

CHAPTER 3: KARMA YOGA

Sloka 1

Arjuna uvacha:

**JYAYASEE CHET KARAMANASTE MATAA BUDDHIR JANARDANA
TAT KIM KARMANI GHORE MAAM NIYOJAYASI KESHAVA**

Arjuna said:

O Keshava, if your belief is that knowledge is superior to action, why do you engage me in (this) dreadful battle?

If we can recollect the second chapter, we will note that both action and knowledge are extolled by the Lord.

An elaborate description of karma yoga was given through slokas 47-60 and through slokas 11-46 an elaborate description on jnana yoga.

The Lord ended the chapter 2 with an elaborate description on the qualities of a “Man of steady wisdom.”

We should also recall at this juncture that Arjuna was full of confidence in himself and went to the battlefield with Sri.Krishna as his charioteer. He requested Krishna to take the chariot to the middle of the battlefield so that he could see all the warriors who had assembled to fight for the evil Prince Duryodhana.

Suddenly he developed a serious doubt in his mind about the justification for fighting against the respected elders of his own extended family and his mentors. He lost the nerve and dropped his bow Gandeeva and asked Krishna to guide him on the right path of action.

From the point of taking for granted that Sri Krishna was his charioteer, Arjuna moved one step higher in his spiritual plane and saw in Krishna the aspect of a “Guru” and asked for guidance. The first step taken by Sri Krishna was to go through the four main paths of “Bhakti, Jnana, Karma and Dhyana” in the second chapter.

We can say that Arjuna, through this question in this chapter has certainly moved another step higher. But he still has in the heart of heart no inclination to fight. We seem to get the impression that he would rather give the kingdom without fight to Duryodhana and take up “Sanyasa ashrama” duties. That is to be understood by the last quarter of this sloka: “Why do you engage me in this dreadful battle?”

We can also presume that by referring to “Karma and Jnana” he has some doubt about his decision not to fight. It appears that he has a flicker of light of knowledge that he should act properly and the guide to help him to conduct the right action was “Krishna.” Krishna not as his charioteer but Sri Krishna as his master.

We must therefore learn the lesson that when we have any doubts on the correctness of our actions, we must approach the “Guru” and request for guidance. Arjuna did follow this path of asking for guidance and the result is “The Srimad Bhagavad-Gita”.

It is a jewel in the crown for the entire mankind irrespective of religion, faith, caste, sex or creed. Let us unfold our mind at the vicinity of the master and learn the lesson of right action in life with the sole purpose of “Loka Kalyana.”