



## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 18: Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga

4/6 (Ślōka 36-45), Sunday, 03 May 2026

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/YXZKTy21ZAY>

## The path to lasting and divine bliss lies not in indulgence, but in renunciation, austerities, and discipline.

The eighteenth adhyāya of Śrīmad Bhāgavad Gītā is titled '**Mokṣa-Sannyāsa Yoga**' - The yoga of renunciation and surrender.

The fourth of the Six-part interpretation session of the 18th adhyāya of Śrīmad Bhāgavad Gītā started with prayers to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa followed by the lighting of the auspicious lamp so that we are guided towards the path of Dharma, with the blessings of the Paramātmā, our Guru and the light of knowledge.

**gururbrahmā gururviṣṇuḥ gururdevo maheśvaraḥ  
guruḥ sākṣāt parabrahma tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ**

The guru is Brahmā, the guru is Viṣṇu, the guru is Maheśvara (Śiva), the guru is the self-revealing limitless Brahman. Salutations to that revered guru.

**kṛṣṇāya vāsudevāya haraye paramātmāne .  
praṇataḥ kleśanāśāya govindāya namo namaḥ**

*'Salutation to Krishna, Vaasudeva, Hari the Paramātmān, Govinda, we bow our heads to you for the destruction of all our grief.'*

**Oṃ pārthāya pratibodhitām bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayam  
vyāsenā grathitām purāṇa-muninā madhye mahābhārate  
advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm aṣṭādaśādhyāyiniṁ  
amba tvām anusandadhāmi bhagavad-gīte bhava-dveṣiṇīm**

*'O Bhagavad-Gītā, you have been told to Arjuna, the son of Prtha by Bhagavān Narayana Himself and afterwards you were included within the Mahabharata by the ancient sage Vyasa. Your eighteen*

*divine adhyāyas are like a shower of the immortal nectar of wisdom of the Absolute. O mother, destroyer of man's rebirth into the darkness of this mortal world, upon you I meditate.'*

The session this day was of the most beautiful and longest adhyāya of Bhāgavad Gītā the 18th Adhyāya 'Mokṣā-Sannyāsa Yoga' as known as Ek adhyayi Gita. In the previous discussion sessions, we have seen that Bhagavān has elucidated three types of Jnana, Karma, and Buddhi in detail. Bhagavān has also characterized three types of doers for each of these. In the upcoming Śloka Śrī Kṛṣṇa touches upon the topic that is endearing for all – 'Happiness.'

Everyone desires to be happy. While individuals may differ on the specific things that constitute happiness—such as pleasure, virtue, or wealth—all people desire happiness because it represents the final end that fulfils their natural appetite. There are a few who are happy because they are married and there are a few who desire to be single because they are happy with their state. People are happy when they eat their favourite food like sweets or ice-cream and there are others who are happy with just any type of food because food is not important to them. Across the general population and across the discernible ages, if one were to ask, 'Do you want happiness?' – there probably would be an overwhelming 'Yes' as an answer. Why did Bhagavān Buddha leave the palace, the lavish life, and his wife and child? He left because he was not happy. He sought deeper knowledge and left in pursuit of answers to his questions on life, birth and death and eternal happiness. In conclusion, everybody seeks happiness as the ultimate goal in life.

There is nothing on earth, in heaven, or among the gods that is free from the three gunas (**sāttva**, **rajas**, and **tāmas**), as they are pervasive modes of material nature (**Prakṛti**) that influence all creation. The gunas are present in every aspect of the universe, from the smallest particle to the highest celestial beings. In reality, It is not possible that at any point of time only one of the gunas is binding any aspect or dimension of existence. In any quanta of time, every substance or every dimensional aspect of existence is under the influence of the mix of three gunas, never as a single dimensional influence. Given this understanding, one may ask – 'How do you then distinguish and identify the type? The answer is – one that is predominant in any dimension or aspect is then characterised as that specific influence. For example, if one were to consider 'Knowledge' (**jñāna**), that knowhow and that knowledge that is virtuous is called '**Sāttvik**.' Those actions that are virtuous are called '**Sāttvik**' Karma. There may be minor influence of **Rajo** or **Tāmasik** gunas, but which ever is predominant, it is characterised as thus.

Having understood this, let us dwell upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa 's teachings on 'Happiness.'

**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,

'**sukhaṃ tv idānīm tri-vidhaṃ śṛṇu me bharatarṣabha,**' – Bhagavān says that there are three kinds (**tri-vidhaṃ**) of happiness (**sukhaṃ**). Bhagavān calls Arjuna as '**bharatarṣabha,**' – meaning 'The best among Bharatas.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that whatever he is saying is '**śreṣṭha,**' – the best amongst knowledge, and he is asking Arjuna to listen intently. Along with Arjuna, we are also learning what is '**śreṣṭha.**'

Before dwelling deeper, let us understand what is 'Happiness.' Our scriptures define happiness as:

**'Anukūla vedanīyam sukham.'** Literally translating to - 'That which is known to be favourable.' Conversely, it is also stated in scriptures that, **'Pratikūla vedanīyam duḥkham.'** This translates to - 'The pain of experiencing something unfavourable.'

Let us understand this through practical examples. It is summer season for all of us now, however, a few months back it was still very cold in the Northern parts of the country. People suffered with the cold streaks of weather patterns. It even snowed in many parts and it was unprecedented for many. In that kind of situation what is the 'one thing' that you want the most? A cozy blanket would be the most obvious answer. Now, fast forward to the present, many parts of the country is facing unprecedented heat waves. The very same cozy blanket or sweaters would be extremely unfavourable. Therefore, depending on the situation and the environment one is in the midst of, favourable and unfavourable is defined. Continuing on the same example, at the present moment, Air conditioners and coolers are most sought after. Fast forward three months from now, in the rainy season the very same coolers and air-conditioners are unfavourable and will be switched off. As is evident, that which is favourable at a particular span of time is 'Happiness' (**sukham**).

Now, let us dwell on another facet of the very same aspects outlined above. 'Happiness' (**sukham**) definition changes from person to person. Take for instance the example of an elderly lady in the family. The family consists of the elder couple and their son and daughter-in-law. This elderly lady gets up early in the morning, say 4 o'clock and has bath and starts her worship routine. It is a dedicated activity that she has been following for years. It is an activity that brings her happiness. Now, if this old lady were to push the daughter-in-law to do the same thing, it would be an arduous task for the younger generation. For many of the young people, getting up in the morning early is difficult. The work schedule starts at late 9:00 AM, the question arises, 'Why get up so early, why take early bath and then do what?' What was 'Favourable' for the elderly lady, is an 'Unfavourable' routine for the younger daughter-in-law.

What is arduous for some, how do others get happiness out of it? It is by relentless practice (**abhyāsāt**). The elderly or those habituated to getting up early and finishing their spiritual practice is bliss. It is not the elder alone, there are sportsmen and fitness enthusiasts who get up early and finish their exercise routines. They are all happy with their routine, all though it is difficult for others, and their happiness is due to **'abhyāsād ramate.'** Everybody's situation is different and needs are different and therefore the definition of what is 'Favourable' is also different. Whether it is the set of people who get up early, perform exercise, do their spiritual routines or simply enjoy solitude in the early morning or the others who experience bliss in sleeping up to 8:00 AM and then getting up and rushing to their work routines by 9:00 AM, they all experience happiness and content in whatever their routine is and although difficult for the others, they are happy due to **'abhyāsād ramate.'**

Once Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose had visited the prison where Śrī Bal Gangadhar Tilak was incarcerated. Seeing the condition of the prison, Netaji wondered how Tilak ji could have spent six long, agonizing years in this kind of hellhole. Tilak ji however, had been undaunted by the prison-experience, and had utilized his time constructively by writing one of the greatest treatises on Gītā, titled **'Gītā Rahasya.'** Great people such as these including Veer Savarkar have endured suffering through **'abhyāsād ramate'** (Relentless practice and state of happiness). They were able to blank their suffering and bring in intense focus and effort on doing something that brought them happiness.

Thus, happiness and sorrow are feelings experienced by us based on our habit. Everyone desires to be happy, and through their actions they seek fulfilment, peace, and satisfaction. But since everyone's actions differ in their constituent factors, the kind of happiness they derive out of their work is also different. Śrī Kṛṣṇa now goes on to explain the three categories of happiness.

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.

When initial experience is undesirable and feels like poison but leads to a gratifying and pleasurable end-result, the happiness experienced is **Sāttvik** in nature.

Bhagavān says that '**Sāttvik Sukham**' in the beginning is like a poison. Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not mean poison in the literal sense; HE means that it is detestable at the beginning. For example, if one were to start with **Sūryanamaskāra** as a routine, in the beginning it is exceedingly difficult with many complaining of sprains and spasms. The same in case with morning walks, after the kids go out to schools, the mothers will strive to take walks but after a few days they complain of pains and drop out of the effort. For those who stay along and push themselves with the routine, the end result is better health, better energy levels, and higher productivity. Those with better body health and energy levels eventually achieve higher productivity. That is what is meant by '**Amrit**' nectar (**pariṇāme 'mṛitopamam**) at the end. The happiness and bliss derived out of the efforts is called '**Sāttvik Sukham**.' All other forms of happiness gained through consuming tasty food or through entertainment or similar means is all short lived. '**Sāttvik Sukham**' is a form of eternal bliss, or happiness that one experiences.

Going back and understanding the basic nature of beings – We are all composed of '**ātmā**' that which is an '**Ansh**' of the '**Paramātmā**' or the '**Consciousness**' and the matter that which is **Prakṛti**. The consciousness is the '**Puruṣaḥ**' that we have seen in the thirteenth adhyāya and is the form of '**Saccidānanda**' (Truth-Consciousness-Bliss). Therefore, the happiness in the mode of 'goodness' or '**Sāttvik Sukham**' will take us from a state of 'I am happy' to 'I am happiness' and that happens through the pure intellect that is situated in self-knowledge (**ātmā-buddhi-prasāda-jam**).

As a real-life example, We have all seen the Sun Rise, we have seen and experienced the 'Sunlight,' but one can never see the Sun directly and neither can we imagine Sun without the light. Likewise, the **ātmā** that is but a fraction of the **Paramātmā** is also indirectly a fraction of '**Saccidānanda**' (Truth-Consciousness-Bliss). Therefore, we ourselves are also part of happiness under all circumstances. The seekers who are in the mode of '**Sāttvik Sukham**' experience this form of happiness where they are happy for no particular reason, there is a certain glow or aura around them. No matter the situation that they are in, they certainly find ways and means to stay happy. This is the kind of happiness that happens due to pure intellect (**ātmā-buddhi-prasāda-jam**) and is eternal bliss and leads to highest form of liberation.

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.

'**Rājasic Sukham**' is experienced as a thrill that arises from the contact between the senses and their objects, but the joy is as short-lived as the contact itself, and leaves in its wake greed, anxiety, guilt, and a thickening of the material illusion. Taking examples from our daily life, it is peak summer

and the favourites of this season include Mangoes and Ice-cream. When these are placed on the table, everybody wants to jump to grab their share. Both of these are very tasty to the tastebuds and those who consume exude happiness on their faces. However, it is also true that these are not to be consumed beyond a certain limit. In practical terms, which is never the case. One can observe people rushing into take second or third fillings. There are people who are diabetic and not supposed to consume both, but they succumb to the lure of the highly satisfying taste and indulge. However, what is the outcome of such a capitulation? The end result is increased diabetic levels, obesity, and poor health. In short, the outcome is '**pariṇāme viṣham ivā,**' – equivalent to poison.

In this case, it is just not a metaphor that is being used. We all know that if people are unable to control diabetes, and in such a state if there is uncontrolled indulgence, the food consumed is indeed poison and can lead to serious health complications. Even after knowing this, if people capitulate to attractions and short-term happiness and satisfaction, it is an apt example of '**tat sukham rājasam smṛitam**' (**Rājasik happiness**). One can clearly see the difference between the '**Sāttvik**' and '**Rājasik**' **Sukham**.

Again, let us take a look at another practical real-life example. We often come across mothers who give medicines to their toddlers. They initially cajole the children to swallow the bitter medicine, and if push comes to pull, they might pinch the nose gently so that the mouth opens and children swallow the medicine. Why? Because they know that however bitter the medicine is, it is going to cure their child. This is '**Sāttvik Sukham**' - an action which is done with the intent that the end result is good or favourable. On the flipside, if we were to take the example of people who are accustomed to binge-watching shows on television, no matter how much they try, eventually their eyes are impacted, they suffer headaches due to binge watching and their health suffers due to prolonged inactive body state. Initially the shows seem entertaining and time worth spent, but towards the end, on a longer term it is akin to poison - '**pariṇāme viṣham ivā.**'

Be it '**Sāttvik**' or the '**Rājasik**' **Sukham**, there is '**Amrit**' in one form or the other. In '**Sāttvik Sukham**,' the beginning may be bitter, but outcome is '**Amrit**.' In '**Rājasik Sukham**,' the beginning is '**Amrit**,' however the end is unfavourable. The third form of '**Sukham**' discussed in next Śloka is one in which there is no '**Amrit**' at the beginning or the end.

**18.39**

**yadagre cānubandhe ca, sukhaṃ(m) mohanamātmanah,  
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.

The **Tāmasik** pleasures originate from delusions, laziness, heedlessness, and sleep. In the context of this Śloka, sleep refers not just to our routine, nightly slumber but also to intellectual and spiritual inertia. Neither at the beginning, nor at the end do such actions give any happiness. Smoking for example, accords no pleasure either at the beginning or at the end. It just makes us addicted to its toxic fumes. Those who smoke is aware of the inherent health risks and despite tobacco not tasting good, they get addicted to it due to laziness, carelessness, or pure indulgence. People under the influence of such 'Maya' are said to be experiencing '**Tāmasik**' (**tat tāmasam udāhṛtam**). In fact, Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not even call it happiness.' One should notice that nowhere in this Śloka has the word 'Sukh' been mentioned.

'**Nidrā**' – means sleep. Some amount of rest and sleep is necessary. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said one needs to

be temperate in sleep or recreation,

**yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-cheṣṭasya karmasu  
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā||6.17||**

*'But those who are temperate in eating and recreation, balanced in work, and regulated in sleep, can mitigate all sorrows by practicing Yog.'*

Many of us work long hours and whatever rest or sleep is required that much one should take but getting immersed in sleep or indulgence stems out of ignorance. There are many who just do not like to work at all, they just laze around, pick up odd jobs, and indulge in partying, smoking, and drinking. Such habits are '**nidrālasya-pramādottham**' – derived from laziness and indolence. Such people destroy family structure and spread grief. In our daily life we have heard of many such families ruined by intoxicated breadwinners. Their family ruined by lack of steady income leading to children getting stuck in child labour, dropping out of school and the other spouse taking up menial jobs for life sustenance. This is an apt example of '**Tāmasik**' existence where nothing positive is happening in life and there is sorrow for everyone associated with such individuals.

From the discussions so far, we understand that every aspect of our existence is influenced by the three gunas. Therefore, one may ask, 'What should be the aim of our life?' The clear answer is - We should ensure that we lead a life pattern that is away from '**Tāmasik**' existence. While '**Sāttvik Sukam**' is the ultimate goal, sādḥaks may do very well to reduce '**Rājasik**' modes of happiness and stay as close as possible to '**Sāttvik Sukam**'. Many of us do eat healthy food, control our indulgence in food that may not be healthy, and adopt healthy routines. These are all desirable routines and habits and will take us closer to '**Sāttvik Sukam**'.

Our path when fine-tuned towards '**Sāttvik Sukam**', brings in happiness that is long-lasting and blissful experience akin to the Sun that is always illuminated. In Geeta Pariwar, we come across 'Senior Karya Kartas' who are happy whenever one comes across them and even when some planned activity does not go well, they are not disturbed, they work on corrective measures without much ado. They speak with people patiently and they appear to us as happiness personified. We have to analyse such tall figures in our lives, motivate self and gradually orient towards achieving that eternal bliss.

**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.

Not only on earth but also in celestial abode and in other worlds, the effect of the gunas is not spared on the living beings. So, there is no escape from the three gunas of **Prakṛti**. All the lokas or world be it **Swarga**, **Mṛityu loka**, and **Pātāla** are affected by the gunas as they all form a part of **Prakṛti**. The very nature of Prakṛti or anything born out of Prakṛti will be subjected to the three gunas - '**Triguṇātmaka**'.

**The example of a mud pot**

A potter shapes mud into various usable objects like pots for water storage, Long-necked pitcher, and flowerpots. Some of these are baked, some may be even glazed. However, it is a given that the base material in all of these is mud. While this is a limiting example, anything which is in existence, and

living around us is created and nourished by **Prakṛti** and since **Prakṛti** itself is '**Triguṇātmaka**' (composed of three gunas) everything is consisting of these three gunas. Therefore, every aspect and dimension of existence of living beings is subject to the effect of the three gunas. All of us have all the three gunas. No one is entirely '**Sāttvik**,' '**Rājasik**,' or '**Tāmasik**.' We are all different, and our individual characteristic is based on the different permutation and combination of the three gunas. Our intellect may be '**Sāttvik**' but our '**dhṛitiḥ**' could be '**Tāmasik**.' We are all made up of varying degrees of the three gunas.

The term '**sattvaṁ**' here represents material existence. '**yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ**,' - means that the substances of material existence are subject to the effects of three gunas. The sum total of Śrī Kṛṣṇa 's teachings in the Ślokas starting from '**Jñāna**,' '**Karma**,' '**Buddhiḥ**,' and '**Dhṛitiḥ**' are all subject to the effect of the three gunas. Thus far, the teachings have been focussed on the individual level - Meaning that the impact or benefit whatsoever has been described at the Individual level. In the upcoming verses, Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains how societies have developed based on the gunas.

## 18.41

### **brāhmaṇakṣatriyaviśāṁ(m), sūdrāṇāṁ(ñ) ca parantapa, karmāṇi pravibhaktāni, svabhāvaprabhavaigūṇaiḥ. 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.

Shree Krishna explains that people have different natures, according to the guṇas that constitute their personality, and thus different professional duties are suitable for them. The system of **varṇāśhram** dharma was a scientific organization of society according to **svabhāva-prabhavaigūṇaiḥ** (work based on one's nature and guṇas). In this system of categorization, there were four **āśhrams** (stages in life) and four **varṇas** (occupational categories). The four **varṇas** (occupational categories) are,

1. **Brāhmaṇa** (priestly class)
2. **Kṣatriya** (Warrior Class)
3. **Vaiśya** (mercantile and farming class)
4. **Śūdra** - (Worker or Service Class) - This refers to '**Śūdra**' and not to '**kshudra**' referred in the second adhyāya Śloka three. It is just a class and not to be looked down as a lower order.

We should be aware that our Shastras are perfect and the reason why this social order was created was to strengthen the stability of our society. Those of us who understand the principles of management will see how its fundamental propositions are used in every sphere of life, be it the office, financial institutions, the educational system, our homes or even our Geeta Pariwar.

On a closer scrutiny one will find that our social order has been established by our Maharishis for the management of society. Our Swamiji always says that our society is standing on 16 pillars of which four are these chatur varnas or the four castes. This social order has given so much stability to our society since endless yugas! Today if our Sanatana Dharma is stable it is because of such a strong foundation. It is both a natural as well as a scientific way of maintaining society.

Taking the context of organizations or even countries all around the world, we see four divisions at play that ensure successful operation in any system:

- Knowledge centric
- Strength centric
- Wealth centric
- Service centric.

The entire organization at every place works along these divisions. In a similar way, the chatur varnas are revolving precisely around these principles of work. The knowledge component of any operation is symbolized by the Brahmin, while the strength is exemplified by the Kṣatriyas. The creation of wealth is the domain of the Vaishyas whereas providing services would be the privilege of the śūdrās.

Distortions in the **varṇāśhram** system crept in over time due to the repeated cultural invasions, first by the Moghuls and then by the British. Their systematic atrocities on **sanātanam** and the followers had a lasting impact. The distortions also ensured that interpretations with the **sanātanam** were misguided and there were some atrocities committed too. However, it should never be interpreted that the system as a whole is a failure. Take for example the case of a doctor who commits malpractice in his clinic, will it be interpreted as the systemic failure of the healthcare system? Definitely not. Likewise, it is the duty of the sādḥaks to understand the root of the distortions, uphold the traditions and correct the practice for the upcoming generations.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa proceeds further to explain each of the four categories viz 1. **Brāhmaṇa** , **Kṣatriya**, **Vaiśya**, and Śūdra. Their duties based on the gunas has been elaborated.

### **A note of caution**

**Śūdra** is the fourth varna (social class) in traditional Hindu society, focusing on service, labour, and agriculture. The term was derived from 'śūśru' (to serve) or 'śocāt drāvayati' (one who feels compassion on the suffering of others). It is to be pronounced as 'Shoodra.'

**Kshudra** means "small," "tiny," "minor," or "insignificant" in Sanskrit, referring to scale or importance, rather than a specific social caste. It is to be pronounced as 'Kshoo-dhra.'

It is therefore important for sādḥaks to pronounce the term properly.

### **18.42**

## **śamo damastapaḥ(ś) śaucaṃ(ñ), kṣāntirājavameva 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.

What is the **Brāhmaṇa** 's role in the society? **Brāhmaṇa** 's are knowledge centered. They are deeply immersed in the activity of seeking knowledge,

- **jñānaṃ**- knowledge
- **Vijñāna**- wisdom or realisation
- **āstikyaṃ**- religiousness.

A **Brāhmaṇa** is one who has realised the knowledge of the supreme and has understood the existence of this universe. The nature of such a person is characterised through,

- **śhamaḥ** - being in peace and the capacity to free the mind of all desires
  - **Dama**- suppressing the temptation. The examples above illustrate the temptations and distractions and the need for suppression of temptations to achieve goals
- Example 1 - During fasting if delicious food, sweets, and ice-cream are brought are available, the temptation and desire to eat manifests. But the brahmana's most important characteristic is to free

the mind from such distractions with the mind in full concentration

• **Tapah-** meditation. We should not construe that **tapah** is just sitting in the forest in meditation, as this alone is not **tapah**. Peacefully facing the difficulties without complaining and without getting agitated and treading steadily in the path of gaining knowledge is the perspective one should understand and develop. We have come across the Sanskrit phrase, '**Tapo dvandva-sahanam**' - Defining **tapah** as the endurance of life's dualities—such as heat/cold, pleasure/pain, praise/criticism, or success/failure—with equanimity and composure. The phrase is often cited to mean that enduring the contradictions of life is the real spiritual path.

**Example 1** - If one were to sit down and meditate and while meditation is in progress if a few others were to cause noise and disturbance, then under these stressful conditions, if the seeker were to lose temper and get into a shouting spree, then it is not **tapah**.

• **Śaucam-** purification and cleanliness. Here the reference is not just physical purity but also the internal purity of self which should also be very pious and clean. Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions for internal purity. It means cleanliness of '**Indriyas**' including what we hear, what we see, our speech and our thoughts too. It is '**Antar-śucita**' - Inner cleanliness.

• **kṣānti-** complete absence of retaliation. In Spite of having the power to take revenge when abused, if one is composed and does not get into arguments it represents the spirit of **kṣānti**. When one gets into verbal arguments and reacts unnecessarily, all accumulated Karma will get diminished. One should be neutral in actions and peaceful in approach.

**Example 1-** We all have experienced city traffic and its woes. In peak traffic, if one vehicle were to cut across and cause sudden braking and thereby a traffic jam. Tempers flare up and situations leading up to road rage result. Under these situations one who is of a '**kṣānti**' mindset, he remains calm and composed and allows the confusion to clear, instead of reacting to it.

**Example 2- Jñānēśvar Mahārāj** and his siblings (**Nivruttinath, Sopan, and Muktabai**) were born to **Vitthalpant Kulkarni**, who had taken sanyās (renunciation) but returned to married life upon his guru's orders. Orthodox Brahmins deemed this a violation of scriptures, declaring the children '**Sannyasi-putra**' (children of a sannyasi) and out casting them from social and religious life. The family was subjected to ridicule and scorn. They were refused alms and assistance, forcing them to beg for food to survive while being subjected to hateful insults from villagers who viewed them as sinners. While enduring all this suffering, **Mahārāj** did not even once seek retribution.

If someone is misbehaving and abusive, if we were to retaliate in the same tone and tenor, then all the accumulated good karma is lost. But, if we are able to maintain that '**kṣānti**' and able to endure and exercise control, then the doshas within are dissipated and they are assigned to the offending personality. Śrī Kṛṣṇa alludes to this in the Second adhyāya,

**rāga-dveṣha-viyuktais tu viṣhayān indriyaiśh charan  
ātma-vaśhyair-vidheyātmā prasādam adhigachchhati||2.64||**

*one who controls the mind, and is free from attachment and aversion, even while using the objects of the senses, attains the Grace of God.*

• **ārjavam-** straightforwardness or simplicity. One is subject to all kinds of television serials that depict cunning and shrewdness. One should not get attracted to these and allow the mind to be

corrupted. Repeatedly we have been told about the great people in our history who faced daunting situations and yet emerged clean and unscathed in their minds.

A **Brāhmaṇa** who practices endurance and exercises control over his senses will eventually reach a stage where the mind does not get corrupted. All these are the qualities and ideal characteristics of a Brāhmaṇa. Great personalities from our history and heritage like **Sant Jñānēśvar Mahārāj** and **Sant Tukārām** set examples for us to understand and emulate.

**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.

'**śauryaṃ tejo dhṛtir dākṣhyaṃ,**' - Śrī Kṛṣṇa then moves on to illustrating the characteristic of a **Kṣatriya** that include they bravery, courage, and fearlessness even in the most adverse situations. '**yuddhe chāpy apalāyanam,**' - Skill in weaponry and standing one's ground (Not running away from battlefield).

#### **Illustration - our Soldiers**

Our soldiers are on the borders of our country protecting our borders irrespective of the adverse weather or existing hostile conditions. These soldiers follow their Karma and Dharma and no matter how many forces come their way, they will stand steadily and defend. If they were to desert their positions in the face of an attack, what is the state of this great country of ours? These soldiers understand their duty and fearlessness is in their blood. Take for instance a Tiger, the animal is bold and fearless. Even a Tiger cub or even a Lion cub will equally be fearless no matter their size and their age. Fearlessness is ingrained and by birth.

#### **Śivājī Mahārāj 's fearlessness - An Anecdote**

Take the example of **Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj** who was known for his valour. When he was a young child, his father took him to the court of the Mughal emperor, who happened to be the employer of **Śivājī** 's father. On the way, **Śivājī** saw a person, a butcher, pulling a cow mercilessly. **Śivājī** could not tolerate the scene and despite being surrounded by a crowd belonging to other religion and a creed different from that of his own, he fearlessly took out his sword and severed the hands of the person troubling the cow. He was brought before the emperor and his father had to plead for mercy. **Śivājī** was, however, unrepentant for his act. He had after all, carried out this act on a cruel person who had refused to listen to him when the latter had entreated him to be merciful to the cow. This act of his demonstrated his fearlessness.

The Emperor was taken in by the fearless child's attitude and he let him go. Śivājī Mahārāj 's father **Śāhājī Bhōsalē** was upset and after he reached home with the child he confronted **Mātā Jijābāī**. He narrated the entire story and asked her why Śivājī did not offer praṇāms or bow down to the Emperor. He asked her if she had not taught him well. **Mātā Jijābāī** looked at Śivājī and asked him softly, 'Have I not taught you how to bow down?' **Śivājī Mahārāj** replied, 'Yes Mother, you have taught me how to bow and to whom I should bow. I cannot bow to one who is destroying our temples and our society.' When a person is equipped with a strong aura that emanates out of righteousness and an unwavering fearlessness of a determined mind, no one can stand up to him, certainly not one who bears a malice towards him.

- **Tejah** - Radiance, splendour. Such was the power and radiance of **Śivāji Mahārāj** that during his tenure of rule nobody had the courage to commit a crime.
- **Dhṛitiḥ**- unwavering firmness with which any task is taken to completion. We have discussed this in length in the previous adhyāyas.
- **dākṣya**- conscious and cautious. Taking the example of **Śivāji Mahārāj** here, during his rule he fought many wars. However, while he faced enemy each time, he was both conscious and cautious. He was very aware of his army's strength and similarly the strength of the opposition. All his battlefield strategies were set accordingly. It was never that he had to rush headlong into the enemy to demonstrate his valour and strength. **Param Pujya Swamiji** always alludes to the life and anecdotes from **Śivāji Mahārāj** 's life and rule. As an example of this virtue, **Śivāji Mahārāj** was placed under house arrest by Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in Agra following a tense meeting arranged by Raja Jai Singh after the Treaty of Purandar. **Śivāji Mahārāj** feigned illness, then arranged to send large baskets of sweets to Brahmins and the poor in Agra. He and his son used these baskets to escape captivity. They escaped to the Deccan disguised as sadhus, after which Śivāji Mahārāj revoked the treaty and successfully retook several forts from the Mughals. This anecdote illustrates the various strengths of Śivāji Mahārāj like cunning, being conscious and cautious. Śivāji Mahārāj never lost a war as he had these characteristics in him.
- **yuddhe āpyapalāyanam**- Not fleeing away from war. It is not a **Kṣatriya** 's dharma to run away from the battlefield. Irrespective of whether he loses or wins the war, he has to stay put and fight. In the second adhyāya Bhagavān has told Arjuna :

**hato vā prāpsyasi swargaṁ jivā vā bhokṣyase mahim  
tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛita-niśchayaḥ || 2.37||**

*If you fight, you will either be slain on the battlefield and go to the celestial abodes, or you will gain victory and enjoy the kingdom on earth. Therefore, arise with determination, O son of Kunti, and be prepared to fight.*

- **dānam**- charity. Charity should be given to the persons who are worthy of receiving it. In the seventeenth adhyāya Bhagavān has said:

**dātavyam iti yad dānaṁ dīyate 'nupakāriṇe  
deśhe kāle cha pātre cha tad dānaṁ sāttvikam smṛitam || 17.20||**

*Charity given to a worthy person simply because it is right to give, without consideration of anything in return, at the proper time and in the proper place, is stated to be in the mode of goodness.*

Charity should not be given grudgingly as a favour but in the spirit of sharing, as a matter of duty. Whether the charity is of a **Sāttvik** nature or not, depends on the correct place, time, and purpose of the daana.

- **īśvarabhāvaśca**- One who takes care of everybody. Taking care of society is a bounden responsibility of the **Kṣatriya**. We should look at our own army men who ardently say that it is their duty to protect the country and proclaim 'service before self' as their motto. They are ever ready to lay down their lives for the sake of the country.

## **kr̥ṣigaurakṣyavāṇijyam(m), vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam, paricaryātmakam(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).

In this Śloka, Bhagavān refers to the characteristics of the **Vaiśya** and the **Śūdra**.

- **Kr̥ṣi**- Agriculture, ensures food for all
- **gaurakṣya** - cattle rearing as an important occupation to protect them
- **Vāṇijyam**- Trade or carrying out a business

All these are examples of the duties of **Vaiśya**. In the golden old days, the entire society was thriving on rearing of cattle. Villages and communities were built around the cattle concentration. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's father was bestowed a title of **Nanda Mahārāj** (Nandagopa). **Nanda Mahārāj** was a landholder for **King Kaṁsa**, but because by caste he was a **Vaiśya**, a member of the mercantile and agricultural community, he maintained thousands of cows. The milk from the cows were used in trade with other villages and through barter system. The trade was pure and those who did not have essentials were given pure amounts as exchange for services they can offer. Pure trade is the dharma of **Vaiśya** and this is especially important.

- **paricaryātmakam karma**- service for all. The plumber, the doctor, and the nurses for example, are engaged in service to all. The nature of their work bears testimony to the characteristics of the **Śūdra**. We have to understand with clarity that there is nothing high or low about these castes. Our way of living illustrates each case - All the sādhas are sitting and listening to the Vivechan session, if the light goes off, the first thing we need is the electrician. It does not matter who else is around, but the 'Electrician' is of prime importance. Likewise, many of us get up early in the morning to perform puja, get ready for work and leave at appointed time. However, while taking bath if the water delivery fails or the tap does not work, the first call goes to the 'Plumber.' More important than performing puja is to call the Plumber and get the repairs done.

Another vital example is the Vivechan sessions themselves from Learngeeta.com, the background technicians and engineers are the ones who make it happen. The sādhas are comfortably seated at home and taking sessions and these homes were built by engineers and the construction labourers. The engineers, technicians, plumbers, electrician, and construction workers all fall under the category of **Śūdra**. All these people perform service to the society through their natural work - '**paricaryātmakam karma**.' Therefore, a **Śūdra** can never be lower. The **Śūdra** class is the foundation of the society. We have to understand and rectify our perception towards this particular class. Then only we can understand the entire system properly and then we can do justice to what we are striving to be.

To summarise,

- **Śūdras** are people who offer services and they are important.
- The people who are doing the agriculture, trade, and finance, the **Vaiśyas**, they are important.
- Those who protect and serve the society through their strength and charity are the **Kṣatriyas** and they are important.
- Lastly, the **Brāhmaṇas**, who are in the field of knowledge, worship and teaching are important.

Everybody is equally important and it is the division of work that is done so as to have a balance in the society. The classes created in society have a robust foundation based on occupation. The caste system should not become a deterrent by creating a perception of negativity around such a system.

In the midst of this confusion regarding the social divisions, all one needs to do is follow one's dharma and think beyond.

**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 balance in society or organization is achieved by people fulfilling their assigned tasks as per their skill profile. People continuously act in accordance with their Karma – 'sve sve karmaṇy.' A Plumber out of his own volition if he decides to go to a temple and take up worship, which cannot happen overnight. One has to go through the sadhana and the prescribed route to acquire related skills. Similarly, an Electrician cannot decide overnight to become a doctor and start treating patients. If people in a society were to abandon their tasks and duties only chaos will result. Everybody has to fulfil their role as if it is their 'Worship.'

Bhagavān says that our own karma is a means of attaining liberation. We have to perform our Karma as if we are performing worship, with dedication and focus, and it will create a path for '**Siddhi**' – '**sansiddhiṃ labhate naraḥ.**' Our Karma itself will facilitate attaining our goals when performed with dedication and being fully immersed in it. The method to be adopted and the goal of human existence is explained very succinctly by Bhagavān in the succeeding Ślokas.

#### **What it means for us**

We need to endeavour to follow whatever we have learnt so far and inculcate **sāttvikatā** in our life. Introspection has to be undertaken to understand the way of life and see how much we can progress on the spiritual path as taught to us by Bhagavān. We need to focus on our own karmas (**sve sve karmaṇy**) and figure how we can dedicate ourselves, get immersed in our own actions in a positive way in a best conceivable way to attain grace of Bhagavān.

With this, the discussions concluded and the session was dedicated to the lotus feet of **Param Pujya Swamiji**.



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**Jai Shri Krishna!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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