



## International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)

A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal

ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)

Impact Factor: 6.8

Volume-XI, Issue-VI, November 2025, Page No. 86-90

Published by Scholar Publications, Sribhumi, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>

DOI: [10.29032/ijhsss.vol.11.issue.06W.161](https://doi.org/10.29032/ijhsss.vol.11.issue.06W.161)



### *Niškāma Karma: The Bedrock of Human Society*

**Tarak Nath Nandi**

*Asst. Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, Sambhu Nath College, Birbhum, West Bengal, India*

Received: 25.11.2025; Accepted: 27.11.2025; Available online: 30.11.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Scholar Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

#### **Abstract**

*The erosion of human values in every aspect of our lives becomes a matter of high concern in our society. Human values are degrading from the very early stage of our society, not only in modern times. It is time to amplify human values so that different types of erosion can be removed. There are different ways to amplify human values. It is worthy to note that in the Śrimadbhagavadgītā, addressing Arjuna's problem, Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa gave such a profound solution that all human beings should follow. In the course of our discussion, we shall see how the proper teaching and implementation of the same in our society will lead to the solution of our social problems. We know that Śrimadbhagavadgītā is one of the fundamental and popular Hindu religious texts, and the discussion of niškāma karma takes place in a central role. In this paper, I would like to highlight the concept of niškāma karma as it is said in the Śrimadbhagavadgītā, and its applicability in human society for the betterment of the whole.*

**Keywords:** *dhamma, intellect, morality, sakāma karma, niškāma karma, goodwill, equating*

#### **Introduction:**

The Śrimadbhagavadgītā is an ancient Indian text which is narrated in the *Viṣṇu parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, the holy scripture of Hindus. This text consists of eighteen chapters of a total number of 701 sanskrit verses (Gita and Mascaró 1994). In Indian thought, this moral theory emanated from the mouth of Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa holds a place of dignity and respect. A notable feature of this book is its attempt to harmonize metaphysical and ethical perspectives. The book is revealed through a conversation between Arjuna, and Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa (Yogananda 2007). Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa was the charioteer of Arjuna in the religious war of *Kurukṣetra*. The *Gītā* begins with Arjuna's dilemma on the battlefield. Arjuna takes up arms against the *Kaurava*s motivated by the *khatriya* religion and at the same time the horror of killing his relatives as a result of the use of arms prevents him from using arms. He felt that it was his duty to lay down his arms. Thus, the philosophy of the *Gītā* is revealed in Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna about his duties when the conflict of duty had left Arjuna physically and mentally exhausted (Śaṅkarācārya 2022). What Arjuna wanted from Kṛṣṇa was a clear principle of duty. Not only in the battlefield, but we cannot decide our actions or duties in all field of our daily life also. Therefore, the common man also needs a principle of duty which is technically called in the Śrimadbhagavadgītā as *niškāma karma*.

## Philosophy of Niṣkāma Karma:

There are many way to classify the action. In Indian philosophy, action is said to be divided into two, viz., *sakāma karma* and *niṣkāma karma*. *Karma* which is performed with the desire of fruit or result is *sakāma*, and *karma* devoid of all result and attachment is called *niṣkāma karma*. In the *Gītā* this *niṣkāma karma* is propagated (Das and Mandal 2016). It is said in the *Śrimadbhagavadgītā*,

“*karmanyevādhikaraste mā phaleṣu kadācana,  
mā karmaphalaheturbhurmā te saṁgahastvakarmāni*” (Gita and Mascaró  
1994:sloka 47/2).

It implies that your concern is only with action, but not with fruit or result. So, not to be the agent for the fruition of actions; on the contrary, be not attached to inaction. In this case, *karma* means universal action, but *Vedic* rituals are not means. We have to do our duty and *karma* is the rule of our life. Everyone is bound to do *karma* in true of his/ her nature. No one can live for a moment without doing *karma*. But this action must be non-addictive and fruitless.

According to the *Gītā*, there are three characteristics of *niṣkāma karma-yoga*, viz., firstly, abandonment of desire for *karma*, secondly, ‘I am the official of this authority’ - to leave the aircraft, and thirdly, surrendering all *karma* to the God (Das and Mandal 2016; Śaṅkarācārya 2022). In the *Gītā*, it is said to do action without expectation of result. It is said to be indifferent to the results of *karma* but not to act aimlessly. The purpose of working for the protection of God’s creation is to offer all the results of the work to God. So, it is mentioned in the *Gītā* to do according to *yoga*. That is to say,

“*yogasthah kuru karmāni saṁgam tyaktva Dhananjaya,  
sidhyāsidhyoh sama bhūtoa samatvam yoga ucyate.* (Gita and Mascaró  
1994:sloka 48/2)

It means that O Dhananjaya, you should act with *yoga*, discarding fruit power, equating success and failure. Such equanimity of intellect is called *yoga* and action with this equanimity of intellect is *niṣkāma karma* (Mitra 2017). Therefore, the whole teaching of *Śrimadbhagavadgītā* on *Karma-Yogī* can be summarized as follows:

- 1) **Desireless Action:** A *karmayogī* must carry out his duties without wanting to receive any fruit. A *karmayogī* is aware that everything is transient and deceptive. He or she simply performs the necessary *dharma*, focusing on the deeds rather than the outcomes. A real *karmayogī* does not take pleasure in the activity or the outcome.
- 2) **Equanimity (*samatva*):** Success and failure are equivalent in the eyes of a *karmayogī*. Regardless of the outcomes, a *karmayogī* maintains mental equilibrium and tranquility. Neither success nor failure should be a source of joy or sorrow. *Samatva*, which the *Śrimadbhagavadgītā* refers to as real yoga, is this mental condition.
- 3) **Detachment from Outcome:** A *karmayogī* will not be affected by either pleasure or misery. Because they do not care about the outcomes (*phala*) or the sensory experiences that go along with them; instead, they are focused on carrying out their duties (*karma*). He will restrain his senses and never consider the fulfillment of his interests.
- 4) **Selfless Action:** A *karmayogī* will behave not out of selfishness instead of as a gift to the Divine or to the well-being of others. *Karmayogī* is incapable of being attracted to

the worldly world or material wealth. He will be satisfied with the soul alone and transform whatever he does into *yañja*.

We should perform the given rules of *Śrimadbhagavadgītā* accordingly. However, the role of free will is also there. One may say that how can the *niṣkāma karma* and free will be possible in the same work? The answer to this question can be given through an example. Football player plays football. However, he has to maintain the rules and regulations given by the referee. It does not mean that the football player has no free will. The football player should play the ball with his will in a positive energy, proper way. Everything is done within the sphere of his limitation. In the same way, we are the players in this society as well as the whole world. It is determined by the *vidhi* and *niṣedha* of the will of the God (Das and Mandal 2016; Dhiman 2018). Thus, a determination is always the sphere of limitation.

It is said in the *Gītā* that *karma* is secondary, and equanimity is supreme. By taking shelter of all these intellects and performing actions, one can get rid of the results of *karma*. In making moral judgments of actions, the purity and sanctity of the mind are the subject of judgment, not the results of the actions. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant emphasizes goodwill in his theory of ethics. To judge the good and bad of the action, what is the purpose or reason for his actions? According to the *Gītā*, *karma* is not the cause of bondage. Lust or fruition is the cause of bondage. But doing *karma* with equanimity does not cause bondage. *Yoga* is to act with equanimity. Another sign of *niṣkāma karma* is to abandon oneself as an authority. People have to give up the 'I am the authority' type of attitude, and surrender the *karma* to God. Human beings should have the attitude that he has to serve others without expecting any result (Chinmayananda 2021). This is called *niṣkāma karma*.

A person who perform *karma* without attachment to the result and sacrifice his result of *karma* to the *Brahmana* never be indulges in sin. In fact, a wonderful combination of knowledge, action, and devotion can be seen in the *Gītā*. As long as the knowledge of the ego is not eliminated, it is not possible to act dispassionately. The ego is eliminated only when self-knowledge is gained. Therefore, self-knowledge is necessary for the accomplishment of *karma yoga*, and only by gaining self-knowledge, devotion to God is born in people and people see God in all forms. That is why people can ignore their self-interest and devote themselves to the welfare of all. One attains eternal peace and is freed from auspicious and inauspicious effects and *karmic* bondage through offering *karma* to God. A *sthitaprajñā* does not get attached to action even by judging sense goods to subjugate the senses (Chinmayananda 2021; Das and Mandal 2016). Abstaining from all types of enjoyment does not mean a sense of restraint. Thinking of God is the only way of controlling the senses. Attachment to things is removed through thinking about God; hence, the mind is purified, and the senses are restrained. Lord Śrīkrṣṇa says in the *Gītā*,

“*tāni sarvāṇi saṁyamya yukta āsīta matparaḥ,  
base hi yasyendriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā* (Gita and Mascaró 1994:sloka  
61/2).”

That is, he who is a unique devotee of the Kṛṣṇa, restrains all the senses and stays with Kṛṣṇa; that buried mind is the person whose senses are restrained, he is the *sthitaprajñā*. If this state can be achieved, people can attain liberation (*mokṣa*) even by doing work. Therefore, the *Gītā* never advocates a life without action. The *Gītā* states that *karma-yoga* is better than *sannyāsa*.

Now many Western scholars say that no one can work without the desire of fruits or results, and success and failure as a parallel knowledge. Why do one perform actions if there

is no desire for results? It is important to point out that there are two types of desire, viz., *kāma* and *prema*. The desire for the satisfaction of personal interest is called *kāma*, but the desire for the satisfaction or pleasure of the God is called *prema*. Here, *prema* includes the desire for the satisfaction of the interest of the whole society as well (*vahujana hitāya*, *vahujana sukhāya*). So, *niṣkāma karma* is not devoid of all sorts of desire. It is devoid of only that particular type of desire known as *kāma* which is undermined and blamed. But *niṣkāma karma* is not devoid of the desire called *prema* which is praise worthy (Das 2017). So, the objection raised that *niṣkāma karma* is not possible as it is devoid of desire, does not hold true one.

We all are aware of the fact is that no action (*karma*) can be possible without motive. No one, even a fool, engages in action without a motive. However, indifference to results and motivelessness are not the same thing. *Niṣkāma karma* is also not motiveless, its motive is to act for the satisfaction of the interest of the whole society, i.e., protect God's creation. It is the action of God, through the living beings motivated by nature to save the world. It is for this reason that the *niṣkāma karmī* surrenders all *karma* to the God. *Niṣkāma karma* is possible only when the will of God and the will of the doer are united, then the personality of the doer does not exist. In such a situation, equality of results is not impossible, it becomes natural. Boys play in pairs, their aim is to have fun, that is their nature (Śāṅkarācārya 2022). They are very indifferent to winning and losing in the game. But those who gamble cannot be indifferent to winning and losing, because their aim is to win for their side and for their opponent to lose.

Many others also say that even if it is possible to act in this way, this action has no moral value, it is mechanical. It is as if the puppet is not responsible for the actions of the mechanical puppet, i.e., whether the action is good or bad, but the operator is responsible. A great mistake of those who hold such an opinion is that what they call moral value is far above the metaphysics of the *Gītā*. Abandoning responsibility for this moral value is the goal of the *niṣkāma karmī*. It is the *karma* that produces heaven or hell or rebirth. No *niṣkāma karmī* wants to do that. He wants to know himself, from whom he originates, and from whom his action instinct. So, he considers himself a machine and surrenders to that machine to the whole society as well as God (Yogananda 2007). The main *mantra* of *rājasika karmī* is to establish 'ego' ('I'), however, the first and last *mantra* of *sāttvika karmī* is to give up 'ego'.

There is a difference between the law of action (*karmavāda*) as it is given by the *Gītā* and hedonism. According to hedonists, people work for happiness and people should work for happiness. According to the law of action of the *Gītā*, one should act without thinking of any result and surrendering the result of *karma* to God. The ideal of the *Gītā* is *niṣkāma karmayoga*. However, German philosopher Immanuel Kant's dictum 'duty for duty's sake' and *Gītā's Karma-Yoga* are not the same thing. Kant advocates judging in the world of pure thought, avoiding all emotions. But in the *Gītā*, it is not said to avoid all feelings like kindness, *māyā*, compassion, love, etc., here it is said to do *karma* in the sense of *lokasaṁgraha* or wellbeing of the whole society (*ātma mokṣārtham jagathitāy ca*).

## Conclusion:

Finally, the ethics preached in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* are based on spirituality, not metaphysics like Western ethics. The ideality of *niṣkāma karma-yoga* of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* has consisted of the proper combination of *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti*. It is worthy to note that in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, addressing Arjuna's problem, Lord Śrīkrṣṇa gave such a profound solution that all human beings should follow (Frazier 2021). In the course of our discussion,

we shall see how the proper teaching and implementation of the same in our society will lead to the solution of our social problems.

Despite its ancient origin, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* remains profoundly relevant to human life, offering timeless guidance amid the erosion of values in modern society. Its teaching of *niškāma karma*—selfless action without attachment—presents a powerful framework for restoring integrity and harmony. When properly understood and applied, these principles can address individual and social challenges alike, demonstrating that the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā's* wisdom, however old, continues to illuminate pathways for human betterment and collective well-being.

## References:

1. Chinmayananda, Swami. 2021. *The Holy Geeta*. Central Chinmaya Mission Trust.
2. Das, Bhupendra Chandra, and Dipak Kr Mandal. 2016. 'The Doctrine of Niskamakarma of the Bhagabad Gita: An Estimate.'
3. Das, Shubhra Jyoti. 2017. 'Niškāma Karma of the Bhagavadgītā Transcending the Normative.' *Gauhati University Journal of Philosophy* 2(1):64.
4. Dhiman, Satinder. 2018. 'Karma Yoga: The Path of Enlightened Action.' Pp. 103–25 in *Bhagavad Gītā and Leadership: A Catalyst for Organizational Transformation*. Springer.
5. Frazier, Jessica. 2021. 'Ethics in Classical Hindu Philosophy: Provinces of Consequence, Agency, and Value in the Bhagavad Gītā and Other Epic and Śāstric Texts.' *Religions* 12(11):1029.
6. Gita, Bhagavad, and J. Mascaró. 1994. 'Bhagavad Gita.' *Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, USA*.
7. Mitra, Enakshi. 2017. 'Understanding Yudhiṣṭhira's Actions: Recasting Karma-Yoga in a Wittgensteinian Mould.' Pp. 57–81 in *Mahabharata Now*. Routledge India.
8. Śāṅkarācārya. 2022. *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā Bhāṣya of Sri Saṅkarācārya: With Text in Devanagiri & English Rendering, and Index of First Lines of Verses*. Third edition. Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math.
9. Yogananda, Paramahansa. 2007. *God Talks with Arjuna*. Diamond Pocket Books (P) Ltd.