

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 5: Karma-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/XIW0zhpxlrA>

Karma Sannyasa Yoga-The Yoga of Renunciation of Action

The evening Prabachan session commenced with the customary lighting of the lamp or Deep-Prajwalan. Prayers were offered to Paramātmā and to Pujya Gurudev. thus creating a divine atmosphere conducive for spiritual learning of Srimad Bhagavad Gītā

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

Today we will be discussing chapter 5 -- **Karma Sannyās Yoga**.

Before proceeding in detail, let us have a panoramic view of this chapter. In this chapter Shree Krishna compares karma sannyās yoga (the path of renunciation of actions) with karma yoga (the path of work in devotion). HE says: we can choose either of the two paths.

Arjun, the most favoured friend and disciple of Sri Krishna had a very pertinent question in his mind. He asks Sri Krishna which path is better?

The path of Karma-Yoga, performing action with full devotion and detachment
or

The path of Karma-Sannyasa -yoga, renouncing all actions.

Sri Krishna says both these paths lead to moksha or liberation. One can follow any of the two paths. Further HE says, but out of the two paths, the path of Karma-Yoga is easier to practice, more adoptable and hence is better.

The path of Karma-Yoga leads to inner renunciation(Antarik renunciation). The inner cleanliness is always more desirable.

True freedom comes not from abandoning the action but from performing the action with right understanding.

Bhagavān has spoken about the karma-yoga and how to perform action desirelessly in previous

chapters also. HE started explaining from sloka 11 of the second chapter onwards.

***aśhochyān-anvaśhochas-tvaṁ prajñā-vādānś cha bhāṣhase
gatāsūn-agatāsūnś-cha nānuśhochanti paṇḍitāḥ 2.11***

The Supreme Divine said: While you speak words of wisdom, you are mourning for that which is not worthy of grief. The wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead.

HE has addressed this spiritual dilemma of not only Arjuna but of the entire mankind. We all have this inner conflict that-- what should we do?

A common man's confusion--

- Should we abandon performing action altogether and renounce the world or
- Should we lead an active life full of actions.
- Is it possible to achieve spiritual realisation while performing daily activities.

Sri Krishna in this chapter has answered these inner conflicts by explaining the deeper meaning of the word 'Sannyas'.

HE says both renunciation of action and selfless action leads to the same goal that is spiritual liberation.

However karma yoga is superior.

HE clarifies that taking sannyasa by abandoning all actions one is required to perform, while living in the society, yields no results, if his mind still runs after desires. Sannyas has to come from within and not superficially. If one becomes a monk while still desiring to perform worldly activities leads him nowhere. What is required is-- cleanliness of the mind.

It can be achieved--

- By giving up desires
- By abandoning attachments

Performing action by itself is not bad. Rather Bhagavān has explained in the third chapter it is quite natural that one performs action. One can not stay actionless even for a moment. The most essential is-- what is the state of mind?

Is one thinking of the 'fruits of the action' while performing the action or is he performing the action with true devotion without expecting any results from it.

It is the state of mind which decides whether he is a karma- sannyasi or not? Paramātmā has emphasised on unity of karma and knowledge.

- Jnana- yoga and karma -yoga leads to the same result of self realisation.
- A wise person understands where both converge and acts accordingly.
- Purification of mind can be achieved by performing all actions while remaining in the society but giving up the desires for results simultaneously.

Therefore HE encourages karma yoga and by doing selfless karma without attachments to the fruits of action, one gets the knowledge.

Normally we human beings always perform action with an expectation of results. The question that always remains in our mind is that, "what do I get out of it"? A desire for success is always there behind all our efforts.

Instead if we can perform our work as a worship by offering all its results to Bhagavān as if we are offering flowers at his lotus feet, then that becomes karma-yoga. And then then our actions will be filled with divinity and it will leads us to the path of liberation. The wise persons always perform their

actions in this manner.

Characteristics of a wise person:

The truly learned, with the eyes of divine knowledge, see with equal vision a Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater.

They understand that the same 'Self' or 'Atma' exists in all beings. They get a feeling of oneness in all diversities. The feeling of superiority then dies down. When one gets over this discrimination, it leads him to spiritual equality, spiritual harmony and ultimately to spiritual blissfulness.

Such a realised person gets over all emotional disturbances. He remains equipoised. He is balanced in all opposites. He is steadfast and not disturbed in any adversities and at the same time he is never overjoyed with success.

In contrast an ordinary person gets affected by pain and pleasure, success and failure, gain and loss, praise and blame. He becomes emotionally disturbed in the face of adversities.

A wise person understands that fluctuating state of mind and emotional disturbances arise from the falsity of the manifested world, from external conditions and are temporary in nature. Their knowledge keeps them secluded from these temporary features. True happiness comes from within.

Such a state is called the "State of Equanimity"

State of equanimity is an essential requirement for liberation and is key indicator of spiritual maturity.

In the 4th charan of sloka 48 of chapter 2 Sri Krishna has said-- ***samatvam yoga uchyate***-- Such equanimity is called Yoga.

Sri Krishna describes--

Contrast between Inner happiness verses external pleasure-- How do these two compare with each other-

- The external pleasures are derived through the contact of sense organs with the sense objects. The eyes facilitates seeing, the ear starts listening, the mouth facilitates tasting etc. Happiness derived out of such contacts with external objects are temporary in nature as the external objects are themselves temporary and therefore can not provide lasting satisfaction.
- In contrast inner spiritual realisation arises from self realisation. The Self or Atma is permanent. It can not be destroyed and is free from external circumstances. Therefore it provides everlasting satisfaction.
- Therefore one should turn inward in order to find deeper sense of fulfillment.

Further Sri Krishna describes--

The importance of self control in spiritual growth--

Mind and senses pulls the person towards external stimulations. Therefore disciplined effort is required to restrain their outwardness.

Emphasis is being laid on the necessity of self control on sensory organs. These self control gives him peace and prepares him for inner discipline.

A yogi slowly learns to get control over these impulses through self awareness, meditation. difficult living and detachment.

This meditative practices prepares him for meditative absorption and self realisation.

Sri Krishna then describes--

The state of liberated persons--

Such a person have control over their sense organs. They are free from anger and greed. They have compassion for others. They remain calm in every situation. They experiences inner peace and spiritual freedom.

Liberation is something which is not to be achieved after death. One can achieve liberation while he is alive. Liberated person experiences freedom from bondage. He is always in a state of bliss. He lives for the welfare of others.

Sri Krishna describes the techniques of meditation--

Shutting out all thoughts of external enjoyment, with the gaze fixed on the space between the eyebrows, equalizing the flow of the incoming and outgoing breath in the nostrils, and thus controlling the senses, mind, and intellect, yogis remain engaged in meditation.

Mind becomes calm and centered. In such a state the yogi experiences presence of divine.

Meditation dissolves ego and and facilitate one to find Paratma within himself.

With this practice one finds Paramātmā as his true friend, savior of the mankind and creator of all beings.

He experiences Parama-tattva.

This realisation takes the life through a sacred journey of compassion and helpfulness.

Key takeaways--

- Karma yoga is easier to practice. Doing desireless karma is always better than renunciation of karma.
- Realisation of Paramātmā lies in doing karma without desire.
- Self less action drives us towards inner peace.
- Inner peace opens the door to self-realisation.
- With self realisation life's journey becomes blissful and spiritual.

Key Principles--

- Inner renunciation is more important than external withdrawal.
- Selfless action leads to spiritual freedom.
- A wise person sees same divinity in himself and others.
- True happiness comes from inner realisation and not from external sense objects.
- control of mind and senses are most essential and leads to renunciation of desires.
- Lastly Sri Krishna teaches-- a person is liberated in this world itself if he is free from desires, anger, greed etc. and sees everyone around him as equal.
- He lives totally renunciated only for the welfare of others and escapes the cycle of berth and death.

5.1

arjuna uvācha
sannyāsaṃ(ñ) karmaṇāṃ(ñ) kṛṣṇa, punaryogaṃ(ñ) ca śaṃsasi,
yacchreya etayorekaṃ(n), tanme brūhi suniścitam. 5.1

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

At the beginning of this chapter Arjuna expresses his confusion.

Arjuna addresses Sri Krishna and said-- Some times you praised *karma sanyās* (the path of

renunciation of actions), and some times you also advised to do *karma yoga* (work with devotion). Please tell me decisively which of the two is more beneficial?

Arjuna represents all sincere spiritual seekers. This doubt is very natural. All of us many times get entangled in the doubts that should one renunciate all actions, lead an actionless life, simply sit and do meditation, japa and tapa and become a sannyasi in order to get Paramātmā. Or should one do the actions with total devotion and then renounce the results.

Which is the correct path?

What should one do?

Arjun was having exactly the same dilemma in his mind.

The general perception is-- among all spiritual practices, sannyasa or giving up the worldly life and responsibilities is viewed as the highest. Therefore we find monks have great respect in our society. We all think they are closer to Paramātmā.

Arjun also felt the same way-- if renunciation of worldly life is better then why should I do this ghastly karma of fighting a war and incur sin? What purpose does it solve? Rather I should go to the forest and meditate.

An example--

One person wants to go from Mumbai to Pune. He had various options in front of him. He can either go by train, or by taxi or bus. He can also take a flight to Mumbai. He remains confused as long as he could not decide which will be more beneficial for him.

However Sri Krishna has unequivocally said that even by doing one's own karma with devotion and renouncing the results from that karma one can get to Paramātmā. Abandoning the worldly life is not an absolute requirement.

The true spirituality is not abandoning the action but transforming the attitude behind performing the action.

Arjun with all humility asked the question without hiding his mental dilemma. Bhagavān has also answered with equal love and understanding. HE clarifies Arjun's doubt patiently and clearly. The upcoming slokas explains all these.

An anecdotal situation--

One young professional having a bright career reads some books on spirituality which describes life stories of monks. The books describes how the monk had given up all his wealth and fortune and proceeded to Himalayas to meditate.

He also read from scriptures that one must perform one's own karma desirelessly dedicating all actions to Paramātmā. Now being thoroughly confused, he approaches his spiritual guru for his guidance.

Same is the condition of Arjun and he turns to Sri Krishna for help, for precise advice.

The teaching from this sloka--

- Asking sincere questions is essential for spiritual growth.
- Seeker should enquire and seek clarification from the learned ones.
- Harmony between sannyas and karma-- renunciation and karma.

5.2

śrībhagavānurvāca
sannyāsaḥ(kh) karmayoḡāca, niḡśreyasakarāvubhau,
tayostu karmasannyāsāt, karmayogo viśiḡyate. 5.2

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

Renunciation of action and selfless action both lead to liberation.
However karma-yoga is superior.

Sri Krishna says: Both the path of *karma samnyāsa* (renunciation of actions) and *karma yoga* (working in devotion) lead to the supreme goal(*niḡśhreyasa-karāvubhau*). But *karma yoga* is superior (*viśiḡyate*) to *karma sanyās*.

Let us now examine how both the paths lead to the supreme goal--liberation.

Karma Saṃnyāsa removes worldly distractions. A person who is detached from worldly objects can devote his entire time and energy in Bhagavat-chintan. Like many retired people after taking retirement from their active work life dedicate most of their time in prayer and meditation. However total renunciation is very difficult to execute.

Karma-yoga or the path of action teaches how to lead a selfless life. It gives an opportunity for cleaning the cobwebs of the mind and purifying the heart. One dedicates all his actions at the lotus feet of Bhagavān and work with devotion. It gives an opportunity for doing selfless work.

Karma-yoga is easy and superior. Human beings are more prone to action. Hence performing action is their domain and they are comfortable with that. Karma-yoga transforms every action to a form of meditation.

Whereas karma samnyasa or abandoning action is not easy as Bhagavān does not like superficial renunciation. Renunciation has to come from within. Bhagavān does not like hypocrisy. One simply can not run away to forest or sit for meditation at secluded place when his mind is still anchored to worldly desires.

Action is not harmful, the attachment to the fruits of action is harmful and one has to renounce that and not the action. Karma or action is actually the foundation for the path of liberation.

Examples--

Example 1.--

There are doctors working in hospitals. Some doctors see the patients diligently with compassion and dedication whereas there are a group of doctors who work only for remuneration, prestige, name and fame. Both are doing identical actions. But the first group of doctor's action is more towards divinity and hence they progresses sooner in the path of liberation than the other group of doctors. Although both are performing similar actions but their inner attitudes are different as they are performing under the influence of their gunas.

Example 2.--

There were two officials working at senior positions in the corporate sector. One of them quits his job because he wants to do soul searching and meditation. He then proceeds to Himalayas for meditation. However he is always hunt with the thoughts that he has left behind so lucrative job and hefty remuneration.

The other person continues with his job and spends part of his salary in charity and donations. He also does other social services.

Who has done a better job? Bhagavān will be happy with whom? The obvious answer is the second person. What is the point of abandoning worldly activities for practicing meditation if one cannot detach oneself from the worldly desires.

Sri Krishna has explained similar things in the sloka 7 of the 15th chapter.

***mamaivānśho jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥ-śaśṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛiti-sthāni karṣhati 15.7***

The embodied souls in this material world are My eternal fragmental parts. But bound by material nature, they are struggling with the six senses including the mind.

Thus Sri Krishna teachings teach us--

- Balanced living
- How one should continue to live in the world without being controlled by it.
- How to converge the works of daily life and the path of spirituality.

5.3

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

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

The *karma yogis*, who neither desire nor hate anything, should be considered always renounced. Free from all dualities, they are easily liberated from the bonds of material energy.

In this sloka, Sri Krishna has identified two things which binds human beings to the material world and are detrimental to their spiritual progress.

- Strong hatred or dislike (*dveṣṭi*)
- Desire (*kāṅkṣati*)

One need not abandon his profession, career, family, travelling or other worldly activities. All he needs to do is to detach himself from these two negative qualities. These two emotions create constant mental disturbances.

True renunciation is freedom from desire or attachment.

Hatred takes one away from others and hence one should refrain from hating any one.

If one stays equanimous in front of all opposites-- attractions and repulsions, happiness and sorrow, success and failure, gain and loss. plentiness and paucity, then one will automatically get rid of desires. He will then dwell in equanimity and achieve inner happiness. He remains calm in all situations. This inner peace leads to liberation.

He will be liberated from the bonds of material energy (*sukhaṁ bandhāt pramucyate*).

This sloka shifts the definition of renunciation from external life style to inner attitudes.

A person living in a city, doing a job, leading a family life can still remain desireless if his mind remains balanced. On the contrary a person remaining isolated in a monastery can still remain attached if his mind is not free from desires.

The true renunciate is the one who remains free from desires and hatred.

An example--

Consider two business persons. One of them cheers when his profits rise and becomes sad and heartbroken when he incurs losses.

On the contrary the other business man remains equipoised in all circumstances irrespective of whether his profit rises or falls. He learns from both circumstances and remains less emotional. Thus he progresses more in the path of spirituality vis-vis the other businessman as he is (*nirdvandvo*) free from all dualities.

These days it is a fashion to post updates on social media platforms. People are very joyous when others like their posts and comments positively. At the same time they are disappointed when somebody comments adversely or if they do not get enough likes. Their happiness depends on others opinions. But a spiritually inclined person focuses on his work rather than caring for others opinion. He remains calm and deep in spiritual awareness.

To summarise--

- In the first sloka Arjuna is expressing his doubt which path is superior karma-yoga or karma sannyasa-yoga.
- In the second sloka Sri Krishna says-- both lead to liberation but however karma-yoga is superior.
- In the third sloka Sri Krishna says desire and hatred are the two biggest emotions which creates obstructions in the path of liberation.

5.4

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

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

Here Sri Krishna says, only the ignorant says Samkhya Yoga and Karma Yoga are different.

In the first sloka Arjuna had sought clarification-- which is better renunciation of actions(karma sanyās) or performing actions without desires (karma-yoga)?

Bhagavān had replied both lead to liberation but performing action with devotion and without desire (karma-yoga) is better.

Here, Shree Krishna uses the word *sāmkhya* to refer to *karma sanyāsa*, or the renunciation of actions coupled with knowledge.

Those who are truly learned (*paṇḍitāḥ*) say that by applying themselves to any one of these paths, they can achieve the results of both.

The seeker following the path of deep contemplation realises that the soul is distinct from the body and mind. Through this understanding the attachment to the worldly actions disappear. Instead of refraining from action, the seeker continues to act with a purified attitude. It focuses on performing duties without attachment to results.

Final goal of both the paths is the same---

- Realisation of the true self and
- Freedom from bondage.

Both the paths give the same result.

Many people think that either a person should become a monk or perform his worldly duties. Combining both the activities seems impossible to many.

Sri Krishna contradicts this misnomer.

True wisdom which comes from knowledge, leads to selfless karma which in turn gives rise to spiritual awareness.

When a person performs selfless karma his mind becomes purified. The purified mind becomes capable of understanding the deeper spiritual truth and eventually leads to the realisation of self.

Further a person who gains true knowledge gets detached from selfish activities and works for the welfare of others.

Knowledge leads to selfless action and selfless actions lead to knowledge. Both are interconnected. They are not different.

Spirituality is not divided into separate chambers. All paths to spirituality are integrated. This integrated process works towards inner transformation. They all lead to the same goal, liberation.

Imagine two persons seeking spiritual progress. Both are striving for self development and inner happiness. One Person spends years in meditative practices and reading subjects like philosophy, psychology and scriptures. In the end he realises happiness does not depend on material objects. The other person spends many years in social services and works for the benefit of the poor without expecting anything in return.

Although their approaches are different but both in the process develop compassion, humility and wisdom.

One learns through knowledge and other through selfless action. One learns through practices and scriptures and the other learns through experiential knowledge. They both achieve inner transformation.

Consider the field of education. Some students learn by reading books. Others learn by doing experiments.

One receive knowledge by reading theoretically whereas the other receive knowledge by practical experience.

On the same analogy, samkhya gives theoretical knowledge whereas karma provides practical knowledge. Both leads to the same destination.

Thus, the truly learned see no difference between *karma-yoga* and *karma sanyās* or *samkhya*. By following one of them, the results of both are achieved.

5.5

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

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

Sri Krishna here states that what is attained by means of *karma sannyāsa* is also attained by working in devotion. Hence, those who see *karma sannyās* and *karma yoga* to be identical, truly see things as they are (*yaḥ paśhyati sa paśhyati*).

That means they understand correctly that the two paths are the same. They see the ultimate truth. In this sloka Bhagavān reinforces the truth that what one achieves through renunciation of action, the others achieve the same through selfless action.

Truth is one-- Atma is imperishable and distinct from body and mind. In whichever path one proceeds, finally reaches to this understanding. Paths may be different but the destination is the same.

Immature mind may see the difference but a mature mind see the similarity.

The spiritual knowledge provide necessary abilities to recognise the truth and reach there.

Different philosophies propagates different paths for salvation. Some focuses on meditation. Some focuses on selfless service, some other focuses on reading scriptures.

Sri Krishna's teachings remind us that different paths are not contradictory. They are complementary to each other.

Examples--

Consider two mountain climbers, one climbs from the east side while the other climbs from the west side. Both have different experiences on the way. Both view different scenic beauties. After some time both reach the mountain peak. Once they reach the peak their experience is the same. They both have reached the pinnacle.

On the same analogy Sāṃkhya and Karma are two different paths. The ultimate peak is the same--the self awareness and God realisation.

Consider another situation where two professionals are working together. One achieve success through his intellectual ability and the other achieve success through hands on experience and hard work.

The situation is akin to samkhya and karma.

In modern time, people often argue so as to which path leads to better spirituality? How does one become spiritual? By doing puja, or by meditation, or by chanting mantras or simply by reading Gītā and other scriptures, what is the perfect path? One should refrain from such unnecessary discussions which leads to confusion only. One should remember all paths are good and help in purification of mind. Instead of arguing one should rather focus on sincerity, discipline and inner awareness.

5.6

sannyāsastu mahābāho, duḥkhamāptumayogataḥ, yogayukto munirbrahma, nacireṇādhigacchati. 5.6

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

Sri Krishna says here--

Renunciation is difficult to achieve without performing self less karma. Karma Yoga is the preparation for the Sāṃkhya Yoga.

Renunciation without preparation is difficult.

What is the preparation one has to do?

One has to purify the mind through self less karma.

Our minds constantly generate thoughts. These thoughts appear out of desires. If one suddenly renunciate karma while tons of unfulfilled desires are still in the mind, then such a renunciation becomes superficial as mind tries to go back to the thoughts of worldly desires. Both do not synchronise with each other. Therefore renunciation can be a difficult path without preparation.

The preparation one has to do is through practice of karma.

Shree Krishna says that while performing one's duties in the world, a person should slowly learn to rise above anger, greed, and desire. Instead, if one first gives up duties, it is very difficult to purify the mind; and without a pure mind, true detachment remains a distant dream.

Karma Yoga prepares the mind. When selfless work is performed for the benefit of others, the mind become calm and serene. It becomes clean and pure. Then gradual spiritual evolution takes place. Such gradual preparation is any day better than the sudden renunciation.

Self less karma prepares one for achievement of the inner peace and ultimate bliss. Eventually liberation becomes a natural process thereafter.

Analogy--

Imagine someone sees an advertisement regarding a marathon taking place in his town. He had never before participated in any running event nor did he practice running on day to day basis.

On seeing the advertisement he decides to participate in the marathon race without any prior preparation. It goes without saying that he becomes an utter failure in the race.

Similarly Samkhya is like a marathon and karma is the preparation required to be done before joining samkhya marathon.

Karma Yoga is the daily training of the mind.

Imagine a student who dreams to become a great musician one day. He needs regular and rigorous practice for that. Without any daily routine of music practice, if he straight goes and participates in a big concert, he would be an utter failure. Thus Sri Krishna says a person who practices karma yoga sincerely prepares himself for deeper inner realisation. This practice of karma cleanses his mind and makes him free from desires and then he can adapt samkhya for higher realisation. He then eventually realises for ParamBrahmā. He become free from worldly suffering and attain inner peace.

To summarise--

In the 4th sloka it is said-- Only ignorants feel that the path of knowledge and actions are different.

In the 5th sloka we learnt -- Both paths lead to the same spiritual realisation.

In the sixth sloka we learnt-- Renunciation without karma yoga is difficult.

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

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

In this sloka Sri Krishna describes the qualities of a person who are ever free from bondage.

The *karma yogis* have four qualities--

- Who are united in consciousness (*yoga-yukto*)
- Who have purified their intellect (*viśuddhātmā*),
- Who have controlled their mind(*vijitātmā*) and senses(*jitendriyaḥ*),
- They see Paramātmā in every living being (*sarva-bhūtātma-bhūtātmā*).

These yogis although they perform all kinds of actions, they are never entangled(*kurvann api na lipyate*). They remain free from bondage. Actions do not create any bondage for them.

When selfless actions are performed without attachment, selfish desires gradually vanish. When actions are motivated by service rather than personal gain, the mind remains calm. The pure and calm mind brings clarity in thought.

Senses no longer dominate. Pleasure and pain no longer bothers the mind.

Then he sees the same divine consciousness in all beings. This is very profound. This realisation transforms how one deals with others. Such a person even starts loving his competitors and see them as part of the same universe to which he belongs.

Actions performed with wisdom and detachment becomes spiritually liberating.

Examples--Let us consider the example of a social worker. She does a lot of social services in the field of education for the poor and downtrodden ladies of the society. Her work is difficult and requires constant deliberations and interaction with the ladies from the backward and downtrodden classes. If she does it as a pure service to the humanity, then she remains motivated. If she sees her work from personal benefit angle, then she would easily become frustrated. If she sees everybody as same and part of the same Param-tattva, then her work becomes delightful and turns into blessings for her.

Let us consider the example of a factory owner. If the factory owner thinks all his employees are part of the same Param-tattva and have the same right to exist and prosper, then he would look after them better. He would take care of their well being while taking care of his own profit.

This sloka teaches us true sannyas does not require withdrawal from the society. It requires transforming the mind and attitudes that all are one. It teaches us to see the Soul of all souls in every living being (*sarva-bhūtātma-bhūtātmā*).

Thus when the distinction is removed, the ego is controlled. For such a person every work is a path to liberation.

5.8

naiva kiñcitkaromīti, yukto manyeta tattvavit,

paśyañśṛṅvanspṛśañjighran, naśnangacchansvapañśvasan. 5.8

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

Those steadfast in karm yog, always think, "I am not the doer," even while engaged in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, moving, sleeping, breathing, Sri Krishna says a wise person who has the knowledge never thinks he is the doer. He rather thinks "I do not do anything". (*naiva kiñchit karomīti*)

The activities of the indriyas are--

- *paśhyañ* -- seeing
- *śṛṅṅvan* -- hearing
- *spṛśhañ* -- touching
- *jighrann* -- smelling
- *aśhnan* -- eating
- *gachchhan* -- moving
- *svapañ* -- sleeping
- *śhvasan* -- breathing

According to Bhagavad Gītā actions are performed by the body, mind and senses which are part of the Prakṛti, nature.

With the light of divine knowledge, the knowledgeable persons see that it is only the material senses that are moving amongst their objects.

The inner self remains unchanged. Therefore while performing the routine actions the knowledgeable persons remain inwardly free.

This concept of the soul remaining free has also been explained in the 7th sloka of the 15th chapter.

mamaivānśho jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ manaḥ-śhaśṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛiti-sthāni karṣhati 15.7

The embodied souls in this material world are My eternal fragmental parts. But bound by material nature, they are struggling with the six senses including the mind.

With constant contemplation, one realises that the soul remains free and witnesses all activities which occur naturally. This understanding reduces our ego and attachment.

When people understand that they are not the doer and doer is some other entity, an unseen force, they gradually become humble and balanced.

Examples--

Let us consider the example of a highly successful and experienced doctor conducting a surgery. He gains the experience and ability to conduct a complex operation after years of training, practice and with the help of many of his assistants.

If while doing the operation his ego takes over and he starts thinking he is very well professed and can conduct any difficult surgery, then his focus gets shifted. The "I" takes over. This thought-- that "I am only the doer is the ego and it plays the spoil sport and distracts attention.

Needless to say, if he focuses only on his action living all the results of his action to Paramātmā, he would do a perfect job.

Let us consider the example of athletes being "in the zone"---

Being "in the zone" is a psychological state, often referred to as "Flow"-- where an athlete performs at his absolute peak with seemingly no conscious effort. It is characterised by a sense of total immersion in the activity.

This sloka encourages us to develop a witness attitude towards life. We only witness, the doer is somebody else. Such awareness reduces anxiety.

5.9

pralapanvisṛjanḡṛhṇan, nunmiṣannimiṣannapi indriyāṇīndriyārtheṣu, vartanta iti dhārayan. 5.9

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

The list of actions continues in this sloka--

- *pralapan* -- talking
- *visṛjan* -- giving up body waste
- *ḡṛhṇann* -- accepting
- *unmiṣhan* -- opening the eyes
- *nimiṣhann* -- closing the eyes

The wise person understands that the senses are simply interacting with their sense objects and he is not doing anything.

- *indriyāṇī* -- the sense
- *indriyārtheṣhu* -- in the sense objects
- *vartante* -- moving

Most of our physical actions are voluntary and occur naturally.

Very often we get entangled with the thought that we are doing these actions. This thought is erroneous and drags us towards ego inflation.

In contrast when we understand that these actions are natural processes and are plays of Prakṛti, then our mind becomes calm resulting in being humble which facilitates our spiritual journey. It gives us inner freedom.

Sri Krishna encourages to cultivate witness consciousness which means observing thoughts and emotions.

People who do meditation might have experienced initially how the mind fluctuates wildly when one sits for meditations. All sorts of warranted, unwarranted thoughts rush through our mind. But with practice, these thoughts subside and mind becomes calm. The purpose of meditation is to observe closely the thoughts as a witness. They arise and go naturally on their own. Do not fight with thoughts. It is part of a process.

Take the example of a driver driving a vehicle. He does many actions simultaneously. He changes gears, presses the accelerator whenever required. He moves the steering. He observes the traffic

through his eyes and listens to the horns of other vehicles through his ears. All these actions his senses do in a coordinated manner. His soul is not involved in any of these actions. The soul only witness.

Similarly in our cases many of the actions we do, just happen naturally. The actions are play of gunas or nature. We therefore have to remain calm and observe the process as a witness. This calmness of mind destroys the turbulence of the mind. We become less reactive and more balanced. Our inner self remains more peaceful.

Summary of the three slokas--

- The 7th sloka teaches us-- Karma yogi is purified with mind and controlled senses. He remains unaffected by actions.
- The 8th sloka tells us-- The enlightened person understand the true self and thereby realises that all actions are a play of gunas or nature.
- The 9th sloka teaches us -- All actions are interactions between the senses and the world. The soul is not the doer.

Questions and Answers

Pushpa ji

Q: Whenever any wrong action is done by human beings, who does it? Are the indriyas solely responsible for wrong doings?

A: The indriyas are guided by the mind. So to say the mind is the boss of the indriyas. The human being is described as having 5 sheaths or layers, known as Pancha Koshas. They are--

- Physical body known as Annamaya kosha
- Vital energy known as Prāṇamaya kosha
- The mind known as Manomaya kosha
- The buddhi or intellect known as Vijnanamaya kosha
- Soul or Atma known as Anandamaya kosha.

Atma has the highest place. It is above intellect.

The sense organs or indriyas do not perform any action independently. They simply cannot do any action on their own. They are simply body parts. It is the mind which gives them the instructions to perform.

Some objects appear good, some other appear not so pleasant. Some food taste good some food taste bitter. Some sound appears melodious and some other sounds harsh. All these distinctions are formed in the mind. Mind decides which is pleasant and which is unpleasant.

The emotions of 'raga' and 'dvesha' are all play of mind.

Take for example we are travelling by train. We smile at the co passenger and expects that he should also give a return smile. But he doesn't smile. Immediately we jump to the conclusion that he is an unfriendly man who does not even smile. The thought keeps worrying us. Is it necessary to keep the mind engaged in such thoughts. Not at all but we do it all the time.

The body, mind, intellect are gifts to us by nature and act according to gunas. Atma which is construed as part of Paramātmā or Bhagavān is above all these. It sits in the Anandamaya kosha. The "I" is the atma but we confuse it with the body and mind. Hence I the atm a is not the doer. It is the mind which generates all these thoughts and actions such as good, bad etc.

Gītā teaches us to elevate ourselves to the level of Atma. We should get out of the body mind concept and go beyond that and lift ourselves to the level of Atma. We should always think we are the Atma.

Renu ji

Q: Inside us where does the Atma stay?

A: The Atma is so subtle that it can not be seen by any one. It can only be realised. Any type of body scanning will not be able to capture the Atma. It is that unseen energy in absence of which we can not function. Imagine a dead body, all the body parts are in place but non of those can any longer function as the Atma has left the body.

Therefore the Astitva or identity of our body is our Atma. Without the Atma is a bundle of soil. No body wants to keep a dead body.

Atma pervades all parts of the body as long as it is a living body. No body can see the Atma neither it can be located at any part of the body. But it is definitely there in a living body.

Q: Is Prāṇa and Atma the same thing?

A: No they are different. Prāṇa is the life force or the vital energy whereas Atma is the consciousness. Prāṇa expires with death but Atma takes up another form or body.

In Bhagavad Gītā Sri Krishna tells us do satkarma, nishkama karma, and through devotion come to ME so that you don't have to go back to the material world again and again.

Once Atma reaches the divine abode, it merges with Paramātmā.



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Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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