

Karma

Commence the class with the Opening Prayer. Take Attendance. For the Memory Time, children will learn to chant the *Bhagavad Gītā* Chapter XII verses and sing the *bhajana* given in the Prayers section.

TOPIC OF THE DAY

The topic of the day consists of:

- ◆ *Yato Dharmah Tato Jayah*
- ◆ *Karma* Activity
- ◆ The Law Of *Karma*
- ◆ The Right Action
- ◆ What Shall I Do?

Yato Dharmah Tato Jayah

The epic Mahābhārata written in Sanskrit by *Srī* Veda Vyāsa, has 100,000 verses. It is the story of the Kuru dynasty, where cousins, Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas, waged a war against each other. Kauravas lost and the Pāṇḍava prince, Yudhiṣṭhira, was crowned the king of Hastināpura.





In spite of becoming the king, Yudhiṣṭhira was very sad and dejected about the loss of all his cousins and many near and dear ones. He had many questions about life. Śrī Kṛṣṇa advised Yudhiṣṭhira to seek counsel from Bhīṣma *Pitāmaha*, their grandsire, who was the treasure house of sacred and secular knowledge. Bhīṣma, injured in the war, was lying on the bed of arrows, waiting for his death in the battle field of Kurukṣetra.

Yudhiṣṭhira, along with Kṛṣṇa, approached Bhīṣma *Pitāmaha* with all his life-persistent questions. *Pitāmaha* said to Kṛṣṇa, “O Mādhava, this body that has been pierced with arrows is giving me so much pain. When You are there, why do You want me to answer all these questions?”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, “I want people to remember you, My devotee, as the treasure house of knowledge.” With that, the Lord gave *Pitāmaha* the boon where by he would not feel any pain. Yudhiṣṭhira asked many, many questions and *Pitāmaha* answered them all patiently. In the end, *Pitāmaha* added, “Repeatedly, I advised Duryodhana to live by *Dharma*. He did not listen to me. And look what is the result!”

The following verses from Bhīṣmasvargārohaṇa *Parva* of the Mahābhārata describes the theme: *Yato Dharmaḥ Tato Jayaḥ*

रक्ष्याश्च ते पाण्डवेया भवान् येषां परायणम् ।
उक्तवानस्मि दुर्बुद्धिं मन्दं दुर्योधनं तदा ॥ १६७ ४० ॥
rakṣyāśca te pāṇḍaveyā bhavān yeṣāṃ parāyaṇam,
uktavān-asmi durbuddhiṃ mandam duryodhanam tadā. 167.40.

यतः कृष्णस्ततो धर्मो यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ।
वासुदेवेन तीर्थेन पुत्र संशाम्य पाण्डवैः ॥ १६७ ४१ ॥
yataḥ kṛṣṇastato dharmo yato dharmastato jayaḥ,
vāsudevena tīrthena putra saṁśāmya pāṇḍavaiḥ. 167.41.

संधानस्य परः कालस्तवेति च पुनः पुनः ।
न च मे तद् वचो मूढः कृतवान् स सुमन्दधीः ।
घातयित्वेह पृथिवीं ततः स निधनं गतः ॥ १६७ ४२ ॥
saṁdhānasya paraḥ kālastaveti ca punaḥ punaḥ,
na ca me tad vaco mūḍhaḥ kṛtavān sa sumandadhīḥ,
ghātayitveha pṛthivīm tataḥ sa nidhanam gataḥ. 167.42.

167.40 to 167.42. *Pitāmaha* said, “O Lord, You are the sole refuge for Pāṇḍavas. You must protect them. I advised dull and wicked minded Duryodhana, where there is Kṛṣṇa there is *Dharma*, and where there is *Dharma* there is victory. Therefore Duryodhana, with the help of Kṛṣṇa make peace with Pāṇḍavas; this is the best time to make peace. In spite of me telling him again and again, that dull fool did not listen to me and caused many brave soldiers to lose their lives. The earth became wealthless and in the end even he (Duryodhana) lost his life.”

When the teaching was over, Bhiṣma *Pitāmaha* left his body.
In this curriculum, we will learn:

यतो कृष्णः ततो धर्मः । यतो धर्मः ततो जयः ॥
yato kṛṣṇaḥ tato dharmah, yato dharmah tato jayah

Where there is Kṛṣṇa, there is *Dharma*, and where there is *Dharma*, there is victory.

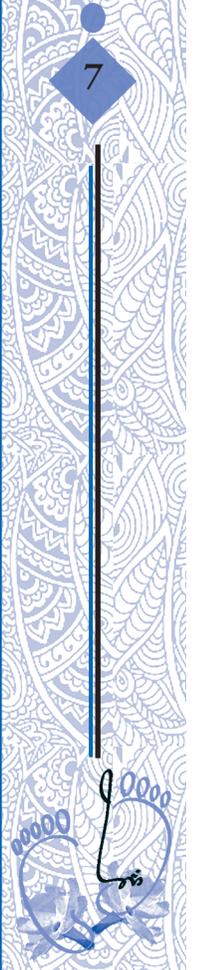
To be victorious, we must know how to act (*karma*) and live by *Dharma*. This sagely-wise advice constitute the core essence of this curriculum.

***Karma* Activity**

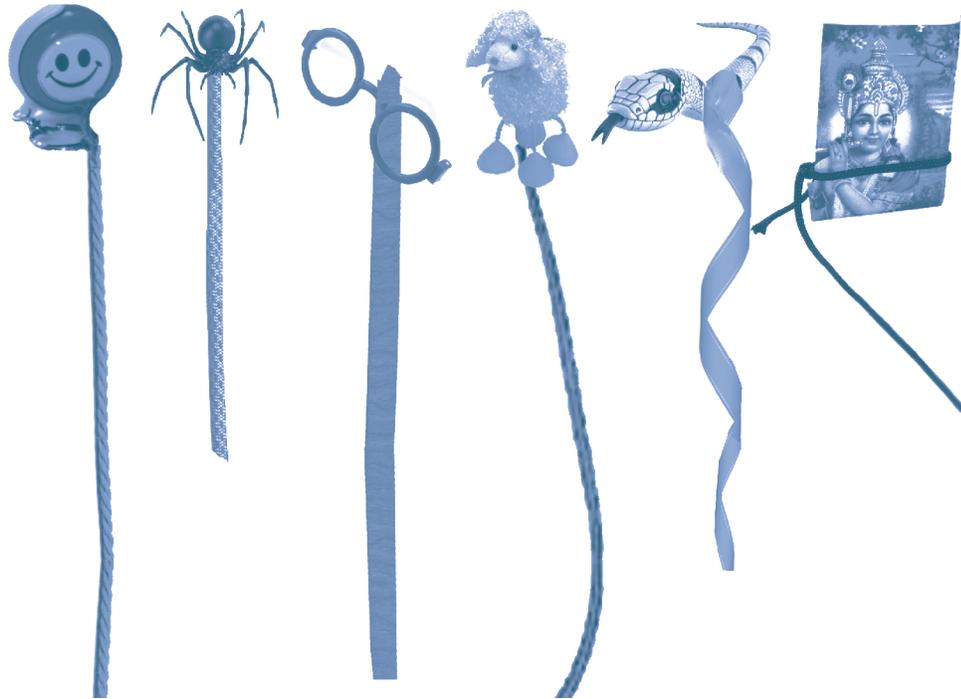
The following activity explains the Law of *Karma*.

Materials Required

- ◆ Strings of varied lengths, quality, color, and thickness
- ◆ One gift box
- ◆ Few rewards – some desirable items like a ball, pencil, puzzle, flower, etc., and some ugly, slimy, undesirable items like toy spider, snake, trashed paper napkin, etc.



1



Directions

Tie one item (desirable or undesirable) to one of the ends of each string of different lengths, colors, thickness, and quality. For example, on some simple and ordinary looking strings, tie desirable rewards at one end; on some beautiful and fancy looking strings, tie undesirable items like spider (any toy insect will do). Some of the strings with nice rewards maybe longer (may want to connect the whole yarn ball to show that the result comes after a very long time) and some maybe short.

Place all strings in the box in such a way that children can only see the loose ends (without the reward items) hanging outside the box, but the other end of the string with the rewards attached is placed inside the box. Cover the box. Take this prepared box to the class.

Let each child pick a string. They are allowed to pick only by looking at the loose end of the string hanging outside the box. Teacher may inspire them to think before they pick a string. Now ask all the children to pull their strings gently. When everyone has pulled their string completely, they will see their reward item tied at the other end of the string. Some will have desirable items, while others will have undesirable items. Some will just have a long string, seemingly with no end, with neither desirable or undesirable items!

Now ask children what they have understood. Explain to children the implications of this *Karma* activity as follows:

- ◆ After pulling one end of the string, the other end may come very quickly, if the string is short, or it may take a long time, if the string is long. But we know that there is definitely the other end, whether we see it or not. Just as

when one end of a string is pulled, the other end comes along automatically, *Karma*, an action, always comes with a result (*karmaphala*).

- ◆ One who performs the action, alone gets the result. When I pull one end of the string, I alone will get the other end of the string, and not someone else. Similarly, the doer alone gets the result.
- ◆ Some actions give results very soon. For example, the act of eating; it appeases hunger. It is like a short string in our activity.
- ◆ Some actions take long, very long time (maybe even another lifetime) to give the result. It is like a string that is connected with the whole yarn ball in our activity. But one thing is certain, result will definitely come.

The Law Of *Karma*

The Law of *Karma* works naturally. Mahābhārata guides us on how to act (*karma*), and live a peaceful and happy life. The following verses of the Mahābhārata in Dānadharmā *Parva* explain further the Law of *Karma*.

यथा धेनुसहस्रेषु वत्सो विन्दति मातरम् ।
एवं पूर्वकृतं कर्म कर्तारमनुगच्छति ॥ ७ २२ ॥
yathā dhenusahasreṣu vatso vindati mātaram,
evaṁ pūrvakṛtaṁ karma kartāram-anugacchati. 7.22.

7.22. Just as among thousands of cows, a calf finds its mother, so also action that is done before, finds its actor and follows him/her.

अचोद्यमानानि यथा पुष्पाणि च फलानि च ।
स्वकालं नातिवर्तन्ते तथा कर्म पुरा कृतम् ॥ ७ २३ ॥
acodyamānāni yathā puṣpāṇi ca phalāni ca,
svakālāṁ nātivartante tathā karma purā kṛtam. 7.23.

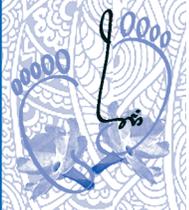
7.23. Flowers or fruits, without anyone's push, never transgress their time; at the right time they bloom and fruits emerge. In the same way, result of an action comes at the right time.

In essence, the Law of *Karma* establishes that:

- ◆ The performer of an action alone gets the result.
- ◆ Result of an action always comes at the right time.

The Right Action

Once, a king had few nagging questions lingering in his mind. He was puzzled as to when is the right time to start the work? Who is the most important person?





And what is the most important work? He thought, if he could find answers, he could make rules in his kingdom that would keep everyone happy.

He asked his ministers to find a person who can answer these questions. The search for such a person was on, but none could provide satisfactory answers. The king decided to search by himself. He had heard about a wise old man, who was living in the woods. The king decided to go to him personally and find answers to his questions.

The king, disguised as an ordinary man, renounced all his royal clothes and amenities, and alone walking, approached the wise old man. At that time, the old man was digging the ground in his yard to plant some flowers.

Curious and impatient to find the answers to his nagging questions, the king asked: Sir, I have heard about your wisdom. I have come from far to find the answers from you. Please tell me:

1. When is the right time to start the work?
2. Who is the most important person?
3. What is the most important work?

The wise man listened, but continued his work. The king got frustrated with the silence of the old man and repeated the questions. The wise man kept on digging and planting his flower garden.

The king, though annoyed, saw the old man tired and so he requested the old man to sit down. He took over and started planting in the garden. As he was just about to finish, they saw a man panting, profusely bleeding, running, and on the verge of collapse, just a short distance away from them. The king ran to the wounded man and carried him to the hut of the wise man. Both of them nursed the wounded man, cleaned his wounds, and comforted him.

Early next morning, again the king asked, “Sir, I have heard about your wisdom. I have come from far to find the answers from you. Please tell me:

1. When is the right time to start the work?
2. Who is the most important person?
3. What is the most important work?

Just then, the man regaining his consciousness with the care he received from the king and the old man, came closer to the king, and said, “Please, forgive me, forgive me.”

The king exclaimed, “Sir, I don’t even know who you are. I don’t know what you have done wrong, and I don’t know why are you asking for forgiveness from me?”

The man said, “Sir, I know you are the king of our land. I knew that you were coming here alone. I had followed you as I wanted to kill you. You had rendered justice that was not in my favor. Ever since, I had decided to kill you. I followed you so that I can kill you. While I was following you, your guards

saw me in hiding and they wounded me; I escaped from them, but collapsed right in front of you! You saved my life!”

Now, the old wise man broke his silence. “O king! Here are the answers to your questions. You asked, when is the right time to start the work? “Now” is the right time to do the work because the present moment alone is in our control; you can do something only in the present! You felt sorry for me and you started digging and planting my garden. If you had not done it, you would have gone back without your answers and you would have been killed by this man, your enemy!”

“Your second question was, who is the most important person? Well, king, the person in front of you, with whom you are talking to, is the most important person. You readily reached out to this wounded and distressed man, who was collapsing right in front of you. And you asked, what is the most important work? You helped the man who was hurting. O king, you cleaned the man’s wound and helped him. This has saved your life; your enemy has become your friend now! To use our body to serve others is the most important work.”

To do good to others is righteousness, *Dharma*, and to harm anyone is sinful as said in the Mahābhārata.

श्लोकार्थेन प्रवक्ष्यामि यदुक्तं ग्रन्थकोटिभिः ।
परोपकारः पुण्याय पापाय परपीडनम् ॥
ślokārthena pravakṣyāmi yaduktam granthakoṭibhiḥ,
paropakāraḥ puṇyāya pāpāya parapīḍanam.

All the wisdom that is taught through innumerable scriptures maybe summed up in half a verse: To do good to others is righteousness, *Dharma*, and to harm anyone is sinful.

What Shall I Do?

One of the questions Yudhiṣṭhira asked Bhīṣma *Pitāmaha* was, “If one wants to have a good life, what should one do? What kind of actions one should avoid?”

Bhīṣma’s answer to the question, given in Mahābhārata *Dānadharmā Parva*, Chapter 13, is as follows:

भीष्म उवाच
कायेन त्रिविधं कर्म वाचा चापि चतुर्विधम् ।
मनसा त्रिविधं चैव दशकर्मपथास्त्यजेत् ॥ १३ २ ॥
bhīṣma uvāca
kāyena trividham karma vācā cāpi caturvidham,
manasā trividham caiva daśakarmapathānstyajet. 13.2.

13.2. Bhīṣma *Pitāmaha* said, “One must give up ten *karmas*: three of body, four of speech, and three of the mind.”





In Lessons 2 and 3, we will learn in detail, about these ten *karmas* that are to be given up.

CLOSING

Conclude the class with the following:

- ◆ Quiet Time: Follow one of the techniques given in the Appendix to make children's mind quiet.
- ◆ Closing Prayer: Conclude the class with the chanting of the Closing Prayer given in the Prayers section.