

THE APPLICATION OF KARMA YOGA IN STUDENT LIFE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MEANINGFUL LIFE

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ABSTRACT

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Karma Yoga serves as a pivotal principle within Indian philosophy, acknowledged universally across its various schools, emphasizing the profound implications of our actions. This paper seeks to elucidate the essence of Karma Yoga and its significant impact on character development and life perspective. By engaging in selfless action, particularly through the concept of Niṣkāma Karma, individuals can alleviate stress and discomfort often associated with attachment to outcomes, ultimately cultivating a healthier lifestyle. The methodological approach of this research integrates an extensive analysis of scriptural texts and relevant literature, along with observational studies and student feedback collected at the Ramakrishna Ashram. The aim is to explore how the practice of Karma Yoga can effectuate meaningful transformations in students' lives, supported by scriptural evidence and empirical observations. Findings indicate a robust correlation between adopting Karma Yoga and improvements in personal values and societal contributions, suggesting that this practice fosters the development of conscientious citizens characterized by strong moral principles. Furthermore, by facilitating both individual and collective aspirations, Karma Yoga serves as a vital framework for nurturing a peaceful, non-violent society. Given the complexities of contemporary life, this research highlights the relevance of Karma Yoga as a pathway to achieving a more meaningful existence, underscoring the importance of consistent practice, discipline, and perseverance in realizing the actuality and science of life.

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1. Introduction:

It has become very common to make ourselves attractive in the modern world. Like in the entertainment industry and the advertising world, everyone is running after being attractive and showing that I am something, always behind

name and fame. But the main problem is they don't know how to be really attractive, or what the real meaning of being attractive is. *Swāmi Vivekānanda* said, “If you are born, try to make an impression”. Those who have solved a societal problem don't have to look back. I.e., if we try to solve any problem of society or do something for our society, we would not have to think about making ourselves famous or popular. It will happen naturally. [1] Now, this life can be formed through various processes, such as karma yoga or a combination of the four streams of *Yoga*, as described by *Swāmi Vivekānanda*: “Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling both external and internal nature. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy – by one, or more, or all of these – and be free”. Through this practice, we can reach our goal. This research study intended to show that if we practice ‘*Karma Yoga*’ in our student life, we can build a meaningful life and, in turn, solve many problems in our society. As a result, our society will become much more self-sufficient. Action with expectations, aiming to achieve results in every moment, leads to stress. This is the need of the present study, so that life can be experienced and lived as meaningfully as possible. [2] Actions are to be performed as a service to humanity, which will lead to liberation or to the ultimate goal of human life. *Niṣkāma Karma* can also be regarded as the ethical ideal. [3] This paper will address the following questions and aspects to examine the objective of the study, that “how the practice of *Karma Yoga* brings meaningful changes in a student's life”, drawing on scriptural evidence and observation.

So, the following questions are:

1. What is Yoga?
2. What is Karma Yoga?
3. What is Meaningful Life?
4. How does Karma Yoga lead to attaining the highest goal mentioned in the Scriptures?
5. Who is not a Karma Yogi?
6. Application of Karma Yoga to build a meaningful life.
7. Comparing the feedback of final semester students and alumni students with the first semester students through observation.

2. METHODOLOGY:

To understand the various types and attributes of karma yoga, the study employed a qualitative research methodology through an exploratory design. The study is based on four primary texts and commentaries on Karma Yoga authored by Swami Vivekananda, Personality development by Swami Vivekananda, *Eso Manush Hoi* authored by Rudra Prasad Sinha, *Bhagavad Gītā* and various scholarly journal articles and relevant books that discussed the concept of Karma Yoga, Niṣkāma Yoga and relevant key areas of study. The choices of these three texts are mainly due to their intellectual authority on the subject, as they are widely recognised and respected. To thoroughly understand the concept of Karma Yoga, an inclusive approach was employed in this study. Analyzing and interpreting the idea solely within a limited set of verses or chapters could lead to bias and misunderstanding. Therefore, it is essential to comprehend the concept within the broader context of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Emphasis was placed on exploring a meaningful life as drawn from Karma Yoga, as these principles provide a defined framework of objectives by which one can live. This research utilized various academic resources, including Google Scholar, Science-Direct, and relevant websites. This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach, focusing on the conceptual analysis of

classical texts alongside reflective observations to explore the practical relevance of Karma Yoga. Thus, the present study aims to analyse the philosophical foundations of Karma Yoga and evaluate its influence on individual character formation and the pursuit of a meaningful life.

Now, let us dive into this study and understand how *Karma Yoga* is so important in today's lifestyle. And let us see how we can all understand the path of *Karma Yoga* and apply this wisdom in our lives to lead a meaningful life.

3. What is Yoga:

Yoga, etymologically rooted in the Sanskrit term *yuj*, can be understood as a process of integration in which different aspects of human existence—physical, mental, and spiritual—are brought into harmony. And the definition we get from the Etymology (Which is called as “*Nirukta*” in Vedic wisdom) is;

युज्यते अनेन इति योगः ॥ *yujyate anena iti yogah*||

Which means, *Yoga* is the technique to unite one with the other. That means to say, at a grosser level, to unite body, breath, mind, and soul. At a deeper level, to unite the individual soul/self with the supreme or universal soul/self. [4],[5]

This is the basic understanding we get from the etymological meaning or definition of *Yoga*. This makes us aware that whatever we do in our lives is *Yoga*. Suppose our body and mind are united. For example, if we are eating, even this eating can become *Yoga*, how? While eating, the eater, the process of eating, and the object being eaten become one, or are united. That means, when the person who is eating, the way they are eating, and whatever they are eating come together, it is *Yoga*. The same can apply to everything, whether singing, dancing, playing, etc. That is why the great master Acharya Pandit Shriram Sharma says that “*Yoga* is a way of life”.

The same concept of *Yoga* we get from one of the greatest scriptures of *Bhārata*, known as ‘The *Bhagavad Gītā*’. In which Lord *Kṛṣṇa* defines *Yoga* as equanimity in the second chapter, forty-eight, and fifty verses. He also states that if a person follows the equanimous path of *Yoga*, then *Yoga* develops the skills in that person's actions. Below are the verses quoted;

समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ *samatvam yoga ucyate*||

Which means equanimity is *Yoga*. Which means seeing all pairs of opposites as equal. Like seeing success and failure as the same, win and loss as equal, pain and pleasure as equal, etc., because they both help us to grow in our life journey. [6]

योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥ *yogah karmasu kauśalam*||

Which means, skill in action is *Yoga*. That means that if a person follows equanimity at every step of their life, they can be at peace. Where the person acquires so many inner skills that allow them to excel more skillfully at their work/action. [6]

Thus, rather than merely implying ‘union,’ *Yoga* in this context represents a disciplined alignment of the individual self with a higher or universal consciousness. The journey of *Yoga* transcends the mere act of profession; it embodies our true identification, the realization of our potential". [5] According to *Haṭha Yoga* concepts, Lord *Śiva*, also known as *Adinatha Bhairava*, is considered the primordial founder and propounder of all *Yoga* techniques. [7] And in the

Vedic wisdom, Sage *Yajñavalkya* says, "*Hiranyagarbho yogasya vaktha nānyah puratanaha*", which means that *Hiranyagarbha* is the earliest propounder of Yoga and none other. [8]

3.1 Streams of Yoga:

There are so many streams/paths of Yoga described in different scriptures, such as the *Yogopaniṣads*. The streams of Yoga are: *Jñāna Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Rāja Yoga*, *Hatha Yoga*, *Mantra Yoga*, *Laya Yoga*, *Swara Yoga*, *Nāma Yoga*, *Nāda Yoga*, etc. And more recently, we saw the four streams of Yoga outlined by *Swāmi Vivekānanda* in his work. And these four streams of Yoga are well known to the world, as *Swāmi Vivekānanda* mentions in one of his quotations that “Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling both external and internal nature. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy – by one, or more, or all of these – and be free”. Where he mentions that, the goal can be achieved through *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Rāja Yoga*, or *Jñāna Yoga*. So, these are the world-renowned four streams of Yoga. [9], [10]

4. What is Karma Yoga?

4.1 What is Karma?

Karma, originating from the Sanskrit root “*kri*” (to act), may be interpreted not only as action itself but also as the broader process through which actions generate consequences in human life. Technically, this word also means the effects of all actions [11].

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते ।

भूतभावोद्भवकरो विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः ।।(भगवद्गीता - 8.3)

akṣharam brahma paramam svabhāvo dhyātmam uchyate ।

bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ karma-sañjñitaḥ ।। (Bhagavad Gita - 8.3)

In this, the lord *Kṛṣṇa* said, “The one who is imperishable is the Supreme self (*Brahma*); abiding in a body, he is *Adhyātma*; and the cessation of properties in beings which produce something or the other is 'action'. [12]

4.2 Types of Karma

In the *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* explains two basic Karmas: *Sakāma Karma* and *Niṣkāma Karma*. That is Karma with the expectation of results, and without it. Where the latter one is the actual path of Karma Yoga. Further, on this basis, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* describes three types of *karma*: *Karma* (Action), *Vikarma* (Forbidden action), and *Akarma* (Inaction/actionlessness), as described in detail in the 4th Chapter, 17th Verse, of the *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*. [13]

कर्मणो ह्यपि बोद्धव्यं बोद्धव्यं च विकर्मणः ।

अकर्मणश्च बोद्धव्यं गहना कर्मणो गतिः ।।

karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyam boddhavyam cha vikarmaṇaḥ ।

akarmaṇaśh cha boddhavyam gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ ।।

This shloka conveys that “it is essential to know the nature of action as well as of actionlessness, and also that of meritorious action, for the ways of action are (so) inscrutable”. [12]

The *Bhagavad Gītā* also speaks of three additional types of *karma* based on the *guṇas*: *Sāttvika Karma*, *Rājasika Karma*, and *Tāmasika Karma*. Which are described in the 18th chapter 23rd, 24th, and 25th verses as follows:

नियतं सङ्गरहितमरागद्वेषतः कृतम् ।

अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत्तत्सात्त्विकमुच्यते.

niyatam saṅga-rahitamarāga-dveṣhataḥ kṛitam ।

aphala-prepsunā karma yattat sātत्वikamuchyate.

Here, that action is said to be immaculate, which is ordained and embarked on with detachment, by one who is free from infatuation as well as loathing, and who does not aspire to any reward, is *Sāttvika Karma*". [12]

यत्तु कामेप्सुना कर्म साहङ्गरेण वा पुनः ।

क्रियते बहुलायासं तद्राजसमुदाहृतम् ।।

yat tu kāmepsunā karma sāhankāreṇa vā punaḥ ।

kriyate bahulāyāsaṁ tad rājasam udāhṛitam ।।

And, that action is said to be of the nature of passion, which is strenuous and entered upon by one who covets rewards and is egotistic, is *Rājasika Karma*". [12]

अनुबन्धं क्षयं हिंसामनपेक्ष्य च पौरुषम् ।

मोहादारभ्यते कर्म यत्तत्तामसमुच्यते ।।

anubandham kṣhayam hinsāmanapekṣhya cha pauruṣham ।

mohādārabhyate karma yattat tāmasamuchyate ।।

“That action is said to be unenlightened, which is taken up out of sheer ignorance and with disregard for outcome, loss to oneself, and injury to others, as well as for one's own competence, is *Tāmasika Karma*". [12]

So, actions may also be understood through the lens of the three guṇas—where some actions are performed with clarity and detachment (*Sāttvika Karma*), others are driven by desire and ego (*Rājasika Karma*), and still others arise from ignorance or lack of knowledge (*Tāmasika Karma*). [12] Thus, understanding these three *Karmas* based on one's own *Guṇas* of *Prakṛti*, one should move from *Tamas* to *Rajas* to *Sattva* through *Niṣkāma Karma*, which further takes one to the *Guṇātīta Avastha* (the state of pure self), [10] which further directs one to the ultimate goal of life, creating a meaningful life.

4.3 Five types of *Karma* are described in the *Mimāṃsa Darśana*:

1. **Nitya Karma** – Nitya karma are those deeds that a person has to do every day—examples: meditation, bathing, worship, etc. Daily prayer is also Nitya Karma. Doing these deeds does not lead to the accumulation of virtue, but not doing them leads to the emergence of sin.

2. **Naimittika Karma** – it is a deed that is done on special occasions. The deeds done at the times of birth, death and marriage are also examples of natural deeds. There is no special benefit from doing this karma. But if they are not done, then sin accumulates.

3. **Kamya Karma** – Such actions that are done for the purpose of achieving certain fruits are called Kamya Karma. Yajna, Havan, Bali, and other deeds performed for the attainment of a son, wealth, house, peace, etc., are examples of Kamya Karma. Performing such deeds accumulates merit. But not doing them does not constitute sin.

4. **Niṣīdha Karma** – Nishidha actions are those actions that are prohibited from being performed. By not doing such deeds, you do not attain virtue, but by doing them, a person is a partaker of sin.

5. **Prayaścitta Karma** – if a person performs prohibited Karma, then *Prayaścitta* is done to avoid its inauspicious results. In such a situation, the action taken to prevent or reduce the bad fruits is called *Prayaścitta Karma*. [11], [14]

According to *Pātañjala Yoga Darśana*, in the 4th chapter, 7th aphorism, there are 4 types of *Karma* described;

कर्माशुक्लाकृष्णं योगिनस्त्रिविधमितरेषाम् ॥

karmāśuklākṛṣṇaṃ yogīnastrividhamitareṣām ॥

Karma, actions stemming from the deep impressions of *samskaras*, which are: *Shukla* (Good *Karma*), *Kṛṣṇa* (Bad *Karma*), *Shuklākṛṣṇa* (Good Bad mixed), and *Asuklākṛṣṇa* (neither good nor bad). So here, the fourth *Karma* falls under, or can be called, the *Karma* of a *Karma Yogi*. [15]

Thus, Classical Indian philosophy categorizes human actions into several types, including obligatory daily practices, context-specific duties, desire-driven actions, prohibited behaviours, and corrective actions performed to neutralize past mistakes. Rather than treating these as rigid categories, this study interprets them as stages reflecting different levels of intention and awareness in human conduct.

4.4 Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga can be conceptualized as a disciplined mode of action in which individuals engage in their duties without attachment to outcomes, thereby transforming ordinary work into a path of inner growth and spiritual alignment, also known as *Niṣkāma Karma* [6]. The 2nd Chapter 47th to 50th verses describe it in detail.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते माफलेषुकदाचन |

माकर्मफलहेतुर्भूमति सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

karmaṇy-evādhikāraste māphaleṣukadāchana|

mākarma-phala-hetur bhūr mâte saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi ॥

In this verse, Śrī *Kṛṣṇa* conveys that, “you have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction”. [12]

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते॥

yoga-sthaḥkurukarmāṇisaṅgaṁtyaktvādhanañjaya ।

siddhy-asiddhyoḥsamobhūtvāsamatvaṁyogauchyate॥

Further, he (Śrī *Kṛṣṇa*) shows the path to transform Karma into Karma Yoga by simply being steadfast in the performance of your duty, O *Arjuna*, abandoning attachment to success and failure. Such equanimity is called *Yoga*. [12]

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते|

तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्॥

buddhi-yukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛita-duṣhkṛite|

tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśhalam॥

And further, he affirms that “one who prudently practices the science of work without attachment can get rid of both good and bad reactions in this life itself. Therefore, strive for *Yoga*, which is the art of working skilfully (in proper consciousness)”. [12] Which brings an attitude of *Niṣkāma Karma*.

Swamiji (*Swami Vivekānanda*) says that *Karma Yoga* is the attainment, through unselfish work, of that freedom which is the goal of all human nature. Every selfish action, therefore, retards our reaching the goal, and every unselfish

action takes us towards the goal; that is why the only definition that can be given of morality is this: That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral. [2]

5. What is meaningful life?

Swami Vivekananda posits that life is a continuous struggle between individuals and the external world. He asserts that we are perpetually engaged in a battle for necessities like food and air; failure in this struggle leads to the end of life. Thus, life is not a smooth experience but a complex interplay between our internal state and external circumstances. [1] While we may lead what appears to be a normal life through consistent work, one must ask: Is this truly life? If so, we would not differentiate between 'life' and 'meaningful life.' Humans and animals share basic needs—food, sleep, fear, and reproduction—so what ultimately distinguishes us from animals?

आहार-निद्रा-भय-मैथुनं च समानमेतत्पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।

धर्मो हि तेषामधिको विशेषो धर्मेण हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः ॥ (ih̥taepde;! - २५)

āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunaṃ cha samānam etat pashubhir narāṇām |

dharmo hi teṣāmadhiko viśeṣho dharmeṇa hīnāḥ pashubhiḥ samānāḥ || (Hitopadesh-25)

Food, sleep, fear and mating, these acts of humans are similar to those of animals; *dharma* is the only special thing. Without *dharma*, humans are also animals. [16]

Dharma has different shades of meaning, the most important being morality, or righteousness. Only human beings can observe their thoughts and actions and make sure that they are morally acceptable. *Dharma* means discrimination between the real and the unreal, the good and the bad, the moral and the immoral, and what leads to frustration. [14] Meaningful life is the life that is immersed in the pursuit of truth. That is to say, the purpose of life is to know the underlying fundamental truth, which has no change. [17] A meaningful life seeks answers to fundamental questions: Where did I come from? Where do I go? What is the origin of the universe? These are life's essential questions. The pursuit of truth, rather than knowing all the answers, is what gives life meaning. Indian sages refer to this eternal truth as *Brahma* (Īśa).

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यांजगत् ।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥ (\$zavaSyaepin;doe - 1)

Īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyāṃ jagat |

tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam || (ēçāvāsyopaniñad – 1)

All this, whatsoever moves in this universe, is indwelt by *Īśa*; therefore, renunciation leads to true enjoyment, while coveting others' wealth should be avoided. The pursuit of truth is a vital first step that reflects a sincere aspiration for the ideal, with all subsequent achievements following from this foundational desire. [18] The struggle is a great lesson. Mind you, the great benefit in this life is struggle. When the spirit has grappled with situations and faced death countless times along the journey, yet remains undeterred, pressing on repeatedly and continuously, the spirit emerges as a titan and chuckles at the ideal it has been striving for, realizing how much more immense it is than that ideal. I am my own self and nothing else, for what is there to compare to my own self? Absolutely not! The highest aspiration I can have is my soul. Understanding my true nature is the ultimate aim of my life. [1] Experience suffering! Pursue happiness! Do not dwell on what you relinquish. Adhere to your ideals and keep progressing. Minor mistakes in our struggle should not hinder us; those overly sensitive should step aside. Swāmi Vivekānanda wisely states, “If a

person with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, a person without an ideal makes fifty thousand. Therefore, it is better to have an ideal.” Existence, in a practical sense, embodies the ideal. These ideal influences all aspects of our lives, whether we engage in philosophy or address daily tasks. The rays of ideal light illuminate our actions, enabling us to perceive everything as transformed by them. It shapes our identity and will continue to define our future. The ideal surrounds us, evident in our joys and sorrows, grand deeds and small actions, as well as our virtues and flaws. This ongoing struggle for the ideal lends meaning to human life. “Man is man as long as he struggles against nature”, says Swāmi Vivekānanda. [2]

6. How Karma Yoga leads in attaining the highest goal, mentioned in the Scriptures;

6.1 According to the 2nd verse of *Iśa Upaniṣad*:

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छते समाः ।
 एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥
kurvanneveha karmāṇi jijīviṣecchataṁ samāḥ |
evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare ||

This Verse of this *upaniṣad* talks about the importance and relevance of *Karma Yoga*, which means “Let every man wish to live for a hundred years while performing *Karma* in this world. Thus, other than this, there is no way out for you; *Karma* does not bind the man”. [18] Here, it can be interpreted that the performance of *Karma* in the sense of duty will never create any *Karmaphalās*, which will always provide the one freedom from its results; thus, this *Karma* will not lead to bondage.

6.2 According to the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

लोकेऽस्मिन्द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ ।
 ज्ञानयोगेन सांख्यानं कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ।। (Ēgviṭa – 3.3)
loke smin dvi-vidhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha |
jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānām karma-yogena yoginām ।। (Bhagavad Gita - 3.3)

The Blessed Lord said: O sinless one, the two paths leading to enlightenment were previously explained by me: the path of knowledge, for those inclined toward contemplation, and the path of work for those inclined toward action. [12]

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।
 न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ।। (Ēgviṭa – 3.4)
na karmaṇām anārambhān naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣho 'śhnute |
na cha sannyasanād eva siddhiṁ samadhigachchati ।। (Bhagavad Gita - 3.4)

One cannot achieve freedom from Karmic reactions by merely abstaining from work, nor can one attain perfection of knowledge by mere physical renunciation. [12]

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
 कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥ (Ēgviṭa – 3.5)
na hi kaśhchit kṣhaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarma-kṛit |
kāryate hyavaśhaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛiti-jairguṇaiḥ ।। (Bhagavad Gita - 3.5)

No one can remain without action even for a moment. Indeed, all beings are compelled to act by their qualities born of material nature (the three *guṇas*). [12]

In the above verses, Śrī Kṛṣṇa provides a detailed method for recognizing and understanding the law of *Karma*, stating that no one is free from Karma for even a moment. And so, everyone must follow the path of Karma, and by understanding one's nature, one moves from Sakāma Karma (*Tāmasika*, *Rājasika*, and *Sāttvika Karma*) to *Niṣkāma Karma* (*Guṇātīta avasthā*). This is considered the path of *Karma Yoga*, by which one establishes oneself by gaining freedom from the cycle of the law of *Karma*, which is also known as *Mokṣa* (liberation).

7. How can we identify that a person is not being a Karma Yogi:

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa talks about it. He says;

कर्मन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥ (Ēgviṭa – 3.6)
karmendriyāṇi sanyamya ya āste manasā smaran ।

indriyārthāṇ vimūḍhātmā mithyāchārah sa uchyate ॥ (*Bhagavad Gita* - 3.6)

Those who restrain the external organs of action, while continuing to dwell on sense objects in the mind, certainly delude themselves and are to be called hypocrites. [12]

And, even one of the *Samṣkrita Subhāṣita* talks about that too, describing;

मनस्यन्यद्वचस्यन्यत्कार्यमन्यद् दुरात्मनाम् ।
मनस्येकं वचस्येकं कर्मण्येकं महात्मनाम् ॥ (s<Sk«t suĒai;t<)
manasyanyadvacasyanyatkāryamanyad durātmanām |
manasyekam vacasyekam karmānyekam mahātmanām || (*saāskāta subhāṇītaā*)

There is just one difference between good people and those who are not. The thoughts, words and deeds of the bad do not match one another. The thoughts, words and deeds of the good people are all identical. [19]

Based on this basic analysis, one can determine who is a real Karma Yogi and who is not, and who is really following the path of *Karma Yoga*, that means *Niṣkāma Karma*, which takes one to the *Guṇātīta avasthā*.

8. Application of Karma Yoga to Build a Meaningful Life:

We cannot explore the objectives of our lives because we cannot build an ideal character. We'll accomplish the objectives of life only when we're selfless & desireless.

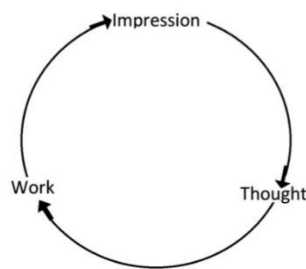
So, it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*;

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः|
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् || (Ēgviṭa – 3.37)
kāma eṣha krodha eṣha rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ |
mahāśhano mahā-pāpmā viddhyenam iha vairiṇam || (*Bhagavad Gita* - 3.37)

“The Lord said, ‘Know that desire arising out of the emotional property of nature (rajas) and insatiable as fire is the same as wrath; and learn to recognise it as your most wicked enemy in this world’ [12] Thus, one has to move towards one's true nature, for which one should recognize and bring that inner perfection to manifest. For the same, one should move towards personality development through character formation.

Character formation

What is character? This is discussed in Swami Vivekananda's book on *Karma Yoga*. An individual's character can be viewed as the cumulative result of repeated thoughts, actions, and behavioural patterns that gradually shape one's mental and moral disposition. Every work that we do, every movement of the body, every thought that we believe, bears an impression on the mind-stuff. What we are every moment is determined by the total of these impressions on the mind. The total of these impressions determines every man's character. If good impressions prevail, the character becomes good; if bad, it becomes bad. As pleasure and pain pass before his soul, they leave upon it different pictures, and the result of these combined impressions is what is called man's "character". Now the question is: what is the way to build a better character? Swamiji himself gave his answer in fluent language – “Human personality is deeply influenced by habitual patterns of thinking, as recurring thoughts tend to leave lasting impressions that guide future behaviour and decision-making. Each thought we think is tinged with our own characters, so that for the pure and holy man, even his jests or abuse will have the twist of his own love and purity and do good”. [2] So, the method



of building improved character is “Thought Judgment”. The process of character development is “Thought judgment”. The matter of thought needs to be understood. Not all the reforms stemming from a person's past thoughts and actions are good, nor are all of them bad. In most cases, there is a mixture of good and bad reforms. As a result, no person can be said to be entirely well. Dimensions may vary, but everyone has both types of reform in the subconscious mind. That is why not all our thoughts are good all the time, nor are all bad all the time. This is the relevance of ‘thought Judgment’. Here, the process of improving character is “Thought Judgment.” It is essential to understand this concept. Not all of the formations created by a person's past thoughts and actions are good, and not all are bad. In most cases, there is a mixture of good and bad formations. As a result, no person can be called completely good or completely bad. There may be differences in degree, but everyone has both types of formations in their subconscious minds. This is why not all of our thoughts are good. And not all of them are bad either. That's why the relevance of thought judgment comes. [20]

This cycle is the strategy of character transformation. Improved impressions are created through karma yoga. Creating a better impression can radically change a person's character. This is why Swami Vivekananda is constantly talking about positive thinking. This is the main mantra of character formation. If we want to make a good habit a part of our character, we have to think about it a lot; this will make it a tendency, and then a “strong habit”. If it continues like this, at some point, the habit becomes a personal character. [2]

The ultimate objective of humankind, according to Vedanta, is to attain Moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Indian philosophy holds that the paths to freedom must be suited to an individual's situation, temperament, and disposition. [20] Karma yoga is one of the paths that lead to ultimate liberation. So, if we can perform daily tasks in a yogic way, we will improve. My primary focus is Karma Yoga, but the other three streams of Yoga (Jnana yoga, Bhakti yoga, Raja yoga) support us in reaching our main and highest goal in life. [2]

9. Comparison of the feedback of final semester students and alumni students with fresher students:

As per the observation, I specifically discussed with the three student categories mentioned. I wanted to know from them how their lives have become more meaningful after following the Karma Yoga path. Here are their identity and statements as follows:

Fresher	Final Semester	Alumni
The 1st Semester students find Karma Yoga a very fascinating part of their curriculum. At first, they all felt very resistant to serving others. Still, gradually, they came to understand the value of Karma Yoga, which made them very humble and submissive towards their teachers and the academic curriculum. I discussed and observed a few new students, and from what I saw, Karma Yoga is definitely working to build their character and behaviour in meaningful ways.	Final-semester students find Karma Yoga very meaningful for their overall personality development. They all mentioned that Karma Yoga is really about enhancing one's inner potential to perform actions without any expectations. And even through my discussion with them and my observations, I could see that their behaviour towards others is simply unimaginable. The way they all perform the actions out of duty and without any expectation in return amazes me, and it shows the impact of Karma Yoga when performed wholeheartedly. A few students were doing Karma Yoga for the sake of the name, because they had no interest in or attitude toward serving people. That is why they misbehave toward others and do unnecessary work.	In this category, I found several people who were missing their college years. They all said that Karma Yoga is a real boon for many people in building a sense of life's meaning. They are still trying to follow the path of Karma Yoga, even though it's difficult to do so outside the university campus, where they had a favourable environment. But in modern times, it's tough to follow this path, as people outside misuse a person's kindness and humility. But they still find Karma Yoga to be a potent tool for letting go of one's ego concept. One of the persons mentioned in his feedback that "Only Karma Yoga can make a real or true student or even a real person".

10. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

If every moment you're actively creating what you really care for is called *Karma*. And if your activity becomes a source of liberation, it is called *Karma Yoga*. There is a relationship between *Karma Yoga* and our way of thinking, acting, and living life. The preconditions for a peaceful and meaningful life at home and in society are physical and mental wellness. Only a healthy body and a healthy mind can build up a complete human being with a holistic personality and positive social attitudes. [2] *Karma Yoga* can help produce an ideal citizen with a strong value-based personality and establish a peaceful, non-violent society by attaining the individual and social aims of education. [21] The key to success is regular practice, discipline and endurance with an attitude of offering. [4] To be a real human being in today's world, this research process is very much relevant. If every student can accept this process in their lives, they can be a real human being, and only a real human being can contribute to society's overall development. A study based on survey results from 459 respondents from two large Indian organisations shows that the dimensions of *Karma Yoga* are related to moral sensitivity, moral motivation, and moral character. [21] Further, the findings also suggest the importance of sense control and equanimity as the necessary prerequisites for individuals to practice *Karma Yoga*. [22] A *Karma-Yogi* (the one who follows the path of *Karma Yoga*) displays five characteristics, which are: a) emphasis on process rather than outcome, b) obligation towards others, c) to act with equanimity, d) to seek perfection/excellence in action, and e) to regard work as an offering to the higher Self (*Īśvarapraṇidhāna*). [23] Thus, the study concludes that, by following the path of Karma Yoga, which is through *Niṣkāma Karma*, one certainly

refines one's character and personality, which brings a clear mindset and right attitude towards one's journey by making one's life meaningful and further through selfless action, one plays a key role in establishing harmony, peace, and a prosperous society.

Strength of the study: This topic is very much relevant in today's world. As youths in society face trouble with a clear mindset and lack a selfless attitude, they are running away from their responsibilities. So, in this scenario, the present study will provide insight into today's youths' lifestyles, and a proper approach to life by understanding one's own nature (*swabhāva*).

Limitations of the study and scope for future research: Inevitably, any study of this nature is tempered somewhat by a degree of subjectivity, especially when it comes to the interpretation of Sublime texts. Furthermore, there is the issue of translation, a key factor that has played a role down the ages in significant bodies of literature. And, as it is not empirical research, it lacks data to support the study. This research study offers potential implications for those in leadership and management roles. Thus, there is scope to explore how it can positively impact students' mindset and behaviour in management. Further, tools and questionnaires are available to conduct an experimental study in this regard.

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