

# Śrīmadbhagavadgītā in Sanskrit: Yogic Teachings on Dharma and Liberation

Leena Ojah, Assistant Professor, Discipline of Sanskrit, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University

Email: [leenaajah123@gmail.com](mailto:leenaajah123@gmail.com)

N. Aphaba Singh, Assistant Professor, Discipline of Yoga, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University

Email: [aphaba009@gmail.com](mailto:aphaba009@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This paper explores the yogic teachings of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* through a close examination of its original Sanskrit verses, focusing on the central philosophical concepts of *dharma* (righteous duty), *yoga* (disciplined path), and *mokṣa* (liberation). It aims to illuminate how the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* presents an integrative vision of *yoga* that transcends doctrinal boundaries by harmonizing action (*karma yoga*), devotion (*bhakti yoga*), and knowledge (*jñāna yoga*). The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, a seminal Sanskrit scripture within the *Mahābhārata*, represents a cornerstone of Indian philosophical thought and yogic practice. Employing a textual and philosophical methodology, the study draws directly from key Sanskrit *ślokas* to analyze the ethical and spiritual frameworks embedded in the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. Through this analysis, the paper demonstrates that the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* does not promote a singular path but advocates a dynamic synthesis of yogic disciplines as a means to attain inner freedom and spiritual realization. The findings highlight the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*'s relevance not only as a classical spiritual text but also as a living philosophy that continues to guide contemporary yogic practice and Indic thought. By returning to the Sanskrit source material, this study reinforces the importance of scriptural authenticity in interpreting yogic principles and offers a nuanced understanding of how ancient teachings can inform modern quests for purpose, balance, and liberation.

## Keywords

Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, Sanskrit, Yoga, Dharma, Mokṣa, Liberation, Karma Yoga, Jñāna Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Indian Philosophy, Ātma, Vidyā, Aṣṭāṅga Yoga.

## Introduction

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, a sacred dialogue between Lord Kṛṣṇa and the warrior Arjuna, occupies a central position in the philosophical and spiritual heritage of India. Embedded within the great epic *Mahābhārata*, this timeless scripture is not merely a theological text but a profound treatise on *yoga*, *dharma*, and the quest for *mokṣa* (liberation). However, the true philosophical depth and spiritual clarity of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* often lie embedded within its original Sanskrit verses, whose nuanced meanings are not always fully preserved in translations. In recent decades, a proliferation of interpretative translations—often filtered through modern ideologies or commercial simplifications—has led to partial, and at times, misleading representations of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*'s yogic doctrine. The complexity of terms like *dharma*, *mokṣa*, *yoga*, and *ātman* cannot be adequately captured without reference to their Sanskrit etymology, grammatical context, and metaphysical connotations. This has created a pressing need to return to the authentic Sanskrit source to gain an accurate understanding of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*'s spiritual guidance.

This study is thus motivated by a desire to critically engage with the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* in its original Sanskrit form, to uncover the authentic yogic teachings embedded within. It specifically aims to investigate how the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* defines the nature of *dharma* (righteous duty and cosmic order) and *mokṣa* (ultimate freedom) as integral to the yogic path.

## Research Objectives

1. To explore the yogic teachings in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* through its original Sanskrit verses.
2. To examine how the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* defines *dharma* and *mokṣa* within the broader framework of *yoga*.

## Scope and Limitations:

This study is limited to a philosophical and textual analysis of selected Sanskrit verses from the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* that explicitly pertain to *dharma*, *mokṣa*, and the three principal *yogas*. It does not attempt a comparative study with other scriptural traditions, nor does it aim to offer a complete commentary on the entire *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*. Rather, it focuses on elucidating key Sanskrit terms and ideas through close reading, aiming to restore

interpretative clarity and highlight the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*'s enduring relevance for yogic philosophy and spiritual practice.

### Review of Related Literature: Exploring *Dharma* and *Mokṣa* in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* has inspired a wide body of literature, from classical commentaries to modern interpretations. This review highlights key contributions while identifying an important gap: the need for deeper, Sanskrit-based analysis of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*'s concepts of *dharma* (righteous duty) and *mokṣa* (liberation), particularly within a yogic context. Vedāntic scholars such as *Śaṅkarācārya*, *Rāmānuja*, and *Mādhva* provided foundational commentaries on the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*. *Rāmānuja* emphasized *bhakti yoga* and devotional surrender, while *Mādhva* advocated dualism, maintaining the eternal difference between soul and God. All three grounded their views in careful Sanskrit analysis, offering deep insights into the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*'s spiritual message.

Thinkers like *Mahātmā Gāndhī*, *Swāmī Vivekānanda*, *S. Radhakrishnan*, and *Śrī Aurobindo* interpreted the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* through the lens of ethics, politics, and spiritual evolution. *Gāndhī* saw it as a guide to selfless action; *Aurobindo* viewed it as a vision of *integral yoga*, blending action, knowledge, and devotion. While these interpretations are practical and influential, they often prioritize social relevance over detailed Sanskrit exegesis. Several scholars, including Georg Feuerstein and Mircea Eliade, have compared the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*'s approach to *yoga* with other systems like *Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras*. *Patañjali* emphasizes mental discipline and meditation, while the *Gītā* offers a more dynamic path through *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti yoga*. However, more attention is needed to the original Sanskrit terms that shape these teachings across traditions. Philosophers such as Wilhelm Halbfass, B.K. Matilal, and Patrick Olivelle have explored the concepts of *dharma* and *mokṣa* in various Indian schools, including *Vedānta*, *Buddhism*, and *Jainism*. Yet, few studies explore how the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* uniquely unites these two goals in a practical, yogic framework based on its Sanskrit formulation.

### Research Methodology

In this present study, the researcher adopts a qualitative and analytical methodology rooted in classical textual interpretation, philosophical analysis, and comparative study. The

objective is to elucidate the yogic vision of *dharma* and *mokṣa* (liberation) as conveyed in the original Sanskrit verses (*ślokas*) of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*.

### Impact of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* on Modern Yoga and Spiritual Practice:

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* remains a powerful guide for contemporary *yoga* and spiritual seekers across the world. While modern *yoga* often emphasizes physical postures, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* presents a broader path that integrates *karma yoga* (selfless action), *jñāna yoga* (knowledge), *bhakti yoga* (devotion), and *dhyāna yoga* (meditation). It teaches that true *yoga* means mastering the mind and realizing one's higher Self, as seen in verse 6.6: "*One who has conquered the mind is a friend of the self.*" The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*'s Sanskrit verses carry deep philosophical meaning and spiritual energy. Teachings like "*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*" (*Gītā* 2.50) — "*Yoga is skill in action*" — remind us that *yoga* is about living mindfully and ethically. Sanskrit helps preserve the original meaning of these teachings, keeping modern *yoga* rooted in *dharma* (righteous living), *sādhana* (practice), and *mokṣa* (liberation).

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* also corrects misunderstandings from New Age or self-help approaches that treat *yoga* only as personal wellness. Instead, it emphasizes self-discipline, ethical action, and devotion. In verse 18.66, it says: "*Surrender to Me alone,*" showing that spiritual growth is not just about feeling good, but about deep transformation. Scholars like Georg Feuerstein and David Frawley warn that detaching *yoga* from its roots weakens its purpose. Beyond individual practice, it has also inspired ethical leadership and personal development. Ideas like *niṣkāma karma* (selfless duty) and *samatva* (balance in success and failure) shape modern values in leadership, mindfulness, and service. Verse 3.19 states: "*Always do your duty without attachment,*" offering timeless wisdom for leading a meaningful and responsible life.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### *Dharma in the Bhagavad Gītā:*

Verse 2.47 of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* highlights the essence of *karma yoga*—doing one's duty without attachment to the results. Lord Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to act sincerely but not be attached to success or failure, warning that both craving rewards and avoiding duty lead to bondage. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya supports this by emphasizing that desire-free action purifies the mind, while Swāmī Mukundānanda compares this attitude to playing golf—

focusing on doing one's best rather than the final score. *Swāmī Rāmsukhdās* explains in *Sādhaka-Saṅjīvanī* that letting go of the fruits of action helps free the mind from past and future attachments, leading to peace and self-realization. He warns that attachment—even in thought—is like fire eating away at a tree from within. Scholar Pathikonda Viśvambara Nāth also notes that Kṛṣṇa rejects escapism and encourages active life in the world through *niṣkāma karma*—selfless action—as the true path to *mokṣa*, or liberation. In essence, Lord Kṛṣṇa calls upon humanity to act sincerely and selflessly, leaving the results to the divine. This leads to spiritual growth and ultimate freedom.

Verse 2.47 of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* offers timeless guidance for a meaningful life by teaching the value of effort without attachment. Sunītā Pant Bansal notes that people often act out of selfish desires and become fixated on results, leading to dissatisfaction, even though material gains are eventually left behind. The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* does not discourage ambition but warns against letting wealth overshadow relationships and social responsibility. True fulfillment comes from sincere action and sharing with those in need. Subbarāo V. Jayanti explains that like students who focus on effort rather than results, we experience less stress and more success when we let go of anxiety about outcomes. Dr. Pramod Miśra and Viditi Rastogī add that inaction is an illusion; we are always engaged in activity, and when work is done with the right attitude, it becomes a source of joy. Ultimately, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* encourages us to find peace and purpose through committed effort, non-attachment, and enjoyment of the process.

### ***Selfless Action in the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā: A Path to Liberation:***

Verse 3.19 of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* teaches that we should perform our duties sincerely, without attachment to the results. *Śrī Śaṅkarācārya* explains that such selfless action, when offered to God (*Īśvara*), purifies the mind and prepares one for liberation (*mokṣa*). A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda adds that for devotees, the highest goal is to serve Kṛṣṇa, and when actions are done with this devotion—free from ego and desire—they lead to spiritual growth. Arjuna was asked to fight in the war not for himself, but as an act of divine duty. This kind of detached service is greater than rituals and frees a person from the cycle of *karma*. Ultimately, *Gītā* 3.19 reminds us that by working selflessly and dedicating our actions to a higher purpose, we attain inner peace, clarity, and freedom.

Verse 3.19 of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* emphasizes doing one's duty without attachment to the outcome. J.M. Mehta points out that while everyone must work, most

people do so to fulfill personal desires, which leads to attachment and mental bondage. When action is done selflessly, it purifies the mind and becomes a form of worship, leading toward spiritual growth. In daily life, working to meet basic needs is natural, but over time, it can turn into greed and indulgence, as noted by Sunītā Pant Bansal. This endless craving prevents true satisfaction. Wise individuals avoid this trap by controlling their desires and remaining detached, which brings lasting peace. The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* connects this idea with *dharma*—universal duties (*sādhāraṇa dharma*), social roles (*varṇāśrama dharma*), and personal duties (*śvadharmā*). By sincerely following one's *śvadharmā* without selfish motives, one can walk the path of inner peace, self-realization, and ultimate *mokṣa*.

### **Dharma and Spiritual Growth in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*:**

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* offers a practical understanding of *dharma* that links social responsibility with spiritual development. *Dharma* is not just about rituals or moral rules; it is about living in alignment with truth, self-control, and one's personal role in life. The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* distinguishes between *sādhāraṇa dharma* (universal duties like nonviolence and honesty) and *śvadharmā* (one's own duty based on nature and role). It encourages performing one's own duties sincerely, even if difficult, rather than imitating others. When actions are done selflessly and without attachment to outcomes (*niṣkāma karma*), they purify the mind and support inner growth. In this view, daily responsibilities become spiritual practice when done with dedication and a sense of offering (*yajña-bhāva*). The *Gītā* integrates action (*karma yoga*), knowledge (*jñāna yoga*), and devotion (*bhakti yoga*) into a unified path, leading to the highest form of *dharma*—complete surrender to the Divine and discovery of the true Self.

### **Yoga as a Path to Liberation in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*:**

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* presents *yoga* as a complete spiritual journey, not just physical exercise. It culminates in *mokṣa*, or liberation from the cycle of birth and death (*samsāra*), achieved through the realization of the true Self and union with the Divine. The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* delineates three principal paths to this goal: *karma yoga* (the path of selfless action), *jñāna yoga* (the path of knowledge and wisdom), and *bhakti yoga* (the path of devotion to God). Each path fits different individuals, but all work together to purify the mind and support spiritual growth. In *karma yoga*, one performs duties without expecting results. *Jñāna yoga* focuses on self-inquiry and detachment, while *bhakti yoga* is about loving surrender to the Divine. The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* teaches that true *yoga* is the balance of

will, intellect, and emotion. By living ethically, serving selflessly, and cultivating devotion and insight, one can realize unity with the Divine and attain liberation.

### **Liberation in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*:**

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* teaches that liberation (*mokṣa*) is the highest goal of life, where the soul returns to its true nature, free from birth, death, pain, and sorrow. It is the union of the individual self (*ātman*) with the Supreme (*brahman*), known as *brahma-nirvāṇa*. This state brings eternal peace and joy through deep spiritual realization, not just intellectual knowledge. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan notes, *mokṣa* means living in constant awareness of the divine. A liberated person is inwardly content, free from desires and attachments, and acts selflessly in the world. The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* presents *mokṣa* as inner freedom and oneness with God, attained through self-realization and spiritual awakening.

### **Equanimity, Detachment, and Divine Union in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*:**

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* teaches a spiritual path focused on inner transformation through three core principles—equanimity (*śamatva*), detachment (*vairāgya*), and divine union (*yoga* or *brahma-sākṣātkāra*). Equanimity refers to the cultivation of inner balance and composure in joy and sorrow, success and failure, thereby enabling clear, deliberate, and peaceful action. Detachment is about performing duties without clinging to results, freeing the mind from selfish desires. Divine union is the realization of oneness with the Supreme, where the ego dissolves and the soul attains lasting peace. These three principles together guide the seeker beyond worldly attachments, leading to liberation (*mokṣa*) and spiritual fulfillment.

### **Synthesis of *Yoga* and *Dharma* in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*:**

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* presents a balanced vision of life by combining *yoga* (spiritual practice) with *dharma* (moral duty), showing that spiritual growth and worldly responsibility can go hand in hand. Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna, who is torn between family attachment and his duty as a warrior, to follow the path of *karma yoga*—selfless action without attachment to results. This is captured in the verse: "*Karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana*"—you have the right to act, but not to the outcome. *Yoga*, in this sense, becomes a method to fulfill one's duty with awareness and detachment, as shown in "*Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*"—*Yoga* is skill in action. The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* emphasizes following one's own duty (*śvadharmā*), even if imperfect, over doing another's well, making *dharma* a

spiritual practice rather than just a social rule. True renunciation is giving up attachment, not action, and through this, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* offers a path where responsible living becomes a way to attain inner peace and liberation (*mokṣa*).

### **Dharma as Action, Yoga as Method, Mokṣa as Goal: An Interconnected Path in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*:**

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* presents a unified path to spiritual growth by linking *dharma* (righteous duty), *yoga* (spiritual discipline), and *mokṣa* (liberation). *Dharma* means performing one's personal duty (*svadharma*) with sincerity and detachment, as seen when Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to fulfill his role as a warrior, even if it is difficult. The verse “*Svadharme nidhanam śreyaḥ*” from the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* conveys that it is preferable to face death while adhering to one's own prescribed duty (*śvadharma*), rather than pursuing the duty of another, even if it appears more appealing or successful. *Yoga* is the method that supports *dharma* through selfless action, devotion, meditation, and knowledge, with *karma yoga* especially emphasized: “*Karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana...*”—you have the right to act, not to the results. This inner discipline purifies the mind and prepares one for *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is the final goal—freedom from the cycle of birth and death—achieved through surrender to the Divine (“*Sarva-dharmān parityajya...*”), self-realization, and spiritual devotion. The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* shows that these three—*dharma*, *yoga*, and *mokṣa*—are not separate teachings but parts of a complete path to inner peace and divine union, making it a timeless guide for spiritual seekers.

### **The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*'s Unique Vision: Uniting Worldly Duty with Spiritual Growth:**

The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* offers a unique and practical vision of spiritual life by teaching that liberation does not require withdrawal from the world. Instead of abandoning duties, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* redefines renunciation (*sannyāsa*) as giving up selfish desires and ego while continuing to act with selflessness. It encourages individuals to perform their responsibilities (*śvadharma*) with devotion (*bhakti*), wisdom (*jñāna*), and a spirit of service to the world (*lokaśaṅgraha*). In this way, even a warrior or householder can be a true *yogī*. By harmonizing action (*karma*), knowledge, and devotion, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* presents a balanced path where worldly life becomes a means for inner growth and spiritual freedom. Its message shows that spiritual practice is not about escaping life, but transforming it from within.

## CONCLUSION

This study examines the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* as a key Sanskrit scripture that presents a practical and unified path of *yoga*, rooted in *dharma* (righteous duty) and *mokṣa* (liberation). Through verses like 2.47, 3.19, and 18.66, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* integrates *karma yoga* (selfless action), *jñāna yoga* (knowledge), *bhakti yoga* (devotion), and *dhyāna yoga* (meditation). It teaches that true liberation is not about withdrawing from life, but about acting without selfish motives, performing one's personal duty (*śvadharmā*), and offering all actions to the Divine (*Īśvara-praṇidhāna*). The concept of *vairāgya* (inner detachment) allows individuals to live spiritually while remaining fully active in the world. The *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* thus serves as a timeless guide for spiritual progress through selfless action and devotion.

Key verses like 2.47 emphasize non-attachment in action, while 18.66 highlights surrender to God. Verse 2.50 defines *yoga* as “*skill in action*” (*Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*), showing that *yoga* is not limited to meditation or posture, but includes living with awareness and purpose. This study also highlights the importance of reading the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* in its original Sanskrit, as terms like *dharma*, *ātman*, *brahman*, and *yoga* hold deep meanings that can be lost in translation. Future research may benefit from comparing the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* with other Sanskrit texts like the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, *Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras*, *Upaniṣads*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which together enrich our understanding of *yoga's* philosophical depth and the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā's* unique role in the broader yogic tradition.

## Final Thoughts:

In conclusion, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* in its Sanskrit form remains not only a philosophical masterpiece but also a practical guide for yogic life that unites action with detachment, knowledge with humility, and devotion with liberation. As modern seekers navigate the complex terrain of spirituality, ethics, and purpose, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā's* voice echoes with profound clarity: inner transformation is the gateway to true freedom—and *yoga*, rightly understood, is the path to that awakening.

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