ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 18: Mokśa-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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Kartā, Buddhi, and Dhṛti in the Light of the Guṇas

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

Today's session began with prayer, lighting of the ceremonial lamp, recitation of the Hanumān Cālīsā, and an invocation offered at the lotus feet of the Guru.

Verse of Invocation:

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम्।
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम्॥

I bow to Kṛṣṇa, the divine son of Vasudeva, the destroyer of Kaṁsa and Cāṇūra, the source of supreme joy to Devakī, and the universal teacher of the world.

योगेशं सच्चिदानंदं वासुदेवं व्रजप्रियं।
धर्मसंस्थापकं वीरं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम्॥

I bow to Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Yoga, embodiment of sat–cit–ānanda (existence–consciousness–bliss), the beloved of Vraja, the valiant restorer of Dharma, and the supreme teacher of the universe.

श्रीगुरुः चरणकमलेभ्यो नमः॥

Salutations at the lotus feet of the revered Guru.

By the exceedingly auspicious grace of Śrī Bhagavān, such a rare and sacred fortune has awakened in our lives—that we have dedicated ourselves to making this life meaningful, fruitful, and directed toward its highest goal through the contemplation, recitation, study, and assimilation of the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā. We are learning its proper pronunciation, discovering its inner meanings, understanding its eternal principles, and striving to apply them in our daily lives.

This must indeed be the fruit of noble deeds from past lives, or perhaps the silent blessings of Saints, that we have been chosen for this sacred pursuit. Truly, it is not we who have chosen the Gītā—it is the Gītā that has chosen us. The deeper this realization settles in our hearts, the more abundantly grace flows into our lives.

Today is **Pitṛpakṣa Amāvasyā**, and from tomorrow begins **Navarātri.** Before we resume our study of Chapter 18, let us reflect upon the significance of Navarātri.

In Sanātana Dharma there are three principal modes (*dhārā*) of worship: **Śākta, Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava.**

- **Śākta** upāsanā centers on worship of Śakti (the Divine Mother) and is considered the most ancient form of human worship.
- **Śaiva** upāsanā primarily worships Bhagavān Śiva.
- **Vaiṣṇava** upāsanā centers on Bhagavān Viṣṇu and His incarnations.

The principal scriptures are: *Śrīmad Devī Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* for the Śākta tradition, *Śiva Mahāpurāṇa* for Śaivas, and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* for Vaiṣṇavas.

Navarātri belongs primarily to the Śākta tradition, yet devotees of all branches worship the Divine Mother during this time. Recitation of the **Durgā Saptashatī** is especially recommended during these nine days. Just as the *Sundarakāṇḍa* is part of the *Rāmcaritmānas* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* is part of the *Mahābhārata*, so too the *Durgā Saptashatī* is part of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.*

Within it, King Suratha represents those desiring worldly prosperity (*saṁsāra*), while Samādhi Vaiśya represents those seeking liberation and union with Bhagavān. Both worship Devī according to their aspirations.

There are five Navarātris in a year, of which two are observed prominently:

- **Chaitra Navarātri** (spring): culminating on Rāma Navamī, when Bhagavān Śrī Rāma was born.
- **Āśvina Navarātri** (autumn), also called **Śāradīya Navarātri**: culminating on Vijayadaśamī, when Rāvaṇa was vanquished.

In one Navarātri, **Divine (Daivī) Śakti arises**, and in the other, **Asuric (demonic) Śakti is destroyed.**

Both **Saguṇa** (with form) and **Nirguṇa** (formless) worship are practiced:

- **Saguṇa upāsanā**: worshiping the nine forms of Devī—Mā Śailaputrī, Mā Brahmacāriṇī, Mā Chandraghaṇṭā, Mā Kūṣmāṇḍā, Mā Skandamātā, Mā Kātyāyanī, Mā Kālarātrī, Mā Mahāgaurī, and Mā Siddhidātrī. Each form has distinct appearance, weapons, mode of worship, and fruits of devotion.

देवी पूज पद कमल तुम्हारे। सुर नर मुनि सब होई सुखारे।।

- **Nirguṇa upāsanā**: through mantras such as—

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता। नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः॥
या देवी सर्वभूतेषु भक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता। नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः॥
या देवी सर्वभूतेषु ज्ञानरूपेण संस्थिता। नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः॥
या देवी सर्वभूतेषु भावरूपेण संस्थिता। नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः॥
या देवी सर्वभूतेषु बुद्धिरूपेण संस्थिता। नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः॥
या देवी सर्वभूतेषु धृतिरूपेण संस्थिता। नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः॥

Worship of Devī during Navarātri multiplies the fruits of devotion manifold. The same upāsanā, japa, or dhyāna performed on these days yields far greater benefit. Hence, Mahāpuruṣas never miss Navarātri worship. Swāmī Govind Giri Ji Mahārāj, though travelling constantly, remains at the seat of Devī for all nine days, absorbed in her worship.

During these nine days one should not only recite the Durgā Saptashatī but also practice discipline over the senses—limiting food, subsisting on fruits, observing silence (*mauna*), and restraining indulgences. Such austerity awakens the dormant energy within. This is the true purpose of Navarātri sādhanā. The wise make use of this time to intensify their *puṇya* and overcome inner defects.

Thus, as Navarātri begins, let us invoke Mā Śakti within our hearts, allow her *caitanya* (living energy) to arise, and with renewed inspiration, begin today's contemplation of Chapter 18.

We have completed up to **verse 18.25**, and now we begin with **18.26.**
As said earlier, this is like the last bogey of the train—catching it is as good as catching the entire train that was about to be missed.

18.26

muktasaṅgo'nahaṃvādī, dhṛtyutsāhaṣamanvitaḥ, siddhyasiddhyornirvikāraḥ(kh), kartā sāttvika ucyate. 18.26

Free from attachment, unegoistic, endowed with firmness and zeal and unswayed by success and failure-such a doer is said to be Sāttvika.

Śrī Bhagavān here portrays the qualities of the *sāttvika kartā*—the doer whose life is guided by purity, steadiness, and freedom from selfish attachments. Such a person works with complete dedication, yet remains inwardly tranquil and free from agitation. His life reflects harmony between wholehearted effort and surrender to the Divine.

The verse identifies four key attributes of this doer:

- **mukta-saṅgaḥ** – free from attachment to results, possessions, or relationships.

- **anahaṃvādī** – free from ego; not claiming "I alone am the doer."

- **dhṛti-utsāha-samanvitaḥ** – endowed with both firmness of determination and joyful enthusiasm.

- **siddhy-asiddhyoḥ nirvikāraḥ** – maintaining equanimity in success and failure, undisturbed by

outcomes.

To illustrate this principle, consider: there is no harm in eating a sweet like *jalebi*. The problem lies in constant contemplation of it—the craving (*vāsanā*). It is not renunciation of the object (*viṣaya*) that matters, but renunciation of attachment to it.

Similarly, worship performed occasionally may generate pride, but when worship becomes continuous, pride dissolves into devotion. Accomplished *mahātmās* often say, when praised for their service to Geeta Pariwar, “Bhagavān is getting it done through us. It is His blessing, Swamiji’s blessing, that makes the work possible.”

An example of steadfast sāttvika doers can be seen in the volunteers of Geeta Pariwar. When hundreds of WhatsApp accounts were suddenly blocked, they quickly resolved to shift operations to Telegram and prepared everything with determination. Soon after, the WhatsApp team itself reached out to Ashu Bhayya ji and the matter was resolved. Such resilience reflects the blend of firmness and enthusiasm described in the verse. Today, 15,000 volunteers serve day and night with tireless energy. Many even took voluntary retirement to dedicate themselves fully to this seva. This is the natural outcome of rising *sattva*: while sāttvika persons seek solutions when challenges arise, rājasika and tāmasika persons are more likely to make excuses to avoid effort.

Thus, the sāttvika doer remains steadfast, undiscouraged even in difficulty. He stays balanced in favorable and adverse situations, accepting all as the will of the Supreme. His attitude can be summed up in these lines:

तेरे फूलों से भी प्यार, तेरे काँटों से भी प्यार।
मन की हो गई तो अच्छी बात,
नहीं हुई तो और भी अच्छी बात,
क्योंकि तब उसके मन की हुई।

Key Insight

The sāttvika doer is a model of true balance—deeply engaged in action yet free from pride and attachment to results. Such a person transforms ordinary work into *karma yoga*, where every effort becomes a step in self-purification and a gateway to inner freedom.

18.27

rāgī karmaphalaprepsuḥ(r), lubdho hiṃsātmako’śuciḥ, harṣaśokānvitaḥ(kh) kartā, rājasaḥ(ph) parikīrtitaḥ. 18.27

The doer who is full of attachment, seeks the fruit of actions and is greedy, and who is oppressive by nature and of impure conduct, and who feels joy and sorrow, has been called Rājasika.

Having described the sāttvika doer in the previous verse, Śrī Bhagavān now presents the opposite nature—the *rājasika kartā*. Unlike the sāttvika, who acts with steadiness and detachment, the rājasika is propelled by desire, self-interest, and ambition. His energy is undeniable, but it is restless, ego-driven, and bound to outcomes.

The verse highlights six qualities of this doer:

- **rāgī** – bound by attachment to possessions, people, or status.

- **karmaphalaprepsuḥ** – motivated primarily by results; acting for reward, not duty.
- **lubdhaḥ** – greedy, never content with what is obtained.
- **hiṃsātmakaḥ** – exploitative or harmful toward others in the pursuit of gain.
- **aśuciḥ** – impure in conduct, ignoring ethics and integrity.
- **harṣa-śoka-anvitaḥ** – tossed between joy in success and sorrow in failure.

This profile reflects the instability of a life dominated by *rajas*. The rājasika doer ties his identity to success and recognition, which makes him rise with pride when outcomes favor him and fall into despair when they do not. His inner compass is not dharma but desire.

The distinction between *preyas* (the pleasant, what the mind craves) and *śreyas* (the good, what is truly beneficial) illustrates this further. The sāttvika nature inclines toward *śreyas* even when it demands discipline, while the rājasika nature gravitates toward *preyas* for quick gratification. For instance, the intellect may suggest listening to Gītā-vivecana, but the restless mind may prefer leisure or distraction. The choice made reveals the guṇa at play.

Goswami Tulsidas Ji observed:

जिमि प्रति लाभ लोभ अधिकाई॥

"The more one gains, the more one desires."

This truth is timeless. Decades ago, a man with just ₹1,000 might gladly give away ₹100 to help another. Today, the same man with one crore may hesitate to part with even ₹1,000. We often see that the poor, who have little, donate with ease and open hearts, while the wealthy may hesitate despite abundance. This is the deepening of *lobha*—greed—which flourishes under rajoguṇa.

Attachment, greed, and obsession with results also foster *hiṃsātmakaḥ*—a harsh, oppressive streak. A rājasika person often struggles to forgive. A telling story illustrates this: A wealthy Sethji had a devoted servant who accidentally broke an expensive cup while serving tea. Enraged, the Sethji scolded him and demanded repayment. Later, in the temple, the servant laughed. When asked why, he replied, "Every day you beg the Almighty to forgive your deliberate wrongs, yet you cannot forgive me for breaking a cup by accident. If you cannot forgive me, how can you expect God to forgive you?" This reveals how rajas magnifies ego while suppressing compassion.

Finally, the hallmark of the rājasika doer is emotional instability. Success produces overexcitement, failure brings despair. Like a pendulum, he is bound to oscillate between joy and sorrow because his sense of fulfillment is tied to outcomes, not inner steadiness.

The lines capture this truth beautifully:

तुझे किस बात का ग़म है वो इतना पूछ लें मुझ से,
वो इतना पूछ लें मुझ से तो फिर किस बात का ग़म है।

This couplet underlines the futility of grief born of attachment. If one pauses to question the root of sorrow, often it is nothing more than unfulfilled desire. The rājasika doer never questions this bondage; he lives

enslaved by it. The sāttvika doer, by contrast, sees everything as the will of the Divine and rises above joy and grief.

Key Insight
The rājasika doer embodies the bondage of desire. His energy and ambition are powerful but misdirected—tied to results and recognition. Without detachment and purity, his actions, however great, yield only agitation, not liberation.

18.28

ayuktaḥ(kh) prākṛtaḥ(s) stabdhaḥ(ś), śaṭho naiṣkṛtiko'lasaḥ, viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca, kartā tāmasa ucyate. 18.28

Lacking piety and self-control, uncultured, arrogant, deceitful, inclined to rob others of their livelihood, slothful, despondent and procrastinating-such a doer is called Tāmasika.

Śrī Bhagavān, having already explained the sāttvika doer who acts with purity and detachment, and the rājasika doer who acts restlessly with desire for results, now describes the *tāmasika kartā*. This is the lowest type of doer, dominated by ignorance and inertia. Such a person squanders the gift of human life by refusing effort, avoiding growth, and sinking into negativity.

The verse identifies eight traits:

- **ayuktaḥ** – lacking discipline, careless, without focus.
- **prākṛtaḥ** – crude, vulgar, unrefined in thought and conduct.
- **stabdhaḥ** – arrogant and rigid, unwilling to learn or change.
- **śaṭhaḥ** – deceitful, cunning, untrustworthy.
- **naiṣkṛtikaḥ** – malicious or destructive, depriving others.
- **alasaḥ** – lazy, shirking effort and responsibility.
- **viṣādī** – gloomy, perpetually discontent, spreading despair.
- **dīrghasūtrī** – procrastinating, endlessly postponing duties.

Together, these traits depict a person trapped in *tamas*. Where the rājasika doer is at least active though agitated, the tāmasika doer resists action altogether. His arrogance blocks learning, deceit erodes trust, laziness wastes time, and procrastination ensures nothing meaningful is achieved. His life becomes a cycle of inertia, gloom, and wasted potential.

- **prākṛtaḥ (crude, uncultured):** It is ironic that we proudly call ourselves "Indians"—a name born of

error. Columbus, mistaking Bhārat for the Indies, applied to us the same label once used for native tribes in America, whom Europeans dismissed as “uncivilised.” But our true heritage is *Bhāratiya*, descendants of King Bharata. We had Nalanda and Takṣaśilā when Europe lacked even elementary schools. “Bhārat” itself means “soaked in the light of knowledge.” To live crudely (*prākṛtaḥ*) is to forget this heritage of wisdom and reduce oneself to ignorance.

- **Yakṣa–Yudhiṣṭhira Dialogue:** In the Mahābhārata, when Yakṣa asked Yudhiṣṭhira, “What is the greatest burden on Earth?” he replied, **“An ungrateful person.”** More than a sinner, the ungrateful is a true burden. Gratitude uplifts; ingratitude drags into tamas.

- **viṣādī (morose, fault-finding):** Such people can neither do good themselves nor appreciate goodness in others. They perpetually complain, demand proof, and when proof is given, they mock its necessity. This temperament, even observed in political leaders, reflects how tamas corrodes positivity and leadership.

- **alasaḥ (lazy):** Laziness becomes the central feature of the tāmasika doer. Duties remain undone, opportunities are lost, and excuses multiply.

- **dīrghasūtrī (procrastinator):** He postpones every task, dreaming of grand achievements but never acting. Time slips away, and he remains empty-handed. Procrastination is not harmless delay—it is a silent theft of life.

Imagine three workers given the same task:

- The **sāttvika** completes it steadily, without concern for praise.
- The **rājasika** rushes, seeking reward, and swings between joy and sorrow.
- The **tāmasika** avoids the work, delays endlessly, or sabotages it.

The sāttvika doer rises, the rājasika stagnates, and the tāmasika falls.

This verse warns against the downward pull of inertia. Rajas ties one to desire and pride, but tamas is more dangerous—it suffocates even the impulse to improve. Arrogance, laziness, and despair seem minor at first, but together they erode character, relationships, and destiny. Tamas is bondage in its darkest form because it resists both effort and change.

Key Insight

The tāmasika doer is chained by ignorance, arrogance, and wasted potential. His life neither uplifts himself nor benefits others. Laziness, ingratitude, and procrastination are not mere weaknesses—they are shackles of darkness that smother the soul’s journey toward liberation.

18.29

buddherbhedaṃ(n) dhṛteścaiva, guṇatastrividhaṃ(m) śṛṇu, procyamānamaśeṣeṇa, pṛthaktvena dhanañjaya. 18.29

Now hear, Arjuna, the threefold divison, based on the predominance of each Guṇa, of understanding (Buddhi) and firmness (Dhṛti), which I shall explain in detail, one by one.

In this verse, Śrī Bhagavān asks Arjuna to listen attentively as He begins to explain how *buddhi* (discriminative understanding) and *dhṛti* (firmness or resolve) are also shaped by the three guṇas, just as actions, desires, and knowledge are.

- **Buddhi** governs discernment—the power to distinguish right from wrong, permanent from impermanent, beneficial (*śreyas*) from merely pleasant (*preyas*).
- **Dhṛti** sustains that discernment in practice—the firmness to remain steady in chosen action, resisting distractions and temptations.

Just as knowledge, desire, and action vary with the guṇas, so too does one's clarity of understanding and capacity to remain resolute.

Śrī Bhagavān underscores that **buddhi is the foremost faculty governing the senses.** For instance, on the way to the office one may see many things, but the mind latches onto what it likes—a fruit vendor selling papayas. Though dozens of other impressions vanish, the papayas remain in memory. This shows how *buddhi* is easily caught by likes and dislikes.

To highlight the harmony of *buddhi* and *dhṛti*, Bhagavān mentions them together in three places in the Gītā:

- In Chapter 6 (6.25):

शनैः शनैरुपरमेद्बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।
आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥

- "Gradually, with firm resolve in the intellect, the mind should be stilled, resting in the Self, thinking of nothing else."
- Here in Chapter 18 (18.29).
- Again later in Chapter 18 (18.51).

Analogy of a TV set: Buddhi is like the television itself—the screen on which options appear. Dhṛti is like the chosen channel—the firmness to stay with what one has selected, despite the distraction of other options.

Illustrative Story
Two friends discovered one morning that their school was closed due to mourning. Both felt the sudden joy of an unexpected holiday.

- One insisted they go to the stadium to watch a cricket match.
- The other, though tempted, wished first to visit Hanumān Ji's temple, explaining that he had missed his Tuesday visit due to illness and wanted to make up for it.

The first argued that Kohli's innings might end soon, whereas Hanumān Ji would always be there. Yet the second remained firm. They separated—one going to the stadium, the other toward the temple.

Later, however, both changed course out of guilt and affection:

- The first abandoned the stadium and went to the temple, no longer desiring cricket.
- The second turned toward the stadium, regretting their quarrel, but did not find his friend there.

In the end, both ended up in the places they initially resisted. This shows how easily company (*satsaṅga* or association) can shift the direction of both *buddhi* and *dhṛti*. The friend oriented toward the temple reflected a sāttvika buddhi, the other a rājasika buddhi. But through interaction, their firmness (*dhṛti*) shifted from one guṇa to another.

This story demonstrates the immense influence of association. Hence the saying:

तबहिं होइ सब संसय भंगा, जब बहु काल करिअ सतसंगा॥

"All doubts are dispelled only through prolonged satsang (company of the wise)."

Dhṛti as Patience and Focus
True firmness is not stubbornness, but steady perseverance born of patience (*dhairya*) and focus (*dhāraṇā*). In Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, *dhāraṇā* is the foundation of *dhyāna* (meditation); without focus, meditation cannot arise. Likewise, without dhṛti, buddhi cannot guide life. Patience, determination, and unwavering concentration are the essence of dhṛti.

With this verse, Śrī Bhagavān prepares Arjuna to see how the guṇas condition even the highest inner faculties. The next verses (18.30–18.32) will classify *buddhi* according to sattva, rajas, and tamas, followed by *dhṛti* (18.33–18.35). By understanding these, one learns not only how to act, but how to think, discern, and remain firm on the path of dharma.

Key Insight
Action depends on choice, and choice depends on buddhi and dhṛti. Unless these are sāttvika, one's life direction will remain clouded by passion or ignorance. Clarity of understanding and firmness in purpose are the true inner wealth, more valuable than all external riches.

18.30

pravṛttiṃ(ñ) ca nivṛttiṃ(ñ) ca, kāryākārye bhayābhaye,
bandhaṃ(m) mokṣaṃ(ñ) ca yā vetti, buddhiḥ(s) sā pārtha sāttvikī. 18.30

The intellect which correctly determines the paths of activity and renunciation, what ought to be done and what should not be done, what is fear and what is fearlessness, and what is bondage and what is liberation, that intellect is Sāttvika.

Śrī Bhagavān now defines the *sāttvika buddhi*—the pure intellect that discerns truth with clarity. It recognizes:

- **pravṛtti-nivṛtti:** when to engage actively in the world, and when to withdraw into restraint.

- **kārya-akārya:** what is righteous duty, and what is not.

- **bhaya-abhaya:** what is truly fearful (actions leading to adharma) and what is truly fearless (abiding by dharma even amidst danger).

- **bandha-mokṣa:** what binds the soul (attachment, ego, desires) and what frees it (detachment, devotion, and knowledge).

This discernment allows one to navigate life wisely, balancing worldly duties with spiritual progress.

Examples of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti

Swami Vivekananda initially leaned toward *nivṛtti mārga*, but his guru, Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, directed him toward *pravṛtti mārga*, urging him to serve society selflessly. Swami Rāmtīrtha, on the other hand, embodied *nivṛtti mārga*—renouncing worldly life after serving as a university professor. His teaching was that **desireless action is nivṛtti, while renunciation entangled in desire becomes pravṛtti.**

Saints like Swami Govind Dev Giriji Maharaj harmonize both. Even at the age of 75–76, he tirelessly works for the nation and dharma, without personal desire or gain. His *pravṛtti* is infused with *nivṛtti*, exemplifying sāttvika buddhi in action.

Story of the Four Friends
Four friends visited another and were served four laddoos. None ate them. Later, they explained: one was not hungry; another was not invited; the third felt insulted by being given only one; and the fourth had already eaten lunch. The first three reflect pravṛtti mārga—guided by preferences, social expectations, or emotions. The fourth reflects natural nivṛtti—renunciation arising from contentment.

Śaṅkarācārya's Balance
Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, though a proponent of *nivṛtti mārga*, actively engaged in society—establishing four maṭhas, reviving temple worship, and unifying Vedic traditions. His life showed how true sāttvika buddhi integrates renunciation with purposeful action.

Bhaya-Abhaya: Paraśurāma and Rāma
True fear (*bhaya*) is straying from dharma; true fearlessness (*abhaya*) is standing firm in dharma. This is beautifully illustrated in the Rāmāyaṇa. When Śrī Rāma broke Śiva's bow, Paraśurāma confronted Him, trying to intimidate both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Yet they did not flinch. Surprised, Paraśurāma asked why they were unafraid. Rāma replied with gentle yet profound words:

बिप्रबंस कै असि प्रभुताई। अभय होइ जो तुम्हहि डेराई॥
सुनि मृदु गूढ़ बचन रघुपति के। उघरे पटल परसुधर मति के॥
राम रमापति कर धनु लेहू। खैंचहु मिटै मोर संदेहू॥
देत चापु आपुहिं चलि गयऊ। परसुराम मन बिसमय भयऊ॥

"O Brāhmaṇa, such is your majesty that even those who fear you become fearless in your presence. Hearing these gentle, deep words of Raghupati, the veil over Paraśurāma's mind lifted. Rāma then took up Viṣṇu's bow and drew it with ease, removing Paraśurāma's doubts. Handing over the bow, Paraśurāma departed, filled with wonder."

Here, Rāma embodies *abhaya*—fearlessness rooted not in pride but in clarity of truth and dharma.

Broader Reflection
Life offers four goals—*dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (pleasure), and *mokṣa* (liberation).

Many seek *mokṣa* yet remain bound to the other three. Only sāttvika buddhi can discern their place, balancing worldly responsibilities while keeping liberation as the highest aim.

Key Insight
Sāttvika buddhi is the guiding light of life. It discerns rightly between duty and indulgence, fear and fearlessness, bondage and freedom. It transforms life into a journey of clarity, where engagement and renunciation harmonize, and dharma becomes the path to liberation.

18.31

yayā dharmamadharmaṃ(ñ) ca, kāryaṃ(ñ) cākāryameva ca, ayathāvatprajānāti, buddhiḥ(s) sā pārtha rājasī. 18.31

The intellect by which man does not truly perceive what is Dharma and what is Adharma, what ought to be done and what should not be done-that intellect is Rājasika.

Śrī Bhagavān here describes the *rājasic buddhi*—the intellect dominated by passion (*rajas*), ambition, and attachment. This type of intellect is not dull like the *tāmasika buddhi* but restless and distorted. It is active and reasoning, yet its conclusions are shaped by self-interest rather than truth.

- **dharmam adharmaṃ ca** – The rājasika intellect misjudges righteousness and unrighteousness. Actions that serve one's ego, wealth, or recognition may be mistaken as dharma, even when they oppose truth.

- **kāryaṃ cākāryam eva ca** – It confuses duty with non-duty. Obligations that should be performed may be avoided if they appear inconvenient, while unnecessary or harmful actions may be pursued if they offer temporary gain.

- **ayathāvat prajānāti** – "Not perceiving as it truly is." This phrase captures the essence of rājasika buddhi. It reasons cleverly, but its reasoning bends reality. It is skilled at creating justifications, but they are driven by desire, not dharma.

This verse contrasts directly with the previous one (18.30). The *sāttvika buddhi* discerns clearly: pravṛtti and nivṛtti, kārya and akārya, bhaya and abhaya, bandha and mokṣa. The *rājasic buddhi*, however, blurs these distinctions. It mistakes *preyas* (the immediately pleasant) for *śreyas* (the truly beneficial), chasing gratification while ignoring long-term spiritual welfare.

Key Insight

The *rājasic buddhi* is intelligent yet misguided. Its fault is not lack of reasoning, but lack of purity. It does not see things "as they are" (*yathāvat*), but "as it wishes them to be." Until refined by sattva, it remains a tool of desire, binding the soul in the restless cycle of action and reaction.

18.32

adharmaṃ(n) dharmamiti yā, manyate tamasāvṛtā, sarvārthānviparītāṃśca, buddhiḥ(s) sā pārtha tāmasī. 18.32

The intellect wrapped in ignorance, which imagines even Adharma to be Dharma, and sees all other things upside-down-that intellect is Tāmasika, Arjuna.

Śrī Bhagavān here describes the lowest form of intellect—the *tāmasika buddhi*. Covered by the darkness of ignorance, it does not simply misjudge but inverts reality itself.

What is dharma appears as adharma, what is beneficial seems harmful, and what is harmful is celebrated as progress.

Breaking down the verse:

- **adharmaṃ dharmam iti yā manyate** – The tāmasika intellect mistakes unrighteous acts as righteous. It glorifies actions that degrade society while ridiculing noble practices.
- **tamasāvṛtā** – This error stems from being veiled by ignorance and delusion. Such an intellect cannot recognize its own distortion.
- **sarvārthān viparītāṃś ca** – It perceives everything in reverse—duty as burden, rights as entitlement, restraint as weakness, and indulgence as modernity.

In today's world, this inversion is clearly visible:

- Many mock temple-goers, meditation, and chanting, branding them as "unproductive" or "outdated."
- They ridicule traditions while glorifying indulgence and call this "progress."
- They misuse spiritual wisdom to defend lethargy, quoting Kabir out of context:

  "पोथी पढ़ि पढ़ि जग मुआ, पंडित भया न कोय,
  ढाई आखर प्रेम का पढ़ेसो पंडित होय।"

  Instead of seeing Kabir's call to go beyond dry scholarship into the spirit of love, they use it to dismiss the importance of study, discipline, and learning altogether.

Signs of Tāmasika Buddhi in Society

- A civilization that once revered the Cow as mother now sees people glorifying dog-love while dismissing cow protection as regressive.
- Courts delay justice for lakhs of innocents, yet act swiftly at midnight to protect terrorists like Yakub Menon.

- A culture rooted in *dharma* and *duty* now speaks only of “rights” without responsibilities.

- Those engaged in *satsaṅga* are labeled backward, while the immoral call themselves modern.

- When the whole of Bhārat worships Devī during Navarātri, left-liberal circles in places like JNU deliberately worship Mahīṣāsura, inverting dharma.

These are stark examples of *tāmasika buddhi*—intellect that glorifies what should be abandoned and ridicules what should be upheld.

Key Insight

The greatest danger of *tāmasika buddhi* is that it does not merely err but insists on its error. It considers falsehood as truth and delusion as wisdom. A society dominated by such intellect slips away from dharma and into darkness. Only the light of satsang, śāstra, and sincere self-purification can dispel this tamas.

18.33

dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate, manaḥprāṇendriyakriyāḥ,
yogenāvyabhicāriṇyā, dhṛtiḥ(s) sā pārtha sāttvikī. 18.33

The unwavering perseverance by which man controls through the Yoga of meditation the functions of the mind, the vital airs and the senses- that firmness, Arjuna, is Sāttvika.

Śrī Bhagavān here explains *sāttvika dhṛti*—the noble and pure firmness that sustains discipline and anchors a seeker on the path of yoga. Unlike stubbornness or rigidity, this firmness is harmonious, conscious, and infused with clarity of purpose. It enables mastery over the restless mind, the fluctuating life-energies, and the wandering senses.

Breaking down the verse:

- **dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate** – By such firmness one “holds steady,” remaining consistent in effort despite distractions or challenges.

- **manaḥ-prāṇendriya-kriyāḥ** – It restrains the oscillations of the mind, regulates the breath (prāṇa), and disciplines the senses, creating an inner order.

- **yogena avyabhicāriṇyā** – This steadiness is achieved through unwavering yoga—practice that is continuous, not broken by negligence, fatigue, or temptation.

- **dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī** – Such firmness, born of purity and discipline, is called sāttvika.

Daily practice of *prāṇāyāma* (such as Anulom-Vilom, Bhastrikā, and Bhrāmarī) strengthens this quality. Regulating the breath calms the nervous system, quietens mental chatter, and deepens concentration, naturally cultivating *dhṛti*. In time, perseverance is no longer forced effort but becomes a stable inner state.

Patañjali Muni summarized this in his timeless sūtra:

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः

Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind.

The Aṣṭāṅga Yoga system shows how sāttvika dhṛti matures step by step:

- *Yama* (restraints) and *Niyama* (observances) establish the moral foundation.
- *Āsana* (posture) makes the body steady.
- *Prāṇāyāma* regulates the vital energy.
- *Pratyāhāra* withdraws the senses from distractions.
- These prepare the seeker for *Dhāraṇā* (focused concentration), *Dhyāna* (meditation), and ultimately *Samādhi* (absorption in the Supreme).

Through this process, sāttvika dhṛti becomes the unseen backbone of spiritual life. It provides the patience to continue, the steadiness to resist distraction, and the faith to persevere in both ease and difficulty.

Key Insight
Sāttvika dhṛti is quiet strength—the firmness that steadies the restless mind, regulates the breath, and disciplines the senses. It arises from consistent yoga practice and blossoms into unshakable perseverance. This kind of firmness transforms ordinary effort into a pathway of inner mastery, ultimately leading to liberation.

18.34

yayā tu dharmakāmārthān, dhṛtyā dhārayate'rjuna,
prasaṅgena phalākāṅkṣī, dhṛtiḥ(s) sā pārtha rājasī. 18.34

The perseverance (Dhṛti), however, by which the man seeking reward for his actions clutches with extreme fondness virtues, earthly possessions and worldly enjoyments-that persevrance (Dhṛti) is said to be Rājasika, Arjuna.

After explaining *sāttvika dhṛti*, Śrī Bhagavān now describes *rājasic dhṛti*. Unlike the pure firmness that steadies the mind and senses through yoga, *rājasic dhṛti* is persistence directed toward achievement, recognition, and material gain. It is active and determined, but its motivation is entangled in desire for outcomes.

Breaking down the verse:

- **yayā tu dharmakāmārthān dhṛtyā dhārayate** – The person applies firmness to uphold *dharma* (virtue/duty), *kāma* (enjoyment), and *artha* (wealth). These pursuits themselves are not wrong, but the firmness is tainted when guided by self-interest.

- **prasaṅgena** – With attachment, fondness, and dependency. Instead of detached discipline, there is clinging and possessiveness.

- **phalākāṅkṣī** – Motivated by expectation of fruits, whether recognition, material benefits, or emotional satisfaction.

- **dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī** – Such firmness, though strong in appearance, is bound by rajas and therefore unstable, as it rises and falls with results.

This kind of perseverance is commonly seen in the world:

- A professional working tirelessly, not for excellence or service, but primarily for promotions, recognition, or wealth.
- A student studying diligently, not for knowledge, but only for securing high marks or praise.
- Even religious austerities performed, not out of devotion, but in expectation of blessings, power, or prestige.

Here, *dhṛti* sustains effort, but its root is not purity; it is ambition. Such perseverance may yield temporary success in dharma, artha, or kāma, but it does not lead to liberation.

Key Insight
Rājasic dhṛti represents determination fueled by desire. It can achieve much in the material and social spheres, yet it binds the doer, because attachment to results creates restlessness and dependence. Only when firmness becomes free of expectation does it rise to the level of *sāttvika dhṛti*, supporting inner freedom and lasting peace.

18.35

yayā svapnaṃ(m) bhayaṃ(m) śokaṃ(m), viṣādaṃ(m) madameva ca, na vimuñcati durmedhā, dhṛtiḥ(s) sā pārtha tāmasī. 18.35

The perseverance (Dhṛti) by which an evilminded person does not give up sleep, fear, anxiety, sorrow and vanity as well, that perseverance is Tāmasika.

Śrī Bhagavān here exposes the lowest form of perseverance—*tāmasika dhṛti*. It is not true strength but a distorted clinging to weakness. Such people mistake indulgence for rest, fear for caution, sorrow for sensitivity, despair for realism, and arrogance for self-worth. Their intellect (*durmedhā*) is clouded, and they refuse to let go of these destructive tendencies.

- **svapnaṃ** – A life lost in excessive sleep, lethargy, and escapism.
- **bhayaṃ** – Being bound by constant fear, paralyzed from taking bold action.
- **śokam** – Habitual lamentation, living in the past with endless grief.
- **viṣādam** – Pessimism and despair that sap initiative.
- **madam eva ca** – Arrogance and vanity, clung to even when baseless.

- **na vimuñcati durmedhā** – A deluded intellect refuses to relinquish these shackles, falsely treating them as natural or inevitable.

Tāmasika dhṛti is visible in society today:

People tarnish their own country's image by saying:

"सौ में नब्बे बेईमान, फिर भी मेरा देश महान।"

They insult great leaders with mockery, calling Mahatma Gandhi a product of "compulsion" with sayings like:

"मजबूरी का नाम महात्मा गाँधी।"

They criticize their own family members before outsiders, showing lack of gratitude and loyalty.

Their ideology is often reduced to:

"बाप बड़ा ना भैया, सबसे बड़ा रुपय्या।"

Such negativity, defended stubbornly, is not realism but *tāmasika perseverance*—a determination to stay chained to cynicism and decline.

A merchant once halted at a dharamshala with twelve camels but lacked enough ropes to tie them. The wise old father of the caretaker advised: *"Pretend to tie them. Mimic the action of binding their necks with ropes."* To the merchant's surprise, all camels sat quietly as though tied. The next morning, they would not move until he mimicked untying them.

The father explained: *"The camels were never tied. They only believed they were. Their conditioning held them captive more tightly than any real rope."*

So too with *tāmasika dhṛti*. People tie themselves with invisible ropes of laziness, fear, despair, and pride. These ropes are not real, but mental conditioning makes them stronger than iron chains.

This verse is a profound warning: persistence itself is not virtue. When firmness is directed toward laziness, grief, fear, or arrogance, it becomes self-destruction disguised as perseverance. Such *tāmasika dhṛti* prevents spiritual growth, societal harmony, and even personal well-being.

Key Insight
Tāmasika dhṛti is false perseverance—a rigid refusal to release destructive habits and illusions. It drags one downward into inertia, despair, and bondage. Like the camels, we must recognise the invisible ropes that hold us back and replace them with *sāttvika dhṛti*—firmness born of clarity, courage, and discipline. Only then can perseverance uplift rather than enslave.

The session concluded with prayers, followed by a Question-and-Answer session.

हरी शरणम् हरी शरणम्
हरी शरणम् हरी शरणम्

Question-and-Answer Session

Prabodh Bajpeyi Ji
Q: I am a teacher in a government school. My duty is to teach the children, and as *phala* (fruit), I receive a

salary. How can I relinquish this *phala*?
A: Relinquishing the fruit of action does not mean giving up your rightful salary. What Bhagavān teaches is the renunciation of *attachment* to the fruit. Perform your duty with sincerity, but do not become dependent on or obsessed with the salary. When you adopt this attitude, you will never resort to wrong or unethical means of earning, and your income will remain pure and dhārmic.

Yogesh Goel Ji
Q: Are Saints and Sanyāsīs the same? What exactly does a Sanyāsī renounce?
A: All Sanyāsīs can be Saints, but not all Saints are Sanyāsīs. A householder too can become a Saint while living amidst family responsibilities.

A Sanyāsī formally renounces *saṃsāra* by undergoing scriptural rites that include giving up his name, gotra, sacred thread (*yajnopavīt*), all family ties, and worldly duties. Traditionally, a Sanyāsī:

- Does not perform yajñas or sacrificial rites,
- Does not cook for himself,
- Does not stay in one place for more than three days,
- And lives away from society, usually in forests.

Today, such strict rules are difficult to observe because the social and natural environment has changed.

There are two types of Sanyāsīs:

- *Nivṛtti-mārgi* Sanyāsīs—absorbed in personal spiritual discipline and sādhanā.
- *Pravṛtti-mārgi* Sanyāsīs—dedicated to guiding and uplifting society.

Swami Govind Dev Giriji Maharaj is a shining example—he embodies the spirit of *nivṛtti* while tirelessly engaging in *pravṛtti* for the welfare of the nation and dharma.

Q: To cultivate Bhakti, should one seek a Sanyāsī Guru or a householder Saint?
A: Ideally, a Sanyāsī Guru is preferable. Yet history shows that householder saints have also reached the highest levels of realization. Saints like Sant Eknath Maharaj were exalted householders whose guidance was as valuable as that of a Sanyāsī. Receiving *dīkṣā* (initiation) from such Saints is rare but highly auspicious.

Examples include Seth Jadayal Goyandka Ji and Hanuman Prasad Poddar Ji, both householders who are revered above many Sanyāsīs for their unparalleled service and devotion.

Bimaleshwar Sadawarti Ji
Q: We are not Brahmins. We have received an invitation from a Brahmin family for *Mṛtyu Bhoj* during Pitṛpakṣa. Is it appropriate to partake of food there?

A: If the family is not closely related to you, it is better to politely decline. However, if there is a close bond, then attending is desirable. Remember, food offered in a Brahmin's home during such rites is not ordinary food—it should be regarded as *prasāda*. Accepting it with reverence is appropriate when there is genuine closeness.

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You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!
Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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