

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 18: Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/bwSYtRWsix8>

**An intelligent person knows the meaning of true renunciation, and does not consider himself as the doer of any activity.**

The **18th chapter** of Bhagavad Gītā is **Mokṣha Sanyāsa Yoga - Yoga of Perfection of Renunciation and Surrender.**

The session began with the prayer and lighting of the lamp to invoke the blessings of the Supreme Divine, our Gurus, and Gītā mata.

The 18th chapter contains the summary of the entire Gītā, and Jnaneshwar ji Maharaj rightly refers to it as 'Ekadyayi Gītā' - entire Gītā covered in one adhyaya. Chapters upto 15 of Gītā gives us the true knowledge. Chapters 16 -18 form the appendix that add to the knowledge. The 18th chapter gives an insight into what is karma.

Sri Krishna starts by describing karma as seen from different perspectives, and finally gives His decisive opinion, which is - Acts of yajna, dana and tapah should never be avoided, and should be done without any attachment (**saṅgam tyaktvā phalāni ca**). Attachment creates a binding to the karma, and hence should be renounced. It is common for us to get attached to our actions and the results. We are like the child who checks the seed she sowed, by digging it out and seeing if it has sprouted. Sri Krishna is advising us to avoid the attachment, because no one can snatch away the results. Once an act is done, what has to happen will happen, whether we like it or not! We have to reap what we sow.

While elaborating on the karma, Sri Krishna also explains about the act of sannyasa (the query which Arjuna asked in the first place). He says that sannyasa is also of three types:

- **Tamasic** - people evade doing any task or duty, due to delusion and lack of knowledge
- **Rajasic** - people avoid doing mandatory duties to avoid pain and struggles
- **Sattvic** - People do the mandatory duties as an act of karma without any attachment to the

karma as well as to the karma phala

One should strive to reach the sattvic state of sannyasa when doing any action. The best example is seen in Sri Ram ji. One day he was informed about his up coming coronation; and the next morning, he was informed about his exile. He accepted both as his duty towards his father and his kingdom. Sita mata too saw it as her duty (dharma) to be with her husband, and set off with him leaving behind the luxuries of the palace. Same was with Lakshman ji who saw it as his duty to be in sewa of his elder brother.

How can one reach this state of sattvic tyagi? Sri Krishna explains in the next shloka.

### 18.10

#### **na dvestyakuśalaṃ(ñ) karma, kuśale nānuśajjate, tyāgī sattvasamāviṣṭo, medhāvī chinnaśayaḥ. 18.10**

He who has neither aversion for action which is leading to bondage (कुशलं) nor attachment to that which is conducive to blessedness (कुशलं)- imbued with the quality of goodness, he has all his doubts resolved, is intelligent and a man of true renunciation.

**akuśalaṃ karma** - unfavourable tasks

**kuśale karma** - favourable tasks

Why does a task become unfavourable? The reasons are as follows:

- Inconvenient
- lack of expertise
- non-rewarding

A task becomes favourable when

- it is easy and convenient
- doer has expertise in that area
- is more rewarding, bringing name and fame.

Sri Krishna says that a person who does not renounce the attachment to the karma (**atyagi**) prefers the favourable tasks over the unfavourable ones. However, a tyagi (who has renounced the karma) does not differentiate between any task. He neither hates unfavourable ones nor attaches to favourable ones. He is undoubtedly (**chinnaśayaḥ**) intelligent (**medhāvī**) and saturated with sattvic guna (**sattvasamāviṣṭo**). Jnaneshwar Maharaj says that a tyagi is like the water that flows through the channels in the field without any discretion or bias.

### 18.11

#### **na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṃ(n), tyaktuṃ(ñ) karmānyaśeṣataḥ, yastu karmaphalatyāgī, sa tyāgītyabhidhīyate. 18.11**

Since all actions cannot be given up in their entirety by anyone possessing a body, he alone who renounces the fruit of actions is called a man of renunciation.

Sri Krishna makes a decisive statement that it is impossible for an embodied being (**dehabhṛtā**) to give up on action totally. The same was emphasized in chapter 3

**na hi kascit ksanam api jatu tisthaty akarma-krt  
karyate hy avasah karma sarvah prakrti-jair gunaih (3.5)**  
*No one can refrain from doing anything, even for a moment.*

However, we can free ourselves from the results which are bound to follow the actions. One has to bear the fruits of the actions, but should not be bound to it. Actions are like seeds that we sow in the soil. We have to reap what we sow. Good and right actions deliver good results, and vice versa.

Sri Krishna is not giving a superficial suggestion, but a detailed analysis of the different types of results of the karmas done, as can be seen in the next shloka.

**18.12**

**aniṣṭamiṣṭam(m) miśram(ñ) ca, trividham(ñ) karmaṇaḥ(ph) phalam,  
bhavatyatyāginām(m) pretya, na tu sannyāsinām(ñ) kvacit. 18.12**

Agreeable, disagreeable and mixed-threefold, indeed, is the fruit that accrues after death from the actions of the unrenouncing. But there is none whatsoever for those who have renounced.

Every action, be it simple or complex, will give results, which can be classified into

- undesirable (**aniṣṭam**) - eg. not getting good marks in the exam
- desirable (**iṣṭam**) - getting more marks than expected
- mixed (**miśram**) - getting good marks in some subjects, and not good in others.

These results are applicable to the atyagi, who is attached to the fruits of the action. The results will follow such a person even after his death. For example, learning Gītā in this lifetime is considered as a result of our past lives good karmas.

While an Atyagi will have to bear the results, a tyagi or sannyasi (who has given up on the fruits) is free from the results which will have no bearing on him. He will be liberated from the world. Hence, it is extremely important to become a sannyasi from within ourselves, not just externally (wearing an orange robe and detaching oneself from the world). Internally, one should become a sattvic tyagi, doing good without expectation of any return. **A true sannyasi is one who has samatva bhaav (equanimous in all situations) and has relinquished the fruits of his duties.**

**18.13**

**pañcāitāni mahābāho, kāraṇāni nibodha me,  
sāṅkhye kṛtānte proktāni, siddhaye sarVākarmaṇām. 18.13**

In the branch of learning known as Sāṅkhya, which prescribes means for neutralizing all actions, the five factors have been mentioned as contributory to the accomplishment of all actions; know them all from Me, Arjuna.

Sri Krishna takes us to an important topic - He gives a detailed analysis of how all activities happen in the universe. Thus far, we learnt about karma mimamsa - how a task binds us, and what should and shouldn't be done.

Once a karma is done, different parameters come into picture and influence the karma. Sri Krishna says that the knowledgeable people (well versed in Vedanta ) are aware that five basic components

are essential for the completion of any act/ karma.

He refers to Arjuna as Mahabaho (man of great strength), implying that Arjuna is a task master, excellent in any activity he undertakes, and hence should be aware of these details.

## 18.14

### **adhiṣṭhānaṃ(n) tathā kartā, karaṇaṃ(ñ) ca pṛthagvidham, vividhāśca pṛthakceṣṭā, daivaṃ(ñ) caivātra pañcamam. 18.14**

The following are the factors operating towards the accomplishment of actions, viz., the body and the doer, the organs of different kinds and the different functions of manifold kinds; and the fifth is Daiva, latencies of past actions.

Five components that are essential for completion of any task are:

- **adhiṣṭhānaṃ** : the place of action (body)
- **kartā** : the doer (the individual)
- **karaṇaṃ** : instruments (sense organs)
- **ceṣṭā** : efforts
- **daivaṃ** : Divine entity / fortune

Body is the first necessary element, without which no action can be undertaken. The body needs a doer, which is the ahankar ('I'ness) or the individual atma that results within the body and identifies itself with the body. The Atma is in fact like uncontaminated pure gold, while the Jīvātmā is the gold contaminated with impurities in order to give it a form or shape. The impurities relate to the characteristics of Prakṛti which get incorporated into the Atma when it enters into a body. The sense organs form the instruments of accomplishing any task. In addition, physical and mental efforts are also needed.

**daivaṃ** refers to the accumulation of our past karmas and current Sādhanā. Our past karmas can be the facilitators of our tasks or obstacles. Current Sādhanās help to remove the obstacles. It should not be noted that destiny / fate is only 1/5th of the success formula. Instead of blaming destiny for our failures, we should focus on other parameters like efforts and Sādhanā to see fruition of our actions. These five components work not only at the individual level, but also at the organisational or society level. Take farming as an example:

- **adhiṣṭhānaṃ** = Farm
- **kartā** = Farmer
- **karaṇaṃ** = Ploughing instruments
- **ceṣṭā** = Daily efforts
- **daivaṃ** = Natural forces (rain/ drought, etc)

In spite of the best efforts and toil of the farmer, rain or drought can nourish or ruin the crops, yielding or not yielding the desired fruits respectively.

At the organisational level, let us take the example of our own Learn Gītā program

*adhiṣṭhānaṃ* = The Learn Gītā platform

*kartā* = The faculties and sadhakas

*karaṇaṃ* = Different platforms/ equipments used for the classes

*ceṣṭā* = Daily efforts by the sevis and sadhakas

*daivaṃ* = God's grace by which classes are conducted smoothly

## 18.15

### **śarīravāñmanobhīryat, karma prārabhate naraḥ, nyāyyaṃ(m) vā viparītaṃ(m) vā, pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ. 18.15**

These five are the contributory causes of whatever actions, prescribed or prohibited, man performs with the mind, speech and body.

Sri Krishna further elaborates that the five components contribute to all actions, be it noble (*nyāyyaṃ*) or evil (*viparītaṃ*), that are accomplished by the use of body (*śarīra*), speech (*vāk*) and mind (*manah*).

Body, speech and mind are the three subtle internal components that help accomplish the tasks. For example, the thought of learning Gītā pops up in your mind. You vocalise your thought to a friend, who forwards the link of the program. Using the body, you register for the class.

Sri Krishna has explained in the 17th chapter how to put the body, speech and mind, to the best possible use, when He spoke about *śarīra tapaḥ*, *Vāṅgmaya* and *manasic tapaḥ*.

***devadvijaguruprājña, pūjanaṃ śaucamārjavam,  
brahmacaryamahimsā ca, śārīraṃ tapa ucyate. 17.14***

***anudvegakaraṃ vākyaṃ, satyaṃ priyahitaṃ ca yat,  
svādhyāyābhyasanaṃ caiva, vāñmayaṃ tapa ucyate. 17.15***

***manaḥ prasādaḥ saumyatvaṃ, maunamātmavinigrahaḥ,  
bhāvasaṃśuddhīryetat, tapo mānasamucyate. 17.16***

If one follows these means as gateways, every act will become a sattvic act (tapaḥ). These elements will ensure successful accomplishment of any task, be it noble or evil. Negative tasks (like creation of bombs for destruction purposes) also use the same set of parameters.

One may ask what is the **role of Atma** in these tasks?

In all these instances, **the Atma does not come into picture at all. It is neutral and detached from the actions.**

## 18.16

### **tatraivaṃ(m) sati kartāram, ātmānaṃ(ñ) kevalaṃ(n) tu yaḥ, paśyatyakṛtabuddhitvān, na sa paśyati durmatīḥ. 18.16**

Notwithstanding this, however, he who, having an impure mind, regards the absolute, taintless Self alone as the doer, that man of perverse understanding does not view aright.

Sri Krishna elaborates on the differences in thought process of the enlightened jnani and the others who consider themselves as the doer.

The ignorant people with limited knowledge (*akṛtabuddhitvān*) misconstrue that the atma is the doer. But what is the actual role of the Atma?

Consider that you are working in a well-lit room. The light in the room helps you to work, but the light by itself is not doing the work. Similarly, all the actions are done by the body under the light of the

Atma; the atma is not doing the actions. Just like the Sun is not responsible for the hurt that it's reflection causes to your eyes, the Atma is not responsible for any actions done by the body. All credit goes to the Prakṛti, as described in chapter 3.

***prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni, guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ,  
ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā, kartāhamiti manyate 3.27***

*Prakṛti is the cause of all actions; however, because of ego-driven misidentification, the unwise wrongly assumes the self to be the doer.*

Because of our misidentification and ahankar generated by our lack of knowledge, we get deluded and have the foolish (***durmatih***) notion that the self is the doer.

**18.17**

***yasya nāhaṅkṛto bhāvo, buddhiryasya na lipyate,  
hatvāpi sa imāṃlokān, na hanti na nibadhyate. 18.17***

He whose mind is free from the sense of doership, and whose reason is not affected by worldly objects and activities, does not really kill, even having killed all these people, nor does any sin accrue to him.

**What is the vision of the intellects?**

Those people who do not have the ego of being the doer (***nāhaṅkṛto bhāvo***), whose intellect is not tainted (***buddhiryasya na lipyate***), are not bound by any actions (***na nibadhyate***). Sri Krishna states that even if such a person slays someone (***hatvāpi sa imāṃlokān***), he is free from incurring any sin.

It may seem strange that Sri Krishna is talking about something terrible like killing. It should not be misunderstood that He is advocating killing. We must remember that the conversation was happening on the battlefield, where Arjuna was fearful of committing a sin by killing his own people. Sri Krishna is assuring him that he would not be committing a sin if he wages the war as a duty without any personal malice.

Consider the role of an executor whose duty is to hang anyone who is sentenced to death. He is not committing a crime because he is just doing his duty of following the orders of the judge, and not killing due to his personal grudge or tainted intellect. However, if he kills someone out of personal interest/ vengeance, he is liable for punishment. Similarly, the soldiers protecting our country are not functioning with a personal motive of enmity; it is their duty, hence they are not tainted by their act of killing the enemies.

We should be intelligent enough to decide what is right; what is duty and what is not. Only an intellect that is not clouded by ignorance will not fall prey to the mistakes and will not incur sins. We can free ourselves from the side effects of the karma, if we have the right intellect. Swamiji advises us to study our scriptures in order to have an awakened intellect. Jnaneshwar Maharaj opines that Mahabharata is a garden full of trees of wisdom.

Bhagavān gives us step by step directive to enhance our intellect, and be free from the karma.

**18.18**

## **jñānaṃ(ñ) jñeyaṃ(m) pariñātā, trividhā karmacodanā, karaṇaṃ(ṅ) karma karteti, trividhaḥ(kh) karmasaṅgrahaḥ. 18.18**

The Knower, knowledge and the object of knowledge-these three motivate action. Even so, the doer, the organs and activity-these are the three constituents of action.

Bhagavān says that there are three impulses (**karmacodanā**) that inspire any action to occur:

- **jñānaṃ** (knowledge)
- **jñeyaṃ** (object of Knowledge)
- **pariñātā** (the knower)

Take for example, a child decides to make tea for himself.

- Tea, the object = *jñeyaṃ*
- Knowing how to make it = *jñānaṃ*
- The child who knows how to make it = *pariñātā*

However, just the presence of these three has not yet transpired into action. When the desire gets converted into physical activity, the impulses get transformed into constituents of actions (**karmasaṅgraha**).

- **jñānaṃ** (knowledge) is transformed into **karaṇaṃ** (the instruments of action)
- **jñeyaṃ** (object of Knowledge) into **karma** (the act)
- **pariñātā** (the knower) becomes the **karta** (the doer).

That is, the inspiration turns into action.

### **18.19**

## **jñānaṃ(ñ) karma ca kartāca, tridhaiva guṇabhedataḥ, procyate guṇasaṅkhyāne, yathāvacchṛṇu tānyapi. 18.19**

In the branch of knowledge dealing with the Guṇas or modes of Prakṛti, knowledge and action as well as the doer have been declared to be of three kinds according to the Guṇa which predominates in each; hear them too duly from Me.

The constituents of actions (*jñānaṃ, karma, kartā*) come under the influence of Prakṛti and naturally will be influenced by the three gunas (**tridhaiva guṇabhedataḥ**). *jñānaṃ, karma,* and *kartā* fall into three types (sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic) as per the science of *Sāṃkhya darshan*, and will be explained in the upcoming shlokas. The session culminated with a prayer and chanting of Hanuman Chalisa.

### **Questions and Answers:**

#### **Gururaja Bhat ji**

**Q:** Who is greater between Hanuman ji and Arjuna?

**A:** Both are great and belong to different yugas; one cannot compare them. Hanuman ji is said to be an avatar of Shiv ji, and is a giver of Ashtasiddhi. Arjuna is an ideal human. If we want to become like Arjuna, we should bow down to Hanuman ji and seek his blessings.

**Q:** Why do we conclude the sessions with Hanuman chalisa?

**A:** This practice started around the time of Ram Pratishta. Swamiji says that we must recite Hanuman

chalisa if we want to regain our country's super power. Hanuman's power increased when he was reminded of them. When we sing his stutis, he blesses us and his powers hidden within us increase. The more people recite it the more powerful it will become. Hanuman ji is the key to get everything, as stated in the Ramraksha stotra. Hence, we conclude the sessions with Hanuman chalisa.

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**Jai Shri Krishna!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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