



JURISPRUDENCE OF KARM YOG & RELEVANCE OF DUTY IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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Abstract

In the Indian Constitution, the duties have found place in the form of Fundamental Duties but they are not considered as important as rights. The same thing is equally applicable across the globe including in different International Conventions and Declarations. This article reveals the importance of Karma /duty in the present day Rights Oriented Society. To prove its point, the author has taken the guidance from the preaching of Lord Krishna in Bhagvad Gita. How un-controlled desires and the gap between deserve and desire creating a restless society and how hyper expectations of individuals in this materialistic world is affecting the psyche of the society negatively, is the point of discussion. How to maintain a balance between our success and failure and between illegitimate and legitimate expectation is the core theme of discussion of this article. Law is not all about resolving conflicts but also minimizing conflicts. Most of the conflicts in the society is the result of greed or hyper expectation. This article teaches us to maintain a balance in life for the peaceful coexistence in the society. Through this article the author tries to prove that only a duty conscious society may establish peace and sustainability in the in the world.

I. INTRODUCTION

Any living being cannot live without doing any karma. Karma of an individual not only affects his own life but also the life of others. Good karma creates good result and bad karma gives bad result. No text in the entire world talks about karma and karmic consequences as elaborately as Bhagvad Gita does. Presently when the whole world and mother earth is suffering from our greedy and selfish attitude the relevance of doctrine of karma becomes much more relevant.¹

Bhagavad Gita is one of the most practical and sound books of all time talking about the karmic presence in our life. Chapter 3 of this book exclusively talks about the importance of KarmYog. The philosophy of KarmYog enshrined in this holy text is the philosophy of Vedas, which is the reflection of philosophy of Sanatan Dharma. There are various divergent concepts thriving under the name of Sanatan Dharma. It welcomes diversity. However, there

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¹Available at: <https://www.baps.org/Spiritual-Living/Hindu-Beliefs/Karma-and-Dharma.aspx>(Last visited on January 5, 2021)

are some high level common salient concepts, about which almost all saints and leaders agree.²

Swami Vivekananda, a hindu monk, makes understand the philosophy of KarmYog in a very revolutionary way to the modern society. KarmYog according to Vivekananda is- “Humankind’s ultimate goal is knowledge & thus it becomes the source of karma. The result of karma comes at the end can be pleasurable or painful. A person’s reaction to the particular karma decides the ‘Character’ of that person.”³

Usually we treat Karma, Duty and KarmYog as synonyms of each other but actually there is a significant difference among them. “Karma” is something which is assigned to us naturally as a human and social being, while “Duty” means something that is imposed. There may be a force of sanction behind ‘duty’ but there is no such compulsion behind ‘karma’. Performing any action is not karma. Machines also perform certain actions through different mechanical processes but their act cannot be characterized as karma. To convert an act into karma combination of three is required and i.e.-Body, Mind and Senses. Thus awareness and consciousness about effect of your action is true karma. Karma is all about your conscious choices. Elevated souls and visionaries have capacity to control their mind. Such people are calmer, more positive and more decisive in their decision making.⁴ Philosophy of Karma is much broader than the philosophy of Duty. KarmYog gives psychological and spiritual expansion to duty or karma to further purify it in individual or collective interest.

II. BHAGVAD GITA AND PHILOSOPHY OF KARMA & KARMYOG

Any work has two effects, one is external and another one is internal. The external effect is the visible one or the physical results of our actions. The internal effect is that which has generated a solid impression in the mind or in sanskar. There is also a third effect which is not visible and is called the karmashaya / cosmic effect. If we do a good act with good intentions, it will come back to us at some point in time. Thus, Karma works like newton’s theory of action-reaction. It is not fixed but relative to the actions you perform. Thus a negative situation can be turned into a positive one with our willful or conscious action⁵.

² Available at: <https://www.esamskriti.com/e/Spirituality/Philosophy/Scriptures-of-Sanatan-Dharma-1.aspx> (Last visited on January 5, 2021).

³ Swami Vivekananda, "Karma-Yoga" <https://sites.google.com/site/mandrivnyjvolhv/indu/piznishi/svami-vivekananda/swami-vivekananda-karma-yoga> (Last visited on January 5, 2021).

⁴ Available at: <https://iskcondesiretree.com/page/what-is-karma> (Last visited on January 10, 2021).

⁵ Karma - The Law of Cause and Effect, <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2020/state-editions/karma---the-law-of-cause-and-effect.html> (last visited on January 15, 2021).

KarmYog teaches us that doing good should be part of our life because our today's action has capacity to mold our future. Though law of destiny precedes the law of karma but our own destiny is determined by our own past karma. According to theory of KarmYog we get what we deserve and not what we desire. A conscious karma liberates the doer while an unaware karma binds us in the bondage to our karmic consequence⁶.

KarmYog is an extension of Karma which teaches us to remain free from ego, attachment and expectation of reward. KarmYog creates a balance between the results of karma, like balance of pleasure or pain, sorrow or happiness and ease or discomfort. In the present day world when everything is governed from greed, materialistic gains and expectation as a natural and social being it is very important to understand the philosophy of KarmYog. It teaches us to become more inclusive, balanced and blissful.

In this 21st century, which is though more modernized and scientifically advanced, but full of cut throat competition, stress and loneliness, philosophy of KarmYog becomes more relevant. In the present materialistic world, we expect much more than our efforts and what we deserve. This gap between deserve and desire is cause of depression and stress. Constant reaction towards stressful situations creates a chronic threat to our life, mental peace and wellbeing. Spirituality is the only way out in such circumstances and the only way to find bliss. If we analyze our life, then we realize that non-spiritual aspects dominate our life. The spiritual aspect has capacity to evolve our life but it is least prioritized. The solution to this is to spiritualize life itself i.e., to make spirituality a part of work or every day actions. It teaches us to control our mind and desires and thus regulates our behavior from being unwarranted by the social and moral norms, which is the most pertinent problem of the present day world. There is a strong linkage between spirituality and our karma. Spirituality keeps our karma pure and enhances positivity to the surroundings in which we live and work.

KarmYog in reality is the spiritual evolution of karma. Mahabharata which includes Bhagavad Gita is a great source of understanding the consequences of our karma and teaches us about the value of good karma for an individual and for the entire universe. It teaches us to maintain a balance between our thoughts and actions and thus between our mind and karma. Most of the time we are governed from our mind. Mind creates warranted and unwarranted desires. Unwarranted desires tend us to do something which is not ethical, moral or legal. So controlling mind is the most difficult but the most desired thing. The 6th Chapter of Bhagavad Gita says that even the great warrior Arjuna had difficulty in controlling his mind.

⁶Available at: <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/3> (last visited on January 15, 2021).

Here, Lord Krishna suggests the path of KarmYog as a solution. For those who are starting the spiritual path, work is the best form of meditation. KarmYog is meditation with eyes open, i.e., in our very interaction with others and in our actions. Once the mind is under control or has become finer, the action form of meditation becomes more effective⁷.

The most popular line related with KarmYog in Bhagavad Gita is, 'KarmanyeVadhikaraste', the starting line of chapter 2 verse 47 in the holy book. Bhagavad Gita is a tool that provides guidance and solutions to human life problems and helps widen the horizons of wisdom and get the courage to live with confidence in any part of the world⁸. The core philosophy of Bhagavad Gita is the philosophy of Karma, which should be understood by everyone for attaining peace and contentment.

There are several commentaries on Bhagavad Gita. According to Ramanujacharya Bhagavad Gita is Bhakti Yog or Emotional Management;⁹ according to Shankar it is GyanYog;¹⁰ according to Tilak it is KarmYog¹¹ and according to Arvindo it is a combination of all forms of Yog and hence it is SamagraYog and according to ParamhansYoganand it is Dhyanyog.¹² Bhagwad Gita talks about the ways to achieve the purpose of life. It basically contains four types of Yog,¹³ viz., **KarmYog, GyanYog, Bhakti Yog and Dhyanyog**. Its interpretation depends upon the 'Bhaav (feelings)' through which it is communicated. Basically it is a dialogue between Buddhi or Intellect (Krishna) and Mann or (Mind) (Arjuna)¹⁴.

One of the key shloka of Bhagvad Gita is-
"कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्तेमांफलेषुकदाचन।मांकर्मफलहेतुर्भूः मांतेसंडगोस्त्वकर्मणि" ॥

***KarmanyeVadhikaraste, Ma phaleshoukadachana, Ma Karma
PhalaHeturBhurmateySangostvaAkarmani***

(Bhagwat Gita: Chapter Two verse 47)

⁷ Available at: <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/6> (last visited on January 15, 2021).

⁸ Available at: <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/2/verse/47> (last visited on January 15, 2021).

⁹ Available at: http://www.srimatham.com/uploads/5/5/4/9/5549439/ramanuja_gita_bhashya.pdf (last visited on January 25, 2021).

¹⁰ Available at: <https://integralyogamagazine.org/the-jnana-yoga-of-adi-shankara/> (last visited on January 25, 2021).

¹¹ Available at: https://en.krishnakosh.org/krishna/Gita_Rahasya_-Tilak (last visited on January 25, 2021).

¹² Essays on the Gita Paperback – 27 April 2001 by Sri Aurobindo (Author) (last visited on January 25, 2021).

¹³ Available at: <https://isha.sadhguru.org/yoga/new-to-yoga/types-of-yoga/> (last visited on January 30, 2021).

¹⁴ Available at: <http://geetadharm.org/swadharm-its-position-and-direction-part-1/> (last visited on January 25, 2021).

"श्रीकृष्णभगवाननेअर्जुनसेकहा: आपकोअपनेनिर्धारितकर्तव्यकापालनकरनेकाअधिकारहै, लेकिनआपकभीकर्मफलकीइच्छासेकर्ममतकरो (कर्मफलदेनेकाअधिकारसिर्फईश्वरकोहै)।कर्मफलकीअपेक्षासेआपकभीकर्ममतकरें, नहीआपकीकभीकर्मनकरनेमेंप्रवृत्तिहो (आपकीहमेशाकर्मकरनेमेंप्रवृत्तिहो) ।।" (Bhagwat Gita: Chapter Two verse 47)

Means-

"You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty. - Bhagavad Gita, Chapter II, Verse 47"

Here below is detailed meaning of this verse:¹⁵

- i. *"karmanyevadhikaraste:* you have a right to work only
- ii. *"ma phalesukadachana:* but have no right to the fruits thereof
- iii. *"ma karma-phala-heturbhur:* let not the fruits be the motive of doing karmas
- iv. *"matesangostvakarmani:* let yourself not be attached to inaction.

Thus according to Bhagvad Gita -Any person cannot live in "Akarm (actionless)" state, though it can be active or passive karma. We are free to decide our Karma. They may be good or they may be bad. But Karma is unavoidable according to lord Krishna.

It is common displeasure among the majority of human beings that despite of putting our all efforts we don't get the desired results any in many other cases with less effort others get much better results. Bhagvad Gita is the only text in the world which explains the reason of this disparity.

According to Lord Krishna there are five elements deciding every Karmphal or outcome of actions-

- i. *Adhishthan-* Place where karma is performed.
- ii. *Karta* - means the doer of the work.
- iii. *Karnam* - means the instrument through which the karma is done.
- iv. *Cheshta-* means activities like desire, thought, faith or behavior.
- v. *Daiv* -means collected karmphal of past birth.

¹⁵Chapter 2: Contents of the Gita Summarized, <https://asitis.com/2/47.html> (last visited on January 30, 2021).

Except the fifth factor rest four are in our control. So human beings have the capacity to control 80% result of their sincere effort. Rest 20% decided on the basis of actions of **PoorvJanam** (previous birth) and that cannot be changed though it can change the outcome of 80% efforts and thus makes the outcome ultimately beyond the control of the individual doer. As 'Daiv' has capacity to change the end result in our favour or otherwise we should focus only upon doing our karma ,without thinking about the fruits of our action.

What is KarmYog?

The word 'Karma' originated from the Sanskrit root 'Kru' which means 'Work' or 'Action'. Karma consists of action we perform consciously or unconsciously and result of that action. Action is a physical act, but whether our mind and soul is aligned with the same action? Without proper alignment of these three we cannot enjoy our work nor we can feel that ultimate bliss of our action which gives a divine feeling.

“YogahKarmasuKausalam¹⁶” ~ Bhagavad Gita 2.50

'Yog' is an art of getting perfection (kausalam) in every work (Karmasu) of life. This perfection comes in karma with the regular practice of devoting karma to others. It keeps a person free from ego and enhances his capacity. Hence, perfection in karma is considered as yog also. According to Lord Krishna the meaning of Karm-Yog is a combination of "Karma (action)" and "Yog (Union)". 'Yog' is the combination of balance and perfection. Perfection in action should be our effort but a balanced approach towards the success and failure should be our attitude. Failure is also the fruit of our effort so it should also be happily accepted. Every karma should be according to dharma and not according to desired consequences. A karm yogi sees no difference between 'karma' and 'prayer' and remains indifferent from the outcome of the action.

Balancing or Sthitiprajyata should be our attitude in all circumstances according to Bhagvad Gita.

“KarmYog is ‘path of action’, one among 4 paths of Yoga in spiritual practices of Sanatan Dharma. Other 3 paths in this series are¹⁷-

Bhakti Yog (Path of Devotion)

JnanaYog (Path of Knowledge)

¹⁶ Available at: <http://bhagavadgita.org.in/Chapters/2/50> (last visited on January 25, 2021).

¹⁷ Available at: <https://ramakrishna.org/fouryogas.html> (last visited on January 30, 2021).

Raja Yog (Path of Discipline)”.

Combination of all these Yog makes the action perfect. Performing karma in such a combination eliminates violence and ego from the seeker’s heart and replaces it with love, joy and compassion¹⁸. Karma is not a mechanical process but it is an outcome of union of thought and action. When yog is added to Karma it becomes a practice of union with one’s true self through ‘action’. Every action which brings awareness about your true-self and your karma is KarmYog¹⁹. So KarmYog is all about making us conscious decision about our action and its consequences.

III. TYPES OF KARMYOG

As I have discussed above KarmYog and Karma are not synonyms of each other. Every karma is not KarmYog but types of KarmYog suggests that in how many ways karma affects us.

Depending upon intention Karma can be categorized as follows²⁰.

Sakam Karma or Action with Desire

Sakam Karma means doing something with the intention of getting some personal gain. It is an attitude in which a person develops a thought of ‘mine’ or ‘your’. “Sakam” is a sanskrit word means “desire of someone behind his actions²¹”. A person who acts with Sakam Karma believes

that if he is doing something he will get result of the same in return. Sakam Karma creates egoism, hatred, jealousy in a person’s heart consciously or unconsciously. It creates restlessness or disappointment when the desired expectation remains unfilled. Sakam Karma is the basic problem of today’s competitive world.KarmYog is not meant for Sakam karma. Yoga frees us from the bondage of karma while Sakam karma keeps us bound in the bondage of karmafal or fruits of our action.

Nishkam Karma or Action without Desire

¹⁸ Available at: https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/UNDERSTANDING-HINDUISM_1OCT2014_2018update.pdf (last visited on February 5, 2021).

¹⁹ What Is Karma Yoga: Its Principles, Types and Importance, available at: <https://www.fitsri.com/yoga/karma-yoga#text=Karma> (last visited on February 5, 2021).

²⁰ What Is Karma Yoga: Its Principles, Types and Importance, available at: <https://www.fitsri.com/yoga/karma-yoga> (last visited on February 5, 2021).

²¹ Available at: <https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/8906/sakam-karma> (last visited on February 5, 2021).

The meaning of “Nishkam Karma” means “action without desire” and it is just the contrast of Sakam Karma. It is the central message and prominent theme of Bhagvad Gita²².

‘Nishkam’ means selfless action which breaks the bondage of karma and makes us free from the cycle of birth and death. Nishkam karma is a kind of detachment from the consequences of the action and leads someone’s soul upward towards divinity. It makes someone free from all sorts of liking, disliking or attachment and purifies the conscience²³. Nishkam karma is the path of renunciation. This type of karma is rarely seen in the present day world.

Thus, it emphasizes that if our present actions are good, they are selfless and in the interest of all that can change the ill effects of impure past karma. It decodes the biggest philosophy of Karma that our present good decisions and deeds have capacity to change our destiny and this is the core of theory of KarmYog.

Importance of KarmYog

KarmYog is an art of balancing one’s act and expectations. It dedicates someone only to his rightful karma. It is a way to follow the path of spirituality. Once selfless action purifies the mind and helps in attaining the supreme state where one remains unaffected from the outcome of actions. KarmYog helps in connecting us to divine energy. It increases dutifulness towards all other living and non-living beings and develops the wisdom of equanimity. It seeks excellence in action and considers work as an offering to higher-self. Ultimately KarmYog enhances the sensibility towards oneness. It develops a clarity of thought and removes all confusion. It develops a balancing attitude even in the most difficult times. It keeps align thoughts, words and actions. It removes all sorts of duality and unify the action with soul.

Whatever you do to others that comes back to you. KarmYog insists upon 100% , part performance which in turns gives an accomplishment to the doer. Such person never expects anything in return but prefers to do a selfless work. Such karmyogi’s are more gentle, soft hearted and generous persons. Benefit of others is the biggest satisfaction for such persons. A karm yogi knows the art of balancing life. It readies a person to accept the result of his efforts happily even if it is a failure. Thus it helps in attaining a calmness of mind in all circumstances and develops a positive psychology.²⁴ KarmYog enhances the value of humanity and gives a feeling of bliss.

²² Available at: <https://vivekavani.com/nishkam-karma-bhagavad-gita/> (last visited on February 5, 2021).

²³ Available at: <https://www.ananda.org/yogapedia/nishkam-karma/> (last visited on February 5, 2021).

²⁴ How to Practice Karma Yoga, Check Principles & Benefits of Karma Yoga, available at: <https://theyogainstitute.org/karma-yoga-practice-principles-benefits/> (Last visited on February 15, 2021).

Volunteerism is one of the most significant characteristic of KarmYog. The conscience of karm yogis is so evolved that they try to provide best possible solution to everyone into trouble. They don't wait for others to help the needy but take initiative to offer help. Since a karm yogi is already aware about the consequences of his actions, his deeds remain more inclined towards the moral and emotional aspects rather than being inclined more towards worldly things. This transformations in one's life can help in making this world a much better place to live for all²⁵.

IV. ROLE OF BHAGVAD GITA IN CREATING A BETTER WORLD- THE ART OF GIVING

Bharat was always a duty centric society whose core fundamental was sacrifices for others. Bharat was the longest survived civilization whose knowledge system was aligned with the nature. The fundamental rule of nature is 'Art of Giving'. Every living and nonliving entity of the universe is bound by certain set of karma. The process of life is going on over this earth from time immemorable just because of this natural philosophy of karma where sun, river, earth, mountain, plants everybody is performing their allotted duty or karma. Nature believes in sharing and caring and Bharat followed this same philosophy of caring and sharing of its prosperity and knowledge.

Since industrial revolution world has seen a sharp change where power was shifted from spiritual knowledge and prosperity to mechanical knowledge and wealth. Imperialism, heavy industrialization and consumerism are the key outcome of this developmental and knowledge model. We created a competitive world where countries, communities, societies and individuals are competing others to prove their superiority. This race is not for gaining knowledge and liberating ourselves but to bind in the web of power and wealth. That's why now the psyche of the society works on the concept of materialistic gain.

In this process to prove one's superiority over others countries and civilizations have been destroyed. Natural resources are sucked by human greed. We alienated ourselves from the nature and started controlling and exploiting natural resources. Now our karmas are governed by greed and this attitude is destroying humanity and nature.

Now most of us prefer to do a karma which gives some materialistic gain in exchange. Now people rarely prefer to owe responsibility unless it is imposed. So now karma is replaced

²⁵ The Path of Work – Karma Yoga, *available at*: <https://vedanta.org/yoga-spiritual-practice/the-path-of-work-karma-yoga>(Last visited on February 15, 2021).

from duty or it is only sakam karma. This thought is creating a deep sense of attachment from the expected outcome of our action and on being unfilled creating a deep sense of annoyance and dissatisfaction. Result of this throat cut competition is very much evident. Recent Corona virus is one such example. In such self-destructive atmosphere if something can save humanity that is- purity of karma and desire free karma.

Desired Karma at personal, social, national and international level are creating a disastrous result. At personal level unfilled and over desires are resulting into crime, at social level they are causing conflicts and among the states they are creating unhealthy competition. Exploitation of developing countries by the developed countries, rising tendency of expansionism of China, destruction of environment and natural resources and breaking families are the outcome of such selfish desires or sakam karma. Crimes against humanity are rising, people are migrating and trust in society is gradually diminishing. The revenge of nature in the form of rising natural calamity and disaster is the example of such karmic consequences.

Bhagvad Gita's KarmYog is the only philosophy in the world which has capacity to guide and save the world. KarmYog teaches us to adhere with our karma without neglecting and compromising our duties and responsibilities. Bring your spirituality and balanced approach to all your actions is the jest of KarmYog²⁶.

V. CONCLUSION

Thus, on the basis of above discussion it is clear that KarmYog is the real solution of all present day problems as it purifies our actions and develops a deep insight about the consequences of our actions. It considers moral behavior as a mandatory duty and collective solidarity as an essentiality of life. KarmYog teaches us to focus on present karma only and not to think about Sanchit, Prarabdh or Agami karma. According to Bhagvad Gita the purity of our current action can purify our past sins. Conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna in Chapter 3 of Bhagvad Gita reveals the importance of KarmYog in an ordinary person's life. It removes doubt of a normal human being experienced by him in his day to day life. In Mahabharata when Arjuna was hesitating to fight against his relatives, Krishna asked him to do his karma by participating in war. He preached Arjuna the importance of Karma according to Dharma and said that Karma is the key to freedom from the cycle of death and birth (salvation).

²⁶Bhagavad Gita- Chapter 2 (Part-4) SaankhyaYogah- Yoga of Knowledge (last visited on February 25, 2021).

While expressing the importance of Karma Lord Krishna says a person cannot be a monk by giving up his responsibility of Karma. Only after purification from Karma a person can lead a life of Monk²⁷. Krishna says in Bhagvad Gita that karma is a quality of active soul and Trigunas (Rajas, Tamas, Sattva) are the constituents of Soul. Thus all beings are bound to act according to the combination of triguna²⁸.

KarmYog helps us in developing a balance among triguna and develop a culture of caring and sharing. It teaches us- do good to get good. It evolves us to accept the existence of other and to respect them. Thus, it stops us from exploiting others and mother earth and leads us towards a model which is more inclusive and sustainable.

Thus, according to Bhagvad Gita karma is the essence of the Law of Universe and everyone should work toward this realization by recognizing it as a truth. KarmYog is the process of self-actualization and liberation. A karm yogi has capacity to liberate his soul from all illusions which are the cause of sufferings. Thus, KarmYog is the path of peace and contentment which unites the doer with the divine.

In the present day world where entire humanity and mother earth facing a deep crisis due to excessive greed, exploitative tendencies and over obsession of 'rights' ,Bhagvad Gita is the only effective way to show the right path to the humanity. High level of consciousness and collective action (karma) of living beings keeps the world going. So do your duty with detachment and learn to engage your minds in contemplation²⁹.

Ultimately, to restore values and humanity in the society and to revive the relevance of natural law, Bhagvad Gita should be the compulsory part of everyone's life.

²⁷ Available at: <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/3.4> (last visited on February 25, 2021).

²⁸ Available at: <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/3.5> (last visited on February 25, 2021).

²⁹ Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2, Verse 47.