

Karma – Essence of the third chapter of Bhagavat Gita

The title of every chapter in Gita indicates the topic of the chapter. The word yoga in the title of the chapter means topic. The third chapter is Karma-Yoga that means the topic of the chapter is Karma, action.

In first two verses Arjuna raised two questions that why should he perform an action, that is waging war which is very cruel actions since thousands of the warriors are going to die and what is *shrey*, ultimate good for him that is moksha, liberation for him – action or knowledge. (3.1, 2)

Instead answering the question directly the Lord begins with the unfoldment of two life-styles Karma-yoga - what is karma and it is for whom actions are and JNana-yoga, what knowledge is and it is for whom. In the beginning of the creation He taught two life-styles for human being. On who still sees the purpose of the action in the life, it is better to perform actions as a duty. But one who has seen the futility of the actions renounces the actions and accepts the life of renunciation for acquiring knowledge of the truth. (3.3)

With this basic understanding of karma and knowledge the Lord takes off and starts to present the reasons for performing the actions and explains why it is not necessary for anyone to give up actions physically. **The Lord presentes four stand points – seekers of the truth, prAkRtas – who are busy in their day to day affairs, wise person and the Lord Himself.**

1. Lord KRSNa gave 4 reasons for the seekers of the truth for performing actions and not to give up actions at all.

1.1. Lord KRSNa says, Just by not performing action one cannot get the Naishkarmya-siddhi, actionlessness and also just by giving up karma, sannyAsa one cannot attain moksha, liberation. (3.4)

1.2. It is impossible for anyone to sit for a moment without performing any action because one is always impelled by one's own prakRti, svabhAva born of three guNa namely sattva, raja and tama to perform actions. (3.5)

1.3. Even if one gives up actions physically but keep building castles in the clouds due to being deluded by the objects of senses it would be mithyA-Achara, hypocrisy on his part. (3.6)

1.4. One needs to perform actions as per the call of the situation because without it, it would be possible to maintain/sustain the body or to live one's life. (3.8)

On the contrary it is better for one to continue to perform one's duties with the right attitude and by having a say over one's senses which is called karma-yoga (3.7). This can give one the purification of the mind to attain the self-knowledge.

2. Now Lord KRSNa talks about the reasons for all human beings, whether one is seeker or not. The people who are engaged in their day to day life activities they should also perform actions for following reasons.

2.1 The Lord says that except the actions those are carried out with attitude of an offering to the Lord, (YajNa-karma) all other actions are binding in nature. It means those actions become the cause for new birth. Therefore being free from all kinds of the attachments may you perform all actions as an offering to the Lord. (3.9) Even in the beginning of the creation along with the human being Prajapati Brahmaji created this yajNa. Then He said that let this yajNa be a ishTa-kAmadhuk, wish fulfilling cow for all of you and may you all prosper by this yajNa. (3.10) You propitiate devtas, deities with this yajNa and they will bring peace, pleasure and prosperity in your life. By this you can gain shreya, ultimate good in your life. (3.11) And also the enjoyment of the result of the actions after offering would release him from all kinds of the sins. But suppose one does not offer after gaining the results of one's action and enjoys oneself he is not eating food but eating only sins and he is a thief. (3.12, 13)

In simple words whatever we do or enjoy, we should offer it to the Lord. That means all our actions are yajNa, the offering to the Lord. We should appreciate the Lord in all our actions and while enjoying the result of the actions.

2.2 **Now Lord talks about very broad vision, which includes entire Universe.** It is called Universal-yajNa or Jagat-chakra. We are not only the beneficiary of the universe but we are the part of the universe.

So Lord KRSNa says that all beings are born of the food, the food is due to the rains, the rains is because of the yajNa, yajNa is born from karma, (3.14) karma is from Vedas and Vedas are from Aksharam Brahman, the Lord. Therefore this all-pervasive Brahman is always in the yajNa. (3.15) further Bhagvan says one who does not follow this jagat-chakra; one who does not participate in this universal-yajNa his life itself is pApa, sin and he is indulging in the sensory satisfaction so his human life is in vain. (3.16)

The message here is that one should perform yajNa in his life all the time. Here the yajNa means one's life should be such that it does not create any kind of the disturbance in the environment which includes nature, elements, and all other forms of lives. Even the pollution is also pApa from this standpoint. One needs to perform actions to participate in the sustenance and maintenance of the world. [That means we are not only the consumer of the world but the contributor in the world. As a contributor one needs to perform actions, fulfil his/her duties, no need to give up karma physically. More one contributes more mature he/she is.]

3. Now Lord takes the standpoint of the enlightened person. Suppose Arjuna thinks he has understood the true nature of the self, still he does need to give up action. Though the Lord says that one who is happy with oneself, one who reveals in the self and one who is satisfied with oneself does not need to perform any action. He is free from all kinds of the duties. (3.17) He does not have anything to gain from anyone in the entire universe therefore he does not have any purpose of the actions in his life neither he has purpose of not performing any action. (3.18) **Still Lord says he should perform actions for which Lord KRSNa gives four reasons. Let us see one by one all reasons for performing actions in the life; to be active in the life.**

3.1 In this reason there are two standpoints for performing actions. If Arjuna thinks he has understood the truth then for the welfare of the world he needs to keep performing actions and if he is not enlightened then to gain the purification of the mind; right kind of the mind to understand the true nature of the self he needs to continue the fulfilling his duties. (3.20)

3.2 In the life once person is grown he/she is a role model for someone in the family, school or society. Same way as an enlightened person, Arjuna is a role model for other seekers and as a warrior also being in the battle field he is the role model, archetype for other soldiers on both sides of the army. Because generally the people have a tendency to follow blindly what their role model is doing and they take their role model's actions as a pramANa, role model, authority or standard for what to do and what not to do. (3.21)

(Grand-parents, Parents, elder siblings, sister/brother and other family members are the role models, teachers and co-students in the school/college, for the welfare of the society, in the battle field for the warriors and in the spiritual world for the followers, the seekers and for the students one can be a role model)

3.3 Even for the desire to do welfare of the society wise person should continue to perform actions without any attachments to the action or the result of the actions, the same way as the ignorants are doing with the attachments. (3.25)

3.4 The fourth and the last reason to perform action for the wise person it is extremely important, especially in the life of any human being. The Lord says that being a role model or an enlightened person it becomes very responsible life and actions so lead such a life that it does not create any kind of the disbelief, confusion or conflict in the life and the mind of the children, the students, the followers, seekers and other ignorant people in the society. It should not hurt others Shraddha, faith, belief because whatsoever all human beings are living their life as per their Shraddha, faith, belief only. (3.26)

4. Finally Lord KRSNa is presenting Himself as an example for performing actions; not giving up actions at all, though he is actionlessness (non-doer and non-enjoyer, akartA-abhoktA). He takes both standpoints – from the standpoint of Himself and from the standpoint of the others who can make Him role model or follow him blindly.

- 4.1.** Lord says, “Look, Arjuna! I do not have any duties whatsoever in these three worlds, which can impel me to perform actions. Nor there is anything in three worlds which is not yet gained for my enjoyments, for which I need to perform actions, still I perform action, I am driving your chariot. See! I am your charioteer on your request.” (3.22)
- 4.2** Suppose I give up the actions and do not perform my duties due to my indifference (Atinidriya) towards the actions, the others would follow me and would fall from their responsibilities towards the family, society and the world. (3.23) As a consequence I would be the cause or responsible for creating confusion in the society (varNa-sankara) regarding one’s duties. In this way I would be responsible for the destruction of the people because they are being moved away from their duties. When one is not performing his/her duties he/she would indulge in the sense-objects. And sometimes for desired objects they would cross the Dharma. If there is no dharma in the society it would lead to the destruction of the humanity. So I would be the responsible for the destruction of the people. (3.24)