

How to Live Well in a Messy World

The Yoga of Action

The second of a three course series on the *Bhagavad Gita*

“ An actor is called pure when he or she is free from attachment and egoism, endowed with constancy and energy, and unaffected by success and failure . ”



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CLASS ONE:
THE PROBLEM OF KARMA

A. Arjuna's Dilemma

अर्जुन उवाच ।

दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम् ॥

arjuna uvāca |

dr̥ṣṭvemaṁ svajānaṁ kṛṣṇa yuyuṭsum samupasthitam ||

Arjuna said:

Krishna, seeing these, my own kinsmen, come together wanting to fight . . . (1.28)

सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति ।

वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते ॥

sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṁ ca pariśuṣyati |

vepathuśca śarīre me romaharṣaśca jāyate ||

. . . my limbs sink in despair and my mouth is parched. My body is trembling and my hair stands on end. (1.29)

गाण्डीवं स्रंसते हस्तात्त्वक्चैव परिदह्यते ।

नच शक्नोम्यवस्थातुं भ्रमतीव च मे मनः ॥

gāṇḍivam sraṁsate hastāttvakcaiva paridahyate |

naca śaknomyavasthātum bhramatīva ca me manaḥ ||

The magic bow slips from my hand and my skin burns. I am unable to stand still; my mind reels. (1.30)

निमित्तानि च पश्यामि विपरीतानि केशव ।

न च श्रेयोऽनुपश्यामि हृत्वा स्वजनमाहवे । ।

nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava |
na ca śreyo'nupaśyāmi hr̥tvā svajanamāhave | ।

I see bad omens, Krishna. I can't see any good in killing my kinsmen in battle. (1.31)

आचार्याः पितरः पुत्रास्तथैव च पितामहाः ।

मातुलाः श्वशुराः पैत्राः श्यालाः सम्बन्धिनस्तथा । ।

ācāryāḥ pitarāḥ putrāstathaiva ca pitāmahāḥ |
mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ paitrāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinastathā | ।

Teachers, fathers, sons, and grandfathers too; uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons,
brothers-in-law, and other blood relatives . . . (1.34)

निहत्य धार्तराष्ट्रान्नः का प्रीतिः स्याज्जनार्दन ।

पापमेवाश्रयेदस्मान्हृत्वैतानाततायिनः । ।

nihatya dhārtarāṣṭrānnaḥ kā prītiḥ syājjanārdana |
pāpamevāśrayedasmānhatvāitānātāyinaḥ | ।

Killing these sons of Dhirtarashtra will bring us no joy, Krishna. Only evil will accrue
to us if we kill those who have taken up arms against us. (1.36)

तस्मान्नार्हा वयं हन्तुं धार्तराष्ट्रान्स्वबान्धवान् ।

स्वजनं हि कथं हत्वा सुखिनः स्याम माधव । ।

tasmānnārhā vayaṁ hantūṁ dhārtarāṣṭrānsvabāndhavān |
svajanaṁ hi kathaṁ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma mādhave | |

It is not honorable for us to kill the sons of Dhirtarashtra, our own relatives. How can we be happy if we kill our own kinsmen, Krishna? (1.37)

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसंमूढचेता ।

यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥

kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvāṁ dharmasammūḍacetā |
yacchreyaḥ syānniścitaṁ brūhi tanme śiṣyaste'haṁ śādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannaṁ ||

I am afflicted to my core by the flaw of deep depression; my mind is totally confused about right and wrong. I beg you to tell me clearly what is best. I am your student; please teach me. I surrender myself to you. (2.7)

B. Krishna's First Response: The Yoga of Wisdom

अशोच्यानवशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।

गतासूनगतासंउश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥

aśocyānavaśocastvaṁ prajñāvādāṁśca bhāṣase |
gatāsūnagatāsamūśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ ||

You have mourned those who need not be mourned, speaking words which only seem to be wise. The learned do not grieve for either the dead nor the living. (2.11)

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम् ॥

na tvevāhaṁ jātu nāsaṁ na tvaṁ neme janādhipāḥ ।
na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayamataḥ param ॥

There was never a time when I, you, or these lords were not, nor you, and there will never be a time in the future when we all will cease to be. (2.12)

देहिनेऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

dehine'sminyathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā ।
tathā dehāntaraprāptirdhīrastatra na muhyati ॥

Just as an embodied person undergoes childhood, youth, and old age in one body, so too does one obtain another body. An intelligent person is not confused about this.
(2.13)

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ ।
ubhayorapī dṛṣṭo'ntastvanayostattvadarśibhiḥ ॥

What isn't truly really cannot come into existence, and what is truly real cannot go out of existence. The ultimate truth of both of these is surely seen by those who have seen how things really are. (2.16)

अविआशि तु तद् विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति ॥

avināśi tu tadviddhi yena sarvamidam tatam ।
vināśamavyayasyāsya na kaścitkartumarhati ॥

Know that that which pervades all this is indestructible. No one can bring about the destruction of that which is imperishable. (2.17)

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः ।

अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युध्यस्व भारत ॥

antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ ।
anāśino'prameyasya tasmādyudhyasva bhārata ॥

These bodies are known to come to an end, but that which is embodied is permanent, indestructible, and ineffable. So fight, Arjuna! (2.18)

C. The Necessity of Action

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्रुते ।

न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥

na karmaṇāmanārambhānnaiṣkarmya puruṣo'snutel
na ca sannyasanādeva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati ॥

A person does not escape karma by just not doing anything. It is not through mere renunciation that one achieves perfection. (3.4)

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।

कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥

na hi kaścitkṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt|
kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ||

There's no one who exists even for a moment without doing some action. Everyone, however unwillingly, is forced to act due to the constituents of nature. (3.5)

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्धयेदकर्मणः । ।

niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ karma jyāyo hyakarmaṇaḥ|
śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyedakarmaṇaḥ| |

Do what is necessary to do, for action is superior to inaction. Inaction would not even keep your own body sustained! (3.8)

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।

स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषं ॥

śreyānsvadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt|
svabhāvaniyataṁ karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣaṁ||

It is better to do one's own duty imperfectly than another's well. There is no fault in doing the action which is necessitated by one's own nature. (18.47)

सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् ।

सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः ॥

sahajam karma kaunteya sadoṣamapi na tyajet |
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnirivāvṛtāḥ ||

One should not abandon the action one is born to do, Arjuna, even when it is flawed.
All undertakings are flawed, like fire enveloped by smoke. (18.48)

D. So Which Is It? Wisdom or Action?

अर्जुन उवाच ।

ज्यायसी चेत् कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन ।

तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव ॥

arjuna uvāca |
jyāyasī cet karmaṇaste matā buddhirjanārdana |
tatkiṁ karmaṇi ghore māṁ niyojayasi keśava ||

Arjuna said:

Krishna, if you think that intelligence is better than action, then why do you urge me
to do this horrible thing?

व्यामिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे ।

तदेकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम् ॥

vyāmiśreṇeva vākyaena buddhiṁ mohayasīva me |
tadekaṁ vada niścitya yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām ||

You confuse my intellect with so many seemingly inconsistent teachings. Can't you just
tell me one invariable thing through which I may attain the highest good? (3.2)

Exercise for Class One

This week spend some time each day trying to identify areas in your life where you feel a conflict between what you think you should do and what seems to be necessitated. Does Arjuna's dilemma have any relevance in your own life?

CLASS TWO:
IMPRISONED BY KARMA

A. The “Laws” of Karma

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

nehābhikramanāśo'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate |
svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt | |

No action in this world goes for nought or brings about a contrary result. Even the smallest religious practice protects against great fear. (2.40)

B. Karma and the Mental Afflictions

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।

सङ्गात् संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥

dhyāyato viṣayānpuṁsaḥ saṅgasteṣūpajāyate |
saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ kāmātkrodho'bhijāyate | |

Attachment to the objects of the senses arises in one who is always thinking about them. From attachment comes desire, and from desire anger arises. (2.62)

क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।

स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥

krodhādbhavati sammohaḥ sammohātsmṛtivyibhramaḥ |
smṛtibhraṁśād buddhināśo buddhināśātpṛaṇaśyati | |

From anger comes confusion, and because of confusion one's mindfulness is wavering. Because of the wavering of mindfulness, the intellect is destroyed. And because of the destruction of the intellect, one is ruined. (2.63)

C. Three Types of Action and Actors

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसंभवाः ।

निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययं ॥

sattvaṁ rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ |
nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinamavyayaṁ ||

Purity, activity, and sluggishness are the three constituents that are born of nature. They bind that which is immutable in the embodied being to the body, Arjuna. (14.5)

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयं ।

सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ ॥

tatra sattvaṁ nirmalatvātprakāśakamanāmayam |
sukhasaṅgena badhnāti jñānasaṅgena cānagha ||

Among these, Arjuna, purity -- which is stainless, luminous, and faultless -- binds one through attachment to happiness and to wisdom. (14.6)

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवं ।

तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनं ॥

rajo rāgātmakaṁ viddhi tṛṣṇāsaṅgasamudbhavaṁ |
tannibadhnāti kaunteya karmasaṅgena dehinaṁ ||

Know that activity, whose very essence is passion, arises from craving and attachment. It binds the embodied being to attachment to action, Arjuna. (14.7)

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनां ।

प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति ॥

tamastvajñānaṁ viddhi mohanaṁ sarvedehināṁ |
pramādālasyanidrābhistannibadhnāti |

And sluggishness, Arjuna, which deludes all embodied beings, binds them to carelessness, laziness, and sleep. (14.8)

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति रजः कर्मणि भारत ।

ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयत्युत ॥

sattvaṁ sukhe sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata |
jñānamāvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayatyuta |

Purity addicts one to pleasure, activity to actions, and sluggishness, which obscures wisdom, addicts one to carelessness. (14.9)

रजस्तमश्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति भारत ।

रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः सत्त्वम् रजस्तथा ॥

rajastamaścābhibhūya sattvaṁ bhavati bhārata |
rajaḥ sattvaṁ tamaścaiva tamaḥ sattvam rajastathā |

Arjuna, sometimes purity predominates over activity and sluggishness; sometimes activity predominates over purity and sluggishness; and sometimes sluggishness predominates over purity and activity. (14.10)

सर्वद्वारेषु देहेऽस्मिन्प्रकाश उपजायते ।

ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्याविवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत ॥

sarvadvāreṣu dehe'sminprakāśa upajāyate |
jñānaṁ yadā tadā vidyāvivṛddhaṁ sattvamityuta |

When the light of wisdom shines forth from every pore of the body, then one knows that purity is prevalent. (14.11)

लोभः प्रवृत्तिरारम्भः कर्मणामशमः स्पृहा ।

रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतर्षभ ॥

lobhaḥ pravṛttirārambhaḥ karmaṇāmaśamaḥ sprhā |
rajasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha ||

When activity prevails, Arjuna, then greed, hustle and bustle, endless projects, restlessness, and the obsession with action arise. (14.12)

अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च ।

तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन । ।

aprakāśo'pravṛttiśca pramādo moha eva ca |
tamasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe kurunandana | |

Dimness, inertia, carelessness, and delusion arise when sluggishness prevails, Arjuna. (14.13)

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे तु प्रलयं याति देहभृत् ।

तदोत्तमविदां लोकानमलान्प्रतिपद्यते ॥

yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu pralayaṁ yāti dehabhṛt |
tadottamavidāṁ lokānamalānpratipadyate ||

When one in whom purity prevails leaves this mortal body, he or she enters the stainless spheres of those who know the highest things. (14.14)

रजसि प्रलयं गत्वा कर्मसङ्गेषु जायते ।

तथा प्रलीनस्तमसि मूढयोनिषु जायते । ।

rajasi pralayaṁ gatvā karmasaṅgiṣu jāyate |
tathā pralīnastamasi mūḍhayoniṣu jāyate | |

When one meets one's end while rajas prevails, he or she is born among those attached to action. And when one dies with sluggishness predominating, he or she is born into the wombs of the foolish. (14.15)

कर्मणः सुकृतस्याहुः सात्त्विकं निर्मलं फलं ।

रजसस्तु फलं दुःखमज्ञानं तमसः फलं ॥

karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasyāhuḥ sāttvikaṁ nirmalaṁ phalaṁ |
rajasastu phalaṁ duḥkhamajñānaṁ tamaśaḥ phalaṁ ||

They say that the result of action well done is without taint and characterized by purity; that of activity is suffering and that of sluggishness is ignorance. (14.16)

सत्त्वात्सङ्जायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च ।

प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥

sattvātsañjāyate jñānaṁ rajaso lobha eva ca |
pramādamohau tamaso bhavato'jñānameva ca ||

Wisdom arises from purity, greed from activity, and carelessness, delusion, and also ignorance come from dullness. (14.7)

नियतं सङ्गरहितमरागद्वेषतः कृतं ।

अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत्तत्सात्त्विकमुच्यते ॥

niyataṁ saṅgarahitamaraḡadveṣataḥ kṛtaṁ |
aphalaprepsunā karma yattatsāttvikamucyate ||

A pure action is said to be one which is done with restraint, without attachment, without wanting to obtain a result, and without desire or aversion. (18.23)

यत्तु कामेप्सुना कर्म साहङ्कारेण वा पुनः ।

क्रियते बहुलायासं तद्राजसमुदाहृतं ॥

yattu kāmepsunā karma sāhaṅkāreṇa vā punaḥ |
kriyate bahulāyāsaṁ tadrājasamudāhṛtaṁ |

But an action is declared to have the nature of the constituent of activity when it is done with great effort and egoism by one who wants to obtain a result. (18.24)

अनुबन्धं क्षयं हिंसामनपेक्ष्य च पौरुषं ।

मोहादारभ्यते कर्म यत्तत्तामसमुच्यते । ।

anubandhaṁ kṣayaṁ hiṁsāmanapekṣya ca pauruṣaṁ |
mohādārabhyate karma yattattāmasamucyate | |

An action is said to be in the nature of dullness when it is undertaken out of delusion and without regard for the destructive and harmful consequences it will have on other people and on oneself. (18.25)

मुक्त्यसङ्गोऽनहंवादी धृत्युत्साहसमन्वितः ।

सिद्धयसिद्धयोर्निर्विकारः कर्ता सात्त्विक उच्यते ॥

muktyasaṅgo'naḥmavādī dhr̥tyutsāhasamanvitaḥ |
siddhyasiddhyornirvikāraḥ kartā sāttvika ucyate | |

An actor is called pure when he or she is free from attachment and egoism, endowed with constancy and energy, and unaffected by success and failure. (18.26)

रागी कर्मफलप्रेप्सुर्लुब्धो हिंसात्मकोऽशुचिः ।

हर्षशोकान्वितः कर्ता राजसः परिकीर्तितः ॥

rāgī karmaphalaprepsurlubdho hīnsātmako'śuciḥ |
harṣaśokānvitaḥ kartā rājasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ |

An actor is proclaimed to be endowed with the constituent of activity when he or she is passionate, desirous of obtaining the results of action, greedy, violent, impure and at the mercy of the vicissitudes of life. (18.27)

अयुक्तः प्राकृतः स्तब्धः शठो नैष्कृतिकोऽलसः ।

विषादी दीर्घसूत्री च कर्ता तामस उच्यते ॥

ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭho naiṣkṛtiko'lasaḥ |
viṣādī dīrdhasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate ||

An actor is said to be characterized by dullness is undisciplined, vulgar, stubborn, fraudulent, deceitful, lazy, despondent, and procrastinating. (18.28)

D. Liberation from Karma

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।

अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताऽहमिति मन्यते ॥

prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ |
ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā kartā'hamiti manyate ||

All actions are done just by the constituents of nature, but one who is deluded by the ego thinks, "I am the doer." (3.27)

तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयोः ।

गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्त इति मत्वा न सज्जते ॥

tattvavittu mahābāho guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ |
guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate ||

But, Arjuna, one who knows the true nature of the distinctions between actions and constituents, and who thinks, “Constituents depend on other constituents,” he is not attached. (3.28)

प्रकृतेर् गुणसंमूढाः सज्जन्ते गुणकर्मसु ।

तानकृत्स्नविदो मन्दान्कृत्स्नविन्न विचालयेत् ॥

prakṛter guṇasammūdhāḥ sajjante guṇakarmasu |
tānakṛtsnavido mandānkṛtsnavinna vicālayet ||

Those bewildered by the constituents of nature cling to the workings of the constituents. The one who knows this perfectly should not unsettle those who are dull and with only imperfect knowledge. (3.29)

प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः ।

यः पश्यति तथात्मानमकर्तारं स पश्यति ॥

prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ |
yaḥ paśyati tathātmānamakartāraṁ sa paśyati ||

One who sees that all actions are actually done only through the workings of nature and thus that the self is not an actor at all, truly sees. (13.29)

नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टानुपश्यति ।

गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति ॥

nānyaṁ guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṁ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati |
guṇebhyaśca paraṁ vetti madbhāvaṁ so'dhigacchati ||

When a seer realizes that there is no agent other than the constituents, and knows what is beyond the constituents, that one enters My very state of being. (14.19)

गुणानेतानतीत्य त्रीन्देही देहसमुद्भवान् ।

जन्ममृत्युजरादुःखैर्विमुक्तोऽमृतमश्नुते ॥

guṇānetānatītya trīndehī dehasamudbhavān |
janmamṛtyujarāduḥkhairvimukto'amṛtamāśnute ||

Transcending these three constituents that bring about the body, an embodied one is liberated from the suffering of birth, death, and old age and attains immortality. (14.20)

Exercise for Class Two

The Gita speaks of three kinds of actors: those who driven primarily by one or another of the three “constituents” of purity, activity, or sluggishness. Spend fifteen minutes each day this week contemplating what sort of an actor you are.

CLASS THREE:
ACTION WITHOUT EXPECTATION

A. Action for Its Own Sake

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana |
mā karmaphalaheturbhūrmā te saṅgo'stvakarmani ||

Your prerogative is over your actions, not over any of the results. Do not let the results be the motivation of action, but do not be attached to inaction either. (2.47)

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya |
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate ||

Giving up attachment, perform actions as a practise of yoga, Arjuna. Be the same whether you are successful or unsuccessful; this equanimity is what is called yoga. (2.48)

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय ।

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥

dūreṇa hyavaraṁ karma buddhiyogāddhanañjaya |
buddhau śaraṇamanviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ ||

Arjuna, action alone is much inferior to action done with the yoga of understanding. Take refuge in understanding; those driven by the pursuit of results are pathetic. (2.49)

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥
buddhiyukto jahātiha ubhe sukr̥taduṣkr̥te |
tasmādyogāya yuiyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam ||

With one's mind disciplined in understanding, one transcends here both good and bad acts. So devote yourself to yoga. Yoga is skillfulness in actions. (2.50)

B. Detached Action

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥
naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana |
na cāsya sarvabhūteṣu kaścidarthavyapāśrayaḥ ||

He or she has no investment at all in either action or inaction, nor does such a person depend on anyone else at all for anything. (3.18)

तस्माद् असक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥
tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara |
asakto hyācaran karma paramāpnoti pūruṣaḥ ||

Therefore, always carry out any action you must perform without attachment. Performing action without attachment, a person obtains the highest goal. (3.19)

कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।

स बुद्धि मान्मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥

karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyedarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ
sa buddhi mānmanuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt

One who sees inaction in action and action in inaction
has understanding among people, disciplined in all actions he or she performs. (4.18)

यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसंकल्पवर्जिताः ।

ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहुः पण्डितं बुधाः ॥

yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāmasaṅkalpavarjitāḥ ।
jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇaṁ tamāhuḥ paṇḍitaṁ budhāḥ ॥

The wise call one truly learned who carries out all his projects without ignorant desire
and egoistical intention, whose karma is incinerated in the fire of wisdom. (4.19)

त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासंगं निव्र्यत्प्तो निराश्रयः ।

कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव क्षत्करोति सः ॥

tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgaṁ nityatrpto nirāśrayaḥ ।
karmaṇyabhpravṛtto'pi naiva kṣatkaroti saḥ ॥

The one who abandons attachment to the results of action, who is always satisfied,
independent, does nothing at all even when he is engaged in action. (4.20)

निराशीर्यतचित्तात्मा त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः ।

शारीरं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥

nirāśīryatacittātmā tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ ।
śārīraṁ kevalaṁ karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam ॥

Without wishing for something else, restraining himself and his mind, abandoning all
grasping, the one who performs action only with his body incurs no fault. (4.21)

यदृच्छालाभसन्तुष्टो द्वन्द्वतीतो विमत्सरः ।

समः सिद्धावसिद्धौ च कृत्वापि न निबध्यते ॥

yadr̥cchālābhasantuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsaraḥ ।
samaḥ siddhāvasiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate ॥

Content with whatever comes his way, transcending all dualities, free from envy, impartial in success and failure, he not bound even though he acts. (4.22)

C. Yoga, Renunciation, and Action

योगसन्न्यस्तकर्माणं ज्ञानसञ्चन्नसंशयम् ।

आत्मवन्तं न कर्माणि निबध्नन्ति धनञ्जय ॥

yogasannyastakarmāṇaṁ jñānasañcannasaṁśayam ।
ātmavantaṁ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya ॥

The one whose karma is renounced through yoga and whose doubt is cut away through wisdom, who is totally self-possessed, is not bound by actions, Arjuna. (4.41)

अजुन उवाच ।

संन्यासं कर्मणाम् कृष्ण पुनर् योगं च शंससि ।

यच्छ्रेय एतयोरेकं तन्मे ब्रूहि सुनिश्चितं ॥

ajuna uvāca ।

sannyāsaṁ karmaṇām kṛṣṇa punar yogaṁ ca śaṁsasi ।
yacchreya etayorekaṁ tanme brūhi suniścitaṁ ॥

Arjuna said:

Krishna, you praise the renunciation of actions and then also the yoga of actions. Tell me unambiguously – of the two, which one is better? (5.1)

यत्सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते ।

एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

yatsāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṁ tadyogairapi gamyate ।
ekaṁ sāṅkhyāṁ ca yogaṁ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ॥

The level of attainment reached by philosophers is also gained by the practitioners of yoga. The one who sees that philosophy and yoga are the same really gets it. (5.5)

संन्यासस्तु महाबाहो दुःखमाप्तुमयोगतः ।

योगयुक्तो मुनिर्ब्रह्म नचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥

sannyāsastu mahābāho duḥkhamāptumayogataḥ ।
yogayukto munirbrahma nacireṇādhigacchati ॥

Without yoga renunciation is hard to obtain, Arjuna. But a sage who is firmly disciplined in yoga reaches ultimate reality very quickly. (5.6)

योगयुक्तो विशुद्धात्मा विजितात्मा जितेन्द्रियः ।

सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ॥

yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ ।
sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvannapi na lipyate ॥

One who is disciplined in yoga, with a pure heart, who has mastered himself and conquered his senses, whose sense of self is identified with all beings, acts without being stained by action. (5.7)

नैव किम् चित्करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।

पश्यञ्शृण्वन्स्पृशञ्छिघ्नन्नश्नन्गच्छन्स्वपञ्चसन् ॥

naiva kim citkaromīti yukto manyeta tattvavit ।
paśyañśṛṅvanspṛśañjighrannaśnangacchansvapañśvasan ॥

Whether he or she is seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping or breathing, the disciplined one who knows how things really are would think, "I'm not doing anything at all." (5.8).

प्रलपन्विसृजन्गृह्णन्निमिषन्निमिषन्नपि ।

इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन् ॥

pralapanvisṛjanḡṛhṇannimiṣannimiṣannapi ।
indriyāṇīndriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan ॥

Whether he or she is talking, giving or taking, opening or shutting his eyes, he or she is thinking, "The senses are engaging with the objects of senses." (5.9)

ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि संगं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः ।

लिप्यते न स पापेन पद्मपत्रम् इवाम्भसा ॥

brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā karoti yaḥ ।
lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatram ivāmbhasā ॥

He who performs acts having dedicated all actions to ultimate reality and abandoned attachment is not stained by negativity, just as water rolls off the leaf of a lotus. (5.10)

कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।

योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति संगं त्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ॥

kāyena manasā buddhyā kevalairindriyairapi ।
yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṁ tyaktvātmaśuddhaye ॥

Practitioners of yoga only perform actions of the body, mind, intellect and the senses without attachment and for the purpose of self-purification. (5.11)

युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा शान्तिमाप्नोति नैष्ठिकीम् ।

अयुक्तः कामकारेण फले सक्तो निबध्यते ॥

yuktaḥ karmaphalaṁ tyaktvā śāntimāpnoti naiṣṭhikīm ।
ayuktaḥ kāmakāreṇa phale sakto nibadhyate ॥

The disciplined one, letting go of the obsession with the future results of action, obtains perfect peace. The undisciplined one is bound by attachment to the outcome of actions done out of ignorant desire. (5.12)

सर्वकर्माणि मनसा संन्यस्यास्ते सुखं वशी ।

नवद्वारे पुरे देही नैव कुर्वन्न कारयन् ॥

sarvakarmāṇi manasā sannnyasyāste sukhaṁ vaśī ।
navadvāre pure dehī naiva kurvanna kārayan ॥

Mentally renouncing all actions, he who has mastered himself dwells in the nine-gated city, neither acting nor causing to act. (5.13)

अनाश्रितः कर्मफलं कार्यं कर्म करोति यः ।

स संन्यासी च योगी च न निरग्निर्न चाक्रियः ॥

anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṁ kāryaṁ karma karoti yaḥ ।
sa sannnyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnirna cākriyaḥ ॥

One who does what needs to be done while remaining unattached to the results of this action is a true renouncer and a yogi, not the one who has merely abandoned the sacrificial fire or eschews religious rites. (6.1)

यं संन्यासमिति प्राहुर्योगं तं विद्धि पाण्डव ।

न ह्यसंन्यस्तसङ्कल्पो योगी भवति कश्चन ॥

yaṁ sannyāsamiti prāhuryogaṁ taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava |
na hyasannyastasaṅkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana ||

You should know, Arjuna, that yoga is what they call renunciation. No one becomes a yogi who has not renounced expectation of selfish advantage.

(6.2)

आरुरुक्षोमुनेर्योगं कर्म कारणमुच्यते ।

योगारूढस्य तस्यैव शमः कारणमुच्यते ॥

ārurukṣormuneryogaṁ karma kāraṇamucyate |
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇamucyate ||

It is said that for a sage desiring to ascend to the heights of yoga, action is the cause, while for that one who has already reached yoga tranquility is the means. (6.3)

यदा हि नेन्द्रियार्थेषु न कर्मस्वनुषज्जते ।

सर्वसंकल्पसंन्यासी योगारूढस्तदोच्यते ॥

yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasvanuṣajjate |
sarvasaṅkalpasannyāsī yogārūḍhastadocyate ||

One is said to have fully mastered yoga when one has renounced all expectation of selfish advantage in one's actions and is unattached to the objects of the senses. (6.4)

अर्जुनः उवाच

सन्न्यासस्य महाबाहो तत्त्वमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ।

त्यागस्य च हृषीकेश पृतक्केशिनिषूदन ॥

arjunaḥ uvāca

sannyāsasya mahābāho tattvamicchāmi veditum।

tyāgasya ca hṛṣīkeśa pṛtakkeśiniṣūdana।।

Arjuna said:

Krishna, I want to understand the true nature of and difference between renunciation and relinquishment. (18.1)

श्रीभगवान् उवाच ।

काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं संन्यासं कवयो विदुः ।

सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं प्राहुस्त्यागं विचक्षणाः ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca ।

kāmyānāṃ karmaṇāṃ nyāsaṃ sannyāsaṃ kavayo viduḥ ।

sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṃ prāhustyāgaṃ vicakṣaṇāḥ ॥

Krishna said:

The poets know renunciation (*sannyasa*) to be the laying aside (*nyasa*) of actions done out of ignorant desire. The wise say that relinquishment (*tyaga*) is the letting go of the obsession with the results of all actions. (18.2)

त्याज्यं दोषवदित्येके कर्म प्राहुर्मनीषिणः ।

यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यमिति चापरे ॥

tyājyaṃ doṣavadityeke karma prāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ ।

yajñādānatapaḥkarma na tyājyamiti cāpare ॥

Some wise men say that all action is flawed and should be relinquished, while others say actions of sacrifice, generosity, and asceticism should not be relinquished. (18.3)

निश्चयं शृणु मे तत्र त्यागे भरतसत्तम ।

त्यागो हि पुरुषव्याघ्र त्रिविधः संप्रकीर्तितः ॥

niścayaṁ śṛṇu me tatra tyāge bharatasattama ।
tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra trividhaḥ samprakīrtitaḥ ॥

Arjuna, listen to my final decision about relinquishment: Relinquishment is declared to be of three kinds. (18.4)

यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥

yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṁ kāryameva tat ।
yajño dānaṁ tapaścaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām ॥

Acts of sacrifice, generosity, and asceticism are not to be relinquished and must be done. Sacrifice, generosity, and asceticism are the purifiers of the wise. (18.5)

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि संगं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।

कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम् ॥

etānyapi tu karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā phalāni ca ।
kartavyānīti me pārtha niścitaṁ matamuttamam ॥

But even these acts which one should do must be done having relinquished attachment and results. This is my final word on this matter. (18.6)

नियतस्य तु संन्यासः कर्मणो नोपपद्यते ।

मोहात्तस्य परित्यागस्तामसः परिकीर्तितः ॥

niyatasya tu sannyaśaḥ karmaṇo nopapadyate ।
mohāttasya parityāgastāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ ॥

And it is not appropriate to renounce acts which are mandated. The relinquishing of these acts due to delusion is said to be a relinquishment characterized by the constituent of dullness. (18.7)

दुःखमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशभयात्त्यजेत् ।

स कृत्वा राजसं त्यागं नैव त्यागफलं लभेत् ॥

duḥkhamityeva yatkarma kāyakleśabhayātyajet ।
sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgam naiva tyāgaphalam labhet ॥

One who relinquishes action because it's just too hard or due fear of bodily harm does the kind of relinquishment characterized by constituent of activity, and does not obtain the fruit of relinquishment. (18.8)

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियते ऽर्जुन ।

संगं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः ॥

kāryamityeva yatkarma niyataṁ kriyate 'rjuna ।
saṅgam tyaktvā phalam caiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ ॥

Mandated action is done just because it is there to be done, Arjuna. Having relinquished attachment and results, that is regarded at relinquishment characterized by the constituent of purity. (18.9)

न द्वेष्ट्यकुशलं कर्म कुशले नानुषज्जते ।

त्यागी सत्त्वसमाविष्टो मेधावी छिन्नसंशयः ॥

na dveṣṭyakuśalam karma kuśale nānuṣajjate ।
tyāgī sattvasamāviṣṭo medhāvī chinnaśayaḥ ॥

He does not have aversion about that which seems be spiritually disadvantageous nor is he overly attached to that which seems advantageous. This kind of relinquisher of action is wise and endowed with the constituent of purity, his doubts severed. (18.10)

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुम् कर्मण्यशेषतः ।

यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते ॥

na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṁ tyaktum karmāṇyaśeṣataḥ ।
yastu karmaphalatyāgī sa tyāgītyabhidhīyate ॥

It is not possible for an embodied being to completely relinquish action. But one who relinquishes the obsession with results of action considered to be a real renouncer.

(18.11)

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलं ।

भवत्यत्यागिनां प्रेत्य न तु संन्यासिनां क्व चित् ॥

aniṣṭamiṣṭaṁ miśraṁ ca trividhaṁ karmaṇaḥ phalaṁ ।
bhavatyatyāgināṁ pretya na tu sannyāsināṁ kva cit ॥

For those who have not relinquished, there are three kinds of results those actions will bring after death – desirable, undesirable, and mixed. But there are no results whatsoever for a true renouncer. (18.12)

Exercise for Class Three

In this class we learn one of the main techniques for practicing the yoga of action: renunciation of the “fruits” or results. Spend fifteen minutes each day this week practicing this yoga. Every day, pick a task at work or a household chore and try to do it to the best of your ability but without thinking about what the results of the action might be. Be satisfied with the action itself and not what you might get from it.

CLASS FOUR:
SELFLESS ACTION

A. Sacrificial Action

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसंगः समाचर ॥

yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra loko'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ |
tadarthaṁ karma kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara ||

Everyone in this world is bound by actions unless they are done as sacrifices. So perform action with that as the purpose, Arjuna, freed from attachment. (3.9)

गतसङ्गस्य मुक्तस्य ज्ञानावस्थितचेतसः ।

यज्ञायाचरतः कर्म समग्रं प्रविलीयते ॥

gatasāṅgasya muktasya jñānavasthitacetasaḥ |
yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagraṁ praviliyate ||

The karma of one who is without attachment and free, whose mind is stabilized in wisdom, and whose actions are sacrificial, completely dissolves. (4.23)

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।

ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥

brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma havirbrahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam |
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahmakarmasamādhinā ||

The offering is ultimate reality itself, as is the oblation. By means of ultimate reality one offers into the fire of ultimate reality. Ultimate reality is reached by the one who is fully absorbed in meditation on karma and ultimate reality. (4.24)

दैवमेवापरे यज्ञं योगिनः पर्युपासते ।

ब्रह्मान्नावपरे यज्ञं यज्ञेनैपजुहति ॥

daivamevāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate ।
brahmāgnāvapare yajñam yajñenaivopajuhvati ॥

Some yogis offer sacrifices only to divine beings, while others just make their oblations into the fire of ultimate reality itself. (4.25)

श्रोत्रादीनीन्द्रियाण्यन्ये संयमानिषु जुहति ।

शब्दादीन्वषयानन्य इन्द्रियाग्निषु जुहति ॥

śrotrādīnīndriyāṅyanye saṁyamāṅniṣu juhvati ।
śabdādīnvaṣayānanya indriyāgniṣu juhvati ॥

Some make oblations of their senses, hearing and the rest, into the fires of restraint, while others make oblations of the objects of senses, sounds and the rest, into the fires of the senses. (4.26)

सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चापरे ।

आत्मसंयमयोगाग्नौ जुहति ज्ञानदीपिते ॥

sarvāṅīndriyakarmāṇi prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare ।
ātmasaṁyamayogāgnau juhvati jñānadīpīte ॥

Others make oblations of all the actions of their senses and all the actions of breath and offer them into the fire of the yoga of self-restraint which is kindled by wisdom. (4.27)

द्रव्ययज्ञास्तपोयज्ञा योगयज्ञास्तथापरे ।

स्वाध्यायज्ञानयज्जाश्च यतयः संशितव्रताः ॥

dravyayajñāstapoyajñā yogayajñāstathāpare ।
svādhyāyajñānayajñāśca yatayaḥ saṁśitavratāḥ ॥

Other practitioners who are carefully observing their vows offer the sacrifice of material possessions, the sacrifice of yoga, and the sacrifice of study and wisdom. (4.28)

अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेऽपानं तथापरे ।

प्राणापानगती रुद्ध्वा प्रानायामपरायणाः ॥

apāne juhvati prāṇam prāṇe'pānam tathāpare ।
prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ ॥

Others, stopping the ordinary flow of inhalation and exhalation, have the control of the breath as their principal practice, making an oblation of the inhalation into the exhalation, the exhalation into the inhalation. (4.29)

अपरे नियताहाराः प्राणान्प्रआणेषु जुह्वति ।

सर्वेऽप्येते यज्ञविदो यज्ञक्षपितकल्मषाः ॥

apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇānprāṇeṣu juhvati ।
sarve'pyete yajñavidō yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ ॥

Others restrict their diet and offer oblations of life energies into the life energies. All these understand sacrifice and burn up their misdeeds through sacrifice. (4.30)

यज्ञशिष्टामृतभुजो यान्ति ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।

नायं लोकोऽस्त्ययज्ञस्य कुतोऽन्यः कुरुसत्तम ॥

yajñāśiṣṭāmṛtabhujo yānti brahma sanātanam ।
nāyam loko'styayajñasya kuto'nyaḥ kurusattama ॥

Those who enjoy the nectar of the remnants of sacrifice attain the eternal, ultimate reality. But, Arjuna, there is nothing even in this world, let alone elsewhere, for the one who does not sacrifice. (4.31)

एवं बहुविधा यज्ञा वितता ब्रह्मणो मुखे ।

कर्मजान्विद्धि तान्सवनिवं ज्ञात्वा विमोक्ष्यसे ॥

evaṁ bahuvidhā yajñā vitatā brahmaṇo mukhe ।
karmajānviddhi tānsarvānevaṁ jñātvā vimokṣyase ॥

There are thus many kinds of sacrifices that are offered into the mouth of ultimate reality. Know that all of them spring from action. Knowing this, you will be liberated.

(4.32)

B. Offering Action Up to God

येऽप्यन्यदेवताभक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ॥

ye'pyanyadevatābhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ ।
te'pi māmeva kaunteya yajantyaavidhipūrvakam ॥

Even those devotees of other deities who worship them filled with faith are really worshipping Me, Arjuna, albeit not according to the established guidelines. (9.23)

अमं हि सर्वजज्ञानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च ।

न तु मामभिजानन्ति तत्त्वनातश्च्यवन्ति ते ॥

ahaṁ hi sarvayajñānāṁ bhoktā ca prabhureva ca ।
na tu māmabhijānanti tattvenātaścyavanti te ॥

I am the recipient and lord of all sacrifices, but because they do not recognize Me for who I truly am they fall into continual rebirth. (9.24)

यान्ति देवव्रता देवान्पितृन्यान्ति पितृव्रताः ।
भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मघाजिनोऽपि माम् ॥
yānti devavratā devānpitṛnyānti pitṛvratāḥ ।
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājino'pi mām ॥

Those who devote themselves to the gods go to the gods, those devoted to the ancestors join the ancestors, those who sacrifice to ghosts go to the ghosts, but those who worship Me reach Me. (9.25)

पुत्रं पुष्यं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥
putraṁ puṣyaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati ।
tadahaṁ bhaktyupahr̥tamaśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ ॥

I accept as an offering of devotion even just a leaf, a flower, a piece of fruit, or a water offering which has been presented to me with devotion by the devout. (9.26)

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणं ॥
yatkarōṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat ।
yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam ॥

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever kind of austerities you perform, do that as an offering to Me, Arjuna. (9.27)

शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः ।

संन्यासयोगयुक्त्यात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि ॥

śubhāśubhaphalairēvaṁ mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ |
sannyāsayogayuktyātmā vimukto māmupaiṣyasi ||

You will in this way be freed from the bonds of karma and from pleasant or unpleasant results. Liberated and practiced in the yoga of renunciation, you will reach Me. (9.28)

III. The Ideal Actor

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठतत्तदेवेतर जनः ।

स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

yadyadācarati śreṣṭhastattadevetaro janaḥ |
sa yatpramāṇaṁ kurute lokastadanuvartate ||

Whatever an exceptional person does, other folks do too. The whole world tries to measure up to the standard that one sets. (3.21)

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।

नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥

na me pārthāsti kartavyaṁ triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana |
nānavāptamavāptavyaṁ varta eva ca karmaṇi ||

Throughout the three worlds, O Arjuna, there is nothing whatsoever that I need to do. There is nothing unattained that I need to attain, and yet I still engage in action. (3.22)

यदि ह्यहं न वरतेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।

मम वर्तमानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥

yadi hyahaṁ na varteyaṁ jātu karmaṇyatandritaḥ ।
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ ॥

If indeed I did not tirelessly engage in action, Arjuna, people would follow in My footsteps. (3.23)

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्या कर्म चेसहम् ।

सङ्करस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥

utsīdeyurime lokā na kuryāṁ karma cesaham ।
saṅkarasya ca kartā syāmupahanyāmimāḥ prajāḥ ॥

If I didn't perform action, all these worlds would collapse. I would be the bringer of confusion and I would destroy living beings. (3.24)

सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।

कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथासक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम् ॥

saktāḥ karmaṇyavidvāṁso yathā kurvanti bhārata ।
kuryādvidvāṁstathāsaktaśchikīrṣurlokasaṅgraham ॥

Arjuna, while those who are ignorant perform actions out of attachment, the wise one, unattached, acts in order to maintain the world. (3.25)

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।

तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्वद्यकर्तारमव्ययम् ॥

cāturvarṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ ।
tasya kartāramapi māṁ viddhyakartāramavyayam ॥

I created the four social classes, divided according to their constituents and their proper activities. Although I am the doer of this, you should know Me as also an unchanging non-doer. (4.13)

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा ॥

इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्माभिर्न स बध्यते ॥

na māṁ karmāṇi limpanti na me karmaphale sprhā ।
iti māṁ yo'bhijānāti karmābhirna sa badhyate ॥

Actions do not stain Me and I do not long for the results of actions. He who truly understands this about Me is not bound by actions. (4.14)

एवं ज्ञात्वा कृतं कर्म पूर्वैरपि मुमुक्षुभिः ।

कुरु कर्मैव तस्मात्त्वं पूर्वैः पूर्वतरं कृतम् ॥

evaṁ jñātvā kṛtaṁ karma pūrvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ ।
kuru karmaiva tasmāttvaṁ pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraṁ kṛtam ॥

Knowing this, even the ancients, desiring liberation, performed action. So perform action as was done in the past by the ancients. (4.15)

अद्वेषा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥

adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca |
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī ||

One who has no hate for any living being, who is loving and compassionate, unselfish and without ego, equanimous whether suffering or happy, patient, . . . (12.13)

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।

मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥

santuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ |
mayyarpitamano buddhiryo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||

. . . always content, a yogi, self-controlled, firm in his or her resolve, with the mind and understanding fixed on Me, devoted to Me – that one is dear to Me. (12.14)

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।

हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥

yasmānnodvijate loko lokānnodvijate ca yaḥ |
harṣāmarṣabhayodvegairmukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ ||

The world is not intimidated by him or her, nor is he intimidated by the world. Free from lust, jealousy, fear, and anxiety – that one is dear to Me. (12.15)

अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः ।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥

anapekṣaḥ śucirdakṣa udāsīno gatavyathaḥ |
sarvārambhaparityāgī yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||

Impartial, pure, adroit, indifferent, without anxiety, unencumbered by all industriousness, devoted to me – that one is dear to Me. (12.16)

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।

शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः स मे प्रियः ॥

yo na hr̥ṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati ।
śubhāśubhaparit̥yāgī bhaktimānyaḥ sa me priyaḥ ॥

Someone who does not lust nor hate, grieve for what is lost nor long for what has not yet come, who has relinquished what is pleasant and unpleasant and who is full of devotion – that one is dear to Me. (12.17)

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।

शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥

samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā m̥nāpamānayoḥ ।
śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ ॥

Equal when it comes to enemy and friend, honor and dishonor; the same whether it's cold or hot, happy or sad – that one is free from attachment. (12.18)

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिमौनी सन्तुष्टो येनकेनचित् ।

अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रिये नरः ॥

tulyanindāstutirmaunī santuṣṭo yenakenacit ।
aniketaḥ sthīramatirbhaktimānme priye naraḥ ॥

Indifferent to blame and praise, silent, contented no matter what happens, homeless, steady-minded, full of devotion – that man is dear to Me. (12.19)

अर्जुन उवाच ।

कैलिङ्गैस्त्रीन्गुणानेतानतीतो भवति प्रभो ।

किमाचारः कथं चैतांस्त्रीन्गुणानति वर्तते ॥

arjuna uvāca ।

kairiṅgaistrīṅguṇānetānatīto bhavati prabho ।
kimācāraḥ katham caitāṁstrīṅguṇānavartate ॥

Arjuna said:

Lord, what are the distinguishing marks of one who has transcended the three constituents? What does he or she do? And how does one go beyond these three constituents? (14.21)

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव ।

न द्वेष्टि सम्प्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति ॥

śrībhagavānuvāca ।

prakāśam ca pravṛttiṁ ca mohameva ca pāṇḍava ।
na dveṣṭi sampravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati ॥

The Lord said:

Arjuna, he or she neither abhors nor desires the presence or absence of light, activity, or delusion. (14.22)

उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते ।

गुणा वर्तन्त इत्येवं योऽवातिष्ठति नेङ्गते ॥

udāsīnavadāsīno guṇairyo na vicālyate ।

guṇā vartanta ityevaṁ yo'vātiṣṭhati neṅgate ॥

He or she remains aloof, unmoved by the constituents. Thinking, “It’s just the workings of the constituents,” one remains steady and does not waver. (14.23)

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ।

तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥

samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ ।

tulyapriyāpriyo dhīrastulyanindātmasaṁstutiḥ ॥

He or she is composed whether suffering or happy, self-contained, regarding a clod, a rock, and gold as the same, equal toward loved ones and those unloved, steadfast, the same whether praised or reviled. (14.24)

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥

mānāpamānayostulyastulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ ।

sarvārambhaparityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate ॥

A person is said to be beyond the constituents when he or she does not lose poise whether honored or disgraced, equal toward both friend and enemy and renouncing all initiatives. (14.25)

Exercise for Class Four

Krishna tells Arjuna that one can avoid karmic consequences if one offers action as a sacrifice. This week practice this aspect of the yoga of action by picking some activity each day and doing it not for yourself but for someone or something other than yourself.