

# KARMA

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## **Karma Yoga, the path of selfless actions**

My journey began with a personal experience that I'd like to share - my journey from rock bottom to the peak of success. Just a few months ago, I was in a state of despair. It wasn't due to the COVID pandemic, but rather a result of the tough times that life threw at me. Those moments when everything seems to fall apart before your eyes, when your world crumbles beneath your feet, and you realize that your safe haven is being demolished. I'm sure we've all experienced these moments, the ones where we ask the question, "Why me?" Initially, I sought out immediate solutions to my problems. I wanted to take medicine to cure my ailments, but I wasn't ready to give up my bad habits. I went to doctors with the hope that they could fix me, but every attempt ended in failure. Eventually, I became overwhelmed and decided to avoid my problems altogether. That was when I discovered Ekam Vada - a solution that I believed could help me get rid of all my problems. In Sanskrit, Ekam means only one, and Vada means please tell. I wandered around aimlessly for a few weeks until I stumbled upon the Bhagavad Gita. Reading it transformed the way I thought, spoke, and lived my life. How, you ask? Let me explain.

## **Kurukshetra War in Mahabharata**

Arjuna, the great warrior, asked Lord Krishna to drive his chariot between the two armies so he could see who desired to fight with him. As he stood between the armies, he saw his fathers and grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, in-laws, and friends - all of whom he would have to face in battle. Overcome with confusion and despair, Arjuna told Krishna that his body trembled with fear, and he did not wish to fight the war. He felt it was a great sin to kill his own relatives for the sake of a kingdom's pleasures. Arjuna even went as far as to suggest that it would be better if his relatives killed him unarmed and unresisting. In this moment, Arjuna wanted to run away from his problems instead of facing them head-on. Don't we all feel the same way during a crisis? I know I have wanted to run away from my problems in the past.

## **Mighty Lord Krishna Speaks**

Krishna teaches that one should never engage in action solely for the sake of rewards, nor should one long for inaction. Those who break away from the ego-cage of 'I,' 'me,' and 'mine' to unite with the Lord of Love are forever free. He advises Arjuna to work without self-attachments and to stay steady in success and failure. The wise, who unify their consciousness and abandon the attachment to the fruits of action that bind a person to rebirth, attain a state beyond all evil. Krishna warns that when a person has lost the capacity to learn from the past and exercise sound judgment, their life is a waste. Such a person will bring misery upon themselves and those around them and leave this life as a burden instead of a contributor to others' welfare.

In this teaching, Krishna urges us to give up the doer, not the karma. He instructs Arjuna to fulfill all his duties, acting selflessly, and with devotion to selfless work, which is devotion to God. The senses have been conditioned by attraction to the pleasant and aversion to the unpleasant, but one should not be ruled by them as they are obstacles in one's path. Our selfish desires and anger keep us away from eternal bliss.

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\*Excerpts are taken from the book "The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living" by Eknath Easwaran

### **Connections and Conclusions**

Arjuna's situation reflects our own experiences in times of difficulty. Often, our first inclination is to give up and retreat from action, seeing the problem as a personal issue of "I, me, and mine." However, if we view the problem as a collective issue, it becomes a small part of the whole. This is where Krishna's message comes in: we must relinquish the doer and focus on selfless action. When we act as the doer, our ego creates expectations and blames others for any mistakes. But by acting selflessly, we eliminate the divide between the doer and the karma. We must renounce attachment to the fruits of our actions and see good and bad, success and failure, beauty and ugliness, and sorrow and happiness as equal.

Life is constantly changing, and we must adapt to these changes rather than seek comfort in inaction. Only through acting selflessly can we find peace and contentment in our actions, and avoid the trap of being ruled by our selfish desires and expectations.

**Act in a way that benefits society but not just you.**