THE DOCTRINE OF NĪṢKĀMAKARMA OF THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ:
AN ESTIMATE

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Abstract: In this paper an attempt has been made to analyse the concept of nīṣkāma karma of the Bhagavadgītā and to show its social implications. The Lord says that nobody in this world can escape from karma, one must perform all the duties giving up the desire for fruits i.e. with a state of renunciation. So it is clearly stated that it is never possible to abandon action in this world. It is stated in the Gītā that one should perform action for the benefit of people with equable reason and with a disinterested frame of mind without adopting Sannyāsa of karma even after the acquisition of true knowledge. So this path of action is called karmayoga.

Key-words: Nīṣkāma karma, shtiaprajñā, desirelessness, equable reason, special device, pravṛttā karma, nivṛttā karma.

Introduction: The Gītā has given a great importance to the desireless, equable and unattached reason of the doer than to the external result of the action. If the same principle is applied to the conduct of the shtiaprajñā, it follows that the true principle is the equable reason (buddhi) with which he behaves towards his equals and subordinates and that the welfare of all created beings is required. This is the highest and most sālvāka duty to mankind.¹

Meaning of the word ‘karma’: The word ‘karma’ comes from the root ‘kr’ which means ‘doing’, ‘affairs’, ‘activity’ etc. According to the ancient Vedic religion, this action is sacrificial ritual. According to Jaimini, the performance of this Vedic or s’rauta sacrificial ritual was the main and the ancient religion. Whatever a man does, must be done for the purpose of the yajña. If he earns money, he must earn it for the sake of the yajña and if he collects grain that also must be done for the yajña. But although these actions which are performed for the purpose of the yajña, yet the yajña itself leads to heaven and the performer of the yajña performs it willingly only in order to attain heaven.²

According to Manu Smṛti and other religious texts there are four castes, depending on the particular actions prescribed by the Vedas. For example, worshiping and devine contemplation (tapasyā) has been prescribed for the Brāhmins, fighting for the warrior i.e., Kśatriya, trade for the merchant i.e., wais’ya and serving with heart the other castes for the s’ūdra. These have been for the first time systematically prescribed in the Smṛti and they are referred to as smārtā.

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actions. Besides these actions prescribed by the \textit{s'rutis} and \textit{smrtis}, there are religious actions e.g. fasting, austerities etc. which have for the first time been described in detail in the \textit{purāṇa} and it may therefore, be described as \textit{paurāṇika karma}. All these actions are again subdivided into \textit{niyā karma} (action done daily), \textit{nāmitītika karma} (occasional action) and \textit{kāmya karma} (action done for particular purpose).\textsuperscript{3} The action which must be performed everyday such as bathing and offering prayers at twilight are called \textit{niyā karma}. By performing these actions no special purpose (\textit{artha-siddhi}) is achieved but if they are not performed one incurs sin. \textit{Nityā karma} means unconditionally obligatory for all time.\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Nāmitītika karma}, i.e., occasional actions are to be performed on a particular occasion, such as, bathing at the time of solar eclipse is an example of \textit{nāmitītika karma}.\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Kāmya karma} means an action which we very often perform because we desire a particular thing and for acquiring that thing we perform this type of action. For example, sacrificial ritual for obtaining a son (\textit{punrēṣti yajña}). \textit{Niścīḍha karma} means objectionable action such as drinking wine etc. which have been pronounced as totally objectionable and prohibited by the \textit{s'āśtras} and therefore it is known as \textit{niścīḍha karma}.

The word \textit{‘karma’} used as the exposition made in the \textit{Gītā} must not be taken in the restricted meaning of action prescribed by the \textit{s'rutis} and \textit{smrtis}, but in a more comprehensive meaning. In short, all the actions which a man performs, e.g. eating, drinking, singing, hearing, walking etc. are all included in the word \textit{‘karma’} as used in the \textit{Bhagavad Gītā}.\textsuperscript{6} It has been said in the \textit{Gītā} regarding \textit{karma} that: ‘\textit{na hi kas'cit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhāt akarmākṛt},’\textsuperscript{7} ‘\textit{naiśkarman na ca lokesmin muniṁ api labhyate},’\textsuperscript{8} i.e., in this world, no one can remain for a single moment without performing action and no one can escape from \textit{karma} for a moment. Not only men but even the Sun and the Moon are continuously performing action. The Lord has said if one gives up action, it will be impossible to get foods to eat. So the Lord advises everybody in the name of Arjuna: \textit{yaḥ kṛṣṇovin sa panditaḥ} i.e. the man who is a doer is truly learned man. Since nobody in this world can escape from \textit{karma}, one must perform all the duties by giving up desire for fruits for the sake of God. So it is clearly stated that it is never possible to entirely abandon action in this world.

\textbf{Meaning of the word \textit{‘yoga’}}: The word \textit{‘yoga’} comes from the root \textit{‘jñj’} which means ‘to join’, ‘the state of union’, ‘combination’, ‘addition’ or ‘co-existence’, or ‘staying together’ and later on it has also come to mean the ‘means, device’, or ‘method’ or ‘thing to be done’ etc. The \textit{Amarakośa} has given all these meanings of the word in this sentence: ‘\textit{Yogāḥ samhunopāyadvadhyāna saṅgati yuktisu, ‘tesām tuktaṇām nityāḥbhūtanaṁ yogakṣemam vahāmyaham}’\textsuperscript{9} Here the word \textit{‘yoga’}
in the phrase 'yogakṣemam' means acquiring such things as one has not got.

In the Gītā, the word 'yoga', yogi or other compounds from the word 'yoga' have occurred so many times. We find almost everywhere the word used more or less in the meaning of 'means', 'skilful device', 'method', 'the thing to be done', 'union' etc. and it must be said that this is one of the comprehensive words used in the Gītā. Still it is not enough even to say in a general way that yoga means 'means' 'skilful device' or 'method' because it may mean renunciation or the control of mind (citanirodha) or liberation (mokṣa) or of something else. For instance, the word yoga has been used in the Gītā itself to signify the divine skill of the Lord in creating the verigated perceptible world and on that account, the Lord has been referred to as yogesvarā. But this is not the main meaning of the word yoga in the Gītā. So in order to explain what 'particular skill', 'means', 'method' or 'process' is mainly signified in the Gītā by the use of the word yoga. This word has been clearly defined in the Gītā as: 'yogah karmasu kaus'alam'. i.e. 'yoga' means some 'special skill', 'device', 'intelligent method' or graceful way of performing actions.

In the Sāṁkarabhāṣya on the phrase 'karmasu kaus'alam' has been interpreted as tendency of karma to arrange for bondage. Generally there are numerous yoga or means of performing one and the same action but the best of all these methods, specially referred to, is yoga. However the meaning of the word yoga as explained in the Gītā is as follows:
Firstly, the word 'yoga' appears for the first time in the second chapter of the Gītā and at that very place the meaning of the word is clearly explained as:

esā tebhūte śāṁkhya buddhīryoge tvimān śṛṇu
buddhīr yuktō yośā pāṁtha karmabandhain prahāṣyasi I I

This verse is of great importance in order to understand the import of the word yoga. The word 'śāṁkhya' is not to be understood here as meaning Kapila śāṁkhya or only Vedānta, nor is the word 'yoga' to be understood as meaning 'Pāñcajula yoga'. But śāṁkhya must be taken here as meaning sannyāsa and yoga as meaning śāṁkhya in the karmayoga. So the Lord starts to import the knowledge relating to karmayoga or shortly yoga in continuing to perform action with a disinterested frame of mind without adopting sannyāsa even after the acquisition of true knowledge. So the path of action is called karmayoga.

Secondly, the Lord defines the word 'yoga' through the 48th verse of the Gītā. The Lord says that a man should give up all attachments (āsakta) but should not think of giving up actions and should perform action to become steeped in the yoga (yogastha). So yoga means equability of mind towards success or failure.

Thirdly, further the Lord defines the word 'yoga' in accordance with the 49th verse of the
\textit{Gītā}. Here the word ‘yoga’ means the equableness of mind. Ordinary action performed with desire is greatly inferior to action united to the guidance of wisdom, therefore, O Dhananjaya, seek shelter in the ever directing wisdom. Miserable are those who perform actions only for their fruits.

The statement of \textit{karmayoga} mentioned in the 49\textsuperscript{th} verse, namely that the reason is superior to the action is of utmost importance. Some persons try to interpret the word \textit{buddhi} here as meaning that \textit{karma} is of less importance than \textit{jhāna}, but this interpretation is not correct. Because, as the description of equableness given in the 48\textsuperscript{th} verse is continued in the 49\textsuperscript{th} and some subsequent verses. The word ‘\textit{buddhi}’ must be interpreted as meaning an equabilising \textit{buddhi}. The goodness or badness of an act does not depend on the act itself. It becomes good or bad according to the good or evil intention of the doer. So reason is superior to action.\textsuperscript{15}

With regard to the nature of yoga, it is stated in the \textit{Gītā}: ‘\textit{yogah karmasu kaus'alam}.’\textsuperscript{16} From this verse it becomes clear that the ‘special device’ mentioned earlier by the Lord for the sinless or virtuous performance of action is called \textit{yoga}. That is to say, to perform an action with the help of this ‘\textit{kaus'ala}’ or device in the \textit{Gītā} is known as ‘\textit{yoga}’.

\textit{Sankarācārya} himself has interpreted the word ‘\textit{yoga}’ according to the definition given by the Lord as: ‘\textit{samyogdars'anopāya karmānustānam},’\textsuperscript{17} and in the other place as ‘\textit{yoga yukti}’.\textsuperscript{18} At the end of the \textit{sānti parva} of the \textit{Mahābhārata}, the words \textit{sāṁkhya} and \textit{yoga} have senses and it is explained how and why these two paths were created by the Lord in the beginning of the creation itself.

\textbf{What is \textit{karmayoga}?} It has been stated in the \textit{Gītā} that the saint who has the knowledge of the identity of \textit{Brahman} and the \textit{ātman} performs all activities in the illusory world merely by their bodies or by their organs and it has also been stated that the real abandonment of actions consists in performing actions with unattached mind without entertaining the hope of reward. Though \textit{karma} belongs to the illusory world, the Lord has created it for some unintelligible reason and it is not within the power of any human being to stop it or to destroy it. It is within the power only of the Lord to do so. So it is certainly said that the performance of action merely by the body by keeping our mind unattached and it leads to salvation. So there is no problem of performing actions through the bodily organs with disinterested mind.\textsuperscript{19}

But in view of \textit{karmayoga}, these meanings, statements and arguments mentioned above are not correct because the \textit{Gītā} does not accept the position that when a man has acquired knowledge, all wishes, desires must necessarily come to an end. The root cause of our suffering is attachment. According to the \textit{Gītā}, instead of killing desires of all kinds one should only give up
the attachment to the object of desire and go on performing all actions. It is not that when the attachment is left, activity must also be simultaneously left. Though one may be free from desires of all kinds, it is not possible that activity comes to an end. So it is not possible for us to become free from karma after acquisition of perfect knowledge as well as the destruction of desire of all kinds. 20

The Lord has explained the mystery of the path of karmayoga in the following:

karmanye vádhikāraste māphalesu kādācana I
mākarmaphalaheturbhūrma te sangostvakarmāṇi II 21

That is, we have right to the performance of action only though we have no right to desire for fruit of action because obtaining or not obtaining the ‘fruit of action is not within our control and we should not perform action with expecting fruit of action, i.e., our fruit of action should not be the cause of performing action and that is why we should not give up action as we have no hope for fruit.

The fourth part of this stanza are mutually complementary to each other and entire import of the karmayoga is explained in a short and beautiful form and these four parts of this stanza are certainly called catuḥ-sūtra of the karmayoga. It is stated to begin with that our right is to perform action only but as the fruit of an action is inseparable from the action, naturally doubt may be arisen that he who has right to perform action, has also right to take the fruit. The Lord has stated clearly in the second part of this stanza that our right should not extend to the fruits. Then the Lord has stated the third part of the above stanza that one should give up the hope for fruit but at the same time one should not give up doing action. So the meaning of this verse is that one should necessarily perform one’s duty having not given up the action – ‘tygo na yuktaiha karmasu napi rūgoḥ’. The Lord now clearly defines the word ‘karmayoga’:

yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi sangachyaktāh dhanāniyayā I
siddhyasidhyoh saṁbhūvā saṁatvaniyogah ucyate II 22

The word ‘buddhi’ must be interpreted as an equalised buddhi (samatvabuddhi). The goodness or badness of action does not depend on the action itself and though the action may be one and the same, it becomes good or bad according to the good or evil intention of the doer. So the reason or buddhi is superior to action. The Lord has said that action should be performed to become steeped in the yoga (yogastha) with equanimity in success and failure. The Lord further says

dureṇa hyvarain karma buddhiyogād dhanaṁjaya I
buddhau sarvanamanvichha krpanah phalahetavah II 23

Here the word ‘yoga’ has been clearly defined as meaning: yoga means equability of mind towards
success or failure and then He says that this yoga of equalities is better than performing actions with the desire for the fruit and that when the mind is equable, the doer is not affected by the sin or virtue of action and therefore yoga should be acquired. The Lord again defines the word yoga in the following way:

*buddhiyukto jahāthā ubhe suktaduskṛte I
yuṣyasva yogah karmasu kaus’alam II*  

That is to say, one who is united to cosmic wisdom goes beyond the effects of both virtue and vice, even here in this life. Therefore, devote thyself to yoga divine union. - is the art of proper action. He again defines yoga by the words: ‘yogaḥ karmasu kausalam’. Here it has been stated that the equable reason or samatva is the basic structure on which pure conduct or karmayoga is based and when a man performs action with this equable reason, there is no neglect of worldly activities, one can achieve complete perfection.

*Yasnmaṇḍvijate loko lokolokanandvijate ca yahi I*

One of whom people do not concern and who is always cheerful and always free from the conflict of joy and sorrow, fear and dislike, happiness and unhappiness and is always content with himself. *Ātmanā vāmanātusmāh* or one whose reason is not moved by the three constituents or one for whom praise or adverse criticism, honour or dishonour is just the same and who realises the identity of one ātman in every individual. One who does his duty with an equal mind without attachment, courageously and enthusiastically or who is *samaloṣṭas' makāncana ’* i.e., who looks upon earth, stone and gold as the same. This state is known as the state of the perfection (siddhāvasthā) or the brahmānitiḥ. Yogāvāsīṣṭha and other thinkers refer to this state as the state of being free from rebirth (jīvanmuktāvasthā ). Such a state of person is not imaginary, it is not a matter of ordinary occurrence and it can be accomplished by the control of the mind and effort in this life. Buddhists have said that just as the purest diamond does not require to be polished, in the same way, action of that person who has reached the state of nirvāna does not require to be limited by rules of conduct. In the Gitā, it has been said that one who has totally lost the feeling of ego (ahānākāra ) is unattached by sin or merit and whose mind has become equable towards all created beings like that of sāhitapraṇa or jīvanmukta and whose all selfish interests have been merged in the interests of others – he may be said to have become self – enlightened.

**Excellence of karmayoga:** The Lord has clearly said that though the path of renunciation and the path of karmayoga are both equally helpful for attaining salvation, i.e., nīshreyasa , yet out of these two paths the worth or importance of karmayoga is greater, i.e., visisyate. There are several other
statements in the Gītā which contain advice to Arjuna such as ‘tasmād yogāya yujyasva’,\(^{28}\) i.e., therefore the Lord advises Arjuna to adopt karmayoga or ‘māte saṅgostvakarmani’,\(^{29}\) i.e., do not insist on not performing action, or

\[ \text{yastvindriyāni manasa niyāmyārabharerjuna I} \]
\[ \text{karmendriyāḥ karmayogāin asaktāḥ sa visiṣyate II} \]

That is, instead of abandoning action controlling the organs by the mind and using the organs of actions for performing actions with a desireless frame of mind is visēṣa because in any case ‘karmajīyo hy akarmanāḥ’,\(^{31}\) i.e., action is superior to inaction or ‘yogahatiṣṭhottisṭha’, i.e., accept the path of action and stand up to fight or ‘yogi jñānibhyo pi matodhikāḥ’, i.e., the merit of the karmayogī is more (adhitakā) than that of the jñānamārgī, or ‘tasmādyogī bhavārjuna’\(^{32}\) i.e., become a yogī, that is karmayogī, or ‘māmanumisma yudhyacā’,\(^{33}\) i.e., remember me and fight etc. and in that advice the clear words ‘jñayaḥ adhitkā’\(^{34}\) have been used in order to show that the merit of karmayogī is higher than that of renunciation.

In Sankarābhāṣya, Sankarācārya has raised a question whether salvation is attained by means of knowledge or by combination of knowledge and action? He has expounded the import of the Gītā that salvation is attained by knowledge alone by the destruction of karma and that karma is not necessary for salvation. Sankarācārya says that the Lord Himself admit that karma becomes meaningless when one’s mind has become purified.

However, superiority of karmayoga has been proved by the historical illustration of Janaka as ‘karmanaiha hi saṃsiddhimāsthīthā janakādayāh’\(^{35}\) i.e., Janaka and others attained salvation only by performing action. Sankarācārya has re-established the Hindu religion by his super human intelligence and labour. The world itself came into existence when the Lord was ready to perform action and it has also been stated in the Mahābhārata that Marichi and other six mind-born sons came into existence out of the Lord and adopts the activist path, i.e., pravṛttimārga till death without renunciation\(^{36}\).

**Synthesis of Action (karma) and Renunciation (yoga):** According to the Gītā, though the karmayoga is superior to renunciation for attaining salvation, nowhere in the Gītā has been shown any dishonour for that path. The Lord has clearly stated that both the path of renunciation and the path of action equally lead to salvation. The Lord has stated that ‘ekam saṁkhyaḥ ca yah pas’yati sa pasyati.’\(^{37}\) The saints say that if any one path is properly followed, the result of both is achieved and where the follower of the Saṁkhya path reach, the follower of the action reach the same goal. Moreover in the karmayoga, one has to give up the hope for the fruit of action. *na
hyasinnyasta saṁkalpo yogi bhavati kas'cana' \(10\) i.e. unless one performs sannyāsa i.e., tyāga of the saṁkalpo of the hope of reward and one does not become a karmayoga\(T\). In this way the Lord has skilfully harmonised as far as possible between these two paths. The Lord has definitely said that, in this way, both renunciation and action are found in the same place. Moreover Vāsā has clearly expressed this meaning in the following verse:

\begin{quote}
dvāvināvathsa pānthānau yasmin vedah pratisthītah I
pravṛttīlakṣana dharmah nivṛttisca vibhāsitaḥ II 39
\end{quote}

That is the two modes of life, such as one is the activistic path, i.e., pravṛtti and the other is of inaction or of renunciation, i.e., nivṛtti are equally supported by the Vedas. Even it is stated in the Nārāyaṇīya doctrine that this two paths have existed independently from the commencement of the world. In the Gītā it is clearly stated that the stanza ‘dvāvināvathsa pānthānau ’ etc. is of the same importance as the stanza ‘lokasmin dvidhānīṣṭha’. So the two modes of life as pravṛtti and nivṛtti are of equal value. Thus in the Vedic religion the two independent paths of karmasannyāsa, i.e., renunciation and desireless action, i.e., yoga are equally good alternatives though the karmayoga is superior to the path of renunciation.

In the Gītā, it has been said that the path of renunciation and the path of karmayoga equally lead to liberation (niḥsreyaskara) yet karmayoga is the best. So the conclusion has been drawn that if the principal object of the Gītā is to harmonise knowledge with devotion to support the path of karmayoga on that basis, then all these apparent inconsistencies disappear and one cannot but admire the super human wisdom of the Gītā in bringing about a synthesis among knowledge, devotion and karmayoga in most comprehensive way.

Critical Estimate: Some thinkers and critics point out that nīskāma karma is not possible. In response to this question we can say that nīskāma karma is undoubtedly and definitely possible. The question is: how is it possible? If someone can acquire in himself the non-difference between God’s nature (svabhāva) and his own nature by continuous spiritual practices, he can perform nīskāma karma in the true sense of the term because God is a nīskāma karmī\(T\). He does not require performing any action. He is pūrṇa kāma, He has no want of anything. Nevertheless he is always engaged in action. He performs His duties of creation, maintenance and dissolution of the world. He performs other actions also for lokasaingraḥa. In like manner, we should do our duty or some kinds of actions for the service of the human welfare (lokasaingraḥa). At the time of performing all types of actions normal attitude concerning our action and behaviour. We should always have in mind that God is only the doer or authority of all kinds of actions with us as the
instruments in his hands. In other words we can say that we should give up our ego-feeling (aham bhāva) and this ego-feeling should be transformed into thou-feeling (tvam bhāva) in course of performing of our action. We have right to perform our prescribed duty only but we are not entitled to have the fruits of action. We should never consider ourselves the causes of the result of the activities. Inaction is sinful, so we should never attach to not doing our duty.4 We should perform our duty equipoised, abandoning all attachment to success or failure and such equanimity is called yoga. That is to say, we should act in accordance with the principles of yoga. Yoga means to concentrate the mind upon the Supreme by controlling the ever – disturbing sense. The Supreme is the Lord. We have nothing to do with the result of our prescribed duty. Gain and victory are God’s concern. We are directed to act according to the advice of God.

Now a question may be arised- is God considered to be a niśkāma karma? In response to this question Sankarācārya points out that God is a sakāma karma who was born on the earth having strong desire for the protection of Brāhmaṇhood for dominating the vicious persons and for ensuring stability of the world because if Brāhmaṇhood is preserved, the Vedic religion is also preserved.

Attainment of Liberation: The duties like nitya karma prescribed by the Smṛtis have to be performed by all, irrespective of the castes and the stages of life and they are common factors in the lives of all spiritual aspirants and hence their existence need not be considered separately with regard to the house-holders. For the liberation of the house-holders, knowledge has to be combined with actions prescribed by the Vedas and Smṛtis. On the other hand, for the liberation of Sannyāsins, knowledge has to be combined with actions like nitya karma etc. prescribed by the Smṛtis only. According to Sankarācārya, combination of knowledge with actions may be of two kinds such as karma-sammuccaya and saha-sammuccaya. Karma-sammuccaya is the cause where an aspirant embraces renunciation by gradually passing through the different stages of life. This is an indirect combination of knowledge with actions. Sankarācārya concedes this in the case of some people. But the other alternative of saha-sammuccaya where knowledge is sought to be directly combined with actions. Sankarācārya rejects this standpoint.

For Sankarācārya, action and knowledge cannot be combined because of their extreme opposite nature and therefore the path of devotion has been explained in the Gītā. The path of devotion lies in both of them and therefore it removes all obstacles and this devotion is of three kinds such as devotion mixed with action, pure and mixed with knowledge. The performance of sakāma karma done for personal gain is called kāma karma and the prohibited action means
niṣiddha karma. After the cessation of sins, sorrow from the mind; there arises a sense of firm discrimination between the eternal and transient objects (niyāntya vāstu viveka jñāna) and gradually follows detachment from the worldly objects called vasikāra, i.e., complete control over the mind and the organs. Afterwards renunciation is fully established through sama, i.e. limitation of the mind, dama, i.e. restraining the sense organs from their respective objects, uparati, i.e. not allowing the restrained organs by driving back to their objects, titikṣā, i.e. endurance, sraddha, i.e. faith, samādhāna, i.e. concentration of mind and mumukṣata, i.e. strong desire for attaining liberation. Thus the renunciation of all things produces a strong desire for liberation. Here good instructions from a good teacher lead to liberation of an aspirant. Sravana (hearing), manana (thinking) and nididhyāsana (meditation) must be practised for attaining liberation and for the elimination of doubt etc. after the Advaita Vedānta. As a result the knowledge of Reality is attained through the realisation of Upanisadic sentence ‘Thou art That’ which means immediate knowledge of the identity of Brahman and the Self.

Through the power of knowledge of Reality (tattva - jñāna) the result of action done in the past lives that have not yet started bearing fruits (aniśarabda or saścita kārma) get quite destroyed. The actions done in the present life will bear fruits in the future. Due to disturbance of prārabdha kārma past impression (vāsana) does not get destroyed and here samādhi is quickly accomplished through special devotion to God. So an embodiment liberated being (jīvanmukta) becomes accomplished through constant practice of the three disciplines as knowledge of reality (tattva - jñāna), elimination of the modification of mind (mana-nāsa) and dissipation of past impression of all actions as a result of knowledge and has ever absorbed in samādhi and becomes knower of the Brahman and he is spoken of as having gone beyond the guṇas, a man of steady wisdom (sthita-prajña) and he is also called a transcendent of the castes and the stages of life and a delicater of the self.

The Gītā’s teaching on niṣkāma kārma is not beyond mistake because there are contradictions in many places of the Gītā’s teaching. As the Gītā advises to perform action without fruits and on the other hand, the Gītā teaches to perform action for the sake of God, for protecting the creation of the world. In the other place of the Gītā, the Lord advises to adopt the path of jñāna and on the other hand He has tried to establish the supremacy of karmayoga. So it is very difficult to understand the right way to attain mokṣa.

Some modern thinkers like Rajendra Prasad raise some questions about niṣkāma kārma in his book Varna Dharma, niṣkāma Karma and Practical Morality. He thinks that niṣkāma kārma is binding because niṣkāma Karma produces fruits like Sakāma Karma admitted in the
**The Doctrine of Niskāmakarma of the Bhagavad Gītā: An Estimate**

Gītā. For Rajendra Prasad, every action must have a reason and that reason is to desire fruits and if niskāma Karma is a kind of karma, it must have a desire, i.e., the action of niskāma karma is not devoid of expecting fruits of his actions. According to Rajendra Prasad, Śrīkṛṣṇa advises Arjuna that fighting is his only duty. So he has to perform it but the common people do not always perform their actions as duty.

But inspite of some questions raised against the theory of niskāma karma of the Gītā, we cannot underestimate its message and ignore its present day relevance. We cannot forget the message of lokasaṁgraha (service for human welfare) of the Gītā.

This service or performance of action must be disinterested. In the present scenario, we see that almost all the political, social and even religious leaders and workers serve the people to gain name, fame and money. This is serious violation of the principle of lokasaṁgraha and accordingly that of niskāma karma. All the evils of the society are increasing day by day by the activities of such pseudo patriots and spiritualists. So we must bring the Gītā message of niskāma karma to light with strong force before the people as well as educated section of the society with a view to make them aware why the human society today is moving downwards day by day and being drowned into the ocean of evils. We also intend to convey that only political, social, ritualistic, religious awakening have no significant role in the betterment of human society without spiritual awakening as envisaged in the Bhagavad Gītā.

**Social significance of karmayoga:** The verses 3/22-24 of the Bhagavad Gītā where the Lord mentions his own example as working for lokasaṁgraha, are very important for understanding the meaning and scope of the word work. The Lord emphasises in these verses that the real purpose of karma is not to satisfy any narrow, selfish desire though the Lord need not have any karma. Although the Lord implicitly refers here to His karma as protector of the universe. In this context, Gandhiji says that the Lord serves the people for His whole life, a real servant of the world. His whole life is full of karma. As a child He is a cowherd and He is known to the world by the name of Gopala and He has neither sleep nor idleness. He keeps a sleepless vigil over the world.

**Conclusion:** It has been found in this world that man who tries to work for public welfare without desire becomes a yogī. When once the idea that all persons are in Him and that He is in all persons has been deeply rooted in one's mind, the question whether self-interest is distinct from the interest of others does not arise at all and starts to achieve the good of others with the monistic idea that 'sarvam khalvidam brahman'. As giving light is the inherent quality of the sun, so achiev-
ing the good of others become the inherent quality of the saint. Moreover it is said that when the sun is giving light to others it also gives light to itself, in the same way, a saint’s activities are done through his benevolence. The saints who continue their beneficent activities without caring for crisis and without trying to discriminate between whether it is better to suffer adversity or to give up public welfare and if situation arises, they are even ready to be indifferent about sacrificing their own lives. This is known as universal welfare and this is the true karmayoga.

Notes and References

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4. Sri Sukhamay Bhattacharya Sastri Sapta-Tirtha, Purva-Mīmāṃsā Darsan, pp.90-91
5. Ibid., p.91
6. The Gītā, 9.5
7. Ibid, 5.9
8. Ibid, 7.20
9. Amarkośa, 3-3-22
10. The Gītā, 9.22
11. Ibid, 2.50
13. The Gītā, 2.39
15. Ibid., p.75
16. The Gītā, 2.50
17. Gītā Bhasya, 4.42
18. Ibid., 17.7
20. Ibid., pp.444-446
THE DOCTRINE OF NŚŚCĀMAKARAM OF THE BHAGABAD GĪṬĀ: AN ESTIMATE

21. The Gīṭā, 2.47
22. Ibid., 2.48
23. Ibid., 2.49
24. Ibid., 2.50
25. Ibid., 14.23
26. Ibid., 2.55
27. Ibid., 14.24
28. Ibid., 2.50
29. Ibid., 2.47
30. Ibid., 3.7
31. Ibid., 3.8
32. Ibid., 6.46
33. Ibid., 8.7
34. Ibid., 5.2
35. Ibid., 3.20

36. B. G. Tilak, Srimad Bhagavad-Gīṭā Rahasya or Karmayoga Sāstra, Tr. by Bhalchandra Sitaram Sukthankar, Vol. I, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 1935, p. 87

37. The Gīṭā, 5.5
38. Ibid., 6.2
39. Mahābhārata Sāṁ., 260.6
40. Gīṭā Bhasya, 4.42

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