

|| atha tṛtīyo'dhyāyaḥ ||

karma yogaḥ

Chapter 3

Yoga of Action

arjuna uvāca -

gyāyasī cetkarmanaste

matā buddhirjanārdana ।

tatkiṁ karmaṇi ghore mām

niyojayasi keśava ॥

1

Arjuna asked: Krishna! If you believe that Knowledge is superior to Action, then why do you urge me to engage in this horrible act of violence?

vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena

buddhiṁ mohayasīva me ।

tadekaṁ vada niścitya

yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām ॥

2

With your ambiguous statements, you further confuse my mind. Tell me decidedly, which of the two paths is good for me.

śrī bhagavānuvāca -

loke'smindvividhā niṣṭhā

purā proktā mayā'nagha ।

jñānayogena sāṅkhyānām

karmayogena yoginām ॥

3

The divine Lord said: O sinless Arjuna! At the beginning of Creation, I taught the Yoga of Knowledge to those who were eligible to learn it. In the Vedas, I explained to Karma Yogis, the procedure of desire-free action. These two paths support and complement one another. They are not separate from each other. Karma Yoga helps purify the mind. With a mind that is pure, Yoga of Knowledge should be pursued. There is no question as to which of the two is superior.

na karmaṇāmanārambhāt

naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo'snute ।

na ca sannyasanādeva

siddhiṁ samadhigacchati ॥

4

Without first performing action, one cannot reach the state of inaction, granted by Knowledge. Renouncing action before purity of mind is achieved, will block the path to Liberation.

na hi kaścitkṣaṇamapi

jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt ।

kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma

sarvaḥ prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ ॥

5

Giving up action means giving up attachment to the action and to its fruits. No one can ever remain even for an instant without performing some action. All are helpless, and are led into action by the three Gunas born of Maya, illusion.

karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya

ya āste manasā smaran |

indriyārthānvimūḍhātmā

mithyācārassa ucyate ||

6

The fool who merely restrains his organs of action, but engages his mind in desiring worldly pleasures, is a hypocrite.

yastvindriyāṇi manasā

niyamyārabhate'rjuna |

karmendriyaiḥ karmayogam

asaktassa viśiṣyate ||

7

But he who controls his organs of perception, and performs actions with his organs of action without any desires, attains purity of mind. He gains spiritual wisdom.

niyataṁ kuru karma tvam

karma jyāyo hyakarmaṇaḥ |

śarīrayātrā'pi ca te

na prasiddhyedakarmaṇaḥ ||

8

You should perform all actions prescribed by the scriptures. It is better to perform actions rather than to avoid them. If you refrain from actions, even day to day living will be difficult.

yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra

loko'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ ।

tadārthaṁ karma kaunteya

muktasaṅgassamācara ॥

9

Actions performed to please God, are not binding. The world gets caught in bondage due to actions performed for other purposes. Therefore, offer all your desire-free actions to God.

sahayajñāḥ prajāssṛṣṭvā

purovāca prajāpatiḥ ।

anena prasaviṣyadhvam

eṣavo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk ॥

10

At the beginning of Creation, when Brahma created sacrificial rites, he also created living beings and ordained them thus: By performing these regular sacrificial rites, you will flourish. These rites, like the wish-fulfilling celestial cow, Kamadhenu, will satisfy all your requirements.

devānbhāvayatā'nena

te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ ।

parasparam bhāvayantaḥ

śreyaḥ paramavāpsyatha ॥

11

By making offerings to the gods, you keep them contented. They will then bless you with timely rains. Through mutual love and respect, you and the gods will both gain Liberation.

iṣṭānbhogāṇhi vo devāḥ

dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ ।

tairdattānapradāyaibhyaḥ

yo bhunkte stena eva saḥ ॥

12

The deities receiving worship through sacrificial rites will grant you comforts and fulfill all your wishes. The Sastras declare that those who do not thus reciprocate, by sharing their gifts with gods, are sinners.

yajñasiṣṭāśinassantāḥ

mucyante sarvakilbiṣaiḥ ।

bhuñjate te tvaghaṁ pāpāḥ

ye pacantyātmakāraṇāt ॥

13

Those who make offerings to gods and consume later what is left, are released from all sins. But those who are mindful only of themselves, prepare food only for themselves, and refuse to share, consume nothing but sin.

annādbhavanti bhūtāni

parjanyaḍannasambhavaḥ ।

yajñādbhavati parjanyaḥ

yajñāḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ ॥

14

Bodies of living beings are born from food. Food is created by rainclouds. Clouds are formed because of sacrificial rites. Such rites are derived from action.

karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi

brahmākṣarasamudbhavam ।

tasmātsarvagataṁ brahma

nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam ॥ 15

Karma is from the Vedas. Vedas are God's visible form. The ever-effulgent Veda which is everywhere, is established in Yajna, the sacrificial rite.

evaṁ pravartitaṁ cakram

nānuvartayatīha yaḥ ।

aghāyurindriyārāmaḥ

moghaṁ pārtha sa jīvati ॥ 16

Arjuna! He who refuses to follow the wheel of Karma which has been set in motion by God, but, enslaved by the senses, chooses to live in sin, leads a worthless life.

yastvātmaratireva syāt

ātmaṛptaśca mānavaḥ ।

ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭaḥ

tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate ॥ 17

All rituals have been established to instill purity of thought in ignorant human beings. He who ever revels in his Self in total bliss and contentment, has no need to perform any prescribed duty.

naiva tasya kṛtenārthaḥ

nākṛteneha kaścana ।

na cāsya sarvabhūteṣu

kaścīdarthavyapāśrayaḥ ॥ 18

Performance of Karma does not in any way benefit the Jnani, the enlightened individual. No blemish occurs to him from non-performance of action.

tasmādasaktassatatam

kāryam karma samācara |

asakto hyācarankarma

paramāpnoti pūruṣaḥ ||

19

The Self-realized are not concerned with actions, but others must perform actions. Arjuna! You are not enlightened yet. Therefore, without attachment perform your duties. Man, whose actions are free from desire will certainly attain Liberation.

karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim

āsthitā janakādayaḥ |

lokasaṅgrahamevāpi

sampraśyankartumarhasi ||

20

Janaka and others attained purity of heart by the performance of Karma. Later, they became Self-realized. Even after you attain Self-realization, it is best that you continue to perform Karma to encourage others to adhere to Dharma.

yadyadācarati śreṣṭhaḥ

tattadevetaro janaḥ |

sa yatpramāṇam kurute

lokastadanuvartate ||

21

na me pārthāsti kartavyam

triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana |

nānavāptamavāptavyam

varta eva ca karmaṇi ||

22

In this regard, follow my example, Arjuna. In all the three worlds, I have nothing that I have to do. There is nothing that I have gained, and there is nothing for me to gain in the future. Still, to be a role model in this world, I keep performing actions.

yadi hyaham na varteyam

jātu karmaṇyatandritaḥ |

mama vartmānuvartante

manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ ||

23

If I become negligent in my duties, others will follow my example.

utsīdeyurime lokāḥ

na kuryām karma cedaham |

saṅkarasya ca kartā syām

upahanyāmimāḥ prajāḥ ||

24

Such a situation will be calamitous. I will become responsible for the adulteration of castes, and for harming people.

saktāḥ karmaṇyavidvāmsaḥ

yathā kurvanti bhārata |

kuryādvidvāmstathā'saktaḥ

cikīrṣurlokasaṅgraham ||

25

While the ignorant eagerly engage in duties with attachment, the wise perform actions with detachment, only to show others.

na buddhibhedam janayet

ajñānām karmasaṅginām |

joṣayetsarvakarmāṇi

vidvānyuktassamācaran ||

26

One should not disturb the mindset of those who perform actions with attachment. The wise must be alert in performing their own actions, deliberately encouraging others to engage in similar good deeds. If not, the ignorant will turn wayward and give up their duties. If that happens, their hearts will not attain purity and they will fail to gain knowledge. They will be losers at both ends.

prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni

guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ |

ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā

kartā'hamiti manyate ||

27

The three Gunas associated with Nature, take form as bodies. They initiate and perform all actions, both worldly actions and Vedic rituals. But the egotistical, ignorant fool thinks that he is the one responsible for doing all the actions.

tattvavittu mahābāho

guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ ।

guṇā guṇeṣu vartante

iti matvā na sajjate ॥

28

Arjuna! The knower, who understands the role of the Gunas in the performance of Karma (action), remains unattached to sense organs, such as eyes, and to their objects, such as forms. Realizing that the soul plays no part in these interactions between sense organs and the objects they perceive, he abstains from claiming credit for any actions performed by him.

prakṛterguṇasammūḍhāḥ

sajjante guṇakarmasu ।

tānakṛtsnavido mandān

kṛtsnavinna vicālayet ॥

29

Those who are deluded by the Gunas created by Nature, become engrossed in the senses and their functions. The Self-realized should not confuse those dull intellects by avoiding to engage in actions.

mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi

sannyasyādhyātmacetasā ।

nirāśīrnirmamo bhūtvā

yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ ॥

30

Therefore Arjuna, using discretion, surrender all your actions to me. Remaining free from desire, attachment, and sorrow, proceed to fight.

ye me matamidam nityam

anutīṣṭhanti mānavāḥ |
śraddhāvanto'nasūyantaḥ
mucyante te'pi karmabhiḥ || 31

Those who are earnest, free from jealousy, and adopt my philosophy, are released from the bondage of Karma.

ye tvetadabhyasūyantaḥ
nānutīṣṭhanti me matam |
sarvajñānavimūḍhāmstān
viddhi naṣṭānacetasaḥ || 32

Know that those fools who reject and criticize my philosophy, and refuse to follow my guidelines, will perish.

sadrśaṁ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ
prakṛterjñānavānapi |
prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni
nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati || 33

The wise behave according to their innate nature, and so do all other inferior beings. Everyone's actions are dictated by Nature. That being the case, one may ask, why should one restrain the senses?

indriyasyendriyasyārthe
rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau |
tayorna vaśamāgacchet

It is the nature of the sense organs to be attracted to the objects that appeal to them, and to be repulsed by the objects that are disagreeable. A seeker should guard himself from getting swayed by the preferences and distastes of the sense organs. Both attachment and aversion are hurdles to spiritual progress.

śreyānsvadharmo viguṇaḥ

paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt |

svadharme nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ

paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ ||

35

Even if there are inherent flaws, it is best to follow one's own Dharma (prescribed natural duty) to one's best ability. This is better than excelling at another's Dharma. Meeting one's end while engaged in one's own Dharma is meritorious. Following a Dharma that is unsuited to oneself is frightening and dangerous.

arjuna uvāca -

atha kena prayukto'yaṁ

pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ |

anicchannapi vārṣṇeya

balādiva niyojitaḥ ||

36

Arjuna asked: Krishna! Sometimes man is forcibly dragged to committing sin quite against his will. What is the force that compels him to do so?

śrī bhagavānurvāca -

kāma eṣa krodha eṣaḥ

rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ ।

mahāśano mahāpāpmā

viddhyenamihā vairiṇam ॥

37

The divine Lord said: That force is lust, dreaded because it is impossible to satisfy. It is caused by Rajo Guna. If for some reason lust is not satiated, it triggers rage. Lust is your greatest enemy in this world.

dhūmenāvriyate vahniḥ

yathā"darśo malena ca ।

yatholbenāvṛto garbhaḥ

tathā tenedamāvṛtam ॥

38

Lust blocks the intellect the way smoke obscures fire, dust covers a mirror, and the amniotic sac sheaths a fetus. It destroys discretion.

āvṛtam jñānametena

jñānino nityavairiṇā ।

kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya

duṣpūreṇānalena ca ॥

39

Uncontrolled desire is a veritable enemy to Knowledge. It is like a raging fire. In the form of an unquenchable thirst, it smothers judgment.

indriyāṇi mano buddhiḥ

asyādhiṣṭhānamucyate ।

etairvimohayatyeṣaḥ

jñānamāvṛtya dehinam ॥

40

Lust is harbored by the mind, sense organs, and the intellect. If one identifies himself with his body, lust then drowns him in delusion.

tasmāttvamindriyāṅyādau

niyamyā bharatarṣabha ।

pāpmānaṁ prajahi hyenaṁ

jñānavijñānanāśanam ॥

41

Arjuna! First, gain control over your senses. Renounce desire, which, with its sinful nature destroys knowledge and judgment.

indriyāṅi parāṅyāhuḥ

indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ ।

manasastu parā buddhiḥ

yo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ ॥

42

Sense organs are superior to the gross physical body. Mind is superior to the sense organs. A steady intellect is superior to the mind. Soul, as witness, stands apart from the intellect. It is the same as the Supreme Soul.

evaṁ buddheḥ paraṁ buddhvā

saṁstabhyātmānamātmanā ।

jahi śatruṃ mahābāho

kāmarūpaṃ durāsadam ॥

43

With the help of a determined intellect, gain control over your mind. Experience the presence of the indwelling witness, the soul. Gain victory over lustful desire, an enemy difficult to conquer.

॥ iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre

Śrīkṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde

karma yogo nāma tṛtīyo'dhyāyaḥ ॥