
The Fruits of Action

Read the displayed passages from The Bhagavad-Gita, and use their teachings to answer the questions.

Be intent on action;
not on the fruits of action;
avoid attraction to the fruits
and attachment to inaction!
(Bhagavad-Gita 2:47)

1. What fruits might each of the professionals in the following situations hope that their actions will yield?
 - a. A business executive promoting an employee to a managerial position
 - b. A police officer arresting a youth for selling drugs
 - c. A doctor attending a patient who is ill
2. If their actions do *not* attain the desired fruits, how might these people feel?
3. How might remaining unattached to the fruits of action help these professionals follow their *dharma*?

Your own duty done imperfectly
is better than another [person]'s done well.
It is better to die in one's own duty;
another [person]'s duty is perilous.
(Bhagavad-Gita 3:35)

4. Imagine that one of the professionals in question 1 sees a need for an action that is not appropriate to her or his particular role. For example, suppose the police officer recognizes that the young person dealing drugs needs to be taught job skills if he is to earn an honest wage. It might seem to the officer that the need for that action (providing the youth with job training) is greater or more important than the completion of her own task (getting the youth off the street immediately). According to Bhagavad-Gita 3:35, why should the officer stay faithful to her own *dharma* in this situation, which would mean arresting the youth? Why is it important to remain true to yourself even when that means another need might go unmet?

(The excerpts on this handout are quoted from *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*, translated by Barbara Stoler Miller [New York: Bantam Books, 1986], pages 36 and 46. English translation copyright © 1986 by Barbara Stoler Miller.)