

Chapter 5: Karma Sanyaas Yoga – The Yoga of Renunciation of Action

Up to now, 204 verses of the Geeta have been completed. Yet, Arjuna has failed to grasp the utility of *Karma* Yoga (Yoga of Action), which the Lord wants him to follow. Arjuna again crops up a question to the Lord that He had been at one time praising the *Samnyaas* Yoga (Yoga of Renunciation of Action), and at the same time, singing the glory of *Karma* Yoga (Yoga of Action). How could it be both? He requested the Lord to determine exactly which one of the two was superior and suitable for him to follow.

The blessed Lord explained to Arjuna very simply that the end achievement of Yoga of Renunciation of Action was to be one with God (the post from where one does not come again into the cycle of birth and death). The end achievement of Yoga of Action (with non-attachment) was also the same. Hence, the two Yogas were one and the same as far as the goal is concerned. Any person who would try to make a distinction between the two could not be labeled as a person of knowledge (rather he was a fool).

The Lord further explained that the path of the Yoga of Renunciation of Action (*Samnyaas*) is extremely difficult to follow. There are three modes of the lower form of nature (*Prakriti*) called **Gunas**. These gunas drive a person to activities, which can be considered, very good, normal and bad – called *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* respectively.

An average person has an abundance of *Rajas*. This causes the sense organs to go for enjoyments, which are prohibited in the path of spiritual development. It is made clear that every person performs actions or karma. When it is performed with the desire of the fruit in mind, it is termed as *sa-kaam* karma. When it is performed without the eye on the fruit of the action it is termed as *nish-kaam* karma. When a person has knowledge about the shastras, one is gradually able to perform actions with equanimity to the fruits of the actions, i.e. from a *sa-kaam* karmi one is transformed gradually to a *nish-kaam* karmi. The renunciation of the fruit leads to karma becoming *nish-kaam* karma. It is said that all karma or actions have their *karma phalas* or fruits. The accumulation of these fruits leads to **bandhan** or bondage. The fruits of the good deed lead to bondage by having one to get points for enjoyment and happiness. The fruits of ill actions lead one to bondage by accumulation of points for bringing about pain and sufferings. The fruits thus accumulated have to be spent by enjoyments or sufferings in this world and beyond. This is the meaning of bondage. Only actions, which are *nish-kaam*, add no points, thus neither happiness nor suffering have to be undergone. Thus a person, who performs *nishkaam* karma (the *nishkaam* karma yogi), even while performing actions, does not suffer from the bondage of the results of his actions, in fact he is liberated (from the results of actions binding him).

Persons performing *nish-kaam* karma gradually attain the qualities of a sanyasi, albeit a bit slowly. These qualities the samnyasi is able to gather naturally, because by the very unique method of his renunciation of actions. He performs no actions for himself.

## Geeta For All

The Lord nevertheless considers the path of nish-kaam karma yoga to be the path for Arjuna and thereby most of us to follow, as it is simple and easy to practice. The risk in following the path of renunciation of action (*samnyaas*), is that, if by any chance one bends towards the worldly materials and performs actions for self gain (*sakaam-karma*), then the person's resolve of following the path of *Samnyaasi* are at that very point of time, shattered. He immediately falls from his path.

In the case of a Karma Yogi, by the performance of Nish-kaam Karma (the Yoga of Action with non attachment), he develops the natural marks of a Samnyasi. These marks are non-attachment, supreme attraction to God, renunciation of fruits of action, control of senses, mind etc. He is then able to achieve the same position, which a Samnyasi achieves.

Hence, the path of Karma Yoga (Yoga of Action) is much simpler and superior and easier to follow and is therefore of a higher category. It also brings eternal peace.