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तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे
कर्मयोगो नाम तृतीयोऽध्यायः ॥ ३ ॥

Om

*tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyām yogasāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde
karmayogo nāma tṛtīyo'dhyāyaḥ*

Thus in the **Upaniṣad** of the **Bhagavad Gītā** sung by the Lord, the Science of Brahma, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, ends the third discourse entitled **Karma Yoga, or The Yoga of Action.**



SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE

Karma Yoga Yoga of Action

Lord Kṛṣṇa explained two paths to Arjuna:

Jñāna Yoga (Yoga of steady wisdom) and **Karma Yoga** (Yoga of action).

After listening, Arjuna thought that **Jñāna Yoga** is the superior path for self-enlightenment. Therefore Arjuna questions Kṛṣṇa:

Why are you telling me to engage in the terrible action of fighting? (Verse 1)

Arjuna could not decide which path would be the most direct approach to Self-realization. He requests the Lord to tell him one path by which he can achieve the infinite, eternal God. (Verse 2)

The Lord said that the two-fold path of Self-development is prescribed for the two types of aspirants:

1. Those who have attained the contemplative state may practice **Jñāna Yoga**
2. Those who have a mind active in the world may practice **Karma Yoga** as a direct path for Self- development. (Verse 3)

As long as the ego of doership is not renounced one cannot attain the state of actionlessness by non-performance of action. One the other hand, by merely renouncing action one does not achieve knowledge of the Self. (Verse 4)

The mind-body complex is constituted by the three *guṇas*. The *guṇas* are always active. Therefore, no living being can live without performing action: be it voluntary or involuntary, deliberate or by instinct. As long as one is under the influence of the *guṇas*, one is helplessly forced to act. (Verse 5)

One who controls the organs of perception and action by force, but whose mind continues to dwell in the memory of pleasure derived from sense objects is deluded and is called a hypocrite. (Verse 6)

Arjuna, the mind should control the senses by controlling desires. The organs of action should be engaged in selfless service, without attachment to the action and its fruit. One who performs **Karma Yoga** in this way is superior to all. (Verse 7)

Therefore you should perform your obligatory duties. Without performing action, you will not even be able to maintain your existence. Renouncing action is not desirable. (Verse 8)

Except for those actions that are performed as sacrifice or selfless service, actions performed with ego, attachment, and desire create bondage of the soul. Therefore Arjuna, you should perform acts free from attachment and for the sake of sacrifice only. (Verse 9)

The Lord of Creation, Brahmā, created humankind with the spirit of self-dedicated activity. Human beings are the superior incarnation among all creatures and are therefore qualified to perform *yajña* according to their allotted duties in the world. By so doing, they will continue to prosper and all their desires will be fulfilled. (Verse 10)

The gods are elemental forces. They are nourished when humanity obeys and serves the natural laws as a duty, without self-interest. In return, humankind is nourished by nature. (Verse 11)

When nourished, the elemental forces of nature fulfill all needs. The person who enjoys the gifts of nature and doesn't serve nature is verily a thief. (Verse 12)

Those virtuous people who perform selfless service as a duty and receive their share as a leftover of sacrifice, who do not hoard or misuse the gifts of nature, they are freed from all sins. Those who work only for their selfish reasons and do not work for the benefit of humanity, they accrue sins. (Verse 13)

The sun and the water element sacrifice for the evolution of creation. All creatures are born from food. Rain makes the earth productive so that food is created. The rain is caused by the heat of the sun in combination with the water element, which evaporates under that heat, turns into clouds, and rains down onto the earth. Thus the sun and the water element sacrifice so that the creation may evolve. Sacrifice or productive action is born of right action. (Verse 14)

Right action arises from Brahmā, the creator. Brahmā comes from the imperishable supreme. Therefore the all-pervading Supreme ever rests in sacrifice or productive action. (Verse 15)

Arjuna, if a person ignores virtuous action, indulges in sensual action, chooses non-performance of prescribed duties, which is a wrong path of action, it creates disharmony in the flow of the wheel of action. Such a person is living in sin and in vain. (Verse 16)

But the person who is absorbed in taking delight in the

Self, and who is satisfied and contented in the Self alone, is freed from desire and morbid feelings. Such a yogi is not bound by duty to perform. (Verse 17)

The yogi who has no self-interest does not think of gaining from performing action or of losing from not performing action; nor can that yogi have a selfish dependency on any being whatsoever. (Verse 18)

Therefore, according to one's social status, nature, and stage in life, one should perform one's obligatory duties perfectly without attachment. By working in this way, with the spirit of **Karma Yoga**, one achieves Self-realization. (Verse 19)

King Janaka, Aṣvapati, and others attained Self-realization by performing right action in a spirit of self-dedication and nonattachment. (Verse 20)

A wise person who is known for virtuous and noble actions becomes a model for common people. They follow the footsteps of that wise person with faith and devotion. (Verse 21)

For Lord Kṛṣṇa, there is nothing else to be attained neither on earth nor in all three worlds. Lord Kṛṣṇa has achieved the highest goal of life and yet is engaged in selfless service for the interest of world order. He uses Himself as an example for Arjuna. (Verse 22)

Lord Kṛṣṇa warns Arjuna by saying, If I would not continue to work persistently and efficiently, then the mass of people would do nothing and would trap themselves in idleness and inactivity. (Verse 23)

If I do not perform action, these worlds will perish. In the absence of a right model to follow, the worlds will perish in both the social and psychological level. (Verse 24)

Arjuna, worldly-minded people work in the world with enthusiasm and great interest completely attached to the action and its fruit. Due to their selfish motives, they work thoroughly and diligently to achieve their goals. Similarly, a wise person should work without any attachment to achieve a personal goal, but with enthusiasm and sincerity, simply wishing the welfare of the world. (Verse 25)

A wise person should not confuse a common person by intellectual teachings and deep philosophies, but should, by example, guide the common person slowly and steadily in the right direction. (Verse 26)

The person of low understanding, whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks, 'I am the performer of all actions,' and thus gets attached to them. The wise person understands that all actions are done by the modes of *prakṛti*. (Verse 27)

Arjuna, the wise person sees that action is created when the *guṇas*, in the form of the senses, are engaged with sense objects, which are also constituted by the *guṇas*. This unity of senses and objects, or *guṇas* engaging with *guṇas*, creates action in people. The knower of this truth remains unattached to action. (Verse 28)

The wise should not confuse the ignorant, who are attached to the *guṇas* and action, by explaining the knowledge of the Self to them. It will only cause them to give up their worldly duties. (Verse 29)

When all selfish action is renounced, and the mind is centered in the Self without any attachment to action or expectation of the fruit of action, the mind will be freed from the morbid feelings of hope and possessiveness. The mental fever of the pairs of opposites like love-hate, joy-sorrow, pleasure-pain, and attraction-repulsion will also subside. Then the seeker of the truth is ready to fight. (Verse 30)

The people who pursue these teachings in their practical application in day-to-day life, with faith and without caviling, will be freed from the bondage of the world, which is rooted in action performed through desire and attachment. (Verse 31)

Contrary to this is the person who finds fault in the path of **Karma Yoga** and doesn't understand its teachings. By rejecting the **Karma Yoga** philosophy the person gets trapped in egocentric desire and attachment, and loses discrimination. Such a senseless person is doomed to destruction. (Verse 32)

All living beings are pulled and guided to act according to their latencies which are active. Even the enlightened person acts by the force of *prārabdha saṁskāra*. Therefore nothing is accomplished by restraining nature-born qualities. (Verse 33)

One should stay away from both attachment to and aversion for sense objects. Their impulses deceive and trap one in pleasure and pain. Attachment and aversion are enemies of an aspirant because they block the path of redemption. (Verse 34)

One should perform one's duty according to one's nature-born qualities even though it has less merit than someone else's duty. In performing one's own duty, there will be no mental resistance and the result will be peace and harmony. If one performs another's duty, even if that duty is full of merit, there will be mental resistance and disharmony. It is better to live and die performing one's own duty than to do someone else's duty. Another's duty, contrary to one's nature, will bring fear. (Verse 35)

By what impulse is a person compelled to commit sin as if pulled by some irresistible force? (Verse 36)

In this world of activity, it is desire for the world and the anger that is created when desire is not fulfilled that compels one to sin. Desire and anger are the greatest enemies because they block the path to liberation and keep the individual in bondage. (Verse 37)

Desire obscures the divine presence within us, like fire is enveloped by smoke, a mirror is covered by dust, or a fetus is enclosed in the womb. (Verse 38)

Desires are never eliminated by the enjoyment of objects. It is just like fire that gets stronger as more fuel is fed to it. Arjuna, wisdom is obscured by such desire, which is the enemy of the wise. (Verse 39)

Desire deludes the individual self into identifying with the mind-body complex by enveloping wisdom with the senses, the mind, and intellect. (Verse 40)

Arjuna, you must first control the senses because desire expresses itself first by occupying the senses. Knowledge and wisdom are destroyed when, through the senses, desire deludes the mind, intellect, and the embodied soul. (Verse 41)

In the gross body, the senses are said to be superior. Superior to the senses is the mind because it controls the senses. Superior to the mind is the intellect because it can discriminate between the real and unreal. Superior to the intellect is the Self because it is the conscious principle in the intellect. (Verse 42)

Therefore Arjuna, know the Self which is superior to all, and by this knowledge of the Self, control the senses, mind, and intellect; conquer the enemy, which is fighting in a form of desire and very hard to conquer. (Verse 43)