

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 3: Karma-Yoga

1/3 (Ślōka 1-7), Sunday, 25 January 2026

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/fDTdy-mY8OM>

From Confusion to Clarity: Understanding Action and Attachment in Gītā

The first session on **Chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gītā, Karma Yoga**, began with the customary lighting of the lamp and welcoming everyone to the class. All the participants were welcomed in class, following which the below prayer was offered to Śrī Bhagavān:

**vāsudeva-sutaṁ devaṁ kaṁsa-cāṇūra-mardanam |
devakī-paramānandaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ vande jagad-gurum ||**

I bow to Śrī Krishna Bhagavān,
the divine son of Vasudeva,
the slayer of Kaṁsa and Cāṇūra,
the source of supreme joy to Devakī,
and the Guru of the entire universe.

The class took a moment to look back at our Gītā journey so far. We have completed Level 1 and Level 2, and in Level 3, one chapter has already been completed. This helped everyone realize how much progress they have made in learning the Bhagavad Gītā. It was noted that earlier, knowledge may have come bit by bit, but through this program, it is being systematically shared and “downloaded”—chapter by chapter. Each aspect of learning—recitation, understanding meanings, and application in life—is being covered. Everyone should feel very fortunate to receive such structured learning, and should make extra efforts to absorb and live the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā. It was emphasized that by attending classes regularly and putting in consistent effort, we are creating a strong foundation for ourselves. Opportunities like this do not come often, so it is important to cherish and fully enjoy them. Through Geeta Parivar, we are receiving this knowledge systematically, so let’s enjoy the process and experience the joy (Rasa) of Gītā in our lives.

In Level 1, we covered Bhakti Yoga and Purushottam Yoga. In Level 2, we studied Devasura Sampat Vibhag Yoga, Guna Traya Vibhag Yoga, Shraddha Traya Vibhag Yoga, and Raja Vidya Raja Guhya Yoga. In this

way, six chapters were completed in Levels 1 and 2. Similarly, in the current Level 3, six more chapters will be covered, and the remaining six chapters will be completed in Level 4. This step-by-step approach ensures that, eventually, we will finish the entire Bhagavad Gītā, including understanding the meanings and their applications. After completing this journey, we will be able to confidently say, “I have studied the Gītā, understood its meaning, and am implementing it in my life.”

It was emphasized that the three aspects of learning the Gītā are studying, understanding, and implementing, and among these, the most important is implementing. Even Arjuna was very knowledgeable, but only after gaining knowledge could he make the right decisions. With the proper understanding, he chose to fight rather than take sanyasa (renunciation). The teaching is clear: while knowledge is important, true transformation comes when we implement the teachings in our daily life.

If we want to make our lives beautiful, we should focus on the applicability of the Gita in our daily life. Today, we are going to start Chapter 3 – Karma Yoga. But what is karma? Simply put, karma means action or duty. For example, for children, studying is one of our karmas. Fetching things from the market or helping our parents by bringing a glass of water is also our karma. Every little action we do is part of our duties in life.

A story of three friends.

They were passing through a jungle and were able to rescue a king. The king wanted to reward them. Since all three were unemployed, the king gave each of them a piece of land with chandan (sandalwood) trees, thereby giving them an equal opportunity to grow and earn money.

After six months, one of the friends approached the king again, asking for more help because all the money he earned from selling the trees had been spent. After a year, the second friend also came to the king with a similar problem. But the third friend never approached the king. Curious, the king asked his staff to check on him. To his surprise, the third friend was doing well and had even added more trees to his piece of land.

From this story, we learn that through karma, we can create our own luck—or lose it. Some people take what they have for granted and become lazy. Without action, even what is given by destiny cannot be sustained. In other words, to protect and grow what we have, we need to do our proper karma. This is true for big goals too. If someone wants to become a doctor, engineer, businessman, or IAS officer, they must put in the necessary effort and work. Until we do the karma required at that level, we cannot achieve those goals. Whatever is destined for us will only come if we put in the right effort.

Some people enjoy being idle, thinking that whatever is written in destiny will automatically come to them. But in reality, they are wasting their life and opportunities. Karma is what helps us reach our destiny, and at the same time, it can also take away what we do not nurture through our actions. Therefore, karma plays a very important role in shaping our lives.

In Chapter 2, Bhagavan explained both Gyan Yoga (the path of knowledge) and Karma Yoga (the path of action). At this stage, Arjuna is feeling confused and inquisitive. Even though he understands both paths, he is unsure which one to follow. Earlier, he was almost ready to give up the path of action that was destined for him, and now he seeks clarity on which of the two paths is best for him.

3.1

arjuna uvāca :
jyāyasī cetkarmaṇaste, matā buddhirjanārdana,
tatkṛm(ñ) karmaṇi ghore māṁ(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!

Arjuna is **confused**. Bhagavān has praised **knowledge, wisdom, and control of the mind**, but at the same time, HE is asking Arjuna to **fight the war**. So, Arjuna asks honestly:

“If knowledge is higher, why should I act?”

Explanation with an Example

- Teacher explains the lesson in class
- For sake of grasping it, assigns homework on the said lesson

The student may ask: “Teacher, if we have covered the subject then why should we do it again as part of homework?”

This is exactly how **Arjuna feels**. Bhagavā talks about **jnana (knowledge)**, which sounds quiet and peaceful. But He also talks about **karma (action)**, which sounds difficult and full of effort.

Arjuna is not arguing—he is **seeking clarity**. He wants to know:

- Should he **withdraw** and be peaceful?
- Or should **he act and fight**?

3.2

vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena, buddhiṁ(m) mohayasīva me,
tadekaṁ(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 is feeling confused. Bhagavān has spoken about knowledge (jnana) and also about action (karma). Both sound important, but Arjuna does not know which one he should follow. So, he speaks very honestly and says:

“Your words feel mixed and confusing. Please tell me one clear path that will be best for me.”

This shows us something very important:

- Arjuna is not arguing
- He is not asking for material things
- He truly wants to do the right thing that benefits him the most
- Since he is confused, he has left it to Bhagavān to show him the right path

Very often, the things we ask Bhagavān for are toys, holidays, good marks, or other material things. These are not wrong, but they are temporary. Arjuna teaches us something very important here. Before choosing his path, he wanted to be fully sure, so he surrendered his confusion to Bhagavān and asked for right guidance, not material rewards.

In the same way, when we ask Bhagavān for something, we should ask for higher and lasting qualities, not worldly things. Material needs—like food, clothes, school items—can be asked from our parents or guardians, who are responsible for them. From HIM, we can ask for:

- Bhakti (love and devotion)
- Shraddha (faith and trust)
- The strength to be regular in Bhagavad gītā practice
- A pure mind and right understanding

If we get hold of these, good marks etc. will automatically come.

At this stage, to **set the context** and make everyone attentive, the following questions were asked:

Q: What is the name of the first chapter of the Bhagavad gītā?

A: *Arjuna Vishada Yoga*

Q: What is the name of the ninth chapter of the Bhagavad gītā?

A: *Raja Vidya Raja Guhya Yoga*

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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān starts answering Arjuna's question. HE tells Arjuna that there are two types of Nisthas (steady paths of practice):

- Through **knowledge (Gyan)** - Here, knowledge is the main focus.
- Through **action (Karma)** - Here, doing work is the main focus.

Bhagavān had already mentioned this in Chapter 2, showing that both paths are valid. HE gives a comforting message: **Not everyone has to follow the same path.**

- Some people like to think, learn, and understand deeply. For them, the path of knowledge is best.
- Some people like to do work, help others, and stay active. For them, the path of action is best.

Even though the paths are different, the goal is the same: To become a better person and grow closer to Bhagavān. Example: In school:

- Some children enjoy reading and learning
- Some enjoy helping, sports, and activities

Both types of children can grow and succeed, just in their own way.

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 clarifies that there is no state of “doing nothing” (*naiṣkarmyam*). Even if we say we will stop all activities, that state can never exist.

- Can we ever say we will stop eating or stop breathing? No! These things happen naturally.
- That is why Bhagavān says: complete inactivity is impossible.
- Whatever path we choose—knowledge (jnana) or action (karma)—activities continue naturally.

But here's the important part:

- What we can control is attachment to actions.
- Example: We like chocolates. Even after having a few bites, we crave more and more. This craving is attachment

So, Bhagavān is teaching us:

- **Actions cannot be stopped**—they happen naturally.
- **Attachment to actions must be controlled**—this is what we need to watch carefully and remove if it exists.

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 says that no one can remain without performing action even for a moment. All actions are triggered by our nature, which is governed by the three gunas. This concept has already been explained in detail in Shraddha Traya Vibhag Yoga and Guna Traya Vibhag Yoga, so we are familiar with how the gunas function and influence us.

The three gunas are:

- Sattva- purity, goodness, and right action
- Rajas- activity driven by desire and ambition
- Tamas- inertia, laziness, and inactivity

These were discussed earlier across different levels (level 1 & 2) and chapters (12, 14 & 17). In the *Ramayana*, the three brothers are often used as examples to clearly explain these gunas:

- Vibhishana represents **Sattvic guna**, marked by righteousness and wisdom.
- Ravana reflects **Rajasic guna**, characterized by intense activity driven by desire and greed.
- Kumbhakarna symbolizes **Tamasic guna**, preferring sleep and inactivity.

Although they were siblings, their natures were completely different. These extreme examples help us easily understand the qualities of each guna. Bhagavān emphasizes that karma cannot be avoided. Even if a person decides not to do any work, actions still take place, such as sitting, lying down, or sleeping. Complete inactivity is not possible, because the gunas continue to operate naturally.

Each guna has its own importance. For example, tamasic guna causes tiredness and sleep, which is necessary for rest and recovery. In this way, all three gunas are required, but in the right proportion. Since we understand the gunas, we must remain aware and balanced in using them. Our goal should be to increase sattvic activities, while using rajasic and tamasic tendencies only when required. Excess—such as avoiding sleep for constant activity—creates imbalance and is harmful.

Among the three, Sattva Guna is the highest, and we should consciously work towards strengthening it over time. Even when we feel we are doing nothing, actions still happen through the gunas. For example, when a school principal enters a classroom, discipline and silence arise automatically—without instruction. Similarly, our gunas continuously influence our actions, whether we notice them or not.

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.

There are times when we say, “I will stop drinking tea” or “I will stop eating chocolates because they are not good for my health.” But inside, we continue to crave them. Bhagavān calls such a person *mithyācāraḥ*—one who behaves falsely. *Mithyācāraḥ* means *mithya ka ācharaṇ karne wala*—someone whose words and actions do not match. They say one thing but do something else. Externally, the person pretends to have control, but internally the desire is still active. This kind of self-deception is what Bhagavān points out. True discipline is not just about stopping an action, but also about reducing the desire in the mind. So, Bhagavān teaches us that real control means:

- Alignment of thoughts, words, and actions
- Not suppressing desires, but understanding and managing them

Only when the mind is also trained does our effort become honest and meaningful.

Story: The Honest Lakkarhara and the Mithyācārī Woodcutter

Once upon a time, there lived a poor woodcutter (lakkarhara) near a forest. Every day, he would go to the forest, cut wood honestly, and sell it to earn his livelihood. One day, while cutting wood near a river, his iron axe slipped from his hands and fell into the water. The woodcutter became very sad because the axe was his only means of earning. He sat by the river and began to cry—not out of greed, but because he did not know how he would survive. Seeing his honesty and pain, Bhagavān (appearing as a Devata) came before him and asked why he was crying. The woodcutter explained everything truthfully. The Devata went into the river and brought out a gold axe. When asked if it belonged to him, the woodcutter replied

that it was not his. The Devata then brought out a silver axe, but the woodcutter again said honestly that it was not his. Finally, the Devata brought out the iron axe, which the woodcutter happily accepted, saying it was truly his. Moved by his honesty, the Devata rewarded him by giving him all three axes.

Later, another woodcutter heard about this incident. Wanting to gain the same reward, he deliberately threw his axe (his source of livelihood) into the river and began pretending to cry. The Devata appeared again and brought out a gold axe. This time, the second woodcutter immediately claimed that the gold axe was his. Seeing his greed and false conduct, the Devata did not help him further. He neither returned the iron axe nor gave him the gold or silver one.

Key Learnings:

- Honesty brings true reward
- Greed leads to loss
- What matters is truthfulness in thought, word, and action

This story clearly teaches us the value of inner honesty and warns against *mithyācārah*, pretending to be virtuous while being greedy inside.

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 is teaching Arjuna a very important lesson about **doing our work properly**. HE says that the highest kind of work is done by a person who controls *niyamyā* his senses and does actions without attachment.

What does *controlling the senses* mean?

For example,

- While studying, our **eyes** should look only at the book
- Our **ears** should listen only to the lesson
- Our **tongue** should not keep talking or eating
- Our **mind** should stay with the work

Many times, even though we sit down to study, our mind is somewhere else. Because of this, we may find that we have covered very little, or we keep reading the same line again and again. Sometimes we finish the lesson, but nothing gets registered in our mind.

If the mind is not present, then no matter how much effort we put in, we cannot do justice to that activity. That is why, for any work we do, it is very important to do it with a focused mind and by keeping the sense under check.

This is the reason elders say, “*Mann laga kar padhai karoo*”—study with full attention. When we do any work without focus, it cannot be done perfectly. Even when we are watching something, if our mind is elsewhere, nothing really gets registered.

So, Bhagavān teaches us:

- **karmendriyaiḥ** : To keep senses under control and keep mind focused, and
- **karmayogam** : To put in sincere efforts and
- **asaktaḥ** : without attachment

That kind of work becomes the best and highest.

Question & Answers

Manasvani Didi

Question: I was not able to listen to the entire discussion, so I would like to refer to YouTube to go through it completely.

Answer: Yes! The website **vivechan.learngeeta.com** has a collection of all the Vivechans. Anyone who wishes to listen to any discussion can visit the website and:

- Select the chapter name
- Choose the speaker whose Vivechan they want to listen to
- Select the language (English or Hindi)
- Choose the part and play

It will feel just like attending a live class. All the live sessions are **recorded and stored on YouTube** for our reference.



We are sure you enjoyed reading the Vivechan write-up. Please invest three minutes of your time to provide us your feedback. Use the link below:

<https://vivechan.learngeeta.com/feedback/>

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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|| OM ŚRĪKṚṢṆĀRPAṆAMASTU ||