



ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 2: Sāṅkhya-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/myH9vmKITxM>

The Unborn, the Undying, and the Unshaken: Understanding the Eternal Self and the Call to Righteous Action

Chapter 2 of the Bhagavad Gītā is Sāṅkhya Yoga - “The Yoga of Knowledge” or “The Yoga of Wisdom” or “The Yoga of Analytical Knowledge”

The session commenced with deep prajwalan, the customary lighting of the lamp, prayers to the Supreme, and salutations to all the Gurus.

**Vasudeva Sutam Devam, Kansa Chāṇūra Mardanam,
Devakī Parama Ānandam, Kṛṣṇam Vande Jagadgurum.**

**Yogeśam Saccidānandam, Vāsudeva Rājapriyam,
Dharma Saṁsthāpakam Vīram, Kṛṣṇo Vande Jagadgurum.**

Śrī Guru Caraṇa Kamalabhyo Namaḥ

By the immensely auspicious grace of Bhagavān, a deeply awakened sense of gratitude has arisen within all present—gratitude for being blessed with this rare and meaningful human birth. This sacred opportunity now feels destined to be fruitful, not only in this world but in the next as well. With such a goal in mind, each one has begun walking the path of auspiciousness: studying the Bhagavad Gītā, learning its proper recitation, memorising its verses, engaging in self-study, listening to its profound expositions, and, more importantly, striving to integrate its timeless principles into everyday life.

Perhaps it is the fruit of countless virtuous actions performed in previous births, or the blessings of noble ancestors, or the glance of compassion from a saint or great soul in some former lifetime. Whatever the cause, the result is extraordinary—the opportunity to study the Gītā has come not because one has chosen it, but because one has been *chosen* for it.

It is essential to hold this unwavering faith in the heart: *One does not choose the Gītā; one is chosen*

by the Gītā.

The sacred journey through the three dhāmas has already been completed, and now begins the ascent toward the fourth—**Sāṅkhya Yoga**, the second adhyāya (chapter) of the Gītā. For the past three weeks, the seekers have been coming together to reflect upon this most significant chapter. In the last two sessions, nineteen śloka were discussed, each unfolding a layer of transformative wisdom.

Having surrendered completely as a disciple, Arjuna laid down his weapons and sought guidance. Witnessing this moment of total surrender, a profound resolve arose in the heart of Bhagavān—to deliver such timeless knowledge through Arjuna, knowledge that would serve as a beacon for all of humankind, across all generations and yugas.

Indeed, when one looks back over the past 5300 years, one finds that all thinkers, saints, and ācāryas have unanimously affirmed that *there exists no scripture as simple and accessible—and yet as supremely uplifting for human life—as the Bhagavad Gītā.*

When Arjuna declared himself overwhelmed by delusion and confusion, saying his intellect had been overpowered by *kārpaṇya* (cowardice), he admitted with humility:

***kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ
pṛcchāmi tvam̐ dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ (2.7)***

"I am gripped by a weakness of heart; my mind is utterly confused about dharma."

Unlike most, who, when confused, seek validation from others who merely echo their thoughts, Arjuna asked for something very different. He did not say, *"Tell me what I want to hear."* Instead, he said: *"Tell me what will truly lead to my welfare."* This singular attitude is what inspired Bhagavān to begin delivering the divine discourse of the Gītā.

And so, from the 11th śloka of the second chapter, Bhagavān began to speak. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, while writing his commentary on the Gītā, did not even write on the verses before the 11th śloka, considering them preparatory in nature. For it is from this point that the profound teachings begin.

In the first few ślokas, Bhagavān sharply rebukes Arjuna, calling out his unmanliness, his weakness, and his grief-stricken state of mind. He says:

***aśocyān anvaśocas tvam̐ prajñāvādām̐ś ca bhāṣase
gatāsūn agatāsūm̐ś ca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ (2.11)***

"You grieve for those who should not be grieved for, and yet you speak words of wisdom. The wise do not mourn for the living or the dead."

Arjuna, while imagining himself to be speaking wisely, was actually lamenting in a way that was unfitting for a truly wise person. Recognising this, Bhagavān began to dismantle his assumptions—one logical layer at a time.

Hidden truths, long veiled in mystery, began to shine forth. The eternal spiritual knowledge that Bhagavān had once revealed to the sun-god Sūrya, but which had become lost with time, now began to re-emerge through His divine voice.

It is the same **Sāṅkhya Yoga** that Sage Kapila once imparted to his mother Devahūti—a yoga that now, once again, found renewed expression through Bhagavān's words.

From this point onward, begins a discourse that continues to guide and uplift those who are sincerely seeking—not just answers, but transformation. It is a call not just to think differently, but to live differently.

Through every śloka, the Gītā does not merely impart information; it initiates a change, one that blesses not only this world (*loka*) but the next (*paraloka*), not only one life but all lives yet to come. The one who walks this path with humility, sincerity, and surrender indeed walks toward supreme auspiciousness and eternal welfare.

Such is the unfathomable gift of the Bhagavad Gītā.

2.20

**na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin,
nāyaṃ(m) bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ,
ajo nityaḥ(ś) śāśvato'yaṃ(m) purāṇo,
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre. 2.20**

The soul is never born, nor it ever dies; nor does it become after being born. For, it is unborn, eternal, everlasting and primeval; even though the body is slain, the soul is not.

This **Ātman**—this inner Self—is never born, nor does it ever die. At no point in time does it come into being, nor will it ever cease to be. It is **aja**—unborn, **nitya**—eternal, **śāśvata**—unchanging, and **purāṇa**—most ancient.

Yet it is not merely ancient in the sense of being "very old." The term **purāṇa** refers to that which is so ancient, so immeasurably old, that its beginning cannot be traced. Something **purātana** may have arisen long ago, but it still had a beginning. However, **sanātana**—the term that defines this Ātman—means it has **always been**. There was no "first time" for it. It was never created.

People often wonder: How did the world first come into existence? Who was the first being? How did the soul originate? Was it the egg first or the chicken? Such musings arise from limited thinking. Bhagavān declares that all such questions are born from **incomplete understanding**, because they are framed within the boundaries of time. The intellect, being itself time-bound, cannot grasp the essence of that which is **kālātita**—beyond time.

The jīvātmā has no beginning. It was never "thought into being" at some point in time. Bhagavān is beyond time and beyond cause. He did not one day decide to create many souls. The Self is not a product of an event. It is **sanātana**—eternal, beginningless.

Hence, the ideas of "first" or "last" belong only to those who dwell under the influence of time. But Bhagavān is not under time—He transcends it. Therefore, this Self too is untouched by the cycle of birth and death.

Even when the physical body is destroyed, **na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre**—this Self is never slain.

2.21

vedāvināśinaṃ(n) nityaṃ(ṡ), ya enamajamavyayam,

kathaṃ(m) sa puruṣaḥ(ph) pārtha, kaṃ(ñ) ghātayati hanti kam.2.21

Arjuna, the man who knows this soul to be imperishable, eternal and free from birth and decay-how and whom will he cause to be killed, how and whom will he kill ?

O Pārtha, one who truly knows this Self as indestructible (**avināśinam**), eternal (**nityam**), unborn (**ajam**), and imperishable (**avyayam**)—how can such a person ever cause the death of another or kill anyone at all?

This is the understanding that transforms one’s vision entirely. If the Self cannot be destroyed, then who is it that truly kills, and who is it that truly dies?

This is one of the most widely known verses of the Gītā, frequently recited in times of grief, especially in condolence messages. And rightly so. It offers the most profound solace: that the essence of life—the Ātman—is untouched by death, uncreated, and eternal.

Once this truth is understood, the illusion of killing or being killed vanishes. The wise do not grieve, because **they see what truly is.**

2.22

**vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya,
navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi,
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇā-
nyanyāni saṃyāti navāni dehi. 2.22**

As a man shedding worn-out garments, takes other new ones, likewise, the embodied soul, casting off worn-out bodies, enters into others that are new.

Just as a person discards old, worn-out garments and adorns new ones, similarly, the **dehi**—the embodied Self—sheds the old, frail body and takes on a new one.

The metaphor is both simple and profound. When a shirt loses its buttons, one may stitch on new ones. When a tear appears, it may be patched. If the colour fades, it might be dyed again. Every possible effort is made to repair and extend its utility. But eventually, a moment comes when all attempts at repair seem futile. The garment has served its time. It must now be retired.

So too is this body. When a tooth aches, one rushes to a dentist. When the heart falters, a cardiologist is sought. A fracture sends one to an orthopaedic specialist. Every effort is made to preserve, repair, and continue life within this body. But a time inevitably arrives when the Self recognises that this body is no longer usable. Just like a worn-out outfit, the Self simply lets it go and assumes another.

There’s a beautiful English saying:

“Death is the change of name, dress, and address.”

This statement encapsulates the essence of this śloka. Death is merely a transition. Three things change: the name, the form, and the location. The soul moves from one house (body) to another. The name changes, the appearance changes, and the address changes. But the Self remains—untouched, undiminished, eternal.

So what truly dies? Nothing essential. That which is eternal cannot perish.

Once this insight settles into the heart, grief begins to fade. Then arises the wisdom behind the great **yakṣa praśna** from the Mahābhārata. The yakṣa once asked Yudhiṣṭhira: **kim āścaryam?**—What is the greatest wonder in this world?

To which Yudhiṣṭhira replied: Every day countless people are born and countless people die, yet every human lives with the illusion that death is for others, not for oneself. When someone else passes away, it is met with wailing and disbelief, as though it were some unfortunate accident. Everyone behaves as though they are immortal, and the one who died must have done so by mistake.

But if death is certain, and none are exempt from it, then what is the point of excessive sorrow? Some depart earlier, some later—but all must go. When this understanding takes root, the fear of death dissolves. One who has truly grasped this truth no longer fears mortality. For **death is not the end—it is merely a transformation.**

2.23

**nainaṃ(ñ) chindanti śāstrāṇi, nainaṃ(n) dahati pāvakaḥ,
na cainaṃ(ñ) kledayantyāpo, na śoṣayati mārutaḥ. 2.23**

Weapon can not cut it nor can fire burn it; water cannot wet it nor can wind dry it.

This Self, O Arjuna, cannot be pierced by weapons, nor burned by fire. Waters cannot drench it, nor can the wind wither it.

These lines reveal the transcendental nature of the **ātman**. It is beyond the grasp of the elements—it cannot be destroyed by the **pañca-mahābhūtas**. Weapons may cut the body, fire may consume it, water may drench it, and wind may dry it—but the Self remains untouched, unaffected, invincible.

A question may arise in the thoughtful mind: only four elements—fire (**pāvakaḥ**), water (**āpaḥ**), wind (**mārutaḥ**), and weaponry (**symbolising earth**)—are mentioned here. Why is space (**ākāśa**) not included?

The answer lies in its nature. The four mentioned are **kriyātmaka**—active in nature. **Ākāśa** is **akriya**—non-active. It is for this reason that Bhagavān excludes it here. The four are agents of transformation or destruction. But since space does not act, it is not invoked in the context of harming or affecting the Self.

Ultimately, all destruction is only of the body. The Self remains. Beyond time, beyond decay, beyond reach.

Such is the glory of the Self that resides within all beings—eternal, unchanging, and unaffected by anything material. When one begins to grasp this truth, fear disappears, sorrow lessens, and clarity begins to shine.

2.24

**acchedyo'ya madāhyo'yam, akledyo'śoṣya eva ca,
nityaḥ(s) sarvagataḥ(s) sthāṇur, acalo'yaṃ(m) sanātanaḥ. 2.24**

For this soul is incapable of being cut, or burnt by fire; nor can it be dissolved by water and is undriable by air as well; This soul is eternal, all-pervading, immovable, constant and everlasting.

This **ātman** cannot be cut, cannot be burned, cannot be drenched, and cannot be dried. It is **nityaḥ** (eternal), **sarvagataḥ** (all-pervading), **sthāṇuḥ** (firm), **acalaḥ** (immovable), and **sanātanaḥ** (timeless).

A significant shift in understanding is required here. Conventionally, people imagine that when death occurs, the soul exits one body and travels to another. The popular notion is of a soul in transit—departing, journeying, arriving. But this is merely how the intellect chooses to perceive it.

Bhagavān reveals something far more subtle. The **ātman** is **sarvagataḥ**—present everywhere. It is **sthāṇuḥ**—steadfast. It doesn't move. It doesn't travel. So, how does it "go" from one body to another?

It doesn't.

It simply gets **connected**.

A simple analogy can clarify. Consider a mobile phone. It contains a SIM card, and all around, there are signals broadcast by cell towers. These signals are everywhere—pervasive. No matter where the phone moves, it connects to the signal. The signal never moves. The SIM simply aligns itself to it.

Likewise, **ātman** is like that pervasive signal. It is always present. When a new body is formed, it merely aligns with that universal presence. No journey is made. Nothing is transferred. It's only the **connection** that shifts.

Or take another example—television signals from satellites. No matter where a dish is placed—on one rooftop or another, in one city or another—the signal is the same. The setup box merely receives it. The signal didn't move. It was always there.

The **ātman** is not a **padārtha** (tangible substance). It is energy—pure consciousness. Think of electricity. It is generated at a power station and flows through grids and transformers to individual homes. From the meter, it powers various devices. But ask—Is the electricity in the fan different from the one in the bulb? Is the electricity in one apartment different from another?

It's the same. Yet, each home receives a separate bill. Why? Because usage differs. Similarly, **ātman** is one. Undivided. But the experiences and karmic outcomes—like electricity bills—are individual. Different beings receive different results due to their past **karma**, and accordingly, take birth in different **yonis** (forms of existence).

2.25

avyakto'yama cintyo'yam, avikāryo'yamucyate, tasmādevaṃ(ṽ) viditvainaṃ(n) nānuśocitumarhasi.2.25

This soul is unmanifest; it is incomprehensible and it is spoken of as immutable. Therefore, knowing it as such, you should not grieve.

This Self is **avyaktaḥ** (unmanifest), **acintyaḥ** (beyond thought), and **avikāryaḥ** (immutable). Therefore, having known it thus, one has no reason to grieve.

Electricity, for instance, can still be understood in physical terms—electrons, current flow, etc. Even when not visible, its presence is felt—touch a live wire, and the jolt confirms its reality. But **ātman** is

even subtler than that. It cannot be sensed by touch, nor can it be intellectually grasped.

It is **avyaktaḥ**—invisible to the senses. It is **acintyaḥ**—inconceivable by the mind. One can only think of what one has perceived, imagined, or heard of. But that which has never been encountered cannot be contemplated.

Consider this: if someone is asked to visualise “kisrī”—a word they’ve never heard before—it’s impossible. One might ask, “Is it related to *mishrī*?” But no real image or thought will form. The mind has no reference. One cannot think of something utterly unfamiliar.

Similarly, the **ātman** cannot be imagined or described. It is unlike anything else. No metaphor, no image, no category applies to it. That is why it is called **acintyaḥ**.

Moreover, it is **avikāryaḥ**—free from all change or transformation. It does not evolve, decay, or shift forms. Unlike milk that turns into curd—a change from **prakṛti** to **vikṛti**—**ātman** remains constant. That which undergoes change is termed **vikārī**, while that which resists all change is **avikārī**.

So, knowing the Self to be formless, changeless, and beyond all perception or thought, Bhagavān emphatically declares—such a reality is not worthy of sorrow.

Grief arises when something is lost. But that which is eternal can never be lost.

The one who sees **ātman** as unburnable, uncuttable, unchangeable, ungraspable—and yet as the substratum of all experience—begins to understand why Bhagavān urges, **nānuśocitumarhasi** — “There is no need to grieve.”

2.26

**atha cainaṃ(n) nityajātaṃ(n), nityaṃ(ṽ) vā manyase mṛtam,
tathāpi tvaṃ(m) mahābāho, naivaṃ śocitumarhasi.2.26**

And, Arjuna, if you should assume this soul to be subject to perpetual birth and death, even then you should not grieve like this.

Even hypothetically, if one were to believe that the **ātman** is born repeatedly and dies repeatedly, still—there would be no reason for grief. Though such a view does not align with the core truth of **Sanātana Dharma**, Bhagavān offers space to reflect. Out of compassion, He grants the freedom to consider even the most contradictory perspective. And even then, sorrow holds no ground.

Why? Because—

2.27

**jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyuḥ(r), dhruvaṃ(ñ) janma mṛtasya ca,
tasmādaparihārye'rthe, na tvaṃ(m) śocitumarhasi. 2.27**

For, in that case death is certain for the born, and rebirth is inevitable for the dead. You should not, therefore, grieve over the inevitable.

For one who is born, death is certain. And for one who dies, birth too is inevitable. This cycle is inescapable. Whatever is beyond control, **aparihārya**, is not worthy of sorrow. This principle stands true even under the flawed assumption that the **ātman** undergoes birth and death. Therefore, why

grieve?

This truth aligns with an ancient wisdom echoed across traditions:

आया है, सो जाएगा
राजा, रंक, फ़कीर।

He who has come, must go—be he king, pauper or a mendicant.

Bhagavān's perspective is gentle yet firm. There's no imposition, no rigidity. Instead, there is graceful reasoning—a quality that elevates His discourse beyond dogma.

To expand on this principle with a modern analogy, consider the words of Stephen Covey in **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**. He describes two spheres: the **Circle of Influence** and the **Circle of Concern**. The former contains matters we can act upon. The latter includes everything we worry about but cannot control. He suggests that we should invest our energy only in what lies within our influence. Anything outside of it—however distressing—deserves to be released.

A thought-provoking reflection arises: Most human sorrow stems from entanglement with that which cannot be influenced. People torment themselves over the behavior of others, political decisions, weather patterns, even imagined catastrophes like global wars or market crashes. The mind tirelessly roams these external terrains. And yet—none of these lie within one's sphere of action.

Bhagavān offers the same clarity. Arjuna's grief over the impending death of his **sva-jana**—his own kinsmen—while emotionally understandable, is spiritually ungrounded. For even if one believes that they truly die, even then, such an event is **aparihārya**, inevitable. Arjuna has no dominion over who dies, when, and how long anyone lives. Thus, to grieve over what is beyond human agency is futile.

There is a parallel here with practical spirituality. If something lies within your control—act. If not—let it be.

"Om Ignorāya Namaḥ."

A subtle reminder that not everything deserves mental space. The weight of the world is not yours to carry.

Bhagavān, through these verses, reshapes Arjuna's—and through him, the reader's—perception. What appears as loss, fear, or sorrow, is often just misplaced concern. When one recognizes the difference between what can be done and what must be accepted, clarity dawns.

This guidance isn't escapism. It is spiritual realism. A return to dharma through wisdom, not emotion.

Bhagavān speaks not merely to comfort, but to awaken.

2.28

**avyaktādīni bhūtāni, vyaktamadyāni bhārata,
avyaktanidhanānyeva, tatra kā paridevanā. 2.28**

Arjuna, before birth beings are not manifest to our human senses; on death they return to the unmanifest again. They are manifest only in the interim between birth and death. What occasion, then, for lamentation?

All beings, O Bhārata, are unmanifest before birth and become unmanifest again after death. In between, for a brief moment, they appear in a manifest form. What then is the cause for lamentation?

This human form, which we so fiercely cling to, is merely a temporary expression. Before birth, we were **avyakta**—unseen, unmanifest—and after death too, we return to the same unmanifest state. Only during the short span of life do we take visible form. So truly, what is there to grieve over?

Consider: if one's soul has journeyed through countless lifetimes across millions of years, what meaning do these fleeting 60, 70, or 80 years hold? As minuscule as a barely visible dot. And yet, one clings to this tiny dot as if it were everything. That, Bhagavān gently suggests, is a misplaced concern. **Tatra kā paridevanā**—what sorrow can possibly arise from something so momentary and inevitable?

2.29

**āścaryavatpaśyati kaścidenam,
āścaryavadvadati tathaiva cānyaḥ,
āścaryavaccainamanyaḥ(ś) śṛṇoti,
śrutvā'pyenaṃ(ṅ) veda na caiva kaścit.2.29**

Hardly any great soul perceives this soul as marvellous, scarce another great soul likewise speaks thereof as marvellous, and scarce another worthy one hears of it as marvellous, while there are some who know it not even on hearing of it.

The ātman is so subtle, so profound, that even upon hearing about it, only a rare few grasp its essence. Some behold it with wonder. Some speak of it with awe. Others hear of it with deep amazement. And yet—even after hearing about it—there are many who fail to understand it.

This shloka is a reflection of millennia of enquiry. Across ages, in the Upaniṣads, seers have asked and answered questions about the ātman with a sense of deep wonder. Some comprehend, others do not. This truth is beyond the grasp of logic, beyond intellect—it is something to be **realised**, not merely discussed.

2.30

**dehī nityamavadhyo'yaṃ(n), dehe sarvasya bhārata,
tasmātsarvāṇi bhūtāni, na tvaṃ(m) śocitumarhasi. 2.30**

Arjuna, this soul dwelling in the bodies of all, can never be slain; therefore, you should not mourn for any one.

This ātman resides eternally in every being, O Bhārata, and it is **avadhya**—incapable of being slain. Therefore, grief for any living being is uncalled for.

The word **avadhya** carries depth. In one sense, it refers to that which **should not** be killed—like a brāhmaṇa or a cow. But here, it means that which **cannot** be killed—regardless of intent or effort. Even if someone tries, they simply cannot destroy the ātman. It lies far beyond the reach of harm.

As the discourse progresses, beginning from the next verse (2.31 onwards), Bhagavān shifts focus towards action—**kartavya karma**—and begins describing the path of one's rightful duties. These upcoming shlokas hold profound beauty and strength.

2.31

svadharmamapi cāvekṣya, na vikampitumarhasi, dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreyo'nyat, kṣatriyasya na vidyate. 2.31

Besides, considering your own duty too, you should not waver, for there is nothing more welcome for a man of the warrior class than a righteous war.

Even from the standpoint of your **svadharma**, you should not waver. For a **kṣatriya**, there exists no greater good than a righteous war.

Bhagavān now places Arjuna's dilemma in the light of duty. A **kṣatriya** does not shy away from conflict when the cause is dharma. This is not a call to violence but a reminder that evasion from one's ordained role is not spiritual maturity—it is escapism.

It's like a mother in the kitchen, preparing for unexpected guests. There may be pressure, but she does not panic. She embraces her role: preparing tea, meals, and offering hospitality. *"This is my responsibility,"* she says, with calm acceptance. In the same spirit, Arjuna was born into a **kṣatriya** lineage, raised in that dharma, trained for this very purpose. Now, when such a dhārmika opportunity for action presents itself, why should he retreat?

The path of **kartavya karma**—duty-bound action—lies before him. Bhagavān first describes this in terms of **vidheya** (prescribed), and in the next verse, He will speak of what is **niṣiddha** (prohibited). Running from righteous action is not noble detachment—it is rejection of one's essential role.

To act where one must, to retreat where one shouldn't—this discernment is the mark of spiritual strength. Bhagavān leads Arjuna step by step, not through fear, but through understanding.

2.32

yadṛcchayā copapannaṃ(m), svargadvārāmapāvṛtam, sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ(ph) pārtha, labhante yuddhamīdṛśam. 2.32

Arjuna, fortunate are the Kṣatriyās who get such an unsolicited opportunity for war, which is an open gateway to heaven.

This kind of war—righteously aligned and unasked for—has come of its own accord. It is as though the gates of **svarga** have flung open by themselves. And who attains such fortune? Only those **kṣatriyas** who are truly blessed.

Such dhārmika yuddha is not a calamity; it is a rare opportunity—a privilege for a **kṣatriya**. It is not a burden thrust upon him, but a chance granted by destiny itself. To face it is not suffering; to attain it is an honour. For the **kṣatriya**, being established in such action leads to **kalyāṇa**—true well-being.

2.33

atha cettvamimaṃ(n) dharmyaṃ(m), saṅgrāmaṃ(n) na kariṣyasi, tataḥ(s) svadharmāṃ(ñ) kīrtiṃ(ñ) ca, hitvā pāpamavāpsyasi. 2.33

Now, if you refuse to fight this righteous war, then, shirking your duty and losing your reputation, you will incur sin.

But if one refuses this dhārmika saṅgrāma—if, out of fear or confusion, one abandons it—then both **svadharma** and **kīrti** are lost. And in their place comes **pāpa**.

In simple terms: to flee from this battlefield is not just a personal failing; it is a fall from dharma itself. Earthly fame and inner duty—both are forsaken. In the world to come, there is spiritual downfall; in this world, social infamy. One becomes **niṣiddha**—one who turns away from the prescribed and slips into the prohibited. To leave one's role unrighteously is not renunciation; it is regression.

2.34

akīrtiṃ(ñ) cāpi bhūtāni, kathayiṣyanti te'vyayām, saṃbhāvitasya cākīrtiḥ(r), maraṇādatiricyate. 2.34

Nay, people will also pour undying infamy on you; and infamy brought on a man enjoying popular esteem is worse than death.

People will speak of one's **akīrti**—infamy—that endures far beyond death. And for one who has been **saṃbhāvita**—held in honour and high esteem—disgrace is worse than death itself.

The deeper the respect once earned, the deeper the sting of disgrace. Arjuna is reminded that if he flees now, this act will not be forgotten. Even five thousand years hence, an ordinary listener sitting somewhere will speak of how Arjuna turned away. The world will not remember his inner turmoil; it will remember that he abandoned his duty.

He will be called **kāluṣya yukta**—impure in resolve, **napuṃsaka**—unmanly, and **kṣatra dharmaparityakta**—a deserter of his warrior dharma. Such **akīrti** will echo not just in his lifetime but across generations.

History bears testimony to this truth.

In **Tretā Yuga**, Rāvaṇa committed adharma by abducting Sītā. For that sin, he was slain. But even thousands of years later, his **akīrti** continues to burn—literally. Each year, on **Vijayā Daśamī**, effigies of Rāvaṇa are set alight. His name has become symbolic of evil.

And why? Because the sin was not an isolated act. Rāvaṇa was **adharma kā khān**—a mine of unrighteousness. He was no ordinary sinner. He committed atrocities upon sages, violated countless women, stole kingdoms, disrespected his brothers, and hid in the forest to abduct someone else's wife. His sins left scars that history refuses to erase.

And yet today, some confused minds glorify such figures—Rāvaṇa, Karṇa, Duryodhana, Mahiṣāsura—calling them **mahāpaṇḍita**, learned or virtuous. This is the distortion of truth. Perversions of intellect (**buddhi-vikāra**) lead people to praise those who stood against dharma.

What is to be remembered here is that even if someone possesses knowledge or brilliance, it does not cleanse adharma. **Panditya** without **maryādā** is dangerous. If such people are glorified, it is a collective decline. There must be vigilance—not just against adharma, but against the romanticising of adharma.

A man without dharma is no man at all. And without true love rooted in dharma, even Bhagavān cannot be realised.

This section reminds every seeker that one's duty—**svadharma**—is not just a personal burden; it is a cosmic responsibility. To flee from it is to invite **pāpa** and **akīrti** both—this world and the next offer no shelter for such a flight.

2.35

**bhayādraṇāduparataṃ(m), maṃsyante tvāṃ(m) mahārathāḥ,
yeṣāṃ(ñ) ca tvaṃ bahumato, bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam. 2.35**

And the warrior-chiefs who thought highly of you, will now despise you, thinking that it was fear which drove you away from battle.

Those mighty warriors—**mahārathāḥ**—who once held him in the highest regard, will assume he withdrew from the battlefield out of fear. And in their eyes, the one once honoured will fall into **lāghavam**—smallness, ridicule, and irrelevance. Glory, once attained, is hard to retain, and even harder to reclaim once lost. Falling from grace is always more painful than never having risen at all.

The bitter truth is—those who garland him today and bow at his feet may not stand by him tomorrow. The world reveres strength and decisiveness. Hesitation, especially in a moment of duty, invites dishonour more than empathy.

2.36

**avācyavādāṃśca bahūn, vadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ,
nindantastava sāmartyaṃ(n), tato duḥkhataraṃ(n) nu kim. 2.36**

And your enemies, disparaging your might, will speak many unbecoming words; what can be more distressing than this?

His adversaries—**tavāhitāḥ**—will speak countless **avācyavādān**, words so vile they are unworthy of being spoken. They will mock his capability, question his courage, and insult his very identity. What could be more painful than being the subject of such unspeakable reproach?

Someone once asked a revered **sannyāsī** what these **avācyavādān** truly are. With a subtle smile, he replied—“*The very words Bhagavān chose not to utter, you wish me to reveal?*” The severity of these insults lies in their nature—beyond imagination, beneath dignity.

After a certain point in life, **kīrti**—honour—becomes the prime motivator. Once the needs of sustenance, shelter, and family are met, most human actions serve only this one subtle desire—for esteem in the eyes of others.

Why do people choose fine clothing, grand homes, and luxury vehicles? Not just for comfort, but because they hope others will see them as refined, successful, honourable. Even spiritual pursuits, like learning the Gītā, can carry that undercurrent—“*May others see that I know.*”

Hence, **kīrti** must be guarded with the utmost care, because once lost to **nindā**—defamation—it is rarely restored.

Nindā—criticism—is a deeply dangerous tendency, much like *khujlī*—an itch. Everyone knows it should be resisted, yet indulging in it brings a strange satisfaction. Even when warned of its harm, people find it hard to stop.

An ancient episode from the **Upaniṣads** warns of the hidden consequences of **nindā**:

A noble king once performed a great **yajña**. During the **brāhmaṇa bhoj**, as food was being prepared for a thousand sages, a serpent caught by an eagle dropped venom into the cauldron unnoticed. Unaware, the food was served, and as soon as the first morsels were eaten, hundreds of **brāhmaṇas** collapsed and died. Chaos ensued.

The king's *sautela bhāi*—stepbrother—who harboured jealousy, seized the moment and accused him of poisoning the food intentionally. *"He despises brāhmaṇas!"* he shouted. The already grief-stricken king, devastated by this baseless accusation, suffered a heart attack and died. Enraged, the king's son, witnessing this, beheaded the stepbrother then and there.

When they all arrived at Yama's court, **Citrugupta** was baffled. *"So many deaths,"* he said, *"yet none are clearly guilty. Who is to bear the burden of sin?"* The eagle claimed innocence—it was merely seeking food. The serpent? *"I acted in self-defence,"* it said. The cooks? Oblivious to the event. The king? Intent on **puṇya**, not **pāpa**.

Finally, Yama declared: *"The stepbrother shall bear the karma of all deaths."* Why? Because when no direct blame can be assigned, it is the one who slanders—who indulges in *nindā*—that inherits the sin.

Nindā brings the fruit of **pāpa** even if the act was not one's own.

Gosvāmī Tulsīdās offers this wisdom:

निन्दक नियरे राखिए, आँगन कुटी छवाय।

बिन पानी, साबुन बिना, निर्मल करे सुभाय।।

*"Keep a critic close; house him even in your courtyard,
for without soap or water, he helps cleanse your character."*

For one who is **uttam prakṛti**—noble by nature—criticism becomes a catalyst for self-refinement. But one must distinguish between constructive correction and toxic slander.

Some essential reflections on **nindā**:

- **1. Criticism is more painful than death for the dignified.** One may live humbly, but to rise and then fall into disgrace wounds the spirit.
- **2. Even rightful actions attract criticism.** Consider demonetisation. Or spiritual pursuits. People will still mock and question.
- **3. Criticism and itching share a trait—both are harmful, yet tempting.** One knows not to scratch a wound, yet often gives in, worsening it.
- **4. Both listening to and speaking criticism are sinful.** One must avoid such circles. If present, one should quietly leave.
- **5. Criticism often arises from one's own karma.** As Lakṣmaṇa told Niṣāda: *"koi nahim koi kar sukha dukha dātā, nija kṛta karma bhoga saba bhrātā"*. *"No one else gives joy or sorrow. All results come from one's own deeds."*
- **6. Criticism from elders or guides must not be taken as insult.** A father, husband, or teacher may correct; that correction is a path to refinement, not humiliation.
- **7. Even if nindā is true, ask—do I have a right to engage with it?** If not, better to stay silent than stain oneself with another's faults.
- **8. Avoid the company of habitual critics.** *Nindak svabhāv*—those whose nature is to find fault—will infect your inner world too.

- **9. Bhagavān cherishes the quality of *anāsūyā*—one who does not find faults in others.** In the *Gītā*, Arjuna is addressed most often as **anagha** (faultless) and **anāsūya**. These are not just adjectives—they are attributes to be cultivated.

Key Takeaways:

- Criticise no one.
- Do not partake in someone else’s criticism.
- Do not act in a way that invites criticism.

Or else, as warned in *śloka* 2.36, people will utter **avācyavādān**—words that should never be heard.

Let every act be worthy of **kīrti**, and every silence a shield from **nindā**.

2.37

**hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṃ(ñ), jītvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm,
tasmāduttiṣṭha kaunteya, yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ. 2.37**

Die, and you will win heaven; conquer, and you enjoy sovereignty of the earth; therefore, stand up, Arjuna, determined to fight.

Bhagavān presents both outcomes of battle as auspicious for the warrior: should one fall in war, **svarga**—the celestial realms—await; and should one emerge victorious, the earth’s prosperity and royal pleasures become his to enjoy. Either way, the path of dharma leads to gain. Thus, there remains no scope for fear or hesitation. One who stands firmly resolved in the duty of war has nothing to lose.

Even for one inclined toward worldly enjoyments, the path of dharma must not be abandoned. And if disinterested in pleasures, still the path of dharma must be upheld. Whether one seeks bhoga or not, dharma remains supreme. Bhagavān lays this out clearly—whether the desire is for kingdom or renunciation, both find their fulfillment only when grounded in rightful action.

A profound exchange from the *Mahābhārata* between Draupadī and Dharmarāja echoes this very sentiment. When Draupadī questions the purpose of righteous action—“*What do we gain by adhering to dharma?*”—Yudhiṣṭhira replies with a striking truth:

"Dharma is not pursued for reward. It is pursued because it is one’s duty."

Personal benefit is not the standard of dharma; duty is. Regardless of success or failure, the righteous path must not be abandoned.

2.38

**sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā, lābhālābhau jayājayau,
tato yuddhāya yujyasva, naivaṃ(m) pāpamavāpsyasi. 2.38**

Treating alike victory and defeat, gain and loss, pleasure and pain, get ready for the battle; fighting thus you will not incur sin.

This verse marks the pinnacle of the teaching so far. Bhagavān introduces six inevitable pairs of life: **sukha-duḥkha** (joy and sorrow), **lābha-alābha** (gain and loss), and **jaya-ajaya** (victory and defeat). These are not exceptional; they are integral to the human condition. No life is free of all six.

They visit all beings in varying forms and measures.

What matters is **samatva**—equanimity in the face of life’s dualities. When a person learns to remain undisturbed by either gain or loss, not to be swept away by joy or shattered by sorrow, that one is truly prepared for action. To such a soul, no sin attaches, regardless of the battlefield they stand on.

One who celebrates excessively in gain is the same who sinks deeply in loss. That which erupts in elation will drown in despair. And so, Bhagavān advises: neither inflate in victory nor crumble in defeat. Remain poised.

In practical life, this is easy to observe—some flood social media with excitement when things go right, only to post sorrowful poetry or sad songs when things turn wrong. Such reactions reflect instability. True strength lies in inner balance—moving neither too high in joy nor too low in grief. The one who embodies this balance becomes fit for real work, *yogya for karma*.

2.39

eṣā te'bhihitā sāṅkhye, buddhiryoge tvimāṃ(m) śṛṇu, buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha, karmabandhaṃ(m) prahāsyasi. 2.39

Arjuna, this attitude of mind has been presented to you from the point of view of Jñānayoga; now hear the same as presented from the standpoint of Karmayoga (the Yoga of selfless action). Equipped with this attitude of mind, you will be able to throw off completely the shackles of Karma.

Here, Bhagavān transitions from **Sāṅkhya-buddhi**—the contemplative, knowledge-based approach—to **Karma-yoga**, the path of action with wisdom. The knowledge that was just laid out forms the intellectual framework. But now begins the discipline of action rooted in clarity and balance.

Bhagavān encourages one to listen carefully to this next teaching on **yoga**, where the mind remains steady, not swayed by outcomes. When a person is established in such a mindset—**buddhyā yuktaḥ**—they can cast off all bondage to karma. This is not renunciation of action, but renunciation of clinging and confusion that bind one to action.

The karma continues, but the **karmabandha** dissolves.

Bhagavān prepares the seeker not merely to fight a battle, but to conquer the inner war—the attachments to outcome, the pride of victory, the pain of defeat, the waves of joy and sorrow. In teaching the principles of **karma-yoga**, Bhagavān offers not just a doctrine but a lifeline—one that liberates through clarity, steadiness, and surrender to rightful action.

As these teachings deepen further from verse 2.40 onward, the path will become clearer. For now, what remains is to let the message settle, to contemplate the six-fold tests of life, and to walk forward with inner resolution.

***Hari śaraṇam. Hari śaraṇam. Hari śaraṇam.....
Yogeśvara Śrī Kṛṣṇa Candra Bhagavān kī jai.***

Questions and Answers

Arun Ji

Q: If something wrong is happening and criticizing it might bring a good outcome, should we still

avoid doing **nindā** (criticism)?

A: The key is to ask: is it within your **adhikāra** (authority)? Criticizing someone above you may be inappropriate. If it's within your jurisdiction, and your intent is positive—not to defame but to bring correction—then it's acceptable. The intention behind the action matters more than the action itself.

Maya Ji

Q1: Can regular seekers like us visit Swargāśram in Rishikesh?

A1: Yes. Swargāśram refers to the entire area across the Ganga, which includes many āśrams. Anyone can visit, though room bookings are needed for stay—easier in winter, harder during summer holidays.

Q2: Is Maitrī Milan open only to Gītā Vṛtta members?

A2: No, anyone with faith in the Gītā can attend.

Q3: Why is it not held in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh?

A3: These gatherings are organized by local people. If there's initiative from Gwalior, it can certainly happen.

Radhakrishna Ji

Q1: If I'm older in age and see a teacher reciting a shloka incorrectly, can I correct them?

A1: Correction depends on your **adhikāra**. If the person is in the role of a guru, public correction is inappropriate. You may speak to them privately and humbly—only if they are open to hearing it. Otherwise, let it go; it's not your responsibility.

Q2: Why did Bhagavān kill Barbarik (Barbrik) in the Mahābhārata?

A2: Questions like “Why did Bhagavān do this?” aren't always answerable with our limited understanding. The karma of past lives, which only Bhagavān knows, plays a role. There's no textual reference explaining this in detail.

Shalu Ji

Q: After death, when the body is cremated, does the *ātmā* merge with *Paramātmā*?

A: No. The ātmā merges with Paramātmā only upon attaining mokṣa. Until then, it takes new bodies. The pleasure or pain it experiences depends on the yoni (life form) it enters next. For example, in hell, it may take forms like bhūta, preta, or piśāca to suffer. In heaven, it may be born as a deva. In earthly forms—dog, cat, human—it experiences results accordingly.

Shashi Ji

Q: I've heard the famous shloka “nainaṃ chindanti śāstrāṇi...”, but I don't understand it.

A: The essence is: everything we see or understand is **nāśavān** (perishable). Weapons can cut, fire can burn, water can wet, and air can dry physical things—but the **ātmā** is beyond all this. It is **acintya** (inconceivable), **avyaya** (unchanging), and **avināśī** (indestructible). Therefore, none of the four elements can harm it.

Q Follow-up: What does “na enam kledayanti āpaḥ” mean?

A Follow-up: **Āpaḥ** means water, and **kledayanti** means “to moisten.” So, water cannot wet the **ātmā**. It is unaffected by any element.

The session concluded with prayer and chanting Hanuman Chalisa.



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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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