

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 3: Karma-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/rgV90v50S0U>

## Action as Yajña - The Beginning of Karma Yoga

The **third chapter** of the Bhagavadgītā is **Karma-Yoga—the Yoga of Action**.

As per tradition, the session began with sacred invocations: the lighting of the ceremonial lamp, salutations to the Guru, prayers to Śrī Krishna, and hymns glorifying the greatness of the Bhagavadgītā. Reverence was also offered to Sage Vyāsa, the divine compiler of the Mahābhārata. These prayers established the devotional atmosphere and prepared the mind for the study.

Opening Prayers

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः।  
गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरुवे नमः॥

*The Guru is Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. The Guru is verily the Supreme Brahman. I bow to that sacred Guru.*

कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने।  
प्रणतः क्लेशनाशाय गोविंदाय नमो नमः॥

*Salutations to Śrī Krishna, the son of Vasudeva, the Supreme Being, who destroys all sorrows.*

नमामि सद्गुरुं शान्तं सच्चिदानन्द विग्रहम्।  
पूर्णब्रह्मपरानन्दमीशं आळन्दिवल्लभम्॥

*I bow to the true Guru, serene and of the nature of Sat-Cit-Ānanda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss), the Lord of blissful union with the Absolute.*

रत्नाकराधौतपदां हिमालयकिरीटिनीम्।  
ब्रह्मराजर्षिरत्नाढ्यां वन्दे भारतमातरम्॥

*Salutations to Bhārat Mātā, whose feet are washed by the oceans, who wears the Himalayas as her crown, adorned with jewels of sages and seers.*

ॐ पार्थाय प्रतिबोधितां भगवता नारायणेन स्वयं।  
व्यासेन ग्रथितां पुराणमुनिना मध्ये महाभारतम् ॥  
अद्वैतामृतवर्षिणीं भगवतीमष्टादशाध्यायिनीम्।  
अम्ब त्वामनुसन्दधामि भगवद्गीते भवद्वेषिणीम् ॥

*I meditate upon the Bhagavadgītā, taught by Nārāyaṇa Himself to Arjuna, compiled by Vyāsa within the Mahābhārata, a shower of the nectar of non-dualism, the divine Mother who removes worldly bondage.*

नमोस्तुते व्यास विशालबुद्धे  
फुल्लारविन्दायतपत्रनेत्रे।  
येन त्वया भारततैलपूर्णः  
प्रज्वालितो ज्ञानमयः प्रदीपः ॥

*Salutations to Vyāsa, of vast intellect and lotus-like eyes, who lit the lamp of wisdom with the oil of the Mahābhārata.*

With these invocations, blessings were sought from Param Pūjya Śrī Govind Dev Giriji Maharaj, our revered Guru, and heartfelt greetings were offered to all Gītā Sādhakas present.

Recap of the Earlier Chapters

- **Chapter 1 - Arjuna's Viṣāda (Despondency):**

Despite all preparations for battle, Arjuna's heart broke at the sight of his kin arrayed against him. Overcome with sorrow and attachment, he laid down his bow, refusing to fight.

- **Chapter 2 - The Call to Rise:**

Śrī Krishna rebuked him:

**क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप ॥ 2.3 ॥**

*Yield not to unmanliness, O Arjuna; it does not befit you. Shake off this petty faint-heartedness and rise, O scorcher of enemies.*

Still confused, Arjuna surrendered:

**शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥**

*I am Your disciple. Instruct me, for I have taken refuge in You.*

Krishna then unfolded the wisdom of *jñāna* (knowledge), the necessity of *karma* (action), and described the qualities of the *Sthitaprajña*—the person of steady wisdom.

- **क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।**

Transition to Chapter 3

Śrī Krishna taught that those with equipoised mind renounce the fruits of actions and attain liberation:

**कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः।  
जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् ॥ 2.51 ॥**

He further said:

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति।  
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च॥ 2.52 ॥

*When delusion is transcended, one becomes indifferent to worldly gains, past or future.*

Yet this left Arjuna puzzled. If knowledge is supreme, why engage in action? Why fight?

This very doubt opens Chapter 3—where Krishna reveals the harmony of knowledge and action through the path of *Karma Yoga*.

### 3.1

**arjuna uvāca :**  
 **jyāyasī cetkarmaṇaste, matā buddhirjanārdana,**  
 **tatkiṃ(ñ) karmaṇi ghore māṃ(n), niyojayasi keśava. 3.1**

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

At the opening of Chapter 3, Arjuna voices a sincere confusion born from Chapter 2. Having heard the praise of **buddhi** (steady, discerning intellect) and the portrait of the **sthitaprajña** (the person of firm wisdom), he assumes that **jñāna** stands *above* **karma**. Yet the same Teacher has urged him to *act*—to rise and fight. This verse captures that tension and asks for a reconciliation.

- **“jyāyasī... buddhiḥ” (knowledge seems superior):**

In Chapter 2, Śrī Krishna extolled *buddhi-yoga*—acting with a steady, detached intellect—as the means to freedom from bondage. Arjuna infers: if wisdom is higher, is not *withdrawal from action* the logical choice?

- **“karmaṇi ghore” (this grave/dreadful action):**

Arjuna points specifically to **dharma-yuddha**—a righteous but fearsome war against revered elders and kin. *Ghore* here expresses the **weight and gravity** of duty, not that it is unrighteous.

- **“niyojayasi māṃ” (You impel me):**

Arjuna experiences a **cognitive dissonance**: he hears the value of inward steadiness, yet he is being urged to engage in outward action. He seeks a **clear criterion**—*When is knowledge emphasized? When is action enjoined?*

- **Names and nuance—“Janārdana... Keśava”:**

- *Janārdana*—the One who addresses the needs of people—Arjuna appeals to Krishna’s role as guide for all seekers.

- *Keśava*—slayer of the demon Keśi; also etymologically “master of the senses” (ka-īśa, or lord of the rays/hairs). Arjuna implicitly asks: if mastery is inward, why this outward battle?

- **What Arjuna has (slightly) mixed up:**

- **Superiority in end vs. necessity in means:** *Jñāna* is indeed supreme as the **culmination**, but for most seekers the **means** is *karma-yoga*—selfless action that purifies the mind and ripens it for abiding knowledge.
- **Actionlessness vs. inaction:** True freedom is **inner non-doership**, not **outer passivity**. This distinction will be unfolded soon (3.4–3.7).

- **Why this verse matters:**

It frames the **central teaching of Chapter 3**: how **knowledge and action** are not rivals but **harmonized** in *Karma Yoga*. One acts, but without clinging to results; one moves, but remains inwardly still.

## Key Takeaway

Arjuna’s question is every seeker’s dilemma: *If wisdom is highest, why act?* The *Gītā*’s answer begins here—**act you must**, but act **without attachment**, letting action become the **discipline that prepares and expresses knowledge**. *Karma-yoga* bridges the path from effortful doing to effortless being.

Arjuna now presses for precision in **3.2**, asking Bhagavān to **state one clear path** that will decisively remove his confusion.

## 3.2

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

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

Arjuna now openly admits his bewilderment. In Chapter 2, Krishna spoke about the greatness of knowledge (*jñāna*) and the peace of the *sthitaprajña*, while also urging Arjuna to rise and perform action (*karma*). To Arjuna, these sound like two different instructions—leading to his genuine plea for clarity.

- **“vyāmiśreṇa vākyaena” - words that seem mixed:** Arjuna perceives Krishna’s teaching as containing both renunciation and action, which appear contradictory to his mind.
- **“buddhiṃ mohyasi iva me” - You are bewildering my intellect:** With humility, Arjuna says “as if” (*iva*)—acknowledging that the confusion may be his own limitation, not a flaw in Krishna’s teaching.
- **“tad ekaṃ vada niścitya” - tell me one clear path:** He yearns for a decisive answer—should he

follow knowledge, or action?

- **“yena śreyah aham āpnuyām” - by which I may attain the highest good:** The goal is not temporary relief but śreyas—liberation from bondage.

Here, **Sant Dnyāneshwar Maharaj** beautifully captures Arjuna’s state of mind in his commentary:

देवा, तूचि ऐसे बोलावे । तर आम्ही अज्ञानी काय करावे? । आता संपले म्हणावे आघवे । विवेकाचे ॥

*O Lord, if even You speak in such a confusing way, what are we ignorant ones to do? It seems the very light of discernment has been extinguished.*

आडवाटे लावावे अंधास । मद्य पाजावे माकडास । तैसा हा गोमटा उपदेश । ओढवला आम्हा ॥

*It is like putting a blind man on a crooked path, or giving liquor to a monkey—such is this puzzling advice that has befallen us.*

मी आधीच काही न जाणे त्रस्त झालो या मोहाने । तो एकेक नवलाई तुझी सर्व घोटाळाच या उपदेशी ॥

*Already I knew nothing and was troubled by delusion; now each new marvel of Your words only deepens my confusion.*

These vivid images show how the disciple feels lost when profound truths seem to contradict each other. Just as Arjuna turns to Krishna for one clear path, Dnyāneshwar conveys the seeker’s helplessness in the face of lofty yet puzzling instructions.

### Key Takeaway

Arjuna represents every seeker who encounters apparent contradictions on the spiritual path. His humility in admitting confusion becomes his strength. Dnyāneshwar Maharaj’s words remind us that when intellect falters, surrender to the Guru’s guidance becomes the way forward.

Krishna responds in 3.3, affirming that both paths—*jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga*—are valid disciplines, and begins clarifying how they harmonize rather than conflict.

### 3.3

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

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

Bhagavān now begins His clear answer to Arjuna’s confusion. Instead of discarding either knowledge or action, He establishes that both have been valid and eternal disciplines, each suited to seekers of different dispositions.

- **“dvividhā niṣṭhā” - twofold discipline:** The word *niṣṭhā* means firm establishment in a path of

practice. Bhagavān emphasizes that there are two authentic orientations in spiritual pursuit—knowledge and action.

- **“jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānām” - the way of knowledge for the Sāṅkhyas:** The Sāṅkhya-yogis are those inclined to discriminative knowledge, renunciation, and contemplation. They pursue liberation by realizing the Self as distinct from the body and mind.
- **“karma-yogena yoginām” - the way of action for the yogins:** The Karma-yogis are those inclined to activity. They perform their duties without attachment to results, dedicating action to the Divine. Action thus becomes a means of purification and gradual rise toward realization.
- **“purā proktā mayā” - declared by Me in the past:** This twofold division is not new. It is a timeless truth taught from the beginning, embedded in the very structure of spiritual life.
- **“anagha” - O sinless one:** By addressing Arjuna as *anagha*, Bhagavān reassures him that his confusion does not arise from fault but from the natural struggle of a sincere seeker.

Thus, Krishna tells Arjuna: both paths are real, but they are meant for different temperaments. For those deeply contemplative and inwardly detached, *jñāna-yoga* is suitable. For those active and engaged in worldly duties, *karma-yoga* is the practical discipline.

### **Example - Saint Gondavalekar Maharaj's Insight**

To understand why Karma Yoga is necessary for some, consider an incident from the life of Sant Gondavalekar Maharaj, a revered saint from Maharashtra.

His ashram in Gondavale was a place of deep spiritual activity. One day, road construction was taking place near the ashram. Labourers were toiling under the hot sun, while inside the ashram, seekers were meditating peacefully and receiving food.

Two labourers were overheard saying, *“We are working hard all day in this heat, barely earning enough to survive. But inside the ashram, people just sit, eat, and relax. They don't do anything.”*

Maharaj, hearing this with compassion, called them over and asked, “How much do you earn per day?”

They replied, “25 paise.”

He said, “I'll give you 50 paise if you work here instead.”

They agreed and asked what work was to be done.

The next day, Maharaj gave each a japamālā and said, “Sit here and do japa (chanting).” He showed them how to count the beads.

After only two rounds of japa, the labourers became restless. They were not used to silent sitting. Soon, they returned the malas and said, “Maharaj, this is too difficult for us. We would rather go back to our road work.”

This simple yet powerful episode shows that the path of knowledge and silent contemplation is not suited for everyone. For many, action is the more natural and effective starting point. And it is precisely for such seekers that Bhagavān has given *karma-yoga*—a discipline where worldly duties themselves become the means of spiritual progress.

### **Key Takeaway**

The Gītā embraces both knowledge and action as valid disciplines. *Jñāna-yoga* is for the contemplative renunciate; *karma-yoga* is for those engaged in the world. Both, when practiced rightly, lead toward the same goal—liberation. Action, when consecrated, is not a barrier but a bridge to realization.

In verse 3.4, Bhagavān clarifies further: liberation is not attained merely by abandoning action; rather, one must perform action without attachment. This sets the stage for the central message of *karma-yoga*.

### 3.4

#### **na karmaṇāmanārambhān, naiṣkarmaṃ(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 makes an important clarification. Many believe that freedom means inaction, or that renunciation means abandoning all work. But He firmly declares that neither idleness nor external renunciation leads to liberation.

- **“na karmaṇām anārambhāt” - not by refraining from action:** Simply avoiding activity does not liberate a person from bondage. Work itself is not the problem; attachment is.
- **“naiṣkarmaṃ puruṣo 'śnute” - man does not attain actionlessness:** *Naiṣkarma* is not mere inactivity. It is freedom from the binding nature of work. It is the state where the doer disappears, even though work continues.
- **“na ca sannyasanād eva” - not merely by renunciation:** To walk away from duties outwardly without inner purity or knowledge is incomplete. Real renunciation is inward.
- **“siddhiṃ samadhigacchati” - perfection is not attained:** Liberation (*mokṣa*) cannot be reached by simply “not doing.” It is attained when action flows without ego or desire.

#### **What is Naiṣkarma?**

Naiṣkarma is not the absence of activity, but **freedom from the binding nature of action**. It is the state where no further work is needed for personal gain or purification, yet action continues—naturally, selflessly, and effortlessly.

There are two aspects to this state:

1. Doing nothing, yet work happens.
2. Doing everything, yet without any sense of doership.

#### **Illustration 1 - The General Manager Analogy**

When a General Manager enters the office and sits quietly, perhaps reading a newspaper, the entire staff becomes active. His very presence ensures that work flows smoothly. Though he appears to do nothing, his role silently governs all activity.

Similarly, a realized soul, even while outwardly inactive, becomes the silent force that sustains meaningful action. This is *naiṣkarmya*—acting without acting.

## Illustration 2 - Surya Bhagavān and the Illusion of Action

All life on earth depends on Surya Bhagavān (the Sun). He shines ceaselessly, sustaining existence without pause.

If we say, “O Sun God, you rise every morning and set every evening, tirelessly working to sustain life,” Surya would reply:

*“I neither rise nor set. I remain steady in my place. It is your Earth that moves. You perceive my movement, not Me.”*

This is the essence of *naiṣkarmya*—being the cause without claiming doership, allowing work to be accomplished without agency or desire.

### Key Takeaway

True *naiṣkarmya* is not idleness, but freedom from the sense of “I am the doer.” Outwardly, action may continue; inwardly, there is complete detachment. Such action, performed without ego or desire, purifies the seeker and leads to liberation.

In verse 3.5, Bhagavān emphasizes that no one can remain inactive even for a moment, for all are driven to action by the forces of nature (*prakṛti*).

## 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).

Having established that mere abstinence from work does not lead to liberation, Bhagavān now explains why action is inevitable. Life itself is rooted in *prakṛti* (nature), and its three guṇas—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*—compel activity whether one wills it or not.

- **“na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api” - not even for a moment:** Even breathing, thinking, or blinking are actions. In reality, there is no such thing as complete inactivity while embodied.
- **“kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma” - compelled helplessly to act:** The individual self (*jīva*) imagines it is the doer or non-doer, but actions arise from the interplay of guṇas in the body-mind complex.
- **“sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ” - driven by the guṇas of prakṛti:** It is not personal choice alone; it is the natural tendencies of *sattva* (clarity), *rajas* (activity), and *tamas* (inertia) that propel action.

## Nature of Guṇas - The Invisible Strings of Action

As seen in Chapter 14, the guṇas are like invisible ropes binding the jīva to the wheel of karma:

- **Sattva guṇa:** Promotes clarity, harmony, and inspires noble, righteous action. It urges us to do what is beneficial.
- **Rajo guṇa:** Dynamic and restless. It drives us with ambition, desire, and ego—sometimes leading to achievement, often to agitation.
- **Tamo guṇa:** Heavy and obscuring. It induces laziness, inertia, and delusion—resisting right action or pushing toward harmful action.

These three constantly interact, creating impulses and compulsions. They are like musicians playing their instruments, and the jīva, bound to the body, helplessly dances to their tune.

### Illustration - The Bound Passenger in a Moving Cart

Imagine a person tied up and placed in a moving cart. Though he does nothing, he is carried forward. He may believe he is inactive, but in truth, movement continues because he is bound to the vehicle.

In the same way, as long as the jīva is bound to the body, which is a product of *prakṛti*, action is unavoidable. One may claim, “I am sitting idle,” yet eating, drinking, breathing, thinking, and feeling all continue. Even “inaction” is only another form of action.

This verse is a reality check: spirituality is not pretending to avoid work or sitting idle while the mind churns with desires. Real growth comes from recognizing the compulsions of nature and rising above them.

We cannot escape the guṇas, but we can **transform action into yoga**—acting with awareness, surrender, and detachment. Instead of being dragged helplessly by the guṇas, we learn to offer every act to the Divine.

Sant Dnyāneshwar Maharaj brings this truth to life:

म्हणौनि संगू जंव प्रकृतीचा । तंव त्यागु न घडे कर्माचा ।  
ऐसियाहि करूं म्हणती तयांचा । आग्रहोचि उरे ॥

*As long as one is embodied in nature, action cannot be given up. Those who still claim they will abandon it are merely clinging to obstinacy.*

### Key Takeaway

Action is woven into existence. The guṇas of nature compel everyone to act—physically, mentally, or emotionally. The wise do not seek false inactivity but embrace action with detachment, turning karma into *karma-yoga*.

In verse 3.6, Bhagavān warns against hypocrisy: one who outwardly renounces action but inwardly dwells on desires is deluded. True renunciation lies in the purification of intention, not the pretense of inactivity.

## **karmendriyāṇi saṃyamya, ya āste manasā smaran, indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā, 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.

After declaring that no one can remain inactive even for a moment (3.5), Bhagavān now exposes the danger of **false restraint**. True renunciation is not about physical withdrawal while the mind secretly indulges in desires.

- **“karmendriyāṇi saṃyamya” - restraining the organs of action:** A person may sit motionless, giving the appearance of discipline.
- **“ya āste manasā smaran” - but mentally thinking of sense pleasures:** Though silent and still, the mind roams toward food, wealth, pleasure, or power.
- **“indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā” - deluded by attachment:** Such a person mistakes outer quietness for inner purity, not realizing the bondage of imagination.
- **“mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate” - such a one is a hypocrite:** Strong words are used. Bhagavān calls this false practice—an outer show without inner truth.

### **Illustration - Nirjalā Ekādaśī and Food Craving**

On Ekādaśī, many fast to purify the mind and control the senses. Some observe *Nirjalā Ekādaśī*, abstaining even from water.

Now imagine a person keeping this fast who visits a friend’s house. When offered samosas, he proudly says, *“I can’t eat today—but tomorrow I’ll eat double!”*

Outwardly he is fasting, but inwardly he is feasting. The restraint is only of the body; the mind is still bound to craving. This is precisely the kind of *mithyācāra* Bhagavān warns against—when external practice hides inner indulgence.

### **Illustration - The Guru-Śiṣya and the Woman at the River**

A Guru and his disciple were traveling. At a riverbank, they found a woman unable to cross due to the current. She pleaded for help.

The disciple refused: *“I am a renunciate. I cannot touch a woman.”*

When the Guru arrived, he quietly held her hand, helped her across, and continued walking.

Later, at the āśrama, the disciple asked, *“Guruji, did you not teach me that a sannyāsī must never touch a woman? Why then did you break the rule?”*

The Guru replied with calm clarity:

*“I left her hand at the riverbank—but you are still holding it in your mind.”* This story beautifully illustrates Bhagavān’s teaching: real renunciation is mental purity, not physical rigidity. The disciple refused to help but remained inwardly disturbed. The Guru helped without attachment and moved on, free in mind.

## True vs. False Restraint

- **False restraint:** Suppressing the body but allowing the mind to dwell on pleasures.
- **True restraint:** Engaging in necessary actions while keeping the mind free from craving and attachment.

Thus, outward inactivity with inner agitation is hypocrisy. Outward activity with inner detachment is true spirituality.

This verse exposes the gap between appearance and reality. Bhagavān prepares Arjuna for the heart of *karma-yoga*: not renouncing action, but renouncing ego and desire **while acting**.

The sincere karma-yogī performs his duties in the world but remains inwardly detached. Outward work continues, but the heart rests in freedom. This is the antidote to hypocrisy and the path to liberation.

### Key Takeaway

Real sādhana lies not in pretending to be detached but in actually purifying the mind. False renunciation binds; true renunciation liberates. Outward quietness without inner control is hypocrisy, but outward action with inner detachment is *karma-yoga*. In verse 3.7, Bhagavān shows the positive contrast: the one who controls the senses inwardly, while engaging in action with detachment—he is the true yogī.

## 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.

Bhagavān contrasts the hypocrite of the previous verse (3.6) with the true *karma-yogī*. Outward withdrawal is not the goal; what matters is inward control and selfless engagement.

- **“indriyāṇi manasā niyamya” - controlling the senses by the mind:** The mind becomes the guide, holding the senses steady like reins control horses.
- **“ārabhate” - undertakes action:** True discipline is not escape from work, but conscious engagement in it.
- **“karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam” - engaging in selfless work:** The body and senses are used for duty, not for indulgence.
- **“asaktaḥ” - without attachment:** Though active, the yogī is inwardly free—working without ego or craving for results.

- **“sa viśiṣyate” - he excels:** Such a person is superior because his path is balanced, practical, and spiritually uplifting.

### Illustration - The Ship That Crosses the Ocean

A ship floats on the ocean, surrounded by water on all sides. It remains safe as long as the water stays outside. But if water seeps in through a hole, the ship begins to sink. Similarly, we live in *saṃsāra*—this vast ocean of worldly life. The world surrounds us, and we must perform our duties within it. But if *saṃsāra* enters our *antaranga* (inner self) through attachment and identification, we begin to drown.

*Bhava* means becoming, change, worldly flow. *Bhava-sāgara* is the endless ocean of becoming—birth, death, desires, and actions. The one who performs karma without letting it enter the inner self, without being entangled by attachment, floats safely across this ocean.

That is the essence of *karma-yoga*: to live in the world, but not of the world—to perform action without letting the ocean of change flood the heart.

### Key Takeaway

The hypocrite restrains the body but indulges the mind. The *karma-yogī* controls the mind, disciplines the senses, and performs duty without attachment. Like a ship that crosses the ocean without letting water in, he lives amidst the world yet remains untouched by it. This is why he excels.

In verse 3.8, Bhagavān further emphasizes: prescribed action must be performed, for action is superior to inaction, and even sustaining life depends upon action.

### 3.8

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

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

Bhagavān now gives a decisive command: Arjuna must act. After showing that inaction is impossible (3.5), hypocrisy is condemned (3.6), and selfless action is superior (3.7), He insists on the necessity of **niyata karma**—one’s prescribed duty.

- **“niyataṃ kuru karma” - perform your prescribed duty:**  
Bhagavān deliberately uses *niyata karma* rather than just *karma*. Not all action is equal—what matters is action aligned with one’s own dharma.

### Clarifying Vihit Karma and Niyat Karma

- **Vihit Karma:** The broad class of actions enjoined by scriptures or by one’s station in life. For a student, studying is vihit karma; for a parent, caring for children is vihit karma.
- **Niyat Karma:** The specific, individualized duty chosen within vihit karma, suited to one’s *svabhāva* (inner nature) and direction in life.

For example:

- A student's vihit karma is to study sincerely.
- If he chooses engineering, that becomes his niyat karma.
- If he further specializes in Mechanical Engineering, that is the specific focus of his niyat karma.

Thus, **niyat karma is a subset of vihit karma**—tailored to the individual, expressing their aptitudes and responsibilities.

A Common Mistake: Looking at Others' Karma

People often lose sight of their own path by comparing with others:

- A site engineer might envy a software professional's indoor comfort.
- A software professional may long for the travel and variety of outdoor work.

Such comparisons dilute focus and weaken commitment. **Bhagavān cautions against this distraction.** Progress comes not from chasing others' roles out of attraction or aversion, but by perfecting one's own karma, even if modest. This is why Krishna says: perform *your* duty (*niyata karma*), for that alone leads to inner growth.

### Key Takeaway

Not all work is equal. *Niyat karma*—your own dharmic duty aligned with your nature—is superior to inaction and to imitating others. Even the body's sustenance requires action. Liberation comes not from copying others' paths but from faithfully performing one's own.

In verse 3.9, Bhagavān takes this principle further: duties should not only be performed, but performed in the spirit of *yajña* (sacrifice). Only then do actions cease to bind and begin to liberate.

## 3.9

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

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

Here Bhagavān reveals the **transforming key of karma-yoga**—the spirit of *yajña* (sacrifice). Action is inevitable, but whether it binds or liberates depends on the intention behind it.

- **“yajñārthāt karmaṇaḥ” - action performed for the sake of sacrifice:**  
When action is done as an offering to the Divine, free of selfish desire, it purifies the heart and leads toward liberation.
- **“anyatra” - otherwise:**  
Action performed for selfish gain creates bondage, tying the doer to its fruits and perpetuating the cycle of birth and death.
- **“tad-arthaṃ karma kaunteya” - therefore act for that higher purpose:**  
Arjuna is instructed to perform his warrior's duty, but as an offering, not as a pursuit of victory,

wealth, or power.

- **“mukta-saṅgaḥ” - free from attachment:**

The outer work remains, but the inner clinging to results and ego must be given up. This transforms work into worship.

Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj’s Insight

Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj says:

**“स्वधर्म जो बापा । तो च नित्य यज्ञ जाणावा ॥”**

*Whatever is one’s own svadharma (prescribed duty), that itself should be understood as a daily yajña.*

Thus, we must perform our duties with the feeling: *“This is not my work; it is Bhagavān’s work, done for Him and offered to Him.”*

The Spirit of Offering

The bhajan line expresses this truth beautifully:

**“तेरा तुझको अर्पण । क्या लागे मेरा ॥”**

*What belongs to You, I offer back to You. What can ever be mine?*

When this inner offering is made, action ceases to bind.

Example – Golvalkar Guruji’s Yajña Mantra

Param Pujya Golvalkar Guruji, in his portrait offering *āhuti* (oblation) in a yajña, is shown reciting:

**“राष्ट्राय स्वाहा, राष्ट्राय इदम् न मम ॥”**

*This is for the nation, not mine.*

This mantra beautifully captures the yajña spirit: when we say, *“I act not for myself but for the nation, and I see the nation as Paramātmā,”* our every deed becomes sacred.

Whether it is a soldier at the border, a teacher in the classroom, or a farmer in the field—if done with this yajña spirit of “not mine,” every duty becomes karma-yoga.

The Fruit of Such Karma

**Action performed in the yajña spirit:**

- Does not bind us in ego and attachment.
- Purifies the heart of selfishness.
- Leads toward *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*—the state beyond all bondage of action, where the soul rests free in the Divine.

**Key Takeaway**

Action binds if done for oneself. Action liberates if done as yajña—an offering to the Divine. The shift from “mine” to “not mine” turns ordinary duty into sacred karma-yoga.

In verse 3.10, Bhagavān explains how the cosmic order itself is founded on yajña, and how beings and gods sustain each other through this principle of mutual offering.

### 3.10

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

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

Here, Bhagavān reveals the **cosmic foundation of yajña**. Sacrifice is not a later invention but an eternal principle woven into creation itself.

- **“saha-yajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā” - mankind created along with yajña:**

When Brahmā, the Creator, brought forth living beings, he simultaneously established yajña—selfless offering—as the law of life. The two are inseparable: to live is to participate in the cycle of giving and receiving.

- **“purovāca prajāpatiḥ” - Prajāpati said in the beginning:**

The very first instruction to humanity was not mere survival, but *prosperity through yajña*. This shows that dharma is rooted in harmony, not in exploitation.

- **“anena prasaviṣyadhvam” - by this you shall prosper:**

Yajña is the means of growth, both material and spiritual. By living in the spirit of offering—working not for ego but for the whole—society and the individual flourish.

- **“eṣa vo 'stu iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk” - may this fulfill your noble desires:**

Like a wish-fulfilling cow (*kāmadhenu*), yajña provides all that is truly needed. But it yields not through selfish grabbing, but through cooperative sharing and surrender.

This verse elevates action to a cosmic level: every duty, when performed as yajña, aligns the individual with the universal order (*ṛta*).

### **Key Takeaway**

From the beginning of creation, yajña—selfless offering—was established as the way of life. Through it, humanity prospers and desires are fulfilled in harmony with dharma. Action performed in this spirit sustains both the individual and the cosmos.

In verse 3.11, Bhagavān explains how through yajña, humans and devas mutually nourish each other, sustaining the cycle of abundance and harmony.

### 3.11

## **devānbhāvayatānena, te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ, parasparaṃ bhāvayantaḥ(ś), śreyāḥ(ph) paRāmavāpsyatha. 3.11**

Foster the gods through this sacrifice, and let the gods foster you. Thus, each fostering the other selflessly, you will attain the highest good.

Bhagavān now reveals the principle of **reciprocity in yajña**.

- **“devān bhāvayatānena” - nourish the devas through yajña:**

Devas represent the cosmic forces—sun, rain, wind, fertility—that sustain life. When humans act with reverence and offer back through yajña, these forces are honored and strengthened.

- **“te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ” - and the devas will nourish you:**

When these sustaining powers are in harmony, nature provides rain, harvest, and abundance. Life flourishes in balance.

- **“parasparaṃ bhāvayantaḥ” - nourishing each other:**

This is the eternal cycle of cooperation—humans and nature sustaining each other, ensuring harmony between the individual, society, and cosmos.

- **“śreyaḥ parāṃ avāpsyatha” - you shall attain the highest good:**

Such mutual support leads not only to worldly prosperity but also to spiritual progress, freeing one from bondage.

## **First Step (Sopan) of Karma Yoga**

The very first *sopan* (step) of karma-yoga is to **fulfil one’s vihit and niyat karma**. Everyone has a duty—general and individual—that must be performed sincerely.

Since no one can remain without action, Bhagavān asks: *why not act in the right way, for the good of all?*

- Perform your duties not merely for personal gain, but for the welfare of all.
- Offer every action as an oblation in the yajña of life.
- Action performed in the yajña spirit does not bind—it liberates.

Thus, by cooperating with one another, each fulfilling their duties with selflessness, society progresses and the individual grows inwardly. This is the true beginning of karma-yoga.

## **Key Takeaway**

Karma is unavoidable. By aligning it with yajña—selfless offering—we transform duty into worship, work into yoga. Cooperation, responsibility, and surrender turn ordinary living into the path of liberation.

The session was concluded here and humbly offered at the lotus feet of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

**श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु॥**

## **Question and Answer Session**

### **Govind Bhayya Ji**

**Q:** I am a LIC Agent. Sometimes I face rejection. Would that be considered as my *Niyat Karma*?

**A:** Yes, very much so. Your *Niyat Karma* is to meet customers, explain the product with sincerity, and

provide service honestly. Whether they accept or reject is not in your hands.

Bhagavān teaches that a karma-yogī must focus on **effort, not outcome**. The customer's acceptance is the *phala* (fruit), which lies in divine hands. Your liberation and peace lie in discharging your responsibility with detachment.

When done in this spirit, even your professional work becomes yajña, purifying you and benefiting society.

### **Nisha Garg Ji**

**Q:** Please explain the difference between Sāṅkhya Yoga and Karma Yoga.

**A:** Both are paths to the same supreme goal, but the approach differs:

- **Sāṅkhya Yoga (Jñāna Yoga):** The path of knowledge. By deep inquiry, reflection, and meditation, the seeker realizes Bhagavān as the ultimate truth. Knowledge removes ignorance, and by His grace, the yogī merges with Him in union.
- **Karma Yoga:** The path of selfless action. The karma-yogī performs duties diligently but renounces ownership and attachment to results. Every action is dedicated to Bhagavān. This surrender frees him from bondage and leads to union with Paramātmā.

Both paths converge at the same destination. The difference is in suitability:

- A person inclined toward contemplation may follow Jñāna Yoga.
- One engaged in worldly duties can practice Karma Yoga and reach the same goal.

Śrī Krishna Himself harmonizes the two, teaching Arjuna that **Jñāna without Karma is incomplete, and Karma without surrender is binding.**

### **Sohan Lal Ji**

**Q:** In the Mahābhārata war, I do not consider Duryodhan the culprit. My logic is this: Dhṛtarāṣṭra's father was Vicitravīrya, born from the elder wife, whereas Pāṇḍu was born from the younger. The mistake was that Dhṛtarāṣṭra was not made king first; instead, Pāṇḍu was crowned. That was the mistake.

**A:** The law of dharma was clear in those times: **a king had to be physically fit and capable of ruling.** Blindness was considered a disqualification, irrespective of birth order. Therefore, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, though elder, could not be made king. Pāṇḍu was chosen not because of favouritism, but because he was qualified to rule.

**Q:** But after the death of Pāṇḍu, Dhṛtarāṣṭra was still made king. Was that not another mistake?

**A:** Dhṛtarāṣṭra was not made the king in the full sense, but more of a **caretaker monarch** until the Pāṇḍavas grew up. The rightful heirs were the sons of Pāṇḍu. This arrangement was made to maintain continuity in the kingdom, though it later became a source of conflict.

### **Why Duryodhan Was Not the Rightful King**

- **Line of Succession:** The kingdom rightfully belonged to the sons of Pāṇḍu, not to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons. Since Pāṇḍu was the rightful king, his sons were the legal heirs.

- **Dharma vs. Greed:** Duryodhan's claim rested not on dharma but on greed and power lust. The scriptures emphasise that **adharna cannot override rightful succession.**
- **Vidura's Counsel:** Vidura repeatedly reminded Dhṛtarāṣṭra that the Pāṇḍavas, being legitimate sons of Pāṇḍu, must inherit the throne. Ignoring this was against dharma.
- **Śānti Parva Wisdom:** The Mahābhārata (Śānti Parva) records that the throne must always go to the most qualified heir, not merely the eldest by birth.

Therefore, Duryodhan's insistence on kingship was baseless in dharma. His refusal to share even "five villages" exposed his ego-driven attachment to power. Thus, his downfall was inevitable.



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**Jai Shri Krishna!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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