of the Mahābhārata, which itself has about one hundred thousand ślokas. What is available to us now is Vedavyāsa's presentation in śloka form.

Q: Often during discussions, the topic of the Gītā arises. Should we share our understanding or give personal opinions? I worry about giving incorrect information.

A: Absolutely share the message of the Gītā. Convey as much correct information as you know, and do not speak about what you are uncertain of. Wherever possible, provide śloka references for accuracy. Disseminating the Gītā's teachings is our duty.

Bhavani ji

Q: I am learning the Gītā and serve the Geeta Pariwar as a Tech Assistant and Group Coordinator. Should this be considered selfish?

A: No. The intention behind service is what matters. Selfishness is only when the desire is for oneself alone. If your actions benefit others beyond yourself, then your desire is not selfish. Your service is indeed meritorious.

Lalitesh ji

Q: The third verse mentions the characteristics of a Karma Yogi, someone who bears no malice, has no expectations, and is free from all dualities. Does such a Karma Yogi exist today?

A: Yes, certainly. Our revered Swamiji is an excellent example. Saints like Jñāneśvar, Tukārām, and Gulābrāv Maharaj exemplify this in Kaliyuga. Just as a first-grade student may struggle with a tenth-grade question initially but gradually learns, we too must progress steadily toward understanding Karma Yoga. Keep the examples of Tilak, Gandhi, and others as inspiration for gradual progress.

Q: What is the difference between Sannyāsa Yoga, Sāṅkhya Yoga, and Karma Yoga?

A: Sannyāsa is not an independent path. It is a means to practice Karma Yoga and Sāṅkhya Yoga. Without sannyāsa, neither Sāṅkhya Yoga nor Karma Yoga can be fully realised.

Q: Which is superior, Sāṅkhya Yoga or Karma Yoga?

A: Both ultimately lead to the same state of liberation. Their distinction is in the method, not the outcome. The inner state of one who follows either path is identical. Imagine different ice trays: some triangular, some square, some circular, some star-shaped. Each produces ice of a different form, but the water content is the same. Similarly, while Sāṅkhya and Karma are different methods, the final attainment, whether for Śaṅkarācārya, Śukadeva, Arjuna, or King Janaka, is the same: the realisation of Paramātmā and inner equanimity.

The discourse concluded with a prārthanā (prayer) offered at the padakamala (lotus feet) of Śrī Hari, followed by the recitation of the **Hanumān Chalisa**.



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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.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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