

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

# **BHAGAVAD GEETA – 18**

## *Liberation Through Renunciation & Surrender*

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***“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”***

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**TEXT  
28.18**

Reflections by  
**SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA**







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2	<i>Tattwa Bodha</i>	25	<i>Vakya Vritti</i>
3	<i>Atma Bodha</i>	26	<i>Advaita Makaranda</i>
4	<i>Bhaja Govindam</i>	27	<i>Kaivalya Upanishad</i>
5	<i>Manisha Panchakam</i>	<b>28.18</b>	<b><i>Bhagavad Geeta (Discourse 18 )</i></b>
6	<i>Forgive Me</i>	29	<i>Mundaka Upanishad</i>
7	<i>Upadesha Sara</i>	30	<i>Amritabindu Upanishad</i>
8	<i>Prashna Upanishad</i>	31	<i>Mukunda Mala (Bhakti Text)</i>
9	<i>Dhanyashtakam</i>	32	<i>Tapovan Shatkam</i>
10	<i>Bodha Sara</i>	33	<i>The Mahavakyas, Panchadasi 5</i>
11	<i>Viveka Choodamani</i>	34	<i>Aitareya Upanishad</i>
12	<i>Jnana Sara</i>	35	<i>Narada Bhakti Sutras</i>
13	<i>Drig-Drishya Viveka</i>	36	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>
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18	<i>"Nataka Deepa" – Panchadasi 10</i>	41	<i>Mandukya Upanishad</i>
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21	<i>"Sara Sangrah" – Yoga Vasishtha</i>	44	<i>Brahma Sootras</i>
22	<i>Vedanta Sara</i>	45	<i>Jivanmuktananda Lahari</i>
23	<i>Mahabharata + Geeta Dhyanam</i>	46	<i>Chinmaya Pledge</i>

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This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

**– The Author, February 2019, Shivaratri Day**



Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text  
**28.18**



मोक्षसंन्यासयोगः

## THE BHAGAVAD GEETA – 18

*“Liberation Through Renunciation”*

*Sri Veda Vyasaji*

### Reflections

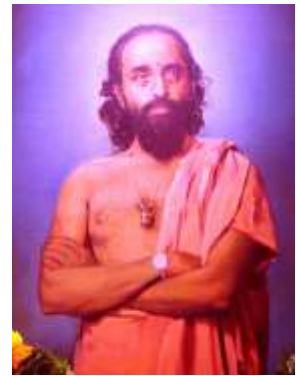
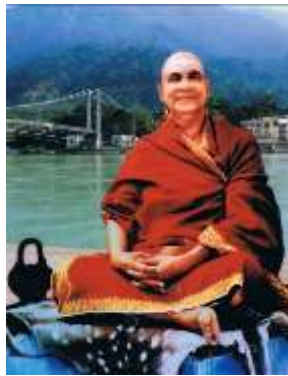
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on the 18 Lectures delivered by **Swami Advayanandaji**

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*Adi Shankaracharya*

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## **Personal Dedication**

### **1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan**

*who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;*

### **2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj**

*the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;*

### **3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)**

*for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;*

### **4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji**

*my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.*

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# ***BHAGAVAD GEETA – 18***

***“Liberation Through Renunciation”***

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॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

अथाष्टादशोऽध्यायः

मोक्षसंन्यासयोगः

## THE BHAGAVAD GEETA

Discourse – 18 (78 Verses)

**“LIBERATION Through Renunciation”**

### INTRODUCTION

**WE** BEGIN THE LONGEST and one of the best Chapters of the Geeta. If Chapter 2 was a summary in prospect, then Chapter 18 is a summary in retrospect. However, it is more than just a summary. Whilst sweeping up most of the topics raised in all the earlier Chapters, it adds emphasis where previously there was none, and it adds touches of crystal clear thoughts that give great clarity on certain topics, particularly Renunciation.

Whilst Chapter 2 may be described as a *philosophical summary*, Chapter 18 has the distinction of being a *practical instruction manual*. This makes Chapter 18 one of the most useful for seekers – it is the Geeta in overview.

Another point of comparison is this: While in Chapter 2 Lord Krishna had the plight of Arjuna at heart and was thinking very much in the shoes of Arjuna, as it were. Arjuna's problem has long since been resolved. Hence, the Lord does not have that restriction. He shines forth as a World Teacher. It is not a surprise that in this Chapter the Lord asks him to do his duty and fight, and Arjuna agrees without hesitation.

The Geeta is brought to a climax with Sanjaya tasked to do the Vote of Thanks. That is another superb feature of this Chapter. It leaves a taste of heroism in every reader, be he a seeker of Truth or be he just an admirer of the Lord. Every reader cannot help rising to applaud the Lord's superb effort to raise Arjuna to the pinnacle of glory.

The same effort has also raised the status of Hinduism as a World Religion that cannot be brushed aside by serious students of religion of any part of the world.

Doubtless, Sri Veda Vyasa has crafted out a masterpiece in spiritual literature that shall throw light upon the path of mankind for milleniums to come.

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**BHAGAVAD GEETA – 18**  
**“Liberation through Renunciation & Surrender”**

## **CONTENTS**

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<b>Introduction to Chapter 18</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>18.1 DEFINITIONS OF RENUNCIATION</b>	<b>(Verses 1 – 6) 06</b>
Verse 1: <i>Sannyasa &amp; Tyaga</i>	6
Verse 2 & 3: <i>Four Definitions of Renunciation</i>	7
Verse 4: <i>Arjuna Congratulated</i>	8
Verse 5: <i>Sri Krishna’s Pick of the Definitions</i>	9
Verse 6: <i>The Lord Adds Two Qualifiers</i>	9
<b>18.2 “TYAGA” – Gauna Sadhana</b>	<b>(Verses 7 – 12) 11</b>
Verse 7: <i>Tamasic Tyaga</i>	11
Verse 8: <i>Rajasic Tyaga</i>	13
Verse 9: <i>Sattwic Tyaga</i>	14
Verse 10: <i>Nature of the Sattwic Tyagi</i>	14
Verse 11: <i>The Non-Tyagi and Tyagi Differentiated</i>	16
Verse 12: <i>The Non-Tyagi and Tyagi – their Rewards</i>	16
<i>Diagram for # 18.3 and # 18.4</i>	<b>19</b>
<b>18.3 THE “ACTION TEAM”</b>	<b>(Verses 13 – 17) 20</b>
Verse 13: <i>Introduction to the “Action Team”</i>	20
Verse 14: <i>The Five Members of the Action Team</i>	21
<i>Table: the Constituents of Kshetra</i>	<b>23</b>
Verse 15: <i>The Members Apply to Every Action</i>	24
Verse 16: <i>Who is Missing in the Team?</i>	24
Verse 17: <i>Untainted &amp; Unbound by Actions</i>	25
<b>18.4 THE MECHANICS OF ACTION</b>	<b>(Verses 18 – 28) 28</b>
Verse 18: <i>Threefold Impulse &amp; Necessities of Action</i>	28
Verse 19: <i>Knowledge, Action &amp; Agent</i>	30
<i>Types of Knowledge (Jnana)</i>	<b>31</b>
Verse 20: <i>Sattwic Knowledge</i>	31
Verse 21: <i>Rajasic Knowledge</i>	31
Verse 22: <i>Tamasic Knowledge</i>	32
<i>Types of Action (Karma)</i>	<b>33</b>

Verse 23:	<i>Sattwic Action</i>	33
Verse 24:	<i>Rajasic Action</i>	34
Verse 25:	<i>Tamasic Action</i>	34
	<i>Types of Agent (Kartaa)</i>	35
Verse 26:	<i>Sattwic Agent</i>	35
Verse 27:	<i>Rajasic Agent</i>	36
Verse 28:	<i>Tamasic Agent</i>	37
<b>18.5</b>	<b>INTELLECT, FORTITUDE &amp; JOY</b>	(Verses 29 – 39) <b>39</b>
Verse 29:	<i>Intellect &amp; Fortitude</i>	39
	<i>Types of Intellect (Buddhi)</i>	40
Verse 30:	<i>Sattwic Intellect</i>	40
Verse 31:	<i>Rajasic Intellect</i>	41
Verse 32:	<i>Tamasic Intellect</i>	42
	<i>Types of Fortitude (Dhriti)</i>	43
Verse 33:	<i>Sattwic Fortitude</i>	43
Verse 34:	<i>Rajasic Fortitude</i>	43
Verse 35:	<i>Tamasic Fortitude</i>	44
	<i>Types of Joy (Sukham)</i>	45
Verse 36:	<i>Introduction to the Threefold Joy</i>	45
Verse 37:	<i>Sattwic Joy</i>	46
Verse 38:	<i>Rajasic Joy</i>	46
Verse 39:	<i>Tamasic Joy</i>	47
<b>18.6</b>	<b>THE FOUR CASTES &amp; THEIR DUTIES</b>	(Verses 40 – 48) <b>49</b>
Verse 40:	<i>No Beings can Escape from the Gunas</i>	49
Verse 41:	<i>The Fourfold Divisions Among Men</i>	50
Verse 42:	<i>The Brahmanas – Religious &amp; Studious</i>	51
Verse 43:	<i>The Kshatriyas – Valorous &amp; Dauntless</i>	51
Verse 44:	<i>The Vaishyas &amp; Shudras</i>	52
	<i>Perfection Through Duty</i>	52
Verse 45:	<i>Devotion to Duty</i>	52
Verse 46:	<i>Duty As Worship of the Lord</i>	54
Verse 47:	<i>Better One's Own Duty</i>	55
Verse 48:	<i>All Duties Have Flaws</i>	57
<b>18.7</b>	<b>READY FOR JNANA SADHANA</b>	(Verses 49 – 53) <b>59</b>
Verse 49:	<i>The Qualified Intellect</i>	59
Verse 50:	<i>The Way Forward – Knowledge of Self</i>	60
Verse 51:	<i>The Pre-Meditation Qualifications</i>	61
Verse 52:	<i>Engagement in Meditation</i>	62

Verse 53:	<i>Post-Meditation Caution &amp; Care!</i>	62
<b>18.8</b>	<b>OTHER PATHS IN THE GEETA</b>	<b>(Verses 54 – 57) 64</b>
Verse 54:	<i>Sankhya Yoga</i>	64
Verse 55:	<i>Bhakti Yoga</i>	65
Verse 56:	<i>Karma Yoga</i>	65
Verse 57:	<i>Buddhi Yoga</i>	66
<b>18.9</b>	<b>BREAKING THE EGO BARRIER</b>	<b>(Verses 58 – 61) 67</b>
Verse 58:	<i>Grace &amp; Egoism Do Not Mix</i>	67
Verse 59:	<i>Egoism &amp; Nature – Who Wins?</i>	68
Verse 60:	<i>Delusion &amp; Karma – Who Wins?</i>	69
Verse 61:	<i>The Lord's Puppet Show</i>	69
<b>18.10</b>	<b>THE LORD'S PROMISE</b>	<b>(Verses 62 – 66) 71</b>
Verse 62:	<i>"Fly Unto Him for Refuge!"</i>	71
Verse 63:	<i>"Act As You Please"</i>	71
Verse 64:	<i>"You Are Most Dear to Me"</i>	72
Verse 65:	<i>"This Do I Promise"</i>	73
Verse 66:	<i>"Arjuna, Grieve Not!"</i>	74
<b>18.11</b>	<b>IMPARTING THE GEETA</b>	<b>(Verses 67 – 71) 75</b>
Verse 67:	<i>Imparting This Knowledge</i>	75
Verse 68:	<i>The Teacher of the Geeta</i>	76
Verse 69:	<i>The Teacher is Most Dear</i>	76
Verse 70:	<i>The Student of the Geeta</i>	77
Verse 71:	<i>The Listener of the Geeta</i>	78
<b>18.12</b>	<b>A CONVERSATION MOST THRILLING</b>	<b>(Verses 72 – 78) 79</b>
Verse 72:	<i>The Lord's Loving Enquiry</i>	79
Verse 73:	<i>Arjuna's Delusion Dispelled</i>	80
Verse 74:	<i>Glory of the Divine Dialogue</i>	81
Verse 75:	<i>Veda Vyasaji Acknowledged</i>	81
Verse 76:	<i>Remember, Remember . . .</i>	82
Verse 77:	<i>. . . Rejoice, Rejoice!</i>	82
Verse 78:	<i>Divinity Combined with Dexterity</i>	83

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**SRI KRISHNA & ARJUNA**  
*“Divinity & Dexterity”*





## 18.1 DEFINITIONS OF RENUNCIATION

(Verses 1-6, 6 No.)

IS THERE A CONNECTION between Chapter 17 and 18? Yes, there is. One's faith and the three major types of actions were described in Chapter 17. However, no mention was made of Renunciation. This is what Arjuna asks about at the start of Chapter 18. What are the various types of renunciation that are prescribed and who are eligible for them?

Chapter 17 itself gave the eligibility – it is the one who has got Sattwic faith, who performs sacrifice, charity and austerity of a Sattwic type, and has developed the Daivi Sampati. But there are other key aspects on Renunciation that have also to be considered.

That is where we begin the Eighteenth Chapter.

### Verse 1:      *Sannyasa & Tyaga*

अर्जुन उवाच ।

संन्यासस्य महाबाहो तत्त्वमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ।

त्यागस्य च हृषीकेश पृथक्केशिनिषूदन

॥ १८-१॥

arjuna uvāca |

saṁnyāsasya mahābāhō tattvamicchāmi vēditum |

tyāgasya ca hṛṣīkēśa pṛthakkēśiniṣūdana

॥ 18-1॥

	<i>Arjuna uvaacha:</i>	<i>Arjuna said:</i>
1	<i>Sannyaasasya mahaabaaho,</i>	<i>About <b>Renunciation</b>, O Mighty-armed,</i>
2	<i>tattvam icchhaami veditum;</i>	<i>I wish to know <u>its essence</u> or truth.</i>
3	<i>tyaagasya hrisheekesha,</i>	<i>And about <b>Abandonment</b>, O Hrishikesha, too</i>
4	<i>prithak keshinishoodana.</i>	<i>in their <u>several categories</u>, O Slayer of Keshi.</i>

This is the first verse where the Lord is addressed in three different ways. This is to forewarn us that there is something exceptional to follow that is worth noting:

- Mahaabaaho**: “mighty-armed”; ushers in His Vishwaroopa Form, His Saundariya.
- Hrishikesha**: “consciousness which propels the senses”; conveys His Lordship.
- Keshini-Shoodana**: “destroyer of Keshini”; conveys His glory and Power.

### Sannyasa & Tyaga Differentiated

There is some doubt in Arjuna's mind about the exact connotation of the words **Sannyasa** and **Tyaga**. These words have been translated as Renunciation and Abandonment respectively. Sri Krishna Himself uses them interchangeably. Sri Shankaracharyaji does not differentiate between the words Sannyasa and Tyaga, but differentiates renunciation into two categories: Mukhya & Gauna Renunciation.

**Mukhya** is primary; **Gauna** is secondary. The former is of a very high order, and is always Sattwic. The latter is the practice of renunciation as a Sadhana, and covers varying degrees, from Tamasic in the beginning, to Sattwic renunciation in the end.

### **Sannyasa & Tyaga Seen as One Path**

Pujya Gurudev unifies both the ideas and says: “Tyaga is the means to reach the goal of Sannyasa.” This is equivalent to saying Tyaga is Gouna renunciation and Sannyasa is Mukhya renunciation. For the purposes of this Chapter, this is a satisfactory definition.

**Tyaga** may be seen as the moment to moment progress in renunciation. It begins by giving up our anxieties over the fruits of actions, and progresses on to renunciation of desire to the best of our ability, improving day by day, bit by bit. It is in the context of the day-to-day practice of giving up our likes and dislikes with the object of attaining purity of mind and some measure of self-control over the mind.

**Sannyasa** is more serious renunciation. It can be a formal, life-time commitment. It concerns the renunciation of all things that stand in the way of abidance in the Self. It is the giving up of individuality, it requires great self-sacrifice, and can only be Sattwic.

Together, Tyaga and Sannyasa take care of the full range of renunciation practised in spiritual life.

### **Verses 2 & 3: Four Definitions of Renunciation**

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं संन्यासं कवयो विदुः ।

सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं प्राहुस्त्यागं विचक्षणाः

॥ १८-२॥

śrībhagavānuvāca |

kāmyānām karmaṇām nyāsaṁ saṁnyāsaṁ kavayō viduḥ |

sarvakarmaphalatyaḡam prāhustyaḡam vicakṣaṇāḥ || 18-2||

	<i>Shree Bhagavaana uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>Kaamyanaam karmanaam nyaasam</i>	i) “The <b>Renunciation</b> of acts with desire”
2	<i>sannyaasam kavayah viduh;</i>	thus do sages understand <u>Sannyasa</u> to be.
3	<i>sarva karma phala tyagam,</i>	ii) “The <b>Abandonment</b> of fruits of all actions”
4	<i>praahuh tyagam vichikshanaah.</i>	thus do the wise declare <u>Tyaga</u> to be.

त्याज्यं दोषवदित्येके कर्म प्राहुर्मनीषिणः ।

यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यमिति चापरे

॥ १८-३॥

tyājyaṁ dōṣavadityēkē karma prāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ |

yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyamiti cāparē

|| 18-3||

5	<i>Tyaaajyam doshavat iti eke,</i>	iii) “Abandon <b>them all</b> as being defective”, thus do
6	<i>karma praahuh maneeshinah;</i>	some wise philosophers speak about <u>Actions</u> .
7	<i>yajna daana tapah karma,</i>	iv) “Acts of <b>sacrifice, charity and austerity</b>
8	<i>na tyaaajyam iti cha apare.</i>	should <u>not</u> be abandoned”, thus say other wise men.

Four different meanings or opinions on **Renunciation** are given in these two verses:

**1-2 Meaning 1:** This says that renunciation is giving up of actions prompted by desire. It implies that Kamya and Nishidha Karmas (desire-prompted and forbidden actions) have to be renounced. One should do only Nitya and Naimitika Karmas (obligatory duties).

**3-4 Meaning 2:** This says that all acts may be done, as long as their fruits are abandoned. The very fact that the fruits are to be abandoned implies that Kamya and Nishidha Karmas are ruled out – how does one do them and give up their fruit at the same time?

**5-6 Meaning 3:** There is always some defect in any action. For example, its addictive power, its power to draw one outward, its power to make one dependent on actions so that the fruit can be enjoyed again and again. Hence, some philosophers say all actions should be abandoned regardless of whether they are Sattwic, Rajasic or Tamasic.

In this rule, if the defects can be removed in some way, then the objection falls away. The problem is how to remove the defects? The defects in Kamya and Nishidha Karmas can be removed only abandoning them. The defect in Sattwic actions is that they can be addictive. This can be removed by doing them as acts of sacrifice. If this is done, then Meaning 3 merges into Meaning 4.

**7-8 Meaning 4:** Others advise that one should abandon all acts *except* sacrifice, charity and austerity. This means implication that Sattwic acts alone are to be done, while Rajasic and Tamasic acts are to be abandoned. Kamya Karma, being Rajasic, is to be abandoned. Nishidha Karma, being Tamasic, is also to be abandoned. Nitya and Naimitika Karmas can be made Sattwic only when done in the spirit of sacrifice. If this is done, then Meanings 1 and 2 also converge with Meaning 4.

Thus we find that the first three meanings form the necessary conditions, whereas the fourth meaning forms the sufficient condition when carried to its logical extreme. In Meaning 4, Tyaga merges with Sannyasa. When all actions are rendered Sattwic by eliminating selfishness and doing them as a Yajna, we reach the culmination of action.

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**Verse 4: *Arjuna Congratulated***

निश्चयं शृणु मे तत्र त्यागे भरतसत्तम ।

त्यागो हि पुरुषव्याघ्र त्रिविधः सम्प्रकीर्तितः

॥ १८-४॥

niścayaṁ śṛṇu mē tatra tyāgē bharatasattama |

tyāgō hi puruṣavyāghra trividhaḥ samprakīrtitaḥ

॥ 18-4॥

1	<i>Nishchayam shrinu me tatra,</i>	Hear from Me the <u>conclusion</u> about
2	<i>tyaage bharata-sattama;</i>	Tyaga, <b>O Best of the Bharatas.</b>
3	<i>tyaagah hi purusha-vyaaghra,</i>	Tyaga, verily, <b>O Tiger among Men,</b>
4	<i>trividhah samprakeertitah.</i>	is declared to be of three kinds:

**1** Apart from announcing the Lord's intention to give His final decision, this verse apparently does not say much. For this reason, it is possible that the main purpose of the verse is to congratulate Arjuna for his interest in such a vital subject as Renunciation.

**2-3** Addressing Arjuna twice in glowing terms, draws our attention to him:

i) as “O Best of the Bharatas!”; and, ii) as “O Tiger among men!”

Indeed, it requires sterling qualities to undertake the path of Renunciation. This path is not for faint-hearted people with many family attachments. It requires the daring and courage of a tiger to pursue it. Sri Krishna feels great joy at seeing this in His disciple.

4 Of the four meanings of Renunciation. Sri Krishna’s choice is yet to follow. The three kinds of Tyaga will help us to understand Sri Krishna’s final choice. Renunciation has two components to it: Desire or sense pleasure is one; the sense of individuality or egoism is the other. Sri Krishna’s final choice depends on the latter, which is at a deeper level.

#### **Verse 5**      *Sri Krishna’s Pick of the Definitions*

यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम्

॥ १८-५॥

yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṁ kāryamēva tat |

yajñō dānaṁ tapaścaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām

॥ 18-5॥

1	<i>Yajna daana tapah karma,</i>	<i>Acts of <b>sacrifice, charity and austerity</b></i>
2	<i>na tyaaajyam kaaryam eva tat;</i>	<i>should not be abandoned, but certainly be done.</i>
3	<i>yajnah daanam tapah cha eva,</i>	<i>For, indeed, sacrifice, charity and austerity</i>
4	<i>paavanaani maneeshinaam.</i>	<i>are <u>purifiers</u>. This is the view of <u>wise men</u>.</i>

The Lord’s personal choice is in two parts. This verse has Part 1, the pick from the four Meanings listed above. All four Meanings are given as coming from wise people who know what they talking about.

As we would have expected, the Lord selects Meaning 4: “Acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity should never be abandoned,” as the ultimate condition for renunciation.

What is the reason behind the Lord’s choice? It is because acts of sacrifice help to purify a person. Purity is a great wealth on the spiritual path. These acts, whose very nature is self-sacrifice, leave no room for the ego to flourish. That is from the individual’s viewpoint. From society’s perspective, all acts of sacrifice are beneficial to the community.

Acts of sacrifice can be practised by people in all the four Ashramas, but each Ashrama has one of them as its most predominant or characteristic activity, as follows:

- i) Brahmacharya Ashrama: predominated by **Yajna**.
- ii) Grihastha Ashrama: predominated by **Dana**.
- iii) Vanaprastha Ashrama: predominated by **Tapas**.
- iv) Sannyasa Ashrama: **All** acts of sacrifice become natural and effortless.

Even these noble actions can be polluted if not done with the right attitude. For this reason, the Lord specifies two conditions upon them which ensure the correct attitude:

#### **Verse 6:**      *The Lord Adds Two Qualifiers*

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।

कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम्

॥ १८-६॥



ētānyapi tu karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā phalāni ca |

kartavyānīti mē pārtha niścitaṁ matamuttamam

|| 18-6||

1	<i>Etaani api tu karmaani,</i>	<i>But even these actions, only after</i>
2	<i>sangam tyaktvaa phalaani cha;</i>	<i><u>abandoning attachment</u> and their <u>fruits</u>,</i>
3	<i>kartavyaani iti me paartha,</i>	<i>should they be done, O Paartha. This is My</i>
4	<i>nishchitam matam uttamam.</i>	<i>certain and best <u>opinion</u>.</i>

**1 Etaani Api:** “Even these”, i.e. the acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity.

**2** The two qualifiers added here are to ensure that these acts are rendered Sattwic. For it is possible to have Rajasic and Tamasic adulterations in them by doing them with attachment (desire) and anticipation of the fruits. When they are thus rendered Sattwic, then all Nitya and Naimitika Karmas automatically become Yajna only.

Some people wish to take **Etaani Api** to include even Kamya Karma. But Sri Shankaracharya pooh-poohs the idea, saying that Kamya Karma by definition is done with both attachment and desire for its fruit.

The Lord’s special touch is that they must be done in a spirit of Karma Yoga. The two conditions given here represent the whole essence of Karma Yoga:

i) **Sangam Tyaktvaa:** “abandoning attachment” – this stands for *Ishwararpana Buddhi*, surrender of all one’s actions to the Lord. In the Geeta, this is called *Vyava-saayaatmika Buddhi*, holding on one-pointedly to the thought of God alone.

ii) **Phalaani Tyaktvaa:** “abandoning the fruits of actions” – this stands for *Prasada Buddhi*, accepting whatever comes as being the Lord’s Prasada. In the Geeta, this is called *Samatva Buddhi*, even-mindedness as to what the fruits are.

This choice is literally Sri Krishna’s signature – it is typical of what He has stood for throughout the *Geeta*. His single call to Arjuna is to do all his actions as Karma Yoga.

### **Same Act, Two Different Attitudes**

Acharyaji told us about “*Samyoga Prithaktvaa*”, which is the phenomenon that arises when the same act is done but having different intentions. In such a case, the result produced is always in accordance with one’s attitude, not the act itself. This is proof that Karma Yoga is not about physical activities, but the mental attitude with which these activities are done.

For example, the chanting of the Lord’s Name can be done with different purposes in mind. The devotee, who does it purely as a spiritual Sadhana, with no selfish intention, gains the purity of mind without his asking. Another who does it with some personal intention in mind, such as gaining attention or gaining entry into heaven, will not get that purity. He may not even get what he wants to gain, because the Lord’s Name is not meant to be used in vain in this manner. The power in the Lord’s Name will ensure that he soon realises his error and uses it for the right reason and in the right manner.

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## 18.2 “TYAGA” – GAUNA SADHANA

(Verses 7-12, 6 No.)

### A CLARIFICATION ON DELUSION

**T**HOSE THAT ERR in the manner of Meaning 3 of Renunciation, consider all actions to have some defects in them, and so they propose to discard them all. This is like ‘throwing away the baby with the bath-water’. Sri Shankaracharya ji vigorously protests against doing this. The sensible approach mentioned earlier is to make an attempt at removing the defects whilst retaining the value of actions to work out one’s existing Karma.

Meaning 3 is considered to be a delusion in the light of Guana Tyaga as a Sadhana. It is clearly against the grain of Sri Krishna’s philosophy of action. To Sri Krishna, it is certainly not true that all Karmas are defective. To think in this manner is a delusion.

The above is one case for dismissing all actions. A second case of deluded discarding of actions is this: One may falsely imagine that himself to already possess the needed Chitta Shuddhi, and therefore give up his Niyata Karma prematurely. This is where the Guru’s guidance becomes absolutely essential. Acharya ji’s general guideline on this is that, when one is ready, i.e. when he has reached the required Chitta Shuddhi, then actions will fall off on their own; one does not have to drop the actions. This approach makes it less likely for premature Tyaga of Niyata Karma, the renunciation of obligatory duties.

Another helpful hint from Acharya ji is that, if work comes naturally to one, it is a sign that God wants us to still act. It means either we are not ready to renounce actions, or that those actions are needed to fulfill a higher, wider purpose.

Unfortunately, it is also a fact that untimely or premature renunciation of action leads to the failure of many aspirants in reaching the ultimate goal of spirituality.

#### Verse 7:      *Tamasic Tyaga*

नियतस्य तु संन्यासः कर्मणो नोपपद्यते ।

मोहात्तस्य परित्यागस्तामसः परिकीर्तितः

॥ १८-७॥

niyatasya tu saṁnyāsaḥ karmaṇō nōpapadyatē |

mōhāttasya parityāgastāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ

॥ 18-7॥

1	<i>Niyatasya tu san-nyaasah,</i>	<i>Verily, the renunciation of <u>obligatory</u></i>
2	<i>karmanah na upapadyate;</i>	<i><u>actions</u> is not proper;</i>
3	<i>mohaata tasya parityaagah,</i>	<i>their abandonment <b>out of delusion</b></i>
4	<i>taamasah pari-keertitah.</i>	<i>is declared to be <b>Tamasic</b>.</i>

**1-2** Here we have clarity on Nitya and Naimitika Karma together. These are obligatory actions, and are considered to be very important by Sri Krishna. This is where Sri Krishna differs with many who suggest that they, too, have to be renounced.

**3-4** In fact, obligatory actions are so important, that their **OMISSION** is considered by Sri Krishna as the only reason for designating them as Tamasic! No other reason is given to describe Tamasic renunciation.

We have to take Sri Krishna's words to heart. They mean that we should never give up our normal daily duties which apply to our situation in life. Giving them up, according to the Lord, can only be due to sheer laziness (Tamas) or ignorance of a proper understanding of the purpose of life (also Tamas).

Tamasic Tyaga is thus very simply and unambiguously rebuked – “Do not shirk your responsibilities, for they are an integral part of your purpose on earth. Through these duties you are linked to the Cosmic Chain of distribution of the needs of all beings.”

### **“RENUNCIATION” – WHAT TO RENOUNCE & WHEN**

A further clarification by Acharyaji is that, whilst Tamas and Rajas are present in a person, Niyata Karma is needed to give us Chitta Shuddhi or purification, and prepare us for knowledge. While this circumstance holds, duties are never to be abandoned. This is the Geeta's view. Only when sufficient purity is gained, then, and only then, can they be given up; and that, too, under the advice of one's Guru. Such Karma Sannyasa is allowed for and is part of the *Geeta's* overall view on action. Care is needed to assess when exactly duties can be given up, beneficially (from the spiritual angle) and legitimately (from the social angle).

In this context, Acharyaji respectfully pointed out that some commentators, not seeing the whole picture, and especially not seeing the circumstance of sufficient purity, advise continuing these Karmas even after purification is acquired. This is an error as it does not take into account the fact that Karma Yoga is an internal act, not an external act. Renunciation, too, is essentially a mental act, not a physical act. When to renounce action and when not to depends on one's mental state of detachment and desirelessness.

For example, **Lokamanya Tilak**, in his commentary *Gita Rahasya*, says these Karmas should never be given up at all. He is clearly addressing the person who is yet far away from the ideal condition of purity needed to give up duties. To that extent, he is right. But to extend his exhortation to act beyond the condition of purity is to hamper the further spiritual growth of a seeker of Truth, who needs silence and solitude to progress further.

Similarly, **Gandhiji** also has interpreted some parts of the *Geeta* such as “Stand up, O Arjuna, and fight; it is your duty!” in a light that is tilted towards the philosophy of non-violence. Insofar as the general trait in man leans towards violence, Gandhiji is perfectly correct in attempting to arrest this leaning to prevent an outburst of violence in society. However, in the *Geeta*, actions on the battlefield are not regarded as “violence”, but as the performance of one's duty. The *Geeta* does not advance the cause of violence; but of Swadharma, one's own duty. Seen in the light of the circumstances prevailing in Gandhiji's times, we are compelled to conclude that in Gandhiji's view, it was better to err on the side of non-violence than on the side of violence. Gandhiji would certainly have taken the shortfalls in human society into consideration before making his decision.

**Verse 8: *Rajasic Tyaga***

दुःखमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशभयात्त्यजेत् ।

स कृत्वा राजसं त्यागं नैव त्यागफलं लभेत्

॥ १८-८॥

duḥkhamityēva yatkarma kāyaklēśabhayāṭtyajēt |

sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgam naiva tyāgaphalam labhēt

|| 18-8||

1	<i>Duḥkham iti eva yat karma,</i>	<i>"It is <u>painful</u>" thus saying, he whose actions</i>
2	<i>kaaya-klesha-bhayaat tyajet;</i>	<i>are <u>abandoned</u> due to <b>fear of bodily trouble</b>,</i>
3	<i>sah kritvaa raajasam tyagam,</i>	<i>he, performing such <b>Rajasic Tyaga</b>,</i>
4	<i>na eva tyaga phalam labhet.</i>	<i>does not obtain the <u>fruit of Tyaga</u>.</i>

**1-2** The abandonment of *Niyata Karma* is once again the focus of this verse. It is declared to be Rajasic to abandon it. The indication is that *Yajna-Dana-Tapas* could well be abandoned by Rajasic people if they are found to be "too painful" to do. They will not abandon Kamya Karma, however painful they may be. In fact, the Rajasic-minded persons are more likely to perform only Kamya Karma, which are 'pleasurable' and fulfill their desires. They are averse to Niyata Karma, which appear as 'drudgery'. Even when it is performed, they are more inclined to perform it with a desire-orientated mentality.

Whilst the Tamasic people give these activities up because they are lazy or out of sheer delusion, the Rajasic people give them up because they are a big botheration to them. They want pleasure out of everything they do; even a little bit of hardship in the course of their duties cannot be accepted by them.

If something is too difficult or painful; if it requires one to go out of one's way; if it is likely to lead to depriving one of some other more desirable activity, then the Rajasic person will simply abandon or shirk his duty to free himself of "bodily trouble".

**3** Rajasic Tyaga is defined by the single criterion of **DISCOMFORT**. Whenever discomfort becomes the key reason to abandon an action, it is a sign of Rajasic renunciation. Fear of "bodily trouble", which in this context includes mental trouble also, cannot be tolerated by the Rajasic person who is governed by likes and dislikes.

Ease, comfort, pleasure, enjoyment – these are the demands of the Rajasic mind. Even if sacrifices, austerities and charity are done, the Rajasic person does them for ostentation and with much comfort built into it, as we have seen in Chapter 17.

**4** Naturally, with such an attitude, the proper fruit of renunciation is not reaped. Such renunciation produces only sorrow and pain. Pujya Gurudev says:

***"Performance of obligatory actions, and not their renunciation, is the most glorious of all forms of Tyaga. And it can be considered doubly so when it involves a certain amount of sacrifice of one's own personal convenience and comfort."***

Earlier in the *Geeta*, Arjuna's abandonment of his duty to fight could be considered an example of Rajasic Tyaga, since his only reason was the pain it would cause him to see his relatives killed in battle. Considerations of duty were not Arjuna's concern at all.



**Verse 9: Sattwic Tyaga**

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन ।

सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः

॥ १८-९॥

kāryamityēva yatkarma niyatam kriyatē:'rjuna |

saṅgam tyaktvā phalam caiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttvikō mataḥ || 18-9||

1	<i>Kaaryam iti eva yat karma,</i>	"This is <b>my duty</b> " – thus saying, such actions
2	<i>niyatam kriyate arjuna;</i>	that are <u>obligatory</u> are performed, O Arjuna.
3	<i>sangam tyaktvaa phalam cha eva,</i>	Abandoning <u>attachment</u> and also their <u>fruits</u> ,
4	<i>sah tyagah saatwikah matah.</i>	he is regarded as performing <b>Sattwic Tyaga</b> .

The Lord's definition of Tyaga in verse 6 is repeated here as the definition of Sattwic Tyaga. There is no difference between the two verses.

Real Tyaga is done for the sake of a higher ideal. A lower thing is given up in order to access something higher. A bud is 'abandoned' in order to become a flower, and a flower is 'abandoned' in order to become a fruit. So, too, sensual life is abandoned in order to live the spiritual life. This is Sattwic Tyaga.

**1** In Sattwic Tyaga the sole criterion is **DUTY** – duty for duty's sake. The person strongly feels, "I must do this as my bounden duty". This sense of duty arises from the fivefold obligation towards the world around us, as we learnt them in Chapter 3. They fulfil our role in the Cosmic Cycle of Action.

**2** Niyata Karma is not optional, but obligatory or compulsory. If we do not perform them, we are incurring the sin of omission.

*Yajna-Dana-Tapas* can safely be assumed to be included here, as they fall in line with Sri Krishna's recommendation in verse 5.

**3-4** The same two conditions as in verse 6 are appended to these duties. The repetition is to drive home an important point. When obligatory duties are done without attachment and without an eye on the fruits, they become pure Yajna, i.e. acts of sacrifice. Pure Yajna is Sattwic Tyaga.

**Verse 10: Nature of the Sattwic Tyagi**

न द्वेष्ट्यकुशलं कर्म कुशले नानुषज्जते ।

त्यागी सत्त्वसमाविष्टो मेधावी छिन्नसंशयः

॥ १८-१०॥

na dvēṣṭyakūśalam karma kūśalē nānuṣajjatē |

tyāgī sattvasamāviṣṭō mēdhāvī chinnasamśayah || 18-10||

1	<i>Na dveshti akushalam karma,</i>	He hates not <u>disagreeable</u> action,
2	<i>kushale na anushajjate;</i>	nor is he attached to <u>agreeable</u> action.
3	<i>tyaagee sattwa-samaavishtah,</i>	The ( <b>Sattwic</b> ) <b>Tyagi</b> who is soaked in <u>purity</u>
4	<i>medhaavee chhinna-samshayah.</i>	and <u>intelligence</u> , cuts asunder all his <b>doubts</b> .

The qualities of a Sattwic Tyagi may be divided twofold as follows:

### **A. The Sattwic Tyagi & Action**

**1-2** 1. In relation to Actions, the disagreeability or agreeability of action is from the viewpoint of others, not from his own viewpoint. For to him nothing is agreeable or disagreeable any longer. Sri Shankara interprets this to mean that the Sattwic person has no hate for those who still perform actions which he once considered to be disagreeable. Conversely, he, the Sattwic Tyagi, has no envy for those who are engaged in actions which he once considered agreeable. He neither looks down upon others nor does he envy others. This reflects his quality of being above all hatred and jealousy. It requires great **humility** and **large-heartedness** to practise these virtues.

2. From the Tyagi's own point of view, 'agreeable action' can be taken to mean befitting action; while 'disagreeable action' can mean unbefitting action. The former would be Niyata Karma or obligatory actions, and the latter would be Kamya and Nishidha Karma. The Sattwic Tyagi does not hate those who are engaged in Kamya and Nishidha Karmas, nor is he attached to those who are engaged in doing their duties as Niyata Karma. He has risen above both extremes, and is engaged only in **Yajna**, or acts of selflessness such as sacrifice, charity and austerity.

3. A third point to note is that the Sattwic Tyagi is aware that all actions, whether befitting or unbefitting, agreeable or disagreeable, are only for the sake of his Purification, and that in themselves they do not have the power to make him realize the Self. He eagerly does them in the knowledge that they will prepare him to receive **knowledge of the Self** in due course. He does not hold a false hope that obligatory actions are sufficient for realisation. The credit for realisation goes solely to knowledge, not to any actions.

This brings us to the second set of qualities in a Sattwic Tyagi.

### **B. The Sattwic Tyagi & Knowledge**

**3-4** 1. Working in the above spirit in the matter of Nitya Karma, he gains the requisite **Chitta Shuddhi** or purity. This is the opportune moment he has been waiting for, as described in point 3 above. Now, on obtaining the desired purity, he is ready to enter the path of Jnana to move further in his spiritual progress.

2. Having arrived at the necessary level of purity for Jnana, the Sattwic Tyagi becomes radiant with **pure intelligence**. Intelligence is credited to having a pure mind. This is an important point – the connection between purity and intelligence. It is as though intelligence were kept locked and was waiting for the key of purity to unlock it! Once intelligence is unlocked, the person absorbs knowledge of the Self as a sponge absorbs water. This attentive absorption of knowledge is called **Sravanam**.

3. Once he has obtained the proper knowledge of what is expected of him, he reflects thoroughly upon this knowledge with his subtle and pure intellect. This reflection is called **Mananam**, and it enables him to grasp the Vedantic ideas firmly, beyond all shadow of doubt.

Such a person is a qualified **Adhikari** for proceeding further in the Sadhana for Self-realisation.

**Verse 11: The Non-Tyagi and Tyagi Differentiated**

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः ।

यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते

॥ १८-११॥

na hi dēhabhṛtā śakyam tyaktuṁ karmāṇyaśēṣataḥ |

yastu karmaphalatyaḡī sa tyāḡītyabhidhīyatē

|| 18-11||

1	<i>Na hi deha-bhritaa shakyaṁ,</i>	Verily, one locked in <u>body-consciousness</u> cannot
2	<i>tyaktum karmaṇi aśeshataḥ;</i>	abandon <u>actions</u> completely – he is a <b>Non-Tyagi</b> .
3	<i>yah tu karma-phala tyaagee,</i>	But he who relinquishes the <u>fruits of action</u> ,
4	<i>sah tyaagee iti abhi-dheeyate.</i>	is verily called a true <b>“Tyagi”</b> .

In this verse, the Lord clarifies who is a non-Tyagi and who is a Tyagi. The actual difference between the two is pin-pointed:

**The Non-Tyagi**

**1-2 Na Shakyam:** The Lord begins by describing the non-Tyagi or one who is “not fit” for any renunciation at all, be it Gouna or Mukhya. If one is over-conscious of the body, he can renounce neither desires nor the fruits of action. His body-consciousness prevents him from even considering renunciation as a requirement for his spiritual progress. Indeed, to such a body-centred individual, no spiritual practice is possible.

If one thinks that merely doing rites and rituals, and that, too, with desire for their fruit, is sufficient to entitle him to be known as a Tyagi, he is gravely mistaken. Being yet very attached to his body, and holding on blindly to body-consciousness, he finds it impossible to renounce the fruits of his actions.

**The Tyagi**

**3-4 Sah Tyagi:** In contrast to these body-conscious seekers, there are those who are “true renouncers”. They have set one foot on the path of renunciation by giving up the fruits of action. The minimum qualification to be called a Tyagi is to give up the fruits of actions. When they begin to also give up desire, then the second foot will also be placed on the path. In due course, he develops into a fully-fledged Sattwic Tyagi who has all the qualities described in the previous verse.

**Verse 12: The Non-Tyagi and Tyagi – their Rewards**

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम् ।

भवत्यत्यागिनां प्रेत्य न तु संन्यासिनां क्वचित्

॥ १८-१२॥

aniṣṭamiṣṭam miśraṁ ca trividhaṁ karmaṇaḥ phalam |

bhavatyatyāgināṁ prētya na tu saṁnyāsināṁ kvacit

|| 18-12||

1	<i>Anishtam ishtam mishram cha,</i>	Evil, good and mixed –
2	<i>trividham karmanah phalam;</i>	these threefold fruits of action
3	<i>bhavati atyaaginaam pretya,</i>	accrue, after death, to the <b>“non-Tyagis”</b> ,
4	<i>na tu sannyaasinaam kvachit.</i>	but never to the <b>“Tyagis”</b> .

Here it is clarified what reward each type gets from their respective effort. The two types of seekers just described in verse 11, the Non-Tyagis and the Tyagis, each obtain a different result. This division of the result indicates two totally opposite camps of people.

The Non-Tyagis remain in the realm of transmigration endlessly until such time as it dawns on them that life has a higher purpose. The Tyagis place their first steps on the path that leads them to Liberation from the transmigration.

The former is the path of “Return”; and the latter is the path of “No Return”. Return means coming back to take birth again and again. Non-return means escape or liberation once and for all from the throes of Samsara or worldly existence.

### **The Path for the Non-Tyagis**

**A. Atyaaginaam:** the “Non-Tyagis” – these people, i.e. the body-conscious people who are not able to renounce the fruits of their actions, remain in the realm of transmigration. They may earn Punya to go to heavenly regions, but that is not helpful in any way to come out of Samsara. They remain firmly rooted in “endless sorrow”.

The fruits earned by the Non-Tyagis is threefold. All three relate to Karma:

- i) **Ishtam:** “desirable or good Karma”; “merits”. This gives one a birth in heaven.
- ii) **Anishtam:** “undesirable or bad Karma”; “demerits”. This gives one a birth in hell.
- iii) **Mishram:** “a mixture of good and bad Karma”. This gives one a birth as a human being on earth.

### **The Path for the Tyagis**

**B. Sannyaasinaam:** the “Tyagis” – these people, i.e. the sincere seekers who have at least managed to renounce the fruits of their actions, have placed their first steps on the path that ends ultimately with total freedom from Samsara. These are the people who have correctly resolved, and so the “evil, good and mixed Karmas” do not apply to them. Because of their renunciation, they do not earn any Punya, but in its place they earn Chitta Shuddhi or **purity of mind**.

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## **PREVIEW OF NEXT TWO SECTIONS**

**(with Diagram on Next Page)**

A Diagram follows this page. It covers the main ideas conveyed in the next two sections, namely 18.3 entitled “The Action Team”, and 18.4 entitled “The Mechanics of Action”. These two sections are of crucial importance in taking our understanding of Actions to a deeper, highly refined level.

Since actions are the main area which man is involved in to satisfy all his desires, they are the chief cause of his Bondage to the world. In-depth knowledge of Actions, as given in the next two sections, helps us to untie the knots in action which bind us. If we understand the science of Actions well enough, it can assist us greatly in realising our oneness with the Supreme Reality, the highest Goal of spiritual life.

To say the least, the knowledge that follows does great credit to raise the reputation of the Bhagavad Geeta as a supremely authoratative and scientific scripture. It is very rare to find such an analysis between the covers of a religious scripture amongst the world’s religions. Students will do well to give their full attention to what follows.

We can think of Lord Krishna as the Divine Cook, dishing out the food of knowledge from His divine kitchen. The servings in the next two sections are His choicest dishes.

Enter with hunger – for we are in for a “**Knowledge Bhandara**”, a feast of wisdom from the kitchen of Krishna!



### 18.3 THE FIVE MEMBERS OF THE “ACTION TEAM”

No.	NAME OF COMPONENT		DESCRIPTION & LOCATION		No. Comp.
1	<b>Adhishthaanam</b>	<i>the Seat</i>	<b>Deha</b>	<i>gross body counter (elements)</i>	5
2	<b>Kartaa</b>	<i>the Doer</i>	<b>Ahamkara</b>	<i>the entire “Inner Instrument”</i>	4
3	<b>Karanam</b>	<i>the Cause</i>	<b>Jnanendriyas</b>	<i>Five perceiving Senses</i>	5
4	<b>Cheshtaah</b>	<i>the Functions</i>	<b>Karmendriyas</b>	<i>Five physiological functions</i>	5
5	<b>Daivam</b>	<i>the Deity</i>	<b>The Devas</b>	<i>Five elemental Forces (Pranas)</i>	5
Total no. of Components (the entire <b>Lower Prakriti</b> , see Chap.7)					24

### 18.4 THE MECHANICS OF ACTION



## 18.3 THE “ACTION TEAM”

(Verses 13-17, 5 No.)

**RENUNCIATION AS A SCIENCE** continues to be the topic of discussion. Much has been said about renouncing ‘fruits of action’ as the starting point of **Gouna Renunciation**. Much has also been said about when actions themselves can be renounced, a stage which marks the end point of Gauna renunciation and the beginning of **Mukhya Renunciation**. But we have not yet said anything about the actions themselves.

To make things a little clearer, the Divine Cook has explained when to turn on the heat and when to switch it off, but as yet He has said nothing about what He is cooking. This section takes a good look at what is *inside* the pot!

The Lord now takes a scientific look at the actions themselves. He literally dissects the anatomy of action, and shows us the components that an action is made up of. It does not require much stretching of our imagination to see the need for this. If actions are at the heart of renunciation, we would do well to get to know as much about them as possible. That would make it clearer for us to see what has to be renounced and what can remain untouched. This is the purpose of this section, which may otherwise appear to be sheer technical jargon.

Only to a scientist is knowledge of atoms and electrons meaningful; similarly, only to a sincere spiritual practitioner – who has reached the final Chapter of this absorbing spiritual classic – only to him, is detailed knowledge as what follows meaningful for his spiritual practice. Others may find it to be dry intellectual gymnastics. The warning has been given!

### **Verse 13:** *Introduction to the “Action Team”*

पञ्चैतानि महाबाहो कारणानि निबोध मे ।

साङ्ख्ये कृतान्ते प्रोक्तानि सिद्ध्ये सर्वकर्मणाम्

॥ १८-१३॥

pañcāitāni mahābāhō kāraṇāni nibōdha mē |

sāṅkhye kṛtāntē prōktāni siddhayē sarvakarmaṇām

|| 18-13||

1	<i>Pancha etaani mahaabaaho,</i>	<i>O Mighty-armed, there are these <u>five members</u></i>
2	<i>kaaranaani nibodha me;</i>	<i>of the “<b>Action Team</b>” – learn of them from Me.</i>
3	<i>saankhye kritaante proктаani,</i>	<i>Declared in ‘<b>Saankhya</b>’ as the <u>end of all actions</u>,</i>
4	<i>siddhaye sarva-karmanaam.</i>	<i>they enable one to attain perfection in all actions.</i>

**Saankhye:** “In Sri Kapila’s Saankhya Yoga System”. The source of this enumeration by Sri Krishna is attributed to the Saankhya philosophy. Pujya Gurudev does not find any trace of it there, and concludes that perhaps this thesis has been lost since the time Sri Veda Vyasa composed the Geeta. However, we are fortunate to have this knowledge salvaged within the pages of the Geeta, provided we learn how to de-code it . . .



**3** iv) **Cheshtaah**: The “functions” – the **Karmendriyas** or “organs of action”; at the physiological level; governed by Kriya Shakti or the power to act.

### **AN EXPANSION ON “DEITIES”**

**4** The last component, the Deity, is different for every function performed in the body. In the context of actions, we can take it to refer to the five Deities presiding over the organs of action. The five Deities of the organs of action are as follows: Space is the Deity of the ears; Air is the Deity presiding over the skin; Fire the Deity of the eyes; Water the Deity of the tongue; and Earth the Deity presiding over the nose.

The concept of Presiding Deities has to be understood carefully. The Supreme Reality is a homogenous mass of Consciousness which is all that really exists. Nothing else exists. Whatever we conceive of with our senses is only a superimposition on that Consciousness, and hence it is unreal. When Consciousness associates Itself with various levels of Creation, It gets a different name. We have already come across this cosmic hierarchy in Chapter 15.

At Level 1 is **Brahman**, the unassociated, pure Consciousness.

At Level 2 is **Ishwara 1**, Consciousness associated with Maya, the power of illusion

At Level 3 is **Ishwara 2**, Consciousness associated with Avidya at the causal level.

At Level 4 is **Hiranyagarbha**, Consc’ness associated with Creation at the subtle level.

At Level 5 is **Virat**, Consciousness associated with Creation at the gross level.

The above terms are for associations with the Total Creation. A similar hierarchy is there for the Individual level for each being. Then going even further down, within each being there are a number of functions such as the 10 senses and other physiological functions within the body. Each of these is presided over by a Deity, which is Consciousness associated with the particular function.

In the total human being, the Presence of Brahman is felt as the **Jeeva** or individual consciousness. We experience this Presence only in relation to our own body and mind as a whole, not the body and mind of other beings, nor the individual functions of the different organs. The Jeeva may thus be referred to as the “Ishwara” of the individual body. All the numerous Deities referred to in verse 14, if they are combined and seen as one Deity, that would be the **Jeeva**. What the Jeeva experiences or knows can be multiplied millions of times to get some idea of what Ishwara experiences or knows. Of course, the experience and knowledge of Brahman would be Infinite! From this, we can get some idea of how severe this limitation of bodily adjuncts (Upadhis) can be.

The body Deities may be thought of as the “Hands and Legs” of the Jeeva; in turn, the Jeeva may be thought of as a single *ray* from the Light of Ishwara. In this manner, the human intellect is able to conceive the magnitude of Pure, unassociated Consciousness as being infinite and all-pervading.

Not only do these Deities perform the different functions, but they also keep a watch over our welfare. Obedience to cosmic laws is rewarded with good health, etc; disobedience to them is punished with illnesses, etc.

Finally, the Deities are the means by which all our subconscious desires and tendencies get ‘stored’ into the Akashic records and determine our future births.



		Chapter 13, Verse 6		Verse 7	Chapter 7
No.	GROUP	CONSTITUENTS OF THE KSHETRA		THE NATURE OF KSHETRA	LOWER PRAKRITI
		SANSKRIT	ENGLISH		
1	Antah-karana:	Ahamkara	<i>Egoism</i>	1. THE BODY CONGLOMERATE	8
2		Buddhi	<i>Intellect</i>		7
3		Manas	<i>Mind</i>		6
4		Chitta	<i>Memory</i>		INCLUDED WITH THE SUBTLE ELEMENTS
5	The Pranas:	Prana	<i>Upward</i>		
6		Apana	<i>Downward</i>		
7		Vyana	<i>Circulation</i>		
8		Samana	<i>Assimilation</i>		
9		Udana	<i>Expulsion</i>		
10	Jnana Indriyas:	Shrotra	<i>Ears</i>		
11		Twak	<i>Skin</i>		
12		Chakshuh	<i>Eyes</i>		
13		Jihvaa	<i>Tongue</i>		
14		Ghraana	<i>Nose</i>		
15	Karma Indriyas:	Vaak	<i>Speech</i>		
16		Paani	<i>Hands</i>		
17		Paada	<i>Feet</i>		
18		Paayu	<i>Anus</i>		
19		Upasthaa	<i>Genitals</i>		
20	Subtle Elements:	Aakaasha	<i>Space</i>		1
21		Vaayu	<i>Air</i>		2
22		Agni	<i>Fire</i>		3
23		Aapah	<i>Water</i>		4
24		Prithvee	<i>Earth</i>		5
25	THE REALITY	KSHETRAJNA	INNER SELF		Higher Prakriti
26	Qualities:	Ichhaa	<i>Desire</i>	2	NOT INCLUDED
27		Dveshah	<i>Hatred</i>	3	
28		Sukham	<i>Pleasure</i>	4	
29		Duhkham	<i>Pain</i>	5	
30		Chetanaa	<i>Sentiency</i>	6	
31		Dhritih	<i>Fortitude</i>	7	

**TABLE SHOWING THE CONSTITUENTS OF KSHETRA**

**4 v) Daivam:** The “Deity presiding over a particular bodily function”; the Deities of the five organs of action are the elemental forces. For our purposes, it would be satisfactory to consider them as the **Pranas** which provide the motive power to all functions.

The first member is the gross body made of the 5 gross elements; the next four comprise the 19 components of the subtle body. In all that makes up the 24 components of the Lower Prakriti which is explained in Chap. 7 and repeated in Chap. 13. The Table given in Chapter 13 has been repeated here for ease of reference.

**Verse 15: The Members Apply to Every Action**

शरीरवाङ्मनोभिर्यत्कर्म प्रारभते नरः ।

न्याय्यं वा विपरीतं वा पञ्चैते तस्य हेतवः

॥ १८-१५॥

śarīravāṅmanōbhīryatkarma prārabhatē narah |

nyāyyam vā viparītaṁ vā pañcāitē tasya hētavaḥ

|| 18-15||

1	<i>Shareera-vaang-manobhih yat,</i>	<i>With <u>body</u>, <u>speech</u> and <u>mind</u> – whatever</i>
2	<i>karma praarabhate narah;</i>	<i>action a man performs,</i>
3	<i>nyaayyam vaa vipareetam vaa,</i>	<i>whether <u>lawful</u> or <u>contrary</u> to law,</i>
4	<i>pancha ete tasya hetavah.</i>	<i>these <u>five components</u> are its <b>Cause</b>.</i>

The above five members, as we have already stated, make up every single action that is performed. This is re-stated here for clarity. Note the care that the Teacher is taking.

**1-2** The Lord stipulates what He means by “all actions”. It covers everything done with the body, speech and the mind, i.e. thought, word and deed are counted as actions. Even a thought is equivalent to an ‘action’ at the mental level.

**3-4** Further to the above, in order to avoid all ambiguity, the Lord stipulates that “all actions” includes the right and the wrong, the good and the bad, i.e actions are neutral.

**Verse 16: Who is Missing in the Team?**

तत्रैवं सति कर्तारमात्मानं केवलं तु यः ।

पश्यत्यकृतबुद्धित्वान्न स पश्यति दुर्मतिः

॥ १८-१६॥

tatraivaṁ sati kartāramātmānaṁ kēvalaṁ tu yaḥ |

paśyatyakṛtabuddhitvānna sa paśyati durmatih

|| 18-16||

1	<i>Tatra evam sati kartaaram,</i>	<i>Now this being the case, to attribute action</i>
2	<i>aatmanam kevalam tu yah;</i>	<i>to the <b>Supreme Self</b> – indeed, only he who is of</i>
3	<i>pashyati akrita buddhitvaat,</i>	<i><u>untrained</u> understanding may make this error.</i>
4	<i>na sah pashyati durmatih.</i>	<i>He, of <u>perverted</u> intelligence, does not really see!</i>

**1** Now the whole point of describing these five members is not so much to tell us who are in the Team, but rather who has been left out of the Team! There is one Player who is conspicuous by His absence. You may have guessed correctly by now.

**2** The Supreme Self, the Atman indwelling the human heart, the core of his being, the pure, pristine Reality is unaffected by actions. Yes, He does not feature among the five members of the “Action Team”. He has nothing to do with these actions. He remains aloof from, untouched by, and uninvolved in them. Earlier it was said, “It is the Gunas that act amongst the Gunas. I have nothing to do with actions.”

**3-4** If we cannot see that, we really are not seeing! We must be blind. We must be the ones of “*untrained understanding*” and “*perverted intelligence*” who do not see the Supreme’s aloofness, and falsely attribute ‘doership’ to Him.

### **The Big Lesson of Akartritva or “Non-doership”**

The Lord’s indictment is not, of course, made in anger to make us feel bad about ourselves. He is trying to teach us to be careful not to attribute our actions to the Supreme Self within. In fact, He really wants us to know that our true self is that Supreme Self, not the fictitious Jeeva which is associated with the body and mind. In this sense, we are really no different from Him who is Brahman Himself. The indwelling Atman is no different from Brahman, the Reality. That is the great lesson the Lord wants us to learn.

It’s a big lesson, and the Lord has to teach it before He closes this long dialogue. He is now taking us to the climax of His Teaching, and making us clearly see who He is and who we really are; that ***we are non-different from Him***; that like Him we are also expected to be detached from our actions. The moment we see this truth, He can end the Geeta. It will also be the end of “*Actions*” once and for all. Never again will we feel that we are acting; for we would feel instead that the “Gunās as the senses are acting through the Gunās as the body”!

This means that we perform actions as though we are just observing them being done by “someone else”! That is precisely what is meant by Akartritva Bhava.

### **Verse 17: Untainted & Unbound by Actions**

यस्य नाहङ्कृतो भावो बुद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते ।  
हत्वाऽपि स इमाँल्लोकान्न हन्ति न निबध्यते ॥ १८-१७॥

yasya nāhaṅkṛtō bhāvō buddhiryasya na lipyatē |  
hatvā:pi sa imāṁlōkānna hanti na nibadhyatē ॥ 18-17॥

1	<i>Yasya na ahamkritah bhaavah,</i>	<i>He who is free from the egoistic notion;</i>
2	<i>buddhih yasya na lipyate;</i>	<i>whose intelligence is not tainted;</i>
3	<i>hatvaa api sah imaan lokaan,</i>	<i>even though he slays these people, such a one</i>
4	<i>na hanti na nibadhyate.</i>	<i>neither slays (in reality), nor is he bound.</i>

There are many advantages in practising and experiencing for ourselves what the Lord is trying to teach us. This verse brings out the gist of the benefit to be gained by having the Akartritva Bhava in day-to-day activities.

### **The End of the “Ego-Notion’s” Reign**

**1 Yasya:** This is the person we are speaking of in this verse. Who is he? He is the one who recognizes that the real ‘he’ is not any of the five causes of all his actions. At once that fact alone separates him from his actions. And being separated from them means that he

also separates himself from his Ego. For it is the 'doership' that is a sign of the ego. If doership is removed, one stands face to face with the might of his own ego, perhaps facing its wrath for ousting it from its former position of power!

And so, very swiftly the Lord is pressing forward to bring us to an awareness of the falsity of our ego. He has worked hard at it in seventeen discourses. Now the time has come to drive the point home and bring us to face the truth of who we are in reality.

The Ego once thrived in being in charge of every aspect of our personality. It claimed rulership over every thought, every word and every deed that expressed itself through this body. It functioned as the boss of this individual human being. Now the truth has to be asserted. Our true Self is to be reinstated as the boss! The ego has to be made subservient to It. The ego, too, is just one of the instruments used by the Jeeva to gather experiences to itself. There should be no special treatment given to it. Like the mind, intellect, senses, etc, the ego is seen to be just another "worker" in this body factory.

Thus we are shown the way to end our enslavement to our ego. Mr Ego is no longer the CEO!

### **The Recovery of the Intellect**

**2** The intellect of the ignorant man suffers from one serious disease. It is paralysed by delusion, something that is out of its control. Maya, the illusory power of Brahman, is responsible for that. She has somehow built into the intellect a flaw by which the reflection of consciousness in the intellect is seen as the Consciousness itself. A reflection is taken to be actual. This is the "taint" spoken of here.

That single taint in the intellect has been duplicated in every single thought that arises in our mind. The "untainted intellect" is the one which has realised this foul-play of Maya, and learnt to undo the mischief She has done in the intellect, the very core of our being. When we are able to separate ourselves from our ego, then alone can our intellect be freed from this taint. Then alone can it look at itself impartially and recognise what has happened while it was under the sway of the Ego.

**3-4** The moment the flaw in the intellect is recognised, the solution to the human predicament becomes clearly apparent. The sense of "doership" becomes the first casualty. That immediately compels us to review our relationship to all our actions. The true relationship, when it dawns upon us, gives us freedom from our own actions which used to bind us until then. Now that binding power is lost. Under the "New Management" of the Self, the intellect sees actions in a different way. It can now sanction them in the light of a higher vision of life. What appeared distasteful before now appears the proper thing to do.

Arjuna's delusion in Chapter 1 gets corrected in the light of this new knowledge in Chapter 18. Gone is his delusion once and for all. This is the essential meaning of this line.

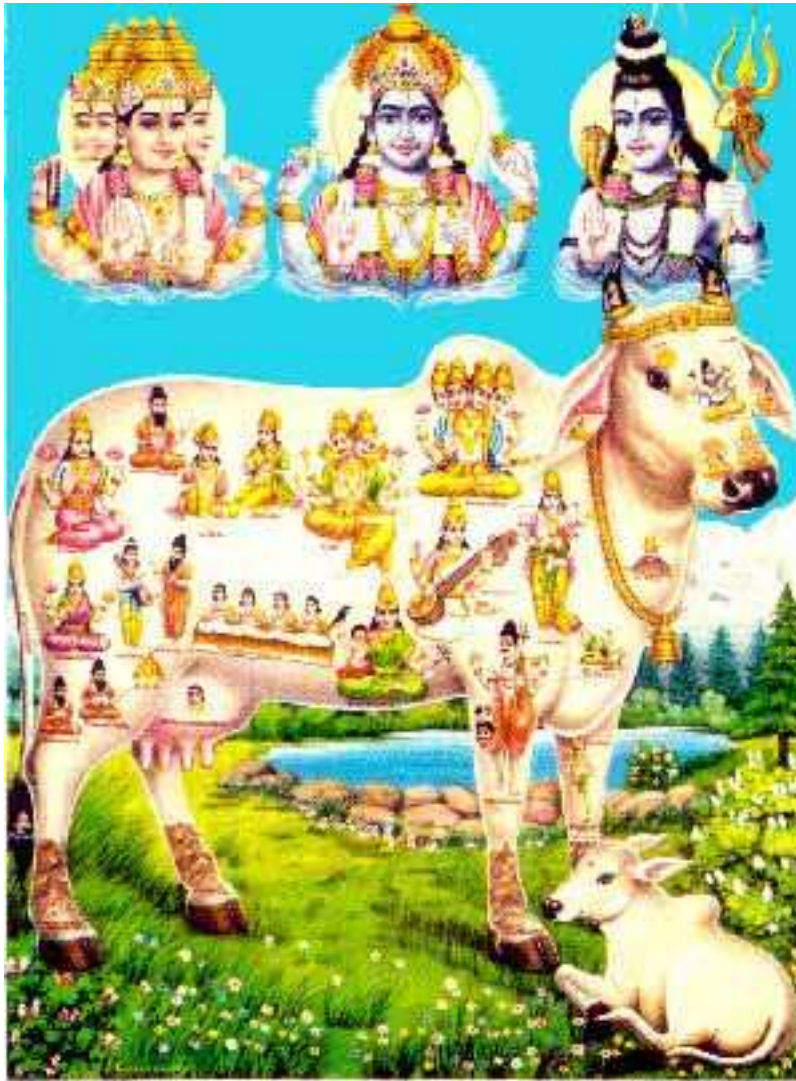
The literal meaning could give rise to many misconceptions about this verse. It could fuel many controversies about the issue of non-violence. However, in a nutshell, it is stating the freedom one experiences from not being a slave to delusion any longer. Delusion made us once think that we were the 'doer of actions. Now that sense of doership has been removed. Arjuna can now perform his duty on the battlefield with a clear conscience.

"Though I slay them" is to be understood from the empirical standpoint, the worldly view. "I slay not" is from the Paramarthic or Absolute standpoint. By seeing this truth behind actions, we remain free of the taint attached to our actions. And by remaining untainted, we

are also unbound by them. This is the secret of acting without incurring any Karma – it is the secret of working with the Akartritwa Bhava, the feeling that “I do nothing.”

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*Can this particular cow,  
which has the Lord stamped on every part of its body,  
ever think of itself as being the 'Doer' of its actions?*



## 18.4 THE MECHANICS OF ACTION

(Verses 18-28, 11 No.)

**D**IFFERENTIATION OF THE three Gunas under various categories resumes in this section. Categories can be differentiated having different purposes in mind:

In Chapter 14, the purpose was to show the general characteristics of each Guna. In Chapter 17, the purpose was to show the Sadhana that had to be done for one to progress from Tamas to Rajas and then from Rajas to Sattwa. For this purpose the categories selected for analysis were faith, foods, sacrifice, austerity and charity.

Now in Chapter 18, the purpose is to show that realisation of the Self *transcends* the Gunas. The Nirgunatva ('Guna-lessness') of the Atman is the current purpose. In this section, the categories chosen are knowledge, actions and agents. They are analysed to show that the Self is not involved in them and is beyond them. Later in the Chapter, other factors will be considered such as intellect, fortitude and joy, showing how they vary with the Gunas.

In this section we begin a novel study of Actions. We take a deep look at the Mechanics of Action. We have seen the five players that the "Action Team" is made up of. Now we shall look at how the 'game of life' is played, what the *game-plan* is, and how we can emerge victorious in this game by understanding all the rules.

It is amazing to note how meticulous in his presentation Veda Vyasa ji has been!

### **Verse 18:** *Threefold Impulse & Necessities of Action*

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं परिज्ञाता त्रिविधा कर्मचोदना ।

करणं कर्म कर्तेति त्रिविधः कर्मसङ्ग्रहः

॥ १८-१८॥

jñānam jñeyam parijñātā trividhā karmacōdanā |

karaṇam karma kartēti trividhaḥ karmasaṅgrahaḥ

|| 18-18||

1	<i>Jnaanam jneyam pari-jnaataa,</i>	<i>Knowledge, the Knowable, and the Knower –</i>
2	<i>trividhaa karma-chodanaa;</i>	<i>these form the threefold "Impulse" to action.</i>
3	<i>karanam karma kartaa iti,</i>	<i>The organs, the action, and the agent –</i>
4	<i>trividhah karma sangrahaah.</i>	<i>these form the threefold "Necessities" of action.</i>

An engineering project is split into two distinct spheres of activity; there is the *Design* sphere and there is the *Construction* sphere. Similarly, in a football team the players are divided into two distinct roles; there are players who *defend* their goal and there are players who *attack* the opposition's goal. Both roles are needed to make up the team.

In the same way, for the "Action Team", there are six roles, grouped into two main categories, namely **Karma Chodana** and **Karma Sangrahaah**. The first provides the *impulse* to act, and the second provides the *necessities* with which to act. There are three roles in each category. Ideally, all five players must learn all the six roles. But each player will specialise in one or two particular roles. Some are made *to inspire* (provide the impulse), and others are

made *to execute* the activity. The captain, the Ego, has to be proficient in both roles so that he can lead the whole team as one unit.

Let us re-cap the players in the team, so that we can assign a main role to them. The table below shows one major role and one sub-role for each member of the team, bearing in mind that each player partakes of all the six roles. Only the captain, the Doer, is given two roles. This is just to convey some idea of how the game of life is organised and has to be played:

TEAM MEMBER			MAJOR ROLE	SUB-ROLE
1	<b>Adhishthaanam – Deha</b>	<b>Seat –</b> <i>gross body counter</i>	<b>Karma Sangraha</b>	5. Karma
2	<b>Kartaa – Ahamkara</b>	<b>Doer –</b> <i>“inner instrument”</i>	<b>Karma Chodana</b> <b>Karma Sangraha</b>	3. Jnaataa 6. Kartaa
3	<b>Karanam – Jnanendriyas</b>	<b>Cause –</b> <i>perceiving senses</i>	<b>Karma Chodana</b>	1. Jnaanam
4	<b>Cheshtaah – Karmendriyas</b>	<b>Functions –</b> <i>physiological functions.</i>	<b>Karma Sangraha</b>	4. Karanam
5	<b>Daivam – The Devas</b>	<b>Deity –</b> <i>Elemental Forces</i>	<b>Karma Chodana</b>	2. Jneyam

## **A. KARMA CHODANA**

### **The “IMPULSE” to Action**

Every Action has to have a spark or impulse to initiate it. This spark is provide in one of three ways.

- i) The **Jnaataa** is the *knower* who has a desire which acts as a spark to ignite action.
- ii) The **Jneyam** is the *known* object which produces the temptation to spark desire.
- iii) The **Jnanam** is the *knowledge* of previous similar experiences which provides the memories that spark off desire.

### **Primary and Secondary Impulses**

A *primary impulse* is the knowledge, “*I am hungry*”. This leads me to the *primary action*, which is the Karma, “*I take food*”. How to cook the food and what ingredients to use are secondary knowledge and action, which are subservient to the primary knowledge.

A primary impulse can be the knowledge “*I want to go to heaven.*” This will necessitate the action “*I must do a Yajna*”. How to do the Yajna is not included in this knowledge, only the primary impulse to the action is called Jnana. The details of how to do the Yajna, what Mantras to chant, the utensils to be used, etc., are the secondary knowledge and secondary actions.

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## **B. KARMA SANGRAHAH**

This major category concerns all that forms the Necessities of Actions, which can also be known as the Field of Actions. It also consists of three roles:

i) The **Karanam** refers to the necessary equipment or instrument(s) needed to do the work or action.

ii) The **Karma** is the action itself. It can also be the reaction, in which case it is called the ‘fruit of action’. Sri Shankaracharyaji prefers the latter meaning, as the fruit of an action is always kept in mind as an incentive to do the action.

iii) The **Kartaa** is the Doer who is doing the Action. This refers to the Ego personality which is the Doer in the case of an ignorant being.

### **Inter-relationships Between Karma Chodana and Karma Sangraha**

The **Kartaa** manages all the **Karakas** or the **Karanam** in order to perform the **Karma** (also called **Kriya**).

The **Karma** is done according to the vision, i.e. the **Jnana**.

The **Karanam** or instrument for the **Karma** is selected according to the **Jneyam**, the knowledge of the object in the mind of the actor.

The **Karta** and the **Jnaataa** will generally be the same person, but in a big project, this may not be so. The designer and the contractor are usually two separate organisations, separate even from the customer. In personal actions, all three can be the same person.

### **Verse 19: Knowledge, Action & Agent**

ज्ञानं कर्म च कर्ता च त्रिधैव गुणभेदतः ।

प्रोच्यते गुणसङ्ख्याने यथावच्छृणु तान्यपि

॥ १८-१९॥

jñānaṁ karma ca kartā ca tridhaiva guṇabhēdataḥ |

prōcyatē guṇasaṅkhyānē yathāvacchṛṇu tānyapi

|| 18-19||

1	<i>Jnaanam karma cha kartaa cha,</i>	<i>Knowledge, action and the agent –</i>
2	<i>tridhaa eva guna-bhedatah;</i>	<i>are of three kinds only, according to the Gunas.</i>
3	<i>prochyate guna-samkhyane,</i>	<i>This is declared in the science of the Saankhyans.</i>
4	<i>yathaavat shrinu taani api.</i>	<i>Duly do thou hear of them also:</i>

**1** Items 1, 5 and 6 of the six roles are Jnanam, Karma and Kartaa. The remaining three can be included under these as the Upalakshana or representatives.

**Jnana** becomes a representative (Upalakshana) for **Jneyam** and **Jnaataa**.

**Karma** becomes a representative for **Karanam**, the instruments of action.

**Kartaa** then stands on its own as the sixth role.

**2** The three that are listed in the verse, are followed up from the next verse onwards with a detailed breakdown of them according to the three Gunas.

**3-4** All this enumeration and classification is attributed to the Saankhya school of thought, as mentioned at the very outset in verse 13.

**(Verses 20-22, 3 No.)**

**Verse 20:**      *Sattwic Knowledge*

॥ १८-२०॥

|| 18-20||

## The Sattwic Jnana or Vision

- Verse 21:**      *Rajasic Knowledge*

॥ १८-२१॥

|| 18-21 ||

## The Rajasic Knowledge or Vision

i) He will try to see differences even where there are none.

ii) His vision is to differentiate on the basis of some quality or the other, and then to view the different parts as opposing each other.

iii) He will sow the seeds of disharmony in a group rather than blend people together. This is the typical nature of Rajasic knowledge or vision.

**Verse 22: *Tamasic Knowledge***

यत्तु कृत्स्नवदेकस्मिन्कार्ये सक्तमहैतुकम् ।

अतत्त्वार्थवदल्पं च तत्तामसमुदाहृतम्

॥ १८-२२॥

yattu kṛtsnavadēkasminkāryē saktamahaitukam |

atattvārthavadalpaṁ ca tattāmasamudāhṛtam

|| 18-22||

1	<i>Yat tu kṛtsnavat ekasmin,</i>	But “ <i>Seeing one part as the whole</i> ” – that which
2	<i>kaarye saktam ahaitukam;</i>	<i>gets attached to just the effect without its cause,</i>
3	<i>atattwa arthavat alpam cha,</i>	<i>without any foundation in truth, and narrow;</i>
4	<i>tat taamasam udaahritam.</i>	<i>that knowledge is declared to be <b>Tamasic</b>.</i>

**APPLICATION OF ABOVE BREAKDOWN**

Under the section on “The Mechanics of Action”, we learnt that **Karma Chodana** is what provides the “Impulse” to act in a certain way. Jnaanam is the experience or knowledge which brings forth memories of a particular desire. That memory then sparks off or ‘inflames’ the doer to act in such a manner that the desire soon gets satisfied through enjoyment.

Verses 20-22 tell us that the impulse towards action could be of three different types, even though the knowledge gathered from an experience may be the same. This means that three different people – one Sattwic, one Rajasic and one Tamasic – may be seeing the same occurrence, having the same experience of a particular object, yet their knowledge gained from that experience could be totally different, even to the extent of being the very opposite in nature.

The Sattwic man will have an integrated knowledge, the Rajasic man will have a differentiated knowledge, and the Tamasic man will have a completely opposite knowledge from that of the Sattwic man.

This being the case, all three persons will act under a different “impulse” even though what they see or hear is the same. The response of a person to an event depends solely on his own nature – whether it is Sattwic, Rajasic or Tamasic. To an independent wise observer, it is possible to deduce the nature of a man simply by taking note of his response to an fixed external event.

In this way the Geeta gives us a powerful tool to assess not only our own experience but also that of others. However, until we become wise, it is better to assess our own only!



### The Tamasic Knowledge or Vision

This is a very strange vision:

- i) The Tamasic, being completely clouded in his understanding, will get hold of one idea, and think that it is the only idea that exists.
- ii) He sees the effect and takes it for the truth without any reference to its cause. Only what is in front of his eyes is the only truth; nothing else exists for him.
- iii) His vision is characterized by narrow-mindedness and falsity.

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### TYPES OF ACTION (KARMA)

(Verses 23-25, 3 No.)

ONE'S VISION DETERMINES one's action. That is what we have just seen. Keeping that variation in mind, we now undertake to see how an action also varies depending on the Guna that is predominant in a person. We are going to analyse the threefold breakdown of an Action in three types of agents – one Sattwic, one Rajasic and one Tamasic.

This is going to be interesting. A single, known experience has already produced three different reactions in three different people. These three people report their experience to three other people of different Gunas. In the second set of three persons each receives three different reports and responds differently to each report. Thus, the same experience now produces nine different responses. What we get is becoming more and more unpredictable!

A general observation is that action cannot be judged from the externals, although it is very tempting to do so. It is tempting to say that meditation and quietness are Sattwic; in the wrong hands they could be the most Tamasic actions. Similarly, we think doing nothing is a Tamasic sign; it may not be. The greatest of thinkers appeared to be “doing nothing”.

One has to look at the intentions and inner qualities that propel the action. That is what determines which category an action falls into.

Let us now look at how three different people respond, assuming that somehow the “impulse” is the same in all three of them . . .

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#### Verse 23:     *Sattwic Action*

नियतं सङ्गरहितमरागद्वेषतः कृतम् ।

अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत्तत्सात्त्विकमुच्यते

॥ १८-२३॥

niyataṁ saṅgarahitamarāgadvēṣataḥ kṛtaṁ |

aphalaprepsunā karma yattatsāttvikamucyate

|| 18-23||

1	<i>Niyatam sangar-rahitam,</i>	<sup>1</sup> Daily obligatory actions, free from <sup>2</sup> attachment;
2	<i>araaga-deshatah kritam;</i>	performed without <sup>3</sup> likes and dislikes;
3	<i>aphala-prepsunaa karma,</i>	by one who does not hanker for <sup>4</sup> rewards –
4	<i>yat tat saattwikam uchyate.</i>	that action is said to be born of <b>Sattwa</b> .

### **Main Features in Sattwic Action**

- i) The action done by a Sattwic agent is always Nitya (ordained by scripture). He will not involve himself in any act that is Nishiddha (prohibited) or Kamya (desire-ridden).
- ii) Because it is an obligatory duty, the action is devoid of attachment. It is not motivated by any selfish desire. For this reason, the act is bound to be straightforward and transparent. There is the legitimate desire to earn an honest livelihood.
- iii) The action is not governed by likes and dislikes. When duty is uppermost in mind, comfort or discomfort is not a consideration. When a thing has to be done because it is a duty, likes and dislikes do not become a defining characteristic of the action.
- iv) There is the legitimate desire to earn an honest livelihood. When love is the main motive behind the work, one is freed from thoughts of hankering after rewards.
- 

### **Verse 24: Rajasic Action**

यत्तु कामेप्सुना कर्म साहङ्कारेण वा पुनः ।  
क्रियते बहुलायासं तद्राजसमुदाहृतम् ॥ १८-२४॥  
yattu kāmēpsunā karma sāhaṅkāreṇa vā punaḥ |  
kriyatē bahuḷāyāsaṁ tadrājasamudāhṛtam ॥ 18-24॥

1	<i>Yat tu kaamepsunaa karma,</i>	<i>But that which is done by one desirous of<sup>1</sup> results;</i>
2	<i>saahamkaarena vaa punah;</i>	<i>or by one who is <sup>2</sup>egoistic and <sup>3</sup>selfish;</i>
3	<i>kriyate bahuḷaayaasam,</i>	<i>and which is performed with <sup>4</sup>strenuous effort;</i>
4	<i>tat raajasam udaahritam.</i>	<i>that action is said to be born of <b>Rajas</b>.</i>

### **Main Features in Rajasic Action:**

- i) The Rajasic act has the opposite qualities of the Sattwic act. As it is done with a desire for the results rather than with a sense of duty, there is no love accompanying the act. Naturally, such an act is filled instead with dishonesty, crookedness and commercialism.
- ii) Again, where there is no spirit of service, the Rajasic act has a strong scent of egoism and selfishness in it. The attitude is, “What is there in it for me?” The approach is not, “What can I do for you?” but “What can I do you for?”
- iii) There is a lot of “strenuous effort” in Rajasic action. As there is greed for more profit, there is great haste in the action. The person’s brow is always creased. He gets stressed out, and takes pride in that fact. The work does not flow smoothly. Stress creates many imaginary problems, and one has to work ‘harder’ to iron them out!
- 

### **Verse 25: Tamasic Action**

अनुबन्धं क्षयं हिंसामनपेक्ष्य च पौरुषम् ।  
मोहादारभ्यते कर्म यत्तत्तामसमुच्यते ॥ १८-२५॥  
anubandhaṁ kṣayaṁ hiṁsāmanapēkṣya ca pauruṣam |  
mōhādārabhyatē karma yattattāmasamucyātē ॥ 18-25॥

1	<i>Anubandham kshayam himsaam,</i>	For <sup>1</sup> consequences, <sup>2</sup> loss or <sup>3</sup> injury;
2	<i>anapekshya cha paurusham;</i>	without regard for these as well as one's <sup>4</sup> capacity;
3	<i>mohaata aarabhyate karma,</i>	the action undertaken purely out of <sup>5</sup> delusion;
4	<i>yat tat taamasam uchyate.</i>	that action is said to be born of <b>Tamas</b> .

### **Main Features of Tamasic Action:**

i) Important considerations are disregarded in the following matters:

a. He pays no attention to the consequences that his actions will have on others. The Tamasic act brings sorrow to all around, especially when the Tamasic man is in charge.

b. Tamasic acts are unmindful of the losses they will incur, be it financial or of one's reputation. There is heedlessness, idleness and dullness in the action. The action only sees to short-term gain, but incurs long-term losses. Others suffer loss and injury due to it.

c. Tamasic action is undertaken without properly assessing one's capacity for it.

ii) The action is clouded by delusion, it is demeaning to one's dignity and status. The action is abandoned before completion, slothfully done; and never finished on time.

## **TYPES OF AGENT (KARTAA)**

(Verses 26-28, 3 No.)

**ACTION IS THE SEED** sown; the Agent is the harvest reaped. There is a spiralling cause and effect relationship between actions done and what one reaps from it. This section focuses on the agent – how he is affected by the actions that he has sown. It tells us more about the person that is produced by actions.

An action is judged by how it affects others, including the doer of the action himself. In the description of actions just given, we see their impact on other people. In this section the description is given of the qualities behind those actions. It answers the question, What kind of person is it that does the action just described?

Naturally, we can expect a close correlation between the description of, say, a Rajasic action and a Rajasic agent. As is the agent, so is the action he produces. Therefore, students may wonder what the difference is between the descriptions of the two. A careful look at the verses will reveal that the present section gives a more accurate picture of the inner personality of the agent, which the previous section did not reveal.

### **Verse 26: Sattwic Agent**

मुक्तसङ्गोऽनहंवादी धृत्युत्साहसमन्वितः ।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योर्निर्विकारः कर्ता सात्त्विक उच्यते

॥ १८-२६॥

muktasaṅgō:'nahaṁvādī dhṛtyutsāhasamanvitaḥ |

siddhyasiddhyōrnirvikāraḥ kartā sāttvika ucyatē

|| 18-26||

1	<i>Mukta sangah anaham-vaadee,</i>	Free from <sup>1</sup> attachment, not <sup>2</sup> egoistic;
2	<i>dhriti utsaaha samanvitaḥ;</i>	endowed with <sup>3</sup> fortitude and <sup>4</sup> diligence;

3	<i>siddhi asiddhyoh nirvikaarah,</i>	<sup>5</sup> <i>unperturbed by success and failure;</i>
4	<i>kartaa saattwika uchyate.</i>	<i>such an agent is said to be <b>Sattwic</b>.</i>

#### Main Features in a Sattwic Agent:

i) The first striking quality in the Sattwic agent is his freedom from **attachment**. Attachment and repulsion arise from likes and dislikes, and these are absent in him. He feels joy in the action itself, without getting attached to it.

ii) He is not **egoistic**. He never places himself at the centre.

iii) **Fortitude** is a Sattwic quality. Acharyaji mentioned the saying, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” But then, he added, with a twinkle, an interpretation all his own: “When the going gets tough, hold on! – the toughness will get going.” (This means that it will leave when it finds that one resists it with fortitude).”

iv) Then there is **diligence**. An enthusiastic person is always surrounded by people. Pujya Gurudev was an embodiment of enthusiasm, despite seeing so many failures in life. Even when the Mission was collapsing, he ever remained smiling and continued undiscouraged. His cheerfulness in such circumstances was magnetic – it held all the co-workers together to pull through the low tide of events.

v) The above example illustrates this point as well. Being *unperturbed* in success and failure is possible when Tamas and Rajas are not present. It is the proof of Sattwa.

#### Verse 27: *Rajasic Agent*

रागी कर्मफलप्रेप्सुर्लुब्धो हिंसात्मकोऽशुचिः ।

हर्षशोकान्वितः कर्ता राजसः परिकीर्तितः

॥ १८-२७॥

*rāgī karmaphalaprēpsurlubdhō himsātmakō:'śuciḥ |*

*harṣaśōkānvitaḥ kartā rājasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ*

|| 18-27||

1	<i>Raagee karma phala-prepsuh,</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>Passionate, desirous of the</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>result of action;</i>
2	<i>lubdhah himsaatmakah ashuchih;</i>	<sup>3</sup> <i>covetous,</i> <sup>4</sup> <i>cruel by nature, and</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>impure;</i>
3	<i>harsha shokaan-vitah kartaa,</i>	<i>very</i> <sup>6</sup> <i>moody – that agent</i>
4	<i>raajasah pari-keertitah.</i>	<i>is declared to be possessed of <b>Rajas</b>.</i>

#### Main Features in a Rajasic Agent:

i) **Passionate** – this single trait leads all the rest in a Rajasic agent.

ii) The Rajasic agent works only if there is something to *gain* out of it. Hence his mind is never truly in his work. It is splintered or fragmented.

iii) **Greedy** or **covetous**: he is not willing to give away his own, and more than willing to take away another's.

iv) He can be quite **cruel** in pursuing his goal. He seeks the last drop from people. He is a “slave-driver”, extracting work from others unjustly, without due compensation.

v) **Impurity** taints his action. There is something secretive about it that he does not want others to know. The impurity is seen by a lack of transparency in his actions.

vi) **Moody** is a fitting description of this agent. His mood bobs up and down like a cork on the waves. This denotes a preoccupation with superficials, a lack of depth.

Acharyaji suggested that the best way of controlling mood swings is to have some useful hobby, through which excess bottled up energy can be channelled. He suggested hobbies such as good music, books, long walks, watching the birds – something relaxing, but not tainting to the mind.

Being in sadness for too long is not a healthy sign, nor is it good to be always excited about things. These are clear signs of a Rajasic agent.

### **Verse 28: Tamasic Agent**

अयुक्तः प्राकृतः स्तब्धः शठो नैष्कृतिकोऽलसः ।

विषादी दीर्घसूत्री च कर्ता तामस उच्यते

॥ १८-२८॥

ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭhō naiṣkṛtikō'lasaḥ |

viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyatē

॥ 18-28॥

1	<i>Ayuktaḥ praakritah stabdhah,</i>	<sup>1</sup> Unsteady, <sup>2</sup> naïve, <sup>3</sup> unbending;
2	<i>shathah naishkritikah alasaḥ;</i>	<sup>4</sup> deceitful, <sup>5</sup> wicked, and <sup>6</sup> lazy;
3	<i>vishaadee deergha-sootree cha,</i>	<sup>7</sup> morose and <sup>8</sup> procrastinating;
4	<i>kartaa taamasah uchyate.</i>	such an agent is said to be <b>Tamasic</b> .

### **Main Features in a Tamasic Agent:**

Whilst the previous two are focused on their work, the Tamasic agent is most certainly not.

i) **Unsteady** – he has numerous distractions, and a totally fickle mind.

ii) **Naïve** – this is a vulgar and uncultured person.

iii) **Unbending** – one who is not open to change. He is like a stick – it will break but it will not bend. Some even take this as a compliment!

iv) **Deceitful** – this is the cheat, the rascal. The word “rascal” has stood the test of time in expressing annoyance. “Fool” and “Idiot” have become a bit outdated and may not guarantee a reaction from someone, but ‘rascal’ will surely arouse a person. Acharyaji said that even Sanskrit does not have such an effective word as ‘rascal’. A dubious compliment to English!

v) **Wicked** – this is the person who delights in destroying the livelihood of others. The Tamasic agent can be quiet malicious. When he has to recover his money, he will not hesitate to throw the other person in the gutter. He will not allow the person even to survive, but see to it that he is destroyed completely. Profound wickedness is a character of a true Tamasic “Deity”!

vi) **Lazy** – even when something urgent has to be done, he cares not. Exams may be nearing, but he will be wasting his time on movies or computer games. This is not just for the sake of relaxing, but out of laziness. Just sleeping is very enjoyable to the Tamasic. The alarm will ring, but the Tamasic person sleeps through it. Even if it is only five minutes to go before class begins, the Tamasic man thinks, “I can still snatch a few more winks.”



vii) **Morose** – Acharyaji called such a person an Avatara of wretchedness and sadness – always showing a sad look. If someone asks, “How are you?” he says, “Oh, terrible!” His sadness is so contagious that happy people are afraid of going near him!

Acharyaji’s solution was that he should join a Laughing Club. Keep laughing. One should never seek attention for being sad.

viii) Procrastinating – this word can have two meanings:

a. More commonly it means one who drags his feet in doing anything. He just does not get down to doing what he has to.

b. The less common meaning is that he can go on talking about ‘Nothing’. He does not care how boring he may be to others, but he is happy to go on lengthening his conversation on the same old pet subject.

Such a person is basically undecided. Even to take a glass of water to a dying person he will have a number of excuses why he should not do it.

Acharyaji’s summing up of such a Tamasic agent was – “a Super-Idiot!”

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## 18.5 INTELLECT, FORTITUDE & JOY

(Verse 29-39, 11 No.)

**W**HAT HAS INTELLECT and fortitude to do with the previous subject of knowledge and Action? Is there a link? Yes, a very close one, too. Knowledge is revealed by **Intellect** in more or less the same way as Action is materialised due to **Fortitude**. Here is how:

### Jnana & Buddhi (Knowledge & Intellect):

Jnana gives a vision of life. The foremost instrument used in formulating that vision is the Buddhi. We may say that Buddhi is the spearhead of Jnana. Jnana is the vision, and Buddhi gives shape and clarity to that vision. Buddhi is the chief ‘whip’ of Jnana.

### Karma & Dhriti (Action & Fortitude):

Similarly, Karma aims to materialise the vision of Jnana. In the factory of Karma, the manager is Dhriti. Dhriti oversees the executive functions that make the factory run smoothly and profitably. Looked at this way, we see that Dhriti is the prop of all Karma.

What Buddhi is to Jnana, Dhriti is to Karma. Buddhi is the captain of **Karma Chodana**; and Dhriti is the captain of **Karma Sangraha**. The first is vital for sustaining one’s Vision in life; the second ensures that it materialises by carrying it to the very end. Clearly, there is the need for a Sattwic **Buddhi** and a Sattwic **Dhriti**.

We have already discussed the threefold categories of Jnana and Karma. In fact, those characteristics are mainly due to the efforts of Buddhi and Dhriti, their respective captains. Buddhi and Dhriti usher in the practical sides of the theory of Jnana and Karma.

The fact that all these come under the threefold division of the Gunas is very significant. The point that is really being brought out is this: The Self, which is nowhere in the picture so far, is NOT under the control of the Gunas. This is the main point running through this discussion. Knowledge and Action, however important a role they have in the life of man, are both part of Prakriti or the “Not Self”. The Spirit is separate from them.

### Verse 29: Intellect & Fortitude

बुद्धेर्भेदं धृतेश्चैव गुणतस्त्रिविधं शृणु ।

प्रोच्यमानमशेषेण पृथक्त्वेन धनञ्जय

॥ १८-२९॥

buddhērbhēdaṁ dhṛtēścaiva guṇatastrividhaṁ śṛṇu |

prōcyamānamasēṣēṇa pṛthaktvēna dhanañjaya

|| 18-29||

1	<i>Buddheh bhedaṁ dhriteh cha eva,</i>	<i>The classification of <b>intellect</b> and <b>fortitude</b>;</i>
2	<i>gunatah trividham shrunu;</i>	<i>is <u>threefold</u> according to <u>Gunas</u> – listen to it</i>
3	<i>prochya-maanam asheshena,</i>	<i>as I declare them <u>elaborately</u></i>
4	<i>prithak-twena dhananjaya.</i>	<i>and <u>severally</u>, O Dhananjaya.</i>

**1-2** The threefold categories of **Buddhi** and **Dhriti** are to be discussed hereafter. Jnana and Karma are given a practical turn through focussing on Buddhi and Dhriti. This is what the Geeta teaching is heading towards.

**3-4 Asheshana** means that the discussion is going to go into great detail in every aspect. **Prithaktvena** means that the differentiation of the subject into the three Gunas is going to be done in great detail.

The term Dhananjaya for Arjuna is very significant: Arjuna had played a major role in the Rajasuya sacrifice that Yudhishtira had arranged, in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the Pandavas' exile. As a result of this he was instrumental in bringing large amounts of wealth into the coffers of the Kingdom. Thus he was named Dhananjaya.

Sri Krishna is about to tell him the secret of acquiring large amounts of spiritual wealth, through cultivating a Sattwic Buddhi and Sattwic Dhriti.

## **TYPES OF INTELLECT (BUDDHI)**

(Verses 30-32, 3 No.)

The general differentiation of the intellect is as follows: The Sattwic intellect is clear; the Rajasic intellect is confused; and the Tamasic intellect is reversed.

### **Verse 30: Sattwic Intellect**

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च कार्याकार्ये भयाभये ।

बन्धं मोक्षं च या वेत्ति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी

॥ १८-३०॥

pravṛttim ca nivṛttim ca kāryākāryē bhayābhayē |

bandham mōkṣam ca yā vētti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī || 18-30||

1	<i>Pravrittim cha nivrittim cha,</i>	Knowing the paths of <b>action</b> and <b>renunciation</b> ;
2	<i>Kaarya-akaarye bhaya-abhaye;</i>	Knowing what <u>ought</u> to be done and what <u>ought not</u> ; what is to be <u>feared</u> and what <u>faced</u> fearlessly;
3	<i>bandham moksham cha yaa veti,</i>	Regarding <u>bondage</u> and <u>liberation</u> – to have a clear understanding of these;
4	<i>buddhih saa paartha saatwikee.</i>	Such an <b>intellect</b> is <b>Sattwic</b> , O Partha.

### **Main Features of a Sattwic Buddhi:**

The Sattwic intellect is able to do the subtle discrimination needed between the pairs listed below:

**1 i) Pravrittim / Nivrittim:** The paths of action and the path of renunciation are both known and clearly differentiated. The Sattwik mind can understand that the **Path of Action** is aimed at giving us Chitta Shuddhi and Chitta Ekagrata (purity of mind and one-pointedness of mind). It is to be followed until these two qualities are developed in sufficient measure. Thereafter, equipped with them, the **Path of Renunciation** of Action is to be followed. It has the purpose of acquiring the necessary knowledge (Sravana), and then doing the Manana (reflection) and Nididhyasana (meditation) in order to bring about the state of union of the Atman with the Supreme Brahman.

**2a ii) Kaarya / Akaarya:** The actions that ought to be done, and those not to be done. A thorough knowledge of these two is needed: **Nitya** and **Naimitika** Karmas, which are obligatory, are to be done. **Kamya** and **Nishidha** Karma, which are desire-prompted and forbidden respectively, are to be avoided. Prayaschitta Karma is to be done for expiation of sins. A knowledge is also needed as to when these are essential and when they become secondary and also when they can be dropped.

**2b iii) Bhaya / Abhaya:** This is about what is to be feared, and what has to be faced fearlessly. This requires a subtlety of intellect to grasp what causes fear and how fear can be overcome once and for all. Duality brings fear and Non-duality removes all traces of fear. Non-duality removes fear at the deepest level – the level of Absolute Reality.

**3 iv) Bandham / Moksham:** This is differentiation between that which leads us into Bondage and that which leads us to Liberation. At the highest level, Dualism brings about bondage; and Non-dualism brings about Liberation.

**4** All the above four types of discrimination can be made possible only with a Sattwic intellect. The Rajasic and Tamasic types cannot perform such in-depth discrimination.

Sri Shankaracharyaji in his Bhashya, interprets the Sattwic Buddhi to refer completely to the spiritual goal of Self-realisation. The explanations given here for each of the four discriminations are based on Sri Shankara's view in his Bhashya.

### Verse 31: *Rajasic Intellect*

यया धर्ममधर्मं च कार्यं चाकार्यमेव च ।

अयथावत्प्रजानाति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ राजसी

॥ १८-३१॥

yayā dharmamadharmam ca kāryam cākāryamēva ca |

ayathāvatprajānāti buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājāsī

|| 18-31||

1	<i>Yayaa dharmam-adharmam cha,</i>	<i>What is <u>virtue</u> and what is <u>vice</u>;</i>
2	<i>kaaryam cha akaaryam eva cha;</i>	<i>what <u>ought</u> to be done and what <u>ought not</u>;</i>
3	<i>ayathaavat prajaanaati,</i>	<i>that by which these are <u>wrongly understood</u>;</i>
4	<i>buddhih saa paartha raajasee.</i>	<i>such an <u>intellect</u> is <b>Rajasic</b>, O Partha.</i>

### Main Features of the Rajasic Buddhi:

The Rajasic Buddhi, being the opposite of the Sattwic, leads one more into bondage. The same points as above are seen to be impossible.

**1 i) Dharmam/Adharmam:** It has no idea what is righteous and what is unrighteous;

**2 ii) Kaaryam/Akaaryam:** nor of what is to be done and what is not to be done.

**3** When these things are not understood, they are invariably wrongly understood.

The net result of these three features is mental confusion. There is always doubt, and therefore the person cannot decide correctly. Indecision means that the intellect is dysfunctional. The whole problem is dumped onto the mind, which does not have the capacity to decide. Understanding is hazy and inconclusive. Restlessness prevents clarity.

**4** The Rajasic Intellect is always swinging, like a pendulum, swayed by the mind.

**Verse 32: Tamasic Intellect**

अधर्मं धर्ममिति या मन्यते तमसावृता ।

सर्वार्थान्विपरीतांश्च बुद्धिः सा पार्थ तामसी

॥ १८-३२॥

adharmam dharmamiti yā manyatē tamasāvṛtā |

sarvārthānviparītāmśca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmāsī

|| 18-32||

1	<i>Adharmam dharmam iti yaa,</i>	<i>Taking <u>vice</u> as <u>virtue</u>, and <u>virtue</u> as <u>vice</u>;</i>
2	<i>manyate tamasaa aavrita;</i>	<i>seeing as though being enveloped in <u>darkness</u>;</i>
3	<i>sarvaarthaan vipareetaan cha,</i>	<i>and seeing all things <u>contrary</u> to what they are;</i>
4	<i>buddhih saa paartha taamasee.</i>	<i>such an <b>intellect</b> is <b>Tamasic</b>, O Partha.</i>

**Main Features of the Tamasic Intellect:**

- i) He takes vice to be virtue;
- ii) His intellect is enveloped in darkness;
- iii) He sees things contrary to what they actually are.

This is not confusion, as in the case of the Rajasic Buddhi; it is just seeing everything in reverse. The Tamasic intellect holds on adamantly without any difficulty to all the wrong viewpoints, even if he has the best teacher in the world to teach him.

**The Problem with the Tamasic Intellect**

The intellect in a Tamasic person is wired the wrong way.

There was a newly built lecture theatre. The panels of switches were beautifully laid out. However, a Tamasic person must have wired them. No one could tell which switch was for a fan and which for a light. There was no order in the switches to tell which was for the front lights and which for the back lights. The fan switches also did not have any order. It was fun to see every person who walked into the auditorium try to switch the right light and the right fan. They would have more luck on a slot machine in a casino!

Here is a light-hearted South African tale, illustrating a Tamasic intellect.

Van and Gert were old friends. Van was sitting all by himself in the local pub. His drink was served but he was too engrossed in his thoughts to start with it. After about 10 minutes, Gert walked in, looked around, and seeing his friend sitting alone, joined him. They got talking of old times. Van's mood had changed. He soon felt in the mood for his drink. He was surprised to find only an empty glass in front of him. Gert sensed this and asked what was the matter. Van told him about the empty glass. Gert guiltily explained, "Oh, I saw two glasses in front of you and assumed that one was for me!" Van understood what happened and laughed off the whole matter.

The next day, Van decided to go to the same venue hoping to meet his friend once more. Gert also had the very same idea and, as he wanted to make amends for the previous night, he was already at the pub waiting for Van. He somehow knew that Van would certainly pitch up, so he bought two drinks, having one ready to share with Van. They started chatting, and forgot all about their drinks. After a good half-hour, Gert, who did most of the talking, had become very thirsty. He looked around but could not find his drink.



He looked into Van's eyes. Van seemed to understand that he had some explaining to do. He said, "Why, Gert, I saw four glasses in front of you, so I thought two were for me!"

## **TYPES OF FORTITUDE (DHRITI)**

(Verses 33-35, 3 No.)

The general trend here is: Sattwic fortitude adheres unswervingly to Sreyas; Rajasic fortitude sticks to Preyas but wavers endlessly between various objects of senses; and Tamasic fortitude is swamped by Moha or delusion.

### **Verse 33:**      *Sattwic Fortitude*

धृत्वा यया धारयते मनःप्राणेन्द्रियक्रियाः ।

योगेनाव्यभिचारिण्या धृतिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी

॥ १८-३३॥

dhṛtyā yayā dhārayatē manahprāṇēndriyakriyāḥ |

yōgēnāvyaabhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī

॥ 18-33॥

1	<i>Dhṛityaa yayaa dhaarayate,</i>	<i>The firmness by which one <u>restrains</u></i>
2	<i>manah praana indriya kriyaah;</i>	<i>the <u>mind</u>, Pranas and sense organs;</i>
3	<i>yogena avyabhi-chaarinyaa,</i>	<i>which by the power of Yoga is <u>unswerving</u>;</i>
4	<i>dhritih saa paartha saattwikkee.</i>	<i>that <b>fortitude</b> is <b>Sattwic</b>, O Partha.</i>

### **Main Features of Sattwic Fortitude:**

**1-2 i) Restraining power** – this is a great asset to the spiritual aspirant. In the context of actions, the aspirant steadily applies his energies in his Sadhana to stabilise its practice. He can use fortitude of this pure type to keep his mind, Pranas, and sense organs in check, well-controlled, disciplined and without allowing them to dissipate his energies.

**3a iii) Unswerving** – this is what is also known as ‘stickability’. It is the ability to stick to one’s task or goal very firmly, not allowing anything to distract him from it. It is like the unswerving determination which Sri Hanuman had when he went to fetch the Sanjivnee herb from the Himalayas to rescue Lakshmana. It is unswerving devotion to one’s purpose. With such a quality, success in any undertaking is guaranteed.

**3b ii) Yogic concentration** – How does one acquire such superhuman fortitude? The answer lies in Yogic power. This power is developed through restraining the mind from sense objects through the power of Brahmacharya. There is no leakage or wastage of seminal energy in the disciplined seeker. By shutting off the mind and senses from all channels of dissipation, tremendous energy gets dammed up. This is stored as fortitude. One’s mental and intellectual powers are increased by the power of Yoga.

### **Verse 34:**      *Rajasic Fortitude*

यया तु धर्मकामार्थान्धृत्वा धारयतेऽर्जुन ।

प्रसङ्गेन फलाकाङ्क्षी धृतिः सा पार्थ राजसी

॥ १८-३४॥

yayā tu dharmakāmārthāndhṛtyā dhārayatē:'rjuna |  
prasaṅgēna phalākāṅkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī

|| 18-34||

1	<i>Yayaa tu dharma kaama arthaan,</i>	<i>But to Dharma, desire and wealth – that</i>
2	<i>dhṛityaa dhaarayate arjuna;</i>	<i>fortitude that holds on to these, O Arjuna;</i>
3	<i>prasangena phala aakaankshee,</i>	<i>with <u>attachment</u> and desire for the <u>fruits</u>;</i>
4	<i>dhṛitih saa paartha raajasee.</i>	<i>that <b>fortitude</b> is <b>Rajasic</b>, O Partha.</i>

#### Main Features of Rajasic Fortitude:

**1-2** This fortitude is burdened by an enormous amount of ego-sense. It holds on tenaciously to something – usually Dharma, Artha and Kaama (a religious pursuit, wealth and sensual desire), but purely to gain something selfish out of it. The fortitude is accompanied by the following two qualities:

**3a i) Attachment** – the tenacity is contaminated by selfish attachment. There is a huge ego-presence in the person, which colours his fortitude. Fortitude is made subservient to one's ego. Attachment is a sure sign that one is in the grip of one's ego.

**3b ii) Desire** – for the fruits of actions. The action is not selfless. The fortitude is such that it makes one desire tenaciously for the result of the action. One sticks to his action, not because he is enjoying the work or because it is the right thing to do, but in the hope that it will bring a good reward.

#### Verse 35: Tamasic Fortitude

यया स्वप्नं भयं शोकं विषादं मदमेव च ।

न विमुञ्चति दुर्मेधा धृतिः सा पार्थ तामसी

|| १८-३५||

yayā svapnaṁ bhayaṁ śōkaṁ viṣādaṁ madamēva ca |

na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī

|| 18-35||

1	<i>Yayaa swapnam bhayam shokam,</i>	<i>By which dream, fear and sorrow;</i>
2	<i>vishaadam madam eva cha;</i>	<i>despondency and also sensuality (pleasures);</i>
3	<i>na vimunchati dur-medhaah,</i>	<i>are <u>not abandoned</u> by one of <u>corrupt intellect</u>;</i>
4	<i>dhṛitih saa paartha taamasee.</i>	<i>such a <b>fortitude</b> is <b>Tamasic</b>, O Partha.</i>

#### Main Features of Tamasic Fortitude:

Tamasic fortitude lies in tenaciously holding on to the following five delusions:

i) **Dream** – holding on to a foolish, dreamlike hope that the worldly object is going to give him pleasure. It is totally unfounded, unlike the Rajasic type of craving. Here the person imagines a joy from something and works towards it as if it is his very life. It is adhering to a fanciful hope of an anticipated pleasure that can never come.

ii) **Fear** – refusing to give up imaginary fears which Tamasic people hang on to. This can be the fear of ghosts, or fear of dying – some meaningless fear. It is a fear-complex.

iii) **Grief and Sorrow** – Tamasic people refuse to abandon sorrow. It is self-depleting and exhausting to the mind to run through thoughts of sorrow and sadness again and again.

iv) **Sadness** – sticking to sadness or despondency as if he is identified with it.

v) **Arrogance** – the Tamasic man takes pride in indulgence; he thinks it is a virtue! He is unwilling to stop himself from indulging in sensual pastimes. It is very queer how he has a total reversal of values which he religiously lives by.

The one who follows these five values is called a fool. All these are due to the “corrupt state of the person’s intellect”. There is simply not enough thought put into what is being done. The most stupid of actions are permitted by this type of fortitude.

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### **TYPES OF JOY (SUKHAM)**

(Verses 36-39, 4 No.)

**Joy** MUST BE READ to mean joy and sorrow, both of which come as a result of the action performed. We have studied the five participants in the Action Team, and analysed the roles they play under the two major divisions, **Karma Chodana** and **Karma Sangraha**. We now go further into the details of the abilities of the captains – intellect and fortitude – in each division. The bottomline that matters at the end of the day is: What is the end result of all this effort? What is the fruit of the action?

Everything has been found to be of three types – Sattwic, Rajasic or Tamasic. The final result, too, will follow the same differentiation. Sattwic acts will bring Sattwic fruits; Rajasic acts will bring Rajasic fruits; and Tamasic acts will bring Tamasic fruits.

The fruit of an action gives the only indication whether the action was Sattwic, Rajasic or Tamasic, and whether it ought to be continued or abandoned. If the result brings sorrow, then a person will discontinue such actions; if it is joy, then he will pursue it more often. Thus the fruit is, in a way, our teacher in the game of life. It helps us to adjust our actions so that we get the happiness we seek.

This section gives us a description of the three types of fruits or results of actions. Although we engage ourselves in action with the hope of enjoying happiness, there could well be ‘enjoyment of sorrow’ awaiting us. The fruit depends on the three Gunas with which the actions are done.

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#### **Verse 36:**     *Introduction to the Threefold Joy*

सुखं त्विदानीं त्रिविधं शृणु मे भरतर्षभ ।

अभ्यासाद्रमते यत्र दुःखान्तं च निगच्छति

॥ १८-३६॥

sukham tvidānīm trividham śṛṇu mē bharatarṣabha |

abhyāsādramatē yatra duḥkhāntam ca nigacchati

|| 18-36||

1	<i>Sukham tu idaanim trividham,</i>	<i>Now, regarding the <b>three kinds of Joy</b> –</i>
2	<i>shrnu me bharatarshabha;</i>	<i>hear from Me, O Best of the Bharatas.</i>
3	<i>abhyaasaat ramate yatra,</i>	<i>That in which one delights due to practice</i>
4	<i>dukhhaantam cha nigacchati.</i>	<i>and certainly attains the <u>cessation of sorrows</u>;</i>

**1-2** The fruit of action is always present in the form of joy or sorrow, whether we desire it or not. As is the nature of the action so is the nature of the fruit it produces.

Only joy is mentioned here, but sorrow has to be understood as included. People always work for a reward of joy, not sorrow. However, whether joy comes or its opposite depends on the attitude with which the action is done.

**3** Joy is a universal incentive to engage in action.

**4** By going through the learning curve of experiencing joy and sorrow, man eventually learns the art of acting in such a manner that there is cessation of all sorrows.

One other factor in our experience of life is that different people see joy or sorrow differently. What is joy to some, may be sorrow to another, and vice versa. This is what we shall see in the next three verses.

**Verse 37: Sattwic Joy**

यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् ।

तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तमात्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम्

॥ १८-३७॥

yattadagrē viṣamiva pariṇāmē:'mṛtōpamam |

tatsukhaṁ sāttvikam prōktamātmabuddhiprasādajam || 18-37||

1	<i>Yat tat agre visham iva,</i>	<i>That which is like <u>poison in the beginning</u>,</i>
2	<i>parinaame amrita upamam;</i>	<i>but like <u>nectar in the end</u>;</i>
3	<i>tat sukham saatwikam proktam,</i>	<i>that joy is declared to be <b>Sattwic</b>,</i>
4	<i>aatma – buddhi – prasaadajam.</i>	<i>born out of <u>purity</u> of one's own mind.</i>

**Main Features of Sattwic Joy:**

i) The only way of telling whether a joy is really a blessing or not is by seeing the long-term result. Sattwic joy has one characteristic – it appears at first as something distasteful and painful, but in the long-term it brings the desired joy. An example of this is studying. A student may find it very tedious to study for many years, and want to 'pack it up' at times, but when his mind thinks of the long-term benefit of studying he gets the incentive to persist.

ii) Sattwic joy comes through deserving it by making the necessary effort and undergoing the necessary self-discipline; it does not come just for the asking. It is not cheap. When a thing is earned honestly and learned the hard way, it gives greater joy.

At the highest level, Sattwic joy is born from perfection in knowledge of the Self.

**Verse 38: Rajasic Joy**

विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद्यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् ।

परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम्

॥ १८-३८॥

viṣayēndriyasam̐yōgādyattadagrē:'mṛtōpamam |

pariṇāmē viṣamiva tatsukhaṁ rājasam̐ smṛtam || 18-38||

1	<i>Vishaya-indriya-samyogaat,</i>	<i>Arising from the contact of the senses &amp; objects;</i>
2	<i>yat tat agre amrita-upamam;</i>	<i>which is <u>at first</u> like nectar,</i>
3	<i>parinaame visham iva,</i>	<i>but in the <u>end</u> like poison,</i>
4	<i>tat sukham raajasam smritam.</i>	<i>that pleasure is declared to be <b>Rajasic</b>.</i>

### **Main Features of Rajasic Joy:**

This joy is directly opposite to Sattwic joy:

**1** i) Sensual in nature – As soon as the senses touch the object, the joy comes at once. It is “on the spot”, as it were. The Bhoga is immediate, instant! This is an effortless joy – just a matter of being in contact with the object.

There is no need for any disciplines to be followed, no efforts at concentration, sense-control, no austerity, Japa, etc. Sensual indulgence can be completely unrestrained.

But there lies the trap! . . .

ii) It is a “**devil in disguise**”. Such a joy, obtained so effortlessly, is like nectar in the beginning and we fall to the bait offered by the instant pleasure. But here are its drawbacks:

a. It is a **Thief** – it steals away our strength, because the body is abused. The body is made to perform a function that is beyond its limits as an instrument given to us for our use.

b. **Vitality** is lost – Vitality is the capacity we have of utilising energy. The subtlest form of energy is Veerya, the precious vital fluid. It is very hard to recover once lost. Indulgence makes us feel tired afterwards. There is a loss in both energy and vitality.

c. **Beauty** is lost – indulgence makes us put on excess weight, it brings on wrinkles and grey hair scores of years before they are due.

d. **Purity** is lost – Indulgence makes us cross the bounds of Dharma or morality. We then incur sin or Paapa, which produces a restless mind, feelings of guilt, regret, etc.

e. **Health** is lost – The moment we go beyond Dharma, we invite into ourselves disease, pain, sorrow, anxiety, stress and other troubles, both physical and psychological.

f. **Friendship** is lost – Our relationships start becoming strained. We become over-dependent on others to give us happiness. *Selfishness* creeps into our relationship and *love* walks out of them.

All this happens for only one reason: We have permitted the objects to rule over us; we have surrendered our freedom to something that is so transient. Tempted by ‘instant’ joy, we become enslaved to the source of that joy. Addiction takes root and we want more and more, till we reach the point of utter ruin!

This is the nature of Rajasic joy. Sadly, most of humanity has fallen into the clutches of such a joy.

### **Verse 39:**     *Tamasic Joy*

यदग्रे चानुबन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः ।

निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम्

॥ १८-३९॥

yadagrē cānubandhē ca sukham mōhanamātmanah |

nidrālasyapramādōttham tattāmasamudāhṛtam

|| 18-39||



1	<i>Yat agre cha anubandhe cha,</i>	<i>That which <u>at first</u> and in the <u>sequel</u></i>
2	<i>sukham mohanam aatmanah;</i>	<i>has pleasure delusive of the Self;</i>
3	<i>nidraa aalasya pramaada uttham,</i>	<i>arising from 'sleep', indolence, heedlessness;</i>
4	<i>tat taamasam mudaa-hritam.</i>	<i>that is declared to be Tamasic.</i>

### **Main Features of Tamasic Joy:**

Tamasic joy is totally different from the above two types. It is totally delusive in nature. As usual, it mistakes joy for sorrow and sorrow for joy.

i) Both in the beginning and in the end, this joy appears as 'pleasure' although in reality it is only sorrow, for it arises purely out of delusion. It is just imagination taken to extremes. It is neither Sattwic nor Rajasic. It is something that does not exist, yet it makes one feel "happy"! What could such a happiness be due to? Sheer Tamas.

ii) Sleep, laziness and heedlessness – These three things, having no substance in them, bring about such happiness!

The 'sleep' here can also be taken philosophically, which means that it is just 'Ignorance' or delusion, a complete lack of knowledge of the Truth. There is no idea of any Reality existing. Tamas has completely covered or shrouded the Truth so that it is beyond recognition to the person.

It is a sheer self-deluding happiness, having no substance in it!

In the absence of any meaningful vision in life, the Tamasic individual obtains his joy from delusory or illusory pleasure. The dull mind simply finds its joy in dullness, lethargy, indulging in excessive physical sleep. It abandons all sense of duty, becomes heedless, loses all decency, indulges in alcohol to the point of drunkenness, which it finds great delight in. The sorrow and pain of overindulgence appears as a 'joy' to it.

Miserable indeed is the lot of such people.

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**MOTHER KALI**

## 18.6 THE FOUR CASTES & THEIR DUTIES

(Verses 40-48, 9 No.)

### A Recap of the Chapter So Far

**THE THEME OF RENUNCIATION**, both Tyaga and Sannyasa, has been shown to have a direct bearing with the field of **Action**. One can either renounce the fruits of action (Gauna, Tyaga), or renounce action altogether (Mukhya, Sannyasa).

The whole field of Action has been comprehensively covered, beginning with the five players participating in action; to the roles played by each player, either on the impulse side or the action side; thereafter, we took a look at the two leading roles, Intellect and Fortitude; and finally closed with a look at the final result or fruit of action. All of this was differentiated into three categories according to the Guna. It was also shown that the whole “Action Chain” was in the realm of matter, in the Unreal aspect of Creation.

The stage begins to shift towards the Supreme Brahman beyond the Gunas. To approach the supreme Brahman we need to clear the dense undergrowth of Karma that obstructs our path to It. Bush-clearing is a very arduous task for the aspirant, but it has to be done. We begin that task by first considering how we can act so that ultimately we are freed from action. This is to be our immediate subject. Only then do we come to the final lap of Sadhana and take up the higher stages that bring us safely to the goal of Self-Realisation.

To clear Karma, the ‘bush-clearing’ spoken of earlier, we go back to Chapters 2 and 3 which dealt with Karma Yoga. In this final Chapter we re-visit every important stage of Sadhana passed in the earlier Chapters, and still manage to add to them some new, refreshing points of practical value to the seeker. The topic we resume now is that of Swadharma, our own duties, which earlier formed the framework for our Karma Yoga.

### Verse 40:     *No Beings can Escape from the Gunas*

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।

सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः

॥ १८-४०॥

na tadasti pr̥thivyāṃ vā divi dēvēṣu vā punaḥ |

sattvaṃ prakṛtijairmuktaṃ yadēbhiḥ syātttribhīrguṇaiḥ     || 18-40||

1	<i>Na tat asti prithivyaam vaa,</i>	<i>There is not existing on <u>earth</u>, or</i>
2	<i>divi deveshu vaa punah;</i>	<i>again in the <u>heavens</u> among the Gods –</i>
3	<i>sattwam prakritijaih muktam,</i>	<i>any being who, born of Nature, is free</i>
4	<i>yat ebhi syaat tribhih gunaih.</i>	<i>from Nature’s three qualities, the <b>Gunas</b>.</i>

A new theme is opened up for discussion that arises from the earlier discussion on Sannyasa and Tyaga, and of the Science of Action. The discussion took us deep into the study of the threefold nature of every aspect of action.

**1** The key point we were reminded of is that everything concerning Action comes under the sway of the three Gunas. This applies to every living being on earth.

**2** Indeed, all life on earth is completely governed by the three Gunas. This includes the Devatas in heaven, and the denizens of hell.

**3-4** No beings are exempted from the influence of the Gunas. The Gunas, which are no different from Prakriti Herself, have complete control over our life in this world.

In spite of this fact, there is some glimmer of escape from this control over us by Nature. Chapter 14 spoke of *transcending* the Gunas to obtain real freedom. Chapter 15 has given us a deeper insight into the Supreme Purushottama who is beyond the Gunas. Chapters 16 and 17 have shed light on how to recognize the Gunas at work in our lives, and given strong hints of the way beyond the clutches of the Gunas.

With this introductory verse, we are now being led once again in that direction towards the same Supreme Goal. Although this Chapter is meant to be a summary of earlier Chapters, yet the Lord sheds new light on the Path at every step of the way.

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**Verse 41:**     *The Fourfold Divisions Among Men*

ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परन्तप ।

कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभावप्रभवैर्गुणैः

॥ १८-४१॥

brāhmaṇakṣatriyaviśāṁ śūdrāṇāṁ ca parantapa |

karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāvaprabhavaigūṇaiḥ

|| 18-41||

1	<i>Braahmana kshatriya vishaam,</i>	<i>Among the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas,</i>
2	<i>shoodraanaam cha parantapa;</i>	<i>and Shoodras, O Parantapa,</i>
3	<i>karmaani pravi-bhaktaani,</i>	<i>the duties are distributed according to</i>
4	<i>swabhaava-prabhavaih gunaih.</i>	<i>the qualities born of their own nature.</i>

**1-2** The science of Gunas is now being merged with the science of Action which we have just studied. The ancient Rishis had built up the whole social fabric based on these two sciences. The theory and practice were merged to obtain the best possible solution for the smooth evolution of human society. Universal principles of nature were applied to obtain a universal solution. This led to the formation of the fourfold caste system which was unanimously adopted by Indian society in ancient India.

The fourfold distribution of duties in society was formulated with the object of providing the most appropriate task for a person in harmony with his inborn natural inclinations. The four castes respectively stand for the thinkers and religious leaders of society, the administrators, the businessmen and the labourers.

In Chapter 4 we gave an elaborate account in the commentary on this subject.

**3-4** The basis of this division was the predominant Guna in the person. It was not his birth that determined a person's caste, but his Guna. This is explained in detail in Chapter 4. Whatever our Swabhava and therefore Swadharma is, if we perform our duty to the best of our ability, we reach a level of maturity from which we can launch ourselves into the final reaches of Sadhana to attain God-realisation.

**Verse 42: The Brahmanas – Religious & Studious**

शमो दमस्तपः शौचं क्षान्तिरार्जवमेव च ।

ज्ञानं विज्ञानमास्तिक्यं ब्रह्मकर्म स्वभावजम्

॥ १८-४२॥

śamō damastapaḥ śaucam kṣāntirārjavamēva ca |

jñānam vijñānamāstikyam brahmakarma svabhāvajam || 18-42||

1	<i>Shamah damah tapah shaucham,</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>Serenity,</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>self-restraint,</i> <sup>3</sup> <i>austerity,</i> <sup>4</sup> <i>cleanliness,</i>
2	<i>kshaantih aarjavam eva cha;</i>	<sup>5</sup> <i>forgiveness and also</i> <sup>6</sup> <i>uprightness;</i>
3	<i>jnaanam vijnaanam aastikyam,</i>	<sup>7</sup> <i>knowledge,</i> <sup>8</sup> <i>realisation,</i> <sup>9</sup> <i>belief in God – these</i>
4	<i>brahma-karma swabhaava-jam.</i>	<i>are the <b>Brahmanas'</b> duties born of their nature.</i>

The breakdown of duties for each caste is now given:

**1-3** These 9 qualities are natural in a **Brahmana**. Due to the predominance of Sattwa in his constitution, he is at home with these qualities. We notice that Lord Krishna is not prescribing a list of jobs that are available to each of the four groups. He merely gives the qualities that one possesses. It is assumed that the job he takes up will best enable him to utilise these qualities.

**4** If he does not possess these qualities, it means that he is not a Brahmana. By these qualities one can consider himself to be a Brahmana and perform a Brahmana's duty.

If he takes up some suitable profession in which these qualities are needed, then he will be at home in that profession. He will naturally enjoy it and thus use it as a platform to work out his evolution in the most efficient manner.

**Verse 43: The Kshatriyas – Valorous & Dauntless**

शौर्यं तेजो धृतिर्दाक्ष्यं युद्धे चाप्यपलायनम् ।

दानमीश्वरभावश्च क्षात्रं कर्म स्वभावजम्

॥ १८-४३॥

śauryam tējō dhṛtirdākṣyam yuddhē cāpyapalāyanam |

dānamīśvarabhāvaśca kṣātram karma svabhāvajam || 18-43||

1	<i>Shauryam tejah dhritih daakshyam,</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>Prowess,</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>splendour,</i> <sup>3</sup> <i>firmness,</i> <sup>4</sup> <i>dexterity;</i>
2	<i>yuddhe cha api apalaayanam;</i>	<sup>5</sup> <i>not fleeing away from battle;</i>
3	<i>daanam eeshwara-bhaavah cha,</i>	<sup>6</sup> <i>generosity and</i> <sup>7</sup> <i>lordliness – these are</i>
4	<i>kshaatram karma swabhaava-jam.</i>	<i>the <b>Kshatriyas'</b> duties born of their nature.</i>

**1-3** These 7 qualities, all of them depicting valour and courage, are predominant in one who can be considered to be a **Kshatriya**.

**4** One possessing these qualities is a Kshatriya by nature. He has the qualities to be a good administrator. He can find a suitable profession such as administration, ruling people, being a leader in a team of people, being an executive in a company, and so on. Ideally, all politicians are expected to have these qualities. A true Kshatriya can never contemplate taking bribes. His very nature forbids stooping so low and making himself unworthy of trust.

**Verse 44:     *The Vaishyas & Shudras***

कृषिगौरक्ष्यवाणिज्यं वैश्यकर्म स्वभावजम् ।

परिचर्यात्मकं कर्म शूद्रस्यापि स्वभावजम्

॥ १८-४४॥

kr̥ṣigaurakṣyavāṇijyam vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam |

paricaryātmakam karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam

|| 18-44||

1	<i>Krushi gaurakshya vaanijyam,</i>	<sup>1</sup> Agriculture, <sup>2</sup> cattle-rearing and <sup>3</sup> trade are
2	<i>vaishya karma swabhaava-jam;</i>	the <b>Vaishyas'</b> duties born of their own nature.
3	<i>pari-charyaatmakam karma,</i>	Actions consisting of <sup>4</sup> service of the others is the
4	<i>shoodrasya api swabhaava-jam.</i>	<b>Shoodras'</b> duties also born of their own nature.

**1-2** The **Vaishyas** are people with a predominance of Rajas, who are more business-minded. They are drawn to professions like the three listed here, due to these business tendencies.

**3-4** The **Shoodras**, again due to their predominant quality of Tamas, do not have the ability to creatively plan out their life along the lines of a profession, and so they find that the most suitable task for them is to serve the other three groups.

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**PERFECTION THROUGH DUTY**

**WHAT** FOLLOWS IN the next four verses is a crucial message from Lord Krishna. In order to derive the maximum benefits of the **Pravritti Marga** or the Path of Action, the Lord stipulates some ground rules for this path. The rules are based on the knowledge that has been discussed so far in this Chapter, which itself is a summary of earlier Chapters of the Geeta.

The Path of Action has to be followed with full knowledge of what its purpose is. The purpose is stated in the first of these verses. In itself it cannot take us to the ultimate Goal; this much should be clear in our mind. The discussion on Tyaga and Sannyasa made it sufficiently clear that there comes a point when actions become a hindrance on the spiritual path. That is when the seeker switches over from the Pravritti Marga of Action to the Nivritti Marga of Renunciation.

The arrival at that key point in spiritual growth is the purpose of the Pravritti Marga. The rules laid out below regarding one's duties have to be seen in this light. They only apply so long as the Pravritti Marga is applicable. The moment one has set foot on the Nivritti Marga, these rules may be dropped as they would have served their purpose.

It is crucial for us to understand this before proceeding further.

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**Verse 45:     *Devotion to Duty***

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।

स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु

॥ १८-४५॥



svē svē karmaṇyabhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhatē narah |  
svakarmanirataḥ siddhiṁ yathā vindati tacchṛṇu

|| 18-45||

1	<i>Sve sve karmani abhirataḥ,</i>	<i>Devoted, each one to his <b>own duty</b>,</i>
2	<i>sam-siddhiṁ labhate narah;</i>	<i>man attains the <u>highest perfection</u>.</i>
3	<i>swakarma-nirataḥ siddhiṁ,</i>	<i>Engaged in his <b>duty</b>, he attains perfection.</i>
4	<i>yathaa vindati tat shrunu.</i>	<i>How that happens, listen now to that:</i>

**1** Why does the Lord ask us to be devoted to our own duty, the duty that comes to us naturally and which is due to our own nature? There are two reasons:

**2 i) Sam-Siddhim:** “the Highest Perfection”. The first reason is that doing one’s duty takes one eventually to the highest goal of God-realisation. *Sam* is a prefix which qualifies perfection and makes it “highest perfection”, leaving no doubt as to what is meant. This can only stand for the Ultimate Goal – union with the Supreme Brahman.

**3 ii) Siddhim:** “perfection”. The perfection referred to here is the *interim* stage achieved due to the Action alone, the action of doing one’s obligatory duties. Here, Siddhi does not refer to the Ultimate Goal, but a stage before it, albeit helpful in achieving it. It leads us towards, but is not equal to, the ultimate perfection.

### **A NOTE ON THE “INTERIM PERFECTION”**

Interim perfection is a state of **purity of mind**. It is a state that is measurable in terms of the Gunas. Ultimate perfection is not measurable this way as it lies beyond the Gunas. When Tamas and Rajas are considerably reduced and one has a predominance of Sattwa, then one can say that the interim perfection in action has been reached. When there is absence of attachment and one has no anxiety over the fruit of actions, then this perfection is reached. As far as spiritual growth is concerned, that is the limit of the Path of Action. That is the only purpose served by Action as defined in Karma Yoga.

In the light of this purpose, we can see that anything more that we expect from actions would be due to attachment and desire. It does not serve our spiritual growth. It would then be classified as Kamya Karma, which does not further our spiritual growth.

We note that as the Geeta comes to an end shortly, Lord Krishna goes deeper into every stage dealt with earlier, so that we do not have any doubt as to how to proceed further in our spiritual development. The Lord gives us sufficient help so that we may be able to determine our path using our purified intellect. The purified intellect becomes our inner ‘Guru’, in addition to the personal external guide we may have. The outer Guru’s task is to lead us to this inner ‘Guru’.

Having said that, up until now, in the performance of one’s duties, no mention is made of its link to the overall purpose of life, i.e. to God-realisation. The perfection attained by doing one’s duty well, could well be purely of a worldly nature. At best it could be to fulfill our role in the Cosmic Cycle of Action spoken of in Chapter 3. Or, it could be only so that good relations prevail with regard to one’s family or society. Or, it could be only to have a clear conscience that one has done his duty. In other words, the interim perfection could easily be something that is not linked to Ultimate spiritual perfection! But it is linked . . .

**4** The question that now arises is: How does doing one's duty bring about interim perfection? This aspect is answered immediately in the next three verses of this section.

However, some may interpret the question as: How does interim perfection bring about Ultimate Perfection? This aspect of the question is answered in the next section. When perfection in Action, i.e. interim perfection, is reached, the Lord Himself makes the arrangements for the person to progress towards the ultimate perfection. This is the topic of the next section. For now, the focus is on interim perfection and how to achieve it.

Is there a link between the two states of perfection? This verse specifically makes that link. It tells us that the two “perfections” are connected. For this reason, the very next verse could well be an answer to the second interpretation of the question asked in **4**. So, both interpretations could run in parallel. In fact, as we move on rapidly towards the end of the Geeta, the separation becomes only academic. or the **Bhakta**, there really is no difference between the two at all. This is the startling fact that emerges shortly.

**Verse 46: *Duty As Worship of the Lord***

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।  
 स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ १८-४६॥  
 yataḥ pravṛttirbhūtānāṁ yēna sarvamidam tatam |  
 svakarmanā tamabhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavah ॥ 18-46॥

1	<i>Yatah pravrittiḥ bhootaanaam,</i>	<i>He from Whom all living beings come into being,</i>
2	<i>yena sarvam idam tatam;</i>	<i>and by Whom all this is pervaded –</i>
3	<i>swa-karmanaa tam abhyarchya,</i>	<i>worshipping Him with one's own duties,</i>
4	<i>siddhim vindati maanavah.</i>	<i>a person easily attains perfection.</i>

The big suggestion in this verse is to do our duty as though it were **Worship** of the Supreme Lord. This is a huge statement that transforms the entire nature of our duty. It renders the whole action into a sacred act of worship. Surely that in itself is sufficient to link the Ultimate Perfection to the “interim perfection” mentioned in the last verse.

For those who are not prepared to go so far so quickly in their vision of duty, they need not. Since the interim goal is defined to be purity of mind, the Lord's suggestion here to do one's duty as worship could simply mean that purity is achieved that much more easily if we did our duty as though it were worship. If purity is the only aim, then what better way to obtain it than to see our duty as a form of worship! This would satisfy even the sceptic who doubts the Reality, wants to stay far away from it, and who is quite content just to have purity of mind!

**The Lord's Zeal to See Us Transform**

However, the Lord is in no mood to ignore the Reality at this late stage in the Geeta. He now puts His foot on the accelerator and is determined to take us there whether we are ready for Him or not:

**1** Firstly, that Supreme Being whom we are supposed to worship is very clearly defined to be the source of our existence.

**2** And secondly, the whole Universe is pervaded by Him. How can He be ignored, even if we tried to? There seems to be no loophole left for the one who may still want to resist merging with the Lord.

**3** Therefore, there is no doubt in the Lord's guidance encompassed in these verses. Worship of the Supreme Lord is what He expects us to accept without question, even though we may be benefitted in many other ways just by doing our duty properly.

**4** If such be the Lord's guidance, then what difference is there between the interim and the Ultimate perfection? None at all, as far as the Lord is concerned. He seems not to be interested in the lower level of perfection; He wants us to go for the Highest directly. The "perfection" in this Pada could thus well mean the Ultimate Perfection itself. If we wish to go slowly, we can consider it to be "interim perfection". There is no harm in it. But, the Lord's zeal to see us progress is such that He is compelling us to go for the jugular, and forget about all other temporary stages!

Are we ready to rise to the occasion and catch the mood in which Sri Krishna is? If we are, none will be more pleased than the Lord. We can leap directly to the Ultimate in this section itself; we need not wait for the next section to do so! The option to go at a slower pace is there for those among us who wish to choose it, and there is nothing wrong in it.

#### **The Slower, Gentler Option**

For one who has done his duty well, purity of mind is easily attained. The person who has done his duty well would become more receptive to God in his life. He would be the Adhikari, the qualified person, to go to the next level of Sadhana.

In his case, this verse describes the route of one who has come to the interim perfection in the Pravritti Marg, or the Path of Action. He has successfully used action as a means of purification and raised his spiritual level to go onto the next stage.

This need not necessarily mean that his duty changes. It may still remain the same. However, certain other changes start happening in his life which make him pay more attention to the spiritual goal of life. He begins to spend more time in Japa, in reading religious books, in chanting the Lord's Name, etc. All this goes along side by side with his duty. In fact, the duty itself starts taking on the form of worship of God!

This is a major transformation in the person's life. It is the fruit of his sincere dedication to his duty for a prolonged period. The divine dimension of life opens up to him.

Thus the person is brought onto the highway that leads him to the Ultimate Perfection. The interim perfection marks a crucial change in his life.

For most of humanity, it is this slower option that is not just naturally chosen, but which is the preferred option. The former path is a leap which perhaps even an Arjuna will not be willing to make due to the risk of bruising himself.

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#### **Verse 47:     *Better One's Own Duty***

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।

स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम्

॥ १८-४७॥

śrēyānsvadharmō viguṇaḥ paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt |

svabhāvaniyataṁ karma kurvannāpnōti kilbiṣam

॥ 18-47॥

1	<i>Shreyaan swadharmah vigunah,</i>	<i>Better is one's <b>own duty</b> though <u>devoid of merit</u></i>
2	<i>para-dharmaat swanushthitaat;</i>	<i>than the duty of <b>another</b> <u>well-performed</u>.</i>
3	<i>swabhaava niyatam karma,</i>	<i>One's own duty ordained by his own nature –</i>
4	<i>kurvan na aapnoti kilbisham.</i>	<i>doing that, he <u>incurs no sin</u>.</i>

It seems as though the Lord has read the mind of the majority of mankind. And so He now accommodates the slower traveller on the path. This verse can be read as advice not to try to beat our own speed by seeing others go faster on the spiritual path. Let others go as fast as they wish to, we should stick to our own natural pace. After all, spirituality is not a race as to who reaches God first!

The previous two verses could be read in two different ways, as we have just seen. This verse is more wary about advising the fast-track option. It puts it aside and selects the path that is more reasonable for most of us.

**1** Someone else may be comfortable in following another path. Let him go on it. We should not try to imitate him, even though our path may be perceived to have a defect in it.

**2** When we are at a Retreat or Conference, it often happens that we see or listen to other very able people giving powerful talks and sermons. We may begin to feel uncomfortable with our own chosen path. The inevitable tendency would be drop what we are doing and take up what we have just heard from another seeker.

**3** The Lord is well aware of this danger. He advises us not to be so fickle-minded. That which we are propelled to do by our own nature is the best for us. We can listen to what the others say, especially at such conferences, but we should stick to what we have been practising. Certainly we can look for improvements, but make them only after giving it a serious thought, and after consulting with our own teacher.

**4** To stop this tendency, the Lord plants a deterrent – we incur no sin if we continue doing what we are familiar with. But if we change merely by being attracted by someone else's charisma or superb presentation, etc, then we do incur 'sin'. It is the sin of being attracted to **Para-Dharma**, "another's duty."

### **Application to Ordinary Work**

The danger is not just in changing one's spiritual practices, but also in changing one's job for the wrong reason. This verse would also apply to the case where people get bored of their own work and long to do something which another person is doing.

Whatever we see as being defective in our own work, we should seek to put it right rather than drop it and turn to something else. Problems are encountered to be overcome, not to be escaped from.

However attractive another's duty may be, our own duty is still always the best for our growth. Accepting this rule prevents us from becoming restless and in a state of perpetual discontent. Discontent is very harmful to one's peace of mind.

By this verse, the Lord shuts off the escape route to avoid facing the usual problems that come to one in life. There is no escape from such problems, as we shall see in the next verse. None can avoid these hardships and trials that come as a matter of course in life. It is our share of life's burden. If it comes to us in the course of our duty we should feel grateful that we have a chance to work out some flaw in our personality.

Perhaps we need to become more humble, perhaps we need to develop adaptability, perhaps we need to do more charity or austerity – whatever it is that we are called upon to do, because it is our duty we are assured that things will happen to make us grow. We need to hold on to this faith. Shirking our duty in favour of another more attractive job is not the solution – it is escapism, and compounds the problem.

**Verse 48: *All Duties Have Flaws***

सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् ।

सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः

॥ १८-४८॥

sahajam karma kaunteya sadōṣamapi na tyajēt |

sarvārambhā hi dōṣeṇa dhūmēnāgnirivāvṛtāḥ

|| 18-48||

1	<i>Sahajam karma kaunteya,</i>	<i>The duty to which one is born, O Kaunteya,</i>
2	<i>sadosham api na tyajet;</i>	<i>though faulty, should not be abandoned.</i>
3	<i>sarvaarambhāa hi doshena,</i>	<i>For are not all undertakings full of flaws,</i>
4	<i>dhoomena agnih iva aavritaah.</i>	<i>just as fire is ever enveloped by smoke?</i>

Here is the explanation of the previous verse – why it is not advisable to abandon our own duty and take up someone else’s.

**1-2** The words of this verse have to be read with some caution. It is not true literally that duties have flaws. The truth is that all tasks can be seen by a flawed human being as having flaws. The flaw is in us who make judgement over our duties because we do not like something about them. The Lord’s words are said with a knowledge of human psychology.

**3** Flaw in one’s duty means flaw as we see them, not as it actually is. In reality, no duty has flaws in them. The flaws are in our own perception of the duty. We always tend not to take any blame for the situations we are placed in. We tend to see the faults as located in someone else or in something else. We are always perfect! That is what our ego makes us think. The Lord here clarifies this misconception by using a beautiful simile.

**4** Even as fire is always enveloped by smoke by its very nature, so also our duties are enveloped by smoke, mostly the smoke of our own “shimmering ego”!

When the smoke covers the fire, can we say that the fire is not burning? Is it a flaw of the fire that smoke is generated by it? Simply because we can’t see the fire, we attribute the flaw to the fire.

In the same way, there is no flaw in our duty. The smoke also is not produced by the duty. The smoke is in our mind and we superimpose it on the duty, as it is more convenient for our ego to do so. Likes and dislikes produce the smoke that we see in our duty. Attachment in our mind produces a thick smoke of impurity around all our relationships. The biggest culprit is delusion which covers our actions in a dense cloud of darkness so that we cannot even see the fire of our duty any more.

**The Critical Lesson About Duties:**

Actually, there is no difference in the merits produced by different duties. The merits are all the same – purity of mind. If we understand that purity is the purpose of all actions,

then we will not see differences between different duties. The corollary to this statement is: If we are not interested in purity, then also there are no differences in duties, for then they all bind us equally to Samsara!

Either way, the message is there is no need to differentiate between duties. The Lord logically shows us the truth that there is no high or low work. No menial or intellectual work. All actions produce equal results – they either liberate us or they bind us. Therefore, all work should be equally respected. We should be able to do all work that comes to us without feeling any repulsion or attraction towards it.

Once we learn this lesson about duties, and reflect it in our life, we have passed the examination of Action in life, and are then prepared for the next stage of spiritual life – **Jnana Sadhana.**

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***A cow with loving thoughts,  
develops this patch on its forehead!***



## 18.7 READY FOR JNANA SADHANA

(Verses 49-53, 5 No.)

**A** MAJOR CHANGE in our life occurs at the point when the purity obtained by performing Swadharma ripens into what we have termed “interim perfection”. The Lord, as it were, picks us up bodily from our erstwhile active lifestream in the midst of the world, and places us in a situation ideal for our further growth.

The external change, if any, will depend on the uniqueness of each case. It may mean taking Sannyasa in one case; or it may not entail any outward change at all in the case of another. But, in all cases there begins a deep inner evolution, which may better be called an inner ‘revolution’!

The Lord Himself takes charge of this stage, but we need to consciously permit Him to do so. The consent has to come from us. Consent here means surrender. Therefore, in this section great stress is placed by Sri Krishna in asking us to surrender to Him – willingly, of course – because He knows His job better than we do.

### Verse 49:     *The Qualified Intellect*

असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः ।

नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां संन्यासेनाधिगच्छति

॥ १८-४९॥

asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra jitātmā vigataspr̥haḥ |

naishkarmyasiddhim paramāṁ samnyāsēnādhigacchati     || 18-49||

1	<i>Asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra,</i>	<i>He whose <b>intellect</b> is <u>unattached</u> everywhere,</i>
2	<i>jitaatmaa vigataspr̥ihah;</i>	<i>who has <u>subdued</u> his self, from whom <u>desire</u> has fled;</i>
3	<i>naishkarmyasiddhim paramaam,</i>	<i>the supreme state of <b>freedom from action</b>,</i>
4	<i>sannyasena adhigacchati.</i>	<i>he attains through such renunciation.</i>

The previous section has laid the foundation for the maximum purity of mind to occur in the minimum amount of time. If we work in full co-operation with the Lord by doing our duty well, we can condense a lifetime’s evolution into a few years. It is left entirely to us how fast or slow we want to tread this path. We can set the pace, and the Lord will be right behind us. Sometimes, as in Arjuna’s case, the Lord runs away in front, and urges Arjuna to follow Him quickly!

**1** The state of the intellect has to be such that there is **no attachment** to any object or being. Attachment is overcome by first overcoming likes and dislikes. Likes and dislikes may build up in the mind, but, with a well-trained intellect, the proper pressure can be brought to bear on the mind to curb them. The achievement belongs to the intellect.

**2** With a firm intellect, the next victory is the little self called the mind. When the mind is subdued and does not have a will of its own, i.e. it becomes undemanding, then

**Desire** cannot flourish in such a mind. Note that it is *desire that should flee away* from us; not that we should flee away from desire. This is the second key qualification described in verse 18.6 and repeated in 18.9 which describe the higher level of renunciation.

Renunciation of desire is the pivotal step which can turn our whole life around in the direction of God. The whole of Vedanta rests heavily on this pivot of **Renunciation**. This is where we began this Chapter, and we do not leave this subject until the very last verse.

**3** As already explained earlier, the Siddhi here is not the Ultimate Perfection, but a well-defined state of purity acquired by dutiful action. This is the stage when the Seeker can give up the performance of his Swadharma, i.e. he gains “*freedom from action*”, and can spend his time in the more intense Sadhana of deep contemplation and meditation.

**4** Renunciation is taken to distinctly greater heights in this stage. It reaches the Mukhya level, the point when the seeker can opt for Sannyasa. This point marks the Sadhaka’s readiness to enter the final stage of **Jnana Yoga**.

This is a milestone that Lord Krishna considers very crucial and hence He mentions it on every occasion possible. In this Chapter itself we have come across it several times. This milestone, we repeat once again, is the one we have called the “interim perfection” in verse 45. From it, one can launch himself into the last lap of Sadhana for God-realisation.

This is where the next verse begins . . .

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**Verse 50:**     *The Way Forward – Knowledge of Self*

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे ।

समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा

॥ १८-५०॥

siddhim prāptō yathā brahma tathāpnōti nibōdha mē |

samāsēnaiva kauntēya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā

|| 18-50||

1	<i>Siddhim praaptah yathaa brahma,</i>	How such a ‘ <u>perfected</u> ’ one reaches <b>Brahman</b>
2	<i>tathaa aapnoti nibodha me;</i>	that you can <u>hear</u> from Me
3	<i>samaasena eva kaunteya,</i>	in brief also, O Kaunteya.
4	<i>nishthaa jnaanasya yaa paraa.</i>	This is the “ <b>Supreme State of Knowledge</b> ”.

**1** The Siddha or ‘perfected’ person we are talking about has been described in the last verse as the one who is ready to receive knowledge. The use of the word **Siddhim**, as opposed to Sam-Siddhim, gives us confirmation that we are speaking of the “interim perfection”. Such a seeker becomes a **Jnana Yogyata**, one who is eligible for the highest flight in spiritual practice, namely the journey that takes him all the way to union with Brahman, known commonly in Vedanta as Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

**2** Sri Krishna here announces His intention to impart the details of this leg of the spiritual journey. In the process of doing so, the Lord summarises the Jnana Kanda chapters of the *Geeta*.

**3** As this last phase is a very highly complex subject, the Lord in the *Geeta* states it “in brief”. The few who are ready for the practice of such Sadhana will need to look at more detailed texts in the Jnana Kanda of the Vedas, i.e. in the Upanishads, to obtain further knowledge and guidance in the art and science of meditation.

**4** The “Supreme State of Knowledge” refers to the highest state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the divine state of God-Consciousness, and nothing short of it. For this phase of the Path, complete focus is required of all one’s energies, and it is applied with full attention to the spiritual pursuit of meditational practice.

## VERSES ON NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI

The following three verses are written for the general knowledge of most spiritual Sadhakas. Those few who are engaged in intense spiritual practice would need to refer to texts that deal in greater detail on this subject, for example, Sri Shankaracharya’s *Viveka Choodamani* and *Jivanmukti Viveka*. These texts contain the intricacies of Sadhana relevant to this stage in far greater detail.

1. **Verse 51:** the pre-meditation qualifications;
2. **Verse 52:** engagement in the practice of meditation; and
3. **Verse 53:** the post-meditation caution and care one has to take.

### Verse 51:     *The Pre-Meditation Qualifications*

बुद्ध्या विशुद्ध्या युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च ।

शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च

॥ १८-५१॥

buddhyā viśuddhyā yuktō dhr̥tyātmānam niyamya ca |

śabdādīnviṣayāṁstyaktvā rāgadvēṣau vyudasya ca

|| 18-51||

1	<i>Buddhyaa vishuddhyaa yuktah,</i>	<i>Endowed with a <b>pure intellect</b>;</i>
2	<i>dhrityaa aatmaanam niyamya cha;</i>	<i>controlling the mind by <sup>1</sup><b>firmness</b>;</i>
3	<i>shabda-aadeen vishayaan tyakvaa,</i>	<i>renouncing all <u>objects</u> such as <sup>2</sup><b>sound</b>, etc;</i>
4	<i>raga-dweshau vyudasya cha.</i>	<i>and abandoning <sup>3</sup><b>attraction</b> and <b>repulsion</b>;</i>

Four prime requisites have to be ensured before beginning serious meditation:

i) **Buddhyaa Vishuddyaa:** The intellect has to be sufficiently purified and Sattwic as described in 18.30.

ii) **Dhrityaa Aatmaanam:** The fortitude or firmness is to be adequate to ensure that the mind is under control. Sattwic Dhriti is described in verse 18.33.

iii) **Vishayaan Tyaktvaa:** “The renunciation of sound and other objects”. This could be interpreted in two ways:

a. It could be taken in the light of Tyaga as described in verse 18.6. This means renouncing the objects of sense pleasures.

b. The meaning could be more subtle. Renunciation here would mean the giving up of all Karma Kanda rites and rituals involving sacrificing various objects; it would also mean giving up all the Upasanas which involve the chanting (sound) of Mantras, such as Japa,

Vedic chanting, and other practices involving repetition of words. This is to ensure the whole mind is devoted to the single Sadhana of meditation. The point is that there has to be no leakage of energy in any other direction.

**Warning:** This renunciation does not imply that the above practices given up have defects or are inferior. It is done only in the interests of reserving all one's energies for the highest goal. It would be wrong to treat the Karma and Upasana Kandas with disdain.

iv) **Raga-Dweshau Vyudasya:** Giving up likes and dislikes is a primary Sadhana to root out all old desires and stop new ones from forming. It is control of one's mind.

**Verse 52: Engagement in Meditation**

विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाक्कायमानसः ।

ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः

॥ १८-५२॥

viviktasēvī laghvāśī yata vākkāyamānasah |

dhyānayōgaparō nityam vairāgyam samupāśritaḥ

॥ 18-52॥

1	<i>Vivikta sevee laghvaashee,</i>	<i>Dwelling in <sup>4</sup>solitude; eating but <sup>5</sup>little;</i>
2	<i>yata vaak kaaya maanasah;</i>	<i>with speech, body and mind <sup>6</sup>subdued;</i>
3	<i>dhyaana yoga parah nityam,</i>	<i>always engaged in <sup>7</sup>meditation on the Highest;</i>
4	<i>vairaagyam sam-upa-aashritah.</i>	<i>with a firm foundation of <sup>8</sup>dispassion;</i>

When one has passed the requirements of the previous verse, he is said to be ready to plunge deep into meditational practice. This will require the conditions mentioned here:

- 1 Solitude; very little food;
- 2 Reduced bodily activity;
- 3 Intense and prolonged periods of concentration and meditation;
- 4 A firm footing in dispassion.

One may deduce from the above conditions that this is in a very special class of its own. Not everyone is able to devote so much time and energy to spiritual practices like these unless there is a definite thirst for spiritual realisation. It is reserved for very dedicated Sadhakas to follow these instructions. Yet, it is important for all Sadhakas to know that such a high standard is required at the highest level. It is a stage wherein one has to devote himself fully, on a full-time basis, having little other cares to be concerned with.

**Verse 53: Post-Meditation Caution & Care!**

अहङ्कारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम् ।

विमुच्य निर्ममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते

॥ १८-५३॥

ahaṅkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krōdhaṁ parigrahaṁ |

vimucya nirmamaḥ śāntō brahmabhūyāya kalpatē

॥ 18-53॥

1	<i>Ahamkaaram balam darpam,</i>	<sup>9</sup> Egoism, <sup>10</sup> power and <sup>11</sup> arrogance;
2	<i>kaamam krodham pari-graham;</i>	<sup>12</sup> desire, <sup>13</sup> anger and <sup>14</sup> self-aggrandisement –
3	<i>vimuchya nirmamah shaantah,</i>	abandoning these; <sup>15</sup> without mine-ness and with <sup>16</sup> tranquillity;
4	<i>brahmah bhooyaaya kalpate.</i>	such a one is <u>fit</u> for becoming <b>Brahman</b> .

As one progresses in such deep meditation with knowledge of the Self that gives him all the direction and impetus he needs, other obstacles arise. With even the first glimpses of success in meditation, come some Siddhis. One feels that he is suddenly empowered to do great things. This can be dangerous if he allows them to reach his ego.

**1-2** Once the ego catches hold of the fruits of such practice, it will hijack them for its own aggrandisement. All the ugly faces of the ego will rear their heads and clamour for attention. Devious ways will be found to satisfy the ego hungering for name and fame.

Acharyaji gave a graphic description of what could happen if one is not alert at this stage. The feeling can arise: “Look, how great I am, I can look into the future, I can read people’s palms and tell them their future. I can...I can...I can....”

Such arrogance has to be nipped in the bud, using the finer emotions of the higher mind to stamp out the baser emotions of the lower mind.

Other dangers, too exist. Meditators can attract people to themselves very easily. This can open one to the dangers of intimacy with the opposite sex. This is extremely dangerous, and very hard to resist. All one’s Yogic power can be blown in a few minutes of revelling in such thoughts.

**3** This has to be carefully avoided by exercising watchfulness over oneself. No room should be given to heedlessness or Pramaada. “Mine”-ness has to be given up and in its place a calmness or tranquility should be allowed to settle.

**4** Only when all these cautionary steps are taken after meditation has begun, can one hope to reach the destination safely, i.e. “**become one with Brahman**”.

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## 18.8 OTHER PATHS IN THE GEETA

(Verses 54-57, 4 No.)

IN THESE FOUR verses the Lord describes four other types of Yogas by which seekers also come to Him eventually, but by different routes. All of them have already featured in the Geeta. They have given the Geeta a motherly personality – She loves all Her children, no matter how they come to Her. She appears to them as they wish to see Her.

**Jnana Sadhana** has been explained in the previous section.

The other paths or Yogas are:

- i) **Sankhya Yoga**: also called “Raja Yoga” which relates Prakriti with Purusha;
- ii) **Bhakti Yoga**: relates to the worship of the Lord as one’s personal Deity;
- iii) **Karma Yoga**: relates to service of the Lord as one’s Master;
- iv) **Buddhi Yoga**: this term is coined by the Geeta; it is not found anywhere else. It is the “Yoga of Discrimination” and relates to discrimination between the Self and Not-Self.

All these paths merge into one – they all reach the Lord.

### Interconnection of All Yogas: INTEGRAL YOGA

Karma Yoga has been the Lord’s “pet” Yoga, especially suited for Arjuna. Throughout the *Geeta*, we have seen how the Lord always reserves special praise for this path. It is the path which is the safest to follow for most seekers. It forms the foundation upon which all the other Yogas are built. It is the predominant path to move one from dark Tamas to active Rajas. From Rajas to Sattwa, Bhakti Yoga becomes predominant. When Sattwa is reached, Jnana Yoga becomes predominant, with the focus shifting to a thorough knowledge and a firm intellectual understanding of the Lord’s nature.

### Verse 54: Sankhya Yoga

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।

समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम्

॥ १८-५४॥

brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śōcati na kāṅkṣati |

samaḥ sarvēṣu bhūtēṣu madbhaktim labhatē parām

|| 18-54||

1	<i>Brahma bhootah prasann-aatmaa,</i>	<i>Becoming Brahman, serene in the Self,</i>
2	<i>na shochati na kaankshati;</i>	<i>he neither grieves nor desires;</i>
3	<i>samah sarveshu bhooteshu,</i>	<i>the same to all beings,</i>
4	<i>mad-bhaktim labhate paraam.</i>	<i>he obtains supreme devotion unto Me.</i>

1 This is the **Saankhya Yoga** expounded in verses 2.48-51. It is also termed as *Yoga of Equanimity* in the *Geeta*, and appears first in Chapter 2, and then throughout the *Geeta*.

2-3 Even-mindedness is the hallmark of the **Sthitaprajna**. That quality is highlighted here. Balance is the essential characteristic of the Sthitaprajna.



**Verse 55: Bhakti Yoga**

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान्यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।

ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम्

॥ १८-५५॥

bhaktyā māmabhi-jānāti yāvānyaścāsmi tattvataḥ |

tatō mām tattvatō jñātvā viśatē tadanantaram

॥ 18-55॥

1	<i>Bhaktyaa maam abhi-jaanaati,</i>	By <b>Devotion</b> he <u>knows</u> Me,
2	<i>yaavaan yah cha asmi tattwatah;</i>	what and who <u>I am</u> in essence.
3	<i>tatah maam tattwatah jnaatvaa,</i>	Having known Me in My essence,
4	<i>vishate tad anantaram.</i>	he forthwith <u>enters</u> into Me, the Supreme.

This verse describes the essence of **Bhakti Yoga**, and its place in spiritual life.

**1** No Devotion is possible without holding some sort of relationship with Him. The devotee begins by taking the lord as his Master, Friend, Mother, Child, Beloved, etc.

**2** As one progresses with such a relationship, Love rises uppermost in his heart. Love increases as knowledge of the Lord increases. The devotee widens his knowledge to various manifestations in Creation as described in Chapters 7 to 10. Besides seeing the Lord in all he is also shown All in the Lord as the Cosmic Form (Chapter 11).

**3-4** Supreme knowledge heightens his devotion. Thus the path of Bhakti merges with Jnana Yoga. When no difference is seen, the Bhakta “enters into Me, the Supreme.”

**Verse 56: Karma Yoga**

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः ।

मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम्

॥ १८-५६॥

sarvakarmāṇyapi sadā kurvāṇō madvyapāśrayaḥ |

matprasādādavāpnōti śāśvataṁ padamavyayam

॥ 18-56॥

1	<i>Sarva karmaani api sadaa,</i>	Even by doing all <b>Actions</b> always,
2	<i>kurvaanah mad-vyapaashrayah;</i>	and taking <u>refuge</u> in Me,
3	<i>mat-prasaadaat avaapnoti,</i>	by My <u>Grace</u> , he obtains
4	<i>shaashwatam padam avyayam.</i>	the <u>Eternal</u> , <u>Indestructible</u> state or Abode.

This is the direct answer to Arjuna’s predicament in Chapter 1 – the path of **Karma Yoga**, most favoured by Sri Krishna. This verse pays due tribute to the Karma Yogi, the path especially selected for Arjuna, so that he would fulfil his role in the Mahabharata War. The Upakrama (beginning) is matched with the Upasamhara (end), as required in Vedantic texts.

**1** The Lord advised Arjuna as early as Chapters 2 and 3 to stick to Karma Yoga, the universal path by which one can dissolve all his Karma safely by dedicating his actions to the Lord. This is the universal remedy to purify our mind of the evils of action.

**2-3** The two main principles by which one “takes refuge in the Lord”, are Vyavasāyaatmika Buddhi and Samatva Buddhi, i.e. dedication of all actions to Him and accepting whatever He sends as the result of actions. This is the way to win the Lord’s Grace.

**4** Ultimately, Karma Yoga also takes the seeker of Truth to the highest rungs of the spiritual ladder. It is the perfect point for anyone, even without any pre-qualifications, to begin the spiritual journey. As the degree of surrender increases, so does Knowledge of God.

**Verse 57: *Buddhi Yoga***

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।

बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव

॥ १८-५७॥

cētasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi saṁnyasya matparaḥ |

buddhiyōgamupāśritya maccittāḥ satatam bhava

॥ 18-57॥

1	<i>Chetasaa sarva karmaani,</i>	<i>Mentally <u>renouncing</u> all actions</i>
2	<i>mayi sannyasya mat-parah;</i>	<i>in Me; having Me as the highest <u>goal</u>;</i>
3	<i>buddhi-yogamupaashritya,</i>	<i>resorting to the <b>Yoga of Discrimination</b>;</i>
4	<i>mat-chittah satatam bhava.</i>	<i>ever <u>fix</u> your mind on Me.</i>

The “**Yoga of Discrimination**” between the Self and the non-Self, is the Jnani’s path.

**1** The renunciation referred to here is Mukhya Sannyasa, arising out of Gauna or secondary renunciation in the beginning. Arjuna has asked about this path twice but the Lord explained that Arjuna was not ready for it. It is the direct path of the birds which has no footprints for one to follow. The trade name for it is: **Dukha Samyogam Viyoga** – “The Yoga of Disunion from the Union With Sorrow”, and it appears in Chapter 6.23.

**2** This Yogi has the Supreme Being as his highest goal; he is on the same road as the Sannyasin and the Jnana Yogi. He is not interested in any selfish intermediate goal such as heavenly pleasures, etc.

**3** He uses his power of discrimination to steer him along the direct path of Jnana Yoga. He is firmly established in the knowledge of the Self as described by Sri Krishna in Chapter 2 at the very outset. This Yogi is born for the spiritual path. He has all the qualifications needed to tread the direct path. His greatest asset is Viveka or Discrimination, by which he overcomes every obstacle encountered on the path.

**4** Through a firm and thorough understanding of the Self, he is able to fix his mind on the Self and arrive at a state of complete union with the Lord (Brahman). He has no need to follow any social traditions, etc. Having no desires to distract him, his mind is easily fixed on the Lord alone. This is the Yogi who is dearest to the Lord.

Since the above four are summaries of the detailed discussions within the earlier chapters, we have not elaborated upon them here, but stated their main points.

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## 18.9 BREAKING THE EGO BARRIER

(Verses 58-61, 4 No.)

**C**OMMON TO ALL Yogas, is the effort to remove one's **Ego**, or curb it by keeping it within limits. Ultimately, ego-consciousness has to be destroyed completely. However, in the early stages it has to be dealt with by doing appropriate Sadhana, especially cultivation of virtues and eradication of vices.

The following verses, whilst summarizing what has already been said about the elimination of Ego, gives us a new perspective on it. Divine Grace is shown to be a key ingredient in the removal of the Ego.

### **Verse 58: Grace & Egoism Do Not Mix**

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।

अथ चेत्त्वमहङ्कारात् श्रोष्यसि विनङ्क्ष्यसि

॥ १८-५८ ॥

maccittah sarvadurgāṇi matprasādāttariṣyasi |

atha cēttvamahaṅkāraṇna śrōṣyasi vinaṅkṣyasi

|| 18-58||

1	<i>Mat-chittah sarva durgaani,</i>	<i>Thus, <u>fixing your mind</u> on Me, all <u>obstacles</u></i>
2	<i>mat-prasaadaat tarishyasi;</i>	<i>shall be overcome by you, by <b>My Grace</b>;</i>
3	<i>atha chet twam ahamkaaraat,</i>	<i>but if you, from a sense of <b>egoism</b>,</i>
4	<i>na shroshyasi vinankshyasi.</i>	<i>will not hear Me, you shall <u>perish</u>.</i>

Here is the core Sadhana in all Yogas discussed in the previous section. This is the single factor that unifies all Yogas, and which makes Yoga a universal science.

**1** In all Yogas, a seeker “fixes his mind” on the Lord. The Lord asks His devotee to anchor himself in Him who is the Universal Presence, the very source of all beings. Whatever be our chosen path, if we can make this connection to the Lord at all times, our efforts will bear His stamp and receive His blessing. It becomes His responsibility to remove all obstacles from our path. There is great power in just being tuned in to the Lord.

**2 Divine Grace:** When a difficult thing is attempted and we know we cannot do it alone, yet we persist and put all our effort into it with strong faith in the Divine, then He responds and makes things favourable mysteriously. Help comes from various sources in a mysterious manner. We cannot explain it. That is Divine Grace at work. When our effort becomes effortless – that is Grace.

**3-4** However, there is a condition for Grace to work; Grace descends only when we withdraw our Ego. Grace and Ego cannot co-exist.

Ego stands for what we want; Grace is what God wants to give us.

If the Lord's instructions are not followed implicitly, due to the Ego obstructing us from obeying them, the consequences are very serious. If we listen to our Ego's voice, and

obey it instead, the Lord says openly, “*You shall perish!*” That is how fatal disobedience is. A plug that is removed from the wall socket is rendered powerless. It can do nothing.

**Verse 59: *Egoism & Nature – Who Wins?***

यदहङ्कारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।  
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥ १८-५९॥  
*yadahaṅkāramāśritya na yōtsya iti manyasē |*  
*mithyaisa vyavasāyastē prakṛtistvām̐ niyōkṣyati* ॥ 18-59॥

1	<i>Yat ahamkaaram aashritya,</i>	<i>If, taking recourse to <b>egoism</b>,</i>
2	<i>na yotsya iti manyase;</i>	<i>you think, “I shall not fight”,</i>
3	<i>mithyaa eshah vyavasaayah te,</i>	<i><u>vain</u> is such a resolve of yours,</i>
4	<i>prakritih tvaam niyokshyati.</i>	<i>for your <b>nature</b> will <u>compel</u> you!</i>

The Lord now explains what happens when we consciously pull our plug out of the socket that connects us to God. Egoism can be compared to unplugging ourselves from God. Egoism is a plug that stands on its own – it draws no power at all.

**1** If Arjuna for any reason allows his Ego to get the better of him even at this last moment, all his good fortune could alter and he could be back to “square one”. Is this likely to happen to Arjuna who has become so devoted and dear to the Lord?

**2** Eighteen chapters ago, it happened. Arjuna had decided to withdraw from the battle, citing reasons that appeared very sound but were completely out of context.

The Lord is indirectly telling Arjuna that surrender is a moment to moment decision. We have to consciously surrender to Him every moment. If Arjuna slackens in this, there is nothing to stop him from going back into his former state of delusion.

If he allows his Ego the slightest opportunity, it will assert itself and refuse to do his duty. The Lord is aware that such a thing is possible if Arjuna’s will is weak and he succumbs to the voice of his ego. He does not want to see that happen to His disciple.

**3** The Lord warns Arjuna of this possibility. We almost sense that the Lord is Himself praying for that not to happen! Will Arjuna give up his inborn capacity and be gripped once again by another wave of resistance from his ego? Is this the Lord’s anxiety?

No, it is the Lord’s love for Arjuna. The Lord knows too well the formidable obstinacy of the Ego. It can be totally unpredictable, and loves to have a challenge thrown at it.

The question most of us will ask in this situation is, “What makes the Ego so powerful?”

**4** But the Lord makes Arjuna see the situation differently. He presents Nature as being more powerful than the Ego, and forces Arjuna to ask the opposite question, “What makes Nature so powerful that it will overpower my ego?”

The Lord sees that His only hope of saving Arjuna from a last-minute relapse is by making him see his own strength within. His inborn nature as a Kshatriya is to fight. It will not let him avoid his duty. Arjuna’s Kshatriya nature will assert itself. It will tell him not to tolerate injustice. That nature will rise up at the appropriate time and force him to fight, even against his own will.

This suggestion is planted in Arjuna's mind to weaken his ego. The truth we see here is that one's nature is more powerful than one's ego. What is the explanation for this? . . .

**Verse 60: Delusion & Karma – Who Wins?**

स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धः स्वेन कर्मणा ।  
कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात्करिष्यस्यवशोऽपि तत् ॥ १८-६०॥  
svabhāvajēna kauntēya nibaddhaḥ svēna karmaṇā |  
kartuṁ nēcchasi yanmōhātkariṣyasyavaśō:'pi tat ॥ 18-60॥

1	<i>Swabhaava-jena kaunteya,</i>	<i>Born of your own <u>nature</u>, O Son of Kunti,</i>
2	<i>nibaddhah svena karmanaa;</i>	<i>is your own <b>Karma</b> which binds you;</i>
3	<i>kartum na icchasi yat mohaata,</i>	<i>that which by <b>delusion</b> you wish not to do,</i>
4	<i>karishyasi avashah api tat.</i>	<i>even that you shall do, <u>helplessly</u> (by nature).</i>

Egoism is really a product of **Delusion**, and delusion is illusory. It is a fictitious quantity imposed on the human will by the indiscriminating intellect.

Nature on the other hand boils down to one's **Karma**, surfacing at the right moment to work itself out of the system. Our bundle of Karma makes up our nature. We are born with certain tendencies and talents according to our previous Karma. In this sense it is a more fundamental force than the Ego. So it can overwrite the Ego. It has a claim on our will that is more fundamental than the claim that Ego has on it.

The Ego may decide it wants to do something, but when the time comes, it is nature that always wins over it. So, egoism versus nature is really a battle between delusion and Karma. And Karma always wins. Our Karmic tendency is what impels us towards action.

Acharyaji closed very forcefully with an excellent quotation:

***“Our Swabhava holds us in prison. To act or not to act is not the question we face. To be bound or to be liberated is the real question!”***

**Verse 61: The Lord's Puppet Show**

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।  
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥ १८-६१॥  
īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām hṛddēśē:'rjuna tiṣṭhati |  
bhrāmayansarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā ॥ 18-61॥

1	<i>Eeshvarah sarva-bhootaanaam,</i>	<i>In all beings, the <b>Supreme Lord</b></i>
2	<i>hriddeshe arjuna tishthati;</i>	<i><u>dwells</u> in their heart, O Arjuna,</i>
3	<i>bhraamayana sava-bhootaani,</i>	<i>causing them all to <u>revolve</u>, (as if mounted)</i>
4	<i>yantra aaroodhaani maayayaa.</i>	<i>like <b>puppets</b> on a machine by His <u>illusive power</u>.</i>

The above argument can be summarized beautifully by the metaphor that the Lord has employed in this verse – the **Lord's Puppet Show**.

**1-2** Our sense of “doership” gets a jolt when we realize the full impact of this metaphor. We really do not do anything. Our so-called “self-will” does not exist! Why do we then pride ourselves that we are acting? Why do we boast our deeds?

This surely has to give the death-blow to our ego. It has to make us think and reconsider our actions. It has to concede victory to the Divine Will. It has no choice.

**3-4** Our helplessness in the matter is seen beyond any doubt when we study this brilliant metaphor. We are merely puppets mounted on a machine, with the Lord pulling the strings. Howevermuch we may think that we are acting out our own will, the truth is that there is a Divine Will in charge of all the actions in the universe. We cannot but do what the Divine wills us to do.

With that final account of the powerlessness of the Ego, the Lord has attempted to avert a recurrence of Arjuna's delusion at the start of the Geeta. He has weakened Arjuna's faith in his Ego, and given him a wider perspective to act from. Arjuna has been encouraged to think from the perspective of society's need as a whole.

We live in a society. We are born into it and die in it. We need to make our contribution to promote its growth. The individual dies but the society lives on. Whatever contribution we can make in life should be for the development of the society we live in.

The Lord has thus presented His full case relevant to Arjuna's situation on the battlefield. He has virtually pressed the “Pause” button on the war in order to put across His message to Arjuna to fight for the cause of righteousness.

In the next section, Sri Krishna has a concluding exchange with Arjuna, which turns out to have not only the historic importance of settling the great conflict of the time, but providing a means to settle every conflict that may fall to the lot of mankind for all times to come. For, through the Geeta, the Lord fulfills His role as an Avatara for all Ages to come.

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## 18.10 THE LORD'S PROMISE

(Verses 62-66, 5 No.)

**T**HIS SECTION COMPLETES the actual teaching of the *Geeta*. The theme of this last piece of advice given to Arjuna is SURRENDER. The Lord sees Arjuna as a fit instrument for His work. He expresses how dear Arjuna is to Him. Every verse here pulsates with His overflowing love for His dearest disciple.

Acharyaji called this section of five verses as “some of the best verses in the *Geeta*.”

### Verse 62: “Fly Unto Him for Refuge!”

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम्

॥ १८-६२॥

*tamēva śaraṇaṁ gaccha sarvabhāvēna bhārata |*

*tatprasādātparāṁ śāntiṁ sthānaṁ prāpsyasi śāśvatam || 18-62||*

1	<i>Tam eva sharanam gaccha,</i>	<i>Fly unto Him for refuge,</i>
2	<i>sarva-bhaavena bhaarata;</i>	<i>with all your being, O Arjuna;</i>
3	<i>tat prasaadaat paraam shaantim,</i>	<i>by His <u>mere Grace</u>, the supreme <b>Peace</b></i>
4	<i>sthaanam praapsyasi shaashvatam.</i>	<i>and Eternal Abode you shall attain.</i>

Surrender from the disciple and Grace from above are the two ingredients that make the happy ending in spiritual life.

**1-2** This verse sets in one's mind a beautiful picture of the disciple “flying unto Him”, a picture of total **Surrender**. It is as a refugee, but that need not mean one who is in dire straits as far as his worldly needs are concerned. This is a spiritual refuge, wanting to escape from the relentless cycle of taking birth in such an illusory world. That is the nature of this surrender. It is not in beggary that he calls upon the Lord, but in deep, pure love; from a heart that knows no other love but that of the Lord.

**3** Surrender is one half of the picture. The other is the Lord, with all compassion, reaching out for the hand of His dearest disciple, to lift him out of his bondage and into the freedom of His Infinite Being. This is called **Grace** – love of the Lord in its purest form – manifesting in the life of the disciple.

**4** The Lord's bosom is the fittest place for a devotee to be. It is the Abode where he finds Eternal rest.

### Verse 63: “Act As You Please”

इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद्गुह्यतरं मया ।

विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु

॥ १८-६३॥

iti tē jñānamākhyātām guhyādgūhyataram mayā |  
vimṛśyaitadaśēṣeṇa yathēcchasi tathā kuru

|| 18-63||

1	<i>Iti te jnaanam aakhyaatam,</i>	<i>Thus has <u>wisdom</u> been declared to you</i>
2	<i>guhyaat guhyataram mayaa;</i>	<i>by Me – a <u>secret</u> greater than all secrets!</i>
3	<i>vimrishya etat asheshena,</i>	<i><u>Reflect</u> upon this fully,</i>
4	<i>yathaa icchasi tathaa kuru.</i>	<i>and then “<b>Act as you please.</b>”</i>

**1** There never was a formality in this entire discourse. It was not a study class, with a student listening to a lecturer. But if it was, then this would be where the teaching ends and the summary begins. The traditional ‘Iti’, meaning “Thus”, is used to end a quotation. Here, with no word before it, the implication is that the whole Geeta before it is the quotation. This ‘iti’ is very special – it marks the end of the entire text.

In one word, the entire Geeta is summed up by the Lord Himself as “**Wisdom**”!

**2** If a second word is needed, it, too, has been chosen by the Lord. It is “**Secret**”. The Geeta is an open secret; the greatest of all secrets. At the halfway mark, the Lord said it was a “Kingly Science and a Kingly Secret.” Now it is just a secret! To describe a secret with even one word, would take away its ‘secretness’. It shall ever remain a secret treasured most of all by the earnest spiritual seeker. Like Arjuna, we, too, have benefitted from this secret teaching.

Great saints have been produced over thousands of years by this secret. Every one of them has sung its glory at the top of his voice. What a way to keep a secret! The Geeta must be a different kind of secret. Perhaps, its only secret is that no one can get to the bottom of it. It’s a treasure that is Infinite, even as its author is the Infinite Being. An Infinite treasure can never be measured – its true measurement will ever remain a secret!

**3-4** Indian spirituality has one great tradition from Vedic times – it is never thrust upon a student. The student is always highly respected. He is given the freedom to make up his own mind in matters related to his spiritual growth. All the information he needs has been given; now he needs to reflect upon it carefully and then decide.

However, three more verses are added, which are the Teacher’s prerogative. In this case it is Sri Krishna’s pure love for His disciple that urges Him to add these verses:

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**Verse 64:** “*You Are Most Dear to Me*”

सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः ।

इष्टोऽसि मे दृढमिति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम्

|| १८-६४||

sarvagūhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu mē paramaṁ vacaḥ |

iṣṭō:'si mē dṛḍhamiti tatō vakṣyāmi tē hitam

|| 18-64||

1	<i>Sarva guhya tamam bhooyah,</i>	<i>Again, most secret of all,</i>
2	<i>shrunu me paramam vachah;</i>	<i>do thou hear My supreme word;</i>
3	<i>Ishtah asi me dridham iti,</i>	<i>“<b>You are most dear to Me</b>” –</i>
4	<i>tatah vakshyaami te hitam.</i>	<i>therefore, I will tell you what I think is good.</i>



**3-4** Then comes the promise of the Lord to His disciple. It is usually the disciple who makes a promise to the Lord to do his Sadhana faithfully. But here the Lord is making a firm promise to the disciple, assuring him that he (the disciple) will certainly come to Him alone.

In all these ways, we witness the drama of the situation before us.

**Verse 66:**     *“Arjuna, Grieve Not!”*

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः

॥ १८-६६॥

sarvadharmānparityajya māmēkaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja |

aham tvā sarvapāpēbhyō mōkṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

|| 18-66||

1	<i>Sarva dharmaan parityajya,</i>	<i>Abandoning <u>all duties</u> (of body, mind, intellect)</i>
2	<i>maam ekam sharanam vraja;</i>	<i>take <u>refuge</u> in Me alone;</i>
3	<i>aham twaa sarva paapebhyah,</i>	<i>thee, from all sins, I</i>
4	<i>moksha-yishyaami maa shuchah.</i>	<i>shall <u>liberate</u> – <b><i>grieve not!</i></b></i>

**1-2** This is the final instruction given by the Lord. For that reason it is worth paying more attention to it. The final message is to give up all duties (this would refer to all Niyata Karma or obligatory duties). From what we have learned about these duties, they are to be given up only when the person is ripe to take up Sannyasa, not before that. Thus, is Krishna offering Sannyasa to Arjuna at the end of the Geeta?

The answer would be “Yes” if Arjuna had the capacity to fulfil the condition that follows – “Take refuge in Me alone.” If Arjuna is not able to do that, he is required to do what the Lord has advised him, i.e. get up and fight in the war. That is the Karma Yoga that Arjuna is called upon to do.

**4** In His first words to Arjuna, back in v2.11, the Lord spoke about the grief that enveloped Arjuna. Here, in His closing words, He returns to the same theme and assures Arjuna that he shall be freed from all grief. The actual teaching of the *Geeta* thus ends on a positive note, with the purpose begun now fulfilled.

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## 18.11 IMPARTING THE GEETA

(Verses 67-71, 5 No.)

### Verse 67: *Imparting This Knowledge*

इदं ते नातपस्काय नाभक्ताय कदाचन ।  
न चाशुश्रूषवे वाच्यं न च मां योऽभ्यसूयति ॥ १८-६७॥

idam tē nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana |  
na cāśuśrūṣavē vācyaṁ na ca mām yō:'bhyasūyati ॥ 18-67॥

1	<i>Idam te na <b>atapaskaaya</b>,</i>	<i>By you – never to one who is devoid of <u>austerity</u>;</i>
2	<i>na <b>abhaktaaya</b> kadaachana;</i>	<i>never to one who is not <u>devoted</u>; and</i>
3	<i>na cha <b>ashushrooshave</b> vaachyam,</i>	<i>never to one who does not render <u>service</u>, or desire to <u>listen</u> – is this to be <b>imparted</b>;</i>
4	<i>na cha maam yah <b>abhyasooyati</b>.</i>	<i>and never to one who <u>talks ill</u> of Me.</i>

### Upadesh Vidhi: “Conditions When Imparting Geeta”

Four conditions are given here when the Geeta should not be taught:

i) **Atapaskaaya**: To one who does not practice any austerity. For instance, the Geeta should not be taught or heard while one is having his meals or is snacking. That would be disrespectful to the Geeta. The mental attitude should always be receptive to the knowledge that is being conveyed.

ii) **Abhaktaaya**: To one who is not devoted. For instance, there should not be any other concurrent activity engaged in while teaching or listening to the Geeta, such as taking a cellphone call, giving an instruction to someone, etc. Devotion is shown by giving one's whole mind to the study.

iii) **Ashushrooshava**: a. To one who does not render any service. Service is the sign of love. No service means there is no actual love for the Geeta, so the attention will not be there. Love and humility will induce the correct attitude.

b. To one who has no desire to listen. No one should be forced to listen to the Geeta if he has no desire for it. It will be a wasted effort.

iv) **Abhyasooyati**: To one who talks ill of the Lord, i.e. one who finds fault in the Lord. When the Lord uses the terms “I” and “Me”, some people think it is out of ego. Such people already have a bias against the Lord, and so they will not benefit from the teaching.

Viewed from the student's angle, this verse tells what we have to avoid if we are listening to or studying the *Geeta*. The study should be taken very seriously, with great alertness, devotion, love for the Lord, and readiness to serve Him in all possible ways.

**Verse 68: The Teacher of the Geeta**

य इदं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।

भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयः

॥ १८-६८॥

ya idam paramam guhyam madbhaktēṣvabhidhāsyati |

bhaktim mayi parāṁ kṛtvā māmēvaiṣyatyasaṁśayaḥ || 18-68||

1	<i>Yah idam paramam guhyam,</i>	<i>This <u>supreme secret</u> – he who</i>
2	<i>mad-bhakteshu abhi-dhaasyati;</i>	<i>shall <b>teach</b> it to My devotees,</i>
3	<i>bhaktim mayi paraam kritvaa,</i>	<i>while having supreme <u>devotion</u> to Me,</i>
4	<i>maam eva eshyati asamshayah.</i>	<i>he shall doubtless <u>come unto Me</u>.</i>

**1** Whenever the knowledge is spoken of as a secret, it means that it is a very valuable and precious knowledge. One should always have an attitude of reverence and value towards the knowledge contained in the Geeta.

**2-3** The teaching itself should not be done in a way that displays one's scholarship, but rather in an atmosphere and setting which glorifies the Lord, such as in a temple or other sacred place, where people will observe the proper rules to listen to it.

The devotion and humility of the teacher are of prime concern. A teacher who has this quality is very dear to the Lord. This implies that the teacher should also be practicing the teachings to the best of his capacity. He should be doing some regular Sadhana. He should reflect the spirit of the Geeta in his own personal life.

**4** Liberation is promised to such an ardent teacher of the Geeta.

**Verse 69: The Teacher is Most Dear**

न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः ।

भविता न च मे तस्मादन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि

॥ १८-६९॥

na ca tasmānmanuṣyēṣu kaścinmē priyakṛttamaḥ |

bhavitā na ca mē tasmādanyaḥ priyatarō bhuvi || 18-69||

1	<i>Na cha tasmaat manushyeshu,</i>	<i>Among men, there is none other</i>
2	<i>kashchit me priya-krittamah;</i>	<i>who does <b>dearer service</b> to Me.</i>
3	<i>bhavitaa na cha me tasmaat,</i>	<i>And, than such a one, there shall be to Me</i>
4	<i>anyah priya-tarah bhoovi.</i>	<i>none other on earth who is <b>dearer</b>.</i>

**1-2** The greatest service is considered to be the teaching of the Geeta. By teaching the Geeta, the continuity of the knowledge within society is assured. The knowledge is carried from generation to generation. After all, it is the most precious teaching. It has the power to bind society, to make all work harmoniously together, to put their ego aside and work for the common good. So it has all the reason to be perpetuated for the well-being of mankind.



**3-4** The devout Teacher is so dear to the Lord, that another verse is set aside especially to honour him. The Lord Himself has just exemplified how powerful the teaching of the Geeta is. He has transformed a grieving Arjuna into a resolute warrior, and at the same time taught him to do his duty as an act of worship to the Lord. A teacher may not even be aware of how he is helping his listeners to grow spiritually.

**Verse 70:     *The Student of the Geeta***

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमावयोः ।

ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः

॥ १८-७०॥

adhyēṣyatē ca ya imaṁ dharmyaṁ saṁvādamāvayōḥ |

jñānayajñēna tēnāhamiṣṭaḥ syāmiti mē matih

॥ 18-70॥

1	<i>Adhyeshyate cha yah imam,</i>	<i>And he who shall <b>study</b> this</i>
2	<i>dharmyam samvaadam aavayoh;</i>	<i>sacred dialogue of ours,</i>
3	<i>jnaana yajnena tena aham,</i>	<i>by that “Sacrifice of Wisdom” by him, I shall</i>
4	<i>ishtah syaam iti me matih.</i>	<i>have been worshipped – such is My conviction.</i>

Now the Lord turns his attention to the student of the Geeta.

**1** Study itself is a most worthy pursuit. A studious mind is a great asset to society. It is such a mind that can gather in itself the precious knowledge and experience of the past and put it to use in the present. Study, in any field, secular or spiritual, has been the efficient cause of the progress of mankind.

Secular study may produce brilliant people who can create magnificent projects, but who will still be prone to using their knowledge for harmful purposes. Spiritual study, if undertaken in the proper prescribed manner, can produce the good, law-abiding citizen.

Among such spiritual texts, the Bhagavad Geeta stands out because it produces the “World Citizen”, the one who sees all humanity as one family. He sees unity where others see diversity. Such people are the dire need of this world. This is the special benefit of studying a text like the Bhagavad Geeta. For this reason, it is considered to be the most worthy book to be studied.

**2** The Geeta is a sacred dialogue, uplifting to others, containing valuable spiritual instructions, valuable knowledge about the spiritual path, valuable information about our traditions – everything about it is valuable. It also enshrines the correct attitude between teacher and disciple. Krishna was the perfect teacher and Arjuna was the exemplary disciple.

**3** The study of the Geeta is considered to be a “Jnana Yajna” – the sacrifice of knowledge or wisdom. In this Yajna, the student offers his ignorance into the fire of knowledge. When done as a Sadhana in this manner, the student is richly benefited with purification of his heart.

**4** The very study thus takes on the form of worship of the Lord. One worships the Lord through his intellect. In return, the Prasad one gets from such worship is a good, virtuous intellect, something very precious! In the Indian tradition, study is always admired and encouraged. Religious study is considered to be most honourable and praiseworthy.

**Verse 71: The Listener of the Geeta**

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः ।

सोऽपि मुक्तः शुभाँल्लोकान्प्राप्नुयात्पुण्यकर्मणाम्

॥ १८-७१॥

śraddhāvānanasūyaśca śṛṇuyādapi yō narah |

sō:'pi muktaḥ śubhāṁllōkānprāpnuyātpuṇyakarmaṇām || 18-71||

1	<i>Shraddhaavaan anasooyah cha,</i>	<i>Full of <u>faith</u> and free from <u>malice</u>,</i>
2	<i>shrunuyaata api yah narah;</i>	<i>even the man who <b>merely</b> hears it,</i>
3	<i>sah api muktaḥ shubhaan lokaan,</i>	<i>he, too, after death, to the <u>happy worlds</u> of</i>
4	<i>praapnuyaata punya karmanaam.</i>	<i>those who have done <u>good deeds</u>, he goes.</i>

Our attention turns to the **listener** of the Geeta. A listener may, of course, be one of the students as described above, but we are now viewing him from the angle of a listener, not a student.

**1-2** Just the fact that someone listens to the Geeta, whether it is a talk on the book or just the recital of the Samskrit verses, is worthy of praise by the Lord. Such a person may not understand the meaning, true, yet he has the faith that he is listening to something sacred. He listens with a feeling of reverence in his heart.

While listening with such an attitude, he is filled with thoughts of devotion. At least, he is free from thoughts of dislike and hatred for that period. His mind is uplifted and rises above worldly concerns for the duration of the chanting. That itself gives him a measure of benefit which many a scholar will not get if he listens with a view to criticise the teaching!

**3-4** Fulfilling these two conditions, the Lord promises that he, too, will go to the “happy worlds”, i.e. to heavenly worlds, after death.

This means that he earns merits just by listening to the Geeta. It becomes a Sadhana.

In the case of all three – the teacher, the student and the listener – these verses should not be seen as mere praise for praise sake. It is the Lord who is saying this, and the Lord will not make empty praises. He is appreciating all three for their particular contribution. And all three people will get the results due to them as mentioned in the verses.

In fact, if the spirit of the above praises is extended a little, we may add other people involved in the process as well. For example, those who organise such Jnana Yajnas; those who assist in the technical side by offering their skills in handling the audio-visual recording of such events; the broadcasting of it over the worldwide web; the transcribing of these talks so that they may be published for wider circulation. If not connected in any of these ways, even those who are involved in sponsoring such events by donating towards their cost, they, too, surely receive some measure of the merits due to their contributions.

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## 18.12 A CONVERSATION MOST THRILLING

(Verses 72-78, 7 No.)

**WE** HAVE COME TO the concluding section of the entire Geeta. It is by the Grace of the Lord that this Geeta Yajna has been possible. It is by the Lord's Grace that readers and writers of such a great text are able to come to this point after days of ardent reading and writing. They, too, may be included in the spirit of the above tribute paid by the Lord.

The Lord makes a loving enquiry of Arjuna, and receives a most appropriate answer from him. Then follow Sanjaya's beautiful concluding remarks about the glory of the Divine Teacher and the Divine student. He expresses his own good fortune of having had the unique divine gift of "eavesdropping" on this divine dialogue. He is grateful for the way in which he is personally benefited by it.

### Verse 72:     *The Lord's Loving Enquiry*

कच्चिदेतच्छ्रुतं पार्थ त्वयैकाग्रेण चेतसा ।

कच्चिदज्ञानसम्मोहः प्रनष्टस्ते धनञ्जय

॥ १८-७२॥

kaccidētacchrutaṁ pārtha tvayaikāgrēṇa cētasā |

kaccidajñānasammōhaḥ pranaṣṭastē dhanañjaya

॥ 18-72॥

1	<i>Kacchit etat shrutam paartha,</i>	<i>Has this been heard, O Son of Pritha,</i>
2	<i>twayaa ekaagrena chetasaa;</i>	<i>by you with a <b>single-pointed</b> mind?</i>
3	<i>kacchit ajnaana-sam-moha,</i>	<i>Has the <b>delusion</b> caused by your <u>ignorance</u></i>
4	<i>pranashtah te dhananjaya.</i>	<i>been <u>dispelled</u> from you, O Dhananjaya?</i>

This is the first instance in the *Geeta* of Sri Krishna asking Arjuna a question. We can make a reasonable extrapolation of His previous question to Arjuna – it must have been just *before* the *Geeta* began: "Where do you want Me to take you in this chariot, Arjuna?"

What we have in this verse typifies the Indian tradition in imparting spiritual knowledge. It is the teacher's duty to always check if the student has understood him correctly. If he has not, then the true teacher has to explain the portions that have not been understood all over again. This is the tradition of teaching, and it is captured in this verse in the Lord's own words!

The teacher should not just walk away after "delivering" his discourse! This is not a business contract – where one does his job, gets paid for it, and walks out!

This is a lesson for all teachers of the *Geeta*. They should never take it for granted that the students have understood everything correctly.

In the process we learn from the Lord of the two most important ingredients that have to be present in a dialogue of this nature:

**1-2 i) Ekaagrena:** “a single-pointed mind”. This is the student’s contribution. He has to supply this item if he wishes to have **Understanding**. This comes of its own accord if there is a strong desire to learn.

**3-4 ii) Sam-Moha Pranashtah:** “dispelling of delusion”. This is the teacher’s contribution. If the teacher possesses the knowledge and the teaching skill, then there is no doubt that the **Delusion** in the student will be removed. Just as a medicine will remove disease, so also knowledge is sure to remove ignorance, and with it the delusion.

In the pure-hearted, knowledge always sinks in deeply, where it is needed. This was the case with Arjuna . . .

**Verse 73: Arjuna’s Delusion Dispelled**

अर्जुन उवाच ।

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।

स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव

॥ १८-७३॥

arjuna uvāca |

naṣṭō mōhaḥ smṛtirlabdhā tvatprasādānmayācyuta |

sthitō:'smi gatasandēhaḥ kariṣyē vacanaṁ tava

|| 18-73||

	<i>Arjuna uvaacha:</i>	<i>Arjuna said:</i>
1	<i>Nashtah mohah smritih labdhaa,</i>	<b><i>Destroyed is my Delusion; regained is my <u>memory</u>.</i></b>
2	<i>tvat prasaadaat mayaa achyuta;</i>	Through Your <u>Grace</u> to me, O Achyuta,
3	<i>sthitah asmi gata-sandehah,</i>	I am firm; my <u>doubts</u> are gone;
4	<i>karishye vachanam tava.</i>	<b><i>I will certainly act according to Your bidding.</i></b>

In crisp, clear and confident words comes Arjuna’s reply.

We see the clarity of Arjuna in the efficiency of the words he uses. Within the space of a single verse, he has managed to put across six thoughts, and that, too, in a rhythmical manner – Pada by Pada he conveys 2-1-2-1 ideas, in measured confidence. Here, again, the credit is Sri Veda Vyasa’s; he never forgets the dynamics of any situation.

All six thoughts are presented in the correct sequence:

**1a** i) The original problem, Arjuna’s **Delusion**, is destroyed;

**1b** ii) That produced a change in Arjuna. He remembers his **duty** on the battlefield as before;

**2** iii) He acknowledges that these benefits are due to the Lord’s **Grace**;

**3a** iv) His **recovery** of himself is firm, unshakable;

**3b** v) The firmness is a result of all his **doubts** having got completely cleared through Brahma Jnana, not any other temporary way; and

**4** vi) He has something to look forward to – to execute the Lord’s **command**!

It is, indeed, a perfect answer to a perfect Teaching.

It meets with every expectation of the Teacher.

It makes us feel proud of the great Indian spiritual tradition.

We can almost see the smile of approval – and relief, no doubt! – that must have come over Sri Krishna’s face as he heard this reply.

If Arjuna had not understood, or had not decided to act firmly, the Lord, without hesitation, would have repeated the entire Geeta to him!

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**Verse 74: *Glory of the Divine Dialogue***

सञ्जय उवाच ।  
इत्यहं वासुदेवस्य पार्थस्य च महात्मनः ।  
संवादमिममश्रौषमद्भुतं रोमहर्षणम्  
sañjaya uvāca |  
ityaham vāsudēvasya pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ |  
saṁvādamimamaśrauṣamadbhutaṁ rōmaharṣaṇam || 18-74||

	<i>Sanjaya uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sanjaya said:</i>
1	<i>Iti aham vaasudevasya,</i>	<i>Thus, between the high-souled ones, Sri Vasudev and Partha, I</i>
2	<i>paarthasya cha mahaatmanah;</i>	
3	<i>samvaadam imam ashrausham,</i>	<i>have heard this divine dialogue – full of</i>
4	<i>adbhutam roma-harshanam.</i>	<i>wonder and which causes the hair to stand on end.</i>

Sri Veda Vyasaji’s main actors are withdrawn from the stage. On comes the programme director, Sanjaya, to do the needful – the Vote of Thanks.

**1-2** Sanjaya was the direct and sole hearer of this entire dialogue when it took place, due to the power bestowed upon him by Sri Veda Vyasaji (see next verse).

**3-4** When he heard it, he was struck with wonder from beginning to end. There must have been amazement in him. He was on a battlefield, not in a board-room. He would have expected the talk to flow along a different line altogether – war strategy, intrigue, attack, and so forth. But there was no such thing.

The dialogue produced was of sheer wisdom pouring out of the Lord into a vessel called Arjuna – well-prepared and empty of all preconceived notions.

**Roma-Harshanam:** “Horripilation” is a poor English translation. Acharyaji gave us the literal meaning of the Samskrit words. They mean “*the hairs are happy*” – the whole body is rejoicing! That is more like what could have happened to Sanjaya.

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**Verse 75: *Veda Vyasaji Acknowledged***

व्यासप्रसादाच्छ्रुतवानेतदुह्यमहं परम् ।  
योगं योगेश्वरात्कृष्णात्साक्षात्कथयतः स्वयम्  
vyāsaprasādācchrutavānētadguhyamaham param |  
yōgam yōgēśvarātkṛṣṇātsākṣātkathayataḥ svayam || 18-75||





These two verses speak for themselves. Sanjaya cannot stop replaying the tape again and again in his mind. And every time he does so he goes through a round of rejoicing that leaves his hair standing permanently on end!

That must have happened even as he recounted the dialogue to the aged King.

For the sake of curiosity, we may ask, What effect would it have had on King Dhritarashtra? History answers that question for us – “None at all!”

The poetic enhancement of using two words twice, in two consecutive verses, in the same position in both verses – this is a skill that only Sri Veda Vyasaji can produce with the perfection of an artist.

Why two verses? One glorifies the dialogue, the words; the other glorifies the Form. Name and form are what this world is made of. Sanjaya is glorifying the manifestation of Divinity on earth!

Sanjaya cannot stop remembering these words. It has become a Japa for him, a sacred Sadhana by which he will never forget the Lord. The message is that for us, too, the same can take place if we diligently take refuge in the Geeta as being the words of the Lord coming directly to us, straight into our hearts.

**Verse 78:     *Divinity Combined With Dexterity***

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।

तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम

॥ १८-७८॥

yatra yōgēśvarahḥ kṛṣṇō yatra pāṛthō dhanurdharahḥ |

tatra śrīrvijayō bhūtirdhruvā nītimatirmama

|| 18-78||

1	<i>Yatra yogeshwarah krishnah,</i>	<i>Wherever there is Krishna, the Lord of Yoga,</i>
2	<i>yatra paarthah dhanuh dharah;</i>	<i>wherever there is Arjuna, ready with his bow,</i>
3	<i>tatra shreeh vijayah bhootih,</i>	<i>there are prosperity, victory, growth, and</i>
4	<i>dhruvaa neetih matih mama.</i>	<i>firm and steady policy; this is my conviction.</i>

Sri Veda Vyasaji’s success in etching the Geeta permanently on the tablet of human history lies in his skill to write the Geeta directly on the canvas of our restless minds. How difficult that must be would surely be known to him. How does he keep our minds still enough so that he can get a chance to write upon it?

His answer is the graphic simile, metaphor, and any other means that language offers to serve as a tool to catch the mind of man.

Here, the Master poet has personified Divinity in Krishna and Dexterity in Arjuna. When the two meet, it is time to start writing the pages of glorious history – unforgettable, profound, heart-melting, soul-stirring, intellectually captivating and inspiring us to action.

This translates into “Prosperity, Victory, Growth and firm, steady Policy”.

How did the *Geeta* begin? When Bhishma fell on the battlefield, it came as a shock to King Dhritarashtra. He immediately called for Sanjaya, known for his neutral, unbiased reporting, to tell him what is actually happening. Sanjaya presented the whole report without any bias, although we know that his loyalty lay with Krishna for His Divinity, and



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with Arjuna for his Dexterity. He always knew that the meeting of these two can never cause failure. The King was too clouded to see this pair's invincibility.

Are we going to make the same mistake?

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु  
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे  
**मोक्षसंन्यासयोगो** नाम अष्टादशोऽध्यायः ॥ १८ ॥

ōṃ tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu  
brahmavidyāyām yōgaśāstrē śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvādē  
mōkṣasaṁnyāsayōgō nāma aṣṭādaśo'dhyāyaḥ ॥ 18 ॥

### **THE CONCLUDING MANTRA**

शान्ताकारं भुजगशयनं पद्मनाभं सुरेशम् ।  
विश्वाधारं गगनसदृशं मेघवर्णं शुभाङ्गम् ।  
लक्ष्मीकान्तं कमलनयनं योगिभिर्ध्यानगम्यम् ।  
वन्दे विष्णुं भवभयहरं सर्वलोकैकनाथम् ॥

śāntākāraṁ bhujagaśayanaṁ padmanābhaṁ surēśam |  
viśvādhāraṁ gaganasadṛśaṁ mēghavarṇaṁ śubhāṅgam |  
lakṣmīkāntaṁ kamalanayanaṁ yōgibhirdhyānagamyam |  
vandē viṣṇuṁ bhavabhayaḥaram sarvalōkaikanātham ॥

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Om Tat Sat!

END OF DISCOURSE 18

**“THE YOGA OF LIBERATION THROUGH RENUNCIATION & SURRENDER”**

