

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 18: Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga

3/6 (Ślōka 23-29), Saturday, 30 March 2024

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/QNWhHXF1INY>

Karma & Kartā based On the Trigunas

This is the third session for the 18th chapter of Bhagavad Gītā, **Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga - The Yoga of Liberation by Renunciation**.

The session began with lighting of the lamp and offering of prayers to Ma Sharada and our Guru.

This chapter is the culmination of Bhagavad Gītā, as it doesn't introduce any new concept but surmises the key aspects which a Sadhak or seeker needs to keep in attention through his spiritual journey. Today's discourse began with a quick review of the previous sessions, where the three types of jñāna or Knowledge were covered. Today's session deliberated on the three types of Karma in continuation with the previous discourse.

In the 40th shloka of this chapter Bhagavān said:

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।
सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः ॥ 40॥

No living being on earth or the higher celestial abodes of this material realm is free from the influence of these three modes of nature.

There is no single element in the entire universe that is free from the 3 Gunas; Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. This subject is elaborated in the 14th chapter, where a detailed description of each of these qualities inherent in every living being was given by Bhagavān.

HE further said that all jñāna and karma can be categorised into 3 types on the basis of the 3 Gunas.

The 3 types of knowledge facilitating such a classification are:

- 1. Knowledge of the Supreme Brahṁā
- 2. Knowledge of the world

- **3. Tamasic knowledge.**

Karma is also of three types - Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. Karma is often mistakenly equated with Rajasic guna. According to Gītā, Rajo guna is not just the action, but it is about the attachment to the results, as explained in the 14th chapter

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम् ।
तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् ॥ 7॥

Rajo guna is of the nature of passion. It arises from worldly desires and affections, and binds the soul through attachment to fruitive actions.

Based on the intent of action the Karma can be divided into the 3 gunas.

18.23

**niyataṁ(m) saṅgarahitam, arāgadveṣataḥ(kh) kṛtam,
aphalaprepsunā karma, yattatsāttvikamucyate. 18.23**

That action which is ordained by the scriptures and is not accompanied by the sense of doership, and has been done without any attachment or aversion by one who seeks no return, is called Sāttvika.

There are 2 types of Karma described in Vedas;

- **Niyata Karma**- The assigned Karma or the regularly carried out actions which are imperative to living and as duty.
- **Nisidha Karma**- The forbidden actions that should not be done.

These categorize the **Dos and Don'ts of Karma.**

The daily karma are those obligatory duties that need to be carried out by default, as defined in śāstra, like the daily Japa (chanting) or Sandhya Vandana (evening prayer) rituals. **Such Karmas don't have any Kartritva-abhiman i.e. it is without a sense of Ownership to the action.** However, when an attachment or “I-ness”, a feeling that ‘this karma is being done by me’ is associated with an action being performed, it becomes a Rajasic Karma. When the same action is performed without this sense of Kartritva, it becomes a Sattvic Karma.

Prior to the battle of Kurukshetra, Duryadhana and Arjuna approached Bhagavān Krishna seeking his support in the battle. HE laid two offers in front of them. On one side was his huge, famous and powerful Narayani sena, specially trained for warfare by Bhagavān HIMSELF. On the other side was HE, unarmed and not even ready to be in active participation in the war.

Duryodhana, who had Kartritva abhiman, was influenced by external factors and his confidence in his position and capabilities. Having Bhīṣma Pitāmaha, Dronacharya and Karna on his side, he was brimming with confidence on the outcome of the war and hence felt that the powerful Narayani Sena would bring additional strength to his army to ensure his victory in the Battle. Arjuna on the other hand didn't have the Kartritva abhiman. He asked for Śrī Krishna, despite knowing that HE would be unarmed and passive. He knew it's the Bhagavān who steers every action in this world and hence was confident of victory if the HE was with him. Arjuna was aware that he is not the owner for any of his actions. All actions are actually being driven by Paramātmā. This is Sattvic Karma where one is aware that he is not the responsible doer but is just delivering actions according to HIS desire and plan. On the other hand, the Kauravas and Duryodhana have Kartritva - abhiman and their actions evidenced Rajasic Karma.

- **arāgadveṣataḥ**-without rāgā and dveṣa meaning without affection or hatred

In sanskrit, prefixing a word with the vowel:

‘अ’ means that the said action or word is not inclusive and hence used to express with a negative connotation. Accordingly here it means without rāgā and dveṣa.

In 3rd chapter Bhagavān said:

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।

तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥ 34॥

The senses naturally experience attachment and aversion to the sense objects, but do not be controlled by them, for they are way-layers and foes.

rāgā and dveṣa are the 2 greatest enemies of human beings. Every wrong action carried out will be an outcome of either attachment or dislike. Consider the behaviour towards one's own child versus another child who is not emotionally connected. It is human nature to take a favourable position towards one's own child, due to affection towards one's own. A person doing sattvic karma, however, will treat both equally. He will not be governed by any attachment towards his own child; for him both children are equal and entitled to the same help. **A Sattvic person's mind is devoid of any discrimination towards anyone or anything.** It is without any rāgā or any dveṣa, and he does is said to be a Sattvic Karma.

There are more than 8000 volunteers in Geeta Pariwar, giving seva without rāgā and dveṣa. If they handle two classes, they treat both the classes equally. All sadhaks are the same for them.

- **Satkṛtam**- Virtue
- **aphalaprepsunā** - No desire for the phala or result of the karma.

Sometimes attachment exists for the present or future too, thinking about the results and fruits of action, and results in pain. As said by Bhagavān in the 14th chapter, such attachment to the outcomes of one's action are all governed by Rajo Guna and can only lead to pain. **Sattvic Karma is done with ‘Aphala’ that is without any view to the consequence or result of the action being performed.**

18.24

**yattu kāmepsunā karma, sāhaṅkāreṇa vā punaḥ,
kriyate bahulāyāsaṃ(n), tadrājasamudāhṛtam. 18.24**

That action, however, which involves much strain and is performed by one who seeks enjoyments or by a man full of egotism, has been spoken of as Rājasika.

- **yattu kāmepsunā**- karma motivated by desire
- **sāhaṅkāreṇa**- person who has ahaṅkāra or ego of carrying out the action
- **kriyate bahulāyāsaṃ**- Karma carried out with lot of effort.

These qualities are characteristics of Rajasic karma. **When one performs an action or Karma to fulfil**

one's own Kaamna or desire, it is a Rajasic Karma. Such actions are always motivated by some desire. Persons with such yearnings will definitely have Kartritva - abhiman and possess Ahankar about their actions. Such actions require the person to put extra efforts.

Rajasic people can be categorized into two types:

- **One who desires strongly for results** or Phal iccha, and is willing to put in extra effort to get the results
- **One who has desires but is attached to bodily comfort.** Such people cannot withstand physical hardship and are prone to give up on their desire in physically demanding situations.

Both have ahaṅkāra and both desire results, but one will not want to put effort. The one who puts in a lot of effort to ensure reaching the desired results will not feel the stress and pain.

Albeit, Rajasic karma is not to be considered as something to be avoided. **Rajasic karma is considered as good karma, as there is some motivation to perform the duty, more so if the outcome is for the betterment of the society in large.** Common persons who have not reached the stage of nirahaṅkāra sattvic stage devoid of Kartritva-abhiman, should continue to perform good actions through rajasic karma.

18.25

**anubandhaṁ(ñ) kṣayaṁ(m) hiṁsām, anavekṣya ca pauruṣam,
mohādārabhyate karma, yattattāmasamucyate. 18.25**

That action which is undertaken through sheer ignorance, without regard to consequences or loss to oneself, injury to others and one's own resourcefulness, is declared as Tāmasika.

- **Anubandhaṁ-** Bonded to future results
- **kṣayaṁ-** Harm or destructions to others
- **hiṁsām-** Pain and distress to others

The above qualities are characteristics of **Tamasic karma, that is performed without considering the ill effects of the outcome on others.** Performers of such action do not care how their action may impact them or others. They are the least bothered about the consequence of what they are doing. They have no qualms of the harm caused to themselves or to others. Karna is a perfect example of such karma. It was he who proposed the idea of bringing Draupadi and disrobing her in the Sabha. Although today, many consider him as a hero, he is actually one of the biggest villains of Mahabharata and an epitome of Tamasic Guna. When giving this terrible idea to Duryadhana, he didn't think or care about the outcome of such an action; how it may harm the people of Hastinapur or the Kauravas or even his brothers, the Pāṇḍavas. Maharshi Vedavyas ji listed him under the category of evil men, when he wrote the Mahabharata. **The presence of Moha or delusion leads to a Karma becoming Tamasic.**

- **mohādārabhyate karma-** Karma generated by the moha or illusion.

The desire to learn Gītā motivates people to join Geeta pariwar. That is sattvic. But there are some undesirable characters who out of illusion, join and create disturbance to fulfill their selfish desires like advertising their products, etc., despite being aware that this is prohibited as a policy. Such acts are tamasic and should be avoided.

Tamasik karmas are generated by the moha or illusion. In fact, at the beginning of the Kurukshetra Battle, Arjuna was overcome by Moha or disenchantment, when he saw his family and loved ones on the opposite side of the battlefield. Despite being a warrior who had won so many battles, he was in deep sorrow because of emotional attachment. But luckily for him, Bhagavān to whom he confided, provided the right counsel. As an outcome Bhagavad Gītā was born, and we too are benefited.

Bhagavān's advice helped remove his illusions, as seen at the end of the 18th chapter, where Arjuna said:

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।

स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥ 73॥

Arjun said: O Infallible One, by Your grace my illusion has been dispelled, and I am situated in knowledge. I am now free from doubts, and I shall act according to Your instructions.

One must be careful when confiding to another about the Moha, delusion or disenchantment. Confiding to a wrong person can lead to a path of further destruction rather than recovery from that state of mind. When Duryodhana shared his views on the resolution of the dispute with the Pāṇḍavas, Karna reinforced the opinion with his own negative opinion, and led him to his downfall. When we have a problem, we should express it to Bhagavān or some elder who can lead us to the right path.

Careful observation will reveal that **one's karma is driven by one's feeling to do a particular action**. This feeling resides in the mind of the Karta or the Doer of the action. Karma is the demonstration of the feeling residing in the mind of the Karta or the Doer. Karma is jaḍa or motionless and it is the kartā who can feel.

Śrī Krishna next talks about the three types of Karta, again differentiated as Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. Depending on the type of the Karta, the Karma or action is also driven respectively as Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic.

18.26

**muktasaṅgo'nahaṁvādī, dhṛtyutsāhaṣamanvitaḥ,
siddhyasiddhyornirvikāraḥ(kh), kartā sāttvika ucyate. 18.26**

Free from attachment, unegoistic, endowed with firmness and zeal and unswayed by success and failure-such a doer is said to be Sāttvika.

- **Muktasaṅgo'nahaṁvādī**- Disassociated from material matters

The word saṅgha seen in the 23rd shloka means attachment. **Muktasaṅgo** means freedom from attachment, freedom from Doership. **A person who shows this trait of detachment from attachment is a Sattvic Karta**. Such person does not have Kartritva-abhimaan or 'I am doing' feeling towards any action.

Every one has all the 3 Gunas in different measures and one has to work towards developing the sattvic qualities in daily life. **The most important qualities are to be free from attachment, and being Anahaṁvādī - Without false sense of ego**. One should not have the feeling of doership. On the other hand, there are those people who do not appreciate suggestions or advice, as they feel they know everything better than the others. They are ahaṁvādī.

In 16th chapter Bhagavān said;

ईश्वरोऽहमहं भोगी सिद्धोऽहं बलवान्सुखी ॥

I am like God Himself, I am the enjoyer, I am perfect

An ahaṁvādī is in a state of thought where he thinks, “I am the Lord, I am siddha (perfect), I enjoy the fruits of my action.” It is all about “I”. Such people clearly belong to the Rajasic type. A Sattvic Karta will however behave very differently and will say “We” because they are Anahamvadi in contraction to the Rajasic Ahamvadi.

A good example is our Geeta Pariwar and the Sewis. In the Vivechan sessions, we have Coordinators, Anchors, etc. The volunteers however, never take individual credit for the sewa they provide. They speak in terms of the entire team associated with the action. They will say the ‘Vivechan Team’ and not call out an individual name of the Doers. They have managed to control their ‘Aham'ness or I-ness’. They acknowledge the action to the Superior Power, the Divine Supreme and hence are Sattvic Kartas.

- **Dhṛtyutsāhaṣamanvitaḥ**- one filled with dhṛti or determination.

A Sattvic Karta is endowed with determination and zeal (Dhṛti and Utsaha). He remains unswayed by success or failure, and is equipoised in favourable and unfavourable situations. This ability to remain unaffected and stable even in adverse times and situations will lead to the supreme bliss.

रहो कटो से भरी है कुशलता से लगाना है

This state of mind is reached through his Sāadhanā and Sattvic Karma. The 17th chapter describes the sattvic way of doing one's duties, be it yajna, dana, tapas or the way to eat, speak and so on. One can follow these in daily life and mould the character and virtues to adapt to the sattvic Dhṛti, sattvic jñāna, sattvic kartā, sattvic buddhi etc. These will not manifest in us on their own, they need to be practised. We need to look around us and be inspired by people who evidence such personality besides performing sattvic karmas as prescribed in the Sashtas. Most people get depressed when they fail in their attempts. **If one can be content and perceive success and failure with equanimity, happiness and peace can be accomplished.**

18.27

**rāgī karmaphalaprepsuḥ(r), lubdho hiṁsātmako'śuciḥ,
harṣaśokānvitaḥ(kh) kartā, rājasah(ph) parikīrtitaḥ. 18.27**

The doer who is full of attachment, seeks the fruit of actions and is greedy, and who is oppressive by nature and of impure conduct, and who feels joy and sorrow, has been called Rājasika.

- **Rāgī**- One who has attachment
- **karmaphalaprepsuḥ**- Desire for the fruits of attachment
- **lubdho**- Dissatisfied and greedy
- **hiṁsātmako**- harmful to others
- **Aśuciḥ**- impure, unclean mind
- **harṣaśokānvitaḥ**- subject to joy and sorrow

A Rajasic Karta has Raag, attachment to the outcome of his actions and always aspires to get more than what he has got thus far. His mind is cluttered with wants and desire, and lacks

purity. Impure ideas can come only if the mind is impure. He is unable to remain unaffected by situations. Success brings in happiness, and failure delivers sorrow, because of attachment to the final result or object or people. If someone close to him succeeds, he is happy, and failure of that person can make him depressed. One gets depressed when one's own child gets less marks in the exams. Emotional attachment to one's own child is the cause for sorrow. The marks of other children have no effect as there is no attachment. **Rajasik kartā is filled with happiness or sorrow depending on the outcome of efforts.**

18.28

**ayuktaḥ(kh) prākṛtaḥ(s) stabdhaḥ(ś), śaṭho naiṣkṛtiko'lasaḥ,
viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca, kartā tāmāsa ucyaṭe. 18.28**

Lacking piety and self-control, uncultured, arrogant, deceitful, inclined to rob others of their livelihood, slothful, despondent and procrastinating-such a doer is called Tāmasika.

The following are the characteristics of Tamasic kartas.

- **ayuktaḥ**- unpious
- **stabdhaḥ**- stand still and unbending or obstinate
- **śaṭho**- stubborn, deceitful and not listening
- **naiṣkṛtiko**- habit of insulting others
- **Alasaḥ**- Lazy people
- **viṣādī** - Pessimistic
- **dīrghasūtrī**- Procrastinating

Tamasic kartas are not careful about how they perform their duties and are stubborn in their attitude. They most likely lack education and as a result their knowledge and mental state remains unchanged and immature. Due to this, **they lack sensitivity toward their surrounding society**. They are unable to develop any desire to help their fellow human beings or serve the nation in a positive way. In fact, if someone is helping them, instead of reciprocating their action, such Tamasic Kartas may cheat or harm their benefactor.

When the Pāṇḍavas were in exile, the kauravas came to the forest with an intent to make the Pāṇḍavas jealous by showing off their luxuries. At that juncture the Gandharvas attacked kauravas. It is said that Karna ran away like a coward, and Arjuna was the one who helped them by fighting the Gandharvas. But instead of reciprocating the Pāṇḍavas; gesture, the kauravas proceeded to create trouble for the Pāṇḍavas. The kauravas are tamasik kartās.

Tamasic kartas are also likely to be afflicted by Alasya or laziness and always procrastinating. While they plan to do a lot of things, they do not take any concrete step towards doing it and most of the time end up doing nothing. **Their attitude towards life is generally negative and they tend to see the dark side of any situation**. They lack any Daivi or good virtue.

18.29

**buddherbhedaṃ(n) dhṛteścaiva, guṇatastrividhaṃ(m) śṛṇu,
procyamānamaśeṣeṇa, pṛthaktvena dhanañjaya. 18.29**

Now hear, Arjuna, the threefold division, based on the predominance of each Guṇa, of understanding

(Buddhi) and firmness (Dhṛti), which I shall explain in detail, one by one.

Further the Lord explains the 3 types of buddhi and Dhṛti.

- **Buddhe-** Buddhi
- **bhedam-** 3 types different
- **dhṛteścaiva-** steadfastness
- **dhanañjaya-** Begetter of wealth. Arjuna is so addressed, because he collected the highest amount during raja suya yaga.

When one has obstacles or problems in work, yet has the drive to proceed with the action, it will be the satvik Dhṛti. More details will be covered in the next session.

The session was followed by a Questions and Answers session and ended with a prayer to the Divine and with rendition of the Hanuman Chalisa.

Questions and Answers:

Gopamani ji

Question: In shloka 24, ahaṅkāra is explained to have a negative meaning. But it is given a positive expression in the 7th chapter

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।

अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥ 4॥

Why?

Answer: 'Aham' can mean self or ego. In chapter 7, it refers to the 'self' indicating the basic element, the microbody. In this chapter, it refers to the ego, which is a vikara, and hence assumes a negative meaning. Likewise in 16th chapter, it refers to ego, in connection with kama and krodha

अहङ्कारं बलं दर्पं

The meaning of a word should be derived in context to the subject.

Subhashji

Question: What does 'dhṛti' mean? What is the difference between 'dhṛti' and 'kriti'?

Answer: 'dhṛti' means 'dharana' and is sometimes indicated as 'dhairya' (patience). This also depends on the context in which the word is used. Here in 18th chapter, it means 'dhairya' to do something.

dhṛti is to decide on something firmly and being determined. 'Kriti' refers to the action or karma itself. As an example, 'I plan to read the Geeta' is 'dhṛti' and reading it is 'Kriti'.



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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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