

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

BHAGAVAD GEETA – 3

Karma Yoga - The Yoga of Action

“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”

**TEXT
28.03**

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA





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List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:

Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT	Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT
1	<i>Sadhana Panchakam</i>	24	<i>Hanuman Chalisa</i>
2	<i>Tattwa Bodha</i>	25	<i>Vakya Vritti</i>
3	<i>Atma Bodha</i>	26	<i>Advaita Makaranda</i>
4	<i>Bhaja Govindam</i>	27	<i>Kaivalya Upanishad</i>
5	<i>Manisha Panchakam</i>	28.03	<i>Bhagavad Geeta (Discourse 3)</i>
6	<i>Forgive Me</i>	29	<i>Mundaka Upanishad</i>
7	<i>Upadesha Sara</i>	30	<i>Amritabindu Upanishad</i>
8	<i>Prashna Upanishad</i>	31	<i>Mukunda Mala (Bhakti Text)</i>
9	<i>Dhanyashtakam</i>	32	<i>Tapovan Shatkam</i>
10	<i>Bodha Sara</i>	33	<i>The Mahavakyas, Panchadasi 5</i>
11	<i>Viveka Choodamani</i>	34	<i>Aitareya Upanishad</i>
12	<i>Jnana Sara</i>	35	<i>Narada Bhakti Sutras</i>
13	<i>Drig-Drishya Viveka</i>	36	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>
14	<i>"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6</i>	37	<i>Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)</i>
15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
16	<i>"Bhoomaiva Sukham" Chand Up 7</i>	39	<i>Aparoksha Anubhuti (Meditation)</i>
17	<i>Manah Shodhanam</i>	40	<i>108 Names of Pujya Gurudev</i>
18	<i>"Nataka Deepa" – Panchadasi 10</i>	41	<i>Mandukya Upanishad</i>
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20	<i>Katha Upanishad</i>	43	<i>Shad Darshanaah</i>
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23	<i>Mahabharata + Geeta Dhyanam</i>	46	<i>Chinmaya Pledge</i>

A NOTE ABOUT SANDEEPANY

Sandeepany Sadhanalaya is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramacharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– The Author, 21st March 2019, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Jayanti

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text
28.03



कर्मयोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA – 3

“Karma Yoga – the Yoga of Action”

Sri Veda Vyasaji

Reflections

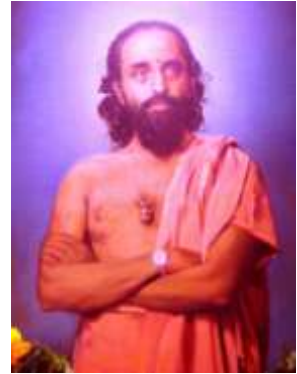
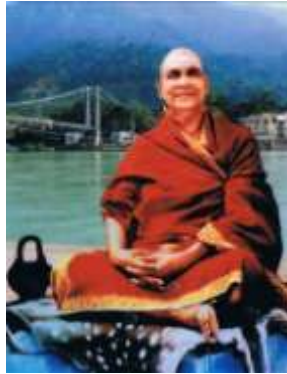
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on the 21 Lectures delivered by **Swami Advayanandaji**

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Adi Shankaracharya

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Personal Dedication

1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan

who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;

2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj

the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;

3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)

for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;

4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji

my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

BHAGAVAD GEETA – 3

“Karma Yoga – the Yoga of Action”

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

अथ तृतीयोऽध्यायः

कर्मयोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA

Discourse – 3 (43 Verses)

“Karma Yoga – the Yoga of ACTION”

WE ENDED CHAPTER 2 on a note which greatly praises the man of steady wisdom. The goal of God-realisation is said to be attainable only by one who has quietened his mind and attained peace. The heights of Saankhya Yoga were being proclaimed by Sri Krishna.

This seemed to be very attractive to Arjuna. His own bent of mind at that juncture was to turn away from the battlefield. He did not wish to engage in this bloody war with his Guru and elderly relatives. So it would suit him perfectly to follow the path of knowledge leading to peace of mind, stillness and realization of God. Arjuna seems to have developed a leaning towards the meditative life, no doubt only because it gives him an opportunity to avoid engaging himself in battle.

However, in the course of Sri Krishna’s advice to him, He has also praised the path of action or Karma Yoga to the hilt. He has spoken eloquently of the path and exhorted Arjuna to “*get up and fight*”, meaning to do his duty as a warrior. This is what has caused some confusion in Arjuna. Sri Krishna seems to be praising both the paths equally. Yet He is asking Arjuna to follow only one of them – namely, Karma Yoga. And this involves Arjuna to take up his bow – which he is very reluctant to do.

Discourse 3 thus begins an elaborate discussion on the value of Karma Yoga. It brings up the topic not only from a spiritual perspective, but even from the secular perspective. Lord Krishna shows the great benefit of action among the pursuits of man. He shows how man’s actions fit into the cosmic scheme of providing nourishment for the whole society. He also shows how this contribution of man can be done in such a way that it does not hamper his spiritual progress but can actually contribute towards it.

There is no clash between the activities of man and his spiritual welfare. The two can go hand in hand. This is what the Yoga of Action teaches.



BHAGAVAD GEETA – 3
“Karma Yoga – the Yoga of ACTION”

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3.1 KARMA YOGA vs. SAANKHYA YOGA

(Verses 1-3, 3 No.)

ARJUNA, THE STUDENT, is making bold to question his Master, Sri Krishna, about a confusion that has arisen in his mind. Before we discuss the question, we note that the dialogue process in itself has a lesson to teach us. We see in it the greatness of the Indian spiritual tradition which permits such wholesome questioning from the disciple. The disciple is never asked to suppress his intellect. The Indian spiritual Masters are sworn to a system which respects the intellect and they will never bypass it and demand an unquestioning obedience.

In the words of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji, “The Vedantic philosophy of India is taught to the student during an intimate and free discussion between the teacher and the taught. In no other religion in the world do we find so much freedom allowed to the disciple to ask freely, to openly contradict, and to argue with his teachers.”

Verse 1: *Arjuna's Question: Which of the Two?*

अर्जुन उवाच ।
ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन ।
तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव ॥ ३-१॥
arjuna uvāca |
jyāyasī cētkarmaṇastē matā buddhirjanārdana |
tatkiṁ karmaṇi ghōrē māṁ niyōjayasi kēśava ॥ 3-1॥

	<i>Arjuna Uvaacha:</i>	<i>Arjuna said:</i>
1	<i>Jyaayasi chet karmanah te</i>	<i>As being superior to action – if You</i>
2	<i>mataa buddhih janaardana;</i>	<i>think that knowledge is so, O Janardana,</i>
3	<i>tat kim karmani ghore maam</i>	<i>then why, in this <u>terrible action</u>, am I</i>
4	<i>niyodayasi, Keshava?</i>	<i>being <u>pushed into</u> by You, O Keshava?</i>

Circumstances of Arjuna's Question

1-2 Two distinct and apparently contradictory paths are placed before Arjuna. Both are being praised in glowing terms by Sri Krishna.

However, it is significant to note that the contradiction of the paths appears only to Arjuna. The Lord does not see them in that light. At no point in Chapter 2 did Sri Krishna say that Saankhya Yoga was better than Karma Yoga. He only praised both when he spoke of them in turn. How did Arjuna then get the idea of one being superior to the other?

Every teacher praises what he is currently speaking about, so that he holds the attention of his student. Sri Krishna has done the same. The cause of the dilemma,

therefore, rests largely in Arjuna's mind. He still has a leaning towards shirking his duty and wriggling himself out of this battle, although Sri Krishna has told him clearly to engage in it.

Sri Veda Vyasa has his own poetic way of expressing the situation. He makes Arjuna address Sri Krishna twice in the same verse. It's the poet's way of showing the perplexity in Arjuna's mind. If we go a little deeper into the two words used to address Sri Krishna, we find that they mean two opposite things! **Janardana** has a root which means "one who brings pain to people." This is how the Gopis felt when Sri Krishna was going to leave them and go to Dwarika. The other word, **Keshava**, means "one who protects and comforts". They are as opposite as the two paths in his question appear to be to Arjuna. Indeed, this point stands as a tribute to the poet in Vyasaji.

3 Kim: Arjuna's "Why?" is a very slanted one – tilted towards his personal taste rather than a desire to know the truth. This is not alarming to us. Arjuna has only just been introduced to the spiritual path, and his reaction is quite understandable. If he was a perfect student, the Geeta could well have ended with the last chapter.

To show his inner preference for the 'meditative path' and aversion for the 'path of battle' Arjuna describes the imminent battle with the word **Ghore**, meaning "abominable, painful, terrible, violent, unbecoming, etc." Even now he is hoping that Krishna would change His advice to him.

4 But Arjuna is given no choice: the Lord has decided the path for him – he is being asked to do what he still has an inclination to dislike. The delusion has not been totally overcome, although it has been greatly contained by Sri Krishna's teaching so far.

The word **Niyojayasi** also is very appropriate to the situation of Arjuna. The word suggests Arjuna is being "propelled, engaged, pushed" into performing a violent duty.

In theory Sri Krishna glorifies Saankhya Yoga, the path of knowledge; but in practice He is all praise for the path of Action or Karma Yoga. Theory and practice often appear different in the eyes of a student, until understanding ripens.

For all these reasons Arjuna asks Sri Krishna to clarify what he is to do. It is a perfectly legitimate question from Arjuna's standpoint, and one that he has well thought out. The question in effect is directly responsible for adding the next three chapters to the *Geeta*. It is most likely that Arjuna's question springs from the embers of his own delusion which made him 'cast his bow to the ground' and say, "I will not fight!"

Verse 2: Krishna's Perplexing Speech

व्यामिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे ।

तदेकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम्

॥ ३-२॥

vyāmiśrēṇēva vākyaṇa buddhiṁ mōhayasīva mē |

tadēkaṁ vada niścitya yēna śrēyō:'hamāpnuyām

|| 3-2||

1	<i>Vyaamishrena iva vaakyena</i>	<i>With this apparently perplexing speech</i>
2	<i>buddhim mohayasi iva me;</i>	<i>You confuse, as it were, my understanding;</i>
3	<i>tat ekam vada nishchitya</i>	<i>therefore, tell me for certain that one way</i>
4	<i>yena shreyah aham aapnuyam.</i>	<i>by which I may attain the Highest good.</i>

Why is Arjuna Perplexed?

1-2 To us it may appear that Arjuna is here suggesting that Sri Krishna is the cause of the confusion in his mind. It is as though he is saying, “O Krishna, why are you confusing me by praising everything that You say? Tell me one thing only; please do not confuse me.”

But it would be very uncharitable to Arjuna for us to lay this charge on him. He is genuinely not certain about which path to follow. He certainly sees two options in front of him and, in his eyes, they are opposed to each other.

There is a lot of respect in Arjuna for Sri Krishna. He uses the respectful term *Iva* twice. It means “as it were”; Arjuna does not mean to blame Sri Krishna nor is he being harsh in any way, and certainly he does not intend to be rude. Rather than showing up Sri Krishna as an ineffective Teacher, he is telling Him of his own inability to understand Him.

3 Arjuna is asking this question purely to gain clarity for himself as to what he should do. He does not grasp yet that he himself is responsible for the advice to do Karma Yoga, rather than to meditate. It is clear that Arjuna has not understood how Karma Yoga and Saankhya Yoga are connected to each other. The two come through to him as two separate paths.

4 Here we get a hint that Arjuna’s attraction for the path of Saankhya Yoga could also be genuine, and not just due to avoiding the battle. He has asked Krishna to tell him what is good for him, not what is pleasurable. That means, Arjuna already wishes to choose Sreyas (the path of good) rather than Preyas (the path of pleasure). There is a deep sincerity in Arjuna which is drawing him to the Highest goal, regardless of which path he is required to follow. This must have greatly encouraged Sri Krishna, the Teacher.

Finally the question shows how attentively Arjuna has been listening to Sri Krishna. He has been carried away by Sri Krishna’s words. At least we know now that Chapter 2 has not fallen on deaf ears. The teaching in it has set the ultimate Goal in Arjuna’s mind. Now, only the means to it remains to be clarified.

An Anecdote: Acharyaji closed this verse with a humorous anecdote. Laurel and Hardy were two famous British comedians of the 1940’s. They had just enlisted for the Army. They were doing their first drill practice. The drillmaster said, “Turn Left”; they followed the instruction. Then he said, “Turn Right”; they changed direction. Then it was “Turn Left” again, and “Turn Right” once more. This was too much for Hardy to take. He went up to the leader and said, “Please *think* before you tell!”

That is how Arjuna must have felt with Krishna’s words in the last Chapter. He has been shown two great things. He wants only one.

Verse 3: *The Lord Clarifies Himself*

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मया नघ ।
ज्ञानयोगेन साङ्ख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम्

॥ ३-३॥

śrībhagavānuvāca |
lōkē'smin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā prōktā mayānagha |
jñānayōgēna sāṅkhyānām karmayōgēna yōginām

|| 3-3||

	<i>Shree Bhagavaan Uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>Loke asmin dvividhaa nishthaa</i>	<i>In this world there is a twofold path</i>
2	<i>puraa proktaa mayaa anagha;</i>	<i>as I have said before, O sinless one:</i>
3	<i>jnaana-yogena saankhya-naam</i>	<i>the path of <u>knowledge</u> of the Saankhyans,</i>
4	<i>karma-yogena yogi-naam.</i>	<i>and the path of <u>action</u> of the Yogins.</i>

The Blessed Lord does not deny the charge altogether. He agrees that He has advanced both the paths. He takes up Arjuna's question seriously, and begins an in-depth explanation of why He had asked Arjuna to get ready for action even though Saankhya Yoga was first presented to tell him about the ultimate goal he was to strive for.

1-2 The paths are being presented before Arjuna from basic principles. The whole universe operates along the lines of these two paths. First we need to obtain the knowledge about the thing towards which we are aiming, whether that is a spiritual goal or a secular goal. The relevant knowledge has to be obtained. Then the action to make it happen needs to be done. A building plan alone is not sufficient. A contractor needs to be engaged to bring the plan into action so that it materializes.

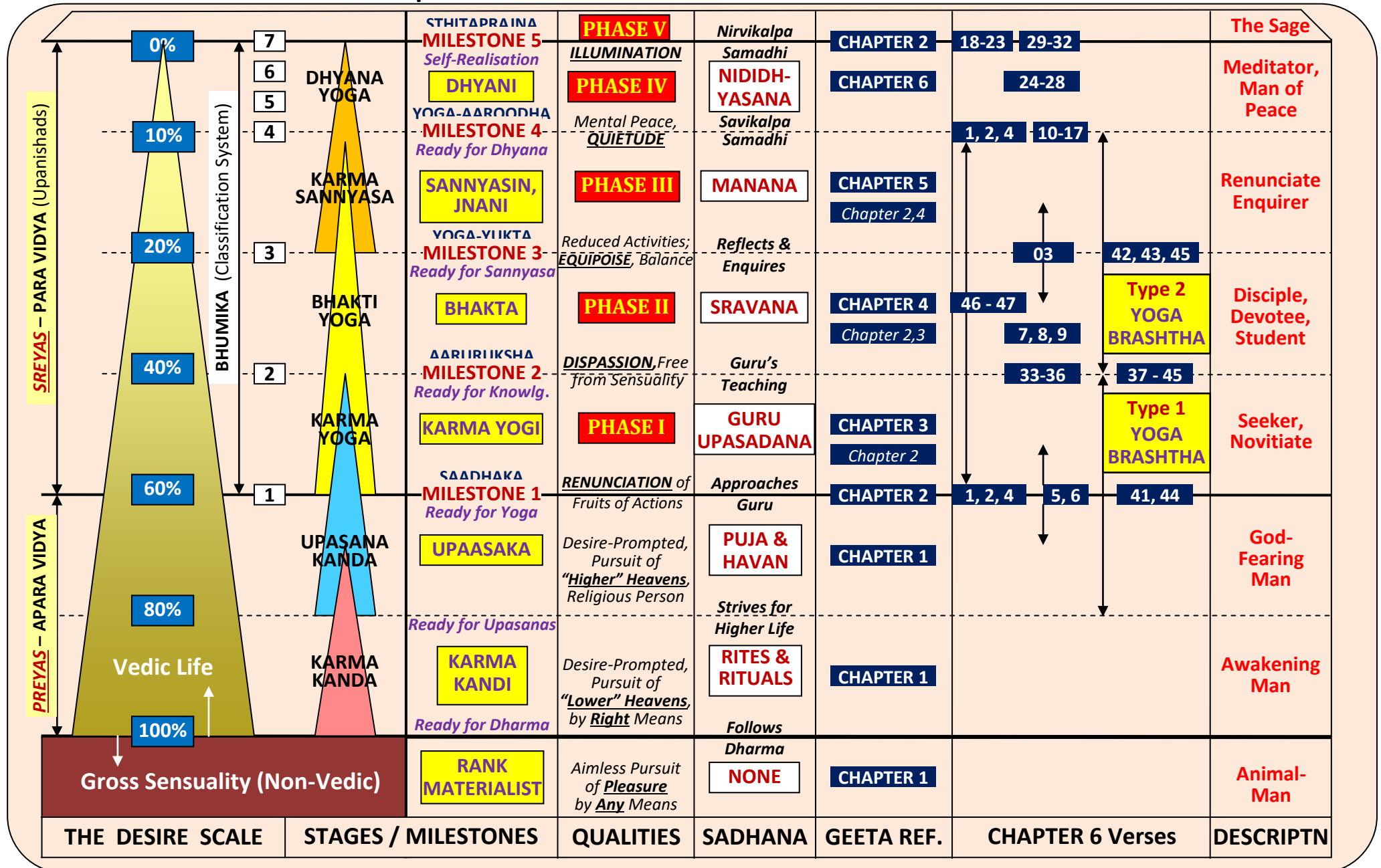
3 In Yoga the same principle applies. In the Geeta, both these paths are spoken of. Firstly, the knowledge of the Self or Brahma Vidya has to be obtained from the Upanishads. We need to know about the Self before we can start any Sadhana to attain It. This is what Lord Krishna did at the very outset from verse 2.11. This is the knowledge of the Saankhyans.

4 Then, from verse 2.39, the practical means to attain the Goal is spoken about. Lord Krishna gives the gist of Karma Yoga, by which the purification process is begun and which eventually takes the seeker to the realization of the Self. This is the path of the Yogins.

Theory and Practice – this is the twin method of making the spiritual journey. More about how the two are related is spoken of in the next few verses.



BHAGAVAD GEETA: Chapters 1 – 6 SUMMARY – The Individual's Progress in Sadhana Verses 1-47



3.2 FROM THE MICROCOSMIC PERSPECTIVE

(Verses 4-9, 6 No.)

ONE'S SWADHARMA OR duty in life has an individual impact as well as a universal impact. In the next five verses Sri Krishna answers the above question from the individual's perspective, that is, the microcosmic or **Vyashti** level.

Verse 4: *Two Misconceptions Cleared*

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।
न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥ ३-४॥
na karmanāmanārambhānnaiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo:'śnutē |
na ca saṁnyasanādēva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati ॥ 3-4॥

1	<i>Na karmanaam anaarambhaat</i>	<i>Neither by <u>non-performance</u> of actions</i>
2	<i>naishkarmyam purushah ashnute;</i>	<i>does a man reach "actionlessness";</i>
3	<i>na cha sannyasanaat eva</i>	<i>nor even through mere <u>Renunciation</u></i>
4	<i>siddhim samadhigacchati.</i>	<i>does he attain <u>perfection</u>.</i>

Sri Krishna begins His logically presented answer by first clearing two misconceptions that commonly exist among people who are new to the spiritual path. If these are Arjuna's misconceptions, leading him to ask his question, then the Lord may not need to go any further with the reply. The misconceptions usually arise in the seeker who is in too great a hurry to reach the top. He tries to "jump" the ladder. Is Arjuna guilty of this?

The two misconceptions are:

i) **The Actionless State:**

1-2 This state is dreamt of as one where actions are given up. It fascinates some seekers, especially those who are lazy to perform actions! The Lord warns such people that just by stopping **Activity**, one does not attain the actionless state. It is not as easy as that. The true "actionless state" is more to do with one's mental attitude of detachment than physically giving up actions.

In the latter part of Chapter 2, it is the message of non-attachment that occupied the Lord's attention. The man of steady wisdom is essentially one who is not attached – to his actions, to people, to objects, to everything 'external' to the Self. That detachment is something rare to attain; it is certainly not obtained merely by not doing any actions.

ii) **The State of Perfection:**

3-4 The other fascination people generally have is for meditation. Because it is so highly praised, people wish to get into it quickly and believe that it will somehow give them

the Divine vision, the state of being always in a God-intoxicated state. This state is somehow associated with being free from all stress, anxiety, fear, etc, and therefore it is a very covetable state.

As covetable as it may be, the warning here is that it is not reached merely by taking the vow of **Sannyasa**, i.e. a formal renunciation of all duties towards the world. Such a short cut is no solution at all to the problem of stress that besets us. If it was a solution, then the world will be full of Sannyasins!

Thus the second warning the Lord gives is not to prematurely take to Sannyasa. If one does so, without having prepared one's mind for it, he will encounter massive conflict within himself as well as a rejection from the community he lives in.

Whilst meditation for short periods may have some benefits to anyone who practices it, the practice of sitting for long periods in this way without the commensurate mental detachment is ill-advised. It invariably becomes a means to escape from doing any work and is definitely not recommended by the Lord. The Lord forewarns aspirants strongly against this kind of escapism from reality.

Verse 5 *Physical Action is Unavoidable*

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।

कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः

॥ ३-५॥

na hi kaścitkṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt |

kāryatē hyavaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ

|| 3-5||

1	<i>Na hi kashchit kshanam api</i>	<i>Indeed, not anyone, even for a moment,</i>
2	<i>jaatu tishthati akarma-krit;</i>	<i>can remain in a state of Actionlessness;</i>
3	<i>kaaryate hi avashah karma</i>	<i>for we are <u>helplessly</u> made to act,</i>
4	<i>sarva prakriti-jaih gunaih.</i>	<i>all of us, by the <u>Gunas</u>, the qualities born of Nature.</i>

The Divine Teacher patiently drives the point home – that Actionlessness is not an option over doing actions. It is not a superficial, physical state of giving up actions, but an internal attitude of mind. In this way, great emphasis is placed on laying the proper foundation to build up Arjuna's spiritual life. All misconceptions must be rooted out. Hence, a verse is taken just to guide the student away from this most common pitfall.

Actions Cannot be Avoided

1-2 The very first Pada emphasizes this three times! The word **Na** ("not") is meant to be taken for each word as follows: **Na Kaschid**, "Not anyone"; **Na Kshanam**, "not for a moment"; and **Na Jaatu**, "not in any state". In other words, not under any circumstances can we avoid actions. Nature will compel us to act. It is how we are made. In fact, even *not doing* anything is an action!

Thus Arjuna should once and for all forget about avoiding his calling in the battlefield. He cannot escape from it; and, with Sri Krishna as his guide, he will not even be allowed to!

The Nature of Action

3-4 The word used for Nature here is 'Prakriti', which contains the 'kr' Dhatu meaning "to act". This is a deliberate choice to emphasise that the activity is unavoidable. There are other words for Nature, such as Maya, Pradhan and Avidya, but they do not convey the idea of actions; they convey other ideas about Nature.

It is Nature's plan that all beings have to physically engage in some activity as per their nature. That activity cannot be abandoned. Even when the aspirant is ready for deep meditation, his activity may be reduced greatly, but not abandoned totally.

In the case of sages who have realized God, we find that in many cases their work actually becomes more intense than before, as their egolessness allows a greater flow of cosmic energy through them, to carry out the work of raising spiritual awareness among mankind. This is a divine calling, not an ego-driven activity.

The Core Teaching on Action – Paraphrased

The *Bhagavad Geeta* is not telling us to ACT, but HOW to act. What we need to learn is HOW to act. That is the *Geeta's* teaching. There is no need for the *Geeta* to tell us to act – for, even without the *Geeta*, we all are compelled by Nature to act.

Arjuna is being taught not to get disenchanted with his own aspect of the Path, however fascinating other aspects of the *same* Path may be.

Sri Krishna's message to Arjuna is emphatic: "It is not so easy to attain the actionless state and spend long hours in meditation. Actionlessness is not literally doing no actions. It really means having no desire, no Vasanas. It goes very deep. Think of this, Arjuna. Give up your fascination for the high goal of reaching Brahman via a short-cut. Prepare yourself well. That is what I have in mind for you. That is why for YOU, I am advising Karma Yoga. Your time to meditate will come later. Beware of the dangers of just giving up your duties; it will surely lead you to laziness and more Tamas!"

It is easy to give up outer actions – and sleep most of the time! That is a big pitfall for beginners who prematurely aim too high. First we have to develop clarity and purity to a great extent and only then can we take to these more subtle practices.

The prerequisite for meditation is to have *knowledge of the Self*. This is vital. Sri Krishna is saying, "Yes, Arjuna, I have shown you both paths. Arjuna, now you have to find out where you fit in. If you take the Saankhya Yoga path, then have you got what it takes to live up to it? It calls for severe austerity of the mind, the denial of sense attractions, a mind that is free to focus itself fully on the Goal. If you still have tendencies that will force you to action, as all Kshatriyas by nature have, then, Arjuna, you should go into Karma Yoga. My personal assessment of you is for you to do Karma Yoga."

Acharyaji gave us the example of a father telling his 8-year-old son: "Son, I want you to get into Medical College." The son gets very excited about this and says, "O Dad, I would love that. Can I start going there from tomorrow?" Dad hastily adds, "O no, son, you cannot just go there at once. I didn't mean you should abandon your schooling. Medical College will happen all in good time. Just keep it in mind for the future."

In the same manner, Sri Krishna is saying to Arjuna, "For now, just stick to Karma Yoga. Other Sadhanas will come to you in their own time. Write the entrance exam of Karma Yoga first and then we shall see about your meditation later."

Verse 6: *The Danger of Premature Meditation*

कर्मन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।

इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते

॥ ३-६॥

karmēndriyāṇi saṁyamya ya āstē manasā smaran |

indriyārthānvimūḍhātmā mithyācārah sa ucyatē

॥ 3-6॥

1	<i>Karmendriyaani samyamy</i>	<i>Merely <u>restricting</u> the organs of action,</i>
2	<i>yah aaste manasaa smaran;</i>	<i>he who sits, <u>thinking</u> in his mind</i>
3	<i>indriya-arthaan vimoodhaatmaa</i>	<i>of the sense objects, he of <u>deluded</u> mind,</i>
4	<i>mithyaachaarah sah uchyate.</i>	<i>is verily called a hypocrite.</i>

As a final warning to Arjuna, the Lord here openly declares what would happen if Arjuna becomes too hasty and starts to meditate without having the basic purity of mind, and without having the proper knowledge of the science of the Self which is needed to proceed in meditation confidently.

1-2 Sri Krishna does not mince His words. The result of impatience on the spiritual path can be devastating – and embarrassing, to say the least. Sitting still in meditation may be okay for the body, but what about the restless mind? It will surely start building castles in the air. It will start jumping about like a chained monkey. Sooner or later, it is going to explode and the person is going to rush about to satisfy his senses. This is worse than what he was in the first place. There will be a definite regression, not a progression, in his growth.

3 The message of the Lord is clear: “Do not be hasty. Go step by step along the path. Do not become a ‘**Moodhatma**’, Arjuna. You are just beginning this journey to the Self. Be patient and do what is needed at each stage of the journey. Then you will enjoy the trip and you will arrive safely at your destination.”

4 Sri Krishna’s remarks about the hypocritical person are not meant to condemn those genuine seekers on the spiritual path who go through the ups and downs of the spiritual path. The sincere seeker who tries his best to progress also has his share of facing certain peculiar challenges. He may not always succeed, but his failure comes under a different category to that spoken of in this verse. In spite of his failure, he progresses since he has a genuine desire and love for God, and is willing to do Karma Yoga and not shirk it. He makes the effort to lock or harness his energies from harmful dissipation. He therefore excels.

His success story is given in the following verse . . .

Verse 7: *The Successful Aspirant’s Approach*

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन ।

कर्मन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगमसक्तः स विशिष्यते

॥ ३-७॥

yastvindriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhatē:'rjuna |

karmēndriyaiḥ karmayōgamasaktaḥ sa viśiṣyatē

॥ 3-7॥

1	<i>Yah tu indriyaani manasaa</i>	<i>But whosoever, <u>with his mind</u>, begins to bring his senses under control, O Arjuna, and</i>
2	<i>niyamy aarabhate, Arjuna;</i>	
3	<i>karma-indriyaih karma-yogam</i>	<i>does Karma Yoga through his organs of action</i>
4	<i>asaktah sah vishishyate.</i>	<i>while remaining <u>unattached</u>, he indeed excels!</i>

This verse is in deliberate contrast to the previous one: From a person who was quiet outside but restless within, we now have one who is busily engaged in his duties outwardly, but gaining strength day by day inwardly, and excelling on the spiritual path. Sri Krishna always juxtaposes the opposites so that their differences are clearly seen.

3 Karma Yoga is intended to utilize the organs of action in such a way that they fulfill the spiritual purpose of having taken this human birth. The organs can be used either to plunge us into further bondage, or, through the two principles of Karma Yoga, to reduce our accumulated Karma and take us towards liberation of the soul.

In order to achieve the latter end, two basic disciplines are mentioned in this verse:

1-2 i) Niyamya: “correct use of senses”. One of the purposes served by Karma Yoga is to train the senses to perform their correct function. From the spiritual purpose of life, the senses are not meant to be used to indulge in sense pleasures for their sake alone. If they are allowed to do that, they will lead us outward and astray from our real nature.

Through Karma Yoga, we learn to offer all that we do to please God, not for our own pleasure. This is the **first principle** of Karma Yoga. This places a rein over the senses, i.e. we learn to control them from running freely, and convert every sense contact into an act of worship of the Lord. With time, this discipline gradually clears away all the latent desires in our subconscious being, and thereby prepares us for the higher-level of meditation.

4 ii) Asaktah: “Detachment”. The second purpose of Karma Yoga is to train the mind not to become attached to the world, but remain always detached from it. This detachment is intended to free us from dependence on the world for our happiness. We get attached to things only because we think they bring us happiness. This is not so; true happiness lies within us.

When we practise such detachment, with the above purpose in mind, it brings into play the **second principle** of Karma Yoga which is to accept as His Prasad whatever result comes due to our actions. This frees us from attachment to the results of actions.

Some Examples that Bring Karma Yoga into Perspective:

1. A parent may have the choice of sending his child to different schools, but once he has chosen the school, he has no choice over which standard his child should start from. That has to be A, B, C, D and so on, in graded sequence. The child cannot jump any standard.

The same applies to the spiritual path. One can choose any Guru or institution that offers help on the spiritual journey. But once that choice is made, one has to go step by step as advised by one’s Guru. There are no short-cuts on the spiritual path.

2. The spiritual path may be thought of as a long 20 km road, like the Mahatma Gandhi Road in all Indian cities. This major Road is so big that it has to be sub-divided into shorter sections, each of which may be called by a different name. Similarly, the main arterial road in spiritual life is Saankhya Yoga, but a large chunk of the first portion of this road is called Karma Yoga. The Karma Yoga Road is a part of the Saankhya Yoga Road!

3. In Mumbai, the small ‘auto cycles’ are allowed on most roads, but when one comes close to the city centre, beyond a certain point these autos are not permitted. Similarly, on the spiritual path, certain actions are allowed and necessary on part of the journey, but later on they have to be dropped. When they are dropped it is not a judgement against them; it is the requirement of the path.

4. Sri Krishna’s main class is meditation. However, He ensures that those who enter that class are thoroughly prepared. To be eligible for it, one needs a lot of purity to succeed in it. Today’s “Meditation Industry” may not have the patience to follow Sri Krishna’s method. However, that does not make Sri Krishna’s method invalid.

5. Pujya Gurudev used to make his whole class say this line, slowly for greater effect:

**ACTION-LESSNESS = DESIRE-LESSNESS =
VASANA-LESSNESS = IGNORANCE-LESSNESS**

With this detailed background, Sri Krishna gives the prescription for Arjuna . . .

Verse 8: “Perform Your Bounden Duty”

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः

॥ ३-८॥

niyataṁ kuru karma tvam karma jyāyō hyakarmaṇaḥ |

śārīrayātrāpi ca tē na prasiddhyēdakarmaṇaḥ

|| 3-8||

1	<i>Niyatam kuru karma tvam</i>	<i>You perform your <u>bounden duty</u>;</i>
2	<i>karma jyaayah hi akarmanah;</i>	<i>for <u>you</u>, <u>action</u> is superior to inaction;</i>
3	<i>shareera yaatraa api cha te</i>	<i>even the maintenance of your body</i>
4	<i>na prasiddhyet akarmanah.</i>	<i>would not be possible by inaction.</i>

Sri Krishna’s style of teaching is reminiscent of Rishi Angiras in the Mundaka Upanishad – both give more than the student asks for, and both start from first principles, not taking anything for granted in the student.

While on this subject Acharyaji noted two types of teachers: one commands and expects the disciple to follow through without needing an explanation; the other patiently explains the needful before proceeding further. Sri Krishna’s relationship with Arjuna is like the second type.

1 Tvam or “you” in this verse, refers to Arjuna, and in a broader sense to all those like him who are beginning the spiritual path. This prescription is for the overwhelming majority of mankind. All potential seekers need to begin at this point.

Niyatam Karma: This refers to all Nitya and Naimitika Karmas, that is, prescribed or approved daily and occasional duties. These should never be given up. They should be done, and done in the spirit of Karma Yoga, as described in Chapter 2. These actions can also be understood to mean actions which come to us naturally in life, ‘falling on our lap’, as it were.

2 Performing action in the right spirit brings about purity in one's nature. Something constructive is achieved through it. For someone like Arjuna, action is the preferred course. In comparison, inaction, which in this verse means inactivity due to prematurely abandoning one's duties, brings only a negative result. There is a laziness that creeps in very easily when we are not actively engaged. Nothing good comes out of it.

Most people are really not ready for meditation, however enthused they may be about it. There are many social reasons why people may wish to do meditation – one of them being “It is the ‘*in-thing*’ to do.” When the fad for meditation is put aside, the bottom line for most seekers is purification. That is their immediate need.

3-4 Sharira Yatra: “*the maintenance of the body*”. Inactivity due to laziness or wrongly understanding the ‘actionlessness’ of Yoga will result in neglect of the body. One is not able to maintain even his bodily health if he does not act. What to speak of the mind and intellect, which are even more easily ruined by disuse or misuse!

The message is for Arjuna to give up all foolish aversion for Karma Yoga, and take it up at once, realizing its value to him as a novice in spiritual life.

Verse 9: *Actions That Do Not Bind*

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर

॥ ३-९॥

yajñārthātkarmaṇō:'nyatra lōkō:'yaṁ karmabandhanah |

tadartham karma kauntēya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara

|| 3-9||

1	<i>Yajna arthaat karmanah anyatra</i>	<i>Other than actions performed for sacrifice,</i>
2	<i>lokaḥ ayam karma bandhanah;</i>	<i>the world is <u>bound by actions</u>;</i>
3	<i>tadartham karma, Kaunteya,</i>	<i>Do you, for That sake alone, O son of Kunti,</i>
4	<i>mukta sangah samaachara.</i>	<i>perform action, free from all attachment.</i>

The Lord concludes this section on the microcosmic viewpoint by repeating the essential point about Karma Yoga as outlined in verse 7 and 8.

1-2 The specific actions to be performed by a Karma Yogi are the acts of sacrifice. All other actions will lead us into bondage to the world. This statement, made at this point, links us to the next section which deals with the macrocosmic viewpoint of our actions. In the next section, much more light is thrown on what exactly are “acts of sacrifice”. In brief, our individual co-operation with the cosmos is the meaning of “sacrifice”.

The Lord here effectively dismisses a major misunderstanding that a spiritual seeker becomes a victim of. It is the misunderstanding that all actions lead one into bondage. This is not true. Only those actions that are desire-prompted and selfish in nature lead to bondage. Since these are so common among mankind, we get the impression that all actions are binding.

But here, Sri Krishna emphatically concludes by telling us that actions done as Karma Yoga, i.e. acts of sacrifice, do not bind us. On the contrary, they alone help us to extricate ourselves from bondage to the world. That is being made clear in this verse.

More on “Acts of Sacrifice”

The topic in this verse is quite clear – we are speaking of actions that bind and actions that do not bind. What is the difference between them?

i) **Actions that Bind:** We have to be clear what these are. Actions that are motivated by egocentric desires, namely, *Kamya Karma*, are certainly binding. Secondly, such actions, if they are fulfilled by unrighteous means, are even more binding. These are *Nishiddha Karma* or prohibited actions which are acts that cross the bounds of Dharma, such as stealing, killing for selfish motives, forcefully subjecting another person to do one’s will (such as sexual crimes), and so on. These bind us because they draw us deeper and deeper into association with the world of sense objects, enslaving us to external objects. More importantly, they taint our minds with sin-consciousness, which is very difficult to wash away.

ii) **Actions that Liberate:** These are clearly stated to be “acts of sacrifice”. What acts are these referring to? ‘Sacrifice’ means for the sake of pleasing the Lord. Hence those actions which are done for the sake of God, to please God, are considered as non-binding. ‘God’ here stands for any higher ideal, such as dedicating oneself to service of the needy with the feeling that they are forms of God; or dedicating oneself to the service of one’s country with a pure motive; or dedicating oneself to social reconstruction programmes.

3-4 In the Geeta, “acts of sacrifice” are defined as actions in which there is, i) **Yajna:** a spirit of self-sacrifice and no selfish motive; ii) **Dana:** a charitable aim that benefits society in general; and iii) **Tapas:** some degree of austerity in the action. These three define the acts which are the subject matter of the next section – acts done at the macrocosmic level.

The Story of Tansen:

Acharyaji recounted this inspiring story from the life of the musician Tansen. He was one of ‘nine gems’ in Akbar’s court. He was a brilliant musician. Akbar said, “You are the best.” Tansen humbly said, “I just play well. I am not the best.” Akbar said, “That is your modesty only.” Tansen disagreed, “No, O Emperor, my Guru is superior to me. You should hear him singing and you will believe me.”

Tansen took Akbar (who went in disguise) to Sant Haridas, the Guru of Tansen. He was in his simple temple, singing in ecstasy before the image of the Lord. Akbar himself got so carried away by the soul-stirring Bhajans being sung that Tansen had to tap him to bring him back to normal awareness. Akbar said to Tansen, “You are right. But you are his disciple. How is it that your singing is not the same?”

Tansen gave a beautiful reply: “I was singing for you; this saint, my Guru, is singing for God alone! Anything done for God will be the best. ”

Dedication of one’s actions to God makes one achieve heights which the ego of man cannot reach.



3.3 FROM THE MACROCOSMIC PERSPECTIVE

(Verses 10-13, 4 No.)

THIS SECTION DEALS with one's Swadharma from the standpoint of the whole society in which one lives, that is, from the macrocosmic or Samashti perspective. It gives us a beautiful perspective on how we fit into the Cosmic Plan. It teaches us "to think Globally, even though we may be acting Locally."

There are four verses and each one takes up a different aspect of the Yajna. They are: i) the Purpose of Yajna; ii) the Covenant with God; iii) our material welfare; and iv) our spiritual welfare. Each one gives us a reason to commit ourselves to Yajna.

Verse 10: *i) Purpose: The "Pump-Station" for Prosperity*

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।

अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक्

॥ ३-१०॥

sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purōvāca prajāpatiḥ |

anēna prasaviṣyadhvamēṣa vō:'stviṣṭakāmadhuk

|| 3-10||

1	<i>Saha-yajnaah prajaah srishtvaa</i>	<i>Having created mankind with <u>sacrifices</u></i>
2	<i>puraa uvaacha Prajaapatiḥ;</i>	<i>in the beginning, Prajapati the Creator said:</i>
3	<i>anena prasa-vishyadhvam</i>	<i>"By this shall you <u>prosper</u>.</i>
4	<i>esha vah astu ishta-kaama-dhuk.</i>	<i>Let this be the <u>milch cow</u> of your desire."</i>

At the heart of the scheme set up by Prajapati for the sustenance of mankind, and indeed all creatures in this world, is the Yajna or Sacrifice. The Yajna is the **Pump-Station** which gets the water of life flowing throughout the Cosmos. It is the machinery by which man's reservoirs and granaries are filled; it is also the machinery which places on man's shoulders the great responsibility of participating in God's scheme for the sustenance of all living creatures.

What is a Yajna?

1 Yajna is man's co-operation with man and with Nature.

The definition of Yajna as given by Pujya Gurudev is: "Self-sacrificing work done for the common good of man, seeking nothing out of it." It is a co-operative effort by which man harmonises with the Cosmic forces, engaging them for his overall welfare.

The essence of Yajna is contained in the two terms most commonly used in any Yajna. The first is the word 'Swaha' which means that it is an offering to God. It is our little 'gift' to God for the numerous gifts that He gives to us. The second word is 'Idam Na Mama' which means "this is not mine". By this word the performer of the sacrifice dissociates his ego from the sacrifice. It renders the act sacred and free of the human ego.

When the whole community gets together to do the Yajna, it has great benefits for society. The Yajna is a communal undertaking. It is something that has to be done regularly to keep the flow of life going. After all, it is the Pump Station of the whole scheme.

2 The Creator Prajapati prescribed the Yajna for mankind. This was His special message to us for harmonious living. We are all beings within the cosmos, and are inter-related and inter-dependent. Everything that we eat has had the contribution of so many others before reaching our dining table. If we think of this fact, we realize how inter-dependent we are.

3-4 What is Prajapati's message to us?

We are obligated to perform sacrifice in order to prosper in life, in order to succeed in living together as a society in harmony and in abundance. We are obliged to act in a spirit of sacrifice so that our common desires may be fulfilled.

Let us take a deeper look into the whole Hindu concept of Yajna:

THE PANCHAYAJNA – THE FIVE GREAT SACRIFICES

The word Yajna is actually used in the plural (***Yajnaah***). Acharyaji gave us the full picture as follows. There are five Yajnas, known as the Panchayajna, by which we fulfil our obligations to the universe. These five Yajnas are:

i) ***Deva Yajna***: Our debt to the Gods. The gods are the presiding Deities of all functions that pertain to the welfare of living creatures. From the functioning of our eyes and ears, to the provision of rains and wind, all these are possible because of the presiding Deity of each function. The Deities may also be seen impersonally as the “governing Laws” in nature. Everything in creation is governed by precise laws, such as the law of gravity, etc.

ii) ***Pitru Yajna***: Our debt to our Forefathers who have contributed their efforts to set up the civilization in which we live. They have passed on their knowledge and understanding to us. We were not born into an emptiness, but into a well-ordered society and civilization with a rich heritage. We did not have to start inventing things from scratch; many things were already invented for us by previous generations, and that makes life so much easier for us now. We in turn need to continue inventing for future generations.

iii) ***Bhoota Yajna***: Our debt to the Sub-human kingdom. We owe so much to the partnership we have with other creatures. The cows and bullocks that help us in farming come to mind first. Then there are our pets like the dogs and cats that are so faithful to us and give us so much pleasure. Even so-called vicious animals are not actually vicious. The lion and the tiger also have a role of keeping a balance in nature, which benefits us.

iv) ***Manushya Yajna***: Our debt to our Fellow-men, our contemporaries, as opposed to our forefathers mentioned above. It is well said that “No man is an island.” We are not independent of each other, but fully *inter*-dependent, in all spheres of life. It takes every member of the whole community to contribute to the smooth functioning of society.

v) ***Brahma Yajna***: Finally, we have a debt to Brahmaji, the Creator Himself. It is He that has given us the scriptures, the governing laws, and the wisdom that is packed in them for our welfare. He is the supreme CEO of this universe in which we live. We pay our debt to Him by revering, worshipping and honouring Him in all that we do.

The Sandeepany Course as an Act of Sacrifice

We also pay our debt by valuing the knowledge He has given, and spreading it to the next generation. For instance, for us to do this Vedanta Course, thousands of people had to contribute donations so that we could study for two years without anxiety over food and care. How do we pay them all back? One way is of course by studying well, but another is by teaching what we learn to others, to succeeding generations.

Thus this very significant verse places a grand vision before us of how we can be partners with Brahmaji in the smooth running of this world, if only we perform our bit as He has prescribed.

Verse 11: ii) Covenant: A Commitment to God

देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।

परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ

॥ ३-११॥

dēvān**bhāvayatānēna** tē dēvā **bhāvayantu** vaḥ |

parasparam **bhāvayantaḥ śrēyaḥ** paramavāpsyatha

|| 3-11||

1	<i>Devaan bhaavayata anena</i>	<i>With this do you nourish the Gods</i>
2	<i>te devaah bhaavayantu vah;</i>	<i>so that those Gods may nourish <u>you</u>;</i>
3	<i>parasparam bhaavayantah</i>	<i>thus nourishing <u>one another</u></i>
4	<i>shreyah param avaapsyatha.</i>	<i>you shall attain the highest good or welfare.</i>

In the Yajna that was taught to mankind by Prajapati Himself to mankind in the last verse, Prajapati places a big responsibility on our shoulders. A **Covenant** has to be honoured to perform the Yajna on an ongoing basis. That is the spirit of this verse.

The Yajna scheme has been laid out. Now the instruction is given to us to stick to it tenaciously to make it work. A commitment is to be made. It is not just an agreement with God, but something far more sacred – we have a Covenant with God. And we would do well not to take it lightly. A covenant is spiritually binding!

The Power of “Yajna With Love”

1 Through the acts of sacrifice or co-operation, we play our part in the Plan for the survival of the community we live in. Our sacrifice is nourishment for the Gods. It is like the commitment made by an employee to his employer so that both parties may thrive. The employee who works with love for his work, wins the love of his employer! We sacrifice willingly in our service to God in the form of the Yajna.

2 In return the Gods, the ‘Employer’ in this case, nourish us, the employees, by sending the rains on time and in sufficient quantity; by keeping the earth revolving, meaning that everything in our environment goes favourably for the Yajna to succeed. When we perform our duty with love as a covenant to God, He is pleased (nourished) and He is able to ‘pay us our wages’ on time, exactly as in an employer-employee relationship.

3 Thus the Gods and we nourish each other. This gives us a great vision to work towards. Through this one instruction, there is the invocation of the great **Power of Love**

into our lives. A mother expresses her love for her child when she feeds it with her milk. Similarly, the Gods express their love for us when they nourish us, just as we express our love for God when we participate in Yajna. Love becomes the hub around which our life's activities are centred. What a lofty thought that is!

Our love to the Deities is one aspect of Yajna. There are four other contributors to be included in the circle of our Love; they too please us and are pleased by us. It may be easy to love the Gods, but it should be just as easy to love our fellowmen and even the dumb animals and birds who share this planet with us.

However, due to the excessive freedom of will given to each individual in modern society, many of us do not view this Covenant seriously enough to make it a compulsory part of our life. This is where the problems of man lie. When people out of arrogance feel that they do not owe anything to others, they are sowing the seeds of their own pains and sorrows in life. Our part has to be played well. If we do not carry out our responsibility, we clog the system, even as a drain gets clogged with dirt. *Then everyone suffers.*

4 By fulfilling our role in the above manner, the Lord gives us the assurance that we are guaranteed the highest welfare. By doing our Yajna, not just as a ceremony but in actual life itself with love behind every act, we can have a clean planet, pollution-free; we can have clean rivers; we can have unpolluted air for all to breathe; we can have sufficient wealth for everyone's *need* (not for everyone's greed); and we can pass this knowledge on to future generations so that continue the same Yajna and obtain the same results as we do.

Verse 12: *iii) Material Welfare: "Thieving" Re-defined*

इष्टान्भोगान् हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।

तैर्दत्तानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः

॥ ३-१२॥

iṣṭānbhōgānhi vō dēvā dāsyantē yajñabhāvitāḥ |

tairdattānapradāyaibhyō yō bhukṣtē stēna ēva saḥ

|| 3-12||

1	<i>Ishtaan bhogaan hi vah devaah</i>	<i>To you, indeed, the desired objects by the Gods,</i>
2	<i>daasyante yajna bhaavitaah</i>	<i>nourished by the <u>Yajna</u>, will certainly be given.</i>
3	<i>taih dattaan apradaaya ebhyah</i>	<i>If we do not <u>offer in return</u> what the Gods give us,</i>
4	<i>yah bhunkte stena eva sah.</i>	<i>and <u>only enjoy</u> them, we are verily thieves!</i>

The third aspect is the **material welfare** resulting from Yajna. If we do not play our part well in fulfilling Yajna, then we shall be guilty of Stealing! That means Bondage in the Jail of Samsara, being denied freedom or liberation – held captive to the world!

Prosperity is what everyone is seeking. However, if prosperity is sought only for individual benefit there are serious repercussions for the whole society. The materialist's view is to gain prosperity for himself only, even if that means at the expense of others. The Vedic view conveyed here is that true prosperity is when everyone benefits.

1-2 When rains come, it is for the whole community, even those who have *not* contributed. As far as the Cosmos is concerned there is no such thing as an 'individual'. In return, every individual is expected to fulfil his role as a member of a team, and do his or her duty. So when the Gods give, they give to all. When the sun gives light, it falls on all.

“Rain” is a symbol for all the gifts given by God for the sustenance of the whole society. Rain stands for everything that man is provided with for his material well-being. There is a rain cycle in Nature. The material well-being of man follows a similar cycle. [This will be discussed in the next section.]

3-4 Now we come to the individual man’s co-operation in this cycle. The Gods have played their part, apparently unconcerned with who among men have actually made the sacrifice. Those who have done their duty honestly in return are the deserving ones. They incur no sin. But what happens to those who shirk their responsibility and act with self-interest? In this Pada we see the repercussions that befall such individuals.

Sri Krishna calls the person who evades his responsibilities to society a **THIEF**. What better word can there be for such a person who enjoys what the gods provide but does not give back in return? It is not an insult to the person, it is the sheer truth. The Lord has laid down a system that requires all to participate. Only a thief will try to grab his share of benefits without paying for it in the form of sacrifice.

Let alone the Gods, even if we live in a country and do not pay the required taxes to the State, we are considered to be thieves. This is expanded further in the block below.

MODERN GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEMS

Imagine a system where a government is held responsible for all “acts of sacrifice”. Individuals, in their turn, try their utmost to cheat the government by tax evasion. A whole new philosophy of life is fostered onto the community, and it is in direct contradietion to the one espoused by the Government of the day.

In the name of individual freedom, the principle which today’s governments are forced to run on is “*each for himself and God for all*”. The modern way of life is predominantly individualistic. Co-operative responsibility is borne by the government.

It is inevitable that in such a system, we are going to raise a nation of “thieves”, in spite of all the efforts of a good and strong government. Governments may try their best with the sincerest intentions, but they do not have control over the conscience of people. They are not in control of instilling or enforcing the spirit of sacrifice among the people. The government’s effort to reduce crime in the community is rendered ineffective by the very individuality it encourages.

The problem which the Geeta highlights to us is that society needs to find a way to instill the right values in the community. Education is the key means by which this can be done. Each government has to find a solution by introducing sound communal values in the education system of the country. This is what existed in ancient India – it was called the Gurukula system, and it upheld and promoted the highest values which entrenched “acts of sacrifice” deep into the psyche of the entire community.

It is in a society having these values entrenched in it, that a scripture like the Geeta can find an echo of response to its ideas. Since the Geeta upholds universal principles, its ideas can be applied even today, if sufficient people ‘vote’ for them and live by them. The Geeta throws a challenge before man. The principles laid down in it, and the details of how to implement them are left for mankind to work out for each age.

Verse 13: *iv) Spiritual Welfare: “Washing” Karmic Debts*

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।

भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात्

॥ ३-१३॥

yajñāśiṣṭāśinaḥ santō mucyantē sarvakilbiṣaiḥ |

bhuñjatē tē tvaghaṁ pāpā yē pacantyātmakāraṇāt

|| 3-13||

1	<i>Yajna-shishta-shinah santah</i>	<i>The righteous who eat the <u>remnants</u> of the Yajna</i>
2	<i>muchyante sarva kilbishaiḥ;</i>	<i>are freed from all sins;</i>
3	<i>bhunjate tu agham paapaah</i>	<i>but those sinful ones verily eat sin</i>
4	<i>ye pachanti aatma-kaaranaat.</i>	<i>who cook only for <u>their own sake</u>.</i>

Fourthly, we look at the **spiritual welfare** of mankind that is conveyed through Yajna.

The whole scheme of Yajna is seen as a spiritual Sadhana that will help us to evolve further. The Yajna becomes a Karma Yoga by which we wash away our Karmic debts. The whole community evolves in the process. Sadhana at the individual level, becomes Yajna at the community level. It takes the whole community forward in its spiritual evolution.

1-2 Sri Krishna first gives the positive side. The Yajna is an act of worship with offerings made to the Deities. All duties are to be performed as a Yajna, i.e. without selfishness. In such a divinely-created scheme, the participants eat only the Prasad after doing the Yajna. Such a person alone, who does his duties dutifully in a spirit of sacrifice with honesty and adoration of the Lord, becomes worthy of the Lord’s Grace. He becomes freed from all sins accumulated over many births.

The Yajna spirit is the essence of Karma Yoga. In Karma Yoga, as we learnt earlier, the two principles are dedicating the actions to God and happily accepting in return whatever He chooses to give. In the performance of these five Yajnas also, the same spirit is applied at a community level, or the macrocosmic level. Each individual who participates in this communal Yajna, benefits spiritually by being “freed of his sins”. He offers his Swadharma (own duty) into the fire of the Yajna. Thus the Covenant to perform sacrifices is not without the benefits of spiritual merit.

3-4 And now the negative side: What happens if we do not participate in this communal sacrifice aimed at the good of the whole community? If we do not perform our duties as above, the dire consequences are given in these two Padas of the verse.

Kilbisha, Agham, Paapah: All these three words refer to “sin”. In the scriptures, whenever something is repeated thrice, special attention has to be given to it. It is telling us “Watch Out!” A warning signal flashes if we fail in our responsibility. Do we wish to be the cause of the calamities suffered by mankind?

The ‘thieving’ in the previous verse dealing with material welfare, becomes the ‘sinning’ with respect to our spiritual welfare. The person who does not play his part is not only “stealing” but verily “eating sin!” The Lord does not mince His words in this regard, for it is a senseless error that decent people can ill-afford to make.

3.4 THE COSMIC WHEEL

(Verses 14-19, 6 No.)

HOW DO THESE YAJNAS fit into the broader picture of the community or the country? In the next five verses we are explained in detail the scientific basis behind the Yajnas. The two previous sections are given a visual illustration – the “Cosmic Wheel”.

At this point it is important for us to note that Yajnas, although they are being described in terms of the fire ritual, are not confined to rituals. Rituals do have their own efficacy in producing results, as the principles are built into them. The first principle of the Yajna is to act in a spirit of selflessness for communal benefit. If this principle alone is followed in all our actions, no ritual is necessary for their success.

“Rain” in its widest sense means the provision of any physical need of man. So too, Yajna in its widest sense means any selfless action which brings “Rain” to the community.

Let us take a closer look at the Cosmic Wheel of co-operative action:

Verse 14: “Cosmic Wheel” – Its Five Component Stages

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः ।

यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः

॥ ३-१४॥

annādbhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaādannasambhavaḥ |

yajñādbhavati parjanyaō yajñāḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ

|| 3-14||

1	<i>Annaat bhavanti bhootaani;</i>	All ⁷ CREATURES come forth from ⁶ FOOD ;
2	<i>parjanyaat anna sambhavaḥ;</i>	food springs forth from ⁵ RAIN ;
3	<i>yajnaat bhavati parjanyaḥ;</i>	rain arises from ⁴ SACRIFICE ;
4	<i>yajnah karma sam-udbhavaḥ.</i>	and sacrifice is born of ³ ACTION .

Verse 15: “Cosmic Wheel” – Its Fountain-Source: Brahman

कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।

तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम्

॥ ३-१५॥

karma brahmōdbhavaṁ viddhi brahmākṣarasamudbhavam |

tasmātsarvagataṁ brahma nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam

|| 3-15||

5	<i>Karma Brahma udbhavam viddhi</i>	Know that ³ ACTION comes from ² BRAHMAJI ;
6	<i>Brahma akshara sam-udbhavam;</i>	and Brahma comes from the ¹ IMPERISHABLE .
7	<i>tasmaat sarva-gatam Brahma</i>	Therefore, the All-pervading ¹ BRAHMAN (the
8	<i>nityam yajne pratishthitam.</i>	ultimate Reality) ever rests in ⁴ SACRIFICE .

Verse 16: “Cosmic Wheel” – Its Fruit: Freedom from Bondage

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।

अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति

॥ ३-१६॥

ēvaṁ pravartitaṁ cakram nānuvartayatīha yaḥ |

aghāyurindriyārāmō mōghaṁ pārtha sa jīvati

|| 3-16||

9	<i>Evam pravartitam chakram</i>	The “ Cosmic Wheel ” that is thus set revolving –
10	<i>na anuvartayati iha yah;</i>	he who does <u>not follow</u> it,
11	<i>aghaayuh indriyaa-raamah</i>	he lives in <u>sin</u> , rejoicing in the senses.
12	<i>mogham Paartha sah jeevati.</i>	He lives in <u>vain</u> , O Partha.

1-4 The diagram explains the chain. In Steps 3-7, the cosmic cycle begins with Actions, then follow Yajna, Rain, Food, Beings and back to Actions. This is the **Cosmic Wheel**.

Yajna: Step 4 is the crucial responsibility of Man – the performance of “acts of sacrifice”. As explained already, this does not stop at just performing a fire ritual. The fire ritual is a symbol, and its essential meaning lies in extending it to the arena of service to mankind and the performance of one’s duties.

5-6 Beyond the Wheel is its Source, Step 1, **Akshara Brahman**, the non-dual Supreme Brahman. Step 2 is Brahmaji or Ishwara, the Creator, from whom Actions emanate.

7-8 As students of Vedanta, we always appreciate the Lord referring everything back to Brahman. The whole Wheel is relevant only because it leads us back to Brahman.

As Acharyaji put it, “Every act we do – saving water, saving electricity, studying the scriptures, producing something for the use of others, giving charity to the needy, taking only what we really need, etc – all these are to be considered as Yajnas. Pure action is the very essence of Yajna. Eventually 100% of our actions should become acts of sacrifice.”

9-12 Every member of society is indispensable in a Yajna. All have a part to play. This spirit was encouraged in the social system that developed in ancient India. Under a materialistic influence, the co-operative element drains out of actions and is replaced by the individualistic element. This goes contrary to the Yajna being taught here by Sri Krishna.

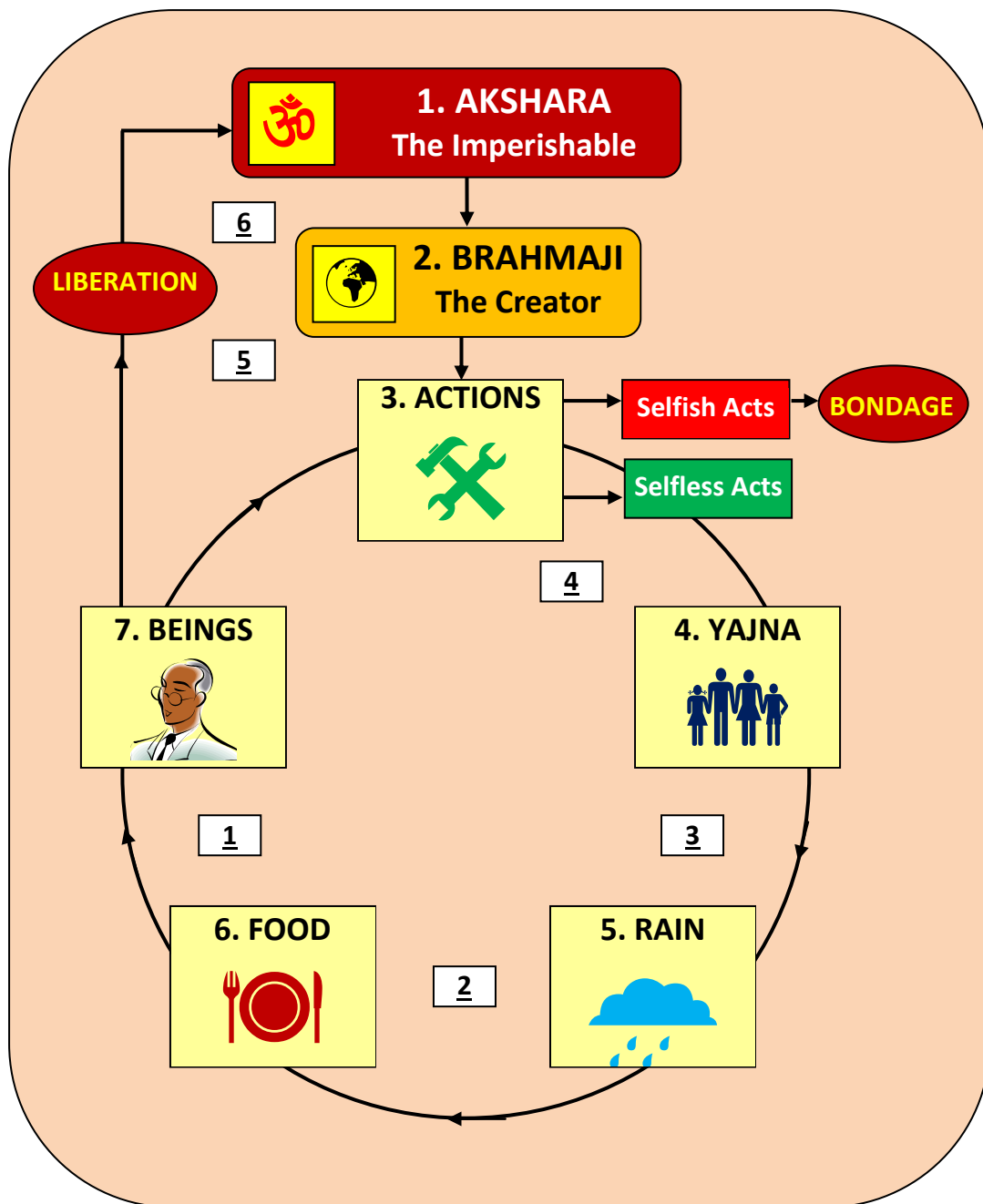
Today, it is only those who have a deep sense of responsibility for human welfare who still act as best as they can, against great odds, to ensure a safe, clean and truly prosperous world. Largely, the economy of the world is driven in a manner very contrary to what is being taught in the Geeta. The consequences of this breach of covenant with the Creator is bound to be painfully catastrophic.

If the governing principles are violated, we cannot hope to have a smooth tenancy here on earth. If, due to the materialistic spirit, we work selfishly, then we put pressure on Mother Nature and She has to compensate for our error by some dysfunction in Her operations, such as floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, cyclones, epidemics and diseases.

Two Outstanding Stories:

On this subject, Acharyaji shared with us two outstanding stories of people who lived in the spirit of Yajna as given above. These stories have been told by Pujya Gurudev during his Gita Yajnas worldwide. They are presented after the “Cosmic Wheel” Diagram below:

THE COSMIC WHEEL OF ACTION



INTERPRETING THE COSMIC WHEEL

Actions (No.3) done by man can be selfish or selfless. **Yajna** (No.4) consists of selfless actions only, and is at the heart of the chain. It is the main link. **Rain** (No. 5) is the primary reward; **Food** (No. 6) or prosperity is the secondary reward. We the **Agents** (No.7), are produced from food. With selfless action, we go out from the Wheel as winners of **Liberation**; with selfish actions, we go as losers into **Bondage**.

i) **Story of Two Brothers:** There was a man on his dying bed, who called his two sons and shared his wealth equally between them before passing away. The younger brother was a Brahmachari and the older a householder with two children. The brothers had great love for each other. The Brahmachari's needs were very little, whereas the older brother, running a household and having more mouths to feed, had needs that were much greater.

One day the younger brother thought about the greater need of his elder brother quite spontaneously. He felt his brother should have received a greater share than him. So he began taking a sack of grain every night and, without anyone knowing he would empty it in his brother's store.

The older brother had a similar thought of compassion for his younger brother: "I wonder how he is managing. He has no one to look after him. Let me give him some more grain." So he, too, used to take a sack of grain every night and empty it in his brother's store. This went on for some time.

The brothers noticed that there was no change in the quantity of their store of grain. Then came a dark night when the brothers bumped into each other. When that event occurred, they realized what was happening in a flash. They hugged each other and tears streamed down their eyes. Without a word, they both returned home, gladdened at heart.

It is said that years later when the villagers wanted to build a temple they chose that particular spot where the brothers hugged each other. It was the junction where Love met Love. In the temple, they installed a statuette of two brothers hugging each other.

ii) **Story of Brahmaji's Tea-Party:** Once a complaint was filed in Brahmaji's office by the Asuras (demons). They complained that Brahmaji always favoured the Devas and disfavoured them. Brahmaji just smiled at them. Soon He invited everyone, both Devas and Asuras, to a huge tea-party. To avoid needless clashes he separated them during the party.

Brahmaji had arranged for a special condition. All the guests had to have sticks tied to their arms so that they could not bend their elbows. How were they to eat without bending elbows? Well, the Asuras were furious with Brahmaji for tying their hands in this manner. Before them was all that delicious food surrounding them, making their mouths water, but they could not get a morsel into their mouths! They cursed and swore but nothing helped. They ended up creating a big din, and not eating anything.

However, the scene among the Devas was quite different. They were eating peacefully. The Asuras went to see how they were managing to be so quiet. They peeped in through the window and saw the Devas had paired up and were feeding each other the sumptuous food. They did not complain about the hands being tied, but used their spirit of co-operation and fed each other!

Verse 17: *The Sage – An Exception to the Rule*

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।

आत्मन्येव च सन्तुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते

॥ ३-१७॥

yastvātmaratirēva syādātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ |

ātmanyēva ca santuṣṭastasya kāryaṁ na vidyatē

|| 3-17||

1	<i>Yah tu aatmaratih eva syaat</i>	<i>But he who <u>rejoices</u> only in the Self,</i>
2	<i>aatmatriptah cha maanavah;</i>	<i>and who is <u>satisfied</u> with the Self, that man</i>
3	<i>aatmani eva cha santushtah</i>	<i>who is <u>content</u> in the Self alone,</i>
4	<i>tasya kaaryam na vidyate.</i>	<i>verily for him there is exemption from <u>actions</u>.</i>

Every rule has an exception – it applies here, too. We have two verses which tell us who is *exempted* from the Cosmic Chain, and why. With Nature, there has to be a good reason for an exemption, for even one unjustified exception is too much; it weakens the chain. So what is it that makes one exempt?

Three conditions in a person can qualify him for an exemption from participating in the above Cosmic Chain. They are given as:

- 1 i) **Atma Ratih**: one who rejoices in the Self alone.
- 2 ii) **Atma Triptah**: one who remains satisfied in the Self.
- 3 iii) **Atma Santushtah**: one who is ever content in the Self alone.

The first leads to the second; and the second leads to the third.

These are rare qualities – indeed, it is a rare state to be in. In a world where the overwhelming majority of people are desirous of more wealth and enjoyments for outer objects, to have these qualities is very rare.

4 Such a person is exempted, not because he makes no difference to the Chain, but his presence is felt in *every* link of the Chain. There is nothing more he can do!

Verse 18 explains in more detail the reason for exempting the sage.

COSMIC CITIZENSHIP

These verses on the Cosmic Cycle are very appropriate in the context of Arjuna's reluctance to do his duty. By not doing his duty on the battlefield, Arjuna becomes guilty of clogging the "Wheel". Thus in a very subtle way Sri Krishna is telling him the consequences of his actions. Surely Arjuna does not want to be guilty of such a sin!

There are four responsibilities given by Sri Krishna for a Cosmic citizen:

1. Do Karma Yoga – it will help to PURIFY you for the higher knowledge;
2. Keep the Covenant with the Creator and do required acts of sacrifice;
3. Do not "clog" the cosmic wheel set in motion in Nature to supply our needs;
4. There are no exemptions from participating in the Cosmic Chain. (see v17-18)

The Cosmic Order enshrines the constitution to be complied with for having Cosmic Citizenship. This idea is fostered in the Geeta in this section. There is a definite plan of action by which the needs of all are met. If we violate that plan, we invite trouble to all mankind. That is quite clear from how the Cycle functions.

Our responsibility as good Cosmic Citizens is to perform our 'bounden duty' in accordance with the social structure we live in. That pleases the Deities and they confer their blessings upon us by a "shower of rain", which figuratively represents our needs for survival on this planet.

Verse 18: Why is the Sage Exempted?

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।

न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः

॥ ३-१८॥

naiva tasya kṛtēnārthō nākṛtēnēha kaścana |

na cāsyā sarvabhūtēṣu kaścīdarthavyapāśrayaḥ

|| 3-18||

5	<i>Na eva tasya kritena arthah</i>	<i>For him there is no compulsion to act,</i>
6	<i>na akritena iha kaschana;</i>	<i>nor even any compulsion not to act in the world;</i>
7	<i>na cha asya sarva bhooteshu</i>	<i>and, in spite of that, on no being whatsoever</i>
8	<i>kashchit artha-vypaashrayah.</i>	<i>does he depend for any object.</i>

5-6 These words obviously cannot be taken literally – as indifference to the world. The sage is not like that. Clearly, it is a mystical expression with a deep underlying message. We have to consider what is the state of the sage before understanding the meaning.

One who possesses the three qualities above, has to be totally absorbed in the Self. What is the Self? It is the essence of all that exists. Yet, from the perspective of the world, it is also beyond what exists and is unaffected by what exists. Whatever goes on in creation, does not affect the underlying Substratum of creation. The sage has identified himself with this Substratum, and so he is unaffected by anything going on in the world. That is the unique state he has reached. We are speaking here of an unusual person, a true God-man on earth. He has reached a realm which is beyond the realm of the Cosmic Chain.

Thus in trying to explain why the sage is exempt from the Chain, we have in fact discovered that he is present in every part of the Chain!

7-8 It is from this lofty point of view that it can also be said that the sage does not depend on anybody or on anything. These are very profound statements, appearing in the guise of ordinary words of disinterest and lack of any concern.

Lord Krishna plays His trump-card in these two verses. He has been explaining all about the governance of this universe, and suddenly, out of the blue, He reminds us that all this is just in the realm of the transitory, ephemeral world! While we are involved in the drama of the world all these rules are vital to be followed. But when we are out of the “game”, of what need are the rules!

In a football game 22 players have to follow all the rules, but there is one person there to whom none of those rules apply but who ensures that they are followed – that is the Referee. The sage is like that referee, and we the aspiring souls are like the 22 players.

A sage is freed from this communal responsibility because whatever he does is only for the good of society. He has no self-interest. His every act cannot but be of help to others. It is not a question of escaping his responsibilities, but of taking on a far greater responsibility which none of us ordinary beings are able to fulfill.

At the other end of the spectrum, lies this example which Acharyaji quoted: A rich old lady was in her last days. A young man, with self-interest at heart, came to serve her at this time. She asked him to look after her dog. Of course, he didn't mind. Soon the lady passed away. In her will, it was found that she had bequeathed her dog to this young man!

Verse 19: *The Conclusion: “Arjuna, You Must Fight!”*

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।

असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः

॥ ३-१९॥

tasmādasaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara |

asaktō hyācarankarma paramāpnōti pūruṣaḥ

|| 3-19||

1	<i>Tasmaat asaktah satatam</i>	<i>Therefore, always and <u>without attachment</u>,</i>
2	<i>kaaryam karma samaachara;</i>	<i>you should perform actions that are your duty.</i>
3	<i>asaktah hi aacharan karma</i>	<i>By so doing – i.e. acting without attachment –</i>
4	<i>parama aapnoti poorushah.</i>	<i>man attains the Supreme Being.</i>

Just in case Arjuna took it into his head that he could be one of those exempted ones, Sri Krishna quickly comes in with what applies to Arjuna: “No, Arjuna, you are not one of those sages yet! You are still far away from that stage. I’m afraid, *you* have to act. Do your duty. That is the only road open to you for your salvation. You cannot escape it.”

1-2 The ‘Tasmaat’ of this verse rounds up not just the present argument on the Cosmic Cycle, but all the arguments presented to Arjuna since verse **4**, namely:

- i) Karma Yoga is a means for you to come to the wisdom of Saankhya.
- ii) You have a Covenant with the Creator to perform the five “acts of sacrifice”.
- iii) You should not clog the cycle set into motion to supply all creatures their needs.
- iv) You are not one of those sages that qualify for exemption from the Cycle.

Performing actions without attachment is the key to making our actions into Karma Yoga. Gandhiji called this by the name of **Asaktah Yoga**, the “Yoga of Non-attachment”, and gave that name to his commentary on the *Geeta*. He exemplified this non-attachment in his own life. While India honoured him and credited him for gaining India’s freedom, he himself did not feel that was correct. In his eyes, he had worked only for God. He was not attached to the honours heaped upon him.

Asaktah Satatam Kaarya –There is an interesting arrangement of these three words: The central word is so placed that it applies to both words on either side of it. The non-attachment (Asaktah) as well as the Karma Yoga action (Kaarya) have to go on always (Satatam), side by side. One cannot stop either. While acting, one has to remain unattached. That is the difficulty. Only heroes like Gandhiji can succeed in doing this.

3-4 The fruit of all this effort and patience is the expansion of consciousness to the highest level possible – a complete mergence with the Supreme Being, Brahman, the Imperishable. As shown in the diagram of the Cosmic Cycle, Brahman is the source of all this world manifestation and He is the One whom we return to when we are liberated from this world drama.



3.5 EXAMPLES SET BY GREAT MEN

(Verses 20-25, 6 No.)

AFTER THE LAST DISCUSSION, Arjuna may perhaps be thinking: “Sri Krishna, has there been anybody as You have described – someone without any attachment? Has anyone really succeeded in being the kind of ideal Karma Yogi You describe? Or am I the fortunate guinea-pig in Your first experiment!” In other words, is this like the case of the boy who let his friend play with his puppy only to find out whether it bites!

Sri Krishna, as though sensing something as mischievous as this from Arjuna, responds to this unasked question by diverting from the main theme in the next ten verses, first by giving some ideal examples of great men (Section 3.5), and then by expounding the art of teaching (Section 3.6).

Verse 20: *The Example of King Janaka*

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः ।

लोकसङ्ग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि

॥ ३-२०॥

karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhimāsthitā janakādayaḥ |

lōkasaṅgrahamēvāpi sampāśyankartumarhasi

|| 3-20||

1	<i>Karmanaa eva hi samsiddhim</i>	Verily, through Action alone was <u>perfection</u>
2	<i>aasthitaah janakaadiyah;</i>	attained by people like <u>Janaka</u> and others;
3	<i>lokasamgraham eva api</i>	even for the sake of <u>protecting the masses</u> ,
4	<i>sampashyan kartum arhasi.</i>	having that in view, you should perform action.

Through the examples of great Karma Yogis like King Janaka, Lord Krishna demonstrates two things: i) that Karma Yoga should be performed as a Sadhana to take one to God-Realisation; and ii) when realization has dawned, the Karma Yoga should continue in order to serve as an **Example** to inspire others. Each of these is now taken up:

Karma Yoga as a Sadhana for Realisation

Self knowledge comes in a flash; time is needed only to clear away the accumulated Karma and prepare one to receive that knowledge.

1-2 King Janaka, the King of Mithila, was one such outstanding example of a Karma Yogi who performed his duty of serving his people by remaining fully detached within. By this means, Janaka attained the ultimate goal of life and was actually given that name as a title. The word means “fatherly”, and many kings received this title. Hence, we cannot be certain that it refers to Janaka, the father of Seeta. These kings and many others of other states were known for their vast knowledge. It is known that when Sri Vyasaji wanted his knowledge to be confirmed, he went to Raja Janaka, who did confirm it.

Karma Yoga as an Example for Others to Follow

3-4 This is the second reason why Lord Krishna is giving the example of Janaka. The knowledge of the Self strengthens and transforms one's personality. Thereafter, the Karma Yogi is advised to continue as before for the sake of setting an example to others, and for doing good works in the community, i.e. **Lokasangraha**, for the good of the world.

Lokasangraha literally means “to hold people well together.” The idea is to provide some sense of moral direction to the general public; to ensure that they stay on the right path. The realized Karma Yogi acts as a role model for other aspirants treading the same path. The realized Yogi also provides the leadership to carry out major charitable projects in society and for establishing an order of righteousness in the community.

Verse 21: *A Role Model for Society*

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।

स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते

॥ ३-२१॥

yadyadācarati śrēṣṭhastattadēvētarō janah |

sa yatpramāṇam kurute lōkastadanuvartatē

|| 3-21||

1	<i>Yat yat aacharati SHRESHTAH,</i>	<i>Whatever a GREAT MAN does</i>
2	<i>tat tat eva itarah janah;</i>	<i>that alone do <u>other men</u> imitate;</i>
3	<i>sah yat pramaanam kurute</i>	<i>whatever he sets up as a standard</i>
4	<i>lokah tat anuvartate.</i>	<i>that the world (people) <u>follows</u>.</i>

Apart from being an example of a Karma Yogi, any great person has a general influence on others which is brought to light in this verse. There are two aspects to this influence: i) his deeds are imitated, i.e. he becomes a celebrity; and ii) he sets the benchmark for others to rise up to.

Sri Krishna could be saying to Arjuna:

i) As a Celebrity:

1-2 “Although you are not in the exempted category I spoke of earlier (v17-18), yet you are an important figure in society. You fall in the category of the ‘celebrities’ of our time. People know your greatness, your skill, your courage and bravery in battle. They are bound to follow whatever you do. Therefore, a big responsibility rests on your head merely because you are so prominent among your countrymen.

“The common folk look up to you as a role model for their behaviour. If you wear a green shirt, everyone will wear a green shirt. If you take up cricket, they will all become cricketers! So can you imagine how they will react if you retreat from this battlefield? They will hurl their cricket bats at you, and cover you in a heap of green shirts!”

In this way, the Lord finds another way to spur Arjuna into action.

Shreshtha: “a great person” is watched very carefully by people. Every act he does becomes known to the whole community. There is no private life for him; his whole life becomes known to all. With social media, that is no problem today. Sri Krishna is saying to

Arjuna, “If you become a Sannyasi, everybody else will do the same. And you, Arjuna, have a very large following. What a problem that will cause! All the people will run away to the forests, and we will have to call the forest animals into the cities to do their work!”

Some people cannot help being in the limelight or spotlight wherever they go. There are the Amitabh Bachans and Sachin Tendulkars who just have it in them to attract the attention of others. They are the natural wonders among men. That can become a burden to them. Such people have to be extra careful of whatever they do or say. If they sneeze, the whole town catches the cold!

There are small ways in which we see this principle at work in daily life. A father stands in front of his dressing table and sets his hair right. When he is gone, his three-year old goes up to the table and, amusing to us, imitates what he saw his father doing.

Acharyaji gave the example of the French footballer Zinedine Zidane who butted the head of an opponent in the 2006 World Cup. Following that incident there were hundreds of youngsters doing the same all over the world. The footballer eventually had to make a public apology to stop this blind imitation.

Another example was of how in Tamil Nadu, actors invariably entered politics and many became Chief Ministers of the State, simply because as actors they had captured the attention and adoration of the masses. That adoration follows the celebrity wherever he goes and whatever he does. The actors develop a “fan-club” which always votes for them.

ii) As a Benchmark for Others:

3-4 All of us are “*Shreshthas*” in our respective roles towards our inferiors. A father is a Shreshtha for his young son; a teacher is a Shreshtha for his students. Acharyaji told us of an example from his own life. He had always held that his teacher could never be wrong. Thus when once his father corrected him on a mathematics problem, young Acharyaji refused to believe that he was right as it clashed with his faith that his teacher could never be wrong!

Standards and goals are set up by the experts in each field of human activity. Sportsmen vie with each other to break records – this is goal-setting in practice. Because of this tremendous urge to be the best, the 100 meter dash has broken the 10 second barrier by far. Presently it has come to as low as 9.6 seconds! Perhaps that, too, is broken now.

How much more important is this principle in the spiritual field: To start with, people have a built-in aversion to practise the disciplines of spirituality. What would make them take to it? – their hero. If Arjuna becomes a skilled Karma Yogi, many other younger people will take to it. Spirituality will have a greater appeal among the youth. Thinking of all this, Sri Krishna urges Arjuna to become a great Yogi, so that thousands of others will also do so!

Verse 22: ***“Look at Me, Arjuna!”***

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।

नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि

॥ ३-२२॥

na mē pārthāsti kartavyam̐ triṣu lōkēṣu kiñcana |

nānavāptamavāptavyam̐ varta ēva ca karmaṇi

|| 3-22||

1	<i>Na me Paartha asti kartavyam</i>	<i>O Partha, there is nothing to be done by Me</i>
2	<i>trishu lokeshu kinchina;</i>	<i>in all the three worlds; not anything is there</i>
3	<i>na anavaaptam avaaptavyam</i>	<i>that I have not attained, or have yet to attain,</i>
4	<i>varta eva cha karmani.</i>	<i>yet, I <u>engage</u> Myself in action.</i>

Now Sri Krishna brings in a very special example of a leader among men – **Himself!**

Sri Krishna certainly belonged to the category of celebrities who did not have a private life they could call their own. He belonged to the people entirely. Everything He did became an example for others to follow. Can one ever find a better example of a Shreshtha!

1-2 As the Lord of the Universe, He was not in need of doing anything, not even a wee bit. He didn't have to tie His bootlaces, but He did. He could command and others would be ready to do His bidding. He could go about in a palanquin borne by others, but He chose to be a charioteer and take Arjuna around on the battlefield.

He did some very simple duties apart from being Arjuna's charioteer – such as washing and grooming the horses of His chariot, just to set an example to others on how to serve with humility. If those who have realized Brahman are exempt from doing any duty (17 and 18), then what to speak of Brahman Himself! Sri Krishna has absolutely no need to do anything.

Vedanta itself teaches us how Brahman is unmoved by what happens in the world. Brahman is said to do nothing, to remain unchanged, to have no birth and no death, to be simply a witness of all that is going on. We almost get the idea that God is more an example of laziness and indifference, than of illumination and virtue!

. . . until we meet His Avatara – **Sri Krishna**. Then all such ideas get blown away when we see how dynamic Lord Krishna is, and how humble He is. He who can get anything done by just raising a finger, works tirelessly to establish Dharma. He faces the taunts of Sishupal a hundred times, the might of King Kamsa, and the wrath of Duryodhana.

3-4 If He does not act, the whole world will collapse as everyone will become inactive. We see how important it is for Sri Krishna to act, and what an act has He put up for the world! It will be hard to find a parallel to the work put in by Sri Krishna. His mere Presence on the side of the Pandavas was enough to win the war for them, and send the shivers down the Kauravas, despite the latter's numerical strength.

Sri Krishna Himself would have much more to tell about His deeds: "Look, Arjuna, I lifted a mountain at the age of 7. At 10, I wrestled with my wicked uncle Kamsa and finished him off. And I did not do it for Myself. I gave the kingdom to someone else and walked away without taking a single rupee for My trouble!"

This is the spirit of Karma Yoga that pervaded Sri Krishna's own life. This is why Sri Krishna speaks so glowingly of Karma Yoga, and why He has become the greatest exponent of Karma Yoga in spiritual history.

Verse 23: *Bringing the World to a Halt*

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः

॥ ३-२३॥

yadi hyaham na vartēyaṁ jātu karmaṇyatandritaḥ |
mama vartmānuvartantē manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ || 3-23||

1	<i>Yadi hi aham na varteyam</i>	<i>For surely if I do not engage Myself</i>
2	<i>jaatu karmani atandritah;</i>	<i>ever in <u>action without relaxation</u>,</i>
3	<i>mama vartma anuvartante</i>	<i>My example (of <u>laziness</u>) would be followed</i>
4	<i>manushyaah Paartha sarvashah.</i>	<i>by men in every respect, O Partha.</i>

An Avatara does not come down to earth to go into caves and meditate there. He emerges out into society and gets involved with the activities of men. He plays His allotted role, so that mankind may follow His example. This is the massive work accomplished by Sri Krishna.

When Sri Krishna speaks in this vein, it has to be understood that He stands for Ishwara Himself. He speaks as a universal Being, not as an individual being. There can be not a trace of ego in Sri Krishna.

[*Note: Acharyaji noted a correction made in the Bhashya by Sri Shankaracharyaji. It shows Sri Shankara's insistence on perfection. There are examples where he has even corrected himself! Like this, Acharyaji would adore Shankaracharyaji at every opportunity.*]

1-2 To paraphrase Sri Krishna's words, He tells Arjuna: "Look, Arjuna, I have no problem sitting in meditation – I can sit for days on end. But can the people do that? If I just meditated, out of love for Me they may try to do the same, but they will simply fall asleep! My inactivity will have a negative influence on people. It will create big problems here. Therefore, I do not do that, but I engage Myself in useful activities of service."

Pujya Gurudev remarks: "If the Lord were not to keep on actively serving the world, the cultural life of the generation would stagnate."

The above is an indictment against the commonly held idea at the time that Sannyasins should not do any work at all. The common perception was that those pursuing the spiritual path were not expected to do any work. Anyone who departed even slightly from the socially accepted viewpoint would face strong rejection from the community. The Geeta does a great service to mankind by setting right these narrow beliefs.

3-4 The verse also brings to the fore the common trait in man, in all periods of time, to settle for the path of least resistance. People simply wait for the slightest excuse to avoid hard work, even knowing that it is for their own welfare. The mental leaning towards comfortable spirituality is something to be guarded against.

Verse 24: *The Scenario if Krishna Did Not Act*

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्या कर्म चेदहम् ।
सङ्करस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः
utsīdēyurimē lōkā na kuryāṁ karma cēdaham |
saṅkarasya ca kartā syāmupahanyāmimāḥ prajāḥ || 3-24||

1	<i>Utseedeyuh ime lokaa</i>	<i>These worlds would <u>perish</u></i>
2	<i>na kuryaam karma chet aham;</i>	<i>if I did not perform My dutiful action;</i>
3	<i>sankarasya cha kartaa syaam</i>	<i>I would be the author of <u>confusion of castes</u></i>
4	<i>upahanyaam imaah prajaah.</i>	<i>and would be responsible for their destruction.</i>

The above verse is from the standpoint of Sri Krishna as a leader whom society is bound to take note of in every detail. Sri Krishna tells us that even if we do not *recognize* the greatness of His Mission, His Mission still remains great. If He stopped doing it, the universe will collapse under lawlessness.

WHAT IS SRI KRISHNA'S MISSION?

1-2 The entire operation of the world depends on the laws of Physics that Sri Krishna has set up. He, as the driving force behind the universe, is responsible for the smooth functioning and continuation of all planetary movements. He is responsible for the different Deities ensuring that the laws governing their respective functions are obeyed.

If the Lord did not keep an eye over the Deities and gave them a free hand to govern the universe, huge problems are likely to arise. Imagine if the Sun, the Deity of the eyes, decides to stop shining for a day – what would happen? Just one of those ‘holidays’, just one dark day would freeze the waters of Earth! Or if the Sun decided to get hotter, just one day of that would melt all the polar ice caps!

The smooth functioning of the Universe depends on all the Deities working in unison and doing their jobs perfectly. Sri Krishna, as the Administrative Head of the Universe, ensures that all this happens. If He Himself goes on a vacation, everything collapses!

HARMONY IN MAN'S SOCIAL STRUCTURE

3-4 He is also deeply involved in the smooth functioning of mankind as a harmonious team, which He ensures by getting everybody to do their Swadharma as allocated to the four Castes according to their capacities. We will see more of this in the next chapter, but for now, we are interested in what happens if the Lord stops doing His job.

If He does not supervise the social Order of man, especially the Brahmins who are responsible for the values instilled in society, then there will be serious shortcomings. The Brahmins will neglect their duty and rest on their laurels. Kshatriyas would have to do the work of the Brahmins. The business class would have to do the administrating work, and the Shudras will have to become the businessmen!

The whole system will turn head-over-heels and fall to pieces. There would be total confusion in the affairs of man. People will be doing work for which they do not have the qualifications, and so it will be done badly and inefficiently. The social order will collapse.

This is not just imagination – it is actually happening in our own age. But it is not because God has gone on holiday; it is because man has slackened considerably in his sense of responsibility. It is man who has gone on strike against the Laws set up by God!

Verse 25: The Difference Between Common and Great

सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।

कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथासक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसङ्ग्रहम्

॥ ३-२५॥

saktāḥ karmaṇyavidvāṁsō yathā kurvanti bhārata |

kuryādvidvāṁstathāsaktaścikīrṣurlōkasaṅgraham

|| 3-25||

1	<i>Saktaah karmani avidvaamsah</i>	<i>The ignorant ones are <u>attached</u> to action.</i>
2	<i>yathaa kurvanti Bhaarata;</i>	<i>Just as they act (from their level), O Bharata,</i>
3	<i>kuryaat vidvaan tathaa asaktah</i>	<i>so should the wise act <u>without attachment</u></i>
4	<i>chikeersshuh loka-sangraham.</i>	<i>desiring only the <u>welfare</u> of the world.</i>

This verse shows us that although there may be not much difference in the external actions done by the common and by the great people, there is a huge difference in the attitude with which the two do their work.

The Attitude of the Ignorant Commoner

1-2 The common person, that is, the one who has only selfish ends, will work extremely hard to earn extra money so that he can enjoy more pleasures. We see such people working around the clock, motivated by the reward of wealth. They also work with great precision and plan themselves well because the earning of wealth needs all these conditions.

The Attitude of the Knowledgeable Wise

3-4 Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that, in the same way as above described, the selfless worker should also work with just as great, if not greater, zeal and energy than such worldly people, but he should do it for the sake of God. The big difference is that he will work without attachment, without selfishness, whereas the worldly person is fully driven by attachment to pleasure to work hard, and fully by selfishness to see to his own ends.

When comparing the two, we see that the actions may be similar, but the motivation and mental attitude are very different.

Sri Krishna is mentioning these to inspire Arjuna. He does not force Arjuna in any way. He Himself has been engaging in very humble but hard work. He is speaking from His own example, and that is why there is so much power in what He says.



3.6 THE ART OF TEACHING

(Verses 26-32, 7 No.)

ARISING FROM THE above diversion on the “Example Set by Great Ones”, we have recognised the factor which distinguishes the great from the commoner, the enlightened from the ignorant, and the wise leader of society from the generality. That factor is **Attachment** – the wise act without attachment, whereas the ignorant cannot help being attached.

The Lord sees the difficulty in *teaching* the ignorant how to come out of his attachment. The procedure is very delicate. He cleverly interweaves a lesson on Teaching, centred around this difficulty, so that teachers become more careful in teaching it.

The subtle insight imparted on the theme of Attachment is indeed interesting and absorbing. It offers us a technique to give up the sense of “**Doership**”, the main cause of attachment to actions.

However, we are to bear in mind the context that it is only a ‘carrier’ for the lesson of the moment – to teach us about the “Art of Teaching”. Keeping this in mind, we move into the second side-issue on “How to be an Ideal Teacher”.

Verse 26: *The Art of Teaching by Example*

न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेदज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम् ।
जोषयेत्सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान्युक्तः समाचरन् ॥ ३-२६॥
na buddhibhēdaṁ janayēdajñānāṁ karmasaṅginām |
jōṣayētsarvakarmāṇi vidvānyuktaḥ samācharan || 3-26||

1	<i>Na buddhi-bhedam janayet</i>	Without causing <u>unsettlement</u> in the minds
2	<i>ajnaanaam karma-sanginaam;</i>	of the ignorant who are <u>attached</u> to actions,
3	<i>joshayet sarva-karmaani</i>	by themselves <u>engaging</u> in all actions,
4	<i>vidvaan yuktaḥ samaacharan.</i>	the wise should act while remaining <u>balanced</u> .

“Unsettling the Ignorant is UNWISE!”

1-2 From action to inaction is a big step and cannot be done directly in one leap. The teacher has to prepare the student before such a step is expected of him. Spiritual counselling has to be very gentle and non-aggressive.

This is advice given to teachers. A teacher should not impose his ideas in an overbearing manner beyond the capacity of his students. There should always be love and understanding with students. Nothing lasting can come by aggressively compelling people to change to a new way.

These words are very sound advice especially for young teachers of Vedanta such as the students who just qualify from Courses like Sandeepany. Having just learnt so much

theoretical wisdom in so short a time (over two years), there is a tendency to go out and preach these ideas to unprepared people. As if that is not bad enough, many trainee teachers preach aggressively and run their listeners down for all the common weaknesses of mankind. All this is quiet unnecessary and backfires on them. The teaching may be true, but the element of *inspiration* is lost. With the result, listeners become fewer and fewer – and teachers more and more frustrated.

The Proper Approach in Teaching

3-4 The truly wise teacher is advised by Sri Krishna to check this tendency. The only way to educate others is to *be the right example* oneself. There is no other way. That is the most effective way of making others take to new, more enlightened ways of living. Love, not compulsion, should be the means, at all times.

The good Karma Yogi can also be the “wise” person in the verse. He makes others enjoy their work by inspiring them with his own example. He takes people forward slowly from their Rajasic nature to the Sattwic nature. If he is hasty in his methods, he risks taking them in the opposite direction, i.e. from Rajas to Tamas. Rajasic people should not be told to stop their actions and take to meditation. They can be asked to include more chanting or Japa as a way of directing their energy Godward. But they can never be made to sit for long hours in silence as that would be contrary to their nature. Their pent-up energy has to be directed to the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

Apart from the message on Teaching as an art, the problem of attachment and its solution, equanimity of mind, is recalled here. That becomes the focus for the next two verses. Whilst Rajasic people act with *attachment*, the prospective reformer has to do the very same thing in a completely balanced state of mind, with *equanimity*.

Verse 27: *How Doership Arises*

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।

अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते

॥ ३-२७॥

prakṛtēḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ |

ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā kartāhamiti manyatē

|| 3-27||

1	<i>Prakriteh kriya-maanaani gunaih</i>	Performed by the Gunas , Nature’s qualities,
2	<i>karmaani sarvashah;</i>	are all these acts , every one of them. However,
3	<i>ahamkaara-vimoodha-aatmaa</i>	with a mind deluded by the sense of ego ,
4	<i>“KARTAA aham” iti manyate.</i>	one thinks, “ I am acting, I am the doer ”.

Sri Krishna gives the intricacies of the example to illustrate the art of teaching.

Tracing the Roots of Action

1-2 The true situation that pertains to *all actions* is stated at the outset. It is the truth that they all arise from the three fundamental qualities or Gunas of *Maya*, namely, Tamas, Rajas and Sattwa. From these three basic building blocks, all creation, both subtle and gross, are manifested. All actions, too, like everything else, fall under the realm of these three Gunas and their interplay.

3-4 Maya is the illusory power of the Supreme Lord. Maya consists of the three Gunas. She is the power that is responsible for creating and deluding the mind, and also creating the false self, called the Ego. Thus, mind and ego are subtle 'objects' composed of the three Gunas.

तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयोः ।

॥ ३-२८॥

gunā gunēsu vartanta iti matvā na sajjatē

5	<i>Tattwavit tu, mahaabaaho</i>	But he who knows the Truth , O Mighty-armed,
6	<i>guna karma vibhaagayoh;</i>	of the divisions of the <u>qualities</u> and their <u>functions</u> –
7	<i>gunaah guneshu vartante</i>	that Gunas (as <u>senses</u>) move amidst Gunas (as <u>objects</u>),
8	<i>iti matvaa na sajjate.</i>	– knowing thus, he is not attached .

For now, we are more interested in how this helps us to refine our teaching of this and similar truths about actions and get them across to people who are attached to actions. We are concerned with learning more about the “Art of Teaching”. Sri Krishna wants us to look at this illustration from the shoes of a teacher.

“The Gunas Act; I am the Witness”

7-8 No, it is not. Let us take a close look at the statement “*I am the doer*”.

ii) They are outside 'me', so they cannot be '*me*'.

iii) The senses which perform the actions are also not 'me'; they are 'mine'. Like the objects, they, too, are made up of elements. Hence, they are the Gunas only.

iv) The mind is the king of the senses. Without mind the senses are ineffective. The mind, too, is made of the Gunas.

v) And finally, the *Ego*, too, is made from the Gunas with subtle elements.

This means that the whole action is only an interplay of the Gunas: “*The Gunas as senses move amidst the Gunas as objects.*” This means the statement “I am the doer”

cannot be true, unless by “I” is meant the Ego-self. But the Ego-self cannot be me. How can “I” be just a combination of elements arising from the Gunas? Surely, “I” am more substantial than that!

This leads us to the idea of the real “I” or Self which does not partake in the actions at all, but simply witnesses them. I am the witnessing Consciousness, not the ‘doer’. The ‘doer’ is Prakriti, call her Maya or Nature, or call her the Gunas. From our true position, doership is found to be false.

In this way, Vedanta teaches us to find our place beyond the sense of ‘doership’. Only by grasping this truth, can we understand our bondage; only this truth explains the liberating science of Karma Yoga; only this truth explains that actions cannot truly bind us as they are Unreal in nature. And finally, only by understanding this truth, can one teach others the science of Karma Yoga by which they can be liberated.

Thus, Lord Krishna lays the foundation upon which the immediate topic of Actions can be expanded to cover the intriguing details that we shall find in the next three Discourses.

This gives us a deep insight into the very roots of action. One who knows and understands this insight or truth about actions, who sees the whole drama of life in this light, is able to free himself from the bondage of actions. He realizes that in none of the above-named participants of action lies the Self which is his true Being.

Upon this solid understanding of himself, he learns to detach himself from all of them, in the firm knowledge that he is not any of them.

Verse 29: *Teaching: Closing the Knowledge-Ignorance Rift*

प्रकृतेर्गुणसम्मूढाः सज्जन्ते गुणकर्मसु ।
तानकृत्स्नविदो मन्दान्कृत्स्नविन्न विचालयेत् ॥ ३-२९॥
prakṛtērguṇasammūdhāḥ sajjantē guṇakarmasu |
tānakṛtsnavidō mandānkṛtsnavinna vicālayēt || 3-29||

1	<i>Prakriteh guna-sammoodhaah</i>	Those <u>deluded</u> by Gunas , the qualities of nature,
2	<i>sajjante guna-karmasu;</i>	cannot help being <u>attached</u> to their functions.
3	<i>taan akritsna-vidah mandaan</i>	Those of imperfect knowledge should not
4	<i>kritsna-vit na vichaalayet.</i>	be <u>unsettled</u> by those of perfect knowledge.

1-2 The insight which Sri Krishna gives us on actions, the part played by the Gunas in them, the sense of doership, and the harm done by attachment to actions, and how we get bound to them – this whole subject is now brought to a fitting conclusion from the teaching point of view. The fact is that those who are not conversant with the truth cannot help being attached to the “action-chain”. It is not their fault. It is due to the veil of Maya that covers all souls that are unenlightened.

Under this circumstance, how should those who are enlightened relate to those who are not? That is now concluded in the next two Padas:

3-4 The Lord's message to teachers of the Science of Karma Yoga is now given in terms that are crystal clear: The message given in verse 26, is now repeated here to indicate the conclusion of its discussion.

The Functions of the Gunas:

This is a good point to add the following information about the Gunas:

Each of the three Gunas has its own specific characteristic which manifests in all actions that it is involved in. If a particular Guna is predominant in us in general, all our actions will have the "signature" of that Guna written all over it. What are these marks by which a Guna is known?

There are three major categories in which they can be grouped:

i) **Jnana Shakti**: This is a Sattwic manifestation. This operates mainly in the **intellect**. It is the drive or urge we feel from within to know and understand things in their true light, to acquire knowledge, to study and to reflect deeply upon that study.

ii) **Kriya Shakti**: This is a Rajasic manifestation. This operates mainly through **desire**. All actions spring from the urge produced by desire. All action is a Rajasic movement requiring motive power. That motive power is Desire.

iii) **Ichha Shakti**: This is a Tamasic manifestation. Desires are taken to mean our worldly desires, and they are prompted by our Tamasic ignorance or **delusion**, which fails to see the truth of the Self, and therefore looks to the not-Self for its satisfaction. Wanting God is termed 'aspiration' and is a positive Ichha or desire, and not included when we speak of desires in general.

Knowledge of the operation of these three powers – Jnana Shakti, Kriya Shakti and Ichha Shakti – helps one to grasp the teaching mentioned earlier that it is the Gunas that act and the Gunas that manifest as sense objects.

CLOSURE ON TEACHING

1. Teaching is like performing **Surgery**. Only after suitable anaesthesia is surgery performed. So also, only after the student is carefully prepared for it by being de-sensitised to the shock of new knowledge, is that knowledge to be gently imparted to him.

2. Acharyaji made it a point of telling us that in Vedanta we often come across words such as 'ignorant', 'deluded', 'foolish', 'fools', etc. These should not be taken in a negative sense as being insulting remarks. They are purely technical terms, commonly used in Vedanta to describe the state of ignorance and its effects. If the reader is also an aspirant seeking the Truth, he will accept these terms with an open heart. By the same token, the opposite of these words do not intend to unduly praise the 'wise ones'! They, too, are only technical Vedantic terms.

3. In the context of these verses, knowledge refers to one who has an intellect subtle enough to detect the play of the three Gunas in all his actions, and thereby remain unmoved by them. Ignorance refers to the opposite, i.e. not seeing the Gunas but simply seeing the end result of their interplay, and therefore not having any idea of how actions can be controlled intelligently.

In the single verse that follows, verse 30, a perfect review is given of the science of **Karma Yoga** and its main principles. It is interesting to consider why Sri Veda Vyasa would want to place a ‘Summary Verse’ at this point. It seems like a stray verse and relates only to the main subject of the Discourse, not to the verses surrounding it.

Here is one possible reason for this:

Since verse 20, we had a six-verse diversion on “*Examples of Great Men*”. This was followed by the four-verse diversion on the “*Art of Teaching*”. The two verses after the next form another diversion on “*Attitude Towards the Teaching*”. This verse is, therefore, in the midst of two diversions to the main topic of the Discourse. It could be a structural technique used by Sri Vyasaji to anchor us to the overall theme of Karma Yoga.

Verse 30: *The Perfect Definition of Karma Yoga*

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।

निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः

॥ ३-३०॥

mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi saṁnyasyādhyātmacētasā |

nirāśīrṇirmamō bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvarah

|| 3-30||

1	<i>Mayi sarvaani karmaani</i>	<i>In Me are All actions</i>
2	<i>sannyasya adhyaatma chetasaa;</i>	<i>renounced, with the mind centred on the Self.</i>
3	<i>niraasheeh nirmama bhootvaa</i>	<i>Having become free from hope and egoism,</i>
4	<i>yudhyasva vigata-jvarah.</i>	<i>and free from mental fever, do thou fight.</i>

Being a defining verse, we first list all the principles covered in this verse:

- i) **Karmaani Sannyasa:** 1 Renunciation of all actions;
- ii) **Adhyatma Chetasa:** 2 Centering the mind on the Self;
- iii) **Niraasheeh:** 3a free from hope; i.e. renunciation of the fruit of action.
- iv) **Nirmama:** 3b free from “mine”-ness or egoism; i.e. no feeling of “Doership”;
- v) **Vigatajvarah:** 4a free from all mental fever; i.e. mind is not restless;
- vi) **Yudhyasva:** 4b Fight, i.e. do your bounden duty.

This verse acts as a perfect “**Prescription**” for the Arjuna-disease. Administered by the Divine Doctor Sri Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield, it would work well for all people even today. The prescription contains six pills: the first two ‘pills’ are for Vyavasaayaatmika Buddhi; the next three ‘pills’ are for Samatva Buddhi; and the last ‘pill’ is for Swadharma. This is the complete remedy prescribed for Arjuna to restore him to ‘normal health’.

Regarding Samatva or equipoise in action, there is a pill each for: anxieties of the future (results of action); accumulations of the past (mine-ness); and the restlessness of the present. All these treated together produce Samatva Buddhi or the equipoised mind.

Pujya Gurudev adds a further simile to express the glory of this verse: Taking away selfish desires from actions is like removing the fangs of a serpent – the moment that is done it is no longer poisonous. A heart laden with selfish desires represents the poisonous ‘fangs’ of action which have a binding effect on man.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE TEACHING

The following two verses cover an aspect that concerns the seeker's attitude and approach to the Geeta. As he does not have the complete knowledge, he has to trust his teacher to proceed further. The benefits come only if he holds in his mind the key ingredients of **Reverence** and **Faith**.

Verse 31: *Need for Reverence & Faith*

ये मे मतमिदं नित्यमनुतिष्ठन्ति मानवाः ।
श्रद्धावन्तोऽनसूयन्तो मुच्यन्ते तेऽपि कर्मभिः ॥ ३-३१॥
yē mē matamidaṁ nityamanutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ |
śraddhāvantō:'nasūyantō mucyantē tē:'pi karmabhiḥ || 3-31||

1	<i>Ye me matam idam nityam</i>	<i>This teaching of Mine – those who constantly</i>
2	<i>anutishthanti maanavaah;</i>	<i><u>practise</u> it – such men,</i>
3	<i>shraddhaa-vantah an-asooyantah</i>	<i>full of <u>faith</u> and <u>not</u> cavilling,</i>
4	<i>muchyante te api karmabhih.</i>	<i>they also are freed from actions.</i>

Verse 32: *Deluded Critics are Doomed*

ये त्वेतदभ्यसूयन्तो नानुतिष्ठन्ति मे मतम् ।
सर्वज्ञानविमूढांस्तान्विद्धि नष्टानचेतसः ॥ ३-३२॥
yē tvētaḍabhyasūyantō nānutiṣṭhanti mē matam |
sarvajñānavimūḍhāṁstānviddhi naṣṭānacētasah || 3-32||

5	<i>Ye tu etat abhyasooyantah</i>	<i>But those who <u>carp</u> at this</i>
6	<i>na anu-tishthanti me matam;</i>	<i>teaching of Mine without <u>practising</u> it,</i>
7	<i>sarva-jnaana vimoodhaan taan</i>	<i>they, <u>deluded</u> in all knowledge, and</i>
8	<i>viddhi nashtaan achetasah.</i>	<i>devoid of <u>discrimination</u>, know them to be doomed.</i>

A word on what is meant by '**Me**' will help. When Sri Krishna uses this pronoun in this scripture, He is using it to refer to a much larger entity than His human form. The 'Me' refers to Ishwara, the Creator of the universe and the laws which govern it.

1-4 The first verse speaks of the benefits received from the teaching by one who has the right attitude; **5-8** the second refers to the opposite type who criticises it.

Insistence on Practice

Is Lord Krishna demanding blind faith or forcing people to follow Him? That has never been His method and has never been the method of the Hindu religion, which stands out in the world as the most tolerant and flexible religion.

Faith is a requirement of the science, not of the teacher. The principle of faith is brought into focus as it is an important element upon which one's practice of these

teachings depends. The Lord is quiet clear that this faith has to be there. The teachings on spirituality will only bring their fruits if the faith and correct attitude are present in a seeker. This is a rule that applies to any teaching, under any teacher, in any part of the world.

It would be unjust to infer any dogmatism from these verses. **Dogma** can be ruled out because a dogmatic teaching cannot stand the test of practice. A dogmatic teacher demands only acceptance, not practice. The teaching on Karma Yoga is not a dogma but a rational science. Hence, the Lord insists on its practice. If practised, the benefits are certain. A genuine medicine will surely cure if it is taken.

The taste of the pudding is in the eating; also, the test of a medicine is that it cures the disease. In the same way, the test of Lord Krishna's teaching lies in the constant practice of it. The sincere will practice the teaching with faith, and only they will benefit.

Carping at the Teaching

Nashtaan: "ruined" or "doomed". This is a self-inflicted punishment, not one administered by Sri Krishna against those who carp and cavil at His teachings. In Hinduism there is no practice of killing those who criticise the religion. Those who criticise unjustly are punished by their own thoughts in due course. In Hinduism, the Truth is held to be indestructible. People only destroy themselves by adhering dogmatically to untruth!

If a seeker is not able to have faith in a teaching, it is more honourable for him to simply leave and go to another teacher, than to criticize and cavil at the teachings. To carp and cavil is unworthy of any person towards any teacher. It is simply bad manners.

Just as an insult to the nation's President is an insult to the nation itself and *vice versa*, so also, caviling of these teachings is tantamount to caviling at Ishwara, the Creator. This is quite a reasonable deduction. There is fairness and decency in it.

Having completed the three diversions since verse 20, Lord Krishna now returns to the main topic of Karma Yoga in earnest by taking up the most 'unappealing part' (from the layman's view) of the Sadhana, namely, self-restraint and curbing of desires, in the next two sections.



3.7 SELF-RESTRAINT IN PRACTICE

(Verses 33-35, 3 No.)

WE RETURN TO THE main plot of the Discourse, continuing from where we left it at verse 19. We had rounded off a view of our actions with respect to the microcosm and with respect to the macrocosm. In this small section, Sri Krishna discusses a crucial aspect which gives the most trouble to most beginners on the path of Karma Yoga. He talks freely and frankly to Arjuna about **Self-restraint** and the difficulties faced in practising it.

Verse 33: “What Can Restraint Do?”

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।
प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥ ३-३३॥
sadṛśam cēṣṭatē svasyāḥ prakṛtēṛjñānavānapi |
prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati ॥ 3-33॥

1	<i>Sadrisham cheshtate svasyaah</i>	<i>Acting in accordance to his <u>own</u></i>
2	<i>prakriteh jnaana-vaan api;</i>	<i><u>nature</u> – even in the case of a <u>wise man</u> –</i>
3	<i>prakritim yaanti bhootaani</i>	<i>beings will follow their <u>own nature</u>.</i>
4	<i>nigrahah kim karishyati.</i>	<i>What can <u>restraint</u> do?</i>

1-2 Svasyaah Prakriteh: “own nature”. Because men and women are helplessly governed by their own nature, they cannot act otherwise but in accordance with the Gunas prevailing in them. This applies to everyone, including the wise. This needs to be clarified:

2 Jnaanavaan Api: “Even a wise man” – Acharyaji clarified that this has to be interpreted intelligently. It does not mean that a Jnani, too, succumbs to sinful tendencies as the rest of humanity does. It means the Jnani will act according to *his* nature, which is sinless, as all seeds of desire are burnt in him. In terms of the Gunas, the Jnani has transcended all the Gunas. He is no longer under their sway. We will learn more of the *Gunateeta* and his conduct in Discourse 14.

3 The point being made is that it is not as easy as one may imagine to keep a check on one’s desires. This is a life-long struggle. There will be difficult times when the senses are tested to their limit. Even in the case of those spiritual practitioners who have been on the Path for many years but who have not reached the goal, the danger always lurks of a slip in their self-discipline. How much more danger is there for a beginner on the path?

And we do not mention anything about those who are not on the Path and are given to sense cravings all the time! Invariably it is they who sit in judgement over Jnanis and seasoned spiritual aspirants who are making sincere efforts to control their senses.

4 The intellect may understand but it may not obey! Restraint is an effort of the intellect to bring some control in one’s lower nature (Rajasic and Tamasic). In order to do

this with reasonable success, it needs to be Sattwic. However, it sometimes slides into Rajas or Tamas, and fails to apply the same restraining power over the senses.

Verse 34: At Mental Level – “Avoid Likes and Dislikes”

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥ ३-३४॥
indriyasyēndriyasyārthē rāgadvēṣau vyavasthitau |
tayōrna vaśamāgacchēttau hyasya paripanthinau ॥ 3-34॥

1	<i>Indriyasya indriyasya arthe</i>	<i>In the senses and in the objects of the senses</i>
2	<i>raga-dveshau vyavasthitau;</i>	<i>abide attachment and aversion for them.</i>
3	<i>tayoh na vasham aagacchhet</i>	<i>Let none come under the sway of these two,</i>
4	<i>tau hi asya pari-panthinau.</i>	<i>for they are verily his foes.</i>

However, all is not lost when failures as described in the previous verse occur. In these two verses Sri Krishna gives even such a person great hope of succeeding on this path. This verse offers help at the mental level; the next one offers help at the physical level.

Verse 33 may give the impression to a seeker that it is pointless doing so much Sadhana to keep temptations at bay when, at any time, at the bidding of Nature (implying beyond our control), one’s resistance can just crumble up. Is there to be no hope of success then? What is the use of a medicine that is not available when we need it? It’s a question that Arjuna the seeker is bound to start pondering over. Sri Krishna foresees this . . .

The Medicine IS Available Always!

1-2 The matter is not so hopeless. The medicine is always available for this problem. The medicine is to be alert against likes and dislikes (attachment and aversion).

Likes and dislikes are the two sides of the same coin; if one is there, the other will also be present. Sri Krishna pins our problem down to these two factors. They are our “foes”. We have to be on guard against them.

Likes and dislikes extend into every department of life. The obvious one is Food and Drinks, where likes and dislikes hold sway and remain largely unchallenged. But it goes on to everything else – the TV programmes we watch, the books we read, the relationships we keep, our dress, our entertainment, and so on.

How to Tackle Likes and Dislikes

3-4 Raga and Dwesha: “Likes and dislikes” – these are the two terrorists that lie in wait to hi-jack us. Their work is to tyrannise us. Acharyaji liked the word ‘tyranny’ in this context as it fits most appropriately. We must guard against their tyranny. They sway our minds, victimize us, they are like highway robbers that come to steal our peace of mind. We are asked to be alert and guarded against them.

These robbers do not come with knives and guns. They are a different breed of robbers. They come with sweet words, so we may not even recognise them or notice their

presence when they come. We may think they are our friends. But they soon capture us and make us their slaves.

How to detect them? We have to introspect and examine our motives every single time. We need to post a policeman over our own minds. Are we drawn to things only because we like them? Conversely, are we repelled from things because of some dislike towards them? Is there a higher, nobler reason that guides our actions, or is it just some vague feeling of like and dislike? Such deep self-enquiry is needed to detect these terrorists.

ACHARYAJI'S HELP IN SELF-RESTRAINT

Generally, we know what we have to keep away from – the wrong foods, alcohol, smoking, illicit sexual relationships, etc. We have to watch our mind when it is drawn towards these and arrest it from coming under their sway.

Acharyaji said the most practical way is to call on God for help at all times. We should always feel, “This body is God’s, not mine. I am not going to use it for the wrong purposes. I am only a trustee of this body.” Sometimes we may lose, but we should never stop fighting or else the likes and dislikes will get the better of us. If we stop the fight, we will become permanent losers.

In this way, the last laugh will be ours. Although Prakriti is so powerful as to sway us at any time, that does not mean that what the Shastras are saying is not possible. We have to try very hard. Spiritual life is a battle from start to finish. It is a constant struggle. Each time we stage a fight against our lower tendencies we become stronger. And each time we neglect to fight back, the enemies get stronger.

Keeping the great goal ahead in our mind is also another important help. These are the two practical ways of overcoming the force of Prakriti and winning this battle.

Acharyaji was very emphatic on this point as it is the central arena of the spiritual struggle. He ended with: “We can conquer these robbers; we must conquer them; and we SHALL conquer them!” Alert, vigilant living is itself a Sadhana.

A very good example was given to us as a final reminder. Sri Rama is always seen with His bow and arrow, even in all His ‘family photographs’ (i.e. with Mother Sita, Sri Lakshman and Sri Hanuman). Why is this so? Symbolically, it means that He is always alert, ready to fight at any time when attacked by these robbers. The Vasanas of likes and dislikes can arise at any time, in any situation. We must be ready with our bow and arrow!

All this is at the mental level. Is there not something that we can do at the physical level to stop these tendencies from arising? The Lord has the answer in the next verse.

Verse 35: *At Physical Level – “Do Your Allotted Duty”*

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।

स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः

॥ ३-३५॥

śrēyānsvadharmō viguṇaḥ paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt |

svadharmē nidhanaṁ śrēyaḥ paradharmō bhayāvahaḥ || 3-35||

1	<i>Shreyaan swadharmah vigunah</i>	<i>Better one's own duty, though devoid of merit,</i>
2	<i>para-dharmaat swanushthitaat;</i>	<i>than the duty of another well-discharged.</i>
3	<i>swadharme nidhanam shreyah</i>	<i>Better is death in one's own duty;</i>
4	<i>para-dharmah bhayaavahah.</i>	<i>the duty of another is fraught with fear.</i>

Here Sri Krishna gives Arjuna another very practical means at the physical level of life to keep a check on our likes and dislikes. **Stick to Duty** – if we do just that, most of our struggle will be overcome. Swadharma can be our anchor to righteousness and resistance against evil tendencies in the mind.

1 Sticking to one's duty sounds like an insignificant matter, but it has a very deep calming and steadying effect on our mind. What is it that makes us want to depart from our duties, to shirk them, or to go and do something else, someone else's duties? The answer is *Likes and Dislikes*.

Swadharma is our connection to God, our connection to the Cosmic Wheel of Action that was spoken of earlier. It is where we fit in the grand scheme of the cosmos. We cannot drop that and run elsewhere, for it is our anchorage, our unique place in life.

Thus, we come a full circle back to the insistence on Swadharma, where Sri Krishna started in verse 8 of this chapter and, going even further back, in verse 31 of Chapter 2. All the reasons for Arjuna to perform his duty have been covered in this circle.

2 We may be good at another person's job, but still our own duty is what is best for us. Acharyaji gave our own situation as an example. We are all at Sandeepany to study. Studying is our duty. If we start thinking of going to the office and helping there because we enjoy some type of work there, it would put us in the danger zone. However attractive something else is, we should never abandon our own task or duty allotted to us.

3 There is a special divine protection we get in sticking to our own duty which is absent the minute we drop it and go to something else. Sri Krishna is so emphatic on this point that He says it is better to die doing our duty than to do another's duty. This may be literally true in the case of Arjuna on the battlefield, but it is figuratively true for all of us.

4 If we drop our own duty and do someone else's, there will always be a nagging voice on our conscience. "Am I doing the right thing?" – This will haunt us all the time. The words "fraught with danger" refer to this danger within ourselves, not any external danger.

Acharyaji's final word on this verse was: "If we do our duty properly, with full attention and perfection, then there will really be no time to spare to think of anything else and get distracted into the danger zone."

Thus the topic of Self-restraint in the practice of Karma Yoga has been covered. Sri Krishna is now ready to go further, but first He has to take a question from Arjuna which is building up in his heart since verse 33 when the Lord said, "What can restraint do?"



3.8 THE “SLAYING” OF DESIRE

(Verses 36-41, 6 No.)

ARJUNA’S QUESTION IS mankind’s question on this universal problem that bugs all people all the time. There seems to be a never-ending struggle against our lower nature by which we feel sometimes that we are driven by force to commit actions against our will, no matter how much we try to stop them. The chain smoker feels he just can’t stop the habit.

Verse 36: “*What Propels One to Sin?*”

अर्जुन उवाच ।
अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥ ३-३६॥
arjuna uvāca |
atha kēna prayuktō:'yam pāpam carati pūruṣaḥ |
anicchannapi vārṣṇeya balādiva niyōjitaḥ ॥ 3-36॥

	<i>Arjuna Uvaacha:</i>	<i>Arjuna said:</i>
1	<i>Atha kena prayuktah ayam</i>	But <u>impelled</u> by what
2	<i>paapam charati poorushah;</i>	does man commit this <u>sin</u> ,
3	<i>anicchhan api, Vaarshneya,</i>	even though against his wishes, O Varshneya,
4	<i>balaat iva niyojitah.</i>	constrained <u>by force</u> , as it were?

1-2 Verse 33 brought up this topic in the context of likes and dislikes. It taught us that our likes (which should be taken to include our dislikes, as they are treated as the same) drive us to do the wrong things. For instance, because we *like* ice-cream, we are driven to have it at every possible opportunity, and then fall sick afterwards.

3-4 But Arjuna sees the problem as worse than that. He can understand being attracted by force to something we like; but how does one explain being attracted to something we do not like? When we genuinely are trying to give up something, why are we still pulled to it by force? Where is this driving force coming from? That is Arjuna’s doubt.

Punya and Paapa – the Definitions

At this point Acharyaji gave us proper definitions for *Punya* and *Paapa*, merit and demerit, being sinless and being sinful. These definitions have a bearing on the answer that Sri Krishna is about to give, and hence it is worth pausing to thoroughly grasp these two technical terms in Vedanta:

i) **Punya:** is *merit* resulting from good deeds; the root meaning comes from ‘Pu’, meaning “that which purifies us or takes us towards our Self.”

ii) **Paapa**: this is *demerit* resulting from sinful deeds; the root meaning comes from ‘Paa’, meaning “that which protects”, in this case it means “protecting our current state”. It implies a resistance to change. We wish to protect our ignorant state in every possible way. If we feel that state threatened, we are willing to sin in order to protect it. This is the root of sin. It is an “ego-protection mechanism”.

The whole world of aspirants awaits the Lord’s answer:

Verse 37: Desire & Anger

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
 काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
 महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥ ३-३७॥

śrībhagavānuvāca |
 kāma ēṣa krōdha ēṣa rajōguṇasamudbhavaḥ |
 mahāśanō mahāpāpmā viddhyēnamiha vairiṇam ॥ 3-37॥

	<i>Shree Bhagavaan Uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>Kaama eshah krodhah eshah</i>	<i>It is Desire, it is Anger,</i>
2	<i>rajo-guna sam-udbhavah;</i>	<i>born of the active quality of <u>Rajas</u>.</i>
3	<i>mahaa-shanah mahaa-paapmaa</i>	<i>It is all-devouring and all-sinful.</i>
4	<i>viddhi enam iha vairinam.</i>	<i>Know this to be <u>the foe</u> here (in the fight against sin).</i>

The Lord goes to the very heart of the question at the very outset.

1-2 Lust and Anger are the culprits. Desire is insatiable and anger is positively wicked. They are, undoubtedly, formidable as well as familiar foes. And where do they arise from? – From Rajas Guna, the quality of restlessness.

If this was the answer then why did Sri Krishna ask us to beware of likes and dislikes in verse 34, and not lust and anger? There is a very good reason:

Checkpoint at the Right Spot

There is great wisdom in Sri Krishna’s suggestion in verse 34 and it may be understood with the following example.

International flights these days are thoroughly checked against terrorist attacks. The checkpoint is the airport terminal itself, not in the plane, least of all when it has already taken off! At the terminal something can be done to avert a threat. In the plane it is too late to check.

It is the same in the case of sense-control which we are considering. The terminal building stands for ‘Likes & Dislikes’. The plane itself stands for ‘Desire & Anger’. If the bomb is not detected and snuffed at the L&D stage, there is no chance of saving the plane when it reaches the D&A stage on the plane itself. This is the reason why Sri Krishna installed the checkpoint wisely at the L&D stage in verse 34.

When L&D are left unchecked, they grow into their dangerous and uncontrollable counterparts, D&A. Then it is too late to do anything about warding off the attack.

Raga is '*I like*'. When it is treated lightly and ignored, it develops into the serious threat of Lust which is '*I want*'. The pimple has become a boil; the infection has become a cancer; the bronchitis left unattended has become pleurisy. This in brief is why it is not just sensible but imperative to attend to the problem of our likes and dislikes while it can still be treated safely.

There is a saying: "A stitch in time saves nine!"

Arjuna's "I Don't Want"

An important point about Arjuna's question is that he feels that even when he does not want to commit sin, he is impelled to sin. There appears to him to be some extraneous force acting against him arbitrarily, i.e. without reason.

3-4 Nothing in nature happens without reason, is Sri Krishna's clear answer. If a terrorist attack has taken place, then it means the 'bomb' was not detected earlier. It means that Arjuna's "I don't want" is not strictly true, but only superficial. Deep down the desire has sneaked in undetected. There is no chance in these matters. Only desire will cause such surprise attacks. The 'bomb' of desire was not detected; it went through unnoticed.

In ordinary life, this happens many times. We do not pay attention to these serious forces called 'likes and dislikes'. We take them to be innocent. But they are not so innocent. They arise from a deeper level in our mind called desire. Every time we satisfy a like we are strengthening that desire deep down. Eventually that desire takes complete control over us. It only appears to us as if it is coming by surprise. We have planted it there, we have watered it and nurtured it, and when it grows into a tree, we are surprised by it!

Suppressed desire will eventually burst through the "mental checkpoint" and manifest itself in action. That is its terrorist tactic.

This is why it is called "Enemy No 1". How do we handle it?

Verse 38: *The Three Stages of Desire*

धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निर्यथादर्शो मलेन च ।

यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस्तथा तेनेदमावृतम्

॥ ३-३८॥

dhūmēnāvriyatē vahniriyathādarśo malēna ca |

yathōlbēnāvṛtō garbhastathā tēnēdamāvṛtam

|| 3-38||

1	<i>Dhoomena aavriyate vanhih</i>	As <i>fire</i> is enveloped by <i>smoke</i> ;
2	<i>yathaa aadarshah malena cha;</i>	as a <i>mirror</i> by <i>dust</i> ;
3	<i>yathaa ulbena aavritah garbhah</i>	and as an <i>embryo</i> by the <i>womb</i> ;
4	<i>tathaa tena idam aavritam.</i>	so is ' <i>this</i> ' enveloped by ' <i>that</i> '.

The scientific approach of the Geeta is beautifully illustrated in this verse, where we have three examples presented to us. The text itself does not say what they represent. We are kept in suspense as to what 'this' and 'that' actually stand for.

If we look at the examples carefully (of course, we needed an Acharyaji to do that for us) we see that they actually mark out three distinct stages of the development of desire and anger. The systematic approach goes down even to the choice of each simile!

Three Stages of Desire & Anger:

Each example stands for a different stage in the growth of desire and anger. Even the order is significant – it goes from mild to intense; what a thorough analyst Sri Vyasaji was!

1 i) *Manda Vasana*: when the Vasana or tendency is mild or *Sookshma* (subtle); this is illustrated by the simile of a fire enveloped by smoke.

2 ii) *Madhyama Vasana*: when the tendency is middling or *Sthoola* (gross); this is illustrated by a mirror covered by dust.

3 iii) *Tivra Vasana*: when the tendency is very intense or *Ati-Sthoola* (very gross); this is illustrated by a fetus that is ‘trapped’ tightly in a womb.

The Similes Explained:

Let us now take a closer look at each of the three similes and see how they are so appropriate for each of the three stages.

1 i) *Fire Covered by Smoke*: The fire covered in smoke cannot be seen. The brightness is covered. However, the heat is still present and can be felt. Similarly, the intellect’s brightness is not seen, but there is still heat in it. It can still act to an extent. It is not incapacitated.

A mere breath of air – by blowing “phoo, phoo” into the fire – can clear out the smoke and re-kindle the fire, and restore the situation to normalcy.

2 ii) *Mirror Covered by Dust*: When a mirror is covered by dust, the reflection cannot be seen at all. There is no sign of the mirror. It is as if it is hidden away. The intellect is not available in this stage. The intellect cannot come to our rescue when ‘that’ gets to the middle stage. ‘That’ stands as a wall in front of us, blocking all functioning.

However, the fortunate thing is that if we get a good rag and wipe off the mirror properly to restore the mirror, then it will do its job once again. A little more effort is required to correct the error; some rubbing is needed; something more than just blowing air onto it.

3 iii) *Foetus Wrapped in the Womb*: This is the chronic stage of ‘that’, very hard to check. The intellect is completely trapped, as it were, like a fetus in a womb. It sits there, counting the months, as it were, with not a hope of any freedom in sight. Tightly wrapped up, there is barely room to move – so intensely is the intellect bound. In fact, the intellect becomes totally dysfunctional, making no response to ‘that’, which now runs rampantly as it pleases.

The remedy here will take a long time. A fetus has to wait for nine months till it sees the light of freedom. The intellect may have to wait for years, it may even be into the next or subsequent births, before it emerges out of ‘that’! Spiritual recovery has to wait for its proper time.

Explanation Using the Gunas

The same examples can be explained using the three Gunas.

[Notice how thoroughly scientific is the Lord’s method of teaching Arjuna – a Divine Teacher of the highest order. It needed our Acharyaji to unravel all this wisdom that is locked into this single verse. That is something we students can ever be grateful to him for.]

i) ***Sattwic*:** In this state ‘that’ can be transcended easily. Acharyaji gave the example of Sri Ramakrishna who had attained the highest in Bhakti. When he was being taken to the

Advaitic stage, it required only a little urging from his Advaita Guru, Sri Totapuri, to get beyond the barrier of the Mother's Form and into the Non-Dual state.

ii) **Rajasic**: A little more effort is needed to eradicate the Rajasic state of 'that'.

iii) **Tamasic**: This form is thick and gross. 'That' will go on torturing the person for a long, long time – many births perhaps – before it eventually gets cleared.

Verse 39: *The Application of the Similes*

आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।

कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च

॥ ३-३९॥

āvṛtaṁ jñānamētēna jñāninō nityavairiṇā |

kāmarūpēṇa kauntēya duṣpūrēṇānalēna ca

|| 3-39||

1	<i>Aavritam JNAANAM etena</i>	<i>Enveloped is WISDOM by this</i>
2	<i>jnaaninah nitya vairinaa;</i>	<i>the constant <u>enemy</u> of the wise,</i>
3	<i>KAAMA roopena, Kaunteya,</i>	<i>whose form is DESIRE, O son of Kunti.</i>
4	<i>dushpoorena analena cha.</i>	<i>It is as <u>unappeasable</u> as fire.</i>

What were the mysterious 'this' and 'that' of the last verse? Sri Krishna now lets the cat out of the bag. He gives us the **Drishtanta** or application of the above similes in this verse. Only in the application do we see what the similes really mean.

Calling Arjuna as Kaunteya indicates that there is a great deal of affection in Sri Krishna's heart. For Sri Krishna had a great love for Mother Kunti, the mother of Arjuna. It was Mother Kunti's standing prayer to Sri Krishna that He should give her any amount of hardships in life as that alone would make her remember Him always. And so, with great love and compassion, the Divine Teacher throws full light on the similes:

1-2 'This' turns out to be the **Wisdom** of the intellect.

3-4 'That' is the **Desire** which resides in our heart.

"Wisdom is clouded by Desire".

Desire is not something that leaves us lightly. Acharyaji said it was not like a beggar coming to us who would go away if we gave him a few rupees. A beggar can be told not to come again by giving him a little more and sending him away firmly. But desire cannot be handled like that. A visit from Desire is like a troublesome mosquito – it will persist again and again until it is finally butted out by the dawn of Self-knowledge.

Desire troubles aspirants in a fair measure. In fact, as Acharyaji put it, desire is a problem only to the aspirant fraternity; others do not have any problem with it! Most people want more of it, they want to be friends with it, unaware of its cunning ways.

Why is Lust So Powerful an Enemy?

Acharyaji used this verse to give us more insight into the nature of Desire. An example of a top South African Olympic athlete was given. He was a gold-medalist. However, sadly, under the impulse of desire, he committed a serious murder.

*Lust is the clutch that disengages the flywheel of our **intellect** from the engine of **discrimination**.*

However strong the intellect, it is the heart which reigns when it comes to action. The central will to act is in the heart. As Acharyaji described it, “The heart takes signing authority over the intellect. If the heart says so, the intellect has no power to stop it. Desire gains the consent of the heart and ignores the intellect. Desire is the Avatara born of Likes and Dislikes.”

इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते ।
 एतैर्विमोहयत्येष ज्ञानमावृत्य देहिनम्
 indriyāṇi manō buddhirasyādhiṣṭhānamucyatē |
 ētaiṛvimōhayatyēsa jñānamāvṛtya dēhinam

1	<i>Indriyaani manah buddhiih</i>	The <u>senses</u> , the <u>mind</u> and the <u>intellect</u>
2	<i>asya adhishtaanam uchyate;</i>	are said to be its seats .
3	<i>etaih vimohayati eshah</i>	Through these it (desire) <u>deludes</u> the
4	<i>jnaanam aavritya dehinam.</i>	embodied one by veiling his wisdom .

ii) **Over the Mind:** It captures the imagination of the mind, and makes it believe that this joy of the senses is the real thing to be had again and again. It sows the seed of addiction in the mind.

iii) **Over the Intellect:** It paralyses the intellect's power of discrimination, rendering it helpless to make any judgement against its own force, i.e. the force of passion.

3-4 By such domination over the three inner instruments, Desire begins to take full charge of the subtle body. It captures the jugular vein and throttles our intellect to death. The gross body merely follows the orders of the subtle body, as a lamb its shepherd.

Desire, as the representative of Maya, works to delude the Jeeva by its total control. Acharyaji gave an allegory to illustrate this:

There was a country called Peace. Its President was Mr Self and Prime Minister Mr Wise. However the Assistant to the Prime Minister was a Mr Fickle, who controlled 10 Chief Ministers. Everything was going smoothly until one day a Mr Charmer came to the country to do trade. He operated secretly. He never went directly to the Prime Minister, but worked covertly with the Chief Ministers. He managed to bribe them all. Eventually, through Mr Fickle he was able to get a free trade licence. He brought in his whole business machinery and staff headed by Mr Desire, who was assisted by Mr Jealousy, Mr Delusion, Mr Corruption and Mr Temptation. It is now clear how he operated. Within a short period he had brought the country down into economic tatters!

That is the working of Desire. This is why the next verse has to be seen with so much importance; it tells exactly how to deal with such a dangerous, unscrupulous guest.

Verse 41: *Slay Desire At Once!*

तस्मात्त्वमिन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ ।

पाप्मानं प्रजहि ह्येनं ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम् ॥ ३-४१॥

tasmāttvamindriyāṇyādaū niyamya bharatarṣabha |

pāpmānaṁ prajahi hyēnaṁ jñānavijñānanāśanam ॥ 3-41॥

1	<i>Tasmaat twam indriyaani aadau</i>	<i>Therefore, from the <u>very beginning</u> these senses</i>
2	<i>niyamya, Bharatarshabha;</i>	<i>have to be protected, O Best of the Bharatas.</i>
3	<i>paapmaanam prajahi hi enam</i>	<i><u>Slay</u> this sinful thing called Desire,</i>
4	<i>jnaana vijnaana naashanam.</i>	<i>the <u>destroyer</u> of all knowledge and wisdom.</i>

1-2 Dealing with a sweet-talking visitor may appear to be a very different project from dealing with a hostile enemy. That is not the way Sri Krishna sees it. He sees the inner purpose of the visitor. If it is a vile corrupting one like Desire, the worst type that exists, then there is only one way to deal with him.

3-4 Usually there are four stages in dealing with an enemy of the State. First is peace-seeking, then reconciliation, then dividing the strength of the enemy, and finally, if all else fails, war with the enemy.

However, in the case of Desire, known to be the king of terrorists to spiritual aspirants, the treatment is the final one from the outset. No sweet talk with this enemy – he is too dangerous to deserve such consideration. He has to be killed at once.

Of course, we need to make sure we ‘kill’ the right person. This is not so easy as Desire is not an *external* enemy who can be shot with a bullet. He dwells within each one of us. We need to first recognize him there before we pull the trigger!

A Visit from Desire

A visit from Desire could be rather unpredictable, but we attempt here a six-point Recognition Map, expressed in the first person as it applies to each one of us.

I may recognise the Desire-Mind in the following way. Yes, he will be sweet-talking, but many good, well meaning thoughts are also like that. How do I differentiate the good thought from the enemy Desire-thought? There are certain traits in Mr Desire which I have to be discerning enough to notice. . .

Point 1. Firstly, He will always offer me his presents. What are his presents? It is pleasure, that tingling sensation of the nerves which makes me feel so nice. That itself is not conclusive, but he knows that it will bring me 80% of the way to his door. He offers them with certain conditions. I should carefully examine those conditions. He offers them with great pomp and festivity, and puts a price tag on it, so that I am convinced it has great value. He will have something to market at every turn of the festivities. I have to keep a lookout for all the disguises he comes in, for he always catches his victim unawares.

Point 2. He tries to bypass my chief executive officer, the intellect, and goes directly to the 'men on the floor', my senses. He is very wary of my chief, and terribly afraid to work directly under his eye.

Point 3. Slowly he starts buying off my agents, the senses, winning them over to his side. He does so through numerous pretty and tempting objects which ooze with pleasure at every breath. His plan usually works very well. He soon gets some sort of a foothold for his dark work. Then he starts his business, which, as it is unchecked, soon blows up into a flourishing empire. He extends his working hours; not concerned about my sleep, he keeps me awake with his business till late hours into the night. Sometimes he even has me in his grip the whole night. It suits him perfectly then if I sleep during the day, for that is when he also takes a rest.

Working furiously, especially at night, and during my meal-times, he establishes his business well in me. He is very prim and proper in all his arrangements to organize this gift of pleasure, for that is his primary means to trap me.

Point 4. Now, I notice another trait in him. He always wants to win, and can never take a loss without kicking up a fuss, or even flaring up in anger against me, if I disappoint him in any of his plans. He just hates defeat. He is not satisfied until I do all his bidding like his obedient servant.

Point 5. And so goes his bible of surreptitious action. It is Power that he really wants over me. He is not interested in advancing my knowledge. In fact he seems to know that knowledge is a rival power to him, so he tries his best to suppress me from learning more.

Point 6. He feeds on my likes and dislikes. His promise to me is Happiness. Very soon he convinces me that he can get anything I want. He convinces me that I can be happy only if I shop at his super-store, the hypermarket where I can get anything and everything I want to make me happy. He advertises himself through the TV as a kind of 'angel of pleasure'. His work is done when he has me addicted to his business at all times. His teaching is "Happiness is obtainable only through him."

There I have all the six recognition features. The most important one is that he lives in my heart, among my emotions in particular, and stays far way from my intellect. He is terribly afraid of the intellect, but very comfortable with my mind where he eventually builds up his empire. That is where I need to look for him to slay him.

The Slaying of Desire

Through experience I have discovered certain very useful ways to curb the power of this visitor called Desire. Every time he pops up his head to want this, that or the other useless thing which I don't really require, I am alert and tell him a big, strong 'NO!' I send him away without discussing anything with him. I do not give him any prime time. I do not give him access to my 'ten ministers', I mean my senses. If I do, I know he will start bribing them immediately. Window shopping with him is very dangerous and I have learnt to literally rule it out. On such occasions in the past, he has snatched away all my senses.

I always keep in mind that he is not an external visitor, but lives right in my very own mind, and he loves the company of my Ego. That is his best friend. Invariably he sits with Ego doing idle things. He does not like the hands that work, for they give him no attention. He likes to take this best friend of his out to restaurants and movies. The two regale themselves in such places with luxurious foods and intoxicating drinks.

And, of course, his favourite (and therefore my most dangerous) haunt is the night club and cinema, where he freely enjoys the company of the opposite sex. That is his most prized pastime. He is never happier than when he is in such company!

The approach outlined so far will be found in Vedantic texts under the name Shama and Dama, meaning mental restraint and physical restraint of the senses respectively.

And what about the slaying? Please read on – to the end of this Discourse!



3.9 BEYOND DESIRE

(Verses 42-43, 2 No.)

(Verses 42-43, 2 No.)

THESE LAST TWO VERSES of the Chapter are, indeed, an exceptional contribution to spiritual literature. They are so simple, yet they contain a wealth of information on the “Slaying of Desire”, the project we have just begun in the last verse. They give us the only way by which we can avoid Desire once and for all. It is the method of going beyond its reach. That is the safest way to avoid Desire – just rise above it.

Verse 42: *Hierarchy of Desire's Abodes*

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।

मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः

॥ ३-४२॥

indriyāṇi parāṇyāhurindriyēbhyaḥ param̐ manaḥ |

manasastu parā buddhiryō buddhēh paratastu sah

|| 3-42||

1	<i>Indriyaani paraani aahuh</i>	(To the body) they say the senses are superior;
2	<i>indriyebhyah param manah;</i>	superior to the senses is the mind ;
3	<i>manasah tu paraa buddhih</i>	but superior to even the mind is the intellect ;
4	<i>yah buddheh paratah tu sah.</i>	one superior even to the intellect is He, the Atman .

In verse 40 we learnt that desire is seated in the subtle body instruments, namely the senses, mind and intellect. Here we are given the hierarchy, the relative status among these three instruments. It has a very, very useful purpose to serve. In short, the hunt for Desire is like the hunt for a terrorist in a big city. We first need to find the correct Suburb of his residence, then we go to the correct Street in which he dwells, and finally we locate the right apartment or office. This is what we are about to do . . .

Closing in on Desire

1 The Suburb – the Senses: Firstly, we move our security forces into the suburb of our target, Mr “Terrorist” Desire. The five arterials leading out from the suburb, namely the dual carriageways of Sight, Sound, and Touch, and the two one-ways of Taste and Smell have to be cordoned off to traffic.

2 The Street – the Mind: There is a boulevard in this suburb which takes us to its Civic Centre, the place where all the administration buildings are. This becomes our next point of interest. The civic centre is what is called Antahkarana in Vedanta, and refers to the four parts of the inner instrument, namely, the mind, the memory, the intellect and the Ego. Each one has its own admin building, but they are closely interlinked. The mind is where all the instructions go out from once they are processed through the other buildings. So the search party reaches this Civic Centre.

1-2 Our ultimate refuge as seekers is the safe, permanent haven of the Atman, where Desire cannot trouble us anymore. Abidance in the Self is the sure means to avoid this most troublesome visitor. Taking shelter there, is like finding our Original Home.

Desire is a terrestrial creature. He lives and survives only in the lower regions of the mind and senses. That is “home-ground territory” for it. It has ‘home ground’ advantage there. Desire cannot reach the Self, the *altitude* is too high. The Self is beyond the realm of thoughts, and Desire needs thoughts to survive, to play its game.

Just as it is always harder to beat a football team on their home ground, so also it is very difficult to defeat desire in its “home territory”. If we can reach the Self, then there is no game with Desire – it cannot reach there. The match is a “walkover” automatically!

In other words, engaging ourselves more and more in Sadhana is the only real possibility we have to defeat Desire.

3-4 While remaining in the lower regions of the mind and senses, it is very hard to conquer Desire, for it has made them its abode. However, we have got to go on trying from the level that we are. In this regard, Acharyaji gave us some very sound practical advice.

Practical Advice – Refuge in the Divine Name & Swadhyaya

This ultimate solution – to be in the Self – is easier said than done. To get to our Original Home is a task of a lifetime and we must ply ourselves to it every moment if we are serious about putting a check on Desire. Until we get there, we have to adopt some more practical means. There is a Sadhana available to us by which we strengthen our link to the Self, the main one being taking recourse to the sweet Name of the Lord.

Whilst we have not reached our Home, the remembrance of the Lord’s Name is the safest refuge in times of trial with Desire. It is the closest equivalent to actually being in the Self. The chanting of the Name sets up a shield around us through which Desire cannot penetrate. A simile for this would be a raincoat. If we cannot go above the clouds, then we can at least protect ourselves from the rain by wearing a good raincoat while in the rain. The Divine Name is the “raincoat” for those who are not yet in the region beyond the clouds!

In addition to the Name, we can also resort to strengthening our intellect by doing Swadhyaya. Swadhyaya is daily study of the scriptures or other religious works in a systematic manner. It helps us to keep our thoughts elevated, so that we do not get invaded by Desire. Every hour spent usefully in spiritual study is an hour when Desire is kept at bay. This practice gradually helps to anchor us in knowledge of the Self. To have good thoughts surrounding us is an effective way to prevent Desire-thoughts from attacking us.

Acharyaji’s final advice: “Desire is a pull on the lower self, like the gravitational pull ‘*g*’, of the earth. We have to escape that pull by propelling ourselves beyond the *g* of Desire and going into space – the Self – where we shall never experience the *g* of Desire again!”

CONCLUSION

This Discourse achieves the following in terms of Karma Yoga:

i) **Reduction of Ego-Sense:** In Karma Yoga, the person gives least importance to his ego, and tries always to see things from the Lord’s angle. That is what is meant by “He tries



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to please God.” This is an effective practical technique to begin to observe ourselves from a higher standpoint.

ii) **Being Witness of Our Upadhis:** Acharyaji pointed out that *Prakriti* here represents the *Upadhis* in practical terms. The closest things to us, our Upadhis, stand as representatives of Prakriti. The Gunas of Prakriti can be seen best by studying how they operate through our own Upadhis. By their operation we can tell which Guna is predominant in us at any particular time. This analysis provides a useful means for the Sadhaka to study himself, and make necessary corrections in his behaviour patterns.

iii) **Giving Up Doership:** Acharyaji highlighted exactly how the ego’s claim to *Doership* makes us more deluded. When the Ego feels it has done the activity, naturally it also wants credit by claiming the results of that activity. The Ego then further thinks that it is responsible for all the happiness that the Jeeva is enjoying. It begins to strive for more of that happiness by engaging in more activity. And so it gets trapped inextricably in a Karmic cycle of action and reaction.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे
कर्मयोगो नाम तृतीयोऽध्यायः ॥ ३॥

ōm tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyām yōgaśāstrē śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvādē
karmayōgō nāma tṛtīyō:'dhyāyah || 3 ||

Om Tat Sat!

END OF DISCOURSE 3

“KARMA YOGA – THE YOGA OF ACTION”

