

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 18: Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/ViD6uwhkE0E>

The Wisdom of Knowing What Truly Brings Joy: Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Reveals How the Guṇas Shape Happiness, Willpower, and the Natural Duties That Lead One Toward Freedom

The name of **Chapter 18** of the Bhagavad Gītā is **Mokṣha Sanyās Yoga - Yoga through the Perfection of Renunciation and Surrender**

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 exceedingly auspicious grace of Bhagavān, such rare good fortune has awakened within everyone that they have become inclined toward making this human life meaningful, successful, and spiritually fulfilled. Inspired by this divine blessing, they now seek to recognise the highest purpose of the human birth.

With that very aspiration, they have become engaged in the the study and recitation of the **Bhagavad Gītā**, learning its correct pronunciation, understanding its meanings, discovering its timeless *sūtras*, and attempting to bring those *sūtras* into their daily conduct. They have begun to devote themselves to *svādhyāya*, personal contemplation and study.

Who knows what has brought about such grace—perhaps some virtuous actions of this very life, or the accumulated *sukṛita* of previous births, or the merit and blessings of ancestors, or perhaps the compassionate glance of a *sant mahāpuruṣha* in some lifetime. Whatever the cause, this rare *bhāgyodaya*, this awakening of fortune, has drawn them into the study of the Bhagavad Gītā and made them worthy of receiving it.

The reflection on **Adhyāya 18** has been underway. In the previous sessions, the exposition had covered the **three types of kartā**, the **three types of karma**, and the **three types of jñāna**. Now, Bhagavān explains to Arjuna that even **sukha**, happiness itself, is of three kinds.

Thus, the teaching now moves forward into the **threefold nature of sukha**.

18.36

**sukhaṃ(n) tvidānīṃ(n) trividhaṃ(m), śṛṇu me bharatarṣabha,
abhyāsādRāmate yatra, duḥkhāntaṃ(ñ) ca nigacchati. 18.36**

Now hear from Me the threefold joy too. That in which the striver finds enjoyment through practice of adoration, meditation and service to God etc., and whereby he reaches the end of sorrow—such a joy,

That happiness in which a seeker delights through practice—through *bhajan*, *dhyāna*, *sevā*, and disciplined effort—happiness that brings an end to sorrow, that appears at first like poison yet later becomes like nectar, arising from the tranquillity of *ātma-buddhi-prasāda*, is described as *sāttvika*.

Thus, though the Gītā speaks of three forms of happiness across its verses, the *śāstrakāras* describe seven types of sukha as well:

- **Nirogī kāyā** – the joy of a healthy body.
- **Ghar meṃ māyā** – prosperity and resources at home.
- **Kulvanti nārī** – a noble, virtuous, and gentle spouse.
- **Putra ājñākārī** – children who obey with respect.
- **Sudeś meṃ vāsā** – living in one’s own homeland. Foreign residence has rarely been considered joyful; many Indians living abroad often express the longing to return.
- **Rāj ho pāsā** – one’s word being honoured, influence being accepted in society.
- **Santoṣī jīvan** – a life filled with contentment.

If someone attains these seven, no human life can be considered more blessed.

As Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa writes:

**“Gau dhan gaj dhan bāj dhan aur ratan sab khān
jab āve santoṣ dhan sab dhana dharī samān.”**

All forms of wealth—cattle, elephants, horses, treasures—become insignificant before the wealth of *santoṣa*, contentment.

Here, Bhagavān emphasises the profound nature of **sāttvika sukha**, a subject requiring deep reflection. Most people easily misunderstand it.

Bhagavān tells Arjuna:

18.37

**yattadagre viṣamiva, pariṇāme'mṛtopamam,
tatsukhaṃ(m) sāttvikam(m) proktam, ātmabuddhiprasādajam. 18.37**

though appearing as poison in the beginning, tastes like nectar in the end; hence that joy, born as it is of the placidity of mind brought about by meditation on God, has been declared as Sāttvika.

At first, this happiness feels like **viṣa**—difficult, unappealing, unpleasant. But its **pariṇāma**, its result, is **amṛita-tulya**, nectar-like. This principle requires careful understanding.

In truth, the experience of 'poison at the beginning' is felt only by the beginner. After a period of practice, the same discipline no longer feels burdensome to the practitioner—but still appears difficult to others.

For example, those who observe **Navarātri upavāsa** come to mind. A well-known illustration is that of the Honourable Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Many have seen in news reports that during both Navarātris of every year, he lives only on *nimbū-jal* for the entire nine days. This fact became publicly known during his visit to the United States, when Navarātri coincided with major conferences, diplomatic dinners, and luncheons. While global leaders gathered, he would take nothing except lemon water. They were astonished: *How is this possible? How can one survive nine days on lemon water?*

For others, such a discipline appears like **viṣa**—impossibly difficult. Yet when Pūjya Swamiji Mahārāj once met the Prime Minister's mother in Gujarat and asked when he had begun this practice, she replied that he had been doing it for more than forty years. Now it has been five to seven years since that conversation—meaning the discipline has continued for forty-five to fifty years. What feels impossible to most is natural to one who has long practiced it.

For many, even the thought of nine days of only lemon water feels overwhelming, almost frightening. But for one who upholds such austerity for decades, its **pariṇāma** is like nectar—their life gains extraordinary strength and clarity. Many of the qualities seen today in the Prime Minister are the natural fruit of such sustained **tapasya**.

Across India, seekers undertake various disciplines—**nava-parāyaṇa**, **māsa-parāyaṇa**, reciting six chapters of the *Gītā* daily, twelve chapters daily, or even the entire *Bhagavad Gītā* every day. Many observe *Ekādaśī upavāsa*: some remain on water alone, some follow *nirjala*, while others take only diluted preparations—milk, *makhāna*, *kīra*, *kuṭṭu*, and so on.

Pilgrimage disciplines are similarly intense. In Vṛindāvana, or on the *Kāmadgiri Parvat* in Chitrakūṭa, or during the *Govardhana parikramā*, one meets hundreds who perform these circuits every month. For many, completing such a pilgrimage even once in life feels momentous. Yet there are those who undertake them monthly—and among them even a few who perform **daṇḍavatī parikramā**.

In *daṇḍavatī parikramā*, one does not walk even a single step. A person stands, offers full *daṇḍavat* prostration, lies down completely, then rises to place the feet where the head had reached, stands again, and repeats the entire cycle. Step by step, only through prostrations, the entire *parikramā* is completed. In Vṛindāvana or Chitrakūṭa, many such devotees can be seen.

For an onlooker, this appears impossibly difficult—truly like *viṣa* at the beginning. And often such disciplines begin with various motivations: some for merit, some for wish-fulfilment, some on the advice of others. But for anyone who remains committed over years, all motivations become secondary. Wish, reward, merit—all fade. Only delight in the practice remains. One can sustain any

discipline for long only when the mind begins to taste joy in it, even when others still perceive it as extremely difficult.

The same applies to practices like **nāma-japa**—a thousand names, ten thousand names, even one lakh names.

It was shared that Ashu Bhaiya's mother has been doing **1 lakh nāma-japa** every day for many years. Observing her perseverance is astonishing. These days her average ranges from **one and a half lakh to nearly two lakh** nāma-japa daily; at times she even completed **two lakh**. For context: **1 lakh japa requires 7-8 hours**.

One and a half to two lakh japa requires nearly 10-11 hours, the entire day dedicated only to japa.

One wonders whether her fingers or thumb ache. Yet she experiences only joy—no discomfort. This, Bhagavān says, is **sāttvika sukha**. At first it appears difficult, but in the end it becomes nectar.

Any small rule taken in life can be like this. A simple niyama such as:

"I will not eat or drink anything before pūjā."

Another niyama:

"Without snāna and pūjā, I will not consume anything."

Someone may say, *"If such rules had to be taught, they should have been told in summer. Why now, when winter is starting?"* It is true—during winter, people often skip snāna. But a niyama is a niyama.

A wealthy *seth ji* had a rule: **Only three items on the plate**.

Another elder brother had a rule: **Only four items**.

Gandhiji too followed: **Only four items in the plate**, whether papad, sabzi, rice, dal, raita, chaas, or sweets—anything, but only four.

To take up such a rule for a lifetime—with no breaks, no excuses—creates a powerful inner brilliance. Those who live by such niyamas become luminous examples for others.

Bhagavān says: **"Pariṇāme amṛitam iva, Arjuna—this is sāttvika sukha."**

Such a person's mind begins to abide naturally in sattva, and sorrows begin to dissolve. Anyone who immerses himself in **sāttvika sukha** finds his grief greatly reduced. Even unfavourable situations lose their power.

Others may come anxiously saying, *"What a terrible thing happened to you the day before!"*

But the sāttvika person calmly replies, *"Hari icchā... Bhagavān's grace."*

This surprises people, for he does not give weight to sorrow at all.

This is **ātmabuddhi-prasāda**, the serenity that arises from the grace of Bhagavān.

Bhagavān describes this as: **"Sukham sāttvikam proktam."**—this is sāttvika happiness.

18.38

**viṣayendriyaśaṃyogād, yattadagre'mṛtopamam,
pariṇāme viṣamiva, tatsukhaṃ(m) rājasam(m) smṛtam. 18.38**

The delight which ensues from the contact of the senses with their objects is eventually poisonlike, though appearing at first as nectar; hence it has been spoken of as Rājasika.

The happiness born from the contact of the senses with their objects— when the eyes see something beautiful, the ears hear something pleasing, the tongue tastes something delicious, the nose smells something fragrant, or the skin experiences a pleasant touch— this sensory happiness is **rājasika**.

In the beginning, it feels like nectar—**amṛtopama**. A spicy hot mirchi-pakoda tastes amazing at first, but later the stomach rebels. Sweets, fast food, indulgent eating—initially delightful, later troublesome.

Buying through EMI also feels exciting. New purchases look wonderful when posted in photographs. But when instalments become difficult to pay, tension arises— **pariṇāme viṣam iva**— the end is like poison.

Excessive, unrestrained indulgence always leads to harm.

The pleasure obtained through sense-objects appears nectar-like in the beginning, but eventually becomes pain. Therefore, this is **rājasika sukha**.

A new mobile, a new car, a new house— even the renovation of a house—the imagination of obtaining it gives immense joy.

A line from a poem captures this beautifully:

क्यों कल्पना खुशी की खुशी से ज्यादा खुशी देती है,
क्यों सामने की खुशी, मुट्ठी में रेत सी फिसल जाती है।

"Kyon kalpanā khushi ki, khushi se zyada khushi deti hai?

Kyon sāamne ki khushi muṭṭhi se ret ki tarah fisal jati hai?"

Why does the imagination of happiness give more joy than the actual happiness?

Why does real happiness slip away like sand from the fist?

Indeed, whatever we imagined to be grand often turned out much smaller in reality.

One imagines:

"When marriage happens, there will be so much joy..."

"When we travel there, it will be amazing..."

"When I meet this person, it will be wonderful..."

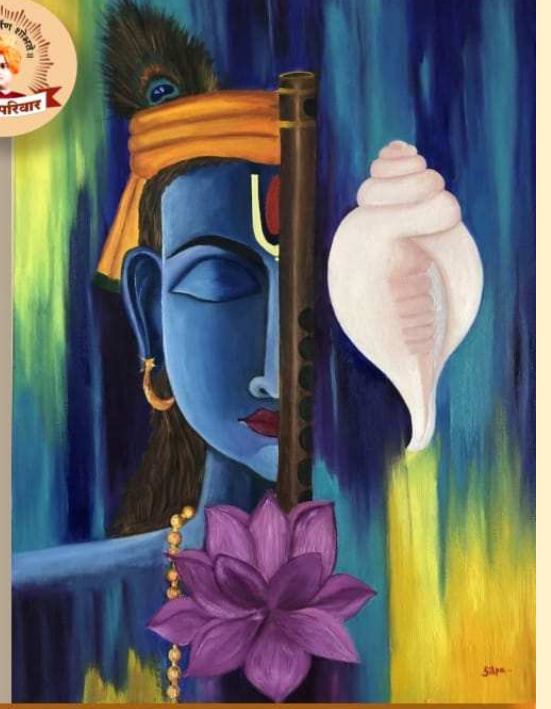
"When I buy the new mobile, it will be thrilling..."

But actual experience rarely matches the vastness of imagination. The imagination of happiness is always larger than reality.

The world's allure appears beautiful but does not endure.

There is a touching bhajan:

उलझ मत दिल बहारों में , बहारों का भरोसा क्या
सहारे टूट जाते हैं, सहारों का भरोसा क्या
तमन्नायें जो तेरी हैं, फुहारे हैं ये सावन की
फुहारे सूख जाती हैं, फुहारों का भरोसा क्या ||1||
दिलासे जो जहाँ के हैं, सभी रंगी बहारें हैं
बहारे रूठ जाती हैं, बहारों का भरोसा क्या ||2||
तू इन फूले गुब्बारों पर, अरे दिल क्यों फिदा होता
गुब्बारे फूट जाते हैं, गुब्बारों का भरोसा क्या ||3||
तू सम्बल नाम का लेकर, किनारों से किनारा कर
किनारे टूट जाते हैं, किनारों का भरोसा क्या ||4||
तू अपनी अक्लमंदा पर, विचारों पर न इतराना
जो लहरों की तरह चंचल, विचारों का भरोसा क्या ||5||
परम प्रभू की शरण लेकर, विकारों से सजग रहना
कहाँ कब मन बिगड़ जाये, विकारों का भरोसा क्या ||6||
उलझ मत दिल बहारों में , बहारों का भरोसा क्या
सहारे टूट जाते हैं, सहारों का भरोसा क्या ||7||



॥ गीता पढ़ें, पढ़ाएँ, जीवन में लाएँ ॥

Repeatedly the mind asks: *“How do we bring the Gītā into life?”*

One of the primary ways is this: **Do not let the heart become entangled in appearances that look attractive at first but end in suffering.**

Gradually reduce what is pleasant only in the beginning but harmful in the end.

The Gītā speaks of two terms:

- **preyas** — what feels pleasant to the mind
- **śreyas** — what is genuinely good for me

If one finds joy exactly in what is good—if **śreyas becomes preyas**— such a life becomes extraordinary.

For **sants, mahāpuruṣas**, and great teachers, **preyas** is always **śreyas**.

They naturally love what is good—pūjā of Bhagavān, selfless service, helping others without motive.

But the more **rājoguṇī** or **tamoguṇī** a person is, the more preyas diverges from śreyas.

“I know what is good...but I end up doing the opposite.”

For example:

- **Exams are approaching—śreyas is to study.**
- **But the mind spends the whole day playing games—this is preyas.**

yadagre cānubandhe ca, sukhaṃ(m) mohanamātmanaḥ, nidrālasypamādotthaṃ(n), tattāmasamudāhṛtam. 18.39

That which stupefies the Self during its enjoyment as well as in the end-derived from sleep, indolence and obstinate error, such delight has been called Tāmasika.

Bhagavān describes tamasic happiness as that which deludes the mind both **in the beginning** and **in the end**. It arises from **sleep, laziness, and negligence**.

Explanation Through Examples

Excessive Sleep

Sleeping ten hours instead of six brings no real benefit. Whether one sleeps six hours or ten, the feeling on waking is the same—only time has been lost, never to return.

Moody, Angry, and Negligent Behaviour

A tāmasika person finds faults everywhere:

- He goes on a pilgrimage and sees only the dirt, not Bhagavān.
- He visits a restaurant or a scenic place but quarrels everywhere he goes.

Story of the Dissatisfied Husband

A noble saint visited a village each year. One woman regularly served him food. One year she looked particularly disturbed. When asked, she explained: “My husband finds faults in everything I cook. I try my best, but he is never pleased.” The saint blessed her: “Tonight, whatever you cook will become like the kitchen of Annapūrṇā. Cook with joy.” She cooked—and miraculously, dish after dish emerged effortlessly until 56 varieties stood ready. Next morning she came to the saint crying even more. “Did my blessing fail?” he asked. “No Mahatmaji... everything turned out divine. But my husband ate and then slapped me saying: ‘Are you trying to kill me? Why did you feed me so much that my stomach may burst?’” The saint concluded: “A tāmasika mind has **no cure**. Such a person can never be satisfied, no matter how excellent the circumstances.”

Tattoo Analogy

People endure immense pain while getting a tattoo. Later, others mock them; eventually, they grow tired of it themselves. Removing it causes even more pain than getting it. This too is tamasic: **pain at the beginning, pain at the end**.

Summary of Tamasic Sukha

Anything rooted in

- excess sleep
- lethargy
- careless speech
- crude behaviour
- quarrelsomeness

is tāmasika and results only in sorrow.

18.40

na tadasti pṛthivyāṃ(m) vā, divi deveṣu vā punaḥ, sattvaṃ(m) prakṛtijairmuktaṃ(m), yadebhiḥ(s) syāttribhirguṇaiḥ. 18.40

There is no being on earth, or in the middle region or even among the gods or anywhere else, who is

free from these three Guṇas, born of Prakṛti.

Bhagavān explains that everything in the manifested world—on earth, in space, and even among the devas—is formed from a unique blend of the three guṇas: sattva, rajas, and tamas. Nothing in creation exists as 100% sattva, 100% rajas, or 100% tamas. All beings and objects function through a mixture of these tendencies.

How the Guṇas Interact

- Excess tamas can be reduced by gently increasing rajas.
- Excess rajas can be purified by moving toward sattva.
- A certain measure of each guṇa is essential for life to function harmoniously.

Practical Illustrations

- Sleep is an expression of tamas.
A healthy person must sleep roughly six hours.
Sleeping more than necessary strengthens tamas, yet rejecting sleep entirely is neither possible nor desirable.
- Rajas is needed for activity, initiative, and movement.
Without it, no work can be done.
- Sattva is essential for clarity, discrimination, steadiness, and rightful duty.
It lifts the mind toward purity and purpose.

A balanced life arises when these three tendencies operate in the right proportion, with sattva taking the lead, rajas supporting action, and tamas providing necessary rest.

Beyond the Three

Above sattva, rajas, and tamas lies a higher spiritual condition known as guṇātīta.

This is the state of transcendence, described earlier by Bhagavān in Bhagavad Gītā, Chapter 14—a state in which the jīva no longer identifies with the movements of the guṇas but abides in Paramātmā-svarūpa, serene and free.

18.41

**brāhmaṇakṣatriyaviśāṃ(m), śūdrāṇāṃ(ñ) ca parantapa,
karmāṇi pravibhaktāni, svabhāvaprabhavaairguṇaiḥ. 18.41**

The duties of the Brāhmaṇas, the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas, as well as of the Śūdras have been assigned according to their innate modes of Prakṛti (Guṇas), Arjuna.

Bhagavān now moves to the topic of **svabhāva-based duties**.

Varṇa is Based on Guṇas, Not Birth

Bhagavān clearly says: Varṇa comes from **one's inherent qualities (guṇa)** and **natural disposition (svabhāva)**, not from family of birth.

Being born in a Brāhmaṇa family does not make one a Brāhmaṇa automatically.

Acting with the qualities of a Śūdra makes one a Śūdra, regardless of birth.

Conversely, acting with higher qualities elevates one's varṇa.

Historical Examples of Varṇa Transformation

Devavrata (Bhīṣma)

A horse trader once challenged King Śantanu.

Young Devavrata reprimanded him for arrogance and declared:

*"If your horse proves extraordinary, I shall make you a Kṣatriya and a king.
If not, I shall demote you to Śūdra."*

The horse proved exceptional, and Devavrata transformed the trader into a Kṣatriya and crowned him.

Karṇa

Duryodhana made Karṇa the king of Anga and declared him Kṣatriya.

Sañjaya

Sañjaya, originally born a sūta, was elevated to the status of a Brāhmaṇa by Vyāsa.

Viśvāmitra

King Kauśika, a Kṣatriya by birth, became a Brahmarṣi through tapas:

- displeased that sage Vasiṣṭha's cow destroyed his army,
- he renounced kingship,
- practised intense austerities,
- rose from Kṣatriya → Brāhmaṇa → Ṛṣi → Maharṣi → Brahmarṣi.

Misinterpretation in Later Periods

Our scriptures never supported untouchability or notions of "high caste-low caste." These distortions appeared later, especially during medieval and Mughal periods.

Examples from Rāmāyaṇa:

- Bhagavān Rāma never called Niśāda "low caste."
- Sabari was lovingly embraced.
- Vidura, born of mixed parentage, was honoured by Bhagavān Śrī Krishna Himself.

The saint Swami-ji says: We must correct historical wrongs, embrace those who were marginalized, and restore unity.

18.42

**śamo damastapaḥ(ś) śaucaṃ(ñ), kṣāntirārjavameva ca,
jñānaṃ(m) vijñānamāstikyaṃ(m), brahmakarma svabhāvajam. 18.42**

Subjugation of the mind and senses, enduring hardships for the discharge of one's sacred obligations, external and internal purity, forgiving the faults of others, straightness of mind, senses and behaviour, belief in the Vedas and other scriptures, God and life after death etc., study and teaching of the Vedas and other scriptures and realization of the truth relating to God—all these constitute the natural duties of a Brāhmaṇa.

Bhagavān Śrī Krishna describes the natural qualities belonging to the **brāhmaṇa-svabhāva**—those inclined towards a life of knowledge, contemplation, and purity. Their inborn dispositions lean toward inner calm, self-discipline, tapas, cleanliness, forgiveness, straightforwardness, deep knowledge, applied wisdom, and faith in the higher truths.

Bhagavān enumerates nine qualities that arise naturally in those with a brāhmaṇa temperament:

1. Śama (mental tranquility):

A mind that effortlessly rests in peace, not agitated by desires or disturbances.

2. Dama (sense control):

The ability to restrain and guide the external senses toward higher purposes.

3. Tapaḥ (austerity):

A willingness to undertake disciplined practices that purify the inner being.

4. Śauca (purity):

Both external cleanliness and internal purity of thought and intention.

5. Kṣānti (forbearance):

The strength to endure difficulties without agitation or resentment.

6. Ārjava (simplicity / straightforwardness):

A transparent nature—honest, upright, without manipulation or crookedness.

7. Jñāna (knowledge):

Scriptural understanding, a clear grasp of higher spiritual principles.

8. Vijñāna (realised wisdom):

The practical, lived experience of those teachings; knowledge that has become one's nature.

9. Āstikya (faith):

A deep inner trust in the unseen spiritual order, in śāstra, and in the presence of Bhagavān.

These qualities are not forced disciplines but arise naturally in a person whose inner nature leans towards contemplation and spiritual understanding. Such a person's "karma"—the work aligned with their nature—is to cultivate knowledge, teach, guide society toward dharma, and live a life of purity and devotion.

18.43

**śauryaṃ(n) tejo dhṛtirdākṣyaṃ(m), yuddhe cāpyapalāyanam,
dānamīśvarabhāvaśca, kṣātraṃ(ñ) karma svabhāvajam. 18.43**

Heroism, majesty, firmness, diligence and dauntlessness in battle, bestowing gifts, and lordliness—all these constitute the natural duty of a Kṣatriya.

Bhagavān Śrī Krishna describes the natural qualities belonging to the **kṣatriya-svabhāva**—those whose inner nature inclines them toward courage, protection, leadership, and responsibility. Their inherent disposition includes valour, strength of spirit, steadfastness, skill, fearlessness in battle, generosity, and a natural sense of authority.

Bhagavān lists eight qualities that arise on their own in those with a kṣatriya temperament:

1. Śauryam (valour):

A natural heroism that rises instantly in moments of challenge. For such a person, confronting difficulties is instinctive—not out of ego, but out of duty.

2. Tejas (radiance / spirited energy):

An inner brilliance and enthusiasm that inspires others. Such individuals possess a charismatic presence and a fiery will.

3. **Dhṛtiḥ (steadfastness):**

The capacity to remain firm, steady, and committed even in adversity. They do not abandon their dharma midway.

4. **Dākṣyam (skill / expertise):**

Efficiency and competence in action. A kṣatriya is naturally organised, capable, and alert.

5. **Yuddhe apalāyanam (non-retreat in battle):**

The strength to stand one's ground in moments of crisis. For them, fleeing from responsibility is unthinkable.

6. **Dānam (generosity):**

A large-heartedness that delights in giving—whether help, resources, or protection.

7. **Īśvara-bhāvaḥ (leadership / sense of authority):**

A natural inclination to guide, protect, and administer. This is not tyranny, but the ability to take charge for the welfare of all.

These qualities collectively form the **kṣātra-karma**, the natural work of one born with a courageous and protective disposition. Such individuals become guardians of society—upholding justice, ensuring safety, and acting with responsibility and strength.

18.44

kṛṣigaurakṣyavāṇijyaṃ(m), vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam, paricaryātmakaṃ(ñ) karma, śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam. 18.44

Agriculture, rearing of cows and honest exchange of merchandise—these constitute the natural duty of a Vaiśya (a member of the trading class); and service of the other classes is the natural duty even of a Śūdra (a member of the labouring class).

Bhagavān Śrī Krishna describes the **natural duties** that arise from the inherent disposition of **vaiśyas** and **śūdras**.

For the **vaiśya**, the natural inclinations are agriculture, protection of cattle, and trade.

For the **śūdra**, the natural disposition expresses as service-oriented work—supporting and assisting others through dedicated effort.

Bhagavān now moves from inner qualities (brāhmaṇa & kṣatriya) to **natural vocations** that arise from one's svabhāva in society:

For the Vaiśya:

1. **Kṛṣi (agriculture):**

A natural talent for cultivation, managing land, and producing food. This includes knowledge of seasons, soil, and sustainability.

2. **Go-rakṣya (cow protection / animal husbandry):**

A protective, nurturing connection with cattle—ensuring their care, wellbeing, and proper management. Traditionally, this also included dairy and related livelihoods.

3. Vāñijyam (trade / commerce):

Business acumen, an instinctive sense of exchange, pricing, negotiation, and management. Those with this temperament excel in creating prosperity and sustaining the economic flow of society.

These occupations are not merely jobs—they express a vaiśya's orientation toward **production, protection, and distribution**, forming the economic backbone of society.

For the Śūdra:

4. Paricaryā-ātmakam karma (service-oriented duties):

Work rooted in dedicated service—assisting, supporting, providing labour, and contributing through hands-on tasks.

Individuals with this disposition thrive in roles that require loyalty, effort, and consistency.

Bhagavān emphasises that *none of these roles is superior or inferior*. Each one is **svabhāva-jam**—born out of a person's natural inner tendencies. When a person acts in alignment with their svabhāva, their karma becomes effortless, meaningful, and spiritually elevating.

18.45

**sve sve karmaṇyabhirataḥ(s), saṃsiddhiṃ(m) labhate naraḥ,
sVākarmanirataḥ(s) siddhiṃ(m), yathā vindati tacchṛṇu. 18.45**

Keenly devoted to his own natural duty, man attains the highest perfection in the form of Godrealization. Hear the mode of performance whereby the man engaged in his inborn duty reaches that highest consummation.

A person who remains dedicated to his own natural duties attains saṃsiddhi—the fulfilment that culminates in Bhagavān's realisation. When one engages wholeheartedly in the work that naturally belongs to him, such engagement itself becomes the means to the highest attainment. How this happens is now explained across the following verses.

Bhagavān summarises four essential principles in these next shlokas—45, 46, 47, and 48.

18.46

**yataḥ(ph) pravṛttirbhūtānām(m), yena sarvamidaṃ(n) tatam,
sVākarmaṇā tamabhyarcya, siddhiṃ(m) vindati mānavaḥ. 18.46**

From whom all beings come into being and by whom the whole universe is pervaded, by worshipping Him through the performance of his own natural duties, man attains the highest perfection.

He from whom all beings arise and by whom this entire universe is pervaded—by worshipping that very Supreme through one's own natural duties, a person attains absolute fulfilment. One's *svabhāvika karma* itself becomes a form of worship (*abhyarcana*) when performed with sincerity.

18.47

**śreyānsvadharṃo viguṇaḥ(ph), paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt,
svabhāvaniyataṃ(ñ) karma, kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam. 18.47**

Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well-performed; for, performing the duty ordained by his own nature, man does not incur sin.

Even imperfectly performing one's own dharma is better than flawlessly imitating another's. Paradharmā, even if executed perfectly, disturbs inner harmony. When one lives according to *svabhāva*, there is no inner conflict or fear. This verse underscores the essential value of authentic living.

18.48

**sahajaṃ(ñ) karma kaunteya, sadoṣamapi na tyajet,
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa, dhūmenāgnirivāvṛtāḥ. 18.48**

Therefore, Arjuna, one should not relinquish one's innate duty, even though it has a measure of evil; for all undertakings are beset by some evil, as is the fire covered by smoke.

Even when one's natural duty appears tinged with imperfections, it should not be abandoned. Just as fire is always accompanied by a veil of smoke, so too every action in this world carries some defect. Therefore, one should not renounce *sahajaṃ karma* merely because it seems flawed.

Bhagavān's teaching in these verses rests on four central insights:

1. Fulfilment comes to the one who follows his natural place in life with honesty.

When a person sincerely follows the responsibilities given by his inherent disposition—his *varṇa* and *āśrama*—he attains Bhagavān. The Mahābhārata narrates the remarkable account of **Tulādhāra**, the humble merchant; **Dharmā**, the butcher; a **devoted housewife**; and even a **gaṇikā**. Each performed their own natural duties with such truthfulness that a great ṛṣi like **Jābāli** had to leave the forest and visit them to gain knowledge.

The tapasvin whose austerity was so intense that birds built nests upon his head, whose fiery gaze could reduce them to ash—such a sage still had to seek wisdom from a housewife, from Tulādhāra the merchant, from Dharmā the butcher, and from the gaṇikā. All four had attained fulfilment simply by performing their allotted duties with unwavering sincerity.

2. Whatever duty is given should be performed as worship.

Whatever responsibility life has placed in one's hands should be done as an offering to Bhagavān—**Jo hī karūṃ so hī terī pūjā** — Whatever I do, let that be Thy worship." Guru Nanak's message echoes this spirit: ordinary work, done with the right attitude, becomes worship.

3. One must regard one's own duty as sacred—even if it seems accompanied by harshness or minor violence.

For example, a soldier standing at the border may think, "If I shoot, someone will die—this is violence." If he abandons his duty out of such confusion, he incurs sin. But if, while protecting the nation, someone dies by his bullet, he remains free from blame, because he was fulfilling his ordained duty.

If a soldier refuses to defend during an attack, claiming to practise non-violence, he becomes responsible for greater harm. Bhagavān explains that no action is entirely free from defects—*dhūmena agnir ivāvṛtāḥ*—just as no fire exists without smoke.

4. Greatness lies not in doing 'big work' but in doing what is ours to do.

People often chase grand actions. But the real question is: **what is appointed for me?**

The story of the young boy by the seashore illustrates this. During high tide, countless jellyfish were washed onto the shore. With tender compassion, the child kept picking them up and returning them

to the sea. A man watching him remarked, “What difference will it make? You save a few, but thousands wash ashore again.”

The child quietly picked up one more jellyfish, held it gently, and said, “It makes a difference to this one,” and placed it in the water.

One may not transform the whole world—but everyone is given enough strength to bring joy or relief to someone. To use whatever little strength Bhagavān has given—this itself is one’s dharma.

5. Dharma lies not only in temples and organised charity, but in daily human conduct.

Offering blankets at a pilgrimage site, organising a bhandaara—these are easy acts.

More difficult, yet more meaningful, is to care for those around us:

- the newspaper delivery boy
- the cable technician
- the courier worker
- the maid who works in the home
- the servant who serves daily
- anyone labouring in the heat or exhaustion

Offering a glass of water, showing concern, tending to them when they fall sick—this is deeper dharma.

Humanity’s error lies in separating daily conduct from dharma. But the Gītā is not entangled in debates about *varṇa-vyavasthā*; its vision is **universal welfare**—*mānav-kalyāṇa*.

Bhagavān’s intention is not to create conflict but to elevate the entire creation. Hence, these teachings on *svadharma* and *sahajaṃ karma* are offered for the well-being of all beings.

18.49

asaktabuddhiḥ(s) sarvatra, jitātmā vigatasprhaḥ, naiṣkarmyasiddhiḥ(m) paramāṃ(m), sannyāsenādhighacchati. 18.49

He whose intellect is unattached everywhere, whose thirst for enjoyment has altogether disappeared and who has subdued his mind, reaches through Sāṅkhyayoga (the path of Knowledge) the consummation of actionlessness.

Bhagavān now introduces a new term: ***naiṣkarmya-siddhi***, the highest state of non-doership. Though the literal meaning of *naiṣkarmya* appears to be “absence of action,” here it does ****not**** mean inaction. Throughout the Gītā, **naiṣkarmya** has several meanings—non-attachment, non-desire, non-involvement, and freedom from the ego of “I am the doer.”

To explain this, the speaker gives an analogy of a *motor car*:

- The engine represents desire (*kāmnā*).
- The driver represents the doer (*kartā*).
- The moving car represents action (*karma*).

Desire alone does not produce karma. Like an engine running without the car moving, a desire may arise but no action occurs until the doer “engages the gear”—that is, gives approval to the desire. Only then does karma take place.

But a second situation also exists: A car can move without the engine running—like in the old days on the steep downhill near Sahastradhārā, where taxi drivers would turn off the engine and simply glide down the slope.

Here, there is no desire, yet action happens by itself.

This is naiṣkarmya — action happening naturally, effortlessly, without the ego of “I am doing.”

A similar example is digestion. We say, “I ate mango,” but no one says, “I digested mango.” Digestion happens on its own. In naiṣkarmya, even actions done consciously—eating, seeing, lifting the hand—happen with the same naturalness as digestion: I am doing nothing.

This is a very advanced state, like a PhD degree, not gained directly. Many preliminary stages—self-control, purity, discipline—are required before one becomes eligible.

Bhagavān mentions three qualifications needed for naiṣkarmya-siddhi:

1. Asakta-buddhi — a mind free from attachment.

2. Vigata-spr̥ha — freedom from clinging desires (explained through the examples of camphor smell sticking to a box, or Rooh-Afza scent remaining in a bottle even after months).

3. Jitātmā — mastery over the inner organs.

Only one who gains these three “degrees” becomes fit for naiṣkarmya-siddhi.

Once attained, higher powers (aṣṭa-siddhis and nava-nidhis) naturally manifest, without special effort.

Naiṣkarmya is not produced by practice; it ****reveals itself**** through purity and Bhagavān’s grace.

To illustrate this state, the speaker narrates the story of Kṛṣṇa, the Gopīs, the Yamunā, and Durvāsā R̥ṣi:

Kṛṣṇa asks the Gopīs to take food across the Yamunā for Durvāsā. The river is flooded. Kṛṣṇa tells them to say: “If Kṛṣṇa has never looked at the face of a woman, O Yamunā, give way.”

The Gopīs are shocked, but upon saying it, the Yamunā parts.

They serve Durvāsā, who eats all nine plates. When returning, the river rises again. Durvāsā tells them to say: “If Durvāsā has eaten nothing except grass (durvā), O Yamunā, give way.”

Even more shocked, they repeat it—and the river parts again.

Confused, they ask Kṛṣṇa the truth. He explains:

“This is naiṣkarmya. Action done without desire does not bind. I interact with you without personal desire—therefore it is not ‘action’ for Me. Durvāsā eats without desire—therefore for him, it is also ‘not eating.’”

This is the essence of verse 18.49.

18.50

**siddhiṃ(m) prāpto yathā brahma, tathāpnoti nibodha me,
samāsenaiḥ kaunteya, niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā. 18.50**

Arjuna, know from Me only briefly the process through which man having attained actionlessness, which is the highest consummation of Jñānayoga (the path of Knowledge), reaches Brahma.

Niṣkāma Karma: Niṣkāma karma refers to action performed without desire for its result. The individual acts, but the mind does not become agitated by expectation or reward. Duty is performed because it is enjoined, not because it promises gain.

Nirliptatā: The State of Non-Doership

Nirliptatā means remaining inwardly untouched, even while the body and senses are fully active. An illustration clarifies this: A person sees a jalebī, picks it up, eats it—these are labelled as “actions.” But the chewing and digesting are never considered actions. They occur naturally, without the sense of “I am doing.”

In the same way: The eyes see, the hands lift, the mouth accepts, the teeth chew, the organs digest, all as functions of Prakṛti.

In truth, the individual does nothing. This is the meaning of the Sāṅkhya declaration:

guṇāḥ guṇeṣu vartante

“The guṇas function among the guṇas.”

Action continues outwardly, but the inner attitude remains constant: “I have done nothing. Bhagavān has appointed me to this task. All unfolds according to His will.”

The Grace Behind Non-Doership

Gosvāmi Tulasīdāsa expresses the same truth:

लोभ पाँस जेहिं गर न बँधाय।

सो नर तुम्ह समान रघुराय॥

यह गुन साधन ते नहिं होई।

तुम्हरी कृपाँ पाव कोइ कोई॥

“The one whom greed cannot bind, O Raghurāya, becomes like You.

This freedom does not arise merely by one’s own effort; only by Your grace does someone attain it.”

Non-doership (nirliptatā) is not achieved by austerity alone—it blossoms through divine grace.

Sāṅkhya-Yoga and the Role of Renunciation

In Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Bhagavān explains that sannyāsa (formal renunciation) is indeed noble, but not suitable for all. Regardless of external renunciation, one must understand the inner truth:

All actions arise in Prakṛti, but the Self is not Prakṛti.

When this is known, even amidst activity one abides in naishkarmya—the state of “actionlessness in action.”

The Gopī-Durvāsā Līlā: An Illustrated Teaching on Naishkarmya

One day the gopīs teased Bhagavān: “You speak such lofty philosophy, yet You stay with us all day—stealing butter, playing, dancing. You never ‘teach’ us!”

Bhagavān remained silent but resolved to instruct them in His own way.

He later said to them: “Sage Durvāsā is staying beyond the Yamunā. Prepare delicacies and offer them to him. If he accepts, your lives will be blessed.”

The gopīs prepared the dishes, but the Yamunā was in full flood. They returned.

Bhagavān instructed: “Pray to Yamunā Mātā: ‘If Kṛṣṇa has never looked at a woman’s face, then give us a path.’”

They protested: “You look at us all day! How can we say this?”

Bhagavān replied only, “Say it if you wish. If you say it, the river will part.”

Knowing His ways, they conveyed the message; astonishingly, the Yamunā parted, and they crossed.

Though Durvāsā had vowed to eat only durvā grass, he accepted every delicacy: “If Kṛṣṇa has sent it, bring it.” He ate everything.

When the gopīs returned, the river was again in spate. Durvāsā instructed: “Say to Yamunā: ‘If Durvāsā has eaten nothing other than durvā, then give us a path.’”

Confused—“He just ate everything!”—yet obedient, they delivered the message. Once again the Yamunā parted.

Bhagavān clarified the seeming contradiction: “I remain with you all day, but My mind never touches a worldly object; I abide in the Self. Therefore, it is true that I have never ‘looked at a woman’—in the sense of mental attachment.

Sage Durvāsā, too, mentally never touches any food. You invoked My name; hence he accepted your dishes. Otherwise, being a durvā-eater, he would have perceived them only as blades of durvā.”

Thus, the truth became clear: External action is not the criterion. Inner absorption determines reality. This alone is naishkarmya—action where no doer is born.

Hari śaraṇam Hari śaraṇam Hari śaraṇam...

And with the chant resonating in the atmosphere, all bowed in reverence —“***Yogeśvara Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chandra Bhagavān kī Jai! Nārayana!***”

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Rajneesh ji

Q: How did the sage Durvāsā get his name?

A: Because he consumed only durvā grass.

Q: What are naishkarmya-karma?

A: Duties performed for the welfare of others, without any personal desire, are naishkarmya-karma. When one helps another without expecting gratitude, recognition, praise, or fame—that is naishkarmya.

Arun ji

Q: What is the difference between bhoga and prasāda?

A: Bhoga is the food or item offered to Bhagavān.

Prasāda is that which, after being offered, becomes sacred and is distributed among devotees.

Prasāda carries the bhāva of Bhagavān’s acceptance.

Bhoga refers to the act of offering; prasāda refers to the sanctified form of what has been offered.

Q: In Hindu society so many castes have emerged. How can we move beyond them?

A: Caste is not a matter of religion; its structure never emerged from dharma.

It evolved from occupational and social functions, and such divisions exist in all communities,

Christian, tribal, and others.

A carpenter worked with wood; a cobbler with leather; a blacksmith with iron; a goldsmith with gold. There was no sense of superiority or inferiority, and no term was originally derogatory. Disruptions occurred during the Mughal period; earlier it was not like this. Bhagavān never discriminated, whether it was with Nīśāda, Kevat, or Śabarī Mātā.



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Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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