



ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 18: Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/XAzGpaxHvP8>

The Supreme Path: Balancing Duty and Detachment

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

The session commenced with the auspicious lighting of the traditional lamp, symbolizing the unwavering flame that illuminates the path of Dharma. This sacred light purifies our *Antaḥkaraṇa* (inner being), dispelling the darkness of ignorance with the light of knowledge. Reverent salutations to Bhagavān and the Guru followed the ceremony.

Sant Dnyāneshwar Maharaj refers to the 18th chapter as the *Ek Adhyayi Gita*, indicating that this chapter encapsulates the essence of the entire *Bhagavadgītā*. Even if one misses the other chapters, reading Chapter 18 alone is akin to absorbing the whole wisdom of the *Bhagavadgītā*. It serves as a comprehensive summary of the entire scripture.

This idea can be illustrated with a simple analogy: Imagine a person running late for a train because the clock at home is slow. He arrives at the station just in time to see the train starting to depart. Desperately, he runs and manages to board the last carriage, thereby completing his journey. Similarly, even if one has missed the earlier chapters' discourses, listening to the discussions on Chapter 18 allows one to grasp the entire essence of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

The number 18 holds profound significance in Hindu tradition. It is no coincidence that there are 18 *Puranas*, the *Mahabharata* is composed of 18 books (*parvas*), and the *Mahabharata* war lasted for 18 days. Similarly, the *Bhagavadgītā* itself is divided into 18 chapters. Numerically, the numbers 9 and 18 are considered highly auspicious. For instance, Shankaracharya Maharaj is often addressed as *Shri Shri 1008*, a number symbolizing perfection (*Pūrṇāṁka*).

The number 9 is particularly revered in *Sanatan Dharma* as it represents completeness. This can be seen in the multiplication table of 9, where the sum of the digits in each product always equals 9:

- $9 \times 1 = 9$
- $9 \times 2 = 18$ ($1 + 8 = 9$)
- $9 \times 3 = 27$ ($2 + 7 = 9$)
- $9 \times 4 = 36$ ($3 + 6 = 9$)
- $9 \times 6 = 54$ ($5 + 4 = 9$)
- $9 \times 11 = 99$ ($9 + 9 = 18$; $1 + 8 = 9$)
- $9 \times 12 = 108$ ($1 + 0 + 8 = 9$)

In *Sanatan Dharma*, many concepts, including the **Navagraha** (nine planets), revolve around the numbers 9 or 18. This chapter is often referred to as the *Purna* (Complete) *Adhyaya* because it encompasses *Karma Yoga*, *Jñāna Yoga*, and *Bhakti Yoga*—the three principal paths detailed in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

The chapter begins with a question from Arjuna, which echoes an inquiry he first raised in Chapter 12. There, Arjuna asked about the difference between *Jñāna* (knowledge) and *Bhakti* (devotion) and sought to understand which form of worship is superior—*Saguna Sakar* (worship of God with attributes) or *Nirgun Nirankar* (worship of the formless God). Sri Bhagavān answered this question and introduced additional paths to attain the Supreme.

In verse 12 of Chapter 12, Sri Bhagavān offers a comparative evaluation of different paths:

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते ।
ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥ 12.12॥

"Better than mechanical practice is knowledge; better than knowledge is meditation. Better than meditation is the renunciation of the fruits of actions, for peace immediately follows such renunciation."

Earlier, in the 3rd and 4th verses of Chapter 3, Sri Bhagavān advised Arjuna:

लोकेऽस्मिन्द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ ।
ज्ञानयोगेन साङ्ख्यानं कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥ 3.3॥

"O sinless one, the two paths leading to enlightenment were previously explained by Me: the path of knowledge, for those inclined toward contemplation, and the path of work for those inclined toward action."

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्रुते ।
न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥ 3.4॥

"One cannot achieve freedom from karmic reactions by merely abstaining from work, nor can one attain perfection of knowledge by mere physical renunciation."

Arjuna was intrigued by the repeated emphasis on *Tyāga* (renunciation) and *Sannyāsa* (renunciation of the world) throughout the *Bhagavadgītā*. The terms *Tyāga* and *Sannyāsa* appear 20 and 14 times, respectively, underscoring their significance.

From the outset of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Arjuna had resolved to renounce the action of war and embrace *Sannyāsa*. He mentioned this in Chapters 1 and 2. Sri Bhagavān praised both *Tyāga* and *Sannyāsa*, and later, in Chapter 12, declared that peace immediately follows renunciation. Arjuna, who sought such peace by abandoning the war and taking up *Sannyāsa*, was perplexed by the nuances of these concepts.

This confusion persisted as Sri Bhagavān moved on to describe the characteristics of the Knower in Chapter 13, the qualities of those who transcend the three *gunas* (qualities) in Chapter 14, the characteristics of the Supreme Being (Paramātmā) in Chapter 15, the traits of divine and demonic individuals in Chapter 16, and the characteristics of individuals based on the three types of faith—*sattvic*

(goodness), *rajasic* (passion), and *tamasic* (ignorance)—in Chapter 17.

Eager to resolve his doubts and implement Sri Bhagavān's guidance, Arjuna returned to the question that had been lingering in his mind. Understanding the importance of his inquiry, Arjuna approached Sri Bhagavān (his Guru) with deep humility and respect. Aware that Sri Krishna is *Parabrahma Paramātmā*, Arjuna framed his question with utmost reverence and sincerity, seeking clarity on the crucial concepts of *Tyāga* and *Sannyāsa*.

18.1

arjuna uvāca sannyāsasya mahābāho, tattvamicchāmi veditum, tyāgasya ca hr̥ṣīkeśa, pṛthakkeśiniṣūdana. 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*.

This verse marks a significant moment in the *Bhagavadgītā*, where Arjuna seeks clarity on the concepts of *Sannyāsa* (renunciation) and *Tyāga* (relinquishment). These themes are central to the *Gītā*'s teachings, and Arjuna's inquiry initiates the profound discourse of the eighteenth chapter.

In this verse, Arjuna addresses Śrī Bhagavān by three names—*Keśiniṣūdana* (Slayer of Keśi), *Mahābāho* (mighty-armed), and *Hṛṣīkeśa* (master of the senses). Each of these names carries deep significance and sets the tone for his sincere quest for knowledge.

- **sannyāsasya mahābāho**: "O mighty-armed," Arjuna begins by acknowledging Śrī Bhagavān's physical and spiritual strength. This respectful address reflects Arjuna's humility and his recognition of Bhagavān's authority, both of which are essential for the guidance he seeks.
- **tattvamicchāmi veditum**: "I wish to understand the truth," Arjuna expresses his deep desire to comprehend the essence of these spiritual practices. The term "tattva" implies the fundamental truth or core essence that Arjuna is eager to grasp, highlighting his earnestness in seeking spiritual wisdom.
- **tyāgasya ca hr̥ṣīkeśa**: "and also of Tyāga, O Hṛṣīkeśa," Arjuna refers to Śrī Bhagavān as Hṛṣīkeśa, the master of the senses. This name reflects Arjuna's trust in Bhagavān's ability to provide clarity on the relinquishment of worldly attachments, a crucial aspect of spiritual discipline.
- **pṛthakkeśiniṣūdana**: "separately, O Slayer of Keśi," Arjuna requests that Bhagavān explain the distinctions between *Sannyāsa* and *Tyāga*. The title *Keśiniṣūdana*, referring to Bhagavān's victory over the demon Keśi, symbolizes the destruction of ignorance and ego—obstacles that must be overcome on the spiritual path.

Arjuna's inquiry underscores the importance of understanding the distinctions between *Sannyāsa* and *Tyāga*. Though often used interchangeably, these terms represent different approaches to spiritual practice:

1. **Sannyāsa (Renunciation):** Traditionally, *Sannyāsa* refers to the complete renunciation of worldly life and material possessions. It is often associated with ascetics who have relinquished all duties and responsibilities to focus solely on spiritual pursuits.
2. **Tyāga (Relinquishment):** *Tyāga* involves the relinquishment of attachment to the fruits of actions, rather than the actions themselves. This practice, central to *Karma Yog*, emphasizes performing one's duties without desire for personal gain or reward.

Understanding the difference between these two paths is crucial for spiritual aspirants, as it helps them choose the path that best aligns with their nature and circumstances.

Śrī Bhagavān's forthcoming response to Arjuna's inquiry will illuminate the subtle distinctions between *Sannyāsa* and *Tyāga* and their significance in the pursuit of self-realization. Through this exploration, Bhagavān will provide Arjuna—and all seekers—with the wisdom needed to discern the appropriate path and fulfill their duties with clarity and purpose.

In the verses that follow, Śrī Bhagavān will elaborate on these concepts, offering Arjuna the guidance he needs to navigate the spiritual path, whether through renunciation or through active engagement in the world with detachment.

18.2

śrībhagavānuvāca

kāmyānām(ñ) karmaṇām(n) nyāsaṃ(m), sannyāsaṃ(ñ) kavayo viduḥ, sarVākarmaphalatyāgaṃ(m), prāhustyāgaṃ(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.

In response to Arjuna's inquiry, Śrī Bhagavān offers a clear and profound explanation of *Sannyāsa* (renunciation) and *Tyāga* (relinquishment), shedding light on their subtle differences and interconnectedness.

- **kāmyānām karmaṇām nyāsaṃ:** "Renunciation of actions driven by desires,"
- **sannyāsaṃ kavayo viduḥ:** "is known as *Sannyāsa*, according to the sages."
- **sarVākarmaphalatyāgaṃ:** "Relinquishing the fruits of all actions,"
- **prāhustyāgaṃ vicakṣaṇāḥ:** "is considered *Tyāga* by the wise."

Through these verses, Śrī Bhagavān introduces two fundamental paths in the spiritual journey:

1. **Sannyāsa (Renunciation of Desire-Driven Actions):**

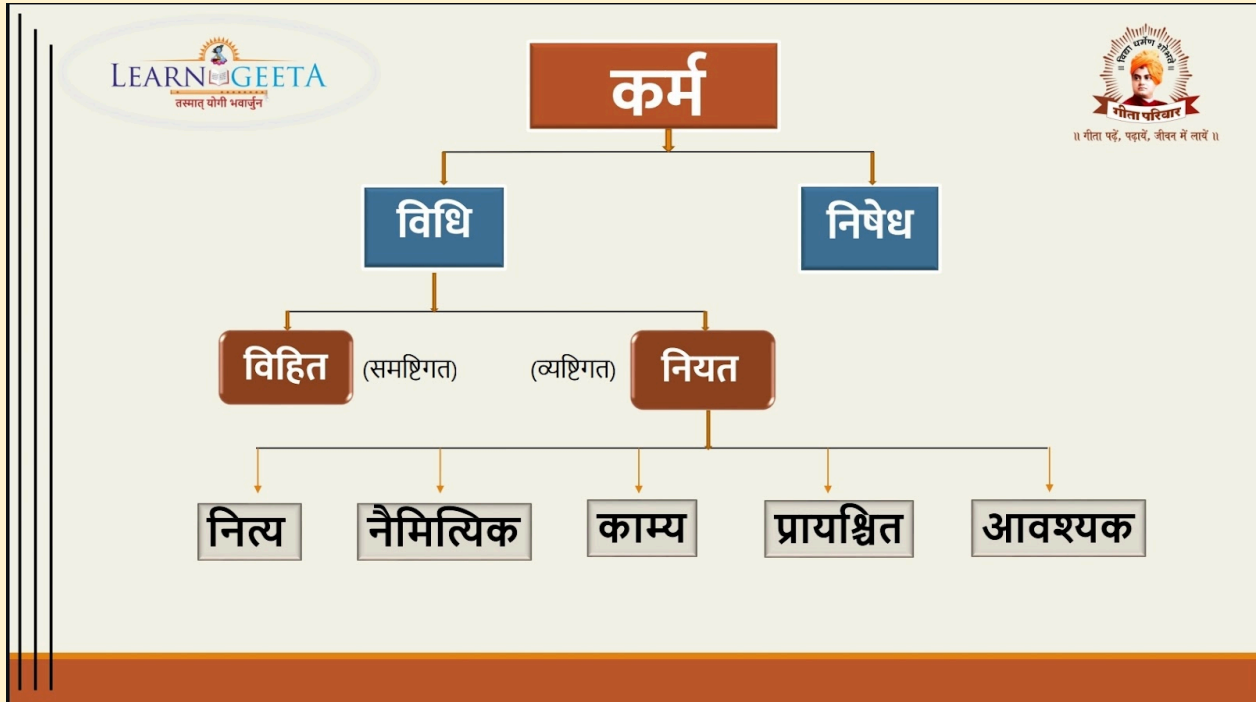
Sannyāsa involves giving up actions motivated by personal desires. It calls for detachment from actions driven by the expectation of specific outcomes, leading to inner peace and spiritual elevation. This path is traditionally associated with those who renounce worldly life to focus solely on spiritual pursuits.

2. **Tyāga (Relinquishment of the Fruits of Actions):**

Tyāga is the practice of relinquishing attachment to the results or fruits of all actions. The focus here

is not on abandoning the actions themselves but on surrendering the desire for their outcomes. This approach fosters equanimity and aligns the individual with a higher spiritual purpose, embodying the essence of *Karma Yoga*.

To further elucidate, *Karma* (action) can be broadly classified into two categories:



1. **Vidhi (Prescribed) Karma:**

These are duties mandated by the scriptures. Failing to perform them results in demerits, but fulfilling them does not necessarily bring rewards. For example, serving one's parents is considered *Vidhi* karma.

2. **Nishiddha (Prohibited) Karma:**

These are actions forbidden by the scriptures, such as theft or indulging in harmful behaviors. Engaging in *Nishiddha* karma leads to negative consequences, while abstaining from them does not yield specific merits.

Within *Vidhi* Karma, there are further classifications:

- **Vihit Karma:**

Actions prescribed by the scriptures that should be performed without a sense of personal doership. For instance, organizing a spiritual discourse (*katha*) is an example of *Vihit* karma.

- **Niyat Karma:**

Duties that must be carried out with responsibility and diligence. For example, tasks like arranging logistics, managing resources, or overseeing events fall under *Niyat* karma.

Niyat Karmas are further subdivided into five types:

- **Nitya Karma:**

These are daily duties, such as *japa* (recitation of mantras), that must be performed consistently. For example, committing to daily meditation, exercise, or prayer is considered *Nitya Karma*. The emphasis is on building disciplined, daily practices that align with spiritual growth.

Example from Tradition:

Swami Ji advised starting with small, achievable commitments—such as reading one or two chapters of the *Bhagavadgītā* daily—and gradually increasing the practice. This ensures that *Nitya Karma* is sustainable and does not become burdensome.

Example from Scripture:

A verse from the *Ramcharitmanas* by Goswami Tulsidas emphasizes the importance of starting the day with gratitude:

प्रातःकाल उठि कै रघुनाथा। मातु पिता गुरु नावहिं माथा ॥

"Upon waking in the morning, Lord Rāma bows down to His parents and Guru."

Another traditional *Nitya Karma* is reciting the following prayer upon waking:

कराग्रे वसते लक्ष्मीः करमध्ये सरस्वती ।
करमूले स्थिता गौरी, प्रभाते करदर्शनम् ॥
समुद्रवसने देवि पर्वतस्तनमण्डले ।
विष्णुपत्नि नमस्तुभ्यं पादस्पर्श क्षमस्वमे ॥

"At the tip of my fingers resides Lakshmi (goddess of wealth), in the middle resides Saraswati (goddess of knowledge), and at the base resides Govinda (Bhagavān Vishnu). Therefore, I look at my hands in the morning."

This prayer serves to begin the day with a sense of reverence and gratitude, seeking blessings for prosperity, wisdom, and divine guidance.

A personal experience by the speaker was shared to stress upon the importance of following certain principles and rules in our daily routine. He too follows certain rules since long. He often used to visit Rishikesh when he was young. Once on such visit his close friend bought a book published by Geeta Press which had some quote printed on it. His friend said to him is it not true you are a staunch follower of certain rules religiously and concealing the part of the printed matter his friend asked him to read what was written. Reading aloud he said look the author has written a sadhak should make it a habit to set small rules for oneself. This made the speaker overjoyed for the author said the same thing that he too believed in and had indeed set some small rules for himself. Not that this was his thought but he followed what he heard earlier in principle. Then removing his finger the friend asked him to read further. Here the author mentioned that the seeker having set the small rules should follow them even if it means sacrificing one's life. Now this does not mean one needs to go to that extreme but should safeguard them and inculcate them through penance.do

- **Naimittika Karma:**

These are occasional duties performed on special occasions, such as rituals during festivals, ceremonies, or important life events.

Example from the Ramayana: There is a beautiful description in Ayodhya Kanda. Śrī Ram gets the news of exile. When Lakshman ji comes to know, he rushes to his brother Śrī Rama and emotes that what has happened is injustice and that they should oppose it. Śrī Ram calming him down says why should they oppose it when its their father who pledged it and it becomes of them to uphold it. On

hearing his brother's take on it Laxman ji then said rather pronounced that he would accompany Śrī Ram on HIS exile. Rama ji did not agree and justified it by teling him how his presence in ayodhya was important to look after the interests of the subjects, take care of his mother , father and so on. But Laxman ji did not get carried away by these reasonings and was firm on his decision to follow his brother on exile. Finally Ram ji asked him to seek his mother Queen Soumitra ji's permission to accompany Ram ji on his exile.

The following couplets from Manas depict the beautiful interaction of Laxman ji:

मागहु बिदा मातु सन जाई। आवहु बेगि चलहु बन भाई॥
मुदित भए सुनि रघुबर बानी। भयउ लाभ बड़ गइ बड़ि हानी॥1॥

O brother! Go and take leave from mother and hurry to the forest! Hearing the words of Shri Ramji , the best of the Raghukul, Lakshman ji became happy. A big loss has been removed and a big benefit has been achieved!□1.

हरषित हृदयँ मातु पहिँ आए। मनहुँ अंध फिरि लोचन पाए॥
जाइ जननि पग नायउ माथा। मनु रघुनंदन जानकि साथा॥2॥

He came to mother Sumitra with a joyful heart , as if a blind man had regained his sight. He went and bowed his head at the feet of mother, but his mind was with Shri Ram and Janaki , who gave joy to the Raghukul.□2□

पूँछे मातु मलिन मन देखी। लखन कही सब कथा बिसेषी।
गई सहमि सुनि बचन कठोरा। मृगी देखि दव जनु चहुँ ओरा॥3॥

Seeing his sad mood, his mother asked him the reason. Lakshmana narrated the whole story in detail. On hearing the harsh words, Sumitra became frightened like a deer becomes frightened on seeing the forest on fire.□3□

लखन लखेउ भा अनरथ आजू। एहिँ सनेह सब करब अकाजू॥
मागत बिदा सभय सकुचाहीं। जाइ संग बिधि कहिहि कि नाही॥4॥

Lakshmana realized that today (now) a disaster has happened. She will spoil the work due to affection. That is why while bidding farewell he hesitates out of fear (and thinks in his mind) whether his mother will ask him to go with her or not.□4□

समुझि सुमित्राँ राम सिय रूपु सुसीलु सुभाउ।
नृप सनेहु लखि धुनेउ सिरु पापिनि दीन्ह कुदाउ॥73॥

Having understood the beauty, character and nature of Rama and Sita and seeing the King's love for them, Sumitraji beat her head and said that the sinful Kaikeyi had badly ambushed them.□73□

धीरजु धरेउ कुअवसर जानी। सहज सुहृद बोली मृदु बानी॥
तात तुम्हारि मातु बैदेही। पिता रामु सब भाँति सनेही॥1॥

But knowing that it was a bad time, she remained patient and Sumitraji, who was a well-wisher by nature, spoke in a soft voice - O dear! Janaki is your mother and Shri Rama, who loves you in every way, is your father.□1□

अवध तहाँ जहँ राम निवासू। तहँई दिवसु जहँ भानु प्रकासू॥
जौ पै सीय रामु बन जाहीं। अवध तुम्हार काजु कछु नाही॥2॥

Ayodhya is where Shri Ram resides. Day is where the sun shines. If Sita and Ram are definitely going to the forest, then you have no business in Ayodhya. [2]

गुर पितु मातु बंधु सुर साई। सेइअहिं सकल प्रान की नाई ॥
रामु प्रानप्रिय जीवन जी के। स्वारथ रहित सखा सबही के ॥3 ॥

Guru, father, mother, brother, god and master, all of them should be served as one's own life. Then Shri Ramchandraji is dear to our lives, is the life of our hearts and is a selfless friend of all. [3]

पूजनीय प्रिय परम जहाँ तें। सब मानिअहिं राम के नातें ॥
अस जियँ जानि संग बन जाहू। लेहु तात जग जीवन लाहू ॥4 ॥

As far as there are worshipful and most beloved people in the world, they are all worthy of being considered (worshipful and most beloved) only because of Rama . Knowing this in your heart, O dear! Go to the forest with him and enjoy the benefits of living in the world! [4]

भूरि भाग भाजनु भयहु मोहि समेत बलि जाउँ।
जौं तुम्हरे मन छाड़ि छलु कीन्ह राम पद ठाउँ ॥74 ॥

I surrender to you (O son!) along with me, and you have become very fortunate that your mind has given up deceit and has attained a place at the feet of Shri Rama. [74]

तुम्हरेहिं भाग रामु बन जाहीं। दूसर हेतु तात कछु नाही ॥
सकल सुकृत कर बड़ फलु एहू। राम सीय पद सहज सनेहू ॥2 ॥

It is because of your good fortune that Shri Ramji is going to the forest. O dear! There is no other reason. The greatest fruit of all good deeds is that there should be natural love for the feet of Shri SitaRamji. [2]

Sumitra Ji blessed him to serve Rama and Sita with unwavering devotion for the entire duration of their 14-year exile. This counsel not only exemplifies *Naimittika Karma*—duties performed on special occasions—but also highlights the profound sense of duty and sacrifice displayed by both Lakshmana and Sumitra Ji. Lakshmana's dedication and Sumitra Ji's selfless guidance underscore the ideals of dharma and devotion that form the core of their actions.

- **Kamya Karma:**

Actions performed with the desire for specific outcomes, such as seeking wealth, success, or other material gains. For example, a farmer planting crops with the hope of a good harvest, or a student studying with the aim of achieving high grades, would be engaging in Kamya Karma.

एक बार भूपति मन माहीं। भै गलानि मोरें सुत नाही ॥

Once the king felt very ashamed that he did not have a son.

King Dasharath went to sage Vasishtha with the desire of having a son..

संगी रिषिहि बसिष्ठ बोलावा। पुत्रकाम सुभ जग्य करावा ॥

Vashishtha called Shringi Rishi and got him to perform the auspicious Putrakameshti Yagna. This is Kamya Karma. All the actions performed to fulfill worldly desires are Kamya Karma.

- **Prāyaścitta Karma:**

Atonement Actions for Repentance:

Prāyaścitta Karma refers to actions performed to atone for wrongdoings or to seek redemption for sins. One of the most profound examples of this in modern history is the story of Mahatma Gandhi

and his vow of austerity.

Gandhi Ji's Vow of Simplicity:

During India's struggle for independence, Mahatma Gandhi led a movement urging Indians to boycott British goods, particularly textiles. He encouraged people to burn British-made clothes as a symbol of resistance and self-reliance. This call to action was embraced by many, and bonfires of foreign clothes became common.

However, Gandhi Ji soon realized the unintended consequences of this act. He saw the impact it had on the poorest people, who often only had a few garments to their name. The thought of them burning the little they had in the name of patriotism troubled him deeply. Recognizing his role in encouraging this action, Gandhi Ji felt a profound sense of responsibility and remorse.

As an act of *Prāyaścitta* (atonement), Gandhi Ji took a solemn vow to wear only a simple hand-spun cloth—known as a loincloth or *dhoti*—for the rest of his life. This vow was not just a personal penance but also a powerful statement of solidarity with the impoverished masses of India. Gandhi Ji adhered to this vow with unwavering commitment, even during his travels to foreign lands, including the cold climate of Britain during the Round Table Conference.

Gandhi Ji's act of *Prāyaścitta* Karma exemplifies how deep remorse and a commitment to corrective action can lead to significant personal and social transformation. His simple attire became a symbol of his dedication to the cause of India's independence and his empathy for the poor. It also underscored the importance of humility, simplicity, and truth in his life.

• **Aavashyak Karma:**

These are essential daily actions necessary for maintaining physical and spiritual well-being, such as eating, bathing, and performing daily prayers.

A story shared to emphasize the importance of performing one's *Niyat* Karma with excellence is as follows:

A king, unhappy with the state of his kingdom, hired a skilled mason to make improvements. After years of hard work, the mason was eager to return home, but the king requested him to build one last house. The mason, hastily finishing the job with substandard materials, later discovered that the house was intended as a gift for him. This realization taught him the importance of giving his best effort in every task, regardless of circumstances.

This story highlights the significance of approaching *Niyat* Karma with dedication and excellence. The quality of our actions, especially when performed with sincerity, ultimately shapes the outcomes we experience in life.

In conclusion, karma accompanies us throughout life, and we reap what we sow. Returning to the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Śrī Bhagavān advises us to perform karma without attachment to the results. Just as a seed grows into a tree and bears fruit, our focus should be on performing our duties with dedication, leaving the results in the hands of the divine. By doing so, we align ourselves with the higher purpose and experience true peace and fulfillment.

18.3

tyājyaṃ(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.

In this verse, Śrī Bhagavān presents a nuanced understanding of *karma* (action) and renunciation, reflecting the differing views among the wise regarding the nature of actions and their potential for spiritual growth.

- **tyājyaṃ doṣavadityeke:** "Some sages argue that all actions are inherently flawed and therefore should be renounced,"
- **karma prāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ:** "because they believe that actions are bound by imperfections and can lead to bondage."
- **yajñadānatapaḥkarma:** "However, others assert that certain actions, such as sacrifice (yajña), charity (dāna), and penance (tapaḥ),"
- **na tyājyamiti cāpare:** "should not be renounced, as they are essential for spiritual advancement."

Śrī Bhagavān highlights two significant perspectives on the nature of *karma* and its role in spiritual life:

1. Renunciation of All Actions (Tyāga):

According to one viewpoint, all actions, due to their inherent imperfections, should be renounced. This perspective arises from the belief that actions are tainted by *doṣa* (flaws), which can entangle the soul in the cycle of *karma*, leading to suffering and bondage. Proponents of this view advocate for the complete renunciation of all actions as a path toward liberation.

2. Essential Actions Not to Be Renounced (Yajñadāna-Tapaḥ):

The opposing view, held by other wise men, emphasizes the importance of certain actions—specifically sacrifice, charity, and penance. These actions, when performed selflessly and with pure intentions, contribute to spiritual purification and uphold *dharma* (righteousness) in society. Therefore, such actions should not be renounced, as they are considered necessary for maintaining spiritual growth and societal harmony.

This verse reflects the complexity of *karma* and the ongoing debate about the merits of action versus renunciation. Śrī Bhagavān presents these differing perspectives to illustrate that while renouncing attachment to actions is crucial, certain righteous actions, when performed with the right attitude, are indispensable for spiritual growth. This balanced approach is central to the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where the path of *karma* is harmonized with spiritual wisdom.

Śrī Bhagavān's discussion of these perspectives emphasizes the need for discernment in action. While some actions may indeed lead to bondage if performed with selfish motives, others, when carried out with a spirit of selflessness and devotion, become powerful tools for spiritual advancement.

In the following verses, Śrī Bhagavān will delve deeper into these themes, guiding Arjuna—and all spiritual seekers—toward a more profound understanding of how to engage in action while progressing on the spiritual path. Through this exploration, Bhagavān will provide clarity on how to balance the performance of one's duties with the pursuit of liberation, offering a path that integrates action with spiritual wisdom.

18.4

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

Of Samnyāsa 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.

At this juncture in the *Bhagavadgītā*, Śrī Bhagavān recognizes Arjuna's inner turmoil. Arjuna, who has been grappling with the decision to renounce the battle and withdraw from the war, stands at a critical crossroads. Understanding this, Śrī Bhagavān seeks to clarify the true nature of *Tyāga* (renunciation), offering Arjuna—and all seekers—a conclusive understanding of its essence and types.

- **niścayaṃ śṛṇu me tatra:** "Listen to My firm conclusion on this matter,"
- **tyāge bharatasattama:** "concerning renunciation, O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna),"
- **tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra:** "For renunciation, O tiger among men,"
- **trividhaḥ samprakīrtitaḥ:** "is said to be of three kinds—Sāttvika, Rājasika, and Tāmasika."

Śrī Bhagavān acknowledges Arjuna's inclination toward renouncing the battle, yet He urges Arjuna to first understand the deeper aspects of *Tyāga*. Bhagavān categorizes *Tyāga* into three distinct forms, each aligned with one of the three *gunas* (qualities) that influence human actions:

1. **Sāttvika Tyāga:**

This highest form of renunciation is rooted in purity, wisdom, and selflessness. It involves giving up attachment to the fruits of actions while continuing to perform one's duties with a clear sense of *dharma* (righteousness). *Sāttvika Tyāga* represents true renunciation, where one acts without selfish desires, fully aligned with spiritual principles. This is the path that leads to liberation and peace, not by escaping responsibilities but by embracing them with detachment.

2. **Rājasika Tyāga:**

Rājasika renunciation is marked by passion and ego. It is driven by a desire for personal gain, recognition, or rewards. In this form of renunciation, one might give up certain actions, but the underlying motives are selfish. For Arjuna, this could represent a withdrawal from the battlefield driven by fear of loss or desire for personal peace, rather than a true, selfless renunciation.

3. **Tāmasika Tyāga:**

This is the lowest form of renunciation, characterized by ignorance, delusion, or laziness. It often involves abandoning one's duties out of fear, confusion, or a misunderstanding of spiritual teachings. *Tāmasika Tyāga* leads to inaction and neglect of one's responsibilities, which in Arjuna's case would mean renouncing the battle out of despair, which is not true renunciation but an escape from duty.

Śrī Bhagavān's guidance is crucial for Arjuna, who is on the verge of renouncing his warrior duties. Bhagavān acknowledges Arjuna's readiness for *Tyāga*, but He emphasizes the need for discernment. True *Tyāga* is not about abandoning one's responsibilities or running away from the challenges of life. Instead, it is about performing one's duties without attachment to the outcomes, acting in accordance with *dharma* with a mind free from selfish desires.

By categorizing *Tyāga* into *Sāttvika*, *Rājasika*, and *Tāmasika*, Śrī Bhagavān teaches that renunciation must be approached with wisdom and self-awareness. He cautions Arjuna against *Tāmasika* renunciation, which is born out of ignorance and fear, and against *Rājasika* renunciation, which is motivated by selfish desires. Instead, He urges Arjuna to embrace *Sāttvika Tyāga*—a renunciation that is pure, selfless, and aligned with the highest spiritual principles.

As the chapter progresses, Bhagavān will elaborate on each type of *Tyāga*, guiding Arjuna toward a deeper understanding of true renunciation. He will show that the path to liberation lies not in abandoning the battle, but in performing his warrior duties with detachment, free from the bondage of desire and ego. This is the path of true *Tyāga* that leads to spiritual freedom and inner peace.

yajñadānatapaḥkarma, na tyājyaṃ(ñ) kāryameva tat, yajño dānaṃ(n) tapaścaiva, pāvanāni manīṣiṇām. 18.5

Acts of sacrifice, charity and penance are not worth giving up; they must be performed. For sacrifice, charity and penance—all these are purifiers to the wise men.

After addressing the complexities of renunciation, Śrī Bhagavān now underscores an essential truth: while the path of *Tyāga* (renunciation) is profound, certain virtuous actions remain indispensable. These actions are not to be cast aside but embraced, as they are vital to spiritual purity and growth.

- **yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṃ:** "Acts of sacrifice (yajña), charity (dāna), and penance (tapaḥ) should never be renounced,"
- **kāryameva tat:** "they must indeed be performed,"
- **yajño dānaṃ tapaścaiva:** "for sacrifice, charity, and penance,"
- **pāvanāni manīṣiṇām:** "are the purifiers of the wise."

In this verse, Śrī Bhagavān delivers a powerful message: even on the path of renunciation, these key actions—sacrifice, charity, and penance—are not just recommended; they are essential.

1. **Yajña (Sacrifice):**

Yajña is more than a ritual; it is an offering to the divine, a practice that aligns us with cosmic harmony. These acts of worship and devotion are the very essence of maintaining balance in the universe and within oneself. Sacrifice is not just a duty—it is a means of elevating the soul and contributing to the welfare of all.

2. **Dāna (Charity):**

Dāna is the expression of selfless love and compassion. Charity purifies the heart, dismantling the ego and fostering a connection with others. It is through giving that we receive the grace of detachment from materialism, allowing us to rise above the limitations of the physical world and engage in acts that have lasting spiritual significance.

3. **Tapaḥ (Penance):**

Tapaḥ represents the discipline and austerity required for spiritual mastery. Through penance, we conquer the senses, purify the mind, and strengthen the will. This self-discipline is not a burden but a pathway to liberation, refining our character and bringing us closer to the divine.

Śrī Bhagavān's directive is clear: these actions—sacrifice, charity, and penance—are not just options on the spiritual path; they are the very foundation upon which true renunciation stands. Even the wisest, those who have renounced worldly attachments, must continue to engage in these practices, as they cleanse the soul, purify the mind, and sustain spiritual progress.

True renunciation (*Tyāga*) is not about forsaking all actions; it is about performing the right actions with the right mindset—one that is detached, selfless, and aligned with the higher purpose of life. In this way, *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapaḥ* become powerful tools for transformation, guiding the soul toward liberation while maintaining the integrity of the individual and society.

Illustrative Insight from Guru Nanak Dev Ji:

Guru Nanak Dev Ji profoundly illustrates this principle:

तीर्थ जप और दान करे, मन में करे गुमान।
नानक निष्फल जात है, जो कुंजर स्नान॥

"One may perform pilgrimages, recite prayers, and give charity, but if done with pride in the heart, says Nanak, it is all in vain, like an elephant taking a bath only to cover itself in dust again."

This wisdom highlights that the true power of these actions lies not in their external execution but in the purity of the heart and mind behind them. Acts of sacrifice, charity, and penance performed with ego or pride are empty and fruitless. However, when carried out with humility, devotion, and a spirit of surrender, they become potent forces for spiritual purification.

Impact on Arjuna's Dilemma:

For Arjuna, who stood ready to abandon his duties in the throes of doubt, Śrī Bhagavān's words serve as a crucial reminder: the path to true renunciation is not found in the abandonment of duty, but in the purification of intent. By continuing to perform righteous actions with a pure heart, Arjuna—and all seekers—can transcend the binding effects of karma while contributing to the greater good.

This teaching elevates the understanding of *Tyāga*, urging us to see renunciation not as an escape from action, but as a higher engagement with life's duties, performed with detachment and devotion. In this way, Śrī Bhagavān guides Arjuna towards a path where he can fulfill his duties as a warrior, not out of attachment or desire, but as an offering to the divine, ensuring that his actions lead to both personal liberation and the welfare of the world.

18.6

**etānyapi tu karmāṇi, saṅgaṃ(n) tyaktvā phalāni ca,
kartavyānīti me pārtha, niścitaṃ(m) matamuttamam. 18.6**

Hence these acts of sacrifice, charity and penance, and all other acts of duty too, must be performed without attachment and expectation of reward : this is My well-considered and supreme verdict, Arjuna.

Following His explanation of the indispensable nature of certain virtuous actions, Śrī Bhagavān reinforces the importance of performing one's duties—particularly those involving sacrifice, charity, and penance—with a spirit of detachment.

- **etānyapi tu karmāṇi:** "These acts of duty, including sacrifice, charity, and penance,"
- **saṅgaṃ tyaktvā phalāni ca:** "should be performed without attachment and without any desire for the fruits of action,"
- **kartavyānīti me pārtha:** "they must indeed be performed, O Arjuna,"
- **niścitaṃ matamuttamam:** "this is My firm and supreme opinion."

In this verse, Śrī Bhagavān imparts three crucial teachings:

1. Detachment from Actions (Saṅgaṃ Tyaktvā):

Actions should be carried out with a sense of duty, free from personal attachment or ego involvement. This means engaging in activities not because of personal desire or expectation but because they are inherently righteous and necessary. Such detachment allows one to act with clarity and purpose, unclouded by the outcomes.

2. Renunciation of the Fruits (Phalāni Tyaktvā):

The essence of *Karma Yoga* lies in relinquishing the desire for the outcomes of one's actions. One should perform their duties without being driven by the potential rewards or consequences, maintaining equanimity regardless of the result. This renunciation of the fruits of action is key to spiritual liberation.

3. Supreme Verdict (Matamuttamam):

Śrī Bhagavān declares this approach—acting without attachment and without desire for results—as His highest and most well-considered teaching. This underlines the significance of selfless action, aligned with *Dharma* (righteousness), as the path to spiritual growth and inner peace.

To further illustrate this teaching, consider the example of Brahmleen Jayadayal Goyandka Ji. When a follower once praised him for his insightful discourses, saying, "You have spoken so wonderfully; we have never heard such things before," Goyandka Ji humbly replied, "You are very generous. I speak simply, yet you praise it so highly." His response, marked by a complete absence of pride, reflects the true humility of a great soul. This humility perfectly embodies the essence of detachment from the fruits of one's actions, as taught by Bhagavān.

Bhagavān's instruction here transcends mere ritualistic observance. He guides Arjuna—and all seekers—toward a deeper understanding of *Tyāga* (renunciation). True renunciation is not about abandoning actions; it is about abandoning attachment to the results of those actions. This approach ensures that one's actions are pure, free from selfish desires, and aligned with the ultimate goal of spiritual liberation.

By performing duties in this manner, a person moves closer to the realization of the Self and experiences the peace and freedom that come from living a life of *Dharma*. This teaching is particularly relevant to Arjuna, who is caught in a moral dilemma about his duty as a warrior. Bhagavān encourages him to fulfill his responsibilities without attachment, which will lead him toward liberation.

A Reflective Bhajan on Karma:

कर्म तेरा साथी है ये ही साथ जाता है।
जो भी पहले बोया है वो ही आज पाता है॥

धोखा अगर तू देगा किसी को, बदले में तू भी धोखा ही पायेगा,
घर तू उजाड़ेगा जो किसी का भी बंदे, तेरा चमन फिर कैसे खिलेगा,
मालिक के पास सबका ही खाता है॥1॥

कर्मों के दुनिया में खेल हैं निराले, कर्मों के ही तो फल पाते सारे,
कर्मों के फल से बनते हैं राजा, कर्मों से बनते भिक्षुक बेचारे,
कर्मों के फल से ही सुख दुःख आता है॥2॥

निर्बल को गर तू देगा सहारा, तुझको भी मिलेगा तभी तो किनारा,
प्यासे को तू जो पानी पिलायेगा, तुझको मिलेगी अमृत की धारा,
काहे को तू यह सच बिसराता है॥3॥

कर्मों से मानव कर्मों से दानव, कर्मों से ही तो बनते हैं देवता,
करने से पहले खूब सोचो विचारो, फिर ना मिलेगी गलती की माफी,
बार बार तू क्यों गलती दोहराता है॥4॥



A beautiful bhajan captures the essence of performing actions selflessly:

कर्म तेरा साथी है ये ही साथ जाता है।
जो भी पहले बोया है वो ही आज पाता है।।

"Your actions are your true companions; they alone accompany you. Whatever you have sown before, you reap today."

धोखा अगर तू देगा किसी को, बदले में तू भी धोखा ही पायेगा,
घर तू उजाड़ेगा जो किसी का भी बंदे, तेरा चमन फिर कैसे खिलेगा.
मालिक के पास सबकाही खाता है ॥१॥

"If you deceive someone, you will also be deceived in return. If you destroy someone's home, how will your own garden bloom? The Lord keeps an account of everything."

कर्मों के दुनिया में खेल है निराले, कर्मों के तो फल पाते सारे,
कर्मों के फल से बनते हैं राजा, कर्मों से बनते भिक्षुक बेचारे.
कर्मों के फल से दुःख सुख आता है ॥२॥

"In the world of actions, the games are unique; everyone reaps the fruits of their actions. Actions make one a king, and actions make one a poor beggar. The fruits of actions bring both joy and sorrow."

निर्बल को गर तू देगा सहारा, तुझको तो मिलेगा तभी तो किनारा,
प्यासे को तू जो पानी पिलायेगा, तुझको मिलेगी अमृत की धारा,
काहे को तू यह सच बिसराता है ॥३॥

"If you support the weak, you will find a shore. If you give water to the thirsty, you will receive the nectar stream. Why do you forget this truth?"

कर्मों से मानव कर्मों से दानव, कर्मों से ही तो बनते हैं देवता,
करने से पहले खूब सोचो विचारो, फिर ना मिलेगी गलती की माफी,
बार बार तू क्यों गलती दोहराता है ॥४॥

"Actions make a human, actions make a demon, and actions make a deity. Think carefully before acting, for there will be no forgiveness for mistakes. Why do you repeat the same mistakes again and again?"

Śrī Bhagavān's teaching resonates deeply with the essence of this bhajan. It reminds us that our actions shape our destiny, and by performing them with detachment and purity, we align ourselves with the divine will. This is the path of *Dharma*, where renunciation is not about inactivity but about acting with selflessness and surrender to the Supreme.

Through these teachings, Bhagavān not only guides Arjuna in his moment of crisis but also offers timeless wisdom to all seekers, showing that the true path to liberation lies in fulfilling one's duties without attachment, with unwavering devotion, and with a heart free from the chains of desire.

The session concluded with a *sankirtan* (devotional singing) of "Harisharanam," followed by a round of Q&A.

Question and Answer Session:

Alka Vashnav Ji:

Q: Sumitra Ji was considerate about Sri Ram and Sita and asked Laxman to follow them into the Vanavas. However, she did not give the same consideration to Laxman's wife, Urmila Ji. Why?

Answer:

To take care of Urmila Ji, the entire family, including Sumitra Ji, was present. However, there was no one else to care for Sri Ram in the forest. This distinction reflects the difference between Bharatiya (Indian) philosophy and Western philosophy. Western philosophy often emphasizes individual happiness, while Bharatiya philosophy focuses on collective welfare (**Samashti**). The ideal in Bharatiya philosophy is to ensure the happiness of the entire universe, not just the individual. Sri Ram is the support of the **Samsara** (world), and His service is essential. Urmila's sacrifice was no less important, and it is noteworthy that she never expressed any complaints about Laxman's departure to the forest. For Laxman, this was an act of '**tapasya**' (penance), a form of **Yajña** (sacrifice) where he renounced his own life with his wife to serve his brother and fulfill his dharma.

Annapurna Ji:

Q: What is Aparā and Para Prakṛti?

Answer:

Aparā Prakṛti and **Para Prakṛti** refer to two aspects of nature or reality:

- **Aparā Prakṛti** is the lower nature or material aspect of the universe. It includes everything that can be perceived by the senses, such as the physical world and the body. Aparā Prakṛti is associated with the three gunas (qualities): sattva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (ignorance).
- **Para Prakṛti** is the higher nature or spiritual aspect. It represents the life force or consciousness that sustains the universe. Para Prakṛti is considered superior and is often associated with the soul or the higher self.

Q: I want to understand the meaning of all the chapters. What should I do?

Answer:

To gain a deep understanding of all the chapters, it is recommended to listen to the Vivechan (discourses) and study the book 'Sadhak Sanjivani' by Swami Ramsukhdas Ji.



We are sure you enjoyed reading the Vivechan write-up. Please invest three minutes of your time to provide us your feedback. Use the link below:

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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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