

- Chapter 3 -
Karma-yoga

Everyone must engage in some sort of activity in this material world. But actions can either bind one to this world or liberate one from it. By acting for the pleasure of the Supreme, without selfish motives, one can be liberated from the law of karma (action and reaction) and attain transcendental knowledge of the self and the Supreme.

Begins section 1:
Arjuna's confusion.

TEXT 1

arjuna uvāca
jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te
matā buddhir janārdana
tat kiṁ karmaṇi ghore mām
niyojayasi keśava

Arjuna said: O Janārdana, O Keśava, why do You want to engage me in this ghastly warfare, if You think that intelligence is better than fruitive work?

TEXT 2

vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena
buddhiṁ mohayasīva me
tad ekaṁ vada niścitya
yena śreyo 'ham āpnuyām

My intelligence is bewildered by Your equivocal instructions. Therefore, please tell me decisively which will be most beneficial for me.

TEXT 3

śrī-bhagavān uvāca
loke 'smin dvi-vidhā niṣṭhā
purā proktā mayānagha
jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānām
karma-yogena yoginām

Begins section 2:
Do your duty (fight), but
without attachment

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O sinless Arjuna, I have already explained that there are two classes of men who try to realize the self. Some are inclined to understand it by empirical, philosophical speculation, and others by devotional service.

TEXT 4

na karmaṇām anārambhān
naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo 'śnute
na ca sannyasanād eva
siddhiṁ samadhigacchati

Not by merely abstaining from work can one achieve freedom from reaction, nor by renunciation alone can one attain perfection.

TEXT 5

na hi kaścit kṣaṇam aṅi
jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt
kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma
sarvaḥ prakṛti-jair guṇaiḥ

Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature; therefore no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment.

TEXT 6

karmendriyāṅi saṁyamya
ya āste manasā smaran
indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā
mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate

One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on sense objects

certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender.

TEXT 7

*yas tv indriyāṇi manasā
niyamyārabhate 'rjuna
karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam
asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate*

On the other hand, if a sincere person tries to control the active senses by the mind and begins karma-yoga [in Kṛṣṇa consciousness] without attachment, he is by far superior.

TEXT 8

*niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ
karma jyāyo hy akarmaṇaḥ
śarīra-yātrāpi ca te
na prasiddhyed akarmaṇaḥ*

Perform your prescribed duty, for doing so is better than not working. One cannot even maintain one's physical body without work.

TEXT 9

*yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra
loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ
tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya
mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara*

Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed; otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage.

TEXT 10

*saha-yajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā
purovāca prajāpatiḥ
anena prasaviṣyadhvam
eṣa vo 'stv iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk*

Begins section 3:
Karma kaṇḍa to karma
yoga

In the beginning of creation, the Lord of all creatures sent forth generations of

men and demigods, along with sacrifices for Viṣṇu, and blessed them by saying, "Be thou happy by this yajña [sacrifice] because its performance will bestow upon you everything desirable for living happily and achieving liberation."

TEXT 11

*devān bhāvayatānena
te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ
parasparam bhāvayantaḥ
śreyāḥ param avāpsyatha*

The demigods, being pleased by sacrifices, will also please you, and thus, by cooperation between men and demigods, prosperity will reign for all.

TEXT 12

*iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā
dāsyante yajña-bhāvitāḥ
tair dattān apradāyaibhyo
yo bhun̄kte stena eva saḥ*

In charge of the various necessities of life, the demigods, being satisfied by the performance of yajña [sacrifice], will supply all necessities to you. But he who enjoys such gifts without offering them to the demigods in return is certainly a thief.

TEXT 13

*yajña-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo
mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ
bhun̄jate te tv agham pāpā
ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt*

The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin.

TEXT 14

*annād bhavanti bhūtāni
parjanyaḍ anna-sambhavaḥ
yajñād bhavati parjanyo
yajñaḥ karma-samudbhavaḥ*

All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced by performance of yajña [sacrifice], and yajña is born of prescribed duties.

TEXT 15

*karma brahmodbhavaḡ viddhi
brahmākṣara-samudbhavam
tasmāt sarva-gataḡ brahma
nityaḡ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam*

Regulated activities are prescribed in the Vedas, and the Vedas are directly manifested from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Consequently the all-pervading Transcendence is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice.

TEXT 16

*evaḡ pravartitaḡ cakraḡ
nānuvartayatīha yaḥ
aghāyur indriyārāmo
moghaḡ pārtha sa jīvati*

My dear Arjuna, one who does not follow in human life the cycle of sacrifice thus established by the Vedas certainly leads a life full of sin. Living only for the satisfaction of the senses, such a person lives in vain.

TEXT 17

*yas tv ātma-ratir eva syād
ātma-tṛptaś ca mānavaḥ
ātmany eva ca santuṣṭas
tasya kāryaḡ na vidyate*

Begins section 4:
Act dutifully with
detachment to set the
example.

But for one who takes pleasure in the self, whose human life is one of self-realization, and who is satisfied in the self only, fully satiated—for him there is

no duty.

TEXT 18

*naiva tasya kṛtenārtho
nākṛteneha kaścana
na cāsya sarva-bhūteṣu
kaścīd artha-vyapāśrayaḥ*

A self-realized man has no purpose to fulfill in the discharge of his prescribed duties, nor has he any reason not to perform such work. Nor has he any need to depend on any other living being.

TEXT 19

*tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ
kāryaṁ karma samācara
asakto hy ācāran karma
param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ*

Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the Supreme.

TEXT 20

*karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim
āsthitā janakādayaḥ
loka-saṅgraham evāpi
sampaśyan kartum arhasi*

Kings such as Janaka attained perfection solely by performance of prescribed duties. Therefore, just for the sake of educating the people in general, you should perform your work.

TEXT 21

*yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas
tat tad evetaro janaḥ
sa yat pramāṇaṁ kurute
lokas tad anuvartate*

Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.

TEXT 22

*na me pārthāsti kartavyam
triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana
nānavāptam avāptavyam
varta eva ca karmaṇi*

O son of Pṛthā, there is no work prescribed for Me within all the three planetary systems. Nor am I in want of anything, nor have I a need to obtain anything—and yet I am engaged in prescribed duties.

TEXT 23

*yadi hy aham na varteyam
jātu karmaṇy atandritaḥ
mama vartmānuvartante
manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*

For if I ever failed to engage in carefully performing prescribed duties, O Pārtha, certainly all men would follow My path.

TEXT 24

*utsīdeyur ime lokā
na kuryām karma ced aham
saṅkarasya ca kartā syām
upahanyām imāḥ prajāḥ*

If I did not perform prescribed duties, all these worlds would be put to ruination. I would be the cause of creating unwanted population, and I would thereby destroy the peace of all living beings.

TEXT 25

*saktāḥ karmaṇy avidvāṁso
yathā kurvanti bhārata
kuryād vidvāṁs tathāsaktaś
cikīrṣur loka-saṅgraham*

As the ignorant perform their duties with attachment to results, the learned may similarly act, but without attachment, for the sake of leading people on the right path.

TEXT 26

*na buddhi-bhedam janayed
ajñānām karma-saṅginām
joṣayet sarva-karmāṇi
vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran*

So as not to disrupt the minds of ignorant men attached to the fruitive results of prescribed duties, a learned person should not induce them to stop work. Rather, by working in the spirit of devotion, he should engage them in all sorts of activities [for the gradual development of Kṛṣṇa consciousness].

TEXT 27

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni
guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā
kartāham iti manyate*

The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature.

TEXT 28

*tattva-vit tu mahā-bāho
guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ
guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta
iti matvā na sajjate*

One who is in knowledge of the Absolute Truth, O mighty-armed, does not engage himself in the senses and sense gratification, knowing well the differences between work in devotion and work for fruitive results.

TEXT 29

*prakṛter guṇa-sammūḍhāḥ
sajjante guṇa-karmasu
tān akṛtsna-vido mandān
kṛtsna-vin na vicālayet*

Bewildered by the modes of material nature, the ignorant fully engage

themselves in material activities and become attached. But the wise should not unsettle them, although these duties are inferior due to the performers' lack of knowledge.

TEXT 30

*mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi
sannyasyādhyātma-cetasā
nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā
yudhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ*

Therefore, O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight.

TEXT 31

*ye me matam idaṁ nityam
anutīṣṭhanti mānavāḥ
śraddhāvanto 'nasūyanto
mucyante te 'pi karmabhiḥ*

Those persons who execute their duties according to My injunctions and who follow this teaching faithfully, without envy, become free from the bondage of fruitive actions.

TEXT 32

*ye tv etad abhyasūyanto
nānutīṣṭhanti me matam
sarva-jñāna-vimūdhāṁs tān
viddhi naṣṭān acetasaḥ*

But those who, out of envy, disregard these teachings and do not follow them regularly are to be considered bereft of all knowledge, befooled, and ruined in their endeavors for perfection.

TEXT 33

*sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyāḥ
prakṛter jñānavān api
prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni
nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati*

Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?

TEXT 34

*indriyasyendriyasyārthe
rāga-dveṣau vyavasthitau
tayoṛ na vaśam āgacchet
tau hy asya pariṣanthinau*

There are principles to regulate attachment and aversion pertaining to the senses and their objects. One should not come under the control of such attachment and aversion, because they are stumbling blocks on the path of self-realization.

TEXT 35

*śreyān sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ
para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt
sva-dharme nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ
para-dharmo bhayāvahaḥ*

It is far better to discharge one's prescribed duties, even though faultily, than another's duties perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's own duty is better than engaging in another's duties, for to follow another's path is dangerous.

TEXT 36

*arjuna uvāca
atha kena prayukto 'yam
pāpam carati pūruṣaḥ
anicchann api vārṣṇeya
balād iva niyojitaḥ*

Begins section 5:
Beware of lust and anger.

Arjuna said: O descendant of Vṛṣṇi, by what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force?

TEXT 37

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
kāma eṣa krodha eṣa
rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ
mahāśano mahā-pāpmā
viddhy enam iha vairiṇam*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: It is lust only, Arjuna, which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world.

TEXT 38

*dhūmenāvriyate vahnir
yathādarśo malena ca
yatholbenāvṛto garbhas
tathā tenedam āvṛtam*

As fire is covered by smoke, as a mirror is covered by dust, or as the embryo is covered by the womb, the living entity is similarly covered by different degrees of this lust.

TEXT 39

*āvṛtaṁ jñānam etena
jñānino nitya-vairiṇā
kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya
duṣpūreṇānalena ca*

Thus the wise living entity's pure consciousness becomes covered by his eternal

enemy in the form of lust, which is never satisfied and which burns like fire.

TEXT 40

*indriyāṇi mano buddhir
asyādhiṣṭhānam ucyate
etair vimohayaty eṣa
jñānam āvṛtya dehinam*

The senses, the mind and the intelligence are the sitting places of this lust. Through them lust covers the real knowledge of the living entity and bewilders him.

TEXT 41

*tasmāt tvam indriyāṇy ādau
niyamyā bharatarṣabha
pāpmānaṁ prajahi hy enaṁ
jñāna-vijñāna-nāśanam*

Therefore, O Arjuna, best of the Bhāratas, in the very beginning curb this great symbol of sin [lust] by regulating the senses, and slay this destroyer of knowledge and self-realization.

TEXT 42

*indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur
indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ
manasas tu parā buddhir
yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ*

The working senses are superior to dull matter; mind is higher than the senses; intelligence is still higher than the mind; and he [the soul] is even higher than the intelligence.

TEXT 43

*evaṁ buddheḥ paraṁ buddhvā
saṁstabhyātmānam ātmanā
jahi śatruṁ mahā-bāho
kāma-rūpaṁ durāsadam*

Thus knowing oneself to be transcendental to the material senses, mind and

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intelligence, O mighty-armed Arjuna, one should steady the mind by deliberate spiritual intelligence [Kṛṣṇa consciousness] and thus—by spiritual strength—conquer this insatiable enemy known as lust.

Thus end the Bhaktivedanta Purports to the Third Chapter of the Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā in the matter of Karma-yoga, or the Discharge of One's Prescribed Duty in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness.

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