

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 3: Karma-Yoga

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Karma Yoga- The Path of Selfless Action

With humble salutations at the sacred feet of Gurudev, with the blessings of Śrī Jñāneśvara Mahārāja, and with the reverent invocation of Mā Sarasvatī, we now proceed toward the exposition of the first half of the Third Chapter, which is of great importance.

**Gurur Brahmā gurur Viṣṇuḥ Gurur devo Maheśvaraḥ |
Guruḥ sākṣāt param Brahma tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ ||**

**yānandaśrutimantraśaktirmahatī brahmātmavidyāvātī yāsūtroditaśāstrapaddhitirīti
pradyotitāntardyutiḥ |
yā satkāvyagatiprasāditamati rnānāguṇālaṅkṛtiḥ sā pratyakṣasarasvatī bhagavatī
māntrāyatām bhārātī ||**

**Namāmi sadgurum śāntam saccidānanda-vigraham |
Pūrṇa-brahma parānandaṁ īsamānandi-vallabham ||**

**Om pārthāya pratibodhitām bhagavatā Nārāyaṇena svayam |
Vyāseṇa grāhitām purāṇa-muninā madhye Mahābhāratam |
Advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm |
Ambā tvām anusandadhāmi Bhagavad-gīte bhava-dveṣiṇīm ||**

**Namo'stu te vyāsa-viśāla-buddhe
phullāravindāyata-patra-netra |
yenā tvayā bhārata-taila-pūrṇaḥ
prajvālito jñānamayaḥ pradīpaḥ ||**

Salutations to Mā Sarasvatī, Bhagavān Vedavyāsa, and Guru Govind Dev Giriji Mahārāj. We offer our respectful obeisances to all Gītā premīs who are devotedly studying the Bhagavad Gītā. On this auspicious occasion of Vasant Pañcamī, we offer our prayers to Mā Sarasvatī, seeking her blessings for profound knowledge. Knowledge pervades all existence, and its divine glory (*jñāna-garimā*) is limitless—beyond measure. With these salutations to Mā Sarasvatī, we now proceed to the Third Adhyāya (Chapter) of the

Gītā, which is Karma Yoga.

Before entering into the exposition of this chapter, it is essential to understand the brief background of the first and second chapters of the Bhagavad Gītā.

The armies of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas had assembled on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, ready for war. Arjuna requested Śrī Kṛṣṇa to place the chariot between the two armies so that he could see who all had gathered to fight against him.

**यावदेतान्निरीक्षेऽहं योद्धुकामानवस्थितान् ।
कैर्मया सह योद्धव्यमस्मिन् रणसमुद्यमे ॥१.२२॥**

Arjuna had chosen Śrī Kṛṣṇa as his charioteer. When given the option of choosing either one akṣauhiṇī (a vast armed army) or the unarmed Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna chose Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Yet, that same mighty and valiant Arjuna, upon seeing his own relatives standing prepared for battle, became disheartened and overwhelmed with sorrow. Arjuna became grief-stricken.

When a person, while immersed in sorrow, remembers Bhagavān, that sorrow itself becomes a means of connection with HIM. The sorrow transforms into Viśāda Yoga. Yoga means union or connection.

Arjuna had fought and won many battles earlier, but here, upon seeing his own kinsmen, he became deluded. One reason for this was the subtle mental conditioning—almost a form of brainwashing—done by Dhṛtarāṣṭra through Sañjaya. Such brainwashing is often directed at noble-hearted individuals. A virtuous person is told, “You are gentle and righteous; struggle and conflict do not suit your nature. Therefore, abandon the battle and withdraw.” In this manner, the wicked gain dominance over the righteous. This phenomenon operates throughout the world.

Hence, revered Swamiji emphasizes that sajjana-śakti—the power of the virtuous—must not only be united but also strong, alert, and active. Such empowered righteousness alone can work for the welfare of the universe.

In this preliminary background, Arjuna’s mental state is being examined, which is essential for understanding the deeper meaning of the Gītā. Arjuna believes that the war is being fought merely for the attainment of a kingdom. While expressing this, Jñāneśvara Mahārāja states:

**तैसे राज्यभोगसमृद्धि । उज्जीवन नोहे जीव बुद्धि ।
एथ जिह्वाळा कृपानिधि । कारुण्य तुझे ॥**

Arjuna conveys that mere enjoyment of royal pleasures and prosperity cannot lead to true upliftment of life. No matter how much physical comfort or material abundance one acquires, bodily identification (deha-buddhi) does not diminish. The desires of the body never truly end. Therefore, Arjuna feels that within this bodily or ego-based consciousness (jīva-buddhi), there is no real elevation or enlightenment.

Arjuna also believes that if the war is fought, Bhagavān will distance HIMSELF from Arjuna, because engaging in war appears to him as sinful. Bhagavān, fully aware of Arjuna’s mental condition, strengthens Arjuna’s morale, for it is rightly said: “Man ke hāre hār hai, man ke jīte jīt”—defeat or victory lies in the state of the mind.

Bhagavān asks Arjuna to transform his mental outlook. The war, HE explains, is not for acquiring a kingdom but must be undertaken as a duty of a kṣatriya. To fight injustice is the very dharma of a kṣatriya.

In the second chapter, Bhagavān gradually leads Arjuna from bodily consciousness to self-consciousness (ātma-buddhi). HE explains that the Ātman is immortal—it cannot be burned, slain, or destroyed.

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वाऽभविता वा न भूयः।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे।।२.२०॥

This principle of the Ātman is eternal and timeless. It is never born, nor does it ever die.

Thereafter, Bhagavān describes the characteristics of a sthita-prajña—a person of steady wisdom. It appears as though HE is describing HIS own state. HE then speaks about Brāhmī Sthiti:

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति।
स्थित्वाऽस्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति।।२.७२॥

One who attains this Brāhmī state and realizes oneness with Brahman is never deluded, even at the time of death, and attains supreme peace.

In the second chapter, Bhagavān instructs Arjuna—who wishes to renounce the war due to overpowering bodily identification—to abandon deha-buddhi and perform duty-bound action. At the same time, HE declares:

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं, जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम्।
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय, युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः।।२.३७॥

If Arjuna is slain in battle, HE will attain heaven; if victorious, HE will enjoy the kingdom on earth. Therefore, Bhagavān urges Arjuna to rise with firm resolve and engage in battle. By performing one's duty, benefit accrues in either case—this is what Bhagavān conveys. However, Arjuna fails to grasp this clearly.

Often, a human being decides the outcome of an event in advance. Arjuna, representing all of humanity, does the same here. HE concludes beforehand that this war is not beneficial for him and then begins providing justifications to support that conclusion. Bhagavān, however, endeavors to turn Arjuna away from this preconceived decision.

Bhagavān further explains what an atmajnani sthita-prajña truly is like. Hearing this, Arjuna responds that HE desires this very self-knowledge and peace.

Every individual has a personal Kurukṣetra—a field of action and karma. This Kurukṣetra is often filled with conflict. Where there is conflict, peace seems absent. War itself is a form of intense conflict, and that is precisely what Arjuna seeks to avoid. To escape this turmoil, HE surrenders to Bhagavān.

Arjuna's surrender is the key to the inner essence of the Bhagavad Gītā. The Bhagavad Gītā itself is the literary embodiment of Bhagavān.

At this point, Arjuna feels that instead of resolving his problem, Bhagavān is increasing it. At times, Bhagavān praises knowledge (jñāna), and at other times, action (karma). While glorifying action, HE says:

“कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन”

—perform action without attachment to results. Yet, while praising knowledge, HE declares:

द्वारेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय।
बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः।।२.४९॥

Here, Bhagavān states that desire-driven action (sakāma karma) is far inferior to buddhi-yoga.

Consequently, Arjuna requests Bhagavān to state one clear and definitive path. A state of deep confusion arises within Arjuna's mind—and it is from this confusion that the profound teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā

unfold.

3.1

arjuna uvāca :
jyāyasī cetkarmaṇaste, matā buddhirjanārdana,
tatkim(ñ) karmaṇi ghore mām(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 addresses Bhagavān twice in this verse as **Janārdana** and **Keśava**. When a person is distressed or agitated, it is natural to call out someone’s name repeatedly. Similarly, Arjuna, being restless, cries out in different ways and asks:

“O Janārdana, if You consider intellect superior to action, then why, O Keśava, are You engaging me in this terrible act of war?”

Here Arjuna recognizes something very important: Bhagavān Himself is assigning him this duty. He accepts that Bhagavān has revealed yoga and wisdom, yet he questions why he must perform such a dreadful (*ghora*) act. He expresses that he has surrendered (*śaraṇāgati*) and seeks guidance—yet he feels his confusion has increased instead of being resolved.

With this inner agitation, Arjuna proceeds to ask further questions in the next śloka.

3.2

vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena, buddhiṃ(m) mohayasīva me,
tadekaṃ(ṅ) vada niścītya, 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 expresses to Bhagavān the deep confusion that has overtaken his mind (*manas*). He requests Bhagavān to tell him one single path, one definite teaching, that will lead to his true welfare (*hitam*). He confesses that his mind has become unsettled and unstable, and he begs Bhagavān to show him what will bring lasting benefit and the highest good (*sukha / parama-hitam*).

Arjuna is troubled by what appears to him as Bhagavān’s mixed instruction—at times praising knowledge (*jñāna*), and at other times praising action (*karma*). This alternating emphasis bewilders him. He seeks clarity and firm guidance so that he may act with certainty and steadiness.

At the same time, there is also a subtle, human hope hidden within Arjuna’s request. Deep within, he wishes that Bhagavān will confirm what he himself wants to hear—that action is of lower importance than knowledge, and that he may avoid the dreadful war. In other words, he longs for reassurance that supports his personal inclination.

This is similar to many real-life situations. Sometimes, parents take their child to a psychologist for counselling, but inwardly they already have a preferred direction in mind. They may subtly expect the counsellor to advise the child according to the parents’ own wishes—what the child should do, which path (*mārga*) should be chosen, and what decisions (*niṣpatti*) should be taken. The counselling is sought, but

the hope remains that their own intention (*icchā*) will be communicated through the counsellor.

Similarly, a person approaching guidance—whether from a Guru, a teacher (*ācārya*), or elders—often desires that the advice should match their own inner conclusion (*antar-manasa-nirdhāraṇa*). The guidance is requested, but the mind secretly hopes for validation rather than correction.

Arjuna is standing exactly in this human tendency. He wants Bhagavān to speak in alignment with the resolution he has already formed within himself—renunciation of the war. This is the natural habit (*svabhāva*) of the mind: when a decision does not match one’s inner liking, one finds it difficult to accept it. Therefore, many people long for their own decision to come from the mouth of the Guru, so that it feels sanctioned and unquestionable. Arjuna too seeks such confirmation, even while presenting his request as a sincere search for truth.

Yet, Arjuna’s question contains something far more noble than this hidden expectation. He is asking for *śreyaḥ*—that which is truly beneficial, welfare-oriented, and conducive to the highest good. This is different from *preyaḥ*, which is merely pleasant, comforting, or immediately desirable.

A simple example makes this distinction clear: if a person loves sweets, eating them feels pleasant (*preyaḥ*). But if the same person has diabetes, sweets may be harmful. Avoiding sweets then becomes the truly beneficial choice (*śreyaḥ*). To understand what is genuinely beneficial often requires guidance from those with wisdom—elders, teachers, doctors, and experts.

The Bhagavad Gītā is such a sublime guide—always oriented toward *śreyaḥ*. It speaks for the welfare of all beings. Yet welfare is not identical for everyone. It varies according to a person’s nature, stage of life, conditioning, and responsibilities. What is *śreyaḥ* for one individual may not be the same for another. Therefore, Arjuna asks Bhagavān specifically: “Tell me what is my *śreyaḥ*—what is truly beneficial for me.”

Earlier, in the first chapter, Arjuna presented a strong intellectual argument:

na ca śreyo ’nupaśyāmi hatvā sva-janam āhave

“I do not see any good in killing my own people in battle.”

Later, Bhagavān calls such reasoning *pāṇḍitya*—cleverness that appears refined, but is still incomplete. Yet Arjuna’s inner condition soon changes. When he truly takes refuge in Bhagavān, he places Bhagavān in the position of his Guru and openly confesses his helplessness:

kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvāṃ dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ |

yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṃ brūhi tan me śiṣyas te ’haṃ śādhi mām tvāṃ prapannam ||

“My nature is overwhelmed by weakness. My mind is deluded regarding dharma. I ask You to tell me clearly what is truly beneficial for me. I am Your disciple; I have taken refuge in You. Please instruct me.”

This is a decisive transformation. Earlier, Arjuna was relying on his own judgment. Now, in surrender, he admits confusion and seeks guidance—not for what is merely pleasing (*preyaḥ*), but for what is truly beneficial (*śreyaḥ*). This shift—from intellectual argument to surrender—is one of the greatest turning points of the Bhagavad Gītā.

Arjuna continues:

na hi prapaśyāmi mamāpanudyād yac chokam ucchoṣaṇam indriyāṅām |

avāpya bhūmāv asapatnam ṛddhaṃ rājyaṃ surāṅām api cādhipatyam ||

He says that he cannot see anything that will remove the grief that is drying up his senses, even if he were to gain an unrivalled prosperous kingdom on earth, or even the lordship of the gods.

Here Arjuna reveals the depth of his suffering. He is saying that external success, power, or victory cannot

heal the inner crisis he is facing. Therefore, he begs Bhagavān again: “Please instruct me. Teach me. I am Your disciple. I have surrendered at Your feet.”

The word **sādhi** means: “Please guide me, discipline me, teach me.”

The word **prapanna** means: “I have taken refuge; I am surrendered.”

Only after this surrender does Bhagavān begin to unfold the eternal wisdom of the Gītā in its full force. From the eleventh verse of the second chapter onward, the timeless stream of knowledge flows—immortality of the Self, the nature of the Ātman, and the description of the *sthita-prajña*.

Yet Arjuna still feels uncertain. Even after hearing about wisdom, he admits that he has not fully grasped what he should do. Now the relationship between Bhagavān and Arjuna becomes one of deep love, compassion, and trust. Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj explains this bond beautifully in the *Jñāneśvarī*, the great commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā, composed with compassion as though carving wisdom into the hearts of seekers. The *Jñāneśvarī* expresses the emotional depth and inner movement of the Gītā with extraordinary tenderness and clarity, unfolding across nearly nine thousand ovis.

Jñāneśvar Mahārāj captures Arjuna’s helplessness in these words:

आतां कैसा नेणों कोण मार्गु ।
धरूं पायांसीं कोणाचा मागु ॥
धर्माधर्माजीं भेदु ।
कळेना ॥
कृपया मज उपदेशु करावा ।
शिष्यत्वे मी तुज भावावा ॥
तुज शरण आलो देवाधिदेवा ।
श्रीकृष्णा ॥

“Now I do not know which path to take. At whose feet should I place myself? I can no longer distinguish between dharma and adharma. Nothing is clear to me. Therefore, please instruct me with compassion. Accept me as Your disciple. I have come in complete surrender, O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Lord of all gods.”

Arjuna confesses that waves of delusion have covered him, and his discernment has been overwhelmed. He admits that he is struggling but cannot rise out of this confusion alone. Therefore, he seeks *viveka*—clear discrimination: the ability to understand what is right and what is wrong, what should be done and what should not be done.

Ignorance must never be encouraged. True wisdom shines among the sages and the divine. This awakening of discernment is *viveka*, and it lies at the heart of the Bhagavad Gītā.

Sant Kabir expresses this as:

मैं सो गुरु पाया जिनका नाम विवेक ।
आठ पहर उजियारा रहे, दुःख अँधेरा देख ॥

He says he found a Guru whose very name is *Viveka*—discrimination that keeps the inner light shining constantly, and exposes sorrow as darkness.

Jñāneśvar Mahārāj also expresses Arjuna’s tender complaint—his loving protest—when Arjuna feels that Bhagavān’s teaching appears mixed:

ये तुझे नवलाई, उपदेश माझी गोवळी ।
एकी ठायीं स्तुती, दुसरी ठायीं निंदा केली ॥

“This is indeed surprising, O Lord—your teaching itself bewilders me. In one place you praise one path, and in another place you seem to criticize it.”

Arjuna is essentially saying: “I have surrendered at Your feet. I want to walk on the path You show. But why does the teaching feel so mixed that it confuses me even more?” He pleads for one definitive instruction—clear, steady, and unmistakable—so that he may know what will lead to his true welfare, and what will carry him toward the highest good.

Bhagavān begins His response by firmly rebuking Arjuna. In the second chapter, He first scolds him because a deeply depressed mind is often not ready to understand subtle truth. At such moments, a sharp awakening is necessary—like a strong shake to break the paralysis.

Therefore Bhagavān says:

klaibyaṃ mā sma gamaḥ — do not fall into weakness.

napuṃsakatvaṃ mā sma gamaḥ — do not sink into cowardice or impotence.

These words are strong, almost like a deliberate shock. Bhagavān is commanding Arjuna to abandon weakness and rise. This teaching was especially dear to Swami Vivekananda. He repeatedly emphasized: **klaibyaṃ mā sma gamaḥ**—never accept weakness.

First, Bhagavān shakes Arjuna awake—pulling him out of mental collapse. But after that stern beginning, Bhagavān does not remain harsh. With immense compassion, tenderness, and wisdom, He begins to explain the deeper truth—leading Arjuna step by step toward clarity, courage, and the true path of *śreyaḥ*.

3.3

Śrībhagavān uvāca : 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 had earlier addressed Arjuna with the sharp words “**klaibyaṃ mā sma gamaḥ**”, strongly rebuking him for weakness. But now, in this chapter, Bhagavān addresses Arjuna as “**Anagha.**” *Anagha* means one who is sinless, pure, and free from fault (*niṣpāpa*). Arjuna has not harbored malice, cruelty, or ill will toward anyone. He is not driven by hatred; his distress arises from compassion and moral sensitivity. In that sense, his inner intention remains pure, and therefore Bhagavān addresses him as **Anagha**.

Bhagavān then reminds Arjuna that He has already explained this earlier—He uses the word “**proktā**”, meaning “I have already declared.” What has been declared? The principle of **two niṣṭhās** (two orientations, two disciplines of approach):

- For the **Sāṅkhyas** — the path of knowledge (**jñāna-yoga**)
- For the **Yogins** — the path of action (**karma-yoga**)

Here, the word **Sāṅkhya** does not point to the technical Sāṅkhya-darśana founded by Sage Kapila, with its detailed analysis of creation through *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. Bhagavān is not entering a philosophical system here. Instead, He uses **Sāṅkhya** in a broader and practical sense: as a **temperament oriented toward**

knowledge, a disposition that naturally moves toward reflection, discrimination, and contemplation. Thus, Bhagavān is indicating that human beings carry different inner leanings, and these become the basis for the spiritual path that suits them.

Human beings can be understood according to their inner constitution—the mixture and dominance of **sattva**, **rajas**, and **tamas** within them.

- Some are naturally inclined toward knowledge and contemplation. Their minds are drawn to inquiry, reflection, meditation, and the pursuit of truth. They value inner clarity and live primarily through the power of intellect. These are **jñāna-yogīs**. For them, Bhagavān indicates the path of knowledge—this is what He refers to as “**jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānām.**”
- Others are naturally inclined toward action. They are driven by work, activity, and engagement. They live primarily through the organs of action, and their mind becomes steady through doing. Such people may not be able to remain still for long listening to extended discourse; their understanding matures through practical expression. They may translate the Gītā, write commentaries, build teachings into service, contribute through technology, teach, organize, or serve society through disciplined work. These are **karma-yogīs**, and for them the fitting path is **karma-yoga**.

Both orientations arise from different inner temperaments, and both are valid.

The destination, however, is one. **Niṣṭhā in its essence is not two.** The final establishment—Self-knowledge, ultimate freedom (*niḥśreyasa*), the highest welfare of human life, and realization of Paramātmā—is one. Yet, to reach that single goal, Bhagavān gives two workable approaches: the path of knowledge and the path of action. Therefore, Bhagavān says, “**Anagha**—O pure one—understand this clearly.”

Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj expresses this inner purity and readiness for surrender:

“तु सुमन, शुद्ध मती, अनिंदु । अघन्य गती, शरण जाणे ॥”

“Tu suman, śuddha mati, anindu | Aghanya gati, śaraṇa jāṇe ||”

Jñāneśvar Mahārāj highlights why Bhagavān calls Arjuna **Anagha**: Arjuna carries no malice, no hatred, no sinful intention. He knows how to surrender with purity. Because of this inner cleanliness, Bhagavān considers him fit to receive the teaching. Bhagavān is making Arjuna understand that the destination is one, but the routes differ according to inner nature.

It is like traveling from one place to another. To reach Delhi, one may go by air, by train, by road (bus or car), or even on foot. The route chosen depends on one’s capacity, resources, circumstances, and physical strength. Great teachers like Ādi Śaṅkarācārya traveled across the vast length of India on foot—from the southern regions up to Badarikāśrama in the north—according to their extraordinary capacity. In the same way, many routes may lead to one destination, but each person must choose the route suited to their nature and ability.

Likewise, in a medical shop, many medicines exist, but not all are suitable for every person. Only the medicine that matches the illness is chosen. Similarly, the Bhagavad Gītā presents multiple yogas—Karma Yoga, Jñāna Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma-Sannyāsa Yoga, Dhyāna Yoga, Ātma-saṁyama Yoga, Kṣetra-Vibhāga Yoga. These are not contradictions. They are distinct approaches leading toward one Supreme Reality. A seeker must adopt the approach that aligns with their nature, inclination, capacity, and inner temperament.

Śrī Gurudev narrates a teaching from Gondawalekar Mahārāj, the great saint of Maharashtra who glorified

nāma-japa and taught that one can reach Paramātmā through the Divine Name, because Bhagavān is present in the Nāma.

Once, Mahārāj was teaching nāma-japa in a temple. People were sitting comfortably, chanting, and listening as he explained the greatness of japa and the right way to practise it. Nearby, construction work was going on, and laborers were working all day in the heat. Those laborers began talking among themselves. Mahārāj overheard them saying, “Look how fortunate these people are. They sit comfortably, chant, and later eat peacefully. They do not struggle at all. Look at us—we toil in the hot sun all day.”

Mahārāj was deeply moved. He called the laborers and asked how much wage they earned for one full day of hard physical work. When they told him, he said, “I will give you double that wage, but with one condition.” They asked what it was. Mahārāj said, “Tomorrow, instead of construction work, you must sit here. Chant the Nāma for four hours, then eat, and then chant again for four hours.”

The next day, Gondawalekar Mahārāj placed japa-mālā in their hands. At first, they were delighted: “This is easy—no hard labor, only sitting and chanting.” But after some time they became restless. These were people accustomed to breaking stones and doing physical labor. Sitting quietly and chanting became extremely difficult. They could not continue. After two or three hours, they returned the mālā, placed it at Mahārāj’s feet, and said, “This is not for us. It is better for us to break stones and do hard labour. That work suits us.”

This shows that not every form of practice suits every person. Each person differs in nature and capacity. What is easy for one may be difficult for another.

Therefore, Bhagavān explains that although two approaches have been described, each person must choose the path according to their own nature and ability. Bhagavān then goes further and makes an essential point: **action (karma) can never be completely abandoned.** As long as one is alive, karma continues. This world itself is a field of action (*karma-bhūmi*). Even breathing is an action. No one can remain completely without action even for a moment.

He explains this further in the fourth śloka.

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.

Arjuna’s mental state was such that even if Bhagavān had permitted him to leave the battlefield and withdraw into solitude for meditation and Self-knowledge, he would not have remained steady for long. Arjuna is **action-oriented** (*kriyā-pradhāna*). In other words, he is predominantly **rājasic (rājoguṇī)** by temperament—his mind naturally moves toward action, engagement, and responsibility. Even if he attempted to sit quietly with a rosary in hand, his thoughts would repeatedly return to the battlefield.

His mind would keep asking: “What is happening there? Are my brothers winning? Are they safe? Is anyone injured?” Thus, even if his fingers moved the beads of japa, his attention would be elsewhere. This is precisely why Bhagavān declares:

“Karmaṇām anārambhāt puruṣo naiṣkarmaṃ na aśnute.”

Here, the term **naiṣkarmya** is extremely significant. It does not merely mean “not doing work.” It means a state of **complete inner freedom from the compulsion of action**—a condition in which nothing remains to be achieved, nothing remains to be known, and nothing remains to be done.

As Gurudev explains, it is the state in which:

What was to be achieved, has been achieved.

What was to be known, has been known.

What actions were to be completed, have been completed.

Sometimes, we understand this concept even through a simple worldly example. If a person has an eight-hour task, and by efficiency or capability completes it in three hours, then for that day there is truly nothing left to do. That “nothing left pending” feeling resembles the idea of *naiṣkarmya* at a surface level.

But to reach the real spiritual state of **naiṣkarmya**, one must first perform the necessary duties and required actions in the right spirit. Without action, that inner state cannot ripen. Therefore Bhagavān teaches that **mere avoidance of action does not produce freedom from action**.

Bhagavān further clarifies:

“Karmanām anārambhāt puruṣo naiṣkarmya-siddhiṁ na aśnute.”

Here, **siddhi** refers to perfection—the true attainment, the ultimate fulfillment of life—the freedom from sorrow (*duḥkha-nivṛtti*), and liberation (*mokṣa*). If one wishes to rise beyond suffering and bondage, one cannot do so by simply escaping action. One must first learn **how to act rightly**, and then transcend the binding nature of action.

That is why Bhagavān emphasizes:

“Na ca sannyasanād eva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati.”

This means: **mere renunciation of action (sannyāsa) does not lead to siddhi**, does not bring perfection, and does not grant liberation.

In reality, one cannot achieve complete freedom by merely abandoning work externally. Action is unavoidable. Even the act of living itself involves karma. Breathing, digesting, sleeping, waking, speaking, walking—everything is action. The world itself is a **karma-bhūmi**, a field of action.

And in Arjuna’s case, even if he abandoned the physical act of fighting, his mind would remain intensely engaged with the war. His withdrawal would not become peace—it would become worry, inner agitation, and attachment. Therefore, the *naiṣkarmya* that Arjuna imagines—freedom from action and freedom from inner disturbance—cannot be obtained simply by leaving the battlefield.

Bhagavān later points out that such an external withdrawal, while the mind continues to run behind action and desire, becomes **mithyācāra**—a false, pretended discipline. It refers to conduct that appears spiritual outwardly, but inwardly remains bound by attachment, craving, and unresolved impulses.

Thus Bhagavān makes the truth unmistakably clear:

Even for a moment, no living being—human or otherwise—can remain without action.

Sleeping and resting are also forms of action.

As long as life continues, karma continues.

Action is not the obstacle. The bondage lies in **attachment, ego, and craving for results**. That is why Bhagavān will now guide Arjuna toward the purified discipline of Karma Yoga—where action becomes the path to inner freedom instead of bondage.

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).

The state of **naiṣkarmya** is primarily an **inner state of mind**, not a physical abandonment of action. It does not mean stopping all work. Rather, it is the state in which a person continues to perform actions, yet remains free from attachment to the results. In other words, a person established in naiṣkarmya may remain active every moment, yet the mind stays unattached to the fruits of action.

For example, **Janārdana Swāmī Mahārāj** was always engaged in some form of action. Even if a bedsheet was torn, he would mend it himself. He remained constantly active. This shows that physical action continues, yet inwardly the mind can remain in a state of naiṣkarmya—free from ego and free from attachment.

That is why Bhagavān clearly tells Arjuna:

न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥

na hi Kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt |
kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ ||

No one can remain inactive even for a moment. Every being is compelled to act by its own nature.

Activity may change its form, but action cannot disappear from life. Listening to a vivecan is action (*karma*), and explaining a vivecan is also action. Speaking, thinking, walking, breathing, eating, sleeping—everything is included within karma.

Action is unavoidable because it arises from one's inherent nature and the working of the three guṇas (modes of material nature). These guṇas—**sattva**, **rajas**, and **tamas**—bind human beings in different ways:

Sattva → clarity, purity, knowledge

Rajas → activity, desire, restlessness

Tamas → inertia, ignorance, heaviness

Because of these guṇas, no human being can remain entirely free from activity. Even if someone renounces physical action through the body, hands, feet, or senses, but continues to dwell inwardly on worldly thoughts and desires, Bhagavān calls such conduct **mithyācāra**—false conduct, pretension, or hypocrisy.

Such behavior is also described as **dambhācāra**, meaning actions performed for display, and **pākhaṇḍa**, meaning pretending to be virtuous, detached, or righteous while inwardly remaining bound by attachment and desire. In short, these terms point to hypocrisy and inner dishonesty.

The Bhagavad Gītā therefore teaches us to live with inner truthfulness:

- Recognize our own faults honestly
- Remove attachment and ego from within

- Act without hypocrisy—externally and internally aligned

If a person performs actions merely for show, or pretends to be detached while remaining mentally attached, then that is wrong conduct—**mithyācāra**. Human beings often try to hide their weaknesses and display virtues, but Bhagavān warns strongly against this subtle form of inner hypocrisy and self-deception.

3.6

karmendriyāṇi saṃyamyā, 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.

Bhagavān explains that such a person is called a **mithyāchārī**—one who practices false conduct. Arjuna wishes to give up action, but if he continues to mentally dwell on that action, its results, or its fruits, then this mental attachment itself becomes **mithyāchāra**. Those who attain the state of **naiṣkarmya**—the wise and realized—remain constantly engaged in action, yet they do not mentally cling to those actions. Their minds do not get bound either to the work or to its results. The body continues to act, but the mind remains free.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa further explains that a confused person (**vimūḍha ātmā**), one whose intellect is deluded, is someone who externally restrains the sense organs, but continues to think about sense-objects within the mind. Such a person is called a **mithyāchārī**—one who practices false or hypocritical conduct. Therefore, it is better to honestly accept if one is unable to concentrate on the vivechan / discourse, rather than to pretend to listen while the mind is wandering elsewhere.

Gurudev narrates a story to explain this truth. Two disciples were travelling together to have the darśan of **Bhagavān Jagannātha**. As they walked, they entered a village where a dance performance was taking place. One disciple thought, “Bhagavān Jagannātha is not going anywhere; I can take darśan later. Let me first watch this dance.” He asked the other disciple to go ahead, saying he would come later.

The second disciple continued and reached the temple of **Bhagavān Jagannātha**. But while standing before the Lord, he began thinking, “Why did I come ahead? My friend must be enjoying that beautiful dance right now.” Though his body was in the temple, his mind was absorbed in the dance. Meanwhile, the first disciple, who was watching the dance, thought, “What have I done? My friend must have reached Bhagavān Jagannātha and is having darśan at His feet.” Though his body was at the dance, his mind was absorbed in Bhagavān Jagannātha.

This story reveals a profound truth: **yatrātmā yatraiva manaḥ**—we are truly present where our mind is.

Bhagavān teaches that restraining the sense organs while the mind continues to dwell on sense-objects is not true renunciation. Arjuna may physically withdraw from the battlefield, but he does not yet have the **pātratā**—the inner fitness—for Jñāna Yoga. If he were to sit in one place pretending to meditate, his mind would continue to return again and again to the war—thinking of what is happening, what the outcome may be, and whether his brothers are safe. Therefore, Arjuna would not attain the final goal of Self-knowledge merely through physical withdrawal. Hence, Bhagavān shows him that **Karma Yoga** is the appropriate path for him—suited to his nature, and therefore the path that he must follow.

Saint Jñāneśvar Mahārāj explains this beautifully:

“मार्ग जरी दोनी, एक वाटती निधानी ।
जैसे सिद्ध-साध्य भोजनी, तृप्ती एक ॥”

“**Mārga jarī donī, eka vāṭatī nidhānī |**
Jaise siddha-sādhya bhojanī, tṛptī eka ||”

Though the paths are two, the destination is one—just as both the perfected being and the ordinary person experience the same satisfaction after eating food.

Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj gives a profound yet simple example. **Siddha bhojana** means cooked food—already prepared, ready to eat, and giving immediate satisfaction. On the other hand, **sādhya bhojana** means uncooked food—such as rice, flour, lentils, or vegetables. It is food material, but it cannot satisfy hunger immediately. It must first be cooked with effort, time, and patience. Both ultimately remove hunger, yet one does so immediately, while the other does so after preparation.

Spiritually, this reveals the difference between Jñāna Yoga and Karma Yoga. A Jñāna Yogi is like someone receiving cooked food—fulfilment, Self-knowledge, and liberation manifest directly. A Karma Yogi is like someone who possesses raw food—he must “cook” it through selfless duty, disciplined action, and inner purification, until it becomes fit to yield the same realization.

The most subtle point is this: the cooked food enjoyed by the Jñāna Yogi did not appear by chance. It was cooked earlier—through Karma Yoga, often through long effort and even through previous births. Through Karma Yoga, the mind becomes purified. Purity makes one fit for knowledge. Knowledge then becomes immediate realization. Therefore, Jñāna Yoga is not opposed to Karma Yoga; rather, Jñāna Yoga is the mature culmination of Karma Yoga.

Thus, Bhagavān conveys to Arjuna that he must remain firmly established on the path of Karma Yoga. Both Karma Yoga and Jñāna Yoga lead to the same Supreme Reality (Paramātmā). The seeker must follow the path best suited to his temperament and capacity.

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.

If a person gives up outward actions but allows the mind to continue dwelling on sense-objects, this becomes hypocrisy (**mithyāchāra**). But the right approach is to first bring the mind under discipline. One who restrains the mind first—**manasā indriyāṇi yamya**—and then governs the senses, and thereafter engages the organs of action in Karma Yoga without attachment, is truly superior. Such a person is considered the best among all.

A simple example makes this very clear. A child sits down to study, but his mind is absorbed in the cricket match playing on the television. His mother does not permit him to watch the match because the child has an exam in school the next day. She asks him to complete his study first. She also adds that once he finishes his studies, she will allow him to watch the match. Under this condition, the child may be physically sitting with the book, but his mind remains on the television—wondering what is happening in the match. Since his mind is not in the chapter, the study will not bear fruit.

Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj says something very beautiful: **to train the mind, we must sometimes listen**

to it a little. There is also an English saying:

“Work while you work, play while you play—this is the way to be happy and gay.”

Its essence is very practical. When you are working, work wholeheartedly; do not think of play while working. When you are playing, play wholeheartedly; do not keep worrying about studies at that time. When you are studying, study with full attention; do not carry your mind toward games. The heart of the teaching is this: we must remain fully present in whatever we are doing now. For this, training and disciplining the mind is essential.

Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj further implies that sometimes the mind simply does not listen. It runs after its desires—just like a child insisting on watching television. In such situations, one must deal with the mind skillfully. One may allow the child to watch television for a short time and then guide him back to studies. Similarly, if someone cannot listen to the vivechan live, it can also be heard later on YouTube. Just as a child may be given a little space and then brought back to what is necessary, the mind too must be handled with wisdom and strategy—not by harsh force.

Another example: if a child insists on eating chocolate at meal time, he may be given a small piece first, and then served a proper meal. In the same way, by gently accommodating the senses within limits, and then guiding them back to discipline, the mind becomes calmer and gradually trained. This is the art of training the mind.

In this way, Bhagavān teaches that one must first cultivate mastery over the mind. When the mind is disciplined and under control, and one performs actions through the organs of action, the results of those actions do not bind the mind. The body remains active, performing its duties, but the mind stays united with the Supreme (Paramātmā). Thus, Karma Yoga becomes a path not of bondage, but of liberation.

3.8

niyataṁ(ñ) kuru karma tvaṁ(ñ), karma jyāyo hyakarmanāḥ, śarīrayātrāpi ca te, na prasiddhyedakarmanāḥ. 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 is guiding Arjuna regarding what must be lived and practiced. Arjuna represents the whole of mankind. Therefore, even though Bhagavān may speak the most profound philosophy and elevated spiritual truths, through Arjuna He is also giving direct instruction to every human being—what must be done in life, what must be practiced, and what must never be escaped.

Bhagavān’s instruction is clear:

niyataṁ kuru karma tvam

“Perform your prescribed duty.”

Action is superior to inaction. Abandoning action does not lead to greatness, purity, or freedom. If one becomes inactive—*akarmaṇī*—even the maintenance of the body will not be possible. Life itself cannot continue without some form of action. Breathing, eating, walking, speaking, thinking, serving, working—all these are actions. Therefore, to sustain life itself, some form of work is unavoidable. Bhagavān is essentially telling Arjuna: there are no shortcuts. Freedom does not arise by escaping responsibility.

When Bhagavān says **niyata karma**, He refers to duty that is assigned by life itself—the work entrusted to you according to where you are born, the circumstances you live in, and the responsibilities that naturally

come to you. These are duties that arise from one's role, position, and station in society. And when such duties are performed with discipline and without attachment, they become the direct path of Karma Yoga.

Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj makes a subtle and powerful distinction here.

- **Vihita karma** refers to duties that are prescribed by one's role, capacity, and life-station.
- **Niyata karma** refers to duties that become fixed by time, occasion, and circumstance—what the moment demands.

These two are not contradictory. They complete one another. Vihita karma is the “general responsibility,” while niyata karma is the “immediate responsibility.”

Three simple examples illustrate this clearly.

First, consider a teacher. Teaching students, preparing lessons, correcting papers, and guiding learners are the teacher's *vihita karmas*—the duties defined by the profession. But suppose an education inspector visits the school on a particular day, or examination papers must be urgently evaluated within a deadline. Attending to the inspector or completing the evaluations that very day becomes the teacher's *niyata karma*. It is the duty demanded by that specific situation and time.

Second, consider a soldier. Defending the nation, maintaining fitness, remaining disciplined, and following commands are the soldier's *vihita karmas*. But if a sudden border conflict arises, or emergency deployment is announced, immediately reporting for duty and entering the battlefield becomes the soldier's *niyata karma*. Though difficult, it is the duty assigned by the moment.

Third, consider a homemaker. Managing the household, caring for family members, preparing meals, and serving elders are the homemaker's *vihita karmas*. But if unexpected guests arrive, a family member falls ill, or an urgent responsibility suddenly appears on a particular day, attending to that pressing situation becomes the homemaker's *niyata karma*. It may demand extra effort, but it is precisely what the moment requires.

Thus, *vihita karma* refers to the general duties of one's role in life, while *niyata karma* refers to the specific duty that arises in a particular moment. Therefore, Bhagavān's instruction is practical and universal: perform your natural daily duties—those that arise at the level of the body, mind, and intellect—sincerely, steadily, and without escape. This is Bhagavān's direction for everyone, not only for Arjuna.

This world would become harmonious if every person truly performed their duties without running away from responsibility. Even our civic responsibilities are also *niyata karmas*, because they arise from the needs of our present time and circumstances:

- Roads should not be dirtied.
- Traffic rules and signals should not be broken.
- Plastic should not be thrown carelessly or overused—many cows have suffered and died after consuming plastic.
- Trees should be planted and protected.
- The environment must be cared for, because nature itself is suffering.

These are not abstract ideals. They are duties placed directly before us today. Imagine a world where:

- Every individual performs duty sincerely,
- Every household functions responsibly,

- Society lives with discipline,
- The nation acts with awareness.

How smooth, orderly, and harmonious the system would become.

When *niyata karma* is performed properly, creation itself is protected. Nature is preserved. Harmony is restored. Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj describes how this duty should be performed—not as a burden, but with joy and inner sweetness, with *rasa*. Duty should not feel like a punishment; it should become an offering.

He expresses this devotional spirit beautifully, implying:

Pāṇḍavā, āpulā ananya bhāvāvā; tī parama sevā mājhyā Paramātmā.

This conveys that when one performs one’s essential duty with complete inner absorption—with love, joy, and sincerity—that very action becomes the highest service to Paramātmā. When work is done in the spirit of Karma Yoga, it becomes worship.

This is why Sister Nivedita could say something extraordinary. When someone asked her, “When I came, you were teaching children,” she replied, “I was not teaching at all—I was worshipping Bhagavān.” This is the transformation that Karma Yoga brings: work does not remain ordinary work; it becomes devotion in action.

Bhagavān further emphasizes that if a person does not perform duties properly, even the maintenance of the body becomes impossible. Without right action, **abhyudaya**—growth, stability, and worldly well-being—cannot be achieved.

Human life has two vital aims:

- **Abhyudaya** — material growth, stability, order, and worldly well-being
- **Niḥśreyasa** — the ultimate welfare, inner peace, and liberation

If a person abandons their duties, then in the end they gain neither abhyudaya nor niḥśreyasa. They lose worldly stability and also lose spiritual progress. The Bhagavad Gītā strongly teaches that life must be lived as a complete path—material responsibility and spiritual fulfilment together. Therefore Bhagavān’s instruction is firm and compassionate:

Perform your **niyata karma**—your prescribed duties—fully, sincerely, attentively, and with dedication.

Then Bhagavān takes this *niyata karma* and places it into the sacred framework of **yajña**. Yajña—sacred offering, selfless sacrifice, and worshipful action—is one of the most central and beloved concepts of the Bhagavad Gītā, along with jñāna (knowledge) and bhakti (devotion). Through yajña, duty becomes purification; action becomes worship; and life becomes a ladder leading to the Paramātmā.

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.

Bhagavān explains that actions performed for the sake of **yajña** do not bind a person. But actions done for selfish reasons—without the spirit of yajña—bind human beings in **karma-bandhana**, the bondage of action. Such actions keep a person tied again and again to this world. Therefore, Bhagavān instructs Arjuna to act without attachment—**mukta-saṅga**.

Attachment means clinging—clinging to the action itself, and especially clinging to its expected results. When one clings to results, bondage is created. Therefore Bhagavān’s teaching is extremely practical: perform actions for a higher purpose, without personal bondage, as an offering to Paramātmā—the Creator and the inner Witness of all. This is the true spirit of yajña.

The word **yajña** immediately reminds us of a sacred fire ritual—an altar where offerings are placed into the fire while chanting **svāhā**. Such yajñas are indeed described in the Vedas. They purify the five elements, help maintain balance in nature, honor the deities, and also fulfill specific desires (*sakāma upāsānā*). Yet in the Bhagavad Gītā, yajña carries a deeper and much broader meaning.

Here, yajña does not remain limited to an outer ritual. Bhagavān expands it into a complete way of living. Yajña becomes the attitude of performing one’s duty as an offering. It is the inner feeling:

“I am doing this not for myself, but because it is my responsibility—and I offer it.”

This is captured beautifully in the spirit of **“idam na mama”**—
“this is not for me.”

In this sense, the Bhagavad Gītā itself becomes a great yajña. Every person places their own offering into it through their duties and actions. This yajña is continuously burning. And when it burns, its flames naturally rise upward. In the same way, when actions are performed in the pure sattvic spirit of yajña, life rises upward. Such action elevates a person, purifies the mind, and leads life toward higher clarity and inner freedom.

Our life flourishes when it is lived in this yajña-spirit. That is why Bhagavān teaches that every action performed with the feeling of yajña **frees** a person. It does not create bondage; it creates purification. It does not trap the soul in karma; it turns karma into worship.

Therefore, one should perform one’s work with the yajña-attitude, because creation itself is born and sustained through yajña. The universe functions through mutual harmony—through giving and receiving, through collective balance, through interdependence. When humans break this harmony through selfishness, greed, and exploitation, they suffer and they also disturb the natural order. But when humans act in the spirit of yajña, their actions support the balance of creation.

Here, the word yajña also means **collective, harmonious action**—organized unity—work done for the welfare of society and the welfare of creation, not merely for individual gain. In modern terms, yajña is the spirit of responsibility and contribution. It is action aligned with the larger order of the universe. Just as teamwork creates strength and success, yajña-based action creates harmony, strength, and upliftment in the world.

Thus, Bhagavān brings all righteous work under this sacred umbrella of yajña: any action done with the intention of welfare, purity, and offering becomes yajña.

The core message Bhagavān teaches is beautifully summarized as follows:

- Perform your **niyata karma** (prescribed duty).
- Do it as **yajña**.
- Do it without attachment to results.
- Offer it to **Paramātmā** and to the welfare of all.

When work is done in this spirit, every action becomes worship. Such yajña-based action does not lead to bondage, but to freedom. It purifies the mind, uplifts life, and becomes a direct path toward ultimate welfare and liberation.

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.

Performing yajña together (**sahāyajña**), Prajāpati (Brahmā) created this universe. The creation of the world was not done in isolation, but collectively—through coordination, organization, and harmony—so that all beings could benefit. Therefore, all actions performed in this spirit of collective welfare are also considered yajña.

Solitary penances (*tapas*) may be performed alone, but true yajña is performed together—in cooperation with others. Creation itself is interdependent. Every being relies on other beings. By participating in such yajña, one attains **utkarṣa** (personal excellence), upliftment, and inner growth. At the same time, this teamwork-based yajña ensures that everyone receives their rightful share of life's necessary enjoyments (**iṣṭa-bhoga**) in a balanced manner.

This point is extremely important: a human being cannot truly live alone in this world.

The school where one studied, the roads one walks on, the libraries where books are borrowed—all of these were not built by a single individual. The scriptures written by sages, the knowledge compiled by scholars, and even the books we read for worldly education have been prepared through great effort for the use of society as a whole.

Therefore, when someone claims, "I am self-made," Gurudev would smile and say: nobody is self-made; no one can truly be self-made. Whatever we have attained, we have received it according to our capacity, through systems, support, and the hidden cooperation of countless beings. Therefore, any action performed for the benefit of others, done in an organized and altruistic manner, is considered yajña in the Bhagavad Gītā's vision.

This brings us to a very practical understanding of teamwork in society:

TEAM — Together Everyone Achieves More.

When any welfare-oriented action is done in an organized way, it benefits everyone collectively.

Once, at a Gītā Sādhanā camp, this topic came up for discussion. Among the participants was a woman from a well-off household. When it was explained that the world is interdependent and that we rely on one another, she said, "We are not dependent on anyone." People sometimes feel this way because they have a strong bank balance and assume that anything can be obtained through money.

However, labor, effort, and the living contributions of others cannot be "created" merely through money.

For example, when a person brings medicine home, they may think they bought it with money. But money alone does not create the medicine. The medicine comes through the labor of workers in factories, the intelligence and discipline of scientists, the knowledge of pharmacists, the distribution systems of transport workers, and the dedication of countless people working together.

Similarly, when electricity stops and an employee climbs a pole in scorching fifty-degree heat to repair wires and restore supply, that effort cannot be dismissed as “purchased.” It is human sacrifice and cooperation that makes electricity reach every house.

The water that comes into a home—though paid for according to the meter—involves vast, organized effort: pipelines, purification, pumping stations, repair workers, operators, planners, and administrators. In a hospital, the dedicated work of doctors, nurses, ward staff, cleaners, technicians, and administrative teams ensures that healthcare reaches patients.

This coordinated effort—where people work together for the welfare of all—is what the Bhagavad Gītā refers to as **sahāyajña**: sacred action performed together for the greater good.

It is the duty of every human being to contribute some effort—no matter how small—to this yajña. Each person must play their part in the larger work of sustaining and uplifting society.

This knowledge was given by Prajāpati (Brahmā): when different beings work together in harmony, that becomes yajña. Every human being must offer something—some contribution (**āhuti**)—into this yajña. Saints and great sages may perform large and grand yajñas, but for an ordinary person, daily duty itself becomes yajña. Even if one cannot perform huge sacrifices or extraordinary acts of service, simply fulfilling one’s responsibilities properly is itself yajña.

This essence is beautifully expressed by Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj:

स्वधर्म जो बापा तो नित्य यज्ञ जाणपा तेथे वर्तता प संशय न

Svadharmā jo bāpa to nitya yajña jānapa tethe vartatā paṁśaya nā

Following your own dharma is a daily yajña—there is no doubt in this.

In other words, one does not need grand rituals or dramatic achievements to serve Paramātmā or society. Simply performing one’s own duties with sincerity, dedication, and inner purity becomes a sacred offering that uplifts both the individual and the world.

When a person lives in this spirit—performing duty as an offering—then such a life does not collect sin or moral blemish. It becomes a life rooted in responsibility, dedication, and righteousness. This is precisely what the Bhagavad Gītā teaches.

3.11

**devānbhāvayatānena, te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ,
parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ(ś), śreyaḥ(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.

When human beings and the cosmic forces support one another in the spirit of sacrifice, mutual upliftment naturally takes place. By sustaining one another in this way, all attain the supreme good (**parama śreyas**). Therefore, when people serve their elders and elders protect the younger ones, when every individual performs their rightful duty within this interdependent creation, the welfare of all is ensured. If each person carries out their responsibilities in this yajña-spirit, the collective good of society is achieved.

Bhagavān says, in essence: **“By performing yajña, nourish the devas, and let the devas nourish you.”** When human beings offer their actions as sacrifice—symbolically represented through offerings into

the sacred fire—the devas are pleased. And when the devas are pleased, they in turn nourish human beings. This mutual nourishment leads to harmony in nature: rain falls at the right time, trees and plants flourish, the environment is protected, pollution reduces, and the balance of creation is maintained. When humans care for nature, nature supports humans in return.

In this way, creation itself becomes a companion on the path of human welfare and spiritual progress. This is the deeper meaning of “**parasparam bhāvayantaḥ**”—living by mutually uplifting and nurturing one another.

This principle does **not** mean drawing new boundaries, hating others, attacking other nations, or declaring that followers of any religion, sect, or community have no right to exist. Bhagavān’s teaching is not the language of exclusion; it is the language of upliftment. Bhagavān silently asks: *Who are we to decide who has the right to live?* Our responsibility is not to destroy others, but to work for the welfare of all.

Thus, by living in the spirit of **parasparam bhāvayantaḥ**, one attains **parama śreyas**—the highest welfare and ultimate good.

Human desires must be fulfilled in harmony with duty. Fulfilling one’s needs is natural, but living by exploiting others is not. Here, a subtle yet profound distinction becomes clear:

Hunger is natural. Every living being feels hunger and eats food to satisfy it—this is nature (**prakṛti**). When a person has enough food and still shares it with others, feeding the hungry, that becomes culture (**saṁskṛti**).

But when a person has enough and still snatches from others, that becomes perversion (**vikṛti**).

This teaches us what the inner attitude of a human being should be—towards elders and children, towards society and nature. Life should be lived with sacrifice, responsibility, and a sincere wish for the upliftment of others. When actions are guided by such an attitude, this interdependent creation begins to support us in return. By living in mutual support and goodwill, the welfare of all is achieved, and everyone moves together toward true well-being.

Bhagavān then takes this teaching one step further. He declares that a person who lives only for himself is blameworthy. One who merely consumes—who eats without offering, who enjoys without contributing, who lives only in self-interest, and who exploits society and nature—such a person is called a **thief** by Bhagavān.

When a person thinks, “I will enjoy everything myself. I will not give back to society. I will not contribute to the collective life of the world,” and lives only for personal pleasure, that life is not righteous. It becomes a life of exploitation rather than yajña.

3.12

**iṣṭānbhogānhi vo devā, dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ,
tairdattānapradāyaibhyo, yo bhunkte stena eva saḥ. 3.12**

Fostered by sacrifice, the gods will surely bestow on you unasked all the desired enjoyments. He who enjoys the gifts bestowed by them without offering their share to them, is undoubtedly a thief.

In this way, the deities who are nourished through yajña grant human beings the objects of rightful enjoyment (**iṣṭa-bhogas**). They provide food, resources, prosperity, and the many necessities that sustain life. But if a person enjoys these gifts without offering back, without sharing, and without dedicating them to Bhagavān—if one consumes everything only for oneself—then such enjoyment becomes sinful.

A person who lives only to enjoy, who hoards pleasures, who exploits nature and society, and who does not participate in the spirit of sacrifice, is called a **stenaḥ**—a thief—by Bhagavān. The Bhagavad Gītā uses this strong word deliberately. To take from creation without contributing to it is nothing less than stealing.

Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj says:

स्वधर्म जो सांडीला, काळ तयासी दंडीला ।
चोर मानोनी हरिला, सर्वस्व त्यासी ॥

Svadharmā jo sāṅḍilā, kāḷa tayāsi daṅḍilā |
Chor mānonī harilā, sarvasva tyāsi ||

Meaning: One who abandons his rightful duty (**svadharmā**), Time itself punishes him. Considering him a thief, Time takes away everything he possesses.

One who does not engage in yajña, who does not offer his actions and enjoyments back to the cosmic order, and who lives purely in self-interest, begins to exploit the world and others for personal gain. Such a person violates **svadharmā**.

Sant Jñāneśvar Mahārāj further warns that one who neglects his rightful duty and exploits the world will inevitably be punished by **Kāla** (Time). Sooner or later, Time itself becomes the judge. Wealth, power, status, and possessions are eventually taken away, and such a person is left empty-handed.

Thus, by explaining the laws of creation and responsibility, Bhagavān teaches how ordinary action can be transformed into Karma Yoga. Through selfless action performed in the spirit of yajña, one progresses on the path that ultimately leads to the Paramātmā.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Shiv Kailash Sharma ji

Question: In the fifth verse of this chapter, Śrī Bhagavān says that no one can remain without performing karma even for a moment. Yet, in the forty-seventh verse of the second chapter, HE declares:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन

Does this mean that a human being is independent (svatantra) in performing karma, or dependent (paratantra)?

Answer: Śrī Bhagavān states: karmaṇi eva te adhikāraḥ asti. Here, the word adhikāra does not merely mean “right”; it signifies competence or eligibility. A human being has eligibility only to perform karma, not over its results, because the fruition of action depends on many factors that are beyond human control.

There is also a deeper intention of Śrī Bhagavān here. Arjuna’s present eligibility lies only in performing karma, not in directly attaining knowledge (jñāna).

A human being cannot remain without karma even for a single moment. If one attempts to abandon action, the mind becomes hyperactive and gets entangled in various sense objects. As a result, it becomes impure, burdened, and loses its creative capacity.

Therefore, Śrī Bhagavān praises karma and upholds it. It must be accepted that all the activities of the body are possible only through the grace of Bhagavān. Yet, even then, a human being is free to act. Otherwise, at the conclusion of the Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa would not have said:

“यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु”

HE conveys: “I have explained everything to you—what is right and what is wrong. Now decide using your own discriminative intellect.”

The capacity to decide through viveka-buddhi (discriminative intelligence) exists only in human beings.

Nandini Mishra ji

Question: Please explain the meaning of “yastvindriyāṇi manasā” mentioned in the seventh verse of this chapter.

Answer: A human being must learn to restrain the organs of perception—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and touch. For instance, one may have a strong liking for sweets, but if one suffers from diabetes, one must learn to control the tongue.

The mind should be strengthened and trained in such a way that it can govern the senses. If the mind itself becomes a servant of the senses, it becomes impossible to accomplish great tasks in life. Those who control the senses through the mind and perform their duty-bound actions are regarded as superior human beings.

Umakant Mishra ji

Question: What is the difference between a śloka, a mantra, and a stotra?

Answer: A stotra means praise or glorification. Examples include Gaṇapati Atharvaśīrṣa and Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma, in which the attributes and greatness of the deities are praised.

The sages and seers who composed these stotras received the knowledge of Paramātmā through subtle waves of consciousness. They presented this wisdom in Sanskrit as eternal principles. These eternal principles are called mantras. Even after thousands of years, they do not require modification.

The definition of a mantra is: **“mananāt trāyate iti mantrah”** — that which, upon contemplation, protects and uplifts the mind is a mantra. Sanskrit is inherently a mantric language. Even if one does not fully understand the meaning of a mantra, its vibrations still influence the mind.

The Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā is also such a mantra, whose wisdom remains eternal even after five thousand years.

When mantras are composed within specific meters (chandas) and adorned with poetic ornamentation (alaṅkāra), they are called ślokas. In the Marathi language, such poetic expressions are known as ovis, as seen in Jñāneśvara Mahārāja’s Jñāneśvarī.



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