



Satsang by Swami Amar Jyoti

Karma Yoga and Purification

Action we have to do; karma we have to do. It is said in the Vedas that if God would stop creating for a moment the cosmos would collapse. The ultimate aim of *karma yoga*, as given in the Bhagavad Gita, is purification of mind.

To the extent that you do or act in the spirit of karma yoga (selfless service) you will be purified. Many may do karma yoga but the spirit or attitude may be missing, or partly missing, so purification or even relaxation may not be the result. In the same vein, if you do not feel much relaxation or purification from doing karma yoga, then feel sure that your spirit of karma yoga is deficient.

Working without being paid does not alone constitute karma yoga. Selflessness is not simply in a material sense but also psychological. There may be gratification, desires fulfilled or competitiveness. There may be an authoritative attitude, even unconsciously or by habit, or a tendency to rule over others. Some may be doing it simply for others to notice—*I'm doing karma*



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yoga. Any of these will spoil the spirit of karma yoga. This is where we have to judge ourselves. If our attitude is right we will experience relaxation. But if we have let go of material desires while retaining a psychological hold, then it is not karma yoga. Once you truly do in the spirit of karma yoga you will feel more free and relaxed. It purifies your heart and mind.

Those who care for God's vision or Liberation should know that karma yoga is helping to take you deeper into contemplation and meditation. Otherwise it will defeat the purpose. Let us say you did karma yoga for many years believing it will lead to God Realization. You may see at one point in your life that it did not give you what you wanted because that is beyond its scope. Karma yoga will help reduce your ego, but if you are thinking it will make you totally egoless, that is debatable. Some may have a difference of opinion on this issue, as they have had since ages in India. Karma yoga is very necessary. But karma yoga may not directly give you God's vision. It is a stepping-stone on the path to Realization. Seen from that perspective, karma yoga is one of the paths to Liberation, along with bhakti yoga, the path of devotion; raja yoga, the path of self-inquiry; and gyana yoga, the path of wisdom. All four paths lead to Liberation, directly or indirectly.

No one is without karma in this world. Even if you are retired you work in your home, in the ashram, in

organizations or in social work. Whatever your age or circumstances, if you do not do karma yoga or selfless service you will not reach your spiritual Goal. Now this could be quoted out of context. "If it does not directly lead to God's vision, why should we do karma yoga?" The reason is that if you are not doing karma yoga you are going to do karma *bhoga*. Karma *bhoga* means you are inviting the effects or the results of your karmas, good or bad. You will remain inside the grinding wheel of karma.

There are some for whom karma yoga is their predominant path, and for them contemplation is less. That is okay. We describe this as the motion left over of karmas from earlier years or lives. They will eventually get purified; some have seen this happen after ten or twenty years. Not everyone is honest in karma yoga either. Some may make a show of doing karma yoga but they are really intent on retaining their ego. After ten years or more they have no peace of mind or relaxation because they did not act in the true spirit of karma yoga. Otherwise in ten years you could have reached the portals of God's chamber. Normally speaking, with due compassion and kindness to seekers, karma yoga should do its job in a few years. If you have not achieved sufficient purification and relaxation within that time you have to search your own heart to find the reason. When you are purified, it will automatically lead you to deep contemplation and meditation.

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When you become Enlightened your action is different than karma yoga. A sage or holy man or Prophet's work will be for others rather than for his own purification. What is meant by purification of mind? We might judge by the results. One would be relaxation or peace. Another is that you will not have to force yourself; you will have a natural urge to meditate. Some part of you will actually demand that. There is a third point, which is that you will feel more cooperative and work more smoothly with others. These are, in my experience, the three proofs of whether your karma yoga spirit is genuine.

We all work, right from an ant up to *Brahman* (the Ultimate), but the way or attitude with which we work makes all the difference. It is not simply, "I'm working hard." That may be true but that alone is not the criterion of selfless service to the Lord. In karma yoga, procrastination, laziness and self-gratification have no place. If the task is too demanding, that is a different matter. Once you let go of desires or negativities, you will feel relieved rather than burdened. You may think that God makes us work to keep his Creation on, but He does not need that. It is for our own growth that we serve.

Once you act in the right spirit you will feel released. Otherwise, as someone commented to me, you may feel, "I'm dying slowly." I said, "Everybody dies slowly, except in accidents. We are all dying slowly until the last moment. What is the big deal about dying slowly in karma yoga?" That attitude means the spirit of

karma yoga must be missing or defective. So whatever your pattern of life may be—your job, business, home life—see that you act in the spirit of selflessness and give yourself fully to it, doing the very best you can. This does not mean you should allow yourself to be exploited. You have a right to change the job and do something else, or even appeal to your management to give you a promotion. There is nothing wrong in this. But at whatever stage or level you are working, see that you give your fullest, even if the remuneration may not be as much as you might expect. This will purify you.

This karma yoga spirit should reduce tensions and clashes around you and within you. If you do this, whether you are a superior or a subordinate, others will love you. Try it. Honesty of purpose and genuineness will give you more than you can imagine. Do you think Divine Mother will hold back if we are open and honest and sincere? If you believe me, Divine Mother will help you—She is more available than you think. Even if we speak of mother nature, is it not around us, inside us, and always helping us if we can tap it? This potential is within you. If we are simple, childlike, honest, genuine, and mean what we do or say, we will see the miracle of Divine Mother's grace. 🙏

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