

## From karma-kanda to karma yoga (3.10-6)

Previously, Krsna established that one should not artificially renounce activities but should perform prescribed duties in a detached way. Now, He will explain the course of action for those who are not yet at the stage of detached work, but wish to attain it: by satisfying their material desires in a religious way, those who are attached will be purified.

Main theme:

Lord Krsna has designed the material world to encourage sacrifice. He does this by making material advancement dependent upon *yajna*. By worshipping the Lord for material well-being, one becomes purified and advances.

Sub points:

- A. The yoga ladder
1. Karma-kanda  
Encouraging regulated sense gratification, brings the general mass of people to a platform of religiosity. *Karma-kanda* purifies the practitioner in many ways:
    - a) It makes one practice some regulations, which brings detachment. Detachment fosters knowledge.
    - b) It brings one to the Vedas, which also contain *jnana* and *upasana* sections.
    - c) By practicing the *yajnas* and getting results, it gives one faith in *sastra*.
    - d) It brings one into association with *brahmanas*, who can give one knowledge.After bringing one to the Vedic path and giving one faith, it will naturally lead them to examine the *jnana* and *upasana* sections because the sense gratification of *karma-kanda* inevitably leads to frustration. In this way it leads one forward.
  2. Sakama-karma-yoga  
Frustrated with sense gratification, one begins to desire purification. They therefore attempt to renounce the fruits of their labor. Due to lingering material desires, they remain attached to some of the fruits but gradually advance to the stage of complete detachment from fruitive action.
  3. Niskama-karma-yoga  
At this stage, one is detached from the fruit of their labor but is still attached to the work itself. This leads to the next step.
  4. Jnana-yoga  
Completely detached from all desires for action and the fruits of action; one can renounce all duties and take fully to philosophical inquiry.
  5. Bhakti-yoga  
*Bhakti* can permeate any of the stages other than *karma-kanda*, but generally does not fully manifest before the deep realization evolved at the *jnana* stage (7.19)
- B. *Karma-yoga* - performing sacrifice for material benefit.
1. Through sacrifice one obtains material prosperity and gradual elevation to liberation (3.10-11)
  2. In all sacrifices (*yajnas*) the supreme beneficiary is Visnu. The demigods take pleasure in the sacrifice as His parts and parcels.
  3. All necessities of life come from the demigods. Thus, by pleasing them, one will prosper.
    - a) The demigods are the empowered administrators of the world, governing on behalf of the Lord. Thus they are naturally pleased when one directly serves the Lord. But, since everyone may not initially be qualified to serve Krsna directly, the Vedas sometimes recommend demigod worship.
    - b) This entire process is designed to foster a mood of dependence and service within the hearts of materialistic people.
    - c) With this goal in mind, Krsna explains that those who receive the fruits of sacrifice without recognizing (and consequently offering back to) the Lord and the demigods is a thief partaking in sinful life (3.12-13).
- C. *Sankirtan yajna* is the simplest and most effective form of sacrifice, especially in Kali Yuga (3.10).

- D. By participating in sacrifice (*yajna*), even with materialistic objectives, one comes in contact with Transcendence. This is because the Vedas directly emanate from the Lord.
- E. *Yajna*, sacrifice, is more than an elaborate ritual. Adherence to one's duties is actual *yajna*. The Vedas prescribed various duties (3.14-16).
1. If one can execute pure devotional service they go directly to transcendence, the varieties of duties are not necessary to purify them (3.15).
  2. What about duties not prescribed in the Vedas? Actions done in disregard to Vedic *dharma* are binding and useless. The purpose of human life is to elevate the consciousness by performance of authorized *dharma* prescribed in the Vedas. Neglecting this, one lives in vain (3.16).
- F. Sacrifice removes false ego - the senses of self-propriety. One can perceive transcendence to the extent that one partakes of sacrifice. Thus spiritual life can be seen as varying degrees of sacrifice for a transcendental cause. It starts with materialists performing *yajnas* to achieve pious sense gratification. The culmination of sacrifice is the life of a pure devotee, pure sacrifice.

### ***Niskama-karma - Acting dutifully to set the correct example (3.17-35)***

After teaching Arjuna about *karma-kanda* Krsna proceeds to *niskama-karma yoga*.

Krsna previously explained that one who desires to become purified must perform prescribed duties, but one who is already self-realized can neglect his duties. Arjuna may think he can avoid fighting by being self-realized, as he would no longer need to be purified by prescribed duties. To prevent this misunderstanding, Krsna explains that even self-realized people perform their prescribed duties, neither out of attachment nor for purification, but to set the proper example for the general mass of people.

While explaining these points Krsna counters Arjuna's argument of "destruction of the family."

Main theme:

One in full knowledge is above material attachment. They do not need prescribed duties for purification. Still they act, setting the example for those who are less knowledgeable.

Sub points:

- A. *Sastra and guru* assign one's duty according to their material attachments. One is given activities to purify them while allowing them to fulfill their desires in a regulated way. The only person free from duties is the self-realized person because they have no desires to fulfill, nor any purification to achieve.
- B. The self-realized do perform prescribed duties, but only to give others a strong example of how to live."
1. Srila Prabhupada explains that the heads of society must be trained to know the revealed scriptures so they may lead society in the correct manner. They also must embody the moral teachings that they are imparting (3.21).
  2. Krsna uses Himself as an example. He is God, and has nothing outside Himself to acquire, but He still acts as a *ksatriya*. The reason is that if He neglected prescribed duties, common people would in turn do the same (3.22-25).
    - a) Here Krsna defeats Arjuna's argument of "destruction of the family."
    - b) The general mass of people will use any excuse to neglect their duty in favor of sense gratification. If leaders like Krsna and Arjuna shun *dharma*, then the masses would surely follow. Whimsicality would run rampant amongst the people, and religious codes regulating the mixing of the sexes would be broken. The result would be *varna-sankara*, unwanted population, which would destroy society.
    - c) Arjuna argued that the war would destroy family tradition and bring on *varna-sankara*. Here Krsna counters that *not* fighting in the war would, for Arjuna, constitute abandonment of duty, which would all the more forcefully destroy traditions and create *varna-sarikara*.

3. One who realizes the futility of materialistic activities should not encourage the masses to give up work prematurely. Instead, he should encourage them to work by their own example. Engaging in the prescribed process of purification slowly but surely brings one to genuine self-realization, but premature renunciation simply makes one a social parasite (3.26,29).

C. What is the difference between self-realized and ignorant people if they both perform the same duties? Prabhupada explains, "A person in Krsna consciousness and a person not in Krsna consciousness are differentiated by different desires" (3.25-30).

1. An ignorant person bewildered by desire for sense gratification believes they are the doer and independent controller of the events of their life. They thus perform their duties with attachment and desire to attain sense gratification

2. A self realized person understands that they do not belong in the material world. They perform their duties with detachment for the sake of purification. They have no attachment to the results of their activities, as they have firm faith that Krsna is the controller (3.28).

3. The highest level of self-realized work is pure devotional service, above ritualistic religion or dutiful work for purification (3.30).

D. One's ability to advance in spiritual life is directly connected with their faithful and non-jealous acceptance of Krsna and His teachings. Even if one is not at the stage of devotion mentioned in 3.30, as long as they are sincerely faithful to the words of Krsna they will ultimately qualify for pure devotional service (3.31-32).

E. Except for the self-realized, all people are driven to act by the three modes of nature. Therefore the sincere aspiring spiritualist follows the path of regulation to gradually purify their modal attachments, while giving themselves enough sense gratification to pacify their mind. Still, if one clings on to the concessions given for sense gratification given in sastra, they risk falling down to sinful life (3.33-34).

F. Finishing His dissertation on *niskama-karma yoga*, Krsna explains that one should never give up their prescribed duties to take to the duties of others. Instead, it is better to encounter destruction on one's own path than to follow another's (3.35).

The following three angles may help one understand why one should rather perform one's own duty imperfectly than do another's perfectly.

1. *Accepting another's duty promotes whimsicality* and thus ultimately creates havoc. It creates the option to reject one's duty if it proves uncomfortable and thus invites a fall to the platform of accepting and rejecting in terms of sense gratification.

2. *Accepting another's duty causes a social disruption*. Prescribed duties are given not only for personal purification but also to have a stable society of different integrated parts. If one decides to change his activities, those who depend on him for certain needs may be let down.

3. *Accepting another's duty is not as easy as one thinks*. One's conditioned tendencies run deeper than they realize. Giving up one's natural work is very difficult. Engaging in unnatural work promotes dissatisfaction and thus the risk of fall down to immorality escalates.

### ***Beware of lust and anger (3.36-43)***

Krsna defeated many arguments justifying disregard of duty and explained the importance of following one's *dharmic* regulations, as authorized in *sastra*. One may ask, "What causes someone to act against *sastric* authority, even when they know such behavior is improper?" In response, Krsna explains the nature of lust.

Main Theme:

The archenemy of spiritual advancement is lust. One can curb lust by following regulations of religious life and by cultivating knowledge of the soul's real nature.

Sub points:

A. Lust also has its origin in Transcendence (3.37).

1. Lust originates when the soul's inherent love for Krsna is refracted back upon itself. Thus, lust - the intense desire to please one's senses - is a reflection of the soul's original intense desire to please Krsna's senses.

2. Srila Prabhupada explains, "If, therefore, the mode of passion, instead of being degraded into the mode of ignorance, is elevated to the mode of goodness by the prescribed method of living and acting, then one can be saved from the degradation of wrath by spiritual attachment."

- a) Unchecked lust leads to wrath - the mode of ignorance (see 2.62-63), but lust (the mode of passion), if properly regulated by prescribed duties, can also be elevated to the mode of goodness.

B. Different species of life are distinguished by the level of lust covering the pure consciousness of the living entity (3.38).

1. Krsna gives a simple analogy comparing the human form of life to a fire covered by smoke. This is meant to explain that in the human form of life, one has a semblance of his pure spiritual consciousness. The human form affords the opportunity to fan the slightly uncovered fire of consciousness into a blaze, thus rekindling one's inherent Krsna consciousness.

C. In a completely different analogy, Krsna compares lust to fire. Lust is never satisfied with any amount of fuel; it simply grows as it is fed. The best way to stop lust is to stop feeding it and let it die (3.39).

D. Krsna closes this chapter with direct instructions on how to defeat the enemy, lust (3.40-43). He first points out where the enemy is located (in text 40), then explains how to defeat him (41-43).

1. The seats of lust: the senses, mind and intelligence.

- a) Senses: One's senses are influenced by lust when they feel attracted to pleasure and repulsed by pain. The senses send images of desirable and undesirable objects to the mind.
- b) Mind: The mind thus becomes a repository of sensual impressions. It is thus occupied by lust.
- c) Intelligence: Lustful imagery arises in the mind and attacks the intelligence. If defeated, the intelligence is commandeered to make plans for fulfilling the lusty desires of the mind. Lust thus enters through the senses and conquers the mind and intelligence.
- d) Srila Prabhupada notes that intelligence occupied by lust reinforces false-ego. This happens because plans to fulfill lusty desires generates a self-concept and world-view in which one is an enjoyer and controller (*ahankara*).

2. How to control lust.

- a) Because the intelligence and mind are difficult to control, one begins by regulating the senses (3.41).
- b) Next, one can attack lust in the mind and intelligence by contemplating that they are spiritual, superior to the dictates of senses, mind, and intelligence. They can thus practice acting on the platform of spiritual desire (Krsna consciousness) rather than material lust (3.42-43)