

# Karma and Renunciation: A Comparative Study of Isha Upanishad Verses 2-3 and Bhagavad Gita

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## Karma and Renunciation: A Comparative Study of Isha Upanishad Verses 2-3 and Bhagavad Gita

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** *The Isha Upanishad presents a unique perspective on the interplay between karma (action) and renunciation (sannyāsa), particularly in verses 2 and 3. While advocating for a life of action without attachment, the text also warns against ignorance and material bondage. This paradox resonates with the Bhagavad Gita's synthesis of karma yoga and jnana yoga, which reconciles duty with spiritual liberation. This study aims to analyze the philosophical and practical implications of karma and renunciation in these two texts, examining their interpretations within Advaita Vedanta, Dvaita Vedanta, and other Hindu traditions. By comparing the Isha Upanishad's teachings with the Bhagavad Gita's discourse on selfless action, the research highlights their relevance in contemporary ethical and spiritual discourse. The study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how these foundational texts guide seekers in navigating the dual path of engagement in the world and spiritual detachment.*

**Methodology:** *In this paper, the exploratory qualitative research method is used. The relevant information is collected using keyword-based search in Google search engine, Google Scholar search engine, and AI-driven GPTs. This information is analysed and interpreted as per the objectives of the paper.*

**Results/Analysis:** *Both texts highlight that it is not action itself that leads to bondage, but rather the ego's identification with being the 'doer' and attachment to outcomes. By shifting one's perspective and dedicating all actions to the Divine, even mundane tasks can become a form of spiritual practice.*

**Originality/Values:** *This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how these texts offer a practical spiritual framework for individuals balancing worldly responsibilities with the pursuit of liberation.*

**Keywords:** Karma, Renunciation, Isha Upanishad, Bhagavad Gita, Advaita Vedanta, Selfless Action

### 1. INTRODUCTION :

The relationship between karma (action) and renunciation (sannyāsa) has been a central debate in Hindu philosophy, particularly in the Upanishadic and Vedantic traditions. The Isha Upanishad, one of the most ancient and concise Upanishads, presents an intriguing paradox in its second and third verses. It states that a person should ideally live for a hundred years performing action without attachment, yet warns that those who remain in ignorance and material attachment fall into darkness. This tension between engaging in worldly duties and seeking spiritual liberation has been interpreted in multiple ways by different philosophical traditions.

A similar discussion unfolds in the Bhagavad Gita, where Krishna instructs Arjuna on the necessity of karma yoga (selfless action) while simultaneously expounding the path of renunciation (jnana yoga). Unlike the Isha Upanishad, which provides brief yet profound statements, the Bhagavad Gita systematically integrates these ideas by presenting renunciation not as mere withdrawal but as a state of inner detachment while performing duty. This approach seeks to dissolve the dichotomy between action and renunciation, advocating a synthesis where one engages in action with a renounced mindset.

This research seeks to explore the philosophical nuances of karma and renunciation in these two texts by comparing their interpretations in Advaita Vedanta, Dvaita Vedanta, and other schools of Hindu thought. It will analyze whether the Bhagavad Gita provides a resolution to the Isha Upanishad's paradox or if the texts represent differing perspectives. Additionally, the study will examine their contemporary significance in ethical living, spiritual discipline, and the modern reinterpretation of dharma (duty). By doing so, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how these texts offer a practical spiritual framework for individuals balancing worldly responsibilities with the pursuit of liberation.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATUR :

- (1) Radhakrishnan, S. (1953). *The Principal Upanishads*. Harper & Brothers.[6]: It is a detailed translation and commentary on major Upanishads, including the Isha Upanishad, with insights into Vedantic interpretations.
- (2) Easwaran, E. (2007). *The Bhagavad Gita*. Nilgiri Press. [7] This is a well-regarded translation and explanation of the Bhagavad Gita, focusing on its spiritual and philosophical teachings.
- (3) Gambhirananda, Swami. (1984). *Eight Upanishads with Commentary of Shankaracharya (Vol. 1)*. Advaita Ashrama. [8] Here we see a critical study of the Upanishads with Adi Shankaracharya's classical commentaries, providing Advaita Vedanta perspectives.
- (4) Sargeant, W. (2009). *The Bhagavad Gita: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition*. State University of New York Press. [9] It is a scholarly translation with extensive notes, comparing different philosophical traditions within Hinduism.
- (5) Hiriyanna, M. (1949). *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*. George Allen & Unwin [10]: We find an excellent introduction to Indian philosophical thought, including the discussions on karma, renunciation, and Vedantic principles.
- (6) Clooney, F. X. (2010). *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions*. Oxford University Press [11]. We witness a comparative study that explores Hindu theological concepts, including karma and renunciation, in dialogue with Western traditions.
- (7) Maharaj, Swami Prabhupada A. C. Bhaktivedanta. (1972). *Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is*. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust [12]. This is a widely recognized edition of the Bhagavad Gita from the Gaudiya Vaishnavism perspective, emphasizing bhakti (devotion) along with karma and renunciation.
- (8) Deutsch, E. (1988). *Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*. University of Hawaii Press [13]: We find a detailed philosophical analysis of Advaita Vedanta's interpretation of renunciation, karma, and self-realization.
- (9) Olivelle, P. (1996). *Upanishads*. Oxford University Press [14]: This is a scholarly translation of the major Upanishads, including the Isha Upanishad, with historical and philosophical commentary.
- (10) Krishna, D. (1991). *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*. Oxford University Press [15]: It is a critique of classical Indian philosophy, including the Upanishadic and Gita-based perspectives on karma and renunciation.

These sources offer a mix of traditional, philosophical, comparative, and modern viewpoints.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

- (1) To study the essence of karma yoga.
- (2) To evaluate the role of Knowledge and Discrimination.
- (3) To understand the Interplay of Action and Renunciation.
- (4) To appreciate the practical applications in modern life.

## 4. METHODOLOGY :

This study employs an exploratory qualitative research approach to gather and analyze relevant data. The information is sourced through keyword-based searches using Google Search, Google Scholar, and AI-driven GPT models. The collected data is then systematically analyzed and interpreted in alignment with the study's objectives [16].

## 5. HINDU PHILOSOPHY :

The concepts of karma (action) and sannyāsa (renunciation) have been central to Hindu philosophy for millennia. The tension between engagement in worldly duties and the pursuit of spiritual liberation has

been a subject of profound debate in ancient texts. The *Isha Upanishad*, one of the oldest and most concise Upanishads, offers an intriguing paradox regarding karma and renunciation. In verse 2, it declares that one should engage in action throughout life while maintaining detachment. Still, verse 3 warns that those who remain ignorant and bound to material existence fall into spiritual darkness. This seemingly contradictory view is further expanded in the *Bhagavad Gita*, which provides a structured resolution by advocating Nishkama Karma (selfless action) as the path to liberation [17-19].

The fundamental question this study seeks to address is: Does karma bind the soul, or can it serve as a path to liberation? By analyzing the interpretations of these teachings within different Vedantic traditions, particularly Advaita Vedanta, Dvaita Vedanta, and Bhakti traditions, this study explores how these foundational texts provide philosophical clarity on the interrelation of karma and renunciation [20-21]. The contemporary implications of these teachings in ethical leadership, professional life, and personal development are also to be analysed.

### 5.1 Isha Upanishad's View on Karma and Renunciation:

The *Isha Upanishad* (Verses 2–3) presents a seemingly paradoxical perspective on karma. **Verse 2 states:**

*"Kurvanneva iha karmāṇi jijīviṣet śataṁ samāḥ |  
Evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare ||"*

(**Translation:** "By performing action alone, one should wish to live for a hundred years. There is no other way; thus, action does not bind a person.")

This verse encourages individuals to engage in action, implying that action is not inherently an obstacle to liberation. However, the **third verse warns:**

*"Asurya nāma te lokā andhena tamasā'vṛtāḥ |  
Tāṁs te pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ ||"*

(**Translation:** "Those who kill the Self enter the worlds of darkness, covered by ignorance.")

This verse critiques those who remain ignorant of the Self, indicating that mere worldly action if performed without spiritual awareness, leads to bondage. The tension between **action and renunciation** in these verses raises a fundamental question: **Should one perform action or withdraw from it?**

Shankaracharya, in his Advaitic interpretation, argues that **verse 2 refers to preparatory action** (karma yoga) that purifies the mind and leads to jnana (self-knowledge), while **verse 3 warns against ignorance and attachment to material life**. This interpretation suggests that while action is necessary, it must ultimately be transcended through **self-realization**.

### 5.2 Bhagavad Gita's Synthesis of Karma and Sannyāsa:

The *Bhagavad Gita* builds upon the Isha Upanishad's paradox and **systematically resolves the debate** between action and renunciation. In **Chapter 3 (Karma Yoga)**, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna:

*"Na karmanām anārambhān naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo'snute |  
Na ca sannyasanād eva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati ||"*

(**Gita 3.4:** "One does not attain freedom from action by mere renunciation, nor does one attain perfection simply by abstaining from work.")

Krishna clarifies that true renunciation is not abandonment of duty but detachment from results. He introduces the idea of **Nishkama Karma** (selfless action), where an individual performs action without selfish desires. This perspective integrates karma and renunciation, resolving the Upanishadic paradox. Further, in **Gita 5.10**, Krishna explains:

*"Brahmaṇyādhyāya karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā karoti yaḥ |  
Lipyate na sa pāpena padma-patram ivāmbhasā ||"*

(**Translation:** "One who performs actions by dedicating them to the Divine, renouncing attachment, remains unaffected by sin, like a lotus leaf in water.")

This verse harmonizes karma and renunciation by redefining **sannyāsa** as **internal detachment**, rather than mere physical withdrawal from life. The *Bhagavad Gita* thus offers a **practical and spiritually aligned model** of action.

### 5.3 Philosophical Comparison: Advaita vs. Dvaita Interpretations:

The *Isha Upanishad*'s karma-renunciation paradox and the *Bhagavad Gita*'s synthesis of **Karma Yoga** and **Jnana Yoga** have been interpreted differently across Vedantic traditions [22-23].

- **Advaita Vedanta (Shankaracharya's view):** Action is necessary only as a **preparatory** stage to attain knowledge of the self. True liberation (**moksha**) comes from realizing the non-dual Brahman, at which point all karma ceases.
- **Dvaita Vedanta (Madhvacharya's view):** Action remains a **duty even for the liberated soul**, performed as an eternal **service to the Divine** (Bhakti). Renunciation is not about abandoning karma but about dedicating it fully to God.
- **Bhakti traditions (e.g., Gaudiya Vaishnavism):** Krishna's *Bhagavad Gita* teachings emphasize **karma as a form of loving devotion (Bhakti Yoga)**, where action itself becomes an expression of surrender to God.

Thus, while Advaita sees karma as temporary, Dvaita and Bhakti traditions uphold it as eternally relevant.

### 5.4 Practical Relevance in Contemporary Life:

The debate between karma and renunciation is not just a theoretical discussion but has deep practical implications. In today's world, individuals struggle with balancing **material responsibilities and spiritual aspirations**. The *Bhagavad Gita*'s principle of **Nishkama Karma** is particularly relevant in:

- **Professional life:** Performing duties without attachment to success or failure, reducing stress and anxiety.
- **Ethical leadership:** Acting with integrity and service-oriented leadership, as seen in Mahatma Gandhi's application of Karma Yoga.
- **Personal development:** Practicing mindfulness by being **engaged in action without obsession with outcomes**.

The *Isha Upanishad*'s insight that detachment should accompany action and the *Bhagavad Gita*'s resolution through **selfless service** provide timeless wisdom for balancing **spiritual growth and worldly engagement**.

The *Isha Upanishad* and the *Bhagavad Gita* offer profound yet distinct perspectives on **karma and renunciation**. While the *Isha Upanishad* presents an **apparent paradox**, the *Bhagavad Gita* provides a **reconciliatory approach** by promoting **selfless action as the highest form of renunciation**. Different philosophical traditions interpret these teachings in unique ways, with Advaita Vedanta emphasizing transcendence of karma, and Dvaita Vedanta advocating eternal action as devotion.

In contemporary society, these teachings continue to guide ethical living, mental well-being, and spiritual practice. By applying the principles of selfless action and inner detachment, one can navigate life's challenges while progressing toward self-realization. Thus, karma and renunciation are not opposing forces but complementary aspects of the spiritual path.

The profound philosophical concepts of karma and renunciation have been central to Indian spiritual thought for millennia. Two seminal texts that explore these ideas in depth are the *Isha Upanishad* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

## 6. THE ESSENCE OF KARMA YOGA :

At its core, karma yoga is the path of selfless action performed without attachment to results. Both the *Isha Upanishad* and *Bhagavad Gita* emphasize the importance of fulfilling one's duties in the world while maintaining inner detachment [1. 24].

The *Isha Upanishad* states: "One should aspire to live a hundred years, performing karma in this world. Thus, and not otherwise, does karma not bind a person." This verse encourages active engagement in life and work, but with the right attitude of non-attachment.

Similarly, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna counsels Arjuna: "You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of work. You should never engage in action for the sake of reward, nor should you long for inaction."



Both texts highlight that it is not action itself that leads to bondage, but rather the ego's identification with being the 'doer' and attachment to outcomes. By shifting one's perspective and dedicating all actions to the Divine, even mundane tasks can become a form of spiritual practice.

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### 6.1 Essence of Karma Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita and Isha Upanishad:

Karma Yoga, the path of selfless action, is a central theme in Hindu philosophy, particularly elucidated in the Bhagavad Gita and hinted at in the Isha Upanishad. Both texts emphasize the importance of performing one's duties without attachment to the results, as a means to spiritual liberation (moksha). Below is a detailed exploration of the essence of Karma Yoga as presented in these scriptures.

#### (1) Karma Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita, a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, is a profound exposition of Karma Yoga. It is primarily discussed in chapters 2, 3, 4, and 6.

Key Teachings on Karma Yoga:

#### (2) Action is Inevitable (Chapter 3, Verses 4-5):

- Krishna states that no one can remain actionless even for a moment. Everyone is driven to action by the qualities (gunas) of nature. Thus, renunciation of action is not the solution; rather, one must learn to act selflessly.

#### (3) Perform Duty without Attachment (Chapter 2, Verse 47):

- The most famous verse on Karma Yoga: "You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of work." This emphasizes performing one's duty without attachment to success or failure, pleasure or pain.

#### (4) Yoga is Skill in Action (Chapter 2, Verse 50):

- Karma Yoga is described as the art of working with equanimity, maintaining mental balance in both success and failure. This skill leads to liberation.

#### (5) Sacrifice and Selfless Service (Chapter 3, Verses 9-10):

- Actions performed as a sacrifice (yajna) for the welfare of others, without selfish motives, purify the mind and lead to spiritual growth.

#### (6) Role of Desire and Ego (Chapter 3, Verse 37):

- Desire and ego are the root causes of bondage. Karma Yoga teaches the renunciation of selfish desires and the ego, allowing one to act for the greater good.

#### (7) Union with the Divine through Action (Chapter 6, Verse 1):

- A Karma Yogi, who performs actions as an offering to God, attains union with the Divine. This is the essence of Karma Yoga—seeing God in all actions.

#### (8) Equanimity and Detachment (Chapter 2, Verse 48):

- A Karma Yogi remains steadfast in success and failure, treating both alike. This detachment from outcomes is the hallmark of a true yogi.

#### (9) Example of Janaka (Chapter 3, Verse 20):

- King Janaka, a perfect Karma Yogi, attained liberation while performing his royal duties. This illustrates that one need not renounce the world to achieve spiritual growth.

### 6.2 Karma Yoga in the Isha Upanishad:

The Isha Upanishad, though concise, provides profound insights into the philosophy of Karma Yoga. It emphasizes the harmony between action and knowledge, and the importance of performing duties with a sense of detachment.

### Key Teachings on Karma Yoga:

(1) Unity of Action and Renunciation (Verse 2):

- The Upanishad advises, "Perform action in this world, desiring to live a full lifespan." It encourages active participation in life while maintaining a spirit of renunciation.

(2) Seeing the Divine in All (Verse 6-7):

- One who sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self attains true knowledge. This vision transforms ordinary actions into offerings to the Divine.

(3) Avoidance of Attachment (Verse 1):

- The opening verse declares, "Everything in the universe is pervaded by God." Recognizing this truth helps one perform actions without attachment, as all actions are ultimately God's.

(4) Balance of Knowledge and Action (Verse 9):

- The Upanishad warns against exclusive reliance on either action (karma) or knowledge (jnana). True wisdom lies in harmonizing the two.

(5) Renunciation of Results (Verse 11):

- The Upanishad teaches that one should perform actions without craving for results, as such craving binds the soul to the cycle of birth and death.

(6) Living in the World with Detachment (Verse 2):

- The ideal is to live in the world, performing one's duties, but with a mind fixed on the eternal Self. This is the essence of Karma Yoga.

### 6.3 Synthesis of Karma Yoga in Both Texts:

- Detached Action: Both texts emphasize performing actions without attachment to outcomes. This detachment is not indifference but a higher state of consciousness where one acts for the sake of duty, not personal gain.

- Selfless Service: Actions performed for the welfare of others, as a sacrifice (yajna), lead to spiritual growth and purification of the mind.

- Union with the Divine: Karma Yoga is not merely ethical action but a spiritual practice that leads to union with the Divine. By seeing God in all actions, the Karma Yogi transcends the ego and attains liberation.

- Harmony of Knowledge and Action: The Isha Upanishad complements the Gita's teachings by emphasizing the balance between knowledge (jnana) and action (karma). True wisdom lies in integrating both paths.

- Living in the World: Both texts reject escapism. The ideal is to live a life of active engagement, performing one's duties with a spirit of renunciation and devotion.

### 6.4 Practical Application of Karma Yoga:

- Daily Life: Karma Yoga can be practiced in everyday life by performing one's duties—whether as a parent, student, professional, or citizen—with sincerity and detachment.

- Mindfulness: Cultivating mindfulness and self-awareness helps in performing actions without being swayed by desires or ego.

- Service to Others: Volunteering, charity, and acts of kindness are practical expressions of Karma Yoga.

- Spiritual Growth: By offering the results of actions to God, one gradually purifies the mind and moves closer to self-realization.

The essence of Karma Yoga, as taught in the Bhagavad Gita and Isha Upanishad, is the art of selfless action performed with devotion and detachment. It is a path that harmonizes worldly duties with spiritual aspirations, leading to inner peace and ultimate liberation. By practicing Karma Yoga, one transcends the ego, realizes the unity of all existence, and attains union with the Divine.

### 6.5 The Interplay of Action and Renunciation:

A key teaching in both texts is that true renunciation does not mean inaction or withdrawal from the world. Rather, it refers to an inner state of non-attachment while continuing to perform one's duties.

The Isha Upanishad declares: "Both action and knowledge should be pursued together. Action without knowledge is blind, and knowledge without action is lame." This advocates for a balanced approach that integrates contemplation with engaged activity in the world.

The Gita echoes this sentiment when Krishna tells Arjuna: "The enlightened, cleansed of sin, freed from duality, keep to the middle path, with senses in control. They see action in inaction and inaction in action."

This subtle understanding transcends simplistic notions of action versus renunciation. It points to a state of inner freedom and equanimity that can be maintained even in the midst of intense outer activity.

#### **6.6 The Nature of the Self and Non-Doer ship:**

Central to both texts is the recognition of one's true nature as the eternal, unchanging Self (Atman) that is distinct from the body-mind complex engaged in action.

The Isha Upanishad proclaims: "The Self is unmoving, one, swifter than the mind. The senses do not reach It as It is ever ahead of them. Though Itself standing still, It outstrips those who run."

This realization of the Self as the non-doing witness consciousness is elaborated upon in the Gita: "The one who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is wise among men. He is a yogi and performs all actions."

By identifying with the changeless Self rather than the ever-changing body and mind, one can engage in action without being bound by it. This shift in perspective is key to practicing karma yoga effectively.

#### **6.7 Cultivating Equanimity:**

Both texts emphasize the importance of maintaining mental equipoise in the face of dualities like pleasure and pain, success and failure. This balanced state of mind is considered essential for treading the path of karma yoga.

The Isha Upanishad states: "Into blinding darkness enter those who worship ignorance; into greater darkness enter those who worship knowledge alone." This cautions against extremes and encourages a middle path.

The Gita elaborates on this theme extensively, with Krishna instructing Arjuna: "Perform your duties equipoised, O Arjuna, abandoning all attachment to success or failure. Such equanimity is called yoga."

By cultivating inner stability and equanimity, one can navigate life's ups and downs with grace, remaining anchored in the unchanging Self amidst the flux of worldly experiences.

#### **6.8 The Role of Knowledge and Discrimination:**

While both texts advocate action, they also stress the importance of right knowledge and discrimination. Without clear understanding, even well-intentioned actions can lead to further entanglement.

The Isha Upanishad declares: "Into blind darkness enter those who worship ignorance. Into still greater darkness enter those who worship knowledge alone." This verse highlights the need to balance knowledge with action.

The Gita echoes this, with Krishna stating: "In this world there are two paths: the path of knowledge for those who renounce, and the path of action for those who engage. No one can attain freedom from action by abstaining from work, nor can one achieve perfection by mere renunciation."

True wisdom lies in recognizing the complementary nature of knowledge and action, using discriminative intelligence to guide one's choices and conduct in the world.

#### **6.9 Dedication to the Divine:**

A powerful theme in both texts is the importance of dedicating all actions to a higher power, whether conceived of as Brahman, Ishvara, or one's chosen deity. This act of surrender transforms work into worship.

The Isha Upanishad proclaims: "All this, whatever moves in this moving world, should be covered by the Lord. Protect the Self by renunciation. Lust not after any man's wealth."

The Gita expands on this idea, with Krishna advising: "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, and whatever austerity you practice, O son of Kunti, do it as an offering to Me."

By shifting the focus from ego-driven action to selfless service of the Divine, one can gradually purify the mind and transcend the binding effects of karma.



#### 6.10 The Illusion of Doer ship:

Both texts point to the fundamental misunderstanding that arises when we identify ourselves as the 'doer' of actions, rather than recognizing the play of universal forces acting through us.

The Isha Upanishad states: "He who sees all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings, hates none."

This points to the underlying unity behind the appearance of multiplicity.

The Gita delves deeper into this theme, with Krishna explaining: "The embodied soul is eternal, indestructible, and immeasurable; therefore, do not grieve. The wise see that the soul neither kills nor is killed. It is not born, nor does it ever die."

By recognizing our essential nature as the unchanging witness consciousness, we can engage in action without being bound by the illusion of individual doer ship.

#### 6.11 Transcending the Gunas:

Both texts allude to the three gunas or qualities of nature - sattva (purity/harmony), rajas (activity/passion), and tamas (inertia/darkness) - and the importance of transcending their influence.

The Isha Upanishad hints at this with the verse: "The face of Truth is covered by a golden disc. O Pushan, remove it so that I who am devoted to the Truth may see the Truth."

The Gita provides a more detailed exposition, with Krishna explaining: "When the seer perceives no doer other than the gunas, and knows That which is beyond the gunas, he attains to My being."

By cultivating awareness of how the gunas operate in our lives and gradually transcending their pull, we can act from a place of greater freedom and alignment with our true nature.

#### 6.12 The Yoga of Meditation:

While both texts emphasize engaged action in the world, they also highlight the importance of regular meditation and introspection to cultivate inner stillness and self-knowledge.

The Isha Upanishad declares: "The Self is one. Unmoving, it moves faster than the mind. The senses do not reach it as it is ever ahead of them. Though immobile, it outruns all pursuit. Without the Self, there is no air that blows."

The Gita provides more detailed instructions on meditation, with Krishna advising Arjuna: "Shutting out all external objects, fixing the vision between the eyebrows, making even the inward and outward breaths, the sage who has controlled the senses, mind, and understanding, who is intent upon liberation, who has cast away desire, fear, and anger, he is ever freed."

Regular meditation practice helps anchor one's awareness in the unchanging Self, providing a stable foundation for engaged action in the world.

### 7. THE ULTIMATE GOAL: SELF-REALIZATION :

Both the Isha Upanishad and Bhagavad Gita point to Self-realization or union with the Divine as the highest aim of human existence. All teachings on karma and renunciation ultimately serve this supreme purpose.

The Isha Upanishad concludes with the powerful invocation: "O Fire, lead us by the good path to felicity. O Lord, you know all our deeds. Take from us our deceitful sins. To You we offer many words of salutation."

The Gita similarly emphasizes liberation as the ultimate goal, with Krishna declaring: "After many births, the wise one takes refuge in Me, realizing that all this is Vasudeva (the Divine). Such a great soul is very rare."

By integrating the teachings on karma yoga, renunciation, and Self-knowledge found in these timeless texts, seekers can progress on the path to ultimate freedom and fulfilment.

### 8. COMPARISON OF KARMA AND RENUNCIATION FROM ISHA UPANISHAD VERSES 2-3 AND BHAGAVAD GITA :

Table 1 summarizes the key differences and similarities between Karma (action) as emphasized in Isha Upanishad and Renunciation (Sannyasa) as elaborated in Bhagavad Gita. Both texts highlight the importance of selfless action but differ in their approach—one advocating duty-bound engagement and the other emphasizing renunciation of attachment rather than work itself.

**Table 1:** Comparison of Karma and Renunciation from Isha Upanishad Verses 2-3 and Bhagavad Gita.

S. No.	Issues	Karma (Action - Isha Upanishad Verses 2-3)	Renunciation (Sannyasa - Bhagavad Gita)
1	<b>Definition</b>	Karma refers to performing righteous duties and actions while living in the world.	Renunciation (Sannyasa) refers to detaching from material desires and giving up the sense of doership.
2	<b>Emphasis on Duty</b>	The Isha Upanishad emphasizes that one should live for 100 years performing karma (actions) as a sacred duty.	The Bhagavad Gita suggests that renunciation is not abandoning work but giving up attachment to the results of actions.
3	<b>Goal of Life</b>	To attain liberation (moksha) by engaging in righteous actions selflessly.	To attain liberation (moksha) by renouncing desires and the ego associated with actions.
4	<b>Attachment to Actions</b>	Encourages engagement in worldly activities but with detachment from their outcomes.	Encourages renouncing attachment to the fruits of action but continuing essential duties.
5	<b>Freedom from Bondage</b>	Performing karma with detachment ensures that one is not bound by their actions (Isha Upanishad 2).	True renunciation means surrendering personal desires and accepting divine will (Bhagavad Gita 6.1).
6	<b>Path to Liberation</b>	Engaging in karma selflessly leads to purification and ultimately liberation.	Renunciation of attachment and ego leads directly to spiritual realization.
7	<b>Role of Knowledge</b>	Encourages action with the wisdom of the impermanence of life.	Stresses that true renunciation arises from self-knowledge and realization.
8	<b>Ideal Way of Life</b>	Living actively in the world, fulfilling responsibilities without selfish motives.	Withdrawing from worldly attachments, but performing necessary duties in a spirit of devotion.
9	<b>Key Teaching</b>	Perform actions selflessly as a duty without expecting rewards (Isha Upanishad 2).	Renounce selfish desires, not actions themselves (Bhagavad Gita 3.19, 18.11).

## 9. PRACTICAL APPLICATION IN MODERN LIFE :

While the Isha Upanishad and Bhagavad Gita were composed millennia ago, their wisdom remains profoundly relevant for navigating the complexities of modern life. Some ways to apply these teachings in daily existence include :

- (1) Cultivate mindfulness: Practice being fully present in each moment, observing thoughts and actions without attachment.
- (2) Perform work as worship: Approach all tasks, however mundane, as opportunities for spiritual growth and service.
- (3) Develop equanimity: Train the mind to remain balanced in the face of success and failure, praise and blame.
- (4) Practice self-inquiry: Regularly contemplate the question "Who am I?" to deepen self-knowledge.
- (5) Engage in selfless service: Look for opportunities to serve others without expectation of reward or recognition.
- (6) Meditate daily: Establish a consistent meditation practice to cultivate inner stillness and self-awareness.

- (7) Study scripture: Regularly read and reflect on spiritual texts to reinforce understanding and inspiration.
- (8) Cultivate devotion: Foster a sense of reverence and dedication to a higher power, however you conceive of it.
- (9) Practice non-attachment: Let go of rigid expectations and learn to flow with life's ever-changing circumstances.
- (10) Seek wise company: Spend time with others who are committed to spiritual growth and self-transformation.

By integrating these practices into daily life, one can gradually embody the timeless wisdom of karma yoga and renunciation taught in the Isha Upanishad and Bhagavad Gita. This leads to greater inner peace, clarity, and alignment with one's highest purpose.

## 10. CONCLUSION :

The teachings on karma and renunciation found in the Isha Upanishad and Bhagavad Gita offer a profound framework for living with wisdom and purpose. By understanding the nature of action and inaction, cultivating non-attachment, and recognizing our true identity beyond the ego, we can navigate life's challenges with grace and progress on the path to ultimate freedom. These ancient texts continue to illuminate the way for sincere seekers, offering timeless guidance for the journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening.

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