

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 18: Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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Interpreter: GĪTĀ VIŚĀRAD ŚRĪ DR. ASHU GOYAL JI

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

Understanding Karma: Fruits, Causes, and Renunciation

The **18th chapter** of the Bhagavad Gītā, titled **Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga—the Yoga of Liberation through Renunciation**.

This chapter guides us toward the ultimate spiritual freedom by revealing the true nature of renunciation. The session commenced with the auspicious lighting of the traditional lamp, symbolizing the unwavering flame of Dharma, which dispels the darkness of ignorance and illuminates the path of righteousness. This light purifies the *Antaḥkaraṇa* (inner consciousness) with the wisdom needed to transcend illusion, preparing us for a journey of spiritual clarity. Salutations were then offered to Bhagavān and to the Guru, invoking their divine blessings for guidance.

It is not by chance that we are studying the Gītā. It is surely the fruit of noble deeds from past births, or perhaps the grace of Saints, that has led us to this rare fortune. Truly, we did not choose the Bhagavad Gītā—it chose us. The stronger this faith becomes, the more grace will flow into our lives.

We are now immersed in Chapter 18. In the last session, it was explained with a simple yet powerful analogy: even if one catches the last bogey of a train, one still boards the entire train. Similarly, this chapter is a *saṅgraha adhyāya*—a summary that encapsulates the essence of the entire Gītā. Even those who might have missed the earlier discourses can still grasp the fullness of its teachings through Chapter 18.

The dialogue begins with Arjuna’s question on *tyāga* (renunciation) and *sannyāsa* (complete renunciation of worldly involvement)—which is superior, and how they differ. As discussed earlier, the distinction is subtle, so much so that the words are often used interchangeably. *Tyāga* is generally understood in two contexts: material renunciation and renunciation of action. In common use, it often refers to giving up material possessions. But in the Gītā, both *tyāga* and *sannyāsa* are directly related to *karma* (action). Śrī Bhagavān clarifies that what is to be renounced is not action itself, nor its results, but the *desire* for the fruits of action. Renunciation of desire—not renunciation of duty—is the true path.

In today’s world, especially on social media, we often see questions framed with partial understanding: “Is it more important to visit a temple, or to take a patient to the hospital?” “Should milk be offered to Śiva, or

given to the poor?" Such comparisons reveal half-knowledge of Dharma. The Bhagavad Gītā clearly emphasizes that *karma*—one's rightful duty—must never be neglected. Yet worship is equally essential, for it nourishes inner spiritual progress. The right answer is not *either-or*, but *both*. True Dharma integrates both dimensions.

One who sees Śiva in the stone idol also sees Him in every living being. Those who offer milk to the poor are the very same who bow before Śiva in the temple. Those who shun worship entirely are unlikely to serve the poor either. These two are inseparable, and both are necessary.

Often, people try to escape their *niyat karma* (ordained duties) by offering excuses: "Why bathe before worship? What difference does it make to Bhagavān?" or "Why ring the temple bell? I believe only in karma-yoga." Such reasoning is often born from laziness disguised as wisdom. Even simple disciplines like chanting on a rosary are seen as burdensome. They quote the proverb:

मन चंगा तो कठौती में गंगा

"If the mind is pure, the Ganges flows even in a small bowl."

But should we not ask: when did our mind become pure? The mind is constantly agitated by desire, pride, jealousy, and deception. How can such a mind be considered pure?

This famous verse is attributed to Saint Ravidas, the revered Guru of Mirabai, himself a cobbler by caste yet a saint of the highest realization. It is often misused to justify negligence of duty. The story behind the verse reveals its true depth.

Once, a man in a hurry to bathe in the Ganges passed by Ravidas, who was stitching shoes. Ravidas humbly requested him to offer a coin in the river on his behalf. When the man obeyed, a divine hand emerged from the waters, accepting the offering and presenting a celestial bracelet in return. Tempted, the man took the bracelet to the king, who demanded a second one for the pair. Unable to obtain it, the man returned to Ravidas in distress. With serene faith, Ravidas placed a wooden bowl before him and declared, "If my mind is pure, the Ganges will reveal itself even here." To everyone's astonishment, a divine hand appeared from the bowl, offering the second bracelet and thus saving the man's life.

The lesson is profound: such miracles manifest only for saints of pure mind and heart, like Ravidas or Swami Govind Giri Ji Maharaj. For us ordinary seekers, purity of mind is not a claim but a goal—attained only through dedicated action, worship, and discipline. Without that, invoking the proverb is mere self-deception.

Śrī Bhagavān firmly warns against *nishiddha karma* (forbidden acts) and *kāmya karma* (desire-driven acts), yet He never advises the renunciation of *niyat karma* (ordained duty). In the next teachings, He will show how renunciation must be rightly understood—not as abandonment, but as a purification of motive and attitude, leading step by step toward true freedom.

18.7

niyatasya tu sannyāsaḥ(kh), karmaṇo nopapadyate, mohāttasya parityāgaḥ(s), tāmasaḥ(ph) parikīrtitaḥ. 18.7

(Prohibited acts and those that are motivated by desire should, no doubt, be given up). But it is not advisable to abandon a prescribed duty. Such abandonment out of ignorance has been declared as Tāmasika.

Before one can truly understand renunciation, it is important to appreciate the indispensable role of duty.

Niyata karma—ordained duties—are not optional practices; they are the foundation of Dharma, purify the heart, and maintain discipline in life. Renouncing such duties is not only improper but spiritually damaging.

- **Niyatasya karmaṇaḥ sannyāsaḥ na upapadyate** – The abandonment of prescribed duties can never be justified. These include acts of daily worship, prayer, service to family and society, and professional obligations that sustain one’s responsibilities.
- **Mohāt tasya parityāgaḥ** – When these duties are given up under the sway of delusion, laziness, or false reasoning (“this has no meaning” or “God does not need such things”), it is not wisdom but ignorance.
- **Tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ** – Such abandonment is classified as Tāmasika. It is born of inertia and escapism, and it leads not to freedom but to bondage and degradation.

Some people, out of delusion, speak of performing a “*manasik snān*” (mental bath) or a “*manasik pūjā*” (mental worship). To them, one should ask: can you also be sustained by “*manasik bhojan*” (mental eating)? Just as physical nourishment cannot be replaced by imagination, duties towards Dharma cannot be set aside with such excuses. Giving up duty to escape effort is nothing but *Tāmas Tyāga*—renunciation in darkness.

Śrī Bhagavān clearly distinguishes between abandoning what is prohibited (*nishiddha karma*) or desire-driven (*kāmya karma*), and abandoning what is obligatory (*niyata karma*). The former is appropriate; the latter, when forsaken, is *tamas*-driven renunciation. This so-called renunciation is often wrapped in lofty words but reflects only spiritual immaturity.

The lazy mind often glorifies its own indiscipline: “Why bathe before prayer? Why light a lamp? Why chant?” Such excuses do not stem from detachment but from avoidance. The Bhagavad Gītā firmly warns that abandoning rightful duty under the guise of philosophy or convenience pulls one further into darkness, not closer to liberation.

Key Insight

True renunciation does not mean discarding responsibilities but performing them without attachment or selfish desire. To neglect duty in the name of spirituality is *tamas*, not *tyāga*. Real renunciation purifies intention while fulfilling Dharma—it transforms action into a path of liberation.

18.8

**duḥkhamityeva yatkarma, kāyakleśabhayāttyajet,
sa kṛtvā rājasam(n) tyāgam(n), naiva tyāgaphalam(m) labhet. 18.8**

Should anyone give up his duties for fear of physical strain, thinking that all actions are verily painful—practising such Rājasika form of renunciation, he does not reap the fruit of renunciation.

Having explained *tāmasika tyāga* in the previous verse, Śrī Bhagavān now reveals another false form of renunciation—one born not of ignorance but of selfish interest and attachment to comfort.

- **Duḥkham iti eva yat karma** – When a person thinks, “All action is suffering,” he begins to look at responsibility as a burden rather than as worship or service.

- **Kāyagleśa-bhayāt tyajet** – Out of fear of physical strain or discomfort, he abandons his duties. This attitude springs from *Kāyagleśa* (dread of hardship) or *Kāya Prem* (excessive attachment to the body).
- **Sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgam** – Such renunciation is classified as *Rājasic*, because it arises from selfishness and desire for bodily ease.
- **Na eva tyāga-phalam labhet** – This kind of renunciation does not yield the true fruit, since it is not based on wisdom or Dharma.

The inclination to avoid discomfort manifests in many subtle ways. For instance, during a *havan* (sacrificial ritual), some may request the priest to rush because the smoke irritates their eyes. Others may dismiss a venue for *satsang* simply because it lacks air-conditioning or other luxuries. Such examples reflect a *Rājasic* mindset, where physical comfort is valued above inner growth.

These attitudes hold people back from genuine spiritual commitment. The craving for comfort keeps them bound to the body and prevents the rise of higher awareness. This is exactly what Śrī Bhagavān warns against: renunciation that is not rooted in wisdom or duty, but in aversion to hardship.

Inspiration can be drawn from lives like that of Professor Shivnarayan Ji from Kanpur, a devoted follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Known for his Gandhian discipline, he would hold himself accountable for his students' mistakes, even punishing himself with a stick, believing their error to be his own failure in teaching. Such discipline reflects inner strength rather than weakness.

One should, from time to time, consciously train the body in *titikṣā*—the endurance of heat and cold, comfort and discomfort, favorable and adverse conditions. Practical disciplines may include avoiding air-conditioners or fans in summer, skipping tea or sweets, eating less than one's desire, or voluntarily embracing simplicity. Those who are physically fit should attempt *Kalpavās* at Prayagraj during the Kumbh, a 40-day discipline of austerity that cleanses body and mind and infuses spiritual energy that is otherwise difficult to obtain.

Such conscious hardships do not weaken; they brighten the body, strengthen the mind, and awaken spiritual power. In contrast, attachment to comfort and the refusal to endure strain deprive one of the fruits of true renunciation.

Key Insight

Rājasic renunciation is not genuine renunciation but avoidance born of selfishness and comfort-seeking. True discipline requires courage to embrace difficulty as a means of purification. Renunciation that fears hardship will never yield liberation; renunciation that accepts *titikṣā* (forbearance) leads to strength, clarity, and higher awareness.

Next, Śrī Bhagavān will show how renunciation performed with wisdom and without attachment becomes Sāttvika—the highest and truest form of tyāga.

18.9

**kāryamityeva yatkarma, niyataṃ(ñ) kriyate'rjuna
saṅgaṃ(n) tyaktvā phalaṃ(ñ) caiva, sa tyāgaḥ(s) sāttviko mataḥ. 18.9**

A prescribed duty which is performed simply because it has to be performed, giving up attachment

and fruit, that alone has been recognized as the *Sāttvika* form of renunciation.

Having revealed the shortcomings of *tāmasika* and *rājasa* renunciation, Śrī Bhagavān now describes the highest form of renunciation—*sāttvika tyāga*. This represents the purest spirit of Dharma, where duty is embraced not for reward, not to avoid pain, but because it is the right thing to do.

- **Kāryam iti eva yat karma** – The duty is performed with the inner conviction, “This must be done because it is my Dharma.” There is no bargaining with convenience, recognition, or outcome.
- **Niyataṃ kriyate** – Prescribed duties, whether spiritual practices, family responsibilities, or societal service, are executed faithfully in the spirit of offering.
- **Saṅgaṃ tyaktvā phalaṃ caiva** – Both attachment to the act and craving for its fruits are given up. Neither pride of “I am the doer” nor the anxiety of “What will I gain?” clouds the action.
- **Sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ** – Such renunciation is called *sāttvika*, luminous and liberating.

To practice true renunciation, one must take joy in performing duties (*niyata karma*) without tying happiness to the results. A simple self-check is to ask: *Am I enjoying the action itself, or only the outcome?* If satisfaction depends on praise, success, or reward, it reflects a *Rājasic* tendency. If joy is found in the very act, independent of external recognition, it reveals a *Sāttvika* mindset.

A profound example comes from the *Mahābhārata*. When Draupadī questioned Yudhiṣṭhira, he replied: “One must follow Dharma not to seek joy or to avoid pain, but simply because it is Dharma. That alone makes it worth doing.” Outcomes will follow—pleasant or unpleasant—but true *tyāga* lies in renouncing expectations. Even noble acts like charity or service lose their purity when tainted by ego, pride, or the craving for recognition.

One should fulfil duties not for *puṇya* or gain, but for the joy inherent in doing them. To complain, “Even if I do good, others do not return it,” is a narrow outlook. Goodness must be practiced out of inner strength and goodwill, not in expectation of repayment.

Thus, abandoning duties altogether becomes *tāmasika* or *rājasa*. Only the renunciation of attachment to results is *sāttvika tyāga*.

A true *Sāttvika* person never abandons duties because they are demanding. They willingly let go of comfort (*sukhābuddhi*) to uphold Dharma. They perform acts like *annadāna* (feeding the needy) not for merit or fame but from a pure heart, expecting nothing in return. They do not seek gratitude or recognition.

The test of *sāttvika karma* lies in the aftermath: does regret or complaint follow the action? If yes, it was likely *rājasic*. But if one can say, “I would do this again, regardless of the outcome,” the action was truly *sāttvika*. Even charity offered for name, fame, or the reputation of an organization loses its *sāttvika* essence.

This verse captures the summit of renunciation. Unlike the darkness of *tāmasika tyāga* and the restlessness of *rājasa tyāga*, *sāttvika tyāga* is serene, disciplined, and liberating. It transforms every duty into worship and purifies the heart through selfless action. Saints and seekers embody this when they serve tirelessly without desire for comfort, success, or praise.

Key Insight

Sāttvika renunciation is not about abandoning life's responsibilities—it is about elevating them. By performing duties as Dharma, free from ego and expectation, one turns action into yoga and karma into worship. This is the true spirit of renunciation, the path that illuminates the heart and leads toward liberation.

18.10

na dveṣṭyakuśalaṃ(ñ) karma, kuśale nānuṣajjate, tyāgī sattvasamāviṣṭo, medhāvī chinna-saṃśayaḥ. 18.10

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

Śrī Bhagavān now describes the mental state of the true *tyāgī*, who transcends ordinary human tendencies of attraction and aversion.

- **Na dveṣṭi akuśalaṃ karma** - The true renunciate does not dislike or avoid duties that appear unpleasant, difficult, or burdensome. For him, no action ordained by Dharma is beneath dignity.
- **Kuśale na anuṣajjate** - He also does not cling to duties that are comfortable, easy, or bring honour and praise. His motivation lies not in preference but in principle.
- **Tyāgī sattva-samāviṣṭaḥ** - Such a person is absorbed in the quality of *sattva*—clarity, purity, and balance. His renunciation is steady, serene, and uplifting.
- **Medhāvī chinna-saṃśayaḥ** - He is intelligent, thoughtful, and free from doubts. Having understood the essence of Dharma, he acts without inner conflict or hesitation.

The ordinary mind swings between *rāga* (attachment) and *dveṣa* (aversion). We eagerly accept actions that appear pleasant, rewarding, or socially respected, and avoid those that seem inconvenient, laborious, or lacking prestige. But such selectiveness is bondage, not renunciation.

The *sāttvika tyāgī* sees all duties as sacred when done in the spirit of offering to Bhagavān. Cleaning the temple floor and performing a yajña are equally acts of worship when performed with purity of intent. For such a person, every action becomes a path to freedom.

Practical life illustrates this well. Some avoid humble services like distributing food or cleaning after a function, while competing for positions that bring visibility and honour. But a true renunciate serves wherever Dharma calls, unaffected by status. His wisdom cuts away doubts of “Should I do this or not?” leaving only the clarity of duty.

Key Insight

True renunciation is freedom from bias. To neither resist difficult tasks nor cling to pleasant ones is the hallmark of a wise renunciate. Anchored in *sattva*, his heart is free, his intellect clear, and his actions luminous. Such a person performs every duty with equanimity, seeing it as Dharma alone—and in this balanced spirit, all doubts are destroyed, and liberation becomes assured.

18.11

na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṃ(n), tyaktuṃ(ñ) karmāṇyaśeṣataḥ, yastu karmaphalatyaḡī, sa tyāḡityabhidhīyate. 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.

Śrī Bhagavān here clarifies a profound truth: complete renunciation of action is not possible for embodied beings.

- **Na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṃ tyaktuṃ karmāṇi aśeṣataḥ** – As long as one lives in a body, actions are inevitable. Eating, drinking, sleeping, breathing, speaking, and even remaining silent — all are forms of action. Hence, one cannot escape karma entirely.
- **Yaḥ tu karma-phala-tyāḡī** – The true renunciate is the one who gives up attachment to the fruits of action, performing duties without selfish expectation.
- **Sa tyāḡī iti abhidhīyate** – Such a person alone deserves to be called a renunciate (*tyāḡī*).

For a *jñānī*, *vihita karma* (ordained actions) and *niṣiddha karma* (forbidden actions) need no explanation. He is naturally aware of what must be done and what must be avoided. The *medhāvī* (wise person), like Swami Govind Giri Ji Maharaj, possesses clarity about which actions to perform and when.

Bhagavān Śrī Rām embodied this wisdom. He did not hesitate before touching the stone form of Ahalyā; His decision was spontaneous, rooted in Dharma. In battle, He killed Khara and Dūṣaṇa with full arrows, but used only a short arrow against Mārīca, sparing his life. These examples reveal the spirit of the *sarvārambha-parityāḡī* — one who acts without ego, without attachment to doership, allowing Dharma to flow naturally.

A striking illustration of this spirit is found in the *Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmcharitmanas*. When the vānaras were deliberating who could cross the ocean to Laṅkā, Aṅgada declared, “I can go, but I may not return.” Each vānar expressed limitations. Then Jāmbavān turned to Hanumān Ji, who sat silently, humble and unassuming, and spoke to him:

**कहइ रीछपति सुनु हनुमाना। का चुप साधि रहेहु बलवाना ॥
पवन तनय बल पवन समाना। बुधि बिबेक बिग्यान निधाना ॥**

“Listen, Hanumān! Why do you sit quietly, O mighty one? You are the son of the wind, your strength equals that of the wind, and you are a treasure of wisdom, intellect, and knowledge.”

कवन सो काज कठिन जग माहीं। जो नहिं होइ तात तुम्ह पाहीं ॥

“What task exists in this world, dear one, that cannot be accomplished by you?”

Hearing these words, Hanumān Ji, who had hidden his power in humility, rose to reveal his might:

राम काज लागि तव अवतारा। सुनतहिं भयउ पर्वताकारा ॥

“You have incarnated to fulfill the tasks of Śrī Rām.”

कनक बर्ण तन तेज बिराजा। मानहुँ अपर गिरिन्ह कर राजा ॥
सिंहनाद करि बारहिं बारा। लघु रूप धरि सागर पारा ॥

His golden body shone like a mountain king. He roared like a lion, assumed a mighty form, and then in a small form leapt across the ocean.

He reached Lankā, met Mother Sītā, delivered Śrī Rām's message, and returned. When Sugrīva narrated this to Rām, Rām Ji expressed His wish to meet Hanumān. And when Hanumān stood before Him, he spoke only when asked — never boasting, never glorifying himself. Nowhere in the *Rāmcharitmanas* does Hanumān Ji praise his own deeds.

This is the essence of *karma-yoga*: acting without ego, without expectation, without self-praise. A true *tyāgī* does not abandon action but abandons attachment to results and to the notion of "I am the doer."

Saint Kabīrdās echoes this very state of renunciation in his description of *Sahaj Samādhi* — a state where every action becomes worship, and dualities vanish:

साधो सहज समाधि भली

साई ते मिलन भयो जा दिन ते सुरत न अंत चली




आँख न मूँदूँ कान न रूँधूँ काया कष्ट न धारूँ
खुले नैन में हैस-हैस देखूँ सुंदर रूप निहारूँ ॥1॥ साधो

कहूँ सो नाम, सुनूँ सो सुमिरन, जो कछु करूँ सो पूजा
गृह उद्यान एक सम देखूँ भाव मिटाऊँ दूजा ॥2॥ साधो

जहँ-जहँ जाऊँ सोई परिक्रमा जो कछु करूँ सो सेवा
जब सोऊँ तब करूँ दण्डवत, पूजूँ और न देवा ॥3॥ साधो

शब्द निरंतर मनुआ राता, मलिन बचन का त्यागी
बैठत-उठत कबहूँ न बिसरै, ऐसी तारी लागी ॥4॥ साधो

कहै 'कबीर' यह उनमूनि रहनी सो परगट कर गाई
सुख-दुख के इक परे परम सुख, तेहि में रहा समाई ॥5॥ साधो



Sant Kabīr's divine composition invites us into the depths of such sahaja (spontaneous) spiritual insight:

साधो सहज समाधि भली।
गुर परताप जा दिन से जागी, दिन दिन अधिक चली ॥

O seekers! Spontaneous absorption in the Divine is most beautiful. Since the day I awakened by the Guru's grace, that state has deepened day by day.

जहँ जहँ डोलौं सो परिकरमा, जो कछु करौं सो सेवा।
जब सोवौं तब करौं दंडवत, पूजौ और न देवा ॥

Wherever I go, it feels like I am circumambulating the Divine. Whatever I do becomes His service. When I lie down to sleep, that too becomes my prostration; I worship no other deity.

कहौं सो नाम सुनौं सो सुमिरन, खाँव पियांसो पूजा।
गिरह उजाड़ एक सम लेखौं, भाव मिटावौं दूजा ॥

Whatever I speak becomes the Lord's name, whatever I hear becomes remembrance. Eating and drinking are acts of worship. I see a palace and a hut as one and the same, dissolving all duality of feeling.

आँख न मूंदौ कान न रूंधौ, तनिक कष्ट नहीं धारौ।
खुले नैन पहिचानौ हँसि हँसि, सुन्दर रूप निहारौ॥

I do not close my eyes or ears, nor take on any austerity. With open eyes, I recognize Him and smilingly behold His beautiful form everywhere.

सबद निरन्तर से मन लागा, मलिन बासना त्यागी।
ऊठत बैठत कबहुँ न छूटै, ऐसी तारी लागी॥

My mind is ever absorbed in the Divine Word, having renounced impure desires. Whether rising or sitting, the connection never breaks—such is this deep, unbroken communion.

कहै कबीर यह उनमनि रहनी, सो परगट कर गाई।
दुख सुख से जोइ परे परम पद, तेहि पद रहा समाई॥

Kabīr says: I have sung aloud this inner state of silent absorption. One who transcends joy and sorrow enters the supreme state and remains established in it.

Essence and Reflection

Whatever action we perform, let it be done with awareness of right and wrong, and most importantly, with the attitude of devotion and service.

Even the most mundane acts can be transformed into divine worship if performed with the sentiment:
"I am serving Śrī Bhagavān through this."

This outlook transforms karma into karma yoga, and living into living worship.

The Unmuni State

The deeper dimension of renunciation is found in the *Unmuni* state.

A revered Sufi saint, Lala Ji Maharaj, often walked miles to meet his Guru in Fatehpur near Kanpur. Once, due to heavy rains, his journey took six hours instead of three. Arriving late and with soiled clothes, he and a companion washed in a pond before approaching the Guru. The Guru sat with half-closed eyes. Lalaji quietly suggested to his companion that they return, offering no explanation.

When he returned the next week, the Guru rushed to embrace him, saying: "Lala, you have reached where you were meant to. That day, I was in *Unmuni* state." Lalaji replied, "I know." The Guru continued, "That you understood is itself a great sign." Later, when the puzzled companion asked about *Unmuni*, Lalaji explained: "It is when one feels more fulfilled without eating than by eating, more at peace without sleeping than in sleeping, more complete in solitude than in company. It is when the soul's connection with Paramātmā is fully established."

Saint Kabīrdās describes this state in his verse:

कहैं कबीर यह उन्मुनि रहनी, सो परगट कर गाई।
जब दिल को नींद आती है और रूह भी गाफिल होती हैं, तब मैं ही अकेला होता हूँ और यार की महफिल होती है।

सुख-दुख के इक परे परम सुख, तेहि में रहा समाई॥

This *Unmuni* state is beyond joy and sorrow. It is the supreme bliss of effortless union with the Divine.

Key Insight

Renunciation does not mean running away from action. It means performing one's duties without ego and expectation of reward. A wise *tyāgī* is one who acts as a servant of Dharma, lives humbly like Hanumān Ji, and remains ever absorbed in the effortless *sahaj samādhi* described by Kabīr. This is the true spirit of Bhagavad Gītā 18.11.

18.12

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

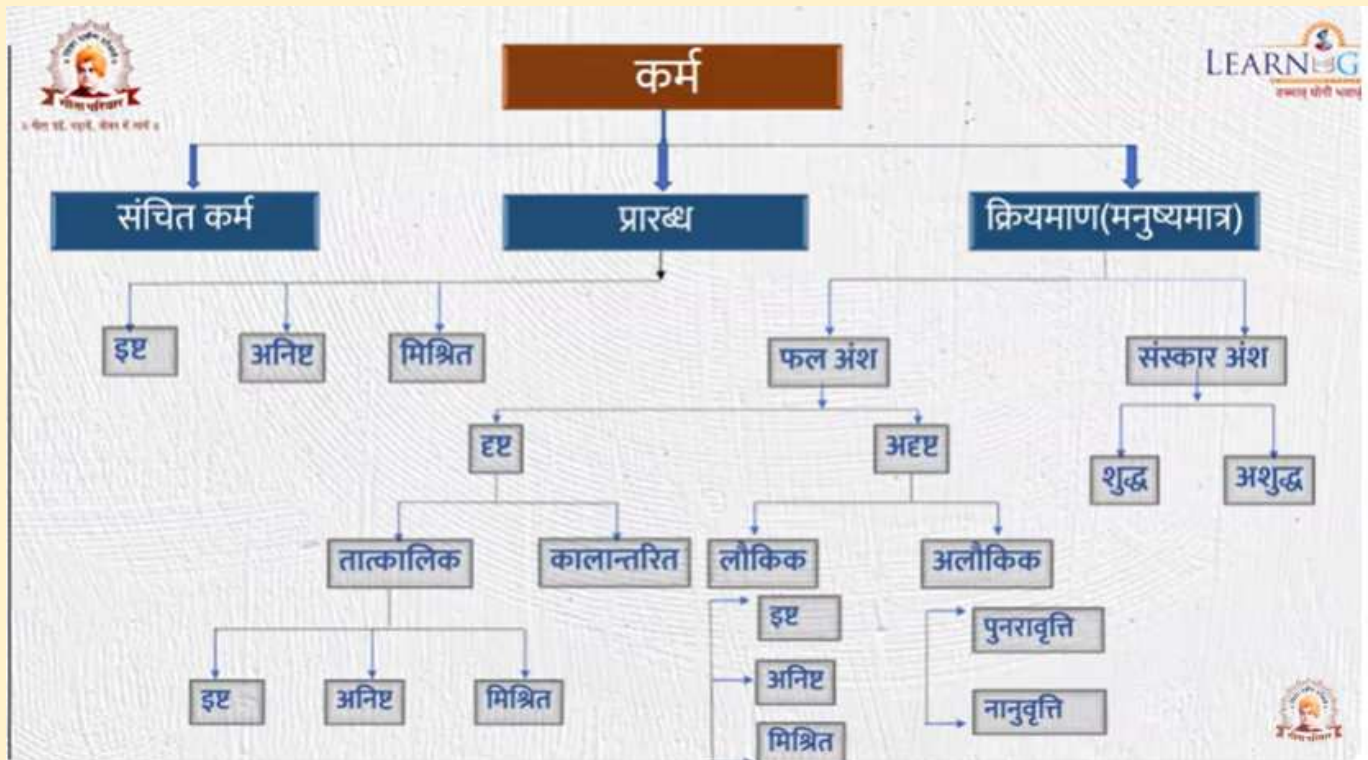
Agreeable, disagreeable and mixed-threefold, indeed, is the fruit that accrues after death from the actions of the unrenouncing. But there is none whatsoever for those who have renounced.

Śrī Bhagavān now explains the outcome of karma for those who cling to fruits versus those who renounce attachment. Actions performed with expectation bind the soul, whereas those performed with detachment liberate it.

- **Aniṣṭam** - Disagreeable fruits: undesirable results that go against our wishes.
- **Iṣṭam** - Agreeable fruits: desirable results that align with our wishes.
- **Miśram** - Mixed fruits: outcomes that are partly desirable and partly undesirable.

These three types of fruits manifest after death for those who do not renounce (*atyāgī*). For the true renunciate (*sannyāsī*), who offers both action and results to the Divine, no binding fruit remains.

Types of Karmas



- **Samchita Karma** - The warehouse of accumulated karmas from countless past lives.
- **Prārabdha Karma** - A certain portion of accumulated karma allotted for this lifetime, shaping present circumstances.
- **Kriyamāṇa Karma** - Future actions resulting from present choices, which continue to add to one's karmic account.

Prārabdha Karma can yield three kinds of fruits:

- **Iṣṭa** - That which is desirable, as per one's wish.
- **Aniṣṭa** - That which is undesirable, against one's wish.
- **Miśra** - A mixed result, partly desirable and partly undesirable.

The categories of desirable or undesirable fruits are linked to **persons, materials, and situations** encountered in life.

Unique Fact about Kriyamāṇa Karma

Among the 84 lakh yonis (forms of existence), only humans are empowered with the capacity to perform *kriyamāṇa karma*. This gives human beings the unique freedom to shape their destiny—either to progress on the path of *adhyātma* (spirituality) or to regress into deeper bondage.

Kriyamāṇa karma carries two essential components:

1. **Phala (Fruit)** – the result that manifests in due course. It is of two types:

- **Dṛṣṭa (Visible)** – immediate or observable results. For example, drinking glucose gives instant energy.
- **Adṛṣṭa (Invisible)** – results that unfold later, or in unseen ways. For example, consuming ghee strengthens health in old age. This type of fruit may be:

- **Laukika (worldly)** or **Alaukika (otherworldly)** such as *pāpa* (sin) and *puṇya* (merit).
- The alaukika fruits can be **punarāvṛtti** (repetitive) or **ananuvṛtti** (non-repetitive).

2. **Sanskara** – the subtle impressions left on the mind and soul, pure or impure, which shape character and tendencies across births.

The characteristics of children from a very young age often arise not from present actions, but from these *sanskaras* carried over from previous lives.

Karma-phala (fruit) is obtained only in *manuṣya yoni* (human birth), and only humans can perform *kriyamāṇa karma*. This means we can both **generate new karma and dissolve old ones**.

One who does not relinquish the fruits of action remains bound to good, bad, or mixed results. But those who renounce fruits rise beyond bondage.

Examples of Pure and Impure Sanskar

Śrī Rām, Raja Harishchandra, and Yudhiṣṭhira all faced extreme difficulties but never compromised on Dharma. Their *sanskara* factor was pure. Those with impure *sanskaras* falter when adverse conditions arise. As *Śrī Rāmcharitmanas* says:

धीरज धरम मित्र अरु नारी। आपद काल परखिए चारी॥

Patience, Dharma, friendship, and spouse—these four are tested in adversity.

Swami Ji's father, a devout priest, once refused double *dakṣiṇā* from a host who requested a shortened *pūjā*. He said: "I will not spoil my *sanskara* for money." This shows how purity of *sanskara* outweighs material gain.

A Parable: Understanding Karma with Discrimination

A Guru, wishing to select his successor, gave two disciples ₹3 each and instructed: "Return within one hour. Spend ₹1 here, ₹1 there, and the remaining ₹1 neither here nor there."

The first disciple returned and explained:

- He ate fritters with ₹1 (here).
- Donated ₹1 to monks (there).
- Saved ₹1 for future meals (neither here nor there).

The second disciple explained differently:

- He ate fritters with ₹1 (here).
- Fed monks fritters worth ₹1 (there).

- Threw ₹1 into the river (neither here nor there).

The Guru reflected: “One took ‘here’ as the āśrama, the other as the world. One saw ‘there’ as the world beyond, the other as service. Both showed insight, but the second showed deeper discrimination.”

Thus, true understanding of karma requires **buddhi (intelligence)** and **viveka (discrimination)** to act rightly and purify both fruit and *sanskar*. The Guru chose the second disciple as his successor.

Key Insight

Whatever action we perform results in both fruit and *sanskar*. The fruit may be pleasant, unpleasant, or mixed; visible or invisible. But the *sanskar* imprints our soul and shapes our destiny. Renunciation of fruit, offering all to the Divine, erases bondage and purifies *sanskar*. This is true renunciation, and this alone leads to liberation.

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.

Śrī Bhagavān now begins to describe the **fivefold causes of action**, laying the foundation for understanding how karma unfolds. This explanation removes the delusion of “I alone am the doer.”

- **Pañca etāni kāraṇāni** – There are five causes or factors behind the accomplishment of any action.
- **Sāṅkhye kṛtānte proktāni** – These have been explained in the philosophy of *Sāṅkhya*, which analyzes reality and the principles that govern the end of action.
- **Siddhaye sarva-karmaṇām** – These factors are necessary for the completion of every action, small or great.

By introducing this framework, Śrī Bhagavān is preparing Arjuna to understand that human effort is never isolated. Action is the interplay of multiple causes, not the monopoly of the ego. This liberates one from the false pride of “I am the sole doer.”

This verse transitions the discussion from renunciation of fruits to a higher wisdom: the **multi-dimensional nature of action**. Often, people claim credit for success or blame themselves entirely for failure. Bhagavān cautions against such narrow vision. Action is never one-dimensional; it is influenced by many causes.

The philosophy of Sāṅkhya identifies five key elements that together determine the outcome of every action. These five will be listed in the next verse (18.14). Until then, Bhagavān urges Arjuna to open his vision beyond the ego.

Key Insight

No action is accomplished by individual effort alone. Behind every deed stand multiple causes—divine,

circumstantial, and collective. Recognizing this truth helps dissolve ego, strengthens humility, and aligns one's work with the larger cosmic order.

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.

Śrī Bhagavān now lists the **five causes of action** that together lead to the fulfillment of karma:

1. **Adhiṣṭhāna (Objective or Goal)** – Every action must have a base purpose. For example, in Ayurveda, taking honey with hot water was traditionally considered prohibited as it harmed muscles and hindered nourishment. Yet today, physicians prescribe it for weight reduction. Here the goal (*adhiṣṭhāna*) is weight loss; thus, what was once prohibited becomes purposeful (*vidhi karma*) when aligned with a clear objective.
2. **Kartā (The Doer)** – Even with a noble goal, if there is no doer, the action cannot manifest. To teach the Bhagavad Gītā, learners are essential; without participants, the teaching remains incomplete.
3. **Karaṇa (Instruments or Means)** – For action to succeed, proper instruments are necessary. To teach the Gītā online, a mobile phone or digital medium is required. To conduct business, capital is essential. To gain employment, education is the instrument.
4. **Ceṣṭā (Effort)** – A goal, a doer, and instruments may be present, but without effort, karma cannot succeed. If one registers for a Gītā class but never attends, or continuously gives excuses, then despite all other factors, learning does not happen. Earnest effort is indispensable.
5. **Daiva (Divine Factor or Destiny)** – Even with all four in place, the unseen factor still plays a role. For example, a family may set up a shop, with capital and hard work, but if an unforeseen pandemic like COVID-19 causes lockdowns, the shop must remain closed, leading to loss. This is the element of destiny. Yet Bhagavān assures flexibility: the greater the effort, the less the dependence on destiny.

Illustration

Śiva Ji says in the *Rāmcharitmanas*:

कर्म प्रधान विश्व रचि राखा।
जो जस करहि सो तस फल चाखा॥

“This world is governed by karma; as one acts, so one experiences the fruit.”

Thus, destiny (*bhāgya*) can be transformed by effort (*puruṣārtha*). As the prayer recited at the beginning of our *vivecana* reminds us:

जहाँ कर्म से भाग्य बदलते, श्रमनिष्ठा कल्याणी है।

“Where karma changes destiny, dedicated effort brings auspiciousness.”

Key Insight

To accomplish any goal in life, these five factors must align: purpose, doer, means, effort, and destiny. While destiny cannot be denied, Bhagavān assures that human effort can transform it. With wisdom, perseverance, and surrender, karma becomes successful and liberating.

The discussion session concluded with the chanting of Harinām Sankīrtana:

हरि शरणं हरि शरणं हरि शरणं हरि शरणम् ।
हरि शरणं हरि शरणं हरि शरणं हरि शरणम् ॥

After this, the *question-and-answer session* began.

Question And Answer Session

Monika Didi Ji

Question – Small children are constantly watching mobile phones. What should be done about this?

Answer – We must remember that we are parents, not masters, of our children. We can give them *sanskaras* (values), but they may not always act exactly as we desire. If this were so, Prahlāda would not have been born in the house of Hiraṇyakaśipu, nor would Rāvaṇa have been born in the lineage of the sage Pulastya. Every individual is the master of their own mind and has the freedom to act independently.

Children rarely listen to lectures but always imitate behavior. If we ourselves spend all day on the mobile, we lose the authority to stop them. It is better to set boundaries: allow them to watch mobile or TV at specific times, so that outside those times they will not insist.

There is a famous incident with Mahatma Gandhi. A man once brought his son to Gandhi Ji, asking him to tell the boy to stop eating jaggery, as it was spoiling his teeth. The boy admired Gandhi Ji deeply, and one word from him would have made the boy give up jaggery instantly. Gandhi Ji, however, asked the man to return after 21 days. When they returned, Gandhi Ji told the boy: “Do not eat jaggery.”

Surprised, the father asked why Gandhi Ji had delayed such a simple instruction. Gandhi Ji replied, “At that time, I myself was eating jaggery every day. For the past 21 days, I have given it up. Only now can I advise your son with integrity.”

In this way, children must be guided more by our conduct than by our words.

Goswami Tulsidas says:

पर उपदेस कुसल बहुतेरे । जे आचरहि ते न घनेरे ॥

“Many are skilled in giving advice, but few practice what they preach.”

Therefore, not giving a mobile phone to the child is not the complete solution. A more effective method is for the parent to abstain from mobile usage for 21 days and demonstrate it through practice. This helps detach the child’s mind from the mobile by the strength of example rather than compulsion.

Durga Prasad Pandey Ji

Question – Is it written in scriptures that a handicapped person should not become a Sanyasi?

Answer – Different sects have different rules (*manyatā*) for Sanyasa. Some sects accept it, while others do not.

Question – If an elder person is giving wrong advice, should that be agreed upon?

Answer – It should be evaluated based on the Shastra (Scriptures). Śrī Ram Ji accepted the exile (*Vanvas*) demanded by Mata Kaikeyi in order to uphold Dharma by fulfilling His father’s promise, thus following the injunctions of Shastra.

Anil Nagar Ji

Question – Please consider adding the study of “Gopālsahasranām” and “Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī” in Geeta Pariwar.

Answer – We already have a suggested list of ten books, which includes these two. We will certainly consider it.

Yogesh Bhaiyya Ji

Question – Just like Maharashtra, Ganeshotsava is now being celebrated in Uttar Pradesh too. But many people celebrating the festival are not deeply religious. Is this appropriate?

Answer – At the very least, it is good that Hindus are coming together under the banner of Ganeshotsava. But improper practices during the festival must be avoided.

Next year, Gītā Pariwar will conduct a campaign to encourage proper celebration of Ganeshotsava. The campaign will emphasize that idols should not be excessively tall, they should be made of pure clay, cinema songs and DJs should not be played in the mandap, and proper worship of Śrī Gaṇeśa should be performed.

Festivals unite society—but they must be celebrated in the right spirit.

Suren Bhaiyya Ji

Question – At every moment, how much of our accumulated karma (*sañcita karma*) manifests as *prārabdha karma*?

Answer – There is no fixed percentage. At every moment, the amount of karma connected to the people we come into contact with gets exhausted.

Meghna Didi Ji

Question – Sometimes people hurt us. Then we also speak harsh words against them. Is this right?

Answer – We are not actually hurt by their behavior or words, but by our unfulfilled expectations from them. We expect them to act or speak in a certain way. When they do not, we feel hurt. Thus, the cause of our pain is not the other person’s action but our own expectations. If we reduce our expectations, we will not feel hurt. Everyone has the freedom to act according to their own mind; it is wrong to expect that they will always act according to us.

The session concluded with the final prayer and the chanting of the Hanumān Chālīsā.

॥ श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ॥



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Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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