

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 18: Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/ZbQ8WL0o1JU>

From Attachment to Surrender: Evolution of Arjuna as a Sadhaka

॥ श्री ॥

The **18th chapter** of the Bhagavadgītā is **Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga - The Yoga of Liberation by Renunciation.**

We begin this session with the traditional lighting of the lamp and prayers to the Gurus. Having come to the beginning of an end of a long journey, let us now slow down and enjoy the nuggets of joy of this immortal elixir.

The 18th chapter again reminds us of the beginning where Arjuna, as he lamented the potential ending of his loved ones, asked for an escape! We too have come to an end of HIS teachings; but what has started shall always end is the rule of nature. Be it people or action, where there are endings, there shall be new beginnings...

Bhagavān stated,

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।

तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥2.27॥

“Death is certain for one who has been born, and rebirth is inevitable for one who has died. Therefore, you should not lament over the inevitable.”

When even death is inevitable, what to say of a journey!! Thus, one need not feel sorrow for something that is near its end, instead one should look forward to what lies beyond that horizon. Just as one can swim across a river to the shores if they have travelled on a boat on that route before; Similarly, having incorporated the Divine Gītā in our lives and HIS teachings, one may still continue practicing it even as we come near the end of learning an aspect of it. For, one can never fully complete it. There is always some new aspect that shines like jewel on its new reading, Gītā being an eternal fountain of knowledge!!

Gītā is the science of Yoga, hence, at the end of every chapter it is stated,

“ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे.....”

“Thus, in the Upaniṣad sung by Bhagavān, the Science of Brahman, the scripture of Yoga..”

Gītā primarily focuses on the internal Yoga, allowing us to experience the nuances of Dhyāna and *Dharana*, and establishing one's mind in a state of equanimity. Bhagavān declared that the mind of a Yogi should become “**Yogastha**” in union with the Supreme and one could achieve it if they are always “**sammatva**” equanimous in response to any situation. While the external yoga (of the body like asana, pranayama etc.) works on training the body to become a vessel that can then focus inwards, the internal yoga is what prepares it to receive HIS grace.

“**Balance**” is the key...

Balance of the breath, through **Pāṇāyāma**

Balance of the mind, through **Dhyāna**

Balance of the body, through **Āsana**

Balance of practice through **Pratyāhāra**

And Balance of purpose through **Dhāraṇa**

This can only be achieved by a sense of detachment.

In the 2nd chapter, Bhagavān stated,

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।

नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ 57॥

“One who remains unattached under all conditions and is neither delighted by good fortune nor dejected by tribulation, he is a sage with perfect knowledge.”

When all internal and external factors of an individual align one achieves “**samattva**” a state of equanimity; where they remain removed from the intensity of emotions, they are always at an equilibrium. Such an individual then attains a state of union with the Supreme, he becomes “Yogastha”. This is Yoga!

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥2.48॥

Bhagavān stated: “Be steadfast in the performance of your duty, O Arjuna, abandoning attachment to success and failure. Such equanimity is called Yoga.”

Death and rebirth are as if the body is changing old clothes with new ones, similarly, we too shall be rid of our unsavoury habits and beliefs by the end of this journey and wearing the new garment of HIS teachings.

As **Swami ji** always tells us, “**Read Gītā, Learn Gītā, Teach Gītā and Imbibe Gītā into your life**”.

We have introduced Gītā into our lives, now the goal remains to practice it until one too becomes free of attachment from this material world. It is easier said than done, why, even Arjuna was grappling with attachment when we began this journey!!

The material world is composed of the 3 Guṇas that encompass everything even our actions are not free from it. Then how does one transcend it? Become *Gunatita*? It is through Jñāna and Vairāgya. One

should be grateful towards Arjuna for allowing us a glimpse into this ancient knowledge through Gītā.

Just as a cowherd uses a calf to increase the production of milk from a cow, by first feeding it; Similarly, Bhagavān used Arjuna as a calf that ensured the abundance of the knowledge from the cow like Gītā.

This is also described in the Gītā Mahatmya, where Shankaracharya ji declared.

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधिभोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ।।

This Gitopanishad, Bhagavad-Gītā, the essence of all the Upanishads, is just like a cow, and Bhagavān Krishna, who is famous as a cowherd boy, is milking this cow. Arjuna is just like a calf, and learned scholars and pure devotees are to drink the ambrosia like milk of Bhagavad-Gītā." (Gītā-mahatmya 6)

Thus, as the despondent Arjuna of the 1st chapter refused to fight the war where eventually he stated,

न काङ्क्षे विजयं कृष्ण न च राज्यं सुखानि च ।

किं नो राज्येन गोविन्द किं भोगैर्जीवितेन वा ॥ 32॥

येषामर्थे काङ्क्षितं नो राज्यं भोगाः सुखानि च ।

त इमेऽवस्थिता युद्धे प्राणांस्त्यक्त्वा धनानि च ॥ 33॥

O Krishna, I do not desire victory, kingdom, or the happiness accruing to it. Of what avail will be a kingdom, pleasures, or even life itself, when the very persons for whom we covet them, are standing before us for battle?

His dilemma of choosing between 2 different duties is common and an eternal one. But only when he surrendered before Bhagavān as a disciple wanting to truly understand his path did Bhagavān began HIS teachings. As we relook the previous 17 chapters, without surrender, there can be no beginning of faith and without faith how could there be devotion? The action or knowledge without being established in faith cannot lead us towards HIM.

But for surrender, one has to be free of attachment, even the attachment to their identity "I". Hence, again we witness Arjuna asking a similar query he asked in the beginning and asked to explain the difference between **Samnyās** (renunciation of actions) and **tyāg** (renunciation of desires), as both come from the root words that mean "**to abandon**."

This chapter explains the three types of Samnyāsa, jñāna and Karma, the conclusive understanding of liberation (mukti) and the most confidential essence of Bhakti.

18.1

arjuna uvāca

sannyāsasya mahābāho, tattvamicchāmi veditum,
tyāgasya ca hr̥ṣīkeśa, pr̥thakkeśiniṣūdana. 18.1

Arjuna said:

O mighty-armed Śrī Kṛṣṇa, O inner controller of all, O Slayer of Keśi, I wish to know severally the truth of Samnyāsa as also of Tyāga.

When a despondent Arjuna in the first chapter declared,

गुरुनहत्वा हि महानुभावान्, श्रेयो भोक्तुं भैक्ष्यमपीह लोके ।
हत्वार्थकामांस्तु गुरुनिहैव, भुञ्जीय भोगान् रुधिरप्रदिग्धान् ॥ 5॥

“It would be better to live in this world by begging, than to enjoy life by killing these noble elders, who are my teachers. If we kill them, the wealth and pleasures we enjoy will be tainted with blood.”

He was in a sense talking of renunciation. He felt it was better to leave the material world behind than deal with its unpleasantness.

As described before, the 3 Guṇas encompass all aspects of existence; thus, even our Sādhana is influenced by them. In this case, the **Tyāga** was of **Rājasika** nature where while Arjuna wanted to abandon his riches, it was borne out of a sense of attachment. Then, in the 12th chapter we come across the mention of Tyāga where the devotee renounces the fruits of their actions which is of Sāttvika nature.

There is also the **Tāmasika** renunciation where one renounces actions due to laziness.

When Arjuna wished to forsake the world, he assumed that he would become like a Saṁnyāsi who has left the society for Sādhana (spiritual practice). In the previous chapter, Śrī Bhagavān described the **mokṣa-kāṅkṣī** (a seeker of liberation) who after becoming devoid of all material desires, seek liberation and perform various types of sacrifice, give in charity and engage in austerities, while uttering the word 'tat'. This is also used to indicate a Saṁnyāsi! Thus, depending on the context and the Bhāva of an individual, these words may mean different things. The worldly attached Arjuna in the beginning is different from the inward-looking Arjuna now; hence, the expression and connotations regarding them is different.

In the Hindu philosophy, the life of an individual is said to revolve around **Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Mokṣa**. One could also define them as the principal aspects of life as they lead one to live a fulfilled life. Of these, the economic aspect (artha) is said to be the most basic, while striving for Mokṣa is the goal. One pursues Artha and Kama (desire) through Dharma which then leads to Mokṣa (freeing from the cycle of death and rebirth). Beyond this is HIS grace that keeps one in the state of eternal bliss.

The economic aspect is the one least impacting the mind. This why one knows that when Arjuna proclaims that he would sacrifice his wealth for attachment (Kama), it is not in pursuit of Self-realization, but simply a pursuit of desire and thus, borne of ignorance.

This is also why scriptures proscribed the first 25 years in accumulation of knowledge and practice Brahmacharya. The years 25-50 as a householder to fulfil their obligations towards society, 50 to 75 as forest dwellers to practice detachment from worldly affairs and the last 25 years in Saṁnyāśaśram as renounces in pursuit of Mokṣa. Thus, the predominant activity recommended involves a journey inward.

One does not need to physically remove oneself from the society to practice detachment. He does not need to go to Vrindavan to seek HIM; for, wherever Vrinda (tulsi plant) resides, HE resides and therefore becomes HIS Vrindavan.

True renunciation is when one is free from the sense of “I”. Hence, Arjuna wanted to understand what kind is the renunciation (**tyāga**) of such renunciants? And of what kind is the **Saṁnyāsa** of such Saṁnyāsis who are **mumukshus** (seeking Mokṣa)? He has used the word **prthak** to differentiate between Saṁnyāsa and Tyāga and their respective natures...

Detachment of the material world eventually leads to the detachment towards "I". This dissolution of material identity and merging with the Supreme is symbolically reflected in many of our traditions. Recently, we performed "**visarjan**" of Bhagavān Ganapati. It was a reminder of the Divinity as envisaged in the *vigraha* merging into water representing HIS Prakṛti, just as the manifest becomes the unmanifest during dissolution and the "**I**" becomes the "**Self**" and then the "**Supreme**" upon becoming "**Yogasth**".

This dissolution of "I" is the essence of and also reflected during the rituals performed when one joins the monastic order becoming a Saṁnyāsi. Their Guru takes them to perform their own *tarpana*, symbolising the death of their previous identity. The new identity is simply of a devotee. He no longer remains independent of HIM but as a part of HIS expansion.

Bhārata is an ancient land of ascetics and seekers who work on the principle of Dharma. When the tyrant Aurangzeb had arrested his father who was also a cruel ruler (Shahjahan), he was given only meagre rations in jail. Even water was severely rationed!

He once sent a message to his son to increase the amount of water he received but was ruthlessly rejected! It was then that Shahjahan stated, "*praised be the hindus in all cases, as they even offer water to their dead*" he lamented that neither he nor his son could understand this land!!

The presence of "I" and "HIM" is Duality. Until the "I" is released, how can one witness HIM? HE exists when the "I" is diminished. One aims to take the journey of **Nar** to **Narayana**, from "**I**" to the "**Divine**," where Arjuna represents the *mumukshu* who seeks the dissolution of Self as he surrenders HIMSELF becoming Narayana Himself.

This is the state where there is no other and only, HE exists,

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥ 6.30॥

As Bhagavān stated: "For those who see Me everywhere and see all things in Me, I am never lost, nor are they ever lost to Me."

Until the duality exists, one cannot take a leap towards HIM, for it is difficult dissolve one's identity. This is what the Saṁnyāsi practices, 'to dissolve his ego!' Hence, they live a life where their very sustenance becomes dependent on others. It is a very difficult situation. They cannot even light their lamps. They depend on their food by asking for alms. Notice, that the giver always has his hands above the receiver. The ego gets a boost on giving while it is painful to be a receiver. Thus, even charity that one may practice as a sadhana has the potential to increase ego if practiced with an incorrect Bhāva.

Once, Buddha asked a woman for alms. She had nothing that day and regretfully informed him of that. Buddha asked her to give him mud then. "Oh my! Wouldn't that destroy the things you have received before? The grains shall become inedible!" "It may be so! But it would ensure that you remain a giver then!" said the Mahatman.

The Saṁnyāsi practices the dissolution of his ego to an extent until all that remains is nothing. Only in that nothingness can one accept HIM. Only when one becomes empty can they be filled with HIM.

Having killed a frightening and wicked Rakshasa called **Keśi**, HE is called **Mahā-bāhuḥ**, 'supremely powerful' and thus was capable of annihilating the demon of his doubts, arisen as **Hṛṣīkeśa**, is the prompter and master of all senses. Thus, this inward-looking Arjuna wished to understand clearly the

distinction between the principle of renunciation of action (**Samnyāsa**) and the principle of renouncing the fruits of action (**Tyāga**).

18.2

śrībhagavānuvāca
kāmyānām(ñ) karmaṇām(ñ) nyāsaṁ(m), sannyāsaṁ(ñ) kavayo viduḥ,
sarVākarmaphalatyāgaṁ(m), prāhustyāgaṁ(m) vicakṣaṇāḥ. 18.2

Śrī Bhagavān said :

Some sages understand Samnyāsa as the giving up of all actions motivated by desire; and the wise declare that Tyāga consists in relinquishing the fruit of all actions.

Here, Bhagavān described these terms as explained by the **vicakṣaṇāḥ**, the enlightened people on the basis of the ancient doctrines.

Accordingly, **Tyāga** is to perform all actions without desiring their result. **Samnyāsa**, however, is to perform all one's obligatory duties (**nitya-karma**) without desiring the results and to give up all **kāmya-karma** (materially motivated action) or fruitive action altogether.

18.3

tyājyaṁ(n) doṣavadityeke, karma prāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ,
yajñadānatapaḥkarma, na tyājyamiti cāpare. 18.3

Some wise men declare that all actions contain a measure of evil, and are, therefore, worth giving up; while others say that acts of sacrifice, charity and penance are not to be shunned.

As noted many times, one cannot remain free from action and thus, there would be consequences from them. There are different streams of thought on how one goes about reducing them to the point that they can be free of them.

The **Sāṅkhya** school of thought, for example recommend the path of cessation of all actions, except those for the sustenance of the body as ultimately actions are motivated by desire, leading to consequences thereby keeping us in the cycle of life and death.

It is contended that actions are subject to inherent defects, like indirect violence. For example, if one lights a fire, there is always the possibility of insects getting involuntarily burnt in it. A farmer who produces food still ends up killing biome surrounding it while planting new life. We begin our day with cooking, even that requires fire which kills its surrounding microbiota. Even pious activities like charity, austerities, chanting cannot be free of doshas.

Those like the **Mīmāṃsakas** recommend never giving up beneficial activities, such as sacrifice, charity, and tapasya or austerities. The argument is that the specific duty overrides the general one. Thus, when in performing a fire sacrifice, if some creatures get killed in the fire unintentionally, they contend that the specific instruction for performing the sacrifice prevails, and it must be followed even though it conflicts with the general instruction for not committing violence.

There was once a beggar who begged for alms near a Mahadeva temple. One night he dreamt of a golden chariot and meeting a king embellished with jewels. He woke up with a start, "What an

auspicious omen! Today shall be my lucky day!"

During all his years as a beggar, he had a habit of adding a fistful of grains in his rag which he would use to store his day's charity. Thinking today was his lucky day he added 2 fistfuls of them. As he walked a familiar path towards his haunt, he was greeted with dust! He could see a golden chariot riding its way towards him. A king descended and beggar was struck with delight imagining all the riches he was about to own!!

But as luck would have it, the king spoke something unexpected! "My good lad! I just had a dream instructing me to collect donation from the first person I see as I ride east! If unable to do so disaster awaits the kingdom. Oh, generous man, for the welfare of the kingdom I beg you to donate something" the poor beggar could only comply. But his fist of grains became empty, and he could only himself part with two grains!

The king was delighted and went back. The beggar too returned to begging Street. He received excess donations this day. As his wife segregated the day's donations, she found 2 grains of gold. The beggar realised his folly. That he had received the 2 grains in remuneration of the charity he gave to the King. Such is the law of Karma! One cannot escape even the most miniscule of action and would receive benefit or loss accordingly.

As seen here, even the performance of one's obligatory duties (nitya-karma) yields fruit, such as the attainment of Material Wealth, Svarga or of Pitṛ-loka (the planet of the forefathers) and getting free from demerits. Then how does one be free of it? It is by Tyāga, where one performs all actions without desiring their result. Saṁnyāsa, however, needs us to perform all of their obligatory duties (nitya-karma) without desiring the results and to give up fruitive action altogether.

The living entity in his bound state is very much attached to performing fruitive action. Through a step-by-step process, by first practising the renunciation of the fruits of action, the heart becomes purified. This is Tyāga. Thereafter, it is only possible to give up action completely when one achieves ātma-rati (the happiness of the self).

It is said that a yogī does not give up his prescribed duty because the prescribed duty itself will renounce the yogī when he has attained an elevated level. As a person's heart is purified after performing this practice of Tyāga for some time and he becomes situated on a higher platform, jñāna. In that stage, it becomes possible for him to renounce Karma completely.

18.4

**niścayaṁ(m) śṛṇu me tatra, tyāge bharatasattama,
tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra, trividhaḥ(s) samprakīrtitaḥ. 18.4**

Of Saṁnyāsa and Tyāga, first hear My conclusion on the subject of renunciation (Tyāga), Arjuna; for renunciation, O tiger among men, has been declared to be of three kinds-Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika.

Previously, Bhagavān described what different authorities had spoken on this subject, in the following verses HE shares his conclusion on the subject of renunciation.

HE declared Tyāga to be of 3 types,

- **Sāttvika Tyāga**

- **Rājasika Tyāga**
- **Tāmasika Tyāga**

The use of **niścayam**, definite conclusion entails that this is the final view on this subject. HE addresses Arjuna as **Vyāghra**, “tiger amongst men” because renunciation is for the brave hearted.

He is described to be the foremost among men and compared with a Tiger, for its bravery and his ability to take a leap forward. Arjuna too needed to take that leap, infact he did! And now stood on the other side of the shore as he began his towards journey towards his Self and thereby Paramēśvara. It is an act of extreme bravery. To remove the sense of “I” is not easy, it needs courage and a leap of faith.

The Gītā is an eternal flow of jñāna, knowledge. Only that which is eternal and true could be said with definite conclusion. **Jñāna**, which is eternal and an unchanging fact, hence is conclusive. While the **Vijñāna** is discovery of new facts regarding a subject.

The understanding of cosmos through science has changed over time. Earlier we used to believe Sun revolved around the earth, then it was earth orbiting around the Sun. Now, we know they both orbit. None is stationary. Thus, our understanding has evolved with time.

This is why Gītā remains contemporary though it is ancient. For, it is mostly Jñāna..

A rope feels like snake in the absence of light. The first impact of light is knowing its true nature. Gītā sheds light on the darkness of ignorance allowing us to know the Reality.

On this beautiful note we end this session...

We shall now take a look at some of the Q and A's of this session.

Meghana ji

Question: We find different versions of the Ganesh Aarti. Does it make a difference as to which one we practice?

Answer: Aarti is where one where there calls the deity with intense passion. This is a method for intense devotion. The words are secondary here. The Ganesh Aarti we popularly sing is by Ramdas Swami ji.

Surendra nath ji

Question: The Viśhwarūpa Darśhana is rare but what about the other forms? How is one experience different from the other.

Answer: There is no difference between the joy experienced. One sees HIM as depending on their own Bhāva.

Kamalesh ji

Question: There are different Yoga's mentioned in Gītā, they seem different yet, they lead to the same destination how does this happen?

Answer: Just as a radius from the centre point of a circle can be measured from any direction and has

the same value. Similarly, the paths to reach HIM are manifold yet they have a common goal. The path of Knowledge may look completely different from Bhakti but as we move forward in that journey, one begins to observe their commonalities and their interdependency. The most important point is to know where we stand on that radial line. It is easier from there.



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Thank you-For reading the summary

You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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