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# Ethical Foundations of Basic Science and the Science Behind Karmayoga Milan Kumar Jana and Dr. Chandan Adhikary\*

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#### Abstract:

The growth of a civilization depends on the development of science, technology, economy, literature, culture, living standards etc. The secret behind all development lies in the nurturing of the unique thought and skilful execution of the same in the process and performance. The art of doing work that leads to the state of perfection, is called yoga, in broader aspect, it is termed as Karmayoga. Selfless action is emphasised in Karmayoga as a means to bring about positive societal change. The motivation behind the development of Karmayoga is altruistic concern for the welfare of others, as opposed to personal gain. Karmayoga reveals the mystery surrounding action. It addresses inquiries such as the definition of right action and the proper methodology for carrying out action. There are inherent conflicts in human behaviour, such as duty versus ethics. Karma Yoga elucidates a method by which such disputes can be resolved impartially. The Gita places great stress on the 'ethics of work' or 'inherent science' that underpins the working process as described in 'loksamgraha,' or engagement with the outside world, as well as the readiness to carry out self-serving actions (niskamakarma) for the benefit of others. In order to address social and political problems in contemporary India, these karma principles play crucial role. Yoga is a practice of spirituality. According to Karmayoga, work should be done in devotion to God and without attachment. This study shows how the Karmayoga applications can foster societal advancement and general development by establishing work ethics and elevating it to the status of work ethics. The present condition shows that there has been an increase in scholarly interest in how spiritual and religious traditions are expressed in the workplace. Researchers include the components of numerous belief systems that are relevant to the workplace. The present treatise operationalises the foundation of the scientific work ethics, Karmayoga, to provide a philosophical, conceptual and methodological critique.

### **Introduction:**

*Karmayoga*, as expounded in the Bhagavad Gita, is the basis of Hindu work ethics. The fundamental Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita (Rastogi et al., 2020), is largely recognized as the most symbolic text on Indian thought, philosophy and religion. *Karmayoga* (the yoga of

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action) is regarded as one of the three main types of yoga, alongside *Bhaktiyoga* (of devotion) and *Jnanayoga* (of knowledge) (Rastogi, et al., 2020). Yoga has been regarded as a "way of life", discipline, and oneness, among other things. *Karmayoga* is proposed as the route of action for obtaining human perfection and enjoyment, and therefore achieving contact with the Transcendental. It is thought to be the philosophy of work in India (Rastogi, et al., 2020). The Bhagavad Gita explains that *Karmayoga* is the 'wise way of doing' because work is necessary and can't be avoided. It means working without expecting anything in return, giving up the perks of the work itself. In *Karmayoga*, "the results of one's actions have no motivating potential, and one constantly pursues an inward journey, which is naturally fulfilling and satisfying." As per the Bhagavad Gita, one can achieve union with the transcendental through *Karmayoga* if he aims for skilful behaviour and doesn't care about the results. (Bhawuk, 2011; Rastogi, et al., 2020)

### Concept of Karmayoga

Karma derives from the Sanskrit root 'kri', which means doing, affairs, or activity and comprises all body, speech, and mental activities (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022). Yoga derives from the Sanskrit root 'yuj', meaning to connect. The Mahabharata uses the term as a) a skill, device, or graceful method for performing actions (Gita 2.50), b) as equability of mind (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022) towards success or failure (Gita 2.48) and c) to eliminate karma's tendency to result in bondage (Gita 2. 50). The term 'Yoga' has been used by Tilak to denote 'device' or 'intelligent method' and 'karma yoga' to mean 'a technique for intelligently performing actions.' In this context, Tilak employs the term 'intelligent' to refer to an action that is advantageous to one's ultimate objectives. Since liberating an individual from the perpetual birth and death cycle is the ultimate purpose of all beings, any approach that facilitates such liberation is more desirable than one that is more likely to ensnare the human being in bondage. *Karmayoga* is a spiritual practice that strives for *mukti*, or liberation. By transcending the material aspect, the purpose of *Karmayoga* is to transform oneself rather than the world (Bhajanananda, 2006, pp.8-9). Krishna defines yoga as -

yōgasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi sangamtyaktvādhanañjaya | siddhyasiddhyōḥ samōbhūtvā samatvam yōgaucyatē || 2.48 ||

"Remain resolute in carrying out your responsibilities, Arjuna, letting go of attachment to the outcome and staying consistent in both success and failure. Yoga is the term used to describe such calmness and composure."

Therefore, *Karmayoga* literally means 'the way of union through action.' In reality, *karmayogis* attain union prior to taking action. *Karmayoga* is an approach to life. One attains self-actualization through duty-driven actions devoid of self-centered ambitions, which are the result of determined thought. Engaging in action without self-centered ambitions progressively transforms an individual into one who recognises the worth of rationality (Gogoi, 2014).*Karma yoga* is defined as doing the appropriate actions with the proper attitude (Dhiman,2018). Right deeds benefit everyone while harming no one, and *Karmayoga* provides the highest ethical

foundation in the world. According to the law of karma, whatever we do, has a multiplier future effect on us. In the workplace, we foster mutual trust, understanding, and peace when we apply *Karmayoga* in the right way. The mind is purified by selflessly doing duties, making it ready to receive the higher lessons of self-knowledge (Dhiman & Amar, 2018). Karmayoga involves altruistic action without regard for its rewards (Moffitt, 1977). Karmayoga participants pursue an inside path that is gratifying and satisfying, while the effects of their acts do not motivate them (Bhawuk, 2011, p.148). The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes the importance of selfless activity (niskama karma) and encourages renunciation of selfishness and its consequences. This refers to renunciation in action (Dhiman & Amar, 2018), not of activities. True renunciation involves letting go of kartapan, a strong sense of responsibility. (Dhiman, 2019). Karmayoga is defined as 'a technique for intelligently performing actions' or 'a technique for performing actions in such a way that the soul is not bound by the effects of the action' (Tilak, 2000). The Principles of Karmayoga as needed in the present-day work ethics are-a) Karmayoga is devoted to prayojana, b) It promotes a beautiful cognitive infinite change, c) It is internal, d) It leads to Self-evolution, e) It is a steadfast unchanging mindset, f) It is based on the thought and the intent, g) It is liberating, h) It glorifies surrender, i) It encompasses only ethical, noble and righteous action, j) It treads on realisation of truth and gives contentment, k) It derives joy in the present by focusing on prayojana, 1) It brings peace and liberation from bondage (Srinivasan, 2022).

### Work excellence and Karmayoga

Excellence is a motivation from within, not without. Excellence should be pursued for personal joy and fulfilment, not just for external recognition. In the Bhagavad Gita, YogahKarmasu Kaushalam (Gita, 2.50) emphasises the need of striving for perfection in action (Srirangarajan, & Bhaskar, 2011). A person with an Indian worldview attains the pinnacle of moral development by attaining excellence in Karmayoga (Mulla & Krishnan, 2009). However, before attempting to comprehend *Karmayoga*, it is necessary to understand the core principles of Indian philosophy upon which the system is based. To attain the desired result, an action must be mixed with an attribute of effectiveness (Tenneti & Tenneti, 2022). The cultivation of individual efficacy is considered an essential characteristic in the Bhagavad Gita (YogahaKarmasu kousalam). The definition of a successful activity is one that is completely goal-oriented and accomplished efficiently. Individuals should allocate their time, energy, capabilities, and talents in a way that prevents them from being spent on 'purpose-defeating' activities. According to the Bhagavad Gita, effectiveness can be achieved by cultivating the attributes such as, a) Possessing an inspiring and motivating Vision or Objective b) Acquiring the ability to concentrate on the current task in pursuit of the Vision or Objective and c) Demonstrating composure in the face of challenges and setbacks encountered along the path to the vision or objective (Tenneti & Tenneti, 2022). Yoga is excellence at work. Kaushalam means working wholeheartedly without being a workaholic. This detached attitude boosts its values and workers attention and skill. Elegance, fortitude, and expertise help our Body-MindSoul work with our hands (Dhiman & Marques, 2020). Become a tool for Supreme and do the work. Performing a job with focus, devotion, and skill makes us important to others and society. The individual should never crave results as money, bonuses, and other external incentives motivate little.

### Keys to achieving excellence

*Karmayoga* can lead one to gain success in work or profession. The human being always strives for excellence. Thus, we have to believe in the presence of an eternal reality (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022). The atman is regarded as our true essence, pure and untainted by the impurities of our ordinary life. The second belief is the law of karma, which states that every action causes a corresponding outcome. This implies that justice is upheld in the world and may manifest across multiple cycles of birth and death. The third concept is liberation, which refers to becoming free from the cycle of life and death, as well as the law of karma, which can be accomplished by a variety of techniques. Thus, the core theoretical concepts of *Karmayoga* are portrayed here in the practical critique.

### Karmayoga: The Method of Effective Action

*Karmayoga* is a method to achieve *moksa* (liberation) by carrying out activities without being influenced. Ranganathananda (2000, p.93) states that throughout our lives, we participate in numerous activities. However, rather than freeing us from limitations, these activities tend to further restrict us. To understand life, one must utilise every action as a method to liberate oneself from bondage (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022).

### Nishkama Karma

*Karmayoga* is a school of ethics that aims to achieve freedom via selflessness and good work. According to Vivekananda (2009 p.121), *Karmayoga* involves belief in the atman (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022), *moksa*, and the law of karma, rather than a personal god. The karma principles in the Bhagavad Gita have been explained in verse 2.47.

karmaņy ē vādhikārastēmāphalēsukadācana | mākarmaphalahēturbhūrmātēsangō:'stvakarmaņi || 2.47 ||

The Nishkama Karma principle motivates the individual to work unselfishly with a disinterested spirit with pure motive. The person should not care about the results (Sivananda, 2000). Inertia must be avoided. For unselfish service, the doer must concentrate on mankind, country, etc. and focus on the process, not the results. As is said in the Bhagavad Gita, one part of the mind (Supriya & Srilalitha, 2019) should be involved in the work while another part should be engaged in praying to God through meditation and Japa, etc.

Lord Krishna says:

Tasmatsarveshukaleshumamanusmarayudhya cha; Mayyarpitamanobuddhirmamevaishyaisyasamsayam. // 8.7 //

"Therefore, at all times think upon Me and fight with mind and reason set on Me, without doubt, thou shalt come unto Me." (Gita 8.7)

### Renunciation of all attachment or Anasakti

In practicing *Karmayoga* it is recommended to achieve equilibrium in matters pertaining to gain or loss, triumph or defeat, delight or anguish. Our mind has to be made disciplined. This serves as the master key to unlock the gates to realms of joy. The secret to *Karmayoga* lies in this. This is the key to achieving success in the practice of yoga. "Renunciation and Yoga of action both lead to the highest bliss; however, Yoga of action is undeniably superior to renunciation of action," says Lord Krishna (Gita, 5.2). It is not possible to attain immortality or the ultimate beatitude instantly rather one has to believe in the consequences of one's actions that will ensnare one in the cyclical process of life and death.

Vivekananda (2009) explains how *ahamkara* and *mamatva* (sense of I and mine) result in attachment. According to Gandhi (1980), the essential principle of the Bhagavad Gita is detachment, which involves abandoning the fruits of action. He referred to *Karmayoga* as '*anasakti yoga*' (yoga of non-attachment), and regarded the Bhagavad Gita as a treatise on this practice.

#### Swadharma

Swadharma refers to the practice of one's own dharma, which encompasses individual duties, responsibilities, and righteousness. The worker has to follow his original nature mixed with the skills requires for the work. As Krishna says

śrēyānsvadharmōviguṇaḥ paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt | svadharmēnidhanaṁśrēyaḥ paradharmōbhayāvahaḥ || 3.35 ||

Duty and morality may change depending on our mental makeup or the various planes of life we inhabit. For persons who are passive, dull, and inactive, engaging in some type of activity (even violence) is recommended as *swadharma*. Conversely, individuals with courage and skill may find their *swadharma* in opposing violence or engaging in battles solely for the betterment of society. It is crucial to understand that there are varying levels of obligation and ethical standards, meaning that the responsibilities of one individual in a specific situation may not apply to another (Vivekananda 2009, pp.15-18).

#### Gunas (ultimate entities)

Gunas can be seen as three forces in the physical world: *tamas* representing inertness, *rajas* representing activity, and *sattva* representing the standpoint between activity and inactivity. When *tamas* prevails, we become lethargic and unenergetic; when *rajas* dominate (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022), we are driven towards intense activity; and when *sattva* is prominent, we participate in peaceful and balanced actions. *Karmayoga* specifically focuses on these three criteria (Vivekananda, 2009, p.13).Tamasic individuals struggle to conduct unattached actions or *Karmayoga* due to their high *tamas* and low *rajas* and *sattva* levels. When their *rajas*' levels rise, they will begin to take action. However, *Karmayoga* requires reducing *tamas* and *rajas* and increasing *sattva*. The transition from tamasic to rajasic to sattvic is a simple technique to

avoid tainted actions. *Sattvic* performers will be unaffected by the fruits of actions (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022).

#### The pure mind (Sattva)

When a man works selflessly, viewing work as a form of worship to God and dedicating all actions to Him, believing that life's purpose is to serve God, his mind will be pure.

#### Absence of Authority

The notion of doership leads to bondage and accrual of karma. Unselfishness eliminates the concept of self completely. Thus, work done with the motive of worship is the key to liberation.

#### **Mindfulness**

Work should be done with mindfulness and utmost concentration, in a view to worship. Work is a form of meditation. Doers must serve everyone with passionate love, with no sense of agency and no hope of fruit or reward. This is the way to understand God. Humanitarian service is divine service (Sivananda, 2000).

### Discussion

The ideals of *Karmayoga* are applicable to all aspects of human excellence leading to liberation. The philosophical explanation of *Karmayoga* appears in Figure 1. Tilak (1915/2000) defines the endless cycle of birth and death as a three-step procedure driven by reincarnation and karma. The process begins with the five senses interacting with external objects, causing the agent to perceive pain or delight (Gita, 2.14). Experiencing pleasure or pain might lead to a wish to repeat the perception (happy) or avoid it (pain). Unfulfilled desires generate reincarnation in a body best suited for experiencing or avoiding particular experiences. Thus, the cycle of birth and death continues in this way (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022). This loop can be broken through *Karmayoga*. An individual may choose to exclude all sensory interaction with external items. However, this approach is not ideal for active individuals. Going beyond the cycle of birth and death requires equanimity and indifference to rewards and consequences of one's actions (Tilak, 1915/2000).

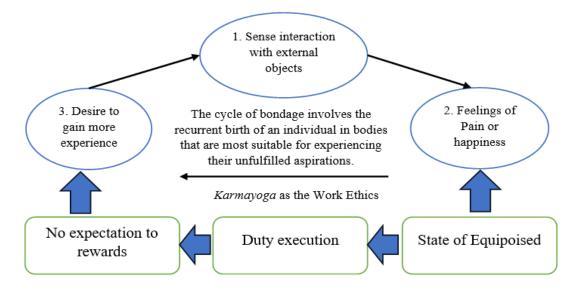


Figure 1. Karmayoga: A Skilful Way of Performing Actions.

(Source: Mulla, Z. R., & Krishnan, V. R. (2014). Karma-Yoga: The Indian Model of Moral Development.)

### **Duty-orientation or art of intelligent action**

Individuals who believe in the law of cause and effect, an immortal soul, and the goal of life as freedom from the cycle of birth and death seek ways to achieve eternal salvation. According to Indian philosophy, the route to freedom should align with the seeker's personality and disposition. *Karmayoga* offers a route to emancipation from the birth and death cycle, ideal for those with an active personality who want to stay in the world and achieve liberation (Mulla & Krishnan, 2014).

#### **Indifference to rewards**

Individuals need to exercise control over the activities they take, since a complex chain of cause and effect determines the consequences. As a result, individuals lose ownership of their activities, believing that they occur spontaneously and that their physiological organs are simply tools for carrying them out. The seeker's indifference to money or social rewards stems from a lack of control over their activities and a sense of obligation to others. This is one of the important qualities of an individual in achieving excellence.

### Equanimity

There is a constant interaction of senses with material objects, and as a result of these interactions, the individual experiencing the sense objects perceives happiness or misery. Desire stems from the awareness of enjoyment or suffering, leading to a desire to repeat or avoid previously experienced sensations. This desire causes additional interactions between the senses and material objects. Even when we enjoy a desirable object, it does not destroy our

cravings, but rather fuels them. Thus, one way to manage one's mental experience of pain and enjoyment is to remain neutral to our senses (Mulla & Krishnan, 2012).

Srirangarajan& Bhaskar (2011) suggests the qualities or the *Karmayoga* attributes which are necessary to any person a) Intension of doing work meaningfully b) preparations for Personal growth and development, c) having Personal values fit with workplace principles, such as harmony, love, respect, trust, care and honesty, d) satisfaction with work, e) a sense of belonging and interconnectedness- understanding and adjustment to the team with a sense of belongingness, f) contribution to society in order to serve others or for a higher purpose, g) pursuit of excellence and perfection, h) acknowledgement of one's internal experiences, i) treating work as worship, j) connection to Nature, Master or God, k) sense of transcendence, l) merely serving as a tool for action, not the one performing the action, and m) Emphasising the process of work rather than the outcomes.

### Conclusion

*Karmayoga* promotes moral decision-making by prioritizing the needs of others and adhering to the principles of selflessness, non-attachment, and *svadharma* (Krishnan & Mulla, 2022). Understanding the theory of *Karmayoga* can offer strength during challenging times and establish the belief that one's present actions shape future results (Banerjee, 1964). *Karmayoga* is the Indian concept of work ethics that leaders can use to inspire their team to fulfil their duties conscientiously and provide dedicated service to consumers. The *Karmayoga* worldview supports efficient and humane organisations, as well as a professional and satisfied staff. (Mulla & Krishnan, 2007). *Karmayogi* leaders can assist their team members selflessly, for improving team outcomes. *Karmayoga* is an effective strategy to combat the rising levels of greed and selfishness in contemporary society and to encourage individuals to prioritize their responsibilities towards others. When individuals prioritize their responsibilities towards others, they will not be seeking personal gains from their acts, therefore improving the quality of the process and results. Individuals who prioritize their duties before personal gains will experience more calmness and a better quality of life.

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