

CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC

Sri Krishna and the Field of Action

February is a month for study of Karma Yoga, a spiritual path leading to the abandonment of selfishness, and a life free from worry and care. As a karma yogi, you practice offering all your thoughts, actions, feelings, and perceptions to the Divine Presence.

Even before fully knowing this Presence, you hold firmly to the belief that the Presence is within each person or other living being that you interact with or serve. Working and abiding in this spirit, you are increasingly able to release attachment to your activities and their results. This yields the freedom promised by Karma Yoga.

Swami Chidbhavananda was a disciple of Swami Shivananda, who was himself a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the 2nd President of the Ramakrishna Order.

Chidbhavanandaji wrote a, long, scholarly, definitive translation and commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. In his Introduction, the Swami says, “The gist of (Sri Krishna’s) teaching is: ‘Fight the battle of life. Let the virtue in you vanquish the vice. Any useful work that falls to your lot gives you the opportunity for self-discipline, emulation, and emancipation. The Divinity within you is your ever-available guide. Attuning yourself to It, do you job as splendidly as you can. Every hero is obliges to wage the Mahabharata war through his own life.’”

Chapter 13 of the Bhagavad Gita is titled “The Field and Its Knower.” In this chapter, Sri Krishna tells his friend and disciple Arjuna:

“This body is called the Field, because a man sows seeds of action in it, and reaps their fruits. Wise men say the Knower of the Field is he who watches what takes place within this body.

Recognize me as the Knower of the Field in every body. I regard discrimination between the Field and the Knower as the highest kind of knowledge.”

How can we attain that highest kind of knowledge?

Through our actions: Karma means action. In the lines just quoted, Sri Krishna defines the knowledge we must find within ourselves, to succeed as a karma yogi.

This morning, we will explore and discuss the Field and its Knower. This can help us understand why, in Chapter 3 of the Gita, Sri Krishna makes this tremendous, reassuring promise: *“Even a little practice of this (karma) yoga will save you from the terrible wheel of rebirth and death ...”*

What’s the definition of Karma Yoga: “Karma Yoga is a spiritual path leading to the abandonment of selfishness,” of self-centeredness. In practical, everyday terms, what does this mean? How is it done?

When your every action (including thoughts, feelings, perceptions) is offered to the Divine Presence, it’s easier to release attachment to results, because you accept the results as the Divine Presence’s prasad. “

A man sows seeds of action in (the body), and reaps their fruits...” Now the fruits are the Divine Presence’s prasad, a gift back to you.

“Even before fully knowing this Presence, you hold firmly to the belief that the Presence is within each person or other living being that you interact with or serve.”

Service to others: “fruits reaped” depend entirely on the spirit in which the service is done ...

Satyagraha — insistence on the truth in every moment is the ideal. (WHAT TRUTH?) *“Where shall we go to find God, if not in our own heart and in every living being?”*
— Sw. Vivekananda

Over time, this practice will reveal the knowledge we must find within ourselves, to succeed on the path of selfless action — the knowledge that Knower is separate from the Field of Action.

Even from the most practical standpoint, just taking a stand for this truth —

- Transforms your experience of “everyday work”
- Transforms relationships — what do you suppose will happen when you begin to treat others with the respect — yea, the reverence that you imagine is appropriate for a relationship with a Divine Being?
- Transforms your sense of self: *“We ought to think of ourselves as highly as immortals ought to think ...”*
— William Blake
- THEN: Slowly and slowly this satyagraha reveals/ uncovers your awareness of the Atman

“...Discrimination between the Field and the Knower (is) the highest kind of knowledge.”

- TO REVIEW: You endeavor, through the practice of recollection, to offer your every moment, your every thought, feeling, perception, and action to the Divine Presence within and all around you.
- As Sw. Prabhavananda said, you give your entire life “a Godward turn;” or, as Sw. Sridharananda puts it, you “Divinize your life”.
- Poetically, life becomes the Divine dancing with itself!

The practice of recollection is use of the “intelligent will” — an attribute we all have, but most often neglect in favor of habit and attraction/aversion.

Conscience/buddhi — the “still, small voice,” so easy to ignore. Accessed through practice of raja yoga.

It helps if we can frequently bring to mind and repeat to ourselves Sri Krishna’s tremendous, reassuring promise: *“Even a little practice of (karma) yoga will save you from the terrible wheel of rebirth and death.”*

Q&A & Commentary — CLOSING CHANT