THE BHAGAVAD GITA
(The Sacred Song)

The Fifth Enlarged, economy Edition

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by
Ramananda Prasad, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER 3

PATH OF SELFLESS SERVICE

Arjuna asked: If You consider acquiring transcendental knowledge is better than working, then why do You want me to engage in this horrible war, O Krishna? You seem to confuse my mind by apparently conflicting words. Tell me, decisively, one thing by which I may attain the Supreme. (3.01-02)

Arjuna was in the mode of delusion; he thought that Lord Krishna meant a contemplative life (BuddhiYoga) was better than doing one’s normal duty in life in verse 2.49. Some people are often confused and think that salvation is possible only by leading a life devoted to scriptural study, contemplation, and acquiring Self-knowledge. Lord Krishna clarifies this by mentioning two major paths of spiritual practice — depending on the nature of the individual — in the following verse:

श्रीपरमाचार्य तोकेदासिने दिशा निर्देश प्रदोष प्राप्ता मयादान।
शान्तिपरे सोभानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम्। (3.03)

Lord Krishna said: In this world I have stated a twofold path of spiritual discipline in past — the path of Self-knowledge (for the contemplative ones) and the path of unselfish work (Sevā, KarmaYoga) for all others. (3.03)

‘Sevā’ or ‘KarmaYoga’ means sacrifice, selfless service, unselfish work, meritorious deeds, giving away something to others. Some people often get confused like Arjuna and think that leading a life devoted to scriptural study, contemplation, and acquiring transcendental knowledge may be better for spiritual progress than doing one’s worldly duty.

A God-realized person does not consider oneself the doer of any action, but only an instrument in the hands of the divine for His use. It should be further pointed out that both metaphysical knowledge and selfless service are means to attain the Supreme Being. These two paths are not separate, but complementary. In life a combination of these two modes is considered the best. Carry both selfless service and a spiritual discipline of acquiring Self-knowledge with you as stated in the following verses:

न कर्मणाम् अनारक्षणाम् कैव्य कष्टमः स्वाभाविकः।
न च संन्यस्तवः एव सिद्धि समस्तिक्ष्यति।।
न हि कर्मकल्याणं जानु तिहिस्तु अर्कर्मकृतः।
कार्यन्ते हि अवधार्य कर्म सर्वप्रकृतितः गुणः।। (3.04-05)

One does not attain freedom from the bondage of Karma by merely abstaining from work. No one attains perfection by merely giving up work because no one can remain actionless even for a moment. Everything in the universe is driven to action — helplessly indeed — by the forces of Nature. (3.04-05)

It is not possible for anybody to completely abandon action by thought, word, and deed. Therefore, one should always be active in serving the Lord by various means of one’s choosing, and never be without work because an idle mind is the devil’s workshop. Performing action till death with a desireless frame of mind is better than abandoning work and leading the life of an ascetic — even after God-realization — because even an ascetic cannot escape the impulse of action.

कर्मदिवांगि संरक्षय च आस्रते मनसा स्मरणौ।
इतिश्राथौ विपुलता मिथ्याचार सुचिनेतु। (3.06)

The ignorant one, who restraints the organs of action but mentally thinks of sense pleasures, is called a pretender. (3.06)

One’s growth comes from working selflessly rather than giving up work and
practicing sense-control before one is naturally ready for it. Bringing the mind under control is difficult, and spiritual life becomes a mockery without mastery over the senses. Desires may become dormant and rise again to give trouble, just as a sleeping person wakes up in due course of time.

The four goals of human life — doing one's duty, earning wealth, material and sensual enjoyment, and attaining salvation — were designed in the Vedic tradition for gradual and systematic growth of the individual and the progress of society. Success in spiritual life does not come from prematurely wearing saffron clothes just to maintain an Ashram or livelihood without first conquering the six enemies --- lust, anger, greed, pride, attachment, and envy. It is said that such pretenders do a great disservice to God, society, and themselves and become bereft of happiness in this world and the next (BP 11.18.40-41) A pretending monk is considered sinful and a destroyer of the ascetic order of life.

WHY ONE SHOULD SERVE OTHERS

One who restrains the senses --- by (a trained and purified) mind and intellect --- and engages the organs of action to KarmaYoga or selfless service without attachment, is considered superior. (3.07)

Perform your obligatory duty because working is indeed better than sitting idle. Even the maintenance of your body would be impossible without work. (3.08)

Human beings in this world are bound by work (Karma) that is not performed as a selfless service (Sevā, Yajna). Therefore, becoming free from attachment to the fruits of work, do your duty to the best of your abilities as a service to Me (for the good of humanity). (3.09)

TO HELP EACH OTHER IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF THE CREATOR

In the ancient time, the Creator created human beings together with selfless service (Sevā, Yajna, sacrifice) and said: By serving each other you shall prosper, and the sacrificial service shall fulfill all your desires. (3.10)

Help the celestial controllers with selfless service and they will help you. Thus helping each other, you shall attain the Supreme goal. (3.11)

The celestial controllers, being nourished and pleased by selfless service, will give you all desired objects. One who enjoys the gift of celestial controllers without sharing with others is, indeed, a thief. (3.12)

A celestial controller or guardian angel means a supernatural ruler, a celestial person, an angel, an agent of God, the cosmic forces that control, protect, and fulfill desires. Even the gates of heaven shall be closed to those who try to enter alone. According to the ancient scriptures, helping others is the best meritorious deed one can do. The wise seek to serve themselves in the service of others while the ignorant serve themselves at the cost of others. To serve each other is the original or first commandment of the creator that has been restated by Lord Krishna in the Gita. God has given us talents to help us serve, and in serving others we grow spiritually. We take birth to help each other, to understand, care, love, give, and forgive each other. Actually, we serve ourselves by serving others. Giving makes the world a better place for all humanity. According to Muniji “Giving is Living”.

It is believed that selfishness saps our natural health and immune system also. When we take steps to move ourselves away from self and think about the needs of others and how to serve them, a physical healing process seems to set in motion. This is especially true if we personally help a person we may never meet again in life.

One who makes no sacrifice, but grabs everything without helping others, is like a thief.
It is said that celestials are pleased when people help each other. The capacity of the giver increases by the grace of God, fulfilling all desires to give. The spirit of cooperation --- not competition or confrontation --- between human beings, between nations, and between organizations seems to be hinted here by the Lord. All the necessities of life are produced by dedicated sacrificial services of other people. We are created to depend on each other. The world has been called a cosmic wheel of cooperative action by Swami Chinmayananda. Cooperation, not competition, is more conducive to overall progress of the individual, as well as society. Nothing worthwhile can be achieved without cooperation and help from others. The world would be a much better place if all inhabitants cooperated and helped each other, rather than fight or compete with each other. It is the selfish motive that prevents cooperation even between spiritual organizations. One who can truly say all organizations, temples, mosques, and churches are our own, is a true leader and a real saint.

The righteous who eat after sharing with others are freed from all sins, but the impious who cook food only for themselves (without first offering to God or sharing with others), in fact, eat sin. (3.13)

Food should be cooked for the Lord and offered first to Him with love before consuming. Children should be taught to pray before taking food. The house rule should be: No food before prayer and thanking the Lord. Lord further states that helping others is divine:

The righteous who eat after sharing with others are freed from all sins, but the impious who cook food only for themselves (without first offering to God or sharing with others), in fact, eat sin. (3.13)

Living beings are sustained from food grains; grains are produced by sacrificial work (or duty performed by farmers and other field workers) and rain. Duty is prescribed in the scriptures. Scriptures come from the Supreme Being. Thus the all-pervading Supreme Being or God is ever present in selfless service. (3.14-15)

LEADERS SHOULD SET AN EXAMPLE
In no other scripture, written before the Bhagavad-Gita, has the philosophy of KarmaYoga — unselfish devotion for the welfare of humanity — been so beautifully expounded. Lord Krishna has elevated the idea of altruism to the highest form of worship and spiritual practice. By altruism, one obtains grace, by grace one gets...
faith, and by faith the ultimate Truth is revealed. One immediately feels better by helping others and comes one step closer to perfection. Swami Vivekananda said: Work done for others awakens the subtle and dormant divine power, Kundalini, within our body. An example of attaining Self-realization by persons while doing their worldly duties is given below:

King Janaka and many others attained perfection of Self-realization by selfless service (KarmaYoga) alone. You also should perform your duty with a view to guide people and for the welfare of society. (3.20)

Those who do selfless service are not bound by Karma and attain salvation (VP 1.22.52). Nothing is beyond the reach of those who have others’ interest in mind. Swami Harihar says: Selfless service to humanity is the true service to God and the highest form of worship.

Because whatever noble persons do, others follow. Whatever standard they set up, the world follows. (3.21)

People follow whatever great persons do (BP 5.04.15). A leader is obliged to set higher ethical, moral, and spiritual standards for the general population to follow. If the leader fails in this regard, the quality of the nation’s life declines, and the progress of society is greatly hampered. Therefore, leaders have a great burden on their shoulders. The life of a true leader is the life of service and sacrifice. Leadership should not be an enterprise for becoming rich or famous.

A political leader or the head of a state uses negotiations (सार्वजनिक), bribery or gift (बांप), physical force (साधारण), and division (मनोकाल). These are the four noble pedestals on which welfare and defense of a country stands, according to the Vedas.

O Arjuna, there is nothing in the three worlds — heaven, earth, and the lower regions — that should be done by Me, nor there is anything unobtained that I should obtain, yet I engage in action. (3.22)

If I do not engage in action relentlessly, O Arjuna, people would follow the same path in every way. These worlds would perish if I did not work, and I would be the cause of confusion and destruction. (3.23-24)

WHAT SHOULD THE WISE DO TO THE IGNORANT?

The ignorant work with attachment to the fruits of work for themselves, and 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 to the best of one’s abilities (without attachment to results). (See also 3.29) (3.26)

Doing one’s duty without a personal, selfish motive is an exalted state given only to the enlightened ones. This may be beyond comprehension of ordinary people. The mark of genius lies in the ability to handle two opposed ideas and paradoxes, such as living in the world with detached attachment. Most people work hard only when they have some motivating force, such as enjoyment of the fruits of work. Such persons should not be discouraged or condemned. They should be introduced slowly to the beginning stages of selfless service. The excessive attachment to possessions, not the possessions themselves, becomes the source of misery.

Just as one has to pray and worship with single-minded attention, similarly, one should perform worldly duties with full attention, even while knowing full well that the world and its affairs are transitory. One should not live thinking only of God and neglecting one’s duty in the world. Yogananda said: Be as earnest about meditation as about earning money. One should
not live a one-sided life. The importance of controlling the senses and ways to combat ego are given below:

**ALL WORKS ARE THE WORKS OF NATURE**

All actions are performed by various forces (or Gunas) of Nature, but due to delusion of ego or ignorance, people assume themselves to be the sole doer. (See also 5.09, 13.29, 14.19, and 18.14) (3.27)

Indirectly, God is the doer of everything. The power and the will of God do everything. One is not free even to kill oneself. One cannot feel the presence of the omnipresent God as long as one feels: “I am the doer”. If one realizes --- by the grace of God --- that one is not the doer, but just an instrument, one at once becomes free. A Karmic bondage is created if we consider ourselves the doer and enjoyer. The work done by a Self-realized master becomes spiritualized and produces no Karmic bondage because a Self-realized person does not consider oneself the doer or the enjoyer. The work done by an ordinary person produces Karmic bondage.

Those who are deluded by the illusive power (Maya) of Nature become attached to the work done by the forces of Nature (Gunas). The wise should not disturb the mind of the ignorant whose knowledge is imperfect. (See also 3.26) (3.29)

While we cannot and should not suppress our nature, we must not become victims but rather controllers and masters of the senses by using the discriminative faculties of human life.
अप तृतीयोधः\nकर्मोः\n1. कर्मोः
अर्जुन उवच-\nज्ञापितो वेद कर्मपूर्वे तेन मना वन्द्यरे जनादान।
ततः किं कर्मणि चोरे मात्र निमोपसति केवल इव।\n2. कर्मोः
अर्जुन बोले- हे हनुमान, यहाँ कर्म से ज्ञान का श्रृद्धापत्र है,
तौ सिरा है केंद्र, अपूर्व है इस प्रकार कर्म में क्यों त्याग कर रहे हैं?
आप निमित्त वचनों से मेरी वृद्धि को प्रभावित कर रहे हैं, अत: आप
उस वक्त को निरोधित कर सकते हैं, जिससे मेरा कर्मयोग हो।
(3.06-08)
श्रीभद्रावनाय-\nलोकेदिस्मपि निधिः पुषा प्रक्रीता मयाधन।
झानयोगेन सांख्यानां कर्मोर्नयोगिनाम।\nश्रीभद्रावनानानेति- हे निमाधुर अर्जुन, इस लोक में वो प्रकार की निधि मेरे द्वारा पानी कही गई है, जिनसे सुख हास भरकम होती है, उनकी निधि झानयोग से और कर्म में संबंधित को निधि कर्मयोग से होती है।
(3.03)
कस्य ज्ञानको सांख्यग्यो या संसारग्यो भी कार्य का कर्ता नाम नहीं। कार्य का अर्थ है तत्त्वनिरपेक्ष का ज्ञान। यहाँ यही बताना चाहिए कि झानयोग और कर्मयोग दोनों भी परमार्थ में पर्यायवाचक की सहायता है। जीवन में इन दोनों मार्ग का सातवें श्रेणी माना जाता है। हां, आलोचना की सार्वजनिक और निर्देशिका सेवा दोनों को अपने जीवन का अंग बनाना चाहिए।

न कर्मयोग अनार्थम् नैक्षेमपुष्पोढङ्गुने।
न च संयमसामु च सिद्धिः समर्पणश्च।\nमनुष्य कर्म का त्यागकर्म के बननों से मुक्ति नहीं होता। कर्म के त्याग मात्र से ही सिद्धि की प्राप्ति से होती है।
(3.04)
न हि कशिष्ट स्थिरगमो जातु स्तन्तुये अर्कस्तकृतु।\nकार्ये तु अर्काः कर्म सः सः प्रकृतिकर्मोऽगुणेऽगुणे।\nकोई भी मनुष्य एक धर्म भी विना कर्म करने के लिए नहीं है, क्योंकि प्रकृति के गुणों द्वारा मनुष्यों से पर्याप्त कर तत्त्व सम्म करना चाहिए। अदा भविष्यवादी मनस्मर्थति के साथ आर्यकर्म करते रहना कर्मयोग तथा प्रामाण्य के बाद बिबाह जीवन, दोनों ते श्रेष्ठ है, क्योंकि तपस्यां भी कर्म के आर्ये के सूक्ष्म से नुकसान नहीं पाता।

कर्मनिद्रायणं संस्मृतं य आलेस्मनस सम्मु।
इन्द्रायणम् विन्दुरायणम् एव उपद्योगम्।\nजो मुनि-मुनि मूल्य इंद्रायण को (प्रदेश के लिए) रोकने वाला द्वारा निधियों का चिनन करता रहता है, वह मिथ्याचारी कहा जाता है।
(3.06)
सराहनीय वन्दन तस्मात असक्षर ज्ञान कर्म समाचार।
असक्षर ज्ञान कर्म परम प्रभावी निरूपण।

इसस्तने तुम असक्षर होकर सत्य अपने कर्मभावन का महत्त्वपूर्ण पाये करो। क्योंकि असक्षर सक्रिय कर्म करने से ही मुन्नुक परस्परभावना का प्राप्त करा है।

(३१५)

कर्मभोग-दर्शन – मननका के क्लय के लिए निश्चय रूप से त्यार भी है। भारतीय प्रथा में इसका संदर्भ नदेश सम्पन्न है। लोकसम्पत्त तथा समाज का साधन रूप है।

(३१६)

सराहनीय वन्दन तस्मात असक्षर समाचार।
लोकसम्पत्ति संज्ञान कर्म अस्तित्व।

रसायन ज्ञान आदि हानीपित निश्चय कर्मभोग द्वारा पुरातन सिद्धि को प्राप्त हुए थे। लोकसम्पत्ति के लिए भी तुम कर्म करना ही प्राप्त है।

(३२०)

निश्चय से कर्मनिवेदन करने से वहीं हो और मुक्ति को प्राप्त करना है (विषय: ३२२५।)

dूसरी के लिए का अक्षर रबनेवालों की भूमिका के खुशी ही बाबा नहीं है। स्वभाव ही होगा जो कहते हैं: मानवता की निश्चय से ही प्रभु की सच्ची सेवा और क्षेत्रस्तु पूजा है।

(३२२)

अपनाओ इतिहास के भूमि पर सोहील।
एवं वहिति चक्षु नृत्यविश्वास या।

(३२६)

हे पार्थ, जो मुंडा सेवा द्वारा इस सृष्टिक के चलन रहने में सहायोगी नहीं रहए हैं, अभाव ममम, ममा मुंडा वर्ष हो जाता है।

(३२८)

गौरी का दान भूमि में दाले जाने और सामा जाने के बिना मात्र एक दान। बलदिन होने पर ही वह अनकथा दानों को जनसेवा करता है। (यष्टम १२.२७।)

(३२५)

स्वयं व्यवस्थापित एवं स्वयं आत्मनिर्भर मान।
आत्मनिर्भर ज्ञान संस्कृत न्याय न विवेच।

(३२७)

परम जो मुंडा परमन्याय में ही स्थायी है तथा परमार्थ में ही तुलन और संगत स्वरूप है, तबें आत्मनिर्भर मनुष्य के लिए कोई कर्मभोग नहीं रहता।

(३२८)

सत्संग कर्मध, दानिभ, निःसेत, नियम और तत्त्वहृद स्वतंत्र रूप से आनंदका अनुभव करता है। पूर्ण योगी के लिए कोई भी सांसारिक दायित्व नहीं है।

(३२९)

नैय तथा कर्मभावाय नामुक्तेन्तर कर्म।
चाल अवर्भवीर निष्कृति अपर्याप्तम: यी।

उसका कर्म करने से वह अपने कर्म नहीं रहता तथा वह (परमार्थना के लिखा) किसी और प्राणों पर आरोप नहीं रहता।

(३२८)

नेता उदाहरण वन्दन तस्मात असक्षर ज्ञान कर्म समाचार।
असक्षर ज्ञान कर्म परम प्रभावी निरूपण।
हे मानत, अज्ञानी लोग जिस प्रकार कर्मसूत्र में आसक्त होकर भलोभाव अपना कर्म करते हैं, उसी प्रकार ज्ञानी मनुष्य भी जननीपमान हेतु आसक्तियत होकर भलोभाव अपना कर्म करते हैं।

(३.२५)

न बलियोंने जीनुदु अज्ञानी कर्मसूत्रिनामू। जीवित हिंसाकल्प चित्रमुक्त नम्बरमात्र निर्देश।

ज्ञानी कर्मज्ञ में आसक्त अज्ञानी को निर्देशित में भ्रम अर्थात् कर्म से अज्ञातमूलका उत्पन्न न रचते तथा कर्म से अन्युक्त होकर भलोभाव कर्म करते हैं।

(३.२६)

प्रतिमानसामान्य वक्त्रत्व के निर्देश उसके दो विशेष विचार और विचारों को संगठन के निर्देश में है; ऐसे संशोधन में निर्धारण आसक्तियों के साथ जीवन। अधिकांश वक्त्रत्व केवल तभी परिष्करणीय काम करते हैं, जब उन्हें कर्मसूत्र के द्विषय या आर्य क्रम यह वक्त्रत्व की प्रारंभिक शक्ति इसके कर्म के संग्रह संबंध है। ऐसे वक्त्रत्वों को हास्यप्रतिकृत नहीं करना चाहिए, न उनकी मानना करना जरूरी है। समय के आर्थिक अर्थात् वक्त्रत्व, न कि स्वयं, इस गुण का स्वरूप बनता है। इस प्रकार वक्त्रत्व के लिए संसारीकरण कर्मों की पूर्णता में भी सम्मानित होना आवश्यक है। इतिहास- तथा उसके लिए ऐसे वक्त्रत्व का काम-कार्य है, इसी प्रकार वक्त्रत्व के लिए संसारीकरण कर्मों की पूर्णता में भी सम्मानित होना आवश्यक है।

(३.२७)

निरन्तर निर्माण वृद्धि नाम है। जीवित हिंसाकल्प चित्रमुक्ते नम्बरमात्र निर्देश।

(३.२८)

ज्ञानी कर्मज्ञ में आसक्त अज्ञानी को निर्देशित में भ्रम अर्थात् कर्म से अज्ञातमूलका उत्पन्न न रचते तथा कर्म से अन्युक्त होकर भलोभाव कर्म करते हैं।

(३.२९)

निरन्तर निर्माण वृद्धि नाम है। जीवित हिंसाकल्प चित्रमुक्ते नम्बरमात्र निर्देश।

(३.३०)

संपन्न कर्म कृतित करती है।

पौरूषों के किल्ले मनुष्यों गुण गुणधर्म स्वरूप।

(३.३१)

ज्ञानी कर्मज्ञ में आसक्त अज्ञानी को निर्देशित में भ्रम अर्थात् कर्म से अज्ञातमूलका उत्पन्न न रचते तथा कर्म से अन्युक्त होकर भलोभाव कर्म करते हैं।

(३.३२)

संपन्न कर्म कृतित करती है।

पौरूषों के किल्ले मनुष्यों गुण गुणधर्म स्वरूप।

(३.३३)

संपन्न कर्म कृतित करती है।

पौरूषों के किल्ले मनुष्यों गुण गुणधर्म स्वरूप।