

## Three Minutes – 3

### Pray to God, but row away from the rock

karmaNyeva adhikAraste  
mA phaleShu kadAcana |  
mA karma phala hetur bhUr  
mA te sa~ngo'stva karmaNi ||  
(bhagavad gltA 2-47)

te = you  
eva = only  
adhikAra = have the right  
karma = for prescribed duties  
mA = never (control/claim)  
phaleShu = in the outcome  
kadAcana = at anytime  
te = You  
mA bhUr = should not be  
karma phala hetu = motivated by the  
results  
mA = nor  
astu = should there be  
sa~ngaH = attachment  
akarmaNi = (in) refraining from duties

This is a very popular shloka in bhagavad gltA. Using arjuna as an excuse (vyAjam / pretence), Lord pArthasArathi (arjuna's chariot driver) addresses the entire human race. In this particular shloka, kR^iShNa says people only have the right to perform the activities and not to anticipate the results. They should never be motivated by the expected results nor have any desire to refrain from duties.

This is a very powerful shloka and my attempt to explain this will be at the basic level. Four things are apparent here :

#### 1. Do the duties

Duties are spiritual injunctions, which are commands of the Lord. They vary according to varNa, the order in society and Ashrama, the stages in life. These are mandatory karma (actions) and must be performed without any exception.

**What we learn is to differentiate between "must do" and "like to do".**

#### 2. Don't expect any return.

While doing the above duties, don't expect anything in return.

**What we learn is - removing anticipation protects you from disappointment.**

#### 3. Never assume you or your action is responsible for the result

God never said that there is no reward for those actions, but simply indicated that you don't determine the time, location and magnitude of the results. His Dispensing of fruits of actions is under His own bookkeeping control. You can't get it or avoid it by your own free will.

**What we learn - Remove the ego and start believing everything is His blessing.**

#### 4. Don't shrug off from actions.

Results should never be instrumental in doing or shrugging off from duties.

**What We learn is to develop strong conviction towards our shAstra-s and fear to disobey them.**

Though the above advice of decoupling actions and results is for mandatory duties, it would be worthwhile to apply for all actions in all walks of life. In summary, do the duty to the best of your ability and leave the rest to God. Try it next time when you take a test, attend an interview or do a favor to someone; concentrate on the action without anticipating about the results!

**[Note: The word adhikAra here has several meanings - ability, control, discretion, choice, command, right, jurisdiction, prerogative, privilege, preference etc.]**

**As expectation goes lower,  
appreciation goes higher.**