

THE KARMA PATH



*From Action to Awareness,
Purification & Liberation*



SWAMI AMAR JYOTI

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Purification & Liberation*



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कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

*Karmanyē vadhika raste, Ma phaleshu kadachana
Ma karma phala he tur bhuh, ma te sangotsva karmanyē*

*You have a right to “Karma” (actions) but never to any Fruits
thereof. You should never be motivated by the results of your
actions, nor should there be any attachment in not doing your
prescribed activities.*

- Bhagavad Gita

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FREE SAMPLE

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Ananda Niketan Trust (Jyoti Ashram) is a nonprofit spiritual organization, founded in 1962 by Swami Amar Jyoti. For further reading on the life of Swami Amar Jyoti and information about His books, recorded Satsangs, publications and Ananda Niketan Trust (Jyoti Ashram), and Ashrams in the USA please visit: jyotiashram.org, truthconsciousness.org

This free sample contains the Preface and Chapter 1 of The Karma Path. It may be shared freely in its complete, unaltered form.

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SOURCE OF THE TEACHINGS

The Satsangs in this book are drawn from the English audio recordings of Swami Amar Jyoti's discourses given at His ashrams in the United States. These teachings were published in text form in *Light of Consciousness: Journal of Spiritual Awakening*, published by Truth Consciousness, USA.

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PURPOSE OF THIS EDITION

This edition of *The Karma Path* is offered with the hope that the timeless teachings of Swami Amar Jyoti may reach both sincere spiritual seekers and readers looking for greater meaning in everyday life. Its purpose is not simply to explain karma, but to invite a deeper reflection on how we live, choose, serve and grow.

Our actions are shaped not only by what we do, but also by the intentions, attachments and expectations behind them. By observing these inner movements, we begin to understand our patterns more clearly and recognise where habit gives way to conscious choice. In this way, ordinary experiences can become opportunities for learning and inner transformation.

The path of Karma Yoga does not ask us to abandon our responsibilities. It invites us to fulfil them with sincerity, to serve without being driven by recognition, and to meet the results of our actions with greater steadiness. Work, family life, relationships and challenges can all become part of spiritual practice when approached with awareness and compassion.

For the seeker, these teachings can support self-inquiry and spiritual discipline. For humanity more broadly, they offer a vision of action guided by responsibility rather than self-interest, and by understanding rather than reaction. The additional reflections in this

edition are intended to help readers connect the teachings with lived experience.

May this book serve as a companion on the journey from unconscious reaction to conscious action, from self-centredness to service, and from confusion towards clarity. May each reader discover that the path to inner freedom is not separate from life, but can unfold through the way life is lived.

A companion for seekers, and an invitation to live with awareness.

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*Karma yoga purifies your heart & mind
if done selflessly*

*Love & Blessings
Radheshri*

PREFACE

Every action has a consequence. Every thought, desire and intention sets something in motion. Through our actions, we continually shape our experience and our inner life.

Every action we perform leaves an impression. We think, speak, choose, desire, give, receive, help, forgive and resist - and through all these movements of life, we are constantly creating and experiencing karma.

Yet karma is much deeper than the simple idea that what we do will eventually come back to us. The teachings of Karma invite us to look within and understand the relationship between our actions, desires, intentions, attachments and consciousness.

The deeper question is not only, "What karma am I creating?" but also: "How can I act without becoming bound by my actions?"

This is where Karma Yoga begins.

The Bhagavad Gita teaches us that we have a right to action, but not to the fruits of action. We cannot escape action, for life itself is action. The spiritual path is therefore not necessarily to withdraw from life, but to transform the way we live and act within it.

When action becomes less dependent upon personal desire, recognition and expectation, it gradually becomes a means of purification. Work can become worship. Responsibility can become service. And ordinary actions can become opportunities for inner growth.

The teachings of Swami Amar Jyoti in this book explore karma, reincarnation, freedom, purification, desire, responsibility,

compassion and the path of Karma Yoga. They invite us to observe our own lives - our reactions, our patterns, our attachments and the motives behind our actions.

Karma Yoga does not ask us to abandon life.

It asks us to live consciously within it - to perform our duties sincerely, serve without demanding recognition, accept what comes with understanding, release attachment to results and gradually offer our actions to the Divine.

The journey from karma to Karma Yoga is ultimately a journey from action to awareness, from attachment to surrender, and from bondage to freedom.

May these teachings help us look within, purify our intentions, serve more selflessly and discover the freedom that comes when action is performed without selfish attachment.

Jyoti Ashram, Pune

01

Karma and Freedom (Liberation)



Seeker: *I think I understand the law of karma fairly well but I still can't comprehend why small children should suffer. Is such suffering earned through the law of karma or have they chosen to suffer for special reasons?*

The law of karma is inextricably linked with reincarnation. The child's suffering can only be explained through reincarnation; in a previous birth they have done something for which they have not paid the price. There are many things we do for which we do not receive the reward or penalty in that same birth. Whatever we fail to suffer or enjoy from actions in our previous birth or births somehow catches up with us in future births. This could be when we are children or adults; it depends on when the opportunity or circumstances are optimum for that particular karmic seed to sprout. Karma is a product of desire. We can liken karma to the seed of a

plant, which sprouts under certain conditions and at its own timing. Karmas that are done in a certain birth or decade or year will bear fruit in their own time. If this occurs in childhood, even though the child does not seemingly do wrong, he or she reaps the results.

I am not implying that children should suffer. We should be loving and compassionate and help them in any way we can. I would like to see society improving in such a way that these things never happen. To put it more clearly: if the law of karma is misunderstood even slightly, it can create havoc. One could jump to the conclusion that in whatever way children are suffering, let it happen, because they did wrong in previous births. That is a “twisting” of the law of karma.

Karma does not overrule the opportunity for you or I to help, regardless of what a person has done. We can forgive, we can help so that suffering does not continue. The door is always left open in the law of karma to improve or correct ourselves and learn from our mistakes. The results of karmas can even be changed, but since that is beyond the ordinary level of consciousness, most of us cannot affect such changes.

In modern society the suffering of children has become more prevalent. In many cases children are cared for less by their families, which makes them more vulnerable. Basically, the law of karma still applies. Often the results of karmas are inexplicable and leave us baffled; how can such things happen? There is no use dragging God in and making Him responsible. We act and reap the consequences.

The law of karma is like a chain of links joined together by cause and effect: a,b,a,b,a,b. There are no breaks in the chain of karma. It is true that those who are instrumental in doing harm will have to pay

the price. That is how the whole creation carries on, actually. Not that it has to carry on that way—it could be better—but that is the method by which the reincarnation process is perpetuated. In a similar vein, it has been said that war does not solve problems. For the time being it seems to offer a solution—one side is defeated and one wins, as if the matter is over. But war only breeds further wars. It is the same with the law of karma; it creates a chain reaction.

Knowingly or unknowingly, each one creates their own bondage, led by desire and ignorance. Imagine the whole cosmos as one great computer. Within this intricate machinery, all minds are linked together, each soul connected to every other soul. If you could raise your consciousness to the fourth dimension or see through the third eye, you would observe in the astral plane minds interconnected in intricate jumbles of karmic chains. From this perspective you would wisely see that each receives according to what they have done. Therefore we should be kind to others because their karma will take care of their wrongs. Why should we put ourselves in the position to punish others? Karma reaches everyone—it is very scientific.

This continuous chain of karma carries on endlessly until the advent of a Liberated Soul. Then suddenly the chain is broken. Liberated ones do not react. All others are so bound by their karmas, by their nature, so that they instinctively react. Perfected Ones stand apart, without reaction. If one person breaks a link, it liberates many. That is why we stress virtues such as forgiveness, patience, kindness, tolerance and letting go, so that you will break free from the endless linking of karmas.

God is not creating our sufferings. What we do comes back to us, whether we are aware of it or not, whether as children or adults.

Even as adults we often do not remember or pay attention to what we do or understand the consequences, leave aside deliberately denying our thoughts and actions when we are well aware of them.

Those who are instrumental in wrongs of any kind will pay the price, no doubt about it. Even should someone take it to the ridiculous extent of trying to justify their wrongdoing by saying that they were only being instrumental in paying back karmic justice, the answer to this is: except one were party to it, they would stand aside and refuse to contribute to the karma. Those who continue the karmic chain reaction do so because of their own temperament and nature, their samskara or karmas. They are under the spell of their own maya or self-created illusions, and will have to pay the price, because that is their tendency too.

Someone has to stand aside and aspire for Liberation, to break the chains of karma. A story I read as a schoolboy illustrates this. Two friends were traveling from their village on pilgrimage. In those days there were no trains and planes, so they were going on horseback. At one place they halted at an inn for the night. During the night someone was murdered in another room. The news spread the next morning and the authorities came to search. In one of the pilgrim's shoulder bags they found a blood-stained dagger. It was not like today, with a jury and court, fingerprints, etc. The pilgrim was arrested, taken before the king and given life in prison. He had not committed the murder and pleaded for himself but nobody listened to him.

In those days they just hurled them into prison, shut the door and forgot about them. This pilgrim, a good and learned man, was kind to everyone. He taught the other prisoners reading, writing and the

scriptures. In the course of time he became a very venerable old man, loved and respected by everyone. Even the guards respected him. They pitied him but there was no court at that time to review his case. One day one of those present asked him if he had committed the murder. He replied, "I didn't murder, they just imprisoned me." "But why," asked the other, "are you suffering this way if you didn't commit the murder?" At last he replied, "Look, even I didn't understand at the time. But while in prison, after years of meditating and praying, I saw a vision that in my last birth I had murdered someone and got away with it. This birth I'm paying the price."

Whether king or beggar, all are subject to the law of karma. It has no "mercy." The law of karma is perfect cosmic justice. Mercy can come from God or Guru or an Illumined One. They can break the inevitable cycle of karma for someone to save them from a particular mishap, but this is not commonly done.

Often we do not know what we did to accrue a certain karma. On the other hand, some knowingly do the same wrongs again and again, deliberately. Those who do this and also plead innocence suffer more.

In a court of law, if we deny and are found guilty, the punishment is more. If we accept our wrongs, at least there may be a more reasonable punishment. Therefore we value humility; it makes us accept the responsibility and the results thereof. Ignorance is no excuse. The only difference is, if we did wrong knowingly we are worse culprits.

There is a story of a Sufi who declared that God is in everyone. In those days in the Middle East this was blasphemy. He was called to the court because the king wanted to hear from the Sufi himself,

knowing he was a great saint. “Do you believe God is in everyone and all are God?” the king asked him. He replied, “Yes, there is no greater truth than that.” The king ordered the saint to die by stoning. Everyone was ordered to throw stones, glass or whatever at him and those who did not would also be severely punished. Throughout the stoning the Sufi, who was an Enlightened Being, was smiling and not seemingly in pain, though he was certainly wounded. His gaze was downward all the while. At one point a flower fell into his lap and he raised his face to see who had thrown it. His disciple was standing there. The disciple had been in a dilemma how to save himself, and like any clever human being he thought, If I have to throw something, let me throw a flower which will be worshipping my Master, though he was really doing it to save his skin. When his Master saw him and tears came to his eyes, it further confused the disciple. Why, when his Master was unaffected by stones and other harsh things, did he weep from a single flower? He asked his Master and the saint replied, “What they were doing was out of ignorance; they don't know who am I. But you are my disciple, you know who am I, and you did it knowingly. That pains me more.”

Those who knowingly do wrongs suffer more. There must be some ego trip, saving the skin, or cleverness involved. Ignorance is no excuse either, but the punishment is less, or at least reasonable. Those who are meek and humble, straight and simple— even though ignorant—will come to God's altar and repent. That is a sign of growth, not the admission alone but true repentance, leave aside not admitting for days, months or years. It has to be very humble repentance, where your mind touches the conscience and changes you. That will lead to Liberation. So do not take repentance lightly, as

only traditional. Humility goes hand in hand with right understanding. Until there is true repentance, admission of faults is not genuine. Think it over. That perfect biting of conscience is necessary for us to change. Without that we may suffer—bodily or mentally or both—but do not change.

Karma strikes whenever and wherever the time is ripe. It could be an accident or an illness; it could be the loss of a dear one, or of health or money or prestige; it could be constant quarreling at home. That's why it's often so baffling. We may be left wondering why things happen at certain times in life and not at other times. This is because a particular karma just sprouted. There is a story from the Vedas about this.

There was once a conference in heaven and all the Devas and Devis came on their vehicles: Shiva on Nandi the bull, Vishnu on the eagle Garuda, Ganesha on the mouse, and Saraswati on her swan. Yamaraj, the god of death, also arrived, his eyes flaming with fire, riding his dark bull. At the entrance to the conference arena was a large gateway. A bird was sitting there and Yamaraj happened to look up at it. It is said if the god of death looks at someone, their days are over. Yamaraj continued on into the gathering but the bird began to tremble, thinking, Yamaraj has looked at me, I'm not long for this world! Garuda, Vishnu's mount, is the fastest bird in existence. He saw the small bird shaking with fear and asked why. The little bird said, "Yamaraj just looked at me, I'm not safe now." "Don't worry," said Garuda, "I will take you far away to where Yamaraj will never find you." The little bird was very thankful and off they went. Garuda flew far, far away and placed the bird on a remote mountain peak, saying, "You are safe here. Okay, I'm going," but at that moment the

bird suddenly died. Garuda then flew back to the gathering. When Yamaraj came out he asked Garuda where he had left the bird. “I took him far away from you, Lord, but he died there.” Yamaraj commented, “That's where his death was written. Actually, when I saw the bird on the gate I was wondering how he could be sitting there when his death was destined a few minutes later so far away.”

So many things are inexplicable. We may think we are saving ourselves or others from suffering the results of karmas, but no strategy on our part can change karmic law. We can only help others with their willingness, not otherwise. Even an Enlightened Soul cannot save you against your wishes. Therefore we must petition God or Guru to help us with our karmas. The attitude with which we seek grace and mercy is very important.

We cannot simply ask God or Guru to do something for us because they can. Humility and repentance are paramount. We have to soberly understand our wrongs, that they were done under the impulse of desire or unconsciousness. It is not difficult to tap the source of mercy, but conscience has to bite when we petition for help. Then our pleas are heard, not otherwise. This attitude is rare. It cannot be rehearsed. It has to be genuine. Our innermost core must be affected. We cannot just say, “God, I'm repentant, I'm a sinner, my conscience is biting. I understand and won't do it again...” and then do it again. Real repentance means your conscience hurts. The mercy of God or Guru is not given unconditionally.

We have heard that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. What does “the Way” mean? It means that the Prophet or Master shows the way. He initiates and you have to tread on that way. We cannot change it or make it shorter. Why? Because the way is through your

mind, and each mind is different. Mind is very interlinked with karmas; it exists only to lodge karmic action and reaction. The day all karmas are over, the mind will vanish. That is Liberation. Since time immemorial this is the divine law. Those who are suffering today might have previously been kings; today's high dignitaries might have been the least beings in some other birth. Those whom we call great could have been high yogis; when they fall they can still become renowned. Such "history" is very difficult to know by ordinary understanding. Those who suffer today might in future be accepted into the highest kingdom.

Spiritual pursuit is not intellectual pursuit. It is a becoming process, transformation. Whether we are from east or west, the same infallible law of karma applies. We perpetuate it by our actions and desires. If you are paying the price now, so much the better. Just finish it. Whatever balance you have in the "karma bank," see that from now onward you do not add to it, creating further suffering. Untruths, whatever they may be—any lack of honesty, any selfishness — will boomerang on us eventually. Any cleverness, vengefulness, negativity or hatred will come back to us sooner or later. Even if no one reacts against us, we will be repaid through our own mind.

There is a true story of a saint who was sitting against a wall when a scorpion came and stung him. He simply flicked it off with his finger and the scorpion went his way. A gentleman was standing there and said, "Sir, at least you should kill it—it stung you." The saint commented, "He was just doing his job and I did mine." "What do you mean?" the gentleman asked. "A scorpion's job is to sting and mine is to forgive." He broke the chain of karma. Everyone cannot do such things, especially when it involves a scorpion! But if you want to

be Liberated you have to come to this state of non-reaction. Otherwise, pay the price and continue with the drama.

We do learn lessons, but do we stick to them? Again we become ungrateful, weird, irresponsible, hiding. Those who come out of the karmic cycle, the karma- chakra, stand as witnesses in the arena of karmas. Under no provocation will they react. That is why they say the spiritual path is “only for the brave”—those who under any challenge or threat are not swayed.

The conflict is not between good and evil but countereffecting evil and replacing it with good. If someone throws a stone at a fruit tree, it gives fruit. That is a counter-effect, not fighting with the stone. In India it is a common saying that if you spit at the sky it will fall on you. That is karma. It is perfect justice. Were it not so, some would get around their own karmas and let others take the brunt. Why should others suffer for what you do?

On one level the mind can be heavenly and on the other it can be very evil. The bigger the ego, the greater the evil. Ordinarily we do not like to analyze our evil side, but whatever is evil is undivine, is it not? Whatever is wrong is not taking us toward God. Evil may be a strong word—call it a diversion from the Path. To heed the Way, the Truth and the Life is to learn to avoid doing the things that landed us into suffering in the first place. When you are about to say, “I’m sorry,” pause before you speak. Ask yourself: do you mean what you are about to say? If the answer is no, then do not say it. If you are truly sorry, then say it. See that you genuinely feel sorry before saying it. This is not crippling self-condemnation, it is self-analysis and auto-reflection, a part of self-realization.

Do not take any of your wrongs lightly, even small things. Often, avoiding self-condemnation goes to the other extreme; not doing anything about ourselves is not right either. Self-condemnation is not necessary but self-analysis, auto-reflection, repentance, opening the conscience and going deeper within ourselves to see what is hurting and what is wrong—these are needed. Still you may fail again. It does not matter as long as you continue sincerely. But if you are avoiding facing karmas, then you are in trouble, deep trouble. That boomerangs back on you.

Once you have learned a particular lesson you will see the way out. Generally there are about five options for a given situation: either you change and then the situation doesn't exist; or you leave the situation; or the other person changes; or sometimes outside help may come. The fifth solution is to put it into God's hands: await His grace and mercy. In no way does running away from the situation on its ego level solve the problem. If you think you have learned the lesson on your own but it still persists, then you can take any of these five options. Running away from the battlefield is no solution because you will do the same wrong elsewhere, due to your tendencies.

There is always a way out of the bondage of karma if we humbly see and take responsibility for our actions. Confess or repent before God. Genuine prayer and understanding is needed. If repentance is genuine, the conscience opens. Then, even if you repeat the same wrongs a few more times, it is like the last punches in boxing: a few punches and it is done, finished. Before that, you get up again and again. If it is a hard blow you may lie down a few more days, and

again get up and continue doing it—endless repetition. After genuine repentance the last blow by God's hand will finish you.

The whole world is a school for learning and we are all here as students. Except the Perfected Ones who are here to help others, each of us has taken birth to learn spiritual lessons. In each birth we are given different situations in which to perfect ourselves. And as long as we have lessons to learn, we will continue to be reborn on this earth.

Swami Amar Jyoti



Swamiji — whom devotees in India addressed as 'Swamiji,' and devotees in the US mostly addressed as Prabhushri, Gurudeva, and Master — gave published Satsangs comprising more than 700 spiritual discourses in English and Hindi, now available on digital platforms. A treasure of the highest wisdom, these illuminating Satsangs — offered with sparkling humor and loving wisdom — cover every aspect of life and the spiritual path, revealing humanity's purpose. He authored a number of books, and some of His experiences were later incorporated into the spiritual novel He wrote

in 1976 — Spirit of Himalaya: The Story of a Truth Seeker — though He admitted that His own experiences were woven with those of other holy men in such a way that the real story will never be known unless He Himself grants that understanding.

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THIS SAMPLE

Continue the journey in the complete book



Karma is more than action and consequence. It is a journey of awareness - through desire, choice, relationship, service, compassion and the gradual purification of the mind.

Drawing from the teachings of Swami Amar Jyoti, this expanded volume explores Karma, Reincarnation, Karma Yoga, Compassion and the deeper question of why we are here.

Alongside the original teachings, new chapters invite the reader to look at karma as a lived experience - and to move from reaction towards conscious action, inner freedom and liberation.

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02 Karma and Reincarnation

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- 07 Karma and the Voice of Conscience

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Swami Amar Jyoti

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