

## **THE PATH TO LIBERATION: REALISING THE TRUTH AND LIVING THROUGH RIGHTEOUS ACTION IN THE BHAGWAT GITA**

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### **Abstract**

The quest for Absolute truth unfolds on the battlefield of Kurukshetra (*dharma-kshetra*), primarily focusing on Arjuna's psychological turmoil and Krishna's philosophical advice. Arjuna's role depicts the mere human psyche bounded by attachment to material life. This article explores the metaphysical and ethical aspects of the Bhagavad Gita, an encyclopaedia of life. Supreme lord's wisdom provides a framework based on Sankhya Yoga and Karma Yoga for resolving moral quandaries, whereas Arjuna's moral crisis reflects a universal moral quandary, perplexed between his emotions and his karma. The concept of duty (*dharma*), action (*karma*), and salvation (*moksha*) are highlighted in the study, which further critiques the delusion of illusion (*maya*) and ignorance (*avidya*) and the consequences of one's *Akarma*. These elements hinder the process of spiritual enlightenment or attaining transcendental consciousness. The pursuit of transcendental consciousness, also called Krishna's consciousness in Karma Yoga, discusses the cosmic ramifications of the human psyche and, role of divine agency. By applying the Hermeneutic approach, the theory of interpretation, this study portrays Gita as a dynamic interaction of psychological, theological elements and ethical elements that are highly relevant to discussions about responsibility, emancipation, and agency.

**Key words:** Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna, Krishna, dharma, karma yoga, sankhya, moksha, maya, spiritual consciousness, Vedic ethics.

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THE TRUTH

The battle of Kurukshetra is where the quest for the ultimate truth starts. Sanjaya, the blind monarch Dhritarashtra's advisor, is asked to find the plan at the *dharma-kshetra* (the field of righteousness). Clouded by the terrifying influence of the sacred field where the Lord himself is present, he seeks reassurance for his heart. Sanjaya, who is endowed with divine vision (*divya drishti*), can see how the war is always evolving. In front of one another, arms seem fearless and unflinching, to their luck—or perhaps tragedy. The best bowmen, chariot fighters, and warriors are prepared to give their lives. Each chariot appears to be propelled by the desire to preserve their dharma (*righteousness*) or by the blazing flame of great strength. Unaware of the full weight of their karma and dharma, these warriors march in phalanxes, ready to sacrifice themselves. The fight begins with the blowing of conch shells, each of which produces a noise so strong that it trembles the ground and the skies, including the centre of Dhritarashtra.

Knowing full well that Dvapara Yuga (the third age of the cosmic cycle according to Hindu cosmology), demise is imminent, the celestial beings (*devas*) tighten their hearts. The sound of trumpets, drums, and every other instrument sounded erratic. With tremendous anticipation, Arjuna requests that Krishna draw their chariot in the centre of the field so that it appears to be a massive test of strength. Arjuna's heart fell till his body (*deha*) began to tremble as the chariot's wheel rotated, each instant marking destinies. His bow, Gandiva, slipped from his hand to the ground as he grew impatient due to his burning heart. The heat travelled to his blood, to his veins, to his bones, and to his very skin. Miserable Arjuna could see his allies and foes standing in front of him, holding onto their weapons. He found himself lost in a trance, his mind reeling, and the misfortune that this battle would curse them with.

Arjuna's inner turmoil is all due to a material conception of life (*maya*). He is aware that his allies and foes will not hesitate to indulge in sinful actions, but bound by the blindfold of materialistic relations, Arjuna is showing ignorance (*avidya*) of his real interest by Krishna's will. Every passing minute is an eternity because of the lord's will. This universe is a playground where each soul (*jivatmas*) must play. The goal is to surrender (*sharanagati*) oneself to the lord, and by following his instructions, one can achieve the path to salvation (*moksha*). Arjuna, the greatest warrior and the ally of Krishna, is standing still in despair. His throat is drying as he envisions that his victory in the battle would only be a cause of lamentation for him. He indicates that the lord should understand what satisfies Arjuna's senses. But Govinda is not meant for satisfying our senses. Lord satisfies as much as one deserves.

His incompetence to kill his relatives, he asks Krishna to kill them personally. But he does not know that Krishna already killed them before coming to the battlefield and that he was only to become an instrument (*nimitta-matra*) for Krishna. We drink the poison our minds pour for us and wonder why we feel so sick (Atticus). It suggests how self-sabotaging thoughts lead to the annihilation of one's mind. Arjuna's pessimistic thoughts hold him back from doing his Karma. It is the lord's will who must be killed and by whom. One cannot attain such power to go against his will; one who tries to do so falls into the deep sea of hell (*naraka*). The lord does not tolerate any mischief done to the devotee by the miscreants. The devotee must not retaliate against the wrongdoer. Krishna wanted Arjuna to kill the miscreants, the parasites that are rotting the entire dynasty, and must be eliminated from the soil. Although Arjuna wanted to excuse them.

The wheel of Karma is inevitable, inescapable, and eternal (*nitya*). The physical body (*deha*) (*deha*) is a shell bounded by karmas and gunas (*sattva*—goodness, *rajas*—passion, and *tamas*—ignorance). As the soul (*jivatama*) gets into the body (*deha*), it is burdened by the Karmas. One can escape the weight of his karmas and the influence of gunas by attaining and surrendering their consciousness (*chitta*) to the supreme (*Paramatma*).

*Varnasrama dharma* outlines the duties and responsibilities of individuals based on their social class (social class—Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra). *Varna* is a class, and *Ashrama* is a stage of life (Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and Sannyasa). There are multiple principles of religious traditions to help a family grow and attain spiritual values. But families that stop indulging in this process may develop irreligious habits and lose their chance to attain salvation. This leads to the downfall of the dynasty as the women of the family become polluted (*stri-dushti*), indulging in adultery, leading to unwanted species and degradation of womanhood. On the failure of following *varnasrama dharma*, the ancestors (*pitrs*) of that dynasty fall from heaven because of a lack of offerings (*shraddha*)- food and water, and the curse spreads to the entire bloodline. Such families dwell in the pits of hell, trapped by their accumulated karmic debts.

### REALISE THE TRUTH- SANKHYA YOGA

Arjuna, overwhelmed by grief, is prepared to be killed by his family even if it leads to the end. He felt his hands and limbs tied to the intense grip of attachment (*moha*) (*moha*). "Govinda, I shall not fight." The words left his mouth like an arrow from a bow piercing through his Lord's order. Torn between those worthies of worship and his duty (*dharma*), Arjuna disparately asks for Krishna's guidance. Seeing his devotee and ally in despair, how could Krishna not help him? On the

battlefield, Krishna imparted the words of wisdom. An encyclopaedia of life. A man fallen into the ocean of folly cannot be saved by rescuing his body (*deha*). Krishna instructs that the material body (*deha*) is just a shell that must die when it is polluted. The soul (*jivatama*) that lives within cannot be destroyed by fire, water, or any calamity. It is unborn, eternal (*nitya*), and primeval (*sanatana*). It transfers from shell to shell to fulfil its karma. One who laments for this outward is called Sudra, laments unnecessarily. When the body (*deha*) is slain, the soul (*jivatama*) is liberated. This realization can only be attained when one works without attachment (*moha*) to fruitive results and is situated in the fixed conception of the real self. Crying over the wrong is considered a mere weakness of the heart. Such false magnanimity/ non-violence is not approved by any authority. Arjuna is a Kshatriya; such acts of cowardice do not suit him, especially under the guidance of Krishna. He could see his wisdom; relations being tainted with the blood of his superiors. Is it still worthy?

Crushed under the pile of questions that are drying up his senses, Arjuna surrendered himself to the lord. Like a beam penetrating the thick layer of soil, Arjuna rose from the ground. His bow was under his tightening grip. His gaze was vivid, driven by his Karma. One who studies sunshine only is the preliminary, one who understands the sun's surface is advanced, and the one who can enter the heart of the sun is compared to those who realise the personal features of the lord. No one in the universe can possess opulence as fully as Krishna. He is rich in riches, power in powerful, beauty in beautiful, Gyan in legends, and detached from endearment. A forest fire that somehow blazes without being set by anyone, just like several perplexities appear in one's life without notice. Life as a human is the greatest asset for a living entity, therefore, one who throws away their life by swinging on the threads of maya lives a life of miser. That living entity is not graced by a human body (*deha*) again; therefore, he takes the form of an animal. At the precise moment, Arjuna felt a sense of relief. The grip of attachment (*moha*) was slowly loosening from his body (*deha*). His body (*deha*) surrendered, his soul (*jivatama*) connected to the god, and he gained the ultimate truth as Krishna speaks: *You are mourning for that which does not merit sorrow.*

The statement explains that a living entity always mourns for the body (*deha*). The body (*deha*) is assigned as a haven for the soul (*jivatama*). When that body (*deha*) is polluted, the karma is done, and the soul (*jivatama*) must leave the shell. It is the body (*deha*) that dies, not the spirit. Thus, what are we grieving for? One who is aware of the body (*deha*) and the soul (*jivatama*) does not lament for any stage of the body (*deha*), neither in living nor in death. The world is born from him and collapses into his singularity. Never was there a time when god, living entities, nature, and

kingdoms existed. The world mutates, collapses, and is reborn from him. Just like that, a living entity should not be bewildered or flattered by any changes, like happiness or distress. These are like seasons, forever changing, and one must adapt to these changes without being disturbed. The duties shall be executed despite calamity, it is a religious principle. The steady one is eligible for liberation (*moksha*). Liberation from the webs of attachment (*moha*), gunas, and maya. A living entity who is well knowledgeable about the nature of the soul (*jivatama*) causes anyone to kill or kill anyone?

For the administration of justice, violence is permitted. An operation is not meant to kill the living but to cure them. Therefore, Arjuna fighting against the evil under the guidance of Krishna, there is no possibility of a sinful reaction. A body (*deha*) is graced by god according to one's karmas and experiences of life. The cycle keeps paddling until one attains salvation. The living is manifested and unmanifested multiple times; one need not lament for any living being. Wars or problems are something to be grateful about; one being graced by the opportunity to fight against problems opens the door to more blessings and happiness. Face your karma, handle it under the guidance of god, and you will attain wisdom, happiness, and his friendship. However, neglecting your duties makes you sinful as it piles up your karma, making it impossible for one to attain salvation soon. Krishna's word of wisdom left ringing in Arjuna's mind. Would he be able to bear the taint of a coward by stepping back from the battle? One must fight for the sake of fighting, not considering the materialistic gratification. When one acts without expecting the fruitive results, he liberates himself from the bounds of karma, as his goal becomes clear, that is to attain god. Devote yourself to his volition, close your eyes, let him guide you through the deserts of hardship, the coldness of depression, and, heavy winds of failure. Man tends to achieve great results, living a fruitful life without doing much work. For that, he indulges himself in various activities that promise him great results in a short span. Such persons have no faith in liberation from material bondage, and devotional service to the lord does not take place. In the Vedas, many sacrifices are recommended for elevation, especially the *Jyotistoma*. A small nursery cannot serve the community at once be served by a field. Similarly, the fruits of the Vedas can be served to one who knows the purpose behind them.

A living entity's goal is to perform the karma, not to wait for the result or fruit. God shall grace you with fruit based on your karma. Endearment to result leads to attachment (*moha*) that pulls you away from your purpose or duty (*dharma*). Arjuna should perform his duty (*dharma*) without considering the result. He is prescribed by the duty (*dharma*) to fight on the battlefield, the duty (*dharma*) his lord

assigned him to do. By not doing so, he is performing inaction (*Akarma*). It certainly does not matter if Arjuna kills his rivals or not, because the battle already took place in the future. Everyone in the army is already dead. Soul (*jivatama*) is liberated from the body (*deha*), and like a seed, it will grow in another. One must perform his duties by abandoning all attachment (*moha*) to results. This equanimity is called Yoga. One must concentrate the mind upon the Supreme by controlling the senses, this action must not satisfy his senses but Krishna. Pray for his glory to be graced upon you, devote your karma and the results to him, and be pleased in his glory. The nature, galaxies is all his singularity. Born from his grace and collapses into his embrace. We are here to experience his glory, to attain detachment. Self-reflect on yourself, is crying for results worth it? Is crying over someone's death justified? *For one who has taken birth, death is certain; and for one who has died, birth is certain. (2.27)* Therefore, one should not lament for the physical form of the body. The souls of all those in the army have already transitioned, having been liberated from their earthly bodies, and like seeds, they will take new forms in the cycle of life. Is lamenting over the results of actions worth it? No. *You have a right to perform your duty, but not to the fruits thereof. (Karmanyē Vadhikaraste, Ma Phaleshu Kadachana - 2.47)* One should perform Nishkarma without the hope of fruitive results. Luxuries are never worthy if they pull you away from god.

Arjuna must attain transcendental consciousness by engaging himself in Krishna's consciousness. If one's senses are uncontrollable, he falls into the web of attachment (*moha*), lust, delusion, bewilderment, and anger. Stuck in this web, his mind is being engulfed by these sinful thoughts that slowly take over his consciousness, It is too late when he realizes his intelligence is tainted by the material pools. Any activity done in Krishna consciousness has a fruit, even if the activity does not get fulfilled. A mind whose consciousness is strong and unshakeable in its devotion never wavers in the material conception of life; the journey of such a person towards the Supreme becomes easy and certain under the divine protection of God. Desires are like an ocean with no bounds—those who dive too deep into them are unaware of the turmoil of their inner storms, only to be drowned before they reach the shore. Likewise, the senses have to be overcome by consciousness and not allow the senses to control one's mind. One has to overcome the influences of the *gunas* (qualities), the *karmas* (actions), and the attachment to the fruit, transcending these material considerations to achieve real spiritual consciousness.

### LIVE THE TRUTH THROUGH ACTION- KARMA YOGA

In its nature, Karma Yoga is the realization of truth by self-disciplined action. It advocates the performance of one's ordained actions (*karma*) in non-attachment to



their fruits, following the theory that selfless action, performed in a spirit of duty rather than personal interest, results in spiritual advancement and inner contentment. Krishna goes on to describe two principal ways available to man depending on temperament: the way of philosophical and empirical knowledge (*gyan yoga*) and the way of devotional service (*bhakti yoga*).

Renunciation of activities of fruitfulness (*karma-phala-tyaga*) and renunciation of materialistic thinking in the search for transcendental consciousness is called *sannyasa* (renunciation). Formal renunciation is, however, not *sannyasa*; the latter is heart purification (*citta-shuddhi*); without the latter, the former is not only ineffective but also superficial. Krishna states that formal renunciation is not necessary for spiritual realization, but by doing duties without attachment to the fruits thereof, one achieves the same end of liberation (*moksha*).

The primary goal must be the satisfaction of one's karma under the strict following (*bhakti*) of the Supreme Lord, irrespective of external interference or internal disturbances. Such regulated activity is a purifying test, through which the practitioner can overcome the web of karma and attain spiritual perception through Krishna consciousness (*Krishna-bhavana*). The physical body (*deha*) does not exist independently in the absence of the soul (*atman*), the vital energizing force. To make the body an effective tool of purposeful activity, one has to be in control of the senses (*indriyas*), mastering them through regulated involvement in duties without attachment to worldly desires. Such mastery enables the individual to overcome material consciousness (*bhoutika chaitanya*) and gradually progress to transcendental consciousness (*brahma-bhuta*) and ultimately reach liberation (*moksha*).

But he who outwardly pretends religious observance or renunciation without inner real transformation, only to receive approbation or to fool followers, is perpetrating hypocrisy. He, even while seeming ascetic or religious, derives no spiritual benefit, for divine grace (*prasada*) cannot be achieved through pretence or outer religiosity.

Senses cannot be controlled if one continues to indulge in worldly luxuries or sensual enjoyment. For the true devotee (*bhakta*), proximity to the Supreme Lord is the greatest in satisfaction. The devotee performs all activities (*karma*) by the Lord's will (*Ishvara-iccha*) alone, consciously refraining from material indulgences and deeming such renunciation as a stepping stone for spiritual growth. Krishna wants his devotees to execute their karma and not dream and doubt themselves.

The physical body (*deha*) does not exist independently of the soul (*atman*), i.e., the energizing power. To render the body an effective instrument of purposeful activity, one has to master the sense organs (*indriyas*) and get the better of them

through self-control in the discharge of duties without attachment to worldly things. This mastery allows the individual to go beyond material consciousness (*bhoutika chaitanya*) and gradually move towards transcendental consciousness (*brahma-bhuta*), leading to liberation (*moksha*).

But he who, outwardly, professes renunciation or religious devotion without inner transformation—merely to win approval or to beguile the faithful—is indulging in hypocrisy. Such a person, though he might be ashrenacharya or mujaddid, derives no spiritual benefit, for God's favor (*prasada*) is not to be gained through hypocrisy or outward religiosity.

Control over the senses is not possible when one is determined on material happiness or sensual satisfaction. For the true devotee (*bhakta*), proximity to the Lord is the utmost sense of pleasure. The devotee does everything (*karma*) merely out of the desire of the Lord (*Ishvara-iccha*), knowingly avoiding material enjoyment and accepting such renunciation as a condition of spiritual advancement.

*yajnarthat karmamanyatra loka yam karma-bandhana*

*tad-artham karma kaunteya mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara*

Actions (*karma*) done without dedication to the Supreme, defined in the Bhagavad Gita as Viṣṇu or as *yajña* (sacrificial offering), result in bondage (*karma-bandhanaḥ*), thus binding the soul to the cycle of birth and death (*saṁsāra*). Karma is not a practical requirement but a causal route to liberation (*moksha*) from the material world. Even the upkeep of the physical body necessitates action; one who abandons action in the form of renunciation annihilates spiritual and material duty. When done in the spirit of *yajña*—unselfish offering—karma becomes purifying, and such a one is led by Kṛṣṇa himself to freedom.

Conversely, the one who dines only for sensual pleasure (*indriya-tṛpti*) sins (*pāpa*) and is stated to live in vain. But food achieved through righteous effort—performed as an offering to the gods—is stated to be consecrated (*prasāda*), a gift from God. All crops of the earth and nourishment ultimately trace back to the *yajña* principle, validating the interconnectedness of nature, duty, and divine will.

Lord Kṛṣṇa, being the Supreme Being (*Parameśvara*), is the paragon of dharma. Despite having no compulsion, he performs enjoined social and family duties (*svadharma*) to maintain cosmic order, i.e., those of a householder (*grhastha*). As part of his duty, he acts to eradicate *varna-saṅskara*—the perversion of social order through the intermixture of castes—because, left unrestricted, it will lead to the perversion of moral and cosmic equilibrium.

A wise individual can distinguish between the gross material body (*sthūla-śarīra*) and the subtle consciousness. The body, being a product of nature (*prakṛti*),



has birth and ultimate return to and in it. Hence, undue attachment (*moha*) to the body and its pleasures is misplaced. Rather than keeping the body at one's command for the exclusive enjoyment of sense pleasures (*manda*), one should keep it at the command of righteousness (*dharma*) and the Supreme.

The body-obsessed only, with no understanding of the distinction between body and soul (*ātman*), are said to be ignorant (*ajñānī*). Such ignorance retards spiritual progress, as it fails to perceive the temporary worth of the body and the eternal character of the soul.

*dhūmenāvriyate vahnir yathādarśo malena ca  
yatholbenāvṛto garbhas tathā tenedam āvṛtam* (38)

As fire is hidden behind smoke, a mirror behind dust, and an embryo behind the womb, so too is the living being hidden behind varying amounts of this lust. In the allegory, lust is a veil that weakens the reflective capacity of the intellect, preventing discernment and distracting the individual from their spiritual goal. The allegories of smoke, dust, and womb symbolically depict the three *guṇas* (modes of material nature): *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance). Each mode imposes a specific veil of obscurity over knowledge, confirming how the strength of one's lust dictates their distance from self-awareness. This lustful passion envelops the individual, but by spiritual strength, one can overcome this unquenchable foe named lust.

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