

# **BHAGAVADGITA**

**English translation of Sri Ramanuja's Sanskrit Commentary - Swami**

**Adidevananda**

**Chapter 18**

**RO**

18.1 Arjuna said -- Both Sannyasa and Tyaga as a means for release are enjoined in such Srutis: 'Not by rituals, nor by progeny, nor by rituals, nor by progeny, nor by wealth but by Tyaga alone do some attain immortality ...' (Ma. Na., 5.14). Ascertaining the truth about the Supreme Reality from a knowledge of Vedanta, and becoming purified in mind by the means of Sannyasa Yoga, these Yatis (ascetics), at the dissolution of their bodies, attain the Lord who is higher than the freed selves and become liberated from bondage' (Man. U., 3.2.6). I want to know separately the truth, viz., whether Tyaga and Sannyasa are synonymous or not. The import is this. Do these two terms Sannyasa and Tyaga have different meanings or do they signify the same thing? If they signify different things, I want to know their different natures. If they are synonymous, their identical nature should be elucidated. Then, in order to prove that the nature of both is identical and that it is such and such, the Lord explains, showing the disagreements among some disputants:

18.2 The Lord said -- Some scholars understand that Sannyasa is complete relinquishment of desire-prompted acts. Some other wise men say that the meaning of the term Tyaga, according to the Sastras dealing with release, is relinquishment of the fruits not only of all desiderative

(Kamya), but also of obligatory and occasional, duties . Here, the problem is, whether the Tyaga taught in the Sastras concern desiderative acts themselves, or fruits of all acts. Sri Krsna has used the terms Sannyasa in one place and Tyaga elsewhere. From this it is understood that Sri Krsna uses the terms Tyaga and Sannyasa as synonyms. Likewise, the decisive teaching is about Tyaga alone in the statement: 'Hear My decision, O Arjuna, about Tyaga' (18.4). That the terms are synonymously used to denote the same sense, is conclusively established from such passages as: 'But the renunciation (Sannyasa) of obligatory work is not proper. Abandonment (Tyaga) of it through delusion is declared to be Tamasika' (18.7); and 'To those who have not renounced the fruits of actions, threefold are the consequences after death --- undesirable, desirable and mixed. But to those who have renounced, none whatsoever' (18.12).

18.3 Some sages, viz., the adherents of Kapila and those Vaidikas who agree with his creed, contend that all acts such as sacrifices etc., should be renounced by aspirants for release, as they bind even as desires and other similar defects tend to bind. Other learned men say that acts like sacrifices etc., should not be renounced.

18.4 Regarding contradictory versions on Tyaga among disputants, listen from Me My decision. Tyaga has been described by Me in respect of actions prescribed by the scriptures from three points of view: (1) as referring to fruits, (2) as referring to acts themselves and, (3) as referring

to agency. It is contained in the statement, 'Surrendering all your actions to Me with a mind focussed on the self,' and 'Free from desire and selfishness and cured of fever --- fight' (3.30). The renunciation of fruits consists in the following manner. 'Heaven and such other results arising from acts do not belong to Me.' Renunciation of acts is complete abandonment of the sense of possession in regard to one's acts. This sense of possession is of the following nature: 'Those acts are mine on account of their being the means for fruits which are to be mine.' Renunciation referring to agency is the renunciation of agency of oneself by ascribing the agency to the Lord of all.

18.5 Acts such as sacrifices, gifts, austerities etc., enjoined in the Vedas should not be relinquished by the aspirant for release, but should be performed day after day until his death. Why? Acts like sacrifices, gifts and austerities associated with the different stations of life, are the means of purification for the wise., i.e., for those given to contemplation. Contemplation is worship. For the aspirants who perform such worship (Upasana) throughout their lives, they (sacrifices etc.) are a help to erase the previous Karmas which stand in the way of the fulfilment of such worship.

18.6 Since sacrifices, gifts, austerities etc., are the means for the purification of the wise, therefore, it is My decided and final view that they should be performed as a part of my worship until one's death, renouncing attachment, viz., possessiveness towards actions and their

fruits.

18.7 Obligatory acts consist of daily, and occasional ceremonies like the five great sacrifices; their abandonment is not proper, for without actions even the sustenance of the body would be impossible, as already stated: 'From no-work, not even the body can be sustained' (3.8). The sustenance of the body by eating the sacrificial remnants produces perfect knowledge. Otherwise, as declared in the statement, 'But the sinful ones eat sin' (3.13). The satisfaction that comes by eating food which is not the remnant of sacrifice and which is therefore of the form of sin, is productive of erroneous knowledge in the mind. For, as declared in the Sruti, 'The mind consists of food' (Cha. U., 6.5.4), the mind is sustained by food. Also, there is the Sruti text, 'When the food is pure, the mind becomes pure; when the mind is pure, remembrance becomes firmly fixed; and when remembrance is acquired, there is release from all knots of the heart' (Ibid., 7.26.2). It is therefore proved by the Sruti that knowledge of the form of direct perception of Brahman, is dependent on the purity of food. Hence the great sacrifices and such other obligatory and occasional rites are worthy of adoption till one's death, as they help in the knowledge of the Brahman. The renunciation of these is therefore not proper. Thus, the relinquishment of these acts which produce knowledge through the delusion that they bind the self, is rooted in Tamas. Tamasika renunciation has its roots in Tamas. Since such renunciation has its roots in ignorance which is the effect of Tamas, such renunciation is said to have its roots in Tamas. For Tamas is the root of

ignorance as has been stated: 'From Tamas arise negligence and delusion, and also, ignorance' (14.17). Ignorance is erroneous knowledge which is antagonistic to right knowledge. So, it will be taught, 'That reason which, enveloped in Tamas, regards wrong as right, and which reverses every value, O Arjuna, is Tamasika' (18.32). It is for this reason that the renunciation of obligatory and occasional actions are said to have their roots in erroneous knowledge.

18.8 Although actions constitute the indirect means for release, yet they produce mental depression, since they can be done only by collecting materials involving painful effort and since they cause bodily strain on account of their requiring strenuous exertion. If, on account of such fear, one decides that the practice of knowledge alone should be tried for perfection in Yoga, and abandons actions like the great sacrifices applicable to one's station in life, he practises renunciation rooted in Rajas. Since that is not the meaning of the Sastras, one cannot win the fruit of renunciation in the form of the rise of knowledge. So it will be shown further one: 'That reason by which one erroneously knows, O Arjuna, is Rajasika' (18.31). In fact, actions do not directly cause purity of the mind but indirectly by winning the grace of God.

18.9 When rites like obligatory and occasional ceremonies and the great sacrifices enjoined on one's station and stage in life, are practised for their own sake, as worship of Myself and as a duty, relinquishing possessiveness and fruits --- such abandonment is regarded as

Sattvika. It is noted in Sattva. The idea is that it is rooted in the knowledge of the meaning of the Sastras as it really is. That Sattva generates the knowledge of things as they really are, has been taught in: 'From Sattva arises knowledge' (14.17), and it will be further declared: 'That reason by which one knows action and renunciation, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, fear and fearlessness, bondage and release, O Arjuna, is Sattvika' (18.30).

18.10 Thus, 'filled with Sattva,' endowed with right knowledge, i.e., with the knowledge of the reality as it is, and as a consequence of it 'having all doubts shattered' --- he alone becomes a renouncer of attachment to work and the fruits of work. He 'neither hates works productive of harmful effects,' nor 'loves others productive of worldly prosperity.' Disagreeable acts are fraught with undesirable fruits; and agreeable acts bring about desirable results such as heaven, sons, cows, food etc. On account of his renouncing all results other than the Brahman and on account of his renouncing the sense of agency, he shows neither love nor hatred for above-mentioned types of works. Here 'sinful acts having undesirable fruits' are only such acts as are inadvertently performed. For it has been taught in the Srutis that nor turning away from bad conduct is antagonistic to the production of knowledge. 'But one who has not ceased from bad conduct, who is not tranquil, is not composed, is not of peaceful mind, cannot obtain Him by knowledge' (Ka. U., 1.2.24). Thus, 'the abandonment' according to the Sastras is renunciation of the sense of agency, attachment and fruits of actions, and not total relinquishment

of actions as such. He explains this further:

error

18.12 The 'undesirable result' is Naraka etc., 'the desirable' is heaven etc., 'the mixed' is sons, cows, food etc., which are combined with some undesirable results. Those who have not renounced, namely, those who are devoid of renunciation of agency, possessiveness and fruits --- they meet with threefold consequences after death. The meaning of 'after death' (Pretya) may be understood as subsequent to the performance of actions. But 'to those who have renounced, none whatsoever,' viz., to those who have relinquished the sense of agency etc., no such results antagonistic to release accrue. Here the purport is this: Agnihotra, the great sacrifices etc. are obligatory throughout life and are required for attaining the objects of desire; but in regard to release their application is different. Though externally they appear to be the same in their nature in both the conditions, they are different in their fruits by virtue of difference in application. Their application to release is seen in such texts as 'The Brahmanas desire to know Him by the study of the Vedas, by sacrifices, by gifts, by austerities conjoined with fasting' (Br. U., 4.4.22). Here the performance of actions without sense of agency is enforced. Such giving up agency etc., are relevant only with regard to acts that are actually performed. Thus Sannyasa or renouncing of this kind is established in the Sastras. The same is also called Tyaga or giving up. Sri Krsna now explains the manner of realising that one is

non-agent, by attributing all agency to God, who is the Supreme Person and the Inner Ruler, By cultivating this attitude, an aspirant can attain the renunciation of possessiveness with regard to actions and also their fruits. For it is the Supreme Person who performs all actions through the individual selves who belong to Him. The organs, bodies and Pranas of embodied beings are His. They exist for the sake of His own sport as the only purpose. Therefore, even the appeasement of hunger etc., and such other acts which affect the life of the individual souls and their works constitute only the means for accomplishing that purpose, namely, the sport of the Highest Purusa Himself. The purport of the argument is this: The analogy of seeds producing the tree and its fruits is not applicable to the actions of release-seekers. Their actions may look like those of fruit-seekers externally. But as mentally they do not entertain any such purpose, the consequence of their actions can be quite different. The purpose served by their actions is only affording sport for the Supreme Being.

18.13 'Sankhya' means Buddhi (reasoning). 'Sankhya-krtanta' means that which is determined after due deliberations by the Buddhi in accordance with the Vedas on the nature of the things as they are. Learn them from Me. There are five causes for the accomplishment of all actions. But the understanding according to the Vedas (Vaidiki-buddhi) is that the Supreme Self alone is the agent working through body, senses, Pranas and the individual self, as asserted in the following Srutis: 'He who, dwelling in the self, who rules the self from within your self, the



Inner Ruler, immortal' (Br. U. Madh., 3.7.22), and 'He who has penetrated the interior, is the Ruler of all creatures and the Self of all' (Tai. A., 3.11.3). Sri Krsna now sets forth the five causes:

18.14 - 18.15 For all actions, performed through body, words or mind, whether they be authorized by the Sastras or not, the causes are these five. (1) The body, which is a conglomeration of the 'great elements,' is known as the seat, since it is governed by the individual self. (2) The agent is the individual self. That this individual self is the knower and the agent is established in the Vedanta-Sutras: 'For this reason, (the individual self) is the knower' (2.3.18) and 'The agent, on account of the scripture having a purport' (2.3.33.). (3) The organs of various kinds are the five motor organs like that of speech, hands, feet etc., along with the mind. They are of various kinds, viz., they have different functions in completing an action. (4) The different and distinctive functions of vital air --- here the expression 'functions' (Cesta) means several functions. Distinctive are the functions of this fivefold vital air which sustains the body and senses through its divisions of Prana, Apana etc. (5) Divinity is the fifth among these causes. The purport is this: Among these, which constitute the conglomeration of causes of work the Divinity is the fifth. It is the Supreme Self, the Inner Ruler, who is the main cause in completing the action. It has been already affirmed: 'I am seated in the hearts of all. From Me are memory, knowledge and their removal also' (15.15), and He will say further: 'The Lord, O Arjuna, lives in the heart of every being causing them to spin round and round by His power

as if set on a wheel' (18.61). The agency of the individual self is dependent on the Supreme Self as established in the aphorism: 'But from the Supreme, because the scripture says so' (B. S., 2.3.41). Now an objection may be raised in this way: If the agency of the individual self is dependent on the Supreme Self and the individual self cannot be charged with moral responsibility, then the scriptures containing injunctions and prohibitions become useless, as the individual self cannot be enjoined to act in regard to any action. The objection is disposed off by the author of the Vedanta-Sutras in the aphorism: 'But with a view to the effects made on account of the purposelessness of injunctions and prohibitions' (2.3.42). The purport is this: By means of his senses, body etc., granted by the Supreme Self --- having Him for their support, empowered by Him, and thus deriving power from Him --- the individual self begins, of his own free will, the effort for directing the senses etc., for the purpose of performing actions conditioned by his body and organs. The individual self itself, of its own free will, is responsible for activity, since the Supreme Self, abiding within, causes it to act only by granting His permission, just as works such as moving heavy stones and timber are collectively the labour of many persons and they are together responsible for the effect. But each one of them (severally) also is responsible for it. In the same way each individual is answerable to Nature's law in the form of positive and negative commandments.

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18.16 In fact, the agency of the individual self is subject to the consent of Supreme Self; such being the case, if the 'individual self regards itself as the agent,' It is of wicked or perverse mind. For, It does not perceive the agent as It really is, since It possesses an 'uncultivated understanding,' namely, an understanding which does not reveal the real

state of affairs.

18.17 He who, through the contemplation of the agency of the Supreme Being, is free from the self-conceit, 'I alone do everything'; he whose understanding is not therefore tainted, and has come to be informed by the understanding; 'As I am not the agent of this work, its fruit is not connected with me; so this work does not belong to me' --- such a person, though he slays all these men, not merely Bhishma, etc., does not slay them. Therefore, he is not bound by the actions known as battle. The meaning is that the fruits of such actions do not accrue to him. Sri Krsna now teaches how action is induced. For this he differentiates actions generated by Sattva and the other Gunas. The object is to inculcate the desirability of the Sattvika type. For, only meditation on the self not being the agent, brings about the growth of Sattva.

18.18 (i) 'Knowledge' means this knowledge about the acts which ought to be performed. (ii) The 'object of knowledge' is the act which ought to be performed. (iii) 'The knower' is the person who knows that act. The meaning is that the injunction to do acts, like Jyotistoma etc., is a combination of knowledge, object of knowledge, and the knower. Among these, action itself, which is the object of knowledge, is briefly described as threefold --- these being the instrument, action and the agent. The instrument forms the materials etc., which are the means. The action consists of the sacrifice etc. The agent is the performer.

18.19 The knowledge of action which ought to be done, the act to be performed, and the performer of the act are threefold, each of them being divided in accordance with Sattva etc., Listen about these, which are differentiated according to the Gunas.

18.20 The self (Atman), which is of the form of knowledge, is alike and uniform, though distinct, in all beings, even though they may externally, and from the point of view of duty, be distinguished as Brahmanas, Ksatriyas, householders, celibates, fair, tall etc. The immutable selves in all these perishing forms or bodies are unaffected by the fruits of actions. Such knowledge of the immutability of the self in all changing beings, is Sattvika.

18.21 Whatever knowledge perceives in Brahmana etc., at the time of work, the entity known as the Atman as of diverse nature because the bodies of those beings are tall or fair and are fit to attain the fruits of work --- know that knowledge to be Rajasika. The point is this: It is not a condemnation of the plurality of Atman. The Atman, though distinct, is uniform everywhere. The bodily attributes do not affect it. The knowledge lacking this understanding is stigmatised as Rajasa.

18.22 But that knowledge which clings to a 'single type of act' as what ought to be done, viz., act in the form of the worship of ghosts or evil spirits yielding very small fruits, as if it yielded all fruits; that work 'not founded on any reason for having attachment,' because it is not a

source of all fruits; 'untrue' because it is based on a false view of things such as seeing differentiation in the nature of the Atman; 'insignificant', because the worship of ghosts and evil spirits yields poor results --- for such reasons knowledge of this kind is declared to be Tamasika. After having thus classified the threefold division of knowledge relating to work according to Gunas in respect of a person who is qualified for work, Sri Krsna explains the triple division of the acts that ought to be done, according to Gunas.

18.23 'Obligatory act' is that which is appropriate to one's own station and stage of life. Doing it 'without attachment' means devoid of attachment to agency etc., and 'without desire or aversion' means that it is not done through desire to win fame and aversion to win notoriety, i.e., is performed without ostentation --- when obligatory works are performed in the above-mentioned way by one who is not after their fruits, they are said to be Sattvika.

18.24 But whatever act is performed by one who seeks to gratify his desires, viz., by one who desires the results of his action and with the feeling of egoism, viz., has the misconceived notion that oneself is the agent; and with a great deal of effort --- such an act is of the nature of Rajas. Here va (or) is used in the sense of ca (and). Whatever action is performed by one who possesses the misconceived notion, 'This action demanding enormous effort is performed entirely by me' --- it is said to be Rajasika.

18.25 'Anubandha' or consequence is here the pain which follows when a work is performed. 'Loss' means loss of wealth involved in doing that act. 'Injury' is the pain caused to living beings when the work is carried out. 'Capacity' is the ability of completing the act. Whenever an act is begun without consideration of these and from delusion, viz., due to ignoring the agency of the Supreme Person --- that act is said to be Tamasika.

18.26 'Muktasangah' is one who is free from attachment to fruits. 'Anahamvadi' is one who is devoid of the feeling of being the agent. He is endued with 'steadiness and zeal.' 'Steadiness' is perseverance in regard to an act that has been begun in spite of the pain that is inevitable till the completion of the work. 'Zeal' is the possession of an active mind. One who is endued with these, and whose mind remains firm, untouched by success and failure in war etc., and also in gathering the material requisities for the work on hand --- such an agent is, of Sattvika nature.

18.27 The 'passionate' doer is one who aspires for fame; 'who seeks the fruits of his acts' is one who longs for the fruits of his acts; the 'greedy' is he who does not spend the wealth required for the act; the 'harmful' is one, who while acting, hurts others; the 'impure', is one who lacks the purity required for the act; who is moved by 'delight and grief' in war etc., is one who is elated or depressed by success or failure in



victory (or the opposite) --- a doer who fulfils these conditions is declared to be Rajasika.

18.28 'Ayukta' is the doer who is unqualified for acts enjoined by the Sastras; the meaning is that he is engaged in perverse acts; who is 'unrefined', means one uninstructed; who is 'stubborn', means one who is not disposed to act; who is 'depraved' means one who has the taste for black magic etc; who is dishonest is one who is treacherous; who is 'indolent' is one who is not inclined to carry out actions undertaken; who is 'despondent' is one given to excessive despondency; and one who is 'dilatory', is a person who, while engaged in black magic, etc., pays malevolent attention to produce long-standing evil to others --- such a doer is declared to be Tamasika. Thus, has been told the threefold division in terms of the Gunas of the knowledge about the work that ought to be performed, and about the agent of work. Now, Sri Krsna describes the threefold division of Buddhi and Dhrti (fortitude) on the basis of Gunas. These faculties give the determinate knowledge of all realities in existence and of all ends of human life (Purusarthas).

18.29 'Buddhi' is the knowledge in the form of discriminative determination. 'Dhrti' is the resolution to hold on with perseverance to what has been undertaken even against all obstacles. Of these two, hear now the threefold division according to Sattva and other Gunas.

18.30 'Activity' is that Dharma which is the means for wordly prosperity. 'Renunciation' is that Dharma which is the means for release. The Buddhi which knows both these as they are, is Sattviki-buddhi. Further, such a Buddhi is capable of distinguishing between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done by persons of different stations in life, having as their duty activity or renunciation at particular places or times. Such a Buddhi helps them to know 'This ought to be done and this ought not to be done.' Such a Buddhi discerns transgression of the Sastras as the cause of fear and observance of the Sastras as the cause of fearlessness. It enables one to distinguish between bondage and release, the true nature of Samsara and deliverance from it. The Buddhi that functions in these ways is Sattvika.

18.31 That Buddhi by which one does not know exactly the twofold Dharma previously mentioned and its opposite, and what ought to be done and what ought not to be done by those intent on them in accordance with place, time and conditions --- that Buddhi is Rajasika.

18.32 That Buddhi is of the nature of Tamas which is 'enveloped in Tamas' and 'reverses every value.' The meaning is that it regards Adharma as Dharma and Dharma as Adharma, existent as non-existent, and non-existent as existent, and higher truth as the lower and the lower truth as the higher, and thus reverses every value.

18.33 That Dhrti by which one through unswerving Yoga sustains the activities of the mind and the vital force and the sense-organs is said to be of the nature of Sattva. 'Yoga is worship of the Lord which forms the means for release. The meaning is that the Dhrti or fortitude by means of which one sustains the activities of the mind and other organs in the practice of Yoga (worship) until one's object is accomplished, is of the nature of Sattva.

18.34 That Dhrti by which a person who, desirous of fruits, i.e., through intense attachment holds fast to duty, desires, and wealth, is of the nature of Rajas. By the terms 'Dharma-kam'artha,' the activities of the mind, vital force and senses as a means for the attainment of Dharma (duty) Kama (pleasure) and Artha (wealth) are signified. Even in the expression, 'One desirous of fruits,' that term indicates duty, desire and wealth, on account of the Rajasika nature of the aspirant. Therefore, what is said amounts to this: the Dhrti by which one maintains activities of the mind etc., with the purpose of attaining duty; desire and wealth, is of the nature of Rajas.

18.35 That Dhrti by which a foolish person does not give up, i.e. persists in, sleep, and sensuous indulgence through the activities of the mind, vital force etc., --- that Dhrti is of the nature of Tamas. The terms fear, grief and depression indicate the objects generating fear, grief etc. That Dhrti by which one maintains the activities of the mind, the vital force etc., as a means for these, is of the nature of Tamas.

18.36 Now, hear about the pleasure to which the knowledge, action, agent etc., already mentioned are all subservient and which is threefold according to the Gunas. ... That pleasure in which a person, through long practice extending over a long time, gradually attains to incomparable joy and never again is engulfed by the pain of life in Samsara. Sri Krsna explains the same:

18.37 That pleasure, which 'at the beginning,' i.e., at the time of beginning of Yoga, is 'like poison,' i.e., is painful because it requires strenuous efforts and because the distinct nature of the self is not yet experienced, but which after long practice fructifies in the blissful experience of the self --- that joy born of a serene state of mind 'focusing on the self' is Sattvika. The Buddhi concerning the self is 'Atama-buddhi.' When all objects are withdrawn from that Buddhi it becomes serene (Prasanna). The joy born of the experience of the self in its distinct nature, when all objects are withdrawn from the Buddhi, becomes 'like elixir'. That joy is said to be Sattvika.

18.38 That which at the 'beginning,' i.e., at the time of experience looks like elixir because of the contact of senses with their objects agreeable to them, but 'at the end,' i.e., when satiation or further incapacity to enjoy due to over-indulgence in them occurs, looks like poison --- that pleasure is said to be Rajasika. In this latter state these so-called enjoyments cause the misery of Naraka.

18.39 Pleasure of the Tamasika type causes delusion to the self at the beginning and the end of enjoyment. Here 'delusion' means the absence of knowledge about things as they are. Pleasure springing from sleep, sloth and error are the cause of it. Even at the time of experience, sleep etc., are the cause of delusion. It is clear how sleep causes delusion. 'Sloth' is indolence in sensory operations. When sensory activities are slow, dimness of knowledge results. 'Error' is heedlessness regarding what ought to be done. From this also occurs the dimness of knowledge. Thus, these two also cause delusion. Such pleasure is declared to be Tamasika. Therefore what is meant is this: subduing Rajas and Tamas, the Sattva alone should be allowed to develop by the aspirant for release.

18.40 There is no Sattva or creature born either among men etc., on the earth or among the gods in heaven, from Brahma down to immobile things, and having their basis in Prakrti, that is free from the dominance of the three Gunas of Prakrti. 'Tyaga', which has been determined as forming the means for release in the Sruti texts like 'By Tyaga alone do they attain immortality' (Ma. Na., 8.14), is of the same meaning as of the word 'Sannyasa'. It is rooted in the relinquishment of the sense of agency in actions that are being performed. The relinquishment of the results and of possessiveness in actions, and the relinquishing of agency are to be gained by ascribing the agency to the Supreme Person. As all these are the effects of the increase of Sattva-guna, the differences of

the effects of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas have been described at length with a view to instruct that Sattva is to be cultivated. Now Sri Krsna, with a view to inculcate that actions done including their fruits, as a means to release and attainment of Him, must be of the nature of the worship of the Supreme Person, and that the fruit thereof is the attainment of Him --- describes the actions obligatory for the qualified classes of the people such as Brahmanas, differentiated by virtue of the natural qualities arising from the Gunas such as Sattva, as also the occupations prescribed for those classes.

18.41 The nature of Brahmanas, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras are due to their respective inherent dispositions. The meaning is that their past Karma has been the cause of determining births as Brahmanas etc. The Sattva and other Gunas are the result of such Karma. The Sattva-guna is born from the inherent nature of the Brahmana becoming dominant by suppressing the qualities of Rajas and Tamas. The quality of Rajas originates from the inherent nature of the Ksatriyas becoming dominant by suppressing qualities of Sattva and Tamas. Tamoguna arises from the inherent nature of the Vaisya, becoming dominant in a little way by suppressing Sattva and Rajas. The duties and works assigned to them according to the Gunas constituting their inherent nature, are expounded and allotted by the Sastras in the order described. For the Sastras analyse that the Brahmanas etc., possess such and such attributes and such and such are their duties and occupations.

18.42 'Sama' is the control of the external sense-organs. 'Dama' is the control of the mind. 'Tapas' is the chastisement of the body by controlling enjoyments, as enjoined by the Sastras. 'Sauca' is fitness for performing acts as enjoined by the Sastras. 'Ksanti' is preserving the composure of the mind, though injured by others. 'Arjava' is straightforwardness expressing itself in correct outward manifestation to others in consonance with one's own mind. 'Jnana' is knowledge about the real nature of the higher and lower truths. 'Vijnana' is the knowledge pertaining to exceptional attributes belonging to the Supreme Reality. 'Astikya' or faith is firm conviction in the truth of all things enjoined in the Vedas. The meaning is that it is unshakable by any reason whatever. 'Astikya' is positive conviction in the truth to the following effect: (1) The Lord Vasudeva, the Supreme Person, is signified by the term, Supreme Brahman. (2) He is devoid of even the slightest trace of evil. (3) He possesses countless hosts of auspicious and excellent attributes such as knowledge, strength etc., boundless and natural. (4) To reveal His nature is the sole purpose of the whole of Vedas and the Vedanta and He can be known only through them. (5) He is the sole cause of the universe (6) He is the foundation of the entire universe. (7) He is the actuator of all. (8) All actions taught in the Vedas form His worship. (9) When worshipped through them, He confers fruits known as Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksa. That such is the meaning has been declared in the following text: 'Indeed I am to be known from all the Vedas' (15.15); 'I am the origin of all; from Me proceed everything' (10.8), 'All this is strung on Me' (7.7), 'Knowing me as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and

austerities ... he attains peace' (10.29), There is nothing greater than myself, Arjuna (7.7) 'He from whom proceeds the activity of all beings and by whom all this is pervaded --- by worshipping Him with his duty, will a man reach perfection' (18.46); and 'He who knows Me as unborn, without a beginning and the great Lord of the worlds ...' (10.3) Such are the duties of the Brahmana arising from his inherent nature.

18.43 'Valour' is the ability of plunging into a battle without fear. 'Invincibility' is the capacity to remain undefeated by others. 'Steadiness' is the capacity to complete a work that has been started despite obstacles. 'Adroitness' is the ability in executing all works. 'Apalayana' is not fleeing in a battle though one is convinced of one's death. 'Generosity' is parting with one's own possessions to others even to its entirety. 'Lordliness' is the capacity to govern all others. This is the duty of a Ksatriya born of his inherent nature.

18.44 'Agriculture' is cultivation to produce crops. The meaning of 'cattle breeding' is the protection and rearing of cattle. 'Trade' is the activity causing the amassing of wealth through buying and selling. This is the duty of Vaisya born of his inherent nature. The duty of a Sudra, born of his inherent nature, is service to the three Orders mentioned earlier. All these have been described to stress that the occupational activities of the four stations are auxiliary to the performance of sacrifices etc., which are ordained by the Sastra. Sacrifices etc., are common to the first three stations. Control of the senses etc., are common to those



who, among the first three stations, are anxious for release. As a Brahmana possesses preponderance of Sattva, and as the control of the senses, mind etc., can be performed by him easily and naturally, control of the senses etc., have been prescribed as his duty. As control of the mind, senses etc., can be performed only with difficulty by the Ksatriyas and the Vaisyas owing to the preponderance of Rajas and Tamas respectively in them, these have not been stated as their duty. The occupation of a Brahmana is officiating as priest in sacrifices, teaching the Vedas and receiving gifts. The occupation of a Ksatriya is protecting the people and that of the Vaisyas is farming etc., as mentioned before. The duty and occupation of the Sudra is service to the three stations.

18.45 When one is devoted to his own duty in a way mentioned earlier, he attains perfection i.e., the supreme state. When a person is devoted to his duty, how he attains perfection, i.e., attains the supreme state, listen.

18.46 He from whom arise all activities as origination of all beings and by whom all this is pervaded, by worshipping Him, i.e., Myself, who abide in Indra and other divinities as the Inner Ruler, man attains perfection, consisting in the attainment of Myself by My grace. It has been told before that everything originates from Me and all this is pervaded by Me, in texts like the following: 'I am the origin and dissolution of the whole universe' (7.6), 'There is nothing higher than Myself, O Arjuna' (7.7), 'This entire universe is pervaded by Me in an

unmanifest form' (9.4), 'Under My supervision, the Prakrti gives birth to all mobile and immobile entities' (9.10) and 'I am the origin of all; from Me proceed everything' (10.8).

18.47 One's proper Dharma is that which is suitable for performance by oneself, in the form of worshipping Myself, relinquishing agency etc., as has been taught. For, Karma Yoga, consisting in the activities of sense organs, is easy to perform by one in association with Prakrti. Thus, Karma Yoga, even if it is defective in some respects, is better than the Dharma of another, i.e., than Jnana-yoga, even for a person capable of controlling his senses, which is an attainment liable to negligence, because it consists of control over all sense-organs; for, though this may be well performed occasionally, one is always liable to deflection from it.

He explains the same: As Karma consists of the activities of the sense-organs, it is ordained by Nature for one who is conjoined with Prakrti, i.e., the body. So by performing Karma Yoga one does not incur any stain. But Jnana Yoga is liable to negligence, because it requires the control of the senses from the very beginning for its performance. One intent on it is likely to incur stain from negligence. [Thus we are reminded about what was mentioned in the third chapter - that Karma Yoga alone is greater.]

18.48 So, one should not relinquish one's works, understanding that they are natural, are easy to perform and not liable to negligence. Such thoughts coupled with the idea that there are imperfections in them

should not lead you to abandon them. The meaning is that though one is fit for Jnana Yoga, one should perform Karma Yoga only. All enterprises, be they of Karma or Jnana, are indeed enveloped by imperfections, by pain, as fire by smoke. But still there is this difference: Karma Yoga is easy and does not involve negligence, but Jnana Yoga is contrary to this.

18.49 He whose understanding is, on all sides, without attachments, concerning fruits etc., whose 'self is conquered,' i.e., who has conquered his mind; who, by contemplating on the agency of the Supreme Person, is free from the habit of attributing agency to the self; and who is thus equipped with Sannyasa which has been positively determined to be the same as Tyaga --- such a man, performing actions, attains supreme perfection which is free from all activities. The meaning is that he attains devotion to Dhyana which is the consummation of even Jnana Yoga; he attains Dhyana Yoga (Yoga of meditation) consisting in the complete cessation of sensory activity, which is going to be described hereafter.

18.50 One who has attained 'perfection', viz., one who has attained perfection in meditation generated by the Karma Yoga performed day after day till death --- how, in what way, he attains the brahman, learn this from Me in brief. It is the same Brahman who is described as the supreme consummation of knowledge. The meaning is that the self is the supreme consummation, the supreme end, of knowledge which is of

the nature of meditation.

18.51 - 18.53 'Endowed with a purified understanding' means endowed with the Buddhi capable of understanding the self as it is in reality; 'subduing the mind by steadiness' means making the mind fit for meditation by turning away from external and internal objects; 'relinquishing sound and other objects of senses' means keeping them far away, casting aside love and hate occasioned by them (i.e., the sense objects). 'Resorting to solitude' means living in a lonely place free from hindrances to meditation; 'eat but little' means eating neither too much nor too little; 'restraining speech, body and mind' means directing the operations of body, speech and mind to meditation; 'ever engaged in the Yoga of meditation' means being like this, i.e., constantly engaged in the Yoga of meditation day after day until death; 'taking refuge in dispassion' means developing aversion to all objects except the one entity to be meditated upon, by considering the imperfections of all objects and thus cultivating detachment to everything. Forsaking 'egoism' means abandoning the tendency to consider what is other than the self, as well as neutralising the power of forcible Vasnas (tendencies) which nourish (egoism), and the resulting pride, desire, wrath and possessiveness. 'With no feeling of mine' means free from the notion that what does not belong to oneself belongs to oneself; 'Who is tranquil' means, who finds sole happiness in experiencing the self. One who has become like this and performs the Yoga of meditation becomes worthy for the state of Brahman. The meaning is that, freed from all

bonds, he experiences the self as It really is.

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bonds, he experiences the self as It really is.

18.54 'Having realised the state of Brahman,' means having got from revelation an understanding of the nature of the self as consisting of unlimited knowledge and of being a Sesa (subserving being) to Me. Subservience to Me has been posited in, 'Know that which is other than this (Prakrti or lower Nature) to be the higher Prakrti of Mine' (7.5). One who is 'tranquil' means one who is not contaminated by various forms of grief (the five Klesas of Yoga-sutras), and does not grieve about any being other than Myself, nor desires anything other than Myself. On the other hand, he becomes equally indifferent to all beings other than Myself as worthless as straw and attains supreme Bhakti for Me. He attains 'supreme devotion' to Me, which is of the form of an experience which makes Me dear beyond all description --- Me the Lord of all, to whom creation, protection and dissolution of the universe is a sport, who is devoid of the slightest trace of evil, who is the sole seat of countless hosts of auspicious attributes which are excellent and unlimited; and who is the ocean of the elixir of beauty; who is the Lord of Sri; who is Lotus-eyed; and who is the self's own Lord. Sri Krsna declares the fruits of this (devotion):

18.55 Through such devotion, he knows 'who I am,' i.e., knows My own essence and My nature, and 'what I am,' i.e., in My attributes and glory. Knowing Me truly, he rises to a higher level than this Bhakti, and acquiring knowledge of the truth, enters into Me through devotion. The

meaning is that he attains Me by means of infinite and unsurpassed Bhakti which develops subsequent in time to the vision of the nature, attributes and glory of the Lord in reality. Here the term 'Tatah' (through) denotes that devotion is the cause of attainment; for it has been stated to be the cause of entrance in the text, 'But by single-minded devotion it is possible ...' (11.54). In this way, the crowning development has been told starting from the disinterested performance of periodical and occasional rites suitable for the various stations and stages of life, which are to be performed to propitiate the Supreme Person. Sri Kṛṣṇa now explains that even for actions meant for attaining desired objects (Kāmya-karmas) the crowning stage is the same as for these described above, provided they too are done not for fulfilling one's desires but as offerings to propitiate the Supreme Person.

18.56 'Taking refuge in Me' means leaving agency etc., to Me. He who performs 'all works constantly' means works that are not only obligatory and occasional acts but even those meant to fulfil desires (Kāmya Karmas) --- he attains, by My grace, the eternal realm which is immutable. 'Pada' means that which is attained. The meaning is that he attains Me. [The idea is that the performance of even those ritualistic actions enjoined for those having the fulfilment of certain desires in view, even these actions, if done without any such desire but only as the worship of the Supreme Person --- they have the same effect as the performance of the enjoined daily and occasional rituals to which no effect except the purification of the self is offered by the Śāstras.]



Since it is so, therefore:

18.57 'By your mind' means with thought which considers the self as belonging to Me and as controlled by Me. For, it has been declared: 'Surrendering all your acts to Me with a mind focussed on the self' (3.30). Surrendering all acts to Me along with agentship and the object of worship and regarding 'Me as the goal,' i.e., constantly contemplating that I alone am to be attained as the goal; performing all acts; and resorting to Buddhi-Yoga --- focus your mind on Me always. Buddhi Yoga here implies the mental attitude special to the seeker of salvation in regard to agency of works, the fruits etc. Thus

18.58 Thus, focusing your thought on Me, if you can perform all acts, you will, by My grace, cross over all difficulties of Samsara. If, however, out of 'self-conceit,' i.e., out of the feeling, 'I know well what is to be done and what is not to be done' --- out of such a feeling, if you do not heed My words, you shall perish. Except Myself, there is none who knows what ought and what ought not to be done by all living beings; there is also none other than Myself who is in the position of a law-giver to them.

18.59 If, in your 'self-conceit,' i.e., under a false sense of independence that you know what is good for you and what is not --- if, not heeding My command, you think, 'I will not fight,' then this resolve based on your sense of independence will be in vain. For Nature will compel you to go

against your resolve --- you who are ignorant and who adversely react to my sovereignty. He elucidates the same:

18.60 For, heroism is the duty of a Ksatriya born of his nature. Impelled by your own duty of heroism born of your own nature, you will lose self-control when you get the taunts of your enemies. Unable to suffer it, you will be compelled to engage them in battle, which, now, out of delusion and ignorance, you do not desire to do. All beings have been ordained by Me to follow their Prakrti acquired by their previous Karmas. Listen about it:

18.61 Lord Vasudeva, who is the ruler over all, lives in 'the heart of all beings,' i.e., in the region from which arises all knowledge which is at the root of all secular and spiritual activities. How and doing what does He exist? He exists enabling, by His Maya (power), 'all beings who are mounted, as it were, on the machine Prakrti' in the form of body and senses created by Himself, to act in accordance with their Gunas of Sattva and others. It was already expressed in 'And I am seated in the hearts of all. From Me are memory, knowledge and their removal also' (15.15) and in 'From Me proceed everything' (10.8). The Srutis also proclaim 'He who, dwelling in the self' (Br. U. Madh., 3.7.22). He now explains the way to get rid of the Maya:

18.62 Such being the case, take refuge with all your heart (Sarvabhavena), by every disposition of your body, senses and mind

(Sarvatmana) in Him --- Him, the ruler of all, who has become your charioteer out of compassion for dependents, and who orders you, 'Act thus' and so on. Even if you do not do so now, fighting in battle etc., is inevitable for you who are ignorant and actuated by His Maya, but then you will get ruined. Therefore, fight etc., in the manner which has been explained by Him. Such is the meaning. Acting in this way, you will attain supreme peace, release from all bondage, and the eternal abode. Hundreds of Srutis declare it: 'That supreme place of Visnu which the sages see' (Rg. S., 1.2.6.5); 'They become meritorious and reach this heaven where Devas and Sadhyas dwell' (Tai. A., 3.12); 'Where dwell the ancient sages, the first-born' (Tai.Sam., 4.7.13.1); 'The supreme place above the paradise in the heart of the Supreme Heaven' (Ma. Na., 8.14); 'He who is in the Supreme Heaven and presides over this' (Rg. S., 8.7.17.7); 'Now that light which shines above this Supreme Heaven' (Cha. U., 3.13.7); and 'He reaches the end of the journey, the Highest abode of Visnu' (Ka. U., 3.9).

18.63 Thus, in this manner, has been set forth everything that is to be acquired by those aspirants for release --- the mystery of mysteries, concerning Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. Reflecting on it fully, do what you wish to do according to your qualification --- i.e., follow Karma Yoga, or Jnana Yoga or Bhakti Yoga according to your liking. Such is the meaning.

18.64 It has been said that Bhakti Yoga is the most secret of all secrets, in such texts as 'I will declare to you, who does not cavil, this most mysterious knowledge' (9.1). Hear again My supreme word concerning it (i.e., Bhakti Yoga). As you are exceedingly dear to Me, therefore, I shall declare what is good for you.

18.65 What is enjoined in Vedanta texts such as 'I know the Great Person of the radiance of the sun, who is beyond this Prakrti. Knowing Him thus, one becomes here immortal; there is no path for immortality' (Sve. U., 3.8); what is designated by words such as knowledge (Vedanta), meditation (Dhyana) and worship (Upasana); what is of the form of direct perception (Darsana) having the character of continuous succession of memory of a surpassingly loving nature to the worshipped --- it is this that is enjoined herein by the words 'Focus your mind on Me,' 'Be My devotee.' It means, be one to whom I am incomparably dear. Since I am the object of superabundant love, meditate on Me, i.e., practise the succession of memory of unsurpassed love of Me. Such is the meaning. Be My worshipper (yaji). Here also the expression, 'Be My devotee' is applicable. Yajna is worship. Worship Me as one exceedingly dear to you. Worship (Aradhana) is complete subservience to the Lord. Prostrate before Me. Prostration means bowing down. The meaning is: Bow down humbly before Me with great love. Renouncing thus all ego-centredness, you shall come to Me. I make this solemn promise to you. Do not take it as a mere flattery. For you are dear to Me. It has been already stated, 'For I am inexpressibly dear to the man of knowledge and

dear is he to Me' (7.17). He in whom there is surpassing love for Me, I hold him also as surpassingly dear to Me. Consequently, not being able to bear separation from him, I myself will enable him to attain Me. It is this truth alone that has been solemnly declared to you in the expression that 'you shall come to Me alone.'

18.66 'Relinquishing all Dharmas means the complete relinquishment of the sense of agency, possessiveness, fruits etc., in the practising of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti Yogas in the way instructed, and the realising of Me as the agent, object of worship, the means and the end. It means that relinquishment is not of all devotional duties but only of the sense of agency and the fruits. This is the Sastraic relinquishment of all Dharmas. It is firmly established in the beginning of this chapter commencing from, 'Listen regarding My decision, O Arjuna, about abandonment; for abandonment is declared to be of three kinds' (18.4), and 'Renouncing attachments and also the fruit, such abandonment is regarded as Sattvika ... for it is impossible for one who bears the body to abandon acts entirely. But he who gives up the fruits of works, is called the abandoner' (18.9-11). If you practise such abandonment of the sense of agency and fruits, I will release you from all 'sins' --- i.e., I will release you from all evil incompatible with the attainment of Myself, consisting of innumerable acts of the nature of doing what ought not to be done and not doing what ought to be done. These piled up from beginningless times from the obstruction in the way. Grieve not, you should not despair; for I shall release you from all these obstructions. Another

(alternative) explanation is this: Bhakti Yoga is possible only for those people to whom the Lord is exceedingly dear and who are free from all evils. Those evils are so huge in their case that the expiatory rites which could wash them off, could not be performed in the limited time of one's life span. Ajuna therefore thought that he was unfit for commencing Bhakti Yoga. To remove the grief of Arjuna the Lord said: 'Completely relinquishing all Dharmas, seek Me alone for refuge.' Expiatory rites can be taken here as what is meant by Dharma, Completely forsake these rites (Dharmas) appropriate for the removal of numerous and varied sins piled up from beginningless time and obstructing the starting of Bhakti Yoga. The expiatory rites consist of practices like Krcchra, Candrayana, Kusmanda, Vaisvanara, Vratapati, Pavitresti, Trvrit, Agnistoma etc., which are of manifold varieties, and which are difficult to perform on account of the brevity of life. So in order to succeed in commencing Bhakti Yoga, seek Me alone for refuge. I am supremely compassionate, the refuge of all without considering the differences of character among them, and am an ocean of tenderness for those dependent on Me. I will release you from all evil, the nature of which has been explained as incompatible with the commencement of Bhakti Yoga. Grieve not. [Both these interpretations of this famous verse are said to teach only Bhakti Yoga and not Prapatti. But the question will rise in one's mind --- why should it not be so taken?]

18.67 I have taught you this most secret doctrine. This should not be imparted by you to someone who has not practised austere disciplines.

Never should this be taught to someone who is not devoted to Me and to you, the teacher (i.e., when you have to play the role of a teacher of this doctrine). The meaning is that it should not be taught by you to someone who, though practising austerities, is not a devotee and does not serve Me. It is also never to be taught to one who has no wish to listen, even though he is a devotee. Nor should it be imparted to one who traduces Me, that is, who --- when My nature, glories and attributes are described --- discovers defects in them. The differences of case (from ablative to nominative form) is to teach that the last one is the most despicable character.

18.68 Whose expounds or elucidates this supreme mystery to My devotees, he, acquiring supreme devotion towards Me, will reach Me only. There is no doubt about this.

18.69 There never exists nor has existed anyone other than such a person as described, who does greater service to Me than he. In the future too, there will not be another such. The first reference is to those who are not worthy to hear the Gita. It is meant to teach that explaining it to them is more displeasing to the Lord than not teaching to those who are worthy.

18.70 He who will study the dialogue between us, which is consistent with the path to realisation, by him I shall be worshipped through the sacrifice of knowledge. Such is My view. The meaning is that whatever

sacrifice of knowledge is taught herein, by that I shall become worshipped by the mere fact of its study.

18.71 A man who, with faith and without cavilling, hears the Gita when taught by a qualified teacher, he too is, by such hearing, released from all evil incompatible with devotional life. He shall reach the Lokas, i.e., the realms of the hosts of My devotees who have done virtuous acts, and who will facilitate the growth of devotion in these new arrivals and lead them ultimately to liberation.

18.72 O Arjuna, have you heard attentively all that I have taught? Has your delusion caused by ignorance, been dispelled --- that ignorance deluded by which you said, 'I shall not fight'?

18.73 Arjuna said -- 'Delusion' or misapprehension is perverted knowledge. By Your grace it has been destroyed. 'Smrti' or memory is the knowledge of things as they really are. I have acquired that. Misapprehension here is the misconception that the self is the Prakrti (body-mind) which is the non-self in reality. It consists in one not apprehending that all intelligent and non-intelligent entities, by reason of their forming the body of the Supreme Being, have Him as their Atman and are thus ensouled by Him. The misapprehension also consists in the lack of knowledge that actions, obligatory and occasional, do not cause bondage but actually form a means for the propitiation of the Supreme Being. All such misapprehensions are now destroyed. The various



phases of knowledge that cleared the misunderstanding may be catalogued as follows: (1) The self is different from Prakrti and is therefore devoid of the qualities of Prakrti. Its nature is that of the knower of Prakrti. (2) The self is a Sesa (sub-ordinate and servant) of the Supreme Person and is ruled by Him. The true knowledge about the Supreme Person is that He is what is signified by the expression Supreme Brahman. (3) He is the great ocean of all auspicious, excellent attributes such as knowledge, strength, glory, valour, power, brilliance etc., which are unbounded and natural. His essence consists solely of auspiciousness. He is antagonistic to all that is evil without exception. The origin, sustentation and dissolution of the entire universe are His sport. (4) You (Sri Kṛṣṇa) are Vasudeva, the Supreme Person, known from the Vedānta, and who can be reached only by worship, which has taken the form of Bhakti. (5) Bhakti can be achieved by the control of the senses and the mind, the abandonment of prohibited acts and the performance of occasional and obligatory acts as solely intended for the goal of the satisfaction of the Supreme Person. Bhakti has to be developed day after day through the regular practice of the discriminatory knowledge of the higher and lower truths. All this has been attained by me (Arjuna). Therefore I stand steadfast, freed from the doubts and devoid of the depression rooted in perverted knowledge nourished by compassion and love for relatives. Now I shall fulfil Your words, concerned with fighting etc., which ought to be done by me. I shall fight as instructed by You. Such is the meaning. Sanjaya now relates to Dhṛtarāṣṭra who had questioned him earlier as to what his

sons and the Pandavas were doing in the battle:

18.74 Sanjaya said -- Thus, in this way have I been hearing, this wondrous and thrilling dialogue, as it took place between Vasudeva, the son of Vasudeva, and His paternal aunt's son Arjuna, who is a Mahatman, one possessed of a great intelligence, and who has resorted to the feet of Sri Krsna.

18.75 By the grace of Vyasa i.e., by the benefit of the divine sense of perception, granted by him, I have heard this supreme mystery called Yoga from Sri Krsna himself --- Sri Krsna who is the treasure-house of knowledge, strength, sovereignty, valour, power and brilliance.

18.76 Remembering this auspicious and wondrous dialogue between Sri Krsna and Arjuna, directly heard by me, I rejoice again and again.

18.77 Great amazement is caused in me, stirred by joy born of the repeated remembrance of that most marvellous and sovereign form of the Lord revealed to Arjuna and directly witnessed by me. I rejoice again and again. Why say more?

18.78 Wherever there is Sri Krsna, the son of Vasudeva, the 'Yogesvara' who is the ruler of the various manifestations of Nature pertaining to all intelligent and non-intelligent entities that have high and low forms, and on whose volition depend the differences in the essential

natures, existences and the activities of all things other than Himself, and wherever there is Arjuna, the archer, who is his paternal aunt's son and who took sole refuge at His feet --- in such places there always will be present fortune, victory, wealth and sound morality. Such is my firm conviction.