

अथ तृतीयोऽध्यायः  
CHAPTER 3  
कर्मयोगः  
PATH OF SELFLESS SERVICE

अर्जुन उवाच  
ज्यायसी चेत् कर्मणस् ते मता बुद्धिर् जनार्दन ।  
तत् किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव ॥१॥  
arjuna uvāca  
jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te matā buddhir janārdana  
tat kiṃ karmaṇi ghore mām niyojayasi keśava  
व्यामिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे ।  
तद् एकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहम् आप्नूयाम् ॥२॥  
vyāmiśreṇeva vākyaena buddhiṃ mohayasīva me  
tad ekaṃ vada niścitya yena śreyo'ham āpnuyām

**Arjuna asked: If You consider that 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 was better than doing one's normal duty in life. 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:

श्रीभगवानुवाच  
लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयाऽनघ ।  
ज्ञानयोगेन सांख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥३॥

śrī bhagavān uvāca  
 loke'smin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayā' nagna  
 jñānayogena sāmkyānām karmayogena yoginām

**Lord Krishna said: In this world I have stated a twofold path of spiritual discipline in past  $\frac{3}{4}$  the path of Self-knowledge for the contemplative ones and the path of unselfish work (Seva, KarmaYoga) for all others. (3.03)**

'Seva' 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 अनारम्भान् नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।  
 न च संन्यसनाद् एव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥४॥  
 na karmaṇām anārambhān naiṣkarmyam puruṣo'snute  
 na ca saṁnyasanād eva siddhim samadhigacchati  
 न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्य् अकर्मकृत् ।  
 कार्यते ह्य् अवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर् गुणैः ॥५॥  
 na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt  
 kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ

**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  $\frac{3}{4}$  helplessly indeed  $\frac{3}{4}$  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.

कर्मन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।  
 इन्द्रियार्थान् विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥६॥  
 karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya ya āste manasā smaran  
 indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate

**Anyone who restrains the senses 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

यस् त्व इन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन ।  
कर्मन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगम् असक्तः स विशिष्यते ॥७॥

yas tv indriyāṇi manasā niyamyā'rabhate'rjuna  
karmendriyaiḥ karmayogam asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate

**One who restrains the senses <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> by a trained and purified mind and intellect <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> and engages the organs of action to selfless service, is considered superior. (3.07)**

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्य् अकर्मणः ।  
शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्धयेद् अकर्मणः ॥८॥

niyataṁ kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hy akarmaṇaḥ  
śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyed akarmaṇaḥ

**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)**

यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।  
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥९॥

yajñārthāt karmaṇo'nyatra loko'yaṁ karma bandhanaḥ  
tad arthaṁ karma kaunteya mukta saṅgaḥ samācara

**Human beings are bound by work (Karma) that is not performed as a selfless service (Seva, Yajna). Therefore, becoming free from selfish attachment to the fruits of**

**work, do your duty efficiently as a service to Me for the good of humanity. (3.09)**

**TO HELP EACH OTHER IS THE FIRST  
COMMANDMENT OF THE CREATOR**

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।  
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वम् एष वोऽस्त्व् इष्टकामधुक् ॥१०॥  
sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ  
anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vo'stv iṣṭa kāmadhuk

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

देवान् भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।  
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परम् अवाप्स्यथ ॥११॥  
devān bhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ  
parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha

**Nourish the celestial controllers with selfless service, and they will nourish you. Thus nourishing one another, you shall attain the Supreme goal. (3.11)**

इष्टान् भोगान् हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।  
तैर् दत्तान् अप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः ॥१२॥  
iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ  
tair dattān apradāyaibhyo yo bhun̄kte stena eva saḥ

**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. According to Muniji “Giving is Living”. Giving makes the world a better place for all humanity.

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.

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।  
 भुञ्जते ते त्व अघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥१३॥  
 yajñasiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarva kilbiṣaiḥ  
 bhujjate te tv agham pāpā ye pacanty ātmakāraṇāt

**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 truth, 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:

अन्नाद् भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्याद् अन्नसंभवः ।  
 यज्ञाद् भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥१४॥  
 annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḥ annasambhavaḥ  
 yajñād bhavati parjanyaḥ yajñaḥ karma samudbhavaḥ  
 कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।  
 तस्मात् सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥१५॥  
 karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi brahmākṣara samudbhavam  
 tasmāt sarvagataṁ brahma nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam

**Living beings are sustained from food grains; grains are produced by sacrificial work (or duty performed by farmers and other field workers). 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)**

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।  
 अघायुर् इन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ॥१६॥  
 evaṁ pravartitaṁ cakraṁ nānuvartayatīha yaḥ  
 aghāyur indriyārāmo moghaṁ pārtha sa jīvati

**One who does not help to keep the wheel of creation in motion by sacrificial duty (Seva) and rejoices in sense pleasures, that sinful person lives in vain. (3.16)**

A grain of wheat is a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains (John 12.24). Saints, trees, rivers, and earth are for the use of others. However, there is no prescribed duty for the enlightened ones as explained below:

यस् त्वात्मरतिर् एव स्याद् आत्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।  
 आत्मन्येव च संतुष्टस् तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥१७॥  
 yas tv ātmaratir eva syād ātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ  
 ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭas tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate  
 नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।  
 न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिद् अर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥१८॥  
 naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana  
 na cāsyā sarvabhūteṣu kaścid arthavyapāśrayaḥ

**For one who rejoices only with the Supreme Being, who is delighted with the Supreme Being, and who is content with the Supreme Being alone, for such a Self-realized person there is no duty. Such a person has no interest, whatsoever, in what is done or what is not done. A Self-realized person does not depend on anybody, except God, for anything. (3.17-18)**

All duties, obligations, prohibitions, regulations, and injunctions are meant to lead one to perfection. Therefore, a

perfect yogi who has Self-knowledge, detachment, and devotion has nothing more to gain in this world by doing worldly duty.

#### LEADERS SHOULD SET AN EXAMPLE

तस्माद् असक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।  
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परम् आप्नोति पूरुषः ॥१९॥  
tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara  
asakto hyācaran karma param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ

**Always perform your duty efficiently and without any selfish attachment to the results because by doing work without attachment, one reaches the supreme goal of life. (3.19)**

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:

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिम् आस्थिता जनकादयः ।  
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन् कर्तुम् अर्हसि ॥२०॥  
karmaṇaiva hi samsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ  
lokasaṁgraham evāpi sampaśyan kartum arhasi

**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.

यद् यद् आचरति श्रेष्ठस् तत् तद् एवेतरो जनः ।  
 स यत् प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस् तद् अनुवर्तते ॥२१॥  
 yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janah  
 sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokas tad anuvartate

**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). Jesus said: I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you (John 13.15). 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.

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।  
 नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥२२॥  
 na me pārthāsti kartavyam triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana  
 nānavāptam avāptavyam varta eva ca karmaṇi

**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)

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।  
मम वर्तमानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥२३॥  
yadi hy ahaṁ na varteyaṁ jātu karmaṇy atandritaḥ  
mama vartmā'nuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ  
उत्सीदेयुर् इमे लोका न कुर्या कर्म चेद् अहम् ।  
संकरस्य च कर्ता स्याम् उपहन्याम् इमाः प्रजाः ॥२४॥  
utsīdeyur ime lokā na kuryāṁ karma ced aham  
saṁkarasya ca kartā syāṁ upahanyāṁ imāḥ prajāḥ

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?

सक्ताः कर्मण्य् अविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।  
कुर्याद् विद्वांस् तथासक्तश् चिकीर्षुर् लोकसंग्रहम् ॥२५॥  
saktāḥ karmaṇy avidvāṁso yathā kurvanti bhārata  
kuryād vidvāṁs tathāsaktaś cikīrṣur lokasaṅgraham

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)

न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेद् अज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम् ।  
जोषयेत् सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान् युक्तः समाचरन् ॥२६॥  
na buddhibhedaṁ janayed ajñānāṁ karma saṅginām  
joṣayet sarva karmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran

**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. (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**

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।  
अहंकारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहम् इति मन्यते ॥२७॥

prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ  
ahaṁkāra vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate

**The forces (Gunas) of Nature do all work, but due to delusion of ignorance people assume themselves to be the doer. (See also 5.09, 13.29, and 14.19) (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 same work done by a Self-realized master and an ordinary person produces different results. 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.

तत्त्ववित् तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयोः ।  
 गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्त इति मत्वा न सज्जते ॥२८॥  
 tattvavit tu mahābāho guṇa karma vibhāgayoḥ  
 guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate

**One who knows the truth about the role of the forces of Nature in getting work done, does not become attached to work. Such a person knows that it is the forces of Nature that get their work done by using our organs as instruments. (3.28)**

प्रकृतेर् गुणसंमूढाः सज्जन्ते गुणकर्मसु ।  
 तान् अकृत्स्नविदो मन्दान् कृत्स्नविन् न विचालयेत् ॥२९॥  
 prakṛter guṇa saṁmūḍhāḥ sajjante guṇa karmasu  
 tān akṛtsnavido mandān kṛtsnavin na vicālayet

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

The enlightened one should not try to dissuade or detract ignorant ones from performing selfish actions that they do, deluded by the forces of Nature, because doing work — and not the renunciation of work in the initial stages — will ultimately lead them to realize the truth that we are not the doers, but divine instruments only. Working with attachment also has a place in the development of society and in the life of common people. People can easily transcend selfish desires by working for a noble goal of their choice.

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।  
निराशीर् निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥३०॥  
mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi saṁnyasyā'dhyātma cetasā  
nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ

**Do your prescribed duty, dedicating all work to Me in a spiritual frame of mind, free from desire, attachment, and mental grief. (3.30)**

ये मे मतम् इदं नित्यम् अनुतिष्ठन्ति मानवाः ।  
श्रद्धावन्तोऽनसूयन्तो मुच्यन्ते तेऽपि कर्मभिः ॥३१॥  
ye me matam idam nityam anutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ  
śraddhāvanto'nasūyanto mucyante te'pi karmabhiḥ  
ये त्वेतद् अभ्यसूयन्तो नानुतिष्ठन्ति मे मतम् ।  
सर्वज्ञानविमूढांस् तान् विद्धि नष्टान् अचेतसः ॥३२॥  
ye tv etad abhyasūyanto nā'nutiṣṭhanti me matam  
sarvajñāna vimūḍhāṁs tān vidधि naṣṭān aceta saḥ

**Those who always practice this teaching of Mine <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> with faith and free from cavil <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> become free from the bondage of Karma. But those who carp at this teaching and do not practice it, should be considered ignorant, senseless, and confused. (3.31-32)**

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर् ज्ञानवान् अपि ।  
 प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥३३॥  
 sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛter jñānavān api  
 prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati

**All beings follow their nature. Even the wise act according to their own nature. If we are but pawns of our nature, what, then, is the value of sense restraint? (3.33)**

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 for gradual improvement. The best way to control the senses is to engage all our senses in the service of God.

### **TWO MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCKS ON THE PATH OF PERFECTION**

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।  
 तयोर् न वशम् आगच्छेत् तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥३४॥  
 indriyasye'ndriyasyā 'rthe rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau  
 tayor na vaśam āgacchet tau hy asya paripanthināu

**Attachments and aversions for sense objects remain in the senses. One should not come under the control of these two because they are two major stumbling blocks, indeed, on one's path of Self-realization. (3.34)**

'Attachment' may be defined as a very strong desire to experience sensual pleasures again and again. 'Aversion' is the strong dislike for the unpleasant. The search for peace of mind, comfort, and happiness is the basis of all human endeavors, including the acquisition and propagation of knowledge. Desire — like any other power given by the Lord — is not the problem. We can have desires with a proper frame of mind that gives us control over attachments and aversions. If we can manage our wants, most

of the things we possess become dispensable rather than essential. With a right attitude, we can get mastery over all our attachments and aversions. The only necessity is to have a frame of mind that makes most items unnecessary. Those who have knowledge, detachment, and devotion have neither likes nor dislikes for any worldly object, person, place, or work. Personal likes and dislikes disturb the equanimity of mind and become a hindrance on the path of spiritual progress.

One should act with a sense of duty without being governed by personal likes and dislikes. Selfless service is the only austerity and penance in this age by which anyone can reach God while living and working in modern society without going to the mountains and jungles.

Everybody benefits if work is done for the Lord, just as every part of the tree gets water when water is put at the root of the tree rather than on individual leaves. Attachments and aversions are destroyed in a noble person at the onset of Self-knowledge and detachment. Personal likes and dislikes are two major obstacles on the path of perfection. One who has conquered attachments and aversions becomes a free person and attains salvation by doing one's natural duty as stated below:

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात् ।  
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥३५॥

śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt  
svadharme nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ

**One's inferior natural work is better than superior unnatural work. Even death in carrying out one's (natural) duty is useful. Unnatural work produces too much stress. (See also 18.47) (3.35)**

One who does the duty ordained by nature is freed from the bonds of Karma and slowly rises above the worldly plane (BP 7.11.32). One who takes on work that was not meant for him or

her certainly courts failure. One evolves by the work best suited to one's own nature or inborn tendencies. There is no perfect occupation. Every occupation in this world has some faults. One should keep oneself free from concern over the faults of one's duty in life. One should carefully study one's nature to determine an appropriate occupation. Natural work does not produce stress and is conducive to creativity. Walking uphill, vocationally, against one's natural tendencies is not only more stressful but also less productive, and it does not provide opportunity and leisure time for spiritual growth and development. On the other hand, if one follows a very easy or artistic path, one may not be able to earn enough to satisfy the basic necessities of (family) life. Therefore, lead a simple life by limiting unnecessary luxuries, and develop a hobby of selfless service to balance the material and spiritual needs of life. The balanced life is a happy life.

### LUST IS THE ORIGIN OF SIN

अर्जुन उवाच

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।

अनिच्छन् अपि वार्ष्णेय बलाद् इव नियोजितः ॥३६॥

arjuna uvāca

atha kena prayukto'yam pāpam carati pūruṣaḥ

anicchann api vārṣṇeya balād iva niyojitaḥ

**Arjuna said: O Krishna, what impels one to commit sin or selfish deeds as if unwillingly and forced against one's will? (3.36)**

श्रीभगवानुवाच

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।

महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनम् इह वैरिणम् ॥३७॥

śrī bhagavān uvāca

kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ

mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhy enam iha vairiṇam

**Lord Krishna said: It is the lust, born out of passion, that becomes anger when unfulfilled. Lust is insatiable and is a great devil. Know this as the enemy. (3.37)**

The mode of passion is the absence of mental equilibrium leading to vigorous activity to achieve desired fruits. Lust, the passionate selfish desire for all sensual and material pleasures, is the product of the mode of passion. Lust becomes anger if it is unfulfilled. When the attainment of fruits is hindered or interrupted, the intense desire for their achievement turns into fierce rage. Hence, the Lord says that lust and anger are two mighty enemies that can lead one to commit sin and turn one astray from the path of Self-realization, the supreme goal of human life. Actually, mundane desire compels a person to engage in sinful activities in spite of his or her will. Control your wants because whatever you want wants you. Lord Buddha said: Selfish desire is the root of all evils and misery.

धूमेनाव्रियते वहनिर् यथादर्शो मलेन च ।  
 यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस् तथा तेनेदम् आवृतम् ॥३८॥  
 dhūmenā'vriyate vahnir yathā'darśo malena ca  
 yatho'lbenā'vṛto garbhas tathā tenedam āvṛtam  
 आवृतं ज्ञानम् एतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।  
 कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥३९॥  
 āvṛtaṁ jñānam etena jñānino nitya vairiṇā  
 kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇā'nalena ca

**As a fire is covered by smoke, as a mirror by dust, and as an embryo by the amnion, similarly, Self-knowledge gets covered by different degrees of this insatiable lust, the eternal enemy of the wise. (3.38-39)**

Lust and Self-knowledge are eternal enemies. Lust can be destroyed only by Self-knowledge. Where lust resides and how one should control the senses to subjugate lust, are given below:

इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिर् अस्याधिष्ठानम् उच्यते ।  
एतैर् विमोहयत्य् एष ज्ञानम् आवृत्य देहिनम् ॥४०॥  
indriyāṇi mano buddhir asyā'dhiṣṭhānam ucyate  
etair vimohayaty eṣa jñānam āvṛtya dehinam

**The senses, the mind, and the intellect are said to be the seat of lust. Lust deludes a person by controlling the senses, the mind, and the intellect and veils Self-knowledge. (3.40)**

तस्मात् त्वम् इन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ ।  
पाप्मानं प्रजहि ह्येनं ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम् ॥४१॥  
tasmāt tvam indriyāṅyādau niyamya bharata ṛṣabha  
pāpmānaṁ prajahi hy enaṁ jñānavijñāna nāśanam

**Therefore, by controlling the senses, first kill this devil of material desires (or lust) that destroys Self-knowledge and Self-realization. (3.41)**

The mighty enemy, lust, enslaves the intellect by using the mind as its friend and senses and sense objects as its soldiers. These soldiers keep the individual soul deluded and obscure Absolute Truth as a part of the drama of life. The success or failure of our role in action depends on how we handle our individual role and reach our destiny.

All desires cannot — and need not — be eliminated, but selfish desires and motives must be eliminated for spiritual progress. All our actions by thought, word and deed, including desires, should be directed to glorify God and for the good of humanity. The scriptures say: The mortal, when freed from the captivity of selfish desires, becomes immortal and attains liberation even in this very life (KaU 6.14, BrU 4.04.07).

**HOW TO CONTROL LUST**

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहर् इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।  
 मनसस् तु परा बुद्धिर् यो बुद्धेः परतस् तु सः ॥४२॥  
 indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ  
 manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ

**The senses are said to be superior to the body; the mind is superior to the senses; the intellect is superior to the mind; and the Self is superior to the intellect. (3.42)**

एवं बुद्धेः परं बुद्ध्वा संस्तभ्यात्मानम् आत्मना ।  
 जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम् ॥४३॥  
 evaṁ buddheḥ param buddhvā saṁstabhyā'tmānam ātmanā  
 jahi śatruṁ mahābāho kāmarupam durāsadam

**Thus, knowing the Self to be the highest, and controlling the mind by the intellect that is purified by spiritual practices, one must kill this mighty enemy, lust, O Arjuna, with the sword of true knowledge of the Self. (3.43)**

Uncontrolled worldly desires will ruin the beautiful spiritual journey of life. The scriptures provide ways and means of keeping the desires born in the mind under proper control. The body may be compared to a chariot upon which the individual soul — as passenger, owner, and enjoyer — is riding on a spiritual journey towards the Supreme Abode of the Lord. Duty and Self-knowledge are the two wheels of the chariot, and devotion is its axle. Selfless service is the road, and the divine qualities are the milestones. The scriptures are the guiding lights to dispel the darkness of ignorance. The five senses are the horses of this chariot. Sense objects are the roadside green grasses; attachments and aversions are the stumbling blocks; and lust, anger, and greed are the plunderers. Friends and relatives are fellow travelers whom we temporarily meet during the journey. Intellect is the driver of this chariot. If intellect, the charioteer, is not made pure and strong

by Self-knowledge and will power, then strong desires for sensual and material pleasures — or the senses — will control the mind (See 2.67) instead of the intellect controlling the mind. The mind and senses will attack and take control of intellect, the weak charioteer, and lead the passenger away from the goal of salvation into the ditch of transmigration.

If the intellect is well trained and purified by the fire of Self-knowledge and discrimination, the intellect will be able to control the sense-horses with the help of spiritual practice and detachment, the two reins of mind, and the whip of moral conduct and spiritual practices. The charioteer should hold the reins under control at all times; otherwise, the sense-horses will lead one into the ditch of transmigration. A single moment of carelessness leads to the downfall of the seeker. Finally, one must cross the river of illusion (Maya) and, by using the bridge of meditation and the silent repetitive chanting of Lord's name or a mantra to still the ripples of mind waves, reach the spiritual shore of trance. Those who cannot control the senses will not be able to attain Self-realization, the goal of human birth.

One must not spoil oneself by wrongful temporary pleasures of the senses. One who can control the senses can control the whole world and achieve success in all endeavors. Passion cannot be completely eliminated, but is subdued by Self-knowledge. The intellect becomes polluted during the youthful years, just as the clear water of a river becomes muddy during the rainy season. Keeping good company and setting a higher goal of life prevent the mind and intellect from becoming tainted by the distractions of sensual pleasures.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे  
श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे कर्मयोगो नाम तृतीयोऽध्यायः ॥

OM tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyām  
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjuna saṁvāde karmayogo  
nāma tṛtīyo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus ends the third chapter named “Path of Selfless Service” of the Upaniṣad of the Bhagavadgītā, the scripture of yoga, dealing with the science of the Absolute in the form of the dialogue between Śrīkṛṣṇa and Arjuna.