

# **BHAGAVADGITA**

**English translation of Sri Ramanuja's Sanskrit Commentary - Swami**

**Adidevananda**

**Chapter 3**

**RO**

3.1 'Arjuna said -- If you consider that knowledge is superior to works, why do you engage me in this terrible deed?' What is said here is this: If the firm adherence to knowledge is the only means to the vision of the self, then how can one accept the idea that devotion to works (Karma) leads to it? It was said before that this firm devotion to knowledge, which forms the means for the vision of the self, could arise by the cessation of the activities of all the senses and the mind in relation to their respective objects such as sound. If the vision of the self is to be attained, which arises by the cessation of the activities of the senses, I should be guided to engage myself solely to acquire firm devotion to knowledge, which is preceded by the abandoning of all works. For what purpose, then, do you engage me in this terrible deed, which consists in the activities of all the senses, and is thus an obstacle for the vision of the self?

3.2 Consequently, it appears to me as if 'you confuse me with statements that seem to contradict each other.' For, firm devotion to knowledge which forms the means for the vision of the self and which is of the nature of stopping the operations of the senses on the one hand, and on the other exhortation to action which is of a nature opposite to it, i.e., knowledge, as a means to the same vision of that Atman --- these

statements are contradictory and confusing. Therefore tell me clearly the path following which I can take a determined course and win the Supreme Being.

3.3 The Lord said -- You have not properly understood what I taught you before. In this world, full of people with varying degrees of qualifications, I have taught in the days of yore two ways, that of knowledge (Jnana Yoga) and that of works, according to the qualifications of aspirants. There is no contradiction in this. It is not possible for all people of the world in whom the desire for release has arisen, to become capable immediately for the practice of Jnana Yoga. But he who performs the worship of the Supreme Person without desire for fruits and thereby gets completely rid of inner impurities and keeps his senses unagitated --- he becomes competent for the path of knowledge. That all activities are for performing the worship of the Supreme Person will be taught in the Gita verse, 'He from `whom the activities of all beings arise and by whom all this is pervaded --- by worshipping Him with his duty man reaches perfection' (18.46). Earlier also performance of activities without any attachment to the fruits is enjoined by the verse beginning with. 'You have the right to work alone ...' (2.47). Next for those whose intellect has been redeemed by this kind of discipline, is enjoined Jnana Yoga by the words, 'When a man renounces all the desires ...' (2.55). Consequently, firm devotion to Jnana Yoga is taught only to the Sankhyas, i.e., those persons who are competent to follow the discipline of the knowledge of the self, and

Karma Yoga to Yogins, i.e., to those competent for the path of work. Sankhya means Buddhi and those who are endowed with the Buddhi (intellectual or mental disposition) having only the self for its object, are Sankhyans. Therefore those who are not fit for this are qualified for Karma Yoga. Those who are possessed of Buddhi which is agitated by objects of the senses, are the persons qualified for Karma Yoga, whereas those whose Buddhi is not thus agitated, are qualified for Jnana Yoga. Therefore nothing contradictory and confusing is taught. It is said in the next stanza that Jnana Yoga is difficult to practise all at once, even when the desire for release arises in any worldly person:

3.4 Not by non-performance of the acts prescribed by the scriptures, does a person attain freedom from Karma, i.e., Jnana Yoga; nor by ceasing to perform such actions as are prescribed in the scriptures and are already begun by him. For, success is achieved by actions done without attachment to the fruits and by way of worshipping the Supreme Person. Hence devoid of it (Karma-nistha), one does not achieve Jnana-nistha. By those persons who have not worshipped Govinda by acts done without attachment to fruits and whose beginningless and endless accumulation of evil has not been annulled thereby, constant contemplation on the self is not possible. It can be done only if it is preceded by the attainment of a state in which the operation of the senses have been freed from disturbance. This view is put forward by the Lord:

3.5 In this world, no man can rest without doing work; for every person, even though he may have determined, 'I will not do anything,' is caused to act, i.e., is compelled to act according to the Gunas born of Prakrti. The Gunas are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas which increase in accordance with his old Karma. Consequently, Jnana Yoga can be attained only by means of a purified inner organ after annulling the old accumulation of sins by means of Karma Yoga of the aforesaid characteristics and bringing Sattva and other Gunas under control. Otherwise, one who engages oneself in Jnana Yoga becomes a hypocrite:

3.6 He whose inner and outer organs of senses are not conquered because of his sins not being annulled but is none the less struggling for winning knowledge of the self, whose mind is forced to turn away from the self by reason of it being attached to sense objects, and who consequently lets his minds dwell on them --- he is called a hypocrite, because his actions are at variance with his professions. The meaning is that by practising the knowledge of the self in this way, he becomes perverted and lost.

3.7 Consequently, he who, with aspiration to have the vision of the self, directs his senses to action according to the scriptures, such action being of the same class as those which he practised earlier, and who then begins to practise Karma Yoga, after renouncing attachment, with the senses which are naturally inclined to action --- he, by reason of there being no chance of errors, excels a man following Jnana Yoga,

because there is no fear of a fall in his case.

3.8 'Obligatory' (Niyatam) means 'concomitant' (Vyaptam); for action is concomitant with that which is conjoined with Prakrti or the body. The contact with Prakrti has arisen from beginningless subtle impressions (Vasanas). You must perform work, because the performance of action is easy and may not cause accidents by reason of its being obligatory. Action is superior to non-action, i.e., even to the devotee of Jnana. Because of the instruction at the beginning (of this context), 'No man experiences freedom from activity' (3.4), devotion to Jnana alone is indicated by the word, 'Non-action' (Akarma). Even in the case of one qualified for devotion to Jnana, devotion to Karma indeed is better because Jnana-nistha is difficult to perform and liable to accidents, as it has not been practised previously and as it does not come to one naturally. Subsequently it will be described how, one with the knowledge of the true nature of the self can carry on actions along with that knowledge. Consequently, we should take the meaning here to be that, because knowledge of the self too is included in Karma Yoga, this kind of Yoga is superior. This statement on the superiority of activity (Karma Yoga) over Jnana Yoga is valid even when there is competency for one to adopt Jnana Yoga. For, if you abandon all activities to qualify yourself for Jnana Yoga, then, for you, who is thus inactive while following Jnana Yoga, even the nourishment of the body, which is necessary even for Jnana-nistha, will not be achieved. The body has to be necessarily sustained until the means are executed to the full. Performing 'great

sacrifices' with the help of honestly earned wealth, the body should be sustained by consuming the remainders left after such sacrifices. This is made clear from scriptural texts like, 'When the food is pure, the Sattva (mind or inner organ) becomes pure; when the Sattva is pure, then the remembrance (meditation) will be steady' (Cha. U., 7.26.2). Sri Krsna himself will declare: 'The sinful ones who cook food for their own sake eat sin (3.13). Consequently, even the sustenance of the body will not be possible in the case of one who practises Jnana-nistha, and does not act. In other ways also Karma Yoga is superior to Jnana Yoga even in respect of one who is qualified for Jnana-nistha; for, obligatory and occasional rites like the 'great sacrifices' must be carried out by one who follows Jnana Yoga too, as he has to sustain the body until he attains perfection. Besides, the understanding of the true nature of the self is incorporated in Karma Yoga, as it involves the contemplation of the self as being a non-agent. It is also in line with the nature of life (Prakrti). Karma Yoga, is for these reasons easier and it is free from danger of downfall. Therefore, you must perform Karma Yoga only. This is the purport of the verse. If it is contended that any action such as earning money implies 'I-ness', 'My-ness' etc., and will therefore be disturbing to the senses, and that such a person devoted often to works will be in bondage through subtle impressions of his acts, Sri Krsna says:

3.9 The world is imprisoned by the bond of work only when work is done for personal ends, but not when work is performed or money acquired for the purpose of sacrifice etc. prescribed in the scriptures.

So, for the purpose of sacrifice, you must perform acts like the acquisition of money. In doing so, overcome attachments generated by the pursuit of personal ambitions, and then do your work in the spirit of Yajna. When a person free from attachment does the work for the sake of sacrifices etc., the Supreme Person, propitiated by sacrifices etc., grants him the calm vision of the self after destroying the subtle impressions of his Karmas, which have continued from time without beginning. Sri Krsna stresses the need for sustenance of the body solely by the remnants of sacrifices in respect of those who are devoted to all ends of human life. He decries the sin of those who nourish the body by things other than the remnants of sacrifices:

3.10 As there is the scriptural text beginning with 'The Lord of Universe' (Tai. Na., 11.3), it is justifiable to take the term Prajapati in its wider connotation and interpret it to mean Narayana who is the Lord of all beings, the creator of the universe and the Self of the universe. In the beginning, i.e., during the creation, He, the Lord of beings, saw all beings helpless by their conjunction with beginningless non-conscious matter, bereft of the distinctions of name and form, and submerged in Himself. They were incapable of attaining the major ends of human existence, being almost one with non-conscious matter. He, the supremely compassionate, with a desire to resuscitate them, created them together with sacrifice in order that they might perform sacrifices as His worship and said: 'By this sacrifice, shall you prosper,' i.e., multiply and prosper. May this sacrifice fulfil your supreme object of

desire called release (Moksa) and also the other desires that are in conformity with it. How, then, should this be done?

3.11 'By this,' i.e., by this sacrifice, you propitiate the gods who form My body and have Me as their Self. For Sri Krsna will say later on: 'For I am the only enjoyer and the only Lord of Sacrifices' (9.24). Worshipped by sacrifices, may these gods, who have Me as their Self, nourish you with food, drink etc., which are required also for their worship. Thus, supporting each other, may you attain the highest good called Moksa (release).

3.12 'Pleased by the sacrifice,' i.e., propitiated by the sacrifice, the gods, who have Me as their Self, will bestow on you the enjoyments you desire. Whatever objects are desired by persons keen on attaining release, the supreme end of human endeavour, all those will be granted by gods previously worshipped through many sacrifices. That is, whatever is solicited with more and more propitiation, all those enjoyments they will bestow on you. Whoever enjoys the objects of enjoyment granted by them for the purpose of worshipping them, without giving them their due share in return --- he is verily a thief. What is called 'theft' is indeed taking what belongs to another as one's own and using it for oneself, when it is really designed for the purpose of another. The purport is that such a person becomes unfit not only for the supreme end of human endeavour, but also will go down towards purgatory (Naraka). Sri Krsna expands the same:



3.13 Those persons who acquire food materials solely for propitiating the Supreme Person abiding as the Self of Indra and other deities, and who, after cooking them, propitiate, through them, the Supreme Person as He is, and then sustain themselves on the remnants of oblations (made for such propitiation), they alone will be free of impurities which have resulted from beginningless evil and which are inimical to the vision of the self. But they are evil-minded, who acquire for selfish use the things which the Supreme Being, abiding as the Self of Indra and other deities, has granted them for worshipping Him with, and use it all on the other hand for feeding themselves --- they eat only sin. Turning away from the vision of the self, they cook only for being led to Naraka (for the expiation of the sin incurred thereby). Sri Krsna says that, from the standpoint of the world as well as that of the scriptures, everything has its origin in sacrifice; and He speaks of the need for the performance of the sacrifices and of the blemish in not performing the same:

3.14 From food arise all beings; from rain food is produced. These two facts are matters of common experience. 'From sacrifice comes rain' this is known from the scriptures such as, 'The oblations offered in fire reach the sun, and from the sun comes rain' (Manu, 6.76), and sacrifice is born out of activities in the form of collecting materials, etc., by the agent. And activity arises from 'Brahman', the body born of Prakrti.

3.15 Here the term, 'Brahman' connotes the physical body consisting of modifications of the Prakrti; for the Prakrti is denoted here by the term 'Brahman', as in the scriptural text: 'From Him arises, this Brahman and this 'Brahman' becomes name, form and food' (Mun. U., 1.1.9). Here also it will be said by Sri Krsna: 'This great 'Brahman' is my womb' (14.3). Therefore, the words that 'Activity springs from 'Brahman' teaches that activity is produced by the physical body which is of the nature of the modification of Prakrti. The 'Brahman' arises from the imperishable self. Here the term, 'imperishable', indicates the individual self. The physical body, which is inhabited by the self who is satisfied by food and drink, is fit for action; hence the physical body which constitutes the instrument of activity is said to be from the imperishable. Therefore the 'all-pervading Brahman' means here the bodies of all persons of diverse kinds which are the products of Prakrti which comprises all material entities, and is hence all-pervading. They, the bodies, are established in sacrifice. The meaning is that the bodies have roots in sacrifice.

3.16 Thus this wheel is set in motion by the Supreme Person: From food arise embodied selves which are denoted by the word 'beings': from rain food; from sacrifice rain; sacrifice from activities which constitute the exercise of an agent; and activity from the embodied self; and again the body endowed with life from food. In this manner there is a sequence which revolves like a wheel through the mutual relations of cause and effect. Hence, He who is engaged in spiritual practice ---

whether one is qualified for Karma Yoga or Jnana Yoga --- if he does not follow, i.e., does not keep in motion the wheel which revolves in a circle through mutual relation of cause and effect --- that person by not maintaining his bodily subsistence by means of the 'remainder of sacrifice,' lives in sin. His life begins in sin or develops in sin, or is of both these kinds; he lives the life of sin. Thus he is a reveller in his senses and not in his self. The senses become the pleasure-gardens of one whose mind and body are not nourished by the 'remainders of sacrifices.' Rajas and Tamas preponderate in his body. Being thus turned away from the vision of the self, he rejoices only in the enjoyment of the senses. Therefore, even if he were to attempt for the vision of the self, it will be fruitless. So he lives in vain, O Arjuna. Sri Krsna now says that there is no need for the performance of the 'great sacrifices' etc., according to his station and stage of life, only in respect of a liberated person whose vision of the self does not depend on any external means.

3.17 But for him, who is not in need of the means of Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga, who finds delight in the self on his own, i.e., who is established in the self, who is satisfied by the self alone and not by food, drink and other things which are other than the self, who rejoices in the self alone and not in pleasure gardens, garlands, sandalpaste, vocal and instrumental music etc., and for whom everything, his subsistence, nourishment and enjoyment, is the self alone --- for him nothing remains to be performed for the vision of the self, because the essential nature of the self is perpetually in his unaided vision.

3.18 Thus, for such a one there is no purpose, i.e., nothing to be gained from work done as a means for the vision of the self, nor is he subject to any evil or calamity from work left undone, because his vision of the self does not rest on any external means. To such a person who has turned by himself away from non-intelligent matter which is different from the self, there is nothing acceptable as a purpose to be gained from the constituents of Prakrti and their products; only if there were such a purpose, there would be the need for the means of retreat therefrom. For, the adoption of the means is only for effecting such a retreat. But he is verily liberated. Non-pursuit of the means for vision of the self is only for that person whose vision of the self no longer depends on any means. But Karma Yoga is better in gaining the vision of the self for one who is in pursuit of the means for that vision, because it is easy to perform, because it is secure from possible error, because the contemplation of the true nature of the self is included in it, and because even for a Jnana Yogin the performance of minimum activity is necessary. For these reasons, Karma Yoga is better as a means for the vision of the Atman.

3.19 Therefore, considering that work has to be performed with detachment, you perform it, considering yourself a non-agent. This will be declared in the words 'with detachment' and 'which ought to be done,' meaning that one attains the Supreme by Karma Yoga itself.

3.20 It is also declared that Karma Yoga alone Janaka and others reached perfection. Because, Karma Yoga is the best means for securing the vision of the self even for a person who is qualified for Jnana Yoga, royal sages like Janaka and others, who are foremost among the Jnanins, preferred Karma Yoga as the means for attaining perfection. Thus, having first declared previously that Karma Yoga must be practised by an aspirant for release who is qualified for Karma Yoga alone, as he is unfit for Jnana Yoga, it was next stated with reasons that, even for one who is qualified for Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga is better than Jnana Yoga Now it is going to be declared (in verses 20-26) that Karma Yoga must be performed in every way by one who is virtuous. At least for the guidance of the world, you should do work even if there is no need of it for yourself.

3.21 Whatever 'an eminent man,' i.e., he, who is famous for his knowledge of all the scriptures and for his observance of the scriptural dictates, performs, others who have incomplete knowledge of the scriptures will also perform, following his example. With regard to any duty which is being performed with all its ancillaries by an eminent personage, the people with incomplete knowledge will do it with the same ancillaries. Therefore for the protection of the world, all acts that are appropriate to one's station and stage in life must always be performed by an eminent man who is distinguished for his wisdom. Otherwise, the evil generated from the ruin of the large masses of the world (who neglect their duties by following his example), will bring him

down, even if he were a follower of pure Jnana Yoga.

3.22 For Me, who is the Lord of all, who has all desires fulfilled, who is omniscient, whose will is always true, and who, at My own will, remains in the three worlds in the forms of gods, men and such other beings, there is nothing whatever to achieve. Therefore though there is for Me nothing 'unacquired', i.e., nothing yet to be acquired by work, I go on working for the protection of the world.

3.23 If I, the Lord of all, whose will is always true, whose sport consists in creation, sustentation and dissolution of universe at My will, even though I am born at My pleasure as a man to help the world --- if, I thus incarnating in the family of Vasudeva who is the foremost among virtuous men, did not continue to work unwearied at all times suitable to that family, then, these men with incomplete knowledge would follow My path, thinking that the way adopted by the son of virtuous Vasudeva alone is the real way. And in place of winning the self, they would go to Naraka because of their failure to do what ought to be done and also because of the sin arising from non-performance of duty.

3.24 If I do not do the work suitable to My station in life, likewise all the virtuous men also, neglecting their duties by following My example, would be destroyed on account of not performing their duties. That is, they will become lost. Thus I would be bringing about chaos among all virtuous men on account of My failure to conduct Myself as prescribed in

the scriptures. Therefore I would be destroying all these people. Even so, if you, Arjuna, a son of Pandu and a brother of Yudhisthira and the foremost of the virtuous, claim to be qualified for Jnana Yoga, then the virtuous aspirants, who do not know everything and who follow your way, without knowing their own competency, would give up practising Karma Yoga and will be lost. Therefore work should be done by one who is recognised as learned and worthy.

3.25 'The ignorant' are those people who do not know the entire truth about the self; 'attached to their work' means they are inseparably yoked to work. Because of their incomplete knowledge of the self, they are not qualified for Jnana Yoga which is of the nature of practising knowledge of the self. They are qualified for Karma Yoga only. As they should practise Karma Yoga for the vision of the self in the same manner Karma Yoga should be practised by one who is recognised as virtuous, who is unattached to work by reason of the vision of the self, and who wishes that his conduct should give guidance to others in virtuous conduct. In this way he should protect the world from chaos by his example. Such a person, even though qualified for Jnana Yoga, should practice Karma Yoga.

3.26 Do not bewilder the minds of ignorant aspirants by saying that there is, besides Karma Yoga, another way to the vision of the self. They cannot practise Jnana Yoga on account of their incomplete knowledge of the self, and attachment to action. They are qualified for Karma Yoga

because of their being fit only for activity on account of the subtle impressions of their beginningless Karma. What then follows from this? It is this: Even though one is qualified for Jnana Yoga because of the complete knowledge of the self, one should do work, holding the view as said previously, that Karma Yoga by itself without Jnana Yoga is an independent means for the vision of the self. He should thus generate love for all types of activity among those who do not know the complete truth. Sri Krsna declares (in the verses 27 to 30) the way in which the self is to be contemplated on as not being an agent as required by Karma Yoga, after demonstrating the difference between the enlightened and unenlightened among those practising Karma Yoga.

3.27 It is the Gunas of Prakrti like Sattva, Rajas etc., that perform all the activities appropriate to them. But the man, whose nature is deluded by his Ahankara, thinks, 'I am the doer of all these actions.' Ahankara is the mistaken conception of 'I' applied to the workings of Prakrti which is not the 'I'. The meaning is that it is because of this (Ahankara), that one who is ignorant of the real nature of the self, thinks, 'I am the doer' with regard to the activities that are really being done by the Gunas of Prakrti.

3.28 But he who knows the truth about the divisions of the Gunas and their actions --- namely, about the division among Sattva etc., on the one hand, and the divisions among their respective functionings on the other hand --- it is he who, realising that Gunas, i.e., Sattva etc., are



operating on their own products, is not attached to the actions of the Gunas, being convinced, 'I am not the doer.'

3.29 Those who 'do not know the whole truth' are those persons who are trying for the vision of the self but are deluded about the nature of the self, not knowing, on account of their involvement in Prakrti, that actions proceed from the Gunas of Prakrti. They are therefore attached to the actions of the Gunas --- i.e., only to actions forming part of Karma Yoga. They are qualified only for Karma Yoga. One who knows the complete truth should not, by himself remaining a practitioner of Jnana Yoga, unsettle those persons who are ignorant and who do not know the complete truth. Those, the ignorant, who tend to follow the behaviour of a great man, when they see him transcend Karma Yoga, will have their minds shaken from Karma Yoga. Thus, the great man, should himself remain established in Karma Yoga, while having the full knowledge of the true nature of the self and contemplating on the self as not being the agent. Thus he should demonstrate that Karma Yoga by itself is an autonomous means for the vision of the self. He should create in those who do not know the complete truth the love of Karma Yoga. The superiority of this Karma Yoga over Jnana Yoga even for those who are qualified for Jnana Yoga has already been stated. Therefore one who is a respected person of note should follow this Karma Yoga alone for the good of the world. The method of performing actions after attributing agency to the Gunas by discerning the nature of the self as different from Prakrti, has been taught. The agency of the self is not produced by the

inherent nature of the self, but by its contact with the Gunas. Hence by discriminating between what is obtained by contact and not obtained when there is no contact, it has to be understood that this agency is due to the Gunas or Prakrti. Now it is said that the agency of works, first attributed to Gunas, ultimately go to the Supreme Person who is the Self of all. It is done by discerning that the nature of the individual self is one of subservience to the Supreme Person, as they constitute His body:

3.30 Do all prescribed acts such as war etc., (here a duty) free from desire or selfishness and devoid of fear, with a mind focussed on the self. Surrender all acts to Me, the Lord of all, who constitutes the inner pervading Self of all beings. 'Adhyatma-cetas' is that mind which is focussed on the self by knowledge of the essential nature of the self as declared in hundreds of Vedic texts. That this individual self constitutes the body of the Supreme Self and is actuated by Him, is taught by Sruti texts like: 'He who has entered within, is the ruler of all beings and is the Self of all' (Tai. Ar., 3.11), 'Him who has entered inside and is the doer' (Ibid., 3.23), 'He who, dwelling in the self, is within the self, whom the Self does not know, whose body is the self, who controls the self from within --- He is your internal ruler and Immortal Self' (Br. U., 3.7.22). Smṛti texts also speak in the same manner: 'Him who is the ruler of all' (Manu, 12.122). Sri Kṛṣṇa will say later on: 'And I am seated in the hearts of all; from Me are memory, knowledge and the faculty of reason' (15.15); 'The Lord, O Arjuna, lives in the heart of everything causing them to spin round and round by His power, as if set on a wheel'

(18.61). Hence, dedicate to Me, the Supreme Person, all actions considering them as done by Me, by contemplating on the self as actuated by Me by reason of Its constituting My body. And do every thing, considering the actions as My worship only; becoming free from desire for fruits and therefore free from selfishness as regards actions, engage in acts like war etc., devoid of 'fever', i.e., the excitement caused by passions like anger. Contemplate that the Supreme Person, Lord of all, Principal of all, gets done His own works only for the purpose of getting Himself worshipped with His own instruments, namely, the individual selves which belong to Him and are His agents. Become free from selfish attachment to action. Also be free from the feverish concern originating from such thoughts as 'What will become of me with an ancient, endless accumulation of evil arising from beginningless time?' Perform Karma Yoga with ease, for the Supreme Person Himself, worshipped by acts, will free you from bondage. His Lordship and Principalship over all are settled by Sruti texts like: 'Him who is the supreme and great Lord of lords, Him the Supreme Divinity of divinities' (Sve. U., 6.7), 'The Lord of the Universe' (Tai. Na., 11.3), 'The Supreme Ruler of rulers' (Sve. U., 6.6-7). Isvaratva is the same as Sesitva, which means controllership. Sri Krsna declares that this alone is the essential meaning of the Upanisads:

3.31 There are those persons who are qualified to understand the Sastras and decide for themselves what is My doctrine, and follow them accordingly; there are others who are full of faith in the meaning of the

Sastras without however practising it. And there are still others who, even though devoid of faith, do not cavil at it, saying that the true meaning of the Sastras cannot be this, i.e., they do not find any blemish pertaining to the Sastras which possess great qualities. All these persons are freed from Karmas which are there from beginningless time and which cause bondage. By the term, *api* (even) in '*te pi karmabhih*' ('even they from Karmas'), these men are divided into three groups. The meaning is that those who, even if they do not act upon the meaning but still believe in this meaning of the Sastras and do not cavil at it, will be cleansed of their evil by their faith and freedom from fault-finding. For, if they have faith they will, before long, take to the practice of this very meaning of the Sastras and be freed. Sri Krsna now speaks of the evil that will befall those who do not practice this instruction of the Upanisads, i.e., those who are faithless and who cavil at it.

3.32 But those who do not follow this view of Mine, namely, that the self has Me for Its support, is subservient to Me and is actuated by Me only, i.e., those who do not perform all acts contemplating in this way as also those who have no faith in the meaning of the Sastras and calumniate them --- know them to be extremely deluded and devoid of reasoning and knowledge and consequently completely lost. For, the function of the mind is the determination of the real nature of things, and in its absence, those mentioned above are devoid of reason, and therefore apostates in knowledge and extremely deluded in all ways. For one united with the Prakrti (body), the sense of agency results from the

preponderance of the Gunas of Prakrti. But this agency really rests with the Supreme Person. Contemplating thus, Karma Yoga alone should be practised by both --- those who are competent for Karma Yoga only and those who are competent for Jnana Yoga. The implied superiority of Karma Yoga has the following justifications; it is easy to perform, free from liability to lapse, and independent of anything else; it comprises the knowledge of the self also within its scope. On the other hand Jnana Yoga is difficult to practise, is not free from the liability to lapse, leaves one dependent on actions for the sustenance of the body etc. And for a distinguished person, this (i.e., Karma Yoga) is especially what ought to be practised. Next, till the end of this chapter, it is explained how Jnana Yoga, being difficult, is liable to lead to lapses.

3.33 Such and such is the nature of the self, which is different from the Prakrti --- this has to be always contemplated upon: thus declare the Sastras. Even a person who knows this, acts in relation to material objects only according to his own nature, i.e., guided by his old subtle impressions. How is this? 'All beings follow their nature.' Beings in conjunction with non-conscious matter, all follow only subtle impressions which have continued to come from time immemorial. What can the control enjoined by Sastras, do to these beings who follow their subtle impressions? Sri Krsna expounds the way by which individuals are overpowered to follow their respective natures:

3.34 An unavoidable attraction has been fixed for organs of sense like ear towards the objects like sound, and for organs of action like that of tongue towards their objects like tasty food. This longing is in the form of desire to experience these objects, which is caused by old subtle impressions. When their experience is thwarted, an unavoidable aversion is experienced. Thus, these two, attachment and aversion, bring under their control one who aspires to follow Jnana Yoga, and forcibly engage him in actions appropriate to them, in spite of his having established some sort of control over the senses. Such an aspirant fails to get the experience of the self, and therefore becomes completely lost. So no one practising Jnana Yoga should come under the sway of attachment and aversion, which are ruinous. These two, attachment and aversion, are indeed his unconquerable foes that deter him from the practice of Jnana Yoga.

3.35 Therefore Karma Yoga is better than Jnana Yoga. For, it forms one's own duty, since it is natural to one and easy to perform, and though defective, is free from liability to interruption and fall. Jnana Yoga, on the other hand, though performed well for some time, constitutes the duty of another, as it is difficult to practise for one conjoined with Prakrti. It is therefore liable to interruption. For a person who lives practising Karma Yoga --- which is his duty because he is qualified for it --- even death without success in one birth does not matter. For, in the next birth with the help of the experience already gained in the previous birth, it will be possible for him to perform Karma Yoga without any impediments.

Jnana Yoga is fraught with fear because of the possibility of errors for anyone who is conjoined to Prakrti. It is another's duty, on account of it being not easily adoptable by him.

3.36 Arjuna said -- Impelled by what does a man practising Jnana Yoga commit sin in the form of experiencing the objects of the senses, as if constrained by force, even against his own will not to experience the objects of the senses.

3.37 The Lord said -- The highly ravenous desire is born of the Guna Rajas originating from old subtle impressions. It has for its objects sound and other sense contacts. It is a foe to him who is practising Jnana Yoga, as he is joined with Prakrti constituted of the Gunas which rise and subside periodically. It attracts him towards the objects of the senses. It is this desire alone which, when hampered, develops into anger towards those persons who are the cause of such hindrance. It is a powerful cause of sin. It incites the aspirant to do harm to others. Know this, which is born of the Guna called Rajas, as the natural enemy of Jnana Yogins.

3.38 As a fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust and as an embryo by the membrane, so are the embodied beings covered by this desire. Sri Krsna teaches the mode of this envelopement:

3.39 The knowledge, having the self for its subject, of this embodied person (the Jiva) whose nature is knowledge, is enveloped by this constant enemy in the shape of desire, which brings about attachment for sense-objects. This desire is difficult to satisfy, i.e., has for its object things unworthy of attainment and is insatiable, i.e., never attains satisfaction. Now listen to what constitutes the instruments with which desire subdues the self. Sri Krsna goes on to expound this:

3.40 The senses, the mind and the intellect are the instruments of desire in so far as it overpowers the self through them. By means of these, viz., the senses, the mind and the intellect, which have been reduced to the position of servants through attachment to sense objects, desire deludes the embodied soul caught up in Prakrti by covering up Its knowledge. Here 'deluding' means making the self a victim of manifold illusions, by turning It away from the knowledge of Its true nature, and making It indulge in sensuous experiences.

3.41 For whatever reason a person engaged in Jnana Yoga, which is of the nature of abandoning the activities of all the senses, should control this enemy in the shape of desire which turns him away from the self through creating infatuation for objects of the senses --- for the same reason, you, who are yoked to the activities of the senses by reason of being in conjunction with the Prakrti, should, in the beginning itself, i.e., at the very beginning of the practice of the means for release, control the senses by the practice of Karma Yoga, which provides for the regulation



of the working of the senses. And then you must destroy, i.e., slay this sinful enemy, which is in the shape of desire and which destroys knowledge and discrimination, i.e., knowledge relating to the nature of the self and of the discriminative power, which is the means to gain this knowledge. Sri Krsna speaks of that which is most important among the adversaries:

3.42 The senses are called the important obstacles of knowledge, because when the senses keep operating on their objects, the knowledge of the self cannot arise. 'The mind is higher than the senses': even if the senses are withdrawn, if the Manas (mind) ruminates over sense objects, knowledge of the self cannot be had. 'The intellect (Buddhi) is greater than the mind', i.e., even if the mind is indifferent to sense objects, a perverted decision by the intellect can obstruct the dawn of the knowledge of the self. But even if all of them upto the intellect are quietened from their activity, still when desire, identified with will, originating from Rajas, is operating, it by itself obstructs the knowledge of the self by inducing the senses etc., to operate in their fields. Thus it is said here: 'But what is greater than intellect is that.' What is greater than the intellect --- is desire. Such is the sense of the last sentence here.

3.43 Thus, understanding desire, which is higher than even the intellect, to be the fore antagonistic to Jnana Yoga, and establishing the mind by means of the intellect in Karma Yoga, slay, i.e., destroy this foe, in the

shape of desire which is difficult to overcome.