

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 25: Chapter 3, Verses 06-11

(October 17 –October 23, 2018)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥ ३-६ ॥
यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन ।
कर्मेन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगमसक्तः स विशिष्यते ॥ ३-७ ॥
नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।
शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्धयेदकर्मणः ॥ ३-८ ॥
यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥ ३-९ ॥
सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥ ३-१० ॥
देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥ ३-११ ॥

*karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya ya āste manasā smaran
indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyācārāḥ sa ucyate
yas tv indriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate 'rjuna
karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate
niyataṁ kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hy akarmaṇaḥ
śarīra-yātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyed akarmaṇaḥ
yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanah
tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara
saha-yajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ
anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vo 'stv iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk
devān bhāvayatānena te devā bhavayantu vaḥ
parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha*

TRANSLATION

- (06)** Those who restrain the external organs of action, while continuing to dwell on sense objects in the mind, certainly delude themselves and are to be called hypocrites.
- (07)** But those *karm yogis* who control their knowledge senses with the mind, O Arjun, and engage the working senses in working without attachment, are certainly superior.
- (08)** You should thus perform your prescribed Vedic duties, since action is superior to inaction. By ceasing activity, even your bodily maintenance will not be possible.
- (09)** Work must be done as a *yajña* (sacrifice) to the Supreme Lord; otherwise, work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kunti, perform your prescribed duties, without being attached to the results, for the satisfaction of God.
- (10)** In the beginning of creation, Brahma created humankind along with duties, and said, “Prosper in the performance of these *yajñas* (sacrifices), for they shall bestow upon you all you wish to achieve.”
- (11)** By your sacrifices the celestial gods will be pleased, and by cooperation between humans and the celestial gods, prosperity will reign for all.

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Commentary:

Verse 06:

In this verse, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that people who externally renounce the objects of the senses while continuing to dwell upon them in the mind are hypocrites, and they delude themselves. Attracted by the lure of an ascetic life, people often renounce their work, only to discover later that their renunciation is not accompanied by an equal amount of mental and intellectual withdrawal from the sense objects. This creates a situation of hypocrisy where one displays an external show of religiosity while internally living a life of ignoble sentiments and base motives. Hence, it is better to face the struggles of the world as a *karma yogi*, than to lead the life of a false ascetic. Running away from the problems of life by prematurely taking *sanyāsa* is not the way forward in the journey of the evolution of the soul.

Verse 07:

Lord Krishna says here that a person in household life who practices *karma yoga* is superior to the false renunciant who continues to dwell on the objects of the senses in the mind. The word *karma yoga* has been used in this verse. It consists of two main concepts: *karma* (occupational duties) and *Yogi* (union with God). Hence, a *karma yogi* is one who performs worldly duties while keeping the mind attached to God. Such a *karma yogi* is not bound by karma even while performing all kinds of works. This is because what binds one to the law of karma is not actions, but the attachment to the fruits of those actions. And a *karma yogi* has no attachment to the fruits of action. On the other hand, a false renunciant renounces action, but does not forsake attachment, and thus remains bound in the law of karma. When one works in the world with the body, but keeps the mind attached to God, know it to be *karma yogi*. When one engages in spirituality with the body, but keeps the mind attached to the world, know it to be hypocrisy.

Verse 08:

One should perform the duties prescribed in the Vedic scriptures appropriate for one's stage in life. The daily duties like praying, meditating and worshipping are being referred to by Lord Krishna. Action is superior to inaction for by abstention from action none of these activities can be accomplished. Until the mind and intellect reach a state where they are absorbed in God-consciousness, physical work performed in an attitude of duty is very beneficial for one's internal purification. Hence, the Vedas prescribe duties for humans, to help them discipline their mind and senses. In fact, laziness is described as one of the biggest pitfalls on the spiritual path. Even the basic bodily activities like eating, bathing, and maintaining proper health require work. To neglect these basic maintenance activities is not a sign of progress, but an indication of slothfulness, leading to emaciation and weakness of both body and mind. On the other hand, a cared for and nourished body is a positive adjunct on the road to spirituality. Thus, the state of inertia does not lend itself either to material or spiritual achievement. For the progress of our own soul, we should embrace the duties that help elevate and purify our mind and intellect.

Verse 09:

Work in itself is neither good nor bad. Depending upon the state of the mind, it can be either binding or elevating. For example, a knife in the hands of a robber is a weapon for intimidation or committing murder, but in the hands of a surgeon is an invaluable instrument used for saving people's lives. Therefore, the knife in itself is neither murderous nor benedictory—its effect is determined by how it is used. Similarly, work done for the enjoyment of one's senses and the gratification of one's pride is the cause of bondage in the material world, while work performed as a sacrifice for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord liberates one from the bonds of Maya and attracts divine grace. Since it is our nature to perform actions, we are forced to work in one of the two modes. We cannot remain without working for even a moment as our mind cannot remain still. If we do not perform actions as a sacrifice to God, we will be forced to work to gratify our mind and senses. Instead, when we perform work as a sacrifice, we then look upon the whole world and everything in it as belonging to God, and therefore, meant for utilization in His service.

Verse 10:

All beings including humans are an integral part of the entire system of God's creation. The air that we breathe, the earth that we walk upon, the water that we drink, and the light that illumines our day, are all gifts of creation to us. All the elements of nature are integral parts of the system of God's creation. All parts of the system naturally draw from and give back to the whole. The sun lends stability to the earth and provides heat and light necessary for life to exist. Earth creates food from its soil for our nourishment. The air moves the life force in our body. While we partake of these God-given gifts to sustain our lives, we also have our duties toward the integral system. Lord Krishna says here that we are obligated to participate with the creative force of nature by performing our prescribed duties in the service of God. That is the *yajña* He expects from us. Our individual souls are tiny parts of the Supreme Soul and we all have our role to play in the grand scheme of things. When we perform our *yajña* toward Him, our self-interest is naturally fulfilled.

Verse 11:

The Vedas mention various ceremonies and processes for the satisfaction of the celestial gods (*Devatās*), and in turn these *Devatās* bestow material prosperity to humans. *Devatās*, are in-charge of the administration of the universe. The Supreme Lord does His work of managing the universe through them. These *Devatās* live within this material universe, in the higher planes of existence, called *Swarga (heaven)*, or the celestial abodes. The *Devatās* are not God; they are souls like us. They occupy specific posts in the affairs of running the world. Souls selected by virtue of their deeds in past lives occupy these seats for a fixed number of ages, and administer the affairs of the universe. At the end of their tenure, new *Devatās* occupy those posts. There are posts such as Agni Dev (the God of fire), Vāyu Dev (the God of the wind), Varuṇa Dev (the god of the ocean), Indra Dev (the king of the celestial gods), etc. Thus, the performance of *yajña* is naturally pleasing to the *Devatās*, who then create prosperity for living beings.