

## THE SECRET OF KARMA-YOGA

Basically there are two paths of Sādhanā: (1) The path of duty or Karma-yoga and (2) the path of transcendental knowledge, Jñāna-yoga. Karma-yoga is a very powerful and easy spiritual discipline. Lord Krishna calls this as the supreme secret (WT=m=] rhy=m=<) in verse 4.03. Karma-yoga is considered better of the two paths by Lord Krishna (5.02) not only because it is easier to practice for anybody, but also it is a prerequisite for the path of knowledge. (4.38)

Whatever you do, do it for the benefit of others. Not doing anything for personal benefit, but for the greater good of all (l=ek: s=]g=>h) is Karma-yoga. Anybody can attain godhood without giving up anything or without doing any difficult Sādhanā, just by following the principles of Karma-yoga described below:

### Definition of Karma-Yoga

Do your duty to the best of your ability, O Arjuna, with your mind attached to the Lord, abandoning worry and selfish attachment to the results, and remaining calm in both success and failure. The calmness of the mind is called Karma-yoga. (2.48) Working to the best of one's abilities without becoming selfishly attached to the fruits of work is called Karma-yoga. (2.50)

A Karma-yogi does not work to enjoy the fruits of work ( $m = k:m=*f:lhet=ur<$   
 $B=Ur<$ ) and work without selfish attachment to the fruits of work ( $y==eig=n=/$   
 $k:m=* ku:v=*ònt= s=V<g=]$   $ty=ktv==tm=x=u3y=e ++ç.ââ++$ ) just for self-  
 purification and God realization. (5.11)

### Explanation of Karma-Yoga

Four terms have been used at various places in the Gita: (1) giving up selfish desires ( $k:=m==n=<$   $ty=ktv==$ ) in 6.24; (2) giving up attachment ( $s=]g=]$   $ty=ktv==$ ) in 2.48, 5.10, and 5.11; (3) giving up attachment to the fruits of work ( $k:m=*f:D==s=]g=]$   $ty=ktv==$ ) in 4.20, 18.06, and 18.09; and (4) giving up fruits of work ( $k:m=*f:l]$   $ty=ktv==$ ) in 2.51, 5.12, 18.02, and 18.11.

These terms need explanation for a clear understanding of Karma-yoga. Work or Karma does not create a Karmic bondage. It is the selfish desire ( $k:=m==n=<$ ) for personal enjoyment of the fruits of work that creates attachment ( $s=]g=m=<$ ) to the fruits causing Karmic bondage. When there is no selfish desire, there will be no attachment to the fruits of work ( $k:m=*f:D==s=]g=m=<$ ). Thus by giving up selfish desire, one gives up the attachment to the fruits of work. Giving up attachment to the fruits of work is equivalent to giving up the fruits of work,  $k:m=*f:lty==g=$ . The gist of Karma-yoga is giving up the selfish motive behind an action.

People generally misunderstand that one has to give up both the expectation of the fruits of work and the fruits of work. This is not possible or practical. No one can perform action without expecting some result. When there is no selfish desire, there will

be no attachment to the fruits of work and renunciation of the fruits of work automatically follows. Thus, Nishkāma Karma-yoga is giving up selfish motive or desire behind an action that causes attachment (s=]g=m=<) to the fruits of work. And giving up the fruits of work (k:m=\*f:lty==g=) simply means giving up the personal use of the fruits of work.

The attachment (s=]g=m=<) to the fruits of work caused by selfish desires (k:=m==n=<) leads to Karmic bondage. Karmic bondage is responsible for the cycles of birth and death. When all bonds of Karma is destroyed, one attains Nirvāna.

### How the wise should work

To help each other is the first commandment of the creator who said: By helping each other you shall prosper. (3.10) One should perform one's duty for the welfare of the society and to set an example. (3.21)

As the ignorant work, O Arjuna, with attachment to the fruits of work, so the wise should work without attachment, for the welfare of the society. (3.25) The wise should not unsettle the minds of the ignorant, who are attached to the fruits of work, but should inspire others by performing all works efficiently without selfish attachment. (3.26)

### Two key verses of Karma-yoga

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You have control over your respective duty only, but no control or claim over the results. The fruits of work should not be your motive. You should never be inactive. (2.47)

This key verse of the Gita has confused some commentators and common people who interpret it to mean that one should work without expecting a fruit. This would mean that Lord Krishna should not expect Arjuna to understand and follow His teachings! No one can perform action without expecting some result. This verse means that one should not expect favorable results of your choice only and should accept all results as Prasad (Grace) from God. This is called Prasād Buddhi, Buddhi-yoga or Karma-yoga.

One is given the power and the ability to do one's respective duty in life, but one is not free to choose the desired results. To work without expecting success or good results would be meaningless, but to be fully prepared for the unexpected should be an important part of any planning. Do your duty in life  $\frac{3}{4}$  to the best of your ability  $\frac{3}{4}$  as God's personal servant without any regard for the personal enjoyment of the fruits of your work.

Fear of failure, caused by being emotionally attached to the fruits of work, is the greatest impediment to success because it robs efficiency by constantly disturbing equanimity of mind. Therefore, duty should be performed with detached attachment. Success in any undertaking becomes easier if one works hard without being bothered by the outcome. Work is done more efficiently when the mind is not continuously — consciously or subconsciously — bothered with the outcome, good or bad, of an action.

The second part of the verse says one should not work just for personal enjoyment of the fruits of work, but for the welfare of all. Also one should never be inactive and do your best in all endeavors. |

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A Karma-yogi becomes free from both vice and virtue in this life itself. Therefore, strive for Karma-yoga. Working to the best of one's abilities without becoming attached to the fruits of work is called Nishkāma Karma-yoga or Sevā. (2.50)

Peace, composure, and freedom from Kārmic bondage await those who work for a noble cause with a spirit of detachment and do not seek any personal reward or recognition. Karma-yoga purifies the mind and is a very powerful and easy spiritual discipline that one can practice while living and working in society.

Work is binding if not done with a proper spirit of Karma-yoga. Dexterity or skillfulness in work is how to perform duty without incurring the bonds of Karma-- good or bad. This is possible by working without any selfish motive.

### **Kāarma-Yogi becomes free from** **Kāarmic reaction**

Treating pleasure and pain, gain and loss, and victory and defeat alike, engage yourself in your duty. By doing your duty this way, you will not incur any Karmic bondage. (2.38)

Human beings are bound by work (Karma) that is not performed as a selfless service (Sevā, Yajna). Therefore, O Arjuna, becoming free from selfish attachment to the fruits of work, do your duty efficiently as a service to Me. (3.09)

The one who has abandoned selfish attachment to the fruits of work, and remains ever content and dependent on no one but God, such a person --- though engaged in activity --- does nothing at all, and incurs no Karmic reaction, good or bad. (4.20)

Work (Karma) does not bind a person who has renounced work --- by renouncing the fruits of work --- through Karma-yoga, (4.41)

A Karma-yogi whose mind is pure, whose mind and senses are under control, and who sees one and the same Eternal Being (Brahm) in all beings, is not bound by Karma though engaged in work. (5.07)

One who does all work as an offering to the Lord --- abandoning selfish attachment to the results --- remains untouched by Karmic reaction or sin as a lotus leaf never gets wet by water. (5.10)

A Karma-yogi attains Supreme Bliss by abandoning attachment to the fruits of work; while others, who are attached to the fruits of work, become bound by selfish work. (5.12)

One who is free from the notion of doership and whose intellect is not polluted by the desire to reap the fruit --- even after slaying all these people --- neither slays nor is bound by the act of killing. (18.17)

## **Karma-Yoga leads to Nirvāna**

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Karma-yoga is the means to attain the equanimity or calmness of mind.

(Therefore, The calmness of the mind is called Karma-yoga (s=m=tv=] y==eg= Wcy=t=e). (2.48)) The calmness of mind is necessary for attaining Self-realization.

Wise Karma-yogis are freed from the bondage of rebirth by renouncing the selfish attachment to the fruits of all work and attain a blissful divine state. (2.51)

Therefore, always perform your duty efficiently and without any selfish attachment to the results, because by doing work without attachment one attains the Supreme Being. (3.19)

Selfless service (Karma-yoga) provides the preparation, discipline, and purification necessary for Self-knowledge. Thus, Self-knowledge is the upper limit of Karma-yoga, and renunciation of doership and ownership (Samnyāsa) is the upper limit of Self-knowledge.

It is said in the scriptures that Mukti is not possible without the true knowledge of the Supreme Being. One discovers this knowledge within, naturally, in course of time when one's mind is cleansed of selfishness by Karma-Yoga and attains Mukti. (4.31, 4.38)

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