

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

2/3 (Ślōka 11-15), Sunday, 26 November 2023

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/nvXm9Z8u-UA>

## You are Defined by Your Śraddhā

The 17th chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is **Śraddhā -Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga - Yoga through Discerning the Three Divisions of Faith.**

The session began with the Auspicious Lighting of the traditional lamp that lights the steadfast flame, guiding us towards the path of Dharma, cleansing our Antaḥkaraṇa with the light of knowledge shedding the path of Ignorance. Followed by recitation of following prayers:

### Guru Parampara:

sadāśiva-samārambhāṁ  
śaṅkarācārya-madhyamām.  
asmadācārya-paryantāṁ  
vande guru-paramparām ॥

**Meaning:** I bow with reverence to the Guru Parampara lineage starting with the all-pervasive Lord Shiva consciousness (Sadasiva) with Adi Sankara in the middle and all those teachers up to my own Guru.

### A prayer to the source of this Divine Knowledge of Yoga, Bhagavadgītā

ॐ पार्थाय प्रतिबोधितां भगवता नारायणेन स्वयं  
व्यासेन ग्रथितां पुराणमुनिना मध्ये महाभारतम् ।  
अद्वैतामृतवर्षिणीं भगवतीम्- अष्टादशाध्यायिनीम्  
अम्ब त्वामनुसन्दधामि भगवद्- गीते भवद्वेषिणीम् ॥ १ ॥

**Meaning:** Om. O Bhagavad Gita, with which Partha was illumined by Narayana Himself, and which was composed within the Mahabharata by the ancient sage, Vyasa, O Divine Mother, the destroyer of rebirth, the showerer of the nectar of Advaita, and consisting of eighteen discourses, upon You, OGita, O affectionate Mother, I meditate.

From the last session one now knows that there are three types of Shradha. Same, as how Bhagavan has categorized everything into Sattoguna, Rajoguna and Tamoguna. In shloka 18.40 Bhagavan has Himself said the following:

**na tad asti pṛithivyām vā divi deveṣhu vā punaḥ  
sattvaṁ prakṛiti-jair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ||18.40||**

**Meaning:** No living being on earth, or the higher celestial abodes of this material realm is free from the influence of these three modes of nature.

So, effect of these three gunas is everywhere and everything is manifested by these three Gunas.

### **What is Prakṛti?**

It is the cause of entire universe, and it is made up of three Gunas: Sattoguna, Rajogun and Tamogun. Say for example, a house is made of mud. Which means soil is everywhere in the house. Similarly, Prakṛti is made of three gunas, so everywhere in this universe there are three gunas. Even our mind is Trigunatmak. Sometimes it is in Sattoguna, sometimes in Rajoguna, else in Tamoguna. Even in thoughts, we think like a Sattvaguni person. Like for example, one has curiosity for the knowledge. One wants to gain more knowledge. That shows that the person's Sattvaguna is proportionately more and due to that one comes under the category of Sattvaguni person. Sometimes we get attached with the thing, with the worldly material/s. That means the Rajoguna is on the rise. And sometimes it happens that one feels very lazy, do not want to get up early in the morning. And even during the day there are times that one slips into the tamoguna. So, following three gunas exists inside every person:

- Sattoguna
- Rajoguna, and
- Tamoguna

But then there is nobody who can say that I am only the Sattvic person. Swami Govinddev Giri ji Maharaj often gives example of a car.

The following three things are a must:

- Light, for seeing the path clearly, sattva guna
- Break, signifies the inertia / tamoguna,
- Gear, for speeding the car, Rajas.

So, everything is needed. Like for example, human beings need tamoguna else the person will not be able to sleep. So, whenever one goes to sleep at night one is engulfed with Tamoguna. So sleeping is the manifestation of Tamoguna. Goodness, while waking up one feels very fresh, one is ready to gain more knowledge. That time Sattoguna is very high. Similarly, Rajoguna is also required. Like for example, Geeta Learning Program, although it's 100% Sattvic program but Rajoguna is required to run all zoom classes. So, three gunas are needed.

Bhagavān started explaining the three gunas from 14th chapter the **Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga**. In that Bhagavān has explained the three gunas (Sattoguna, Rajoguna and Tamoguna) and also the characteristics of each of these three gunas. Sattoguna stands for goodness, Rajoguna represents attachments / passion / activeness, and Tamoguna stands for inertia or laziness. HE also talks about how one can go beyond these three gunas. Why are those needed? Those are need because all three gunas bind us with the Samsara which is dukhamaya. Everywhere in the Samsara there are sorrows. Every morning there are new problems, new difficulties. Since this life / Samsara is dukha swaroopam, one needs to go beyond the Samsara. We are not meant to get this dukha all the time, so according

to vedanta we can come to a stage where one can get ultimate happiness. And this will be possible when we go beyond the three Gunas.

That is why Bhagavān has said:

**guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī deha-samudbhavān  
janma-mṛityu-jarā-duḥkhair vimukto 'mṛitam aśhnute||14.20||**

**Meaning:** By transcending the three modes of material nature associated with the body, one becomes free from birth, death, old age, and misery, and attains immortality.

In the 16th chapter of Bhagavad Gītā is **Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga**, Śrī Krishna describes explicitly the two kinds of natures among human beings - Divine and Demonic. One should develop more of divine qualities and do away with demonic qualities, as given in the shloka below:

**dambho darpo 'bhimānaś cha krodhaḥ pārūṣhyam eva cha  
ajñānaṁ chābhijātasya pārtha sampadam āsurīm||16.4||**

**Meaning:** O Parth, the qualities of those who possess a demonic nature are hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness, and ignorance.

And while concluding chapter 16th, Bhagavān said,

**tasmāch chhāstraṁ pramāṇaṁ te kāryākārya-vyavasthitau  
jñātvā śhāstra-vidhānoktaṁ karma kartum ihārhasi||16.24||**

**Meaning:** Therefore, let the scriptures be your authority in determining what should be done and what should not be done. Understand the scriptural injunctions and teachings, and then perform your actions in this world accordingly.

After going through the above advice from Bhagavān a question can come up in our mind as to how one knows what is written in the Śāstras. This could be because we haven't read the Śāstras or have no knowledge about the Śāstras. So, who will guide us? For this Bhagavān has said Guru will guide us. Hence, while choosing a Guru we should see that He / She knows the Śāstras. Bhagavān concluded chapter 16 by advising Arjuna to refer to the Śāstras as guiding light while leading the life.

Beginning of chapter 17 Arjuna raises the question mentioned below:

**arjuna uvācha  
ye śhāstra-vidhim utsrija yajante śhraddhayānvitāḥ  
teṣhāṁ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛiṣhṇa sattvam āho rajas tamaḥ||17.1||**

**Meaning:** Arjuna said: O Krishna, where do they stand who disregard the injunctions of the scriptures, but still worship with faith? Is their faith in the mode of goodness, passion, or ignorance?

To clarify the above query Bhagavān is classifying everything into sattvic, rajasic and tamasic, In the end HE will also give conclusion of the above question. If one is doing something and is aware that he or she is in sattvic mode it enables the person to know he is moving in the right direction. On the other hand, if one is heading in the wrong direction, it means the person's actions are in Rajasic or Tamasic mode.

So, the question is what these people would be called who do not know the Śāstras, but whatever they do is with complete Shraddha. So, to explain this Bhagavān has classified Shraddha into:

- Sattvic: what will happen when shraddha is sattvic and one does not know the Śāstras.
- Rajasic: what will happen when shraddha is Rajasic and one does not know the Śāstras, and
- Tamasic: what will happen when shraddha is Tamasic and one does not know the Śāstras or

may-be you know the Śāstras.

While Bhagavān started explaining HE first took up food intake and classified the types of food into three modes. He took up food first because that is very important for sustenance. What one eats, or the eating habits reflects the mode of the person. If one has Sattvic food one's body develops in sattvic way, thought process gets inclined towards sattvic living. One should take this as indication. Example, if a person has Rajasic food or Tamasic food we cannot say that the person does not have Sattvic qualities. And if a person takes only sattvic food and believes that he or she has become sattvic is also not correct. This is because there are chances that internally one is carrying the pride of having become sattvic. And people who like Rajasic or Tamasic food do not need to regret on the same. Just that they have to make effort to increase the quantity of sattvic food in their food intake.

After the food intake, Bhagavān takes up discussing Yajna categorization. In Bhagavadgītā, Yajna is discussed at various places. In chapter 4 the same got covered in detail. From shloka 24-30, 12 types of Yajnas have been explained by Bhagavān.

Then we have Panch Maha Yajna for a householder. They are:

- Brahma Yajna
- Deva Yajna
- Pitri Yajna
- Bhuta Yajna; and
- Manushya Yajna.

So, there are many definitions of Yajna. Here one can understand Yajna as duties, or sacrifices or the havan. While we discuss the word yajna we will see the meaning will change when the same is mentioned along the three modes.

## 17.11

### **aphalākāṅkṣibhiryajño, vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate, yaṣṭavyameveti manaḥ(s), samādhāya sa sātṭvikaḥ. 17.11**

The sacrifice which is offered, as ordained by scriptural injunctions, by men who expect no return and who believe that such sacrifices must be performed, is Sātṭvika in character.

The first adjective Bhagavān uses here is '**aphalākāṅkṣibhir**', which means without expectation of any rewards. So, if one is performing duties, sacrifices without any kind of expectation it is called as Sattvic Yajna.

If one sees the Learn Gita Program, in opening ceremonies usage of word **Mahayajna** or **Gītāyajna** is there. People are asked to give their Ahuti as a Sevi or as a Geeta Volunteer. In the said program already, there are more than 8000 volunteers. From morning till night, they are continuously working. They do it without expecting anything in return for the welfare of the society. And for sake of Gītā, if someone gives seva, Swami Govinddev Giri Maharaj ji has said the same is not for society rather it is for self-development. If one is teaching Gītā or speaking something on Gītā that may or may not have effect on others. But it will surely affect the person who takes up the said activity. So, this is a kind of Sādhanā undertaken for self. We as a human being have to do some spiritual Sādhanā to reach the higher ideal, which is to reach the state of ultimate happiness. And for that one has to go beyond the three gunas and that is possible only when our mind becomes purified. Many a times wrong thoughts come to our mind. One knows that those are wrong but still we keep brooding. But, if our quality of

mind improves or the sattva gunas takes predominance then one starts choosing the right path.

How will this happen? When one's actions, sacrifices, yajnas, work for the sake of Bhagavān and not for personal motive. And one learns to sacrifice the fruits the consequences of one's action then slowly the purification process begins. And once the mind is purified one will get rid of all the sorrows and all the pain. But this journey is long, and we have to keep moving ahead slowly. In Geeta Parivar if we see there are trainers who teach how to recite the shlokas of Gītā. While they teach there are sadhaks who raise queries multiple times. The trainers try their best to answer it as many times as possible till the Sadhak picks up. They do not get angry and remain calm. This kind of behavior they may not be able to maintain in all spheres of their lives but in the Gītā class they practice it. Here one needs to note that they are not getting anything in return but still they are practicing. So, Learngeeta program is a means to achieve spiritual growth.

The second adjective that Bhagavan uses in this shloka is "**vidhidṛṣṭo**" spiritual practices prescribed in the scriptures. According to the Śāstras; Vidhi and Nished are two words.

- **Vidhi** means what **one should do**, and
- **Nished** means what one **should not do**.

In vedas there are six types of karmas nitya, naimitik, praschit, upasana, kama and nished. So, nitya and naimitik one has to do. Nitya karmas are like Sandhyavandana in morning rituals and pooja for householders. Naimitik karmas are those which one has to undertake in certain situations. Like after surya grahan or chandra grahan one has to take bath, or one has to do jappa etc. Then we have kamyakarma which is for fulfilling our desires. Like for example 'Jateshti yajna', a sacrifice performed by those aspiring for a child. Bhagavān has said that one should reduce such types of karmas. If one is not doing kamyakarmas then it is good as it will lead to rise of sattvic gunas. But kamyakarmas are not nishidha karmas. Nishidha karmas are ones which we cannot do. Examples are cow slaughter, killing of brahmin, or all the demoniac acts which Bhagavān has highlighted in chapter 16. If one does nishidha karma that accounts to a sin. Remaining karmas are upasana and praschit karmas. Praschit (penance) one takes up on realization that some sin has occurred and due to regret person performs yajna, example Chandrayan Vrat. Shandilya Vidya is an example of Upasana karma.

So vidhi here has two meanings, one to perform only the prescribed karma (nitya and naimitik). And two to perform as given in the Vedas. In this shloka Bhagavān has said if the seeker performs yajna:

- **Only** for sake of Bhagavān,
- **Without expectation** of reward
- With a **firm conviction that it is part of his duties**, and
- keep the actions limited to **only prescribed karmas**.

Then the karmas so performed are called as sattvic karmas. Similarly, in Chapter 12 shloka 11 Bhagavān has stressed on giving up expectation for rewards:

**athaitad apy aśhakto 'si kartum mad-yogam āśhritaḥ  
sarva-karma-phala-tyāgam tataḥ kuru yatātmavān||12.11||**

**Meaning:** If you are unable to even work for Me in devotion, then try to renounce the fruits of your actions and be situated in the self.

In next shloka Bhagavān discusses about Rajasic Yajna.

## 17.12

### **abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ(n), dambhārthamapi caiva yat, ijyate bhārataśreṣṭha, taṃ(m) yajñam(m) viddhi rājasam. 17.12**

That sacrifice however, which is offered for the sake of mere show or even with an eye to its fruit, know it to be Rājasika, Arjuna.

Bhagavān has said the following about Rajasic Yajna:

- **abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ(n)**: Just opposite to the sattvic karma. Main goal of performing a karma is to **get something in return**.
- **dambhārthamapi caiva yat**: yajna performed **with a hypocritical aim**. The person undertaking this shows off that he / she is the biggest follower of Dharma. Example, some people go to temple daily. This they do not for their devotion to Bhagavān , but for showing it to other people that how sattvic they are. They put tilak and in a way practices fancy spiritualism. Sometimes they even sit and meditate for long time. They do acts for public display and not for spiritual reason behind the karma.

This kind of yajna leads to sorrows, pain and illnesses. In next shloka Bhagavān discusses about Tamasic Yajna.

## 17.13

### **vidhihīnamasrṣṭānnaṃ(m), mantrahīnamadakṣiṇam, śraddhāviraḥitaṃ(m) yajñam(n), tāmasaṃ(m) paricakṣate. 17.13**

A sacrifice, which is not in conformity with scriptural injunctions, in which no food is offered, and no sacrificial fees are paid, which is without sacred chant of hymns and devoid of faith, is said to be Tāmasika.

Bhagavān has said the following about Tamasic Yajna:

- **vidhihīnamnot** : They do not follow the injunctions laid down in vedas or Śāstras. They perform the actions for personal reasons only.
- **asrṣṭānnaṃ(m)**: People do not distribute any grains / food at the end of the yajna. They just know how to take from the society. Hence giving is not in their scope / nature. Or even due to laziness this part they end up omitting.
- **mantrahīnam**: yajna without recitation of mantra. Sometimes due to lack of time such people tell pandit ji to skip some mantras or speed up the process or ask him to do it internally and continue performing other rituals.
- **adakṣiṇam**: without giving any dakshina. Example, these days the practice has become to tell pandit ji in advance the amount of dakshina they will give. Such people start to negotiate or fight once the pooja is over. They go back on their committed words. Citing reasons like the pooja got over in just half the time so will give just half the dakshina.
- **śraddhāviraḥitaṃ(m) yajñam(n)**: yajna done without faith. Because elders have been doing or for showing to the society,

In following shlokas Bhagavān discusses the 3 types of Tapas (Sattvic, Rajasic, Tamasic). HE will also classify each type of tapas based on the body, mind and speech. So, as a whole HE will be discussing 9 types of Tapas. So, that means Tapas using the body are of three types (Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic). Similarly, tapas using the mind are also of three types (Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic).

Lastly, the tapas using the speech are also of three types (Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic).

### 17.14

#### **devadvijaguruprājña, pūjanaṃ(m) śaucamārjavam, brahmacaryamahimsā ca, śārīraṃ(n) tapa ucyate. 17.14**

Worship of gods, the Brāhmanaṃ, one's guru, elders and great soul, purity, straightforwardness, continence and non-violence -these are called penance of the body.

Bhagavān has discussed Tapas are performed with the help of the body:

**pūjanaṃ(m)**: offering prayers to following:

- deva: deities
- dvija: is used for brahmin. This is because of two reasons. One he becomes brahmin by birth and other is when he acquires knowledge.
- guru: teacher / preacher
- prājña: the wise people / intelligent people, one who know the ethics, one who knows the Shastras.

**śaucam**: both kinds of purity (internal as well as external).

**ārjavam**: straightforwardness / simplicity

**brahmacaryamahimsā**: The person who thinks about the brahman, param tattvam, constantly / have control of senses / control over mind / celibacy. We also use this for people who have chosen to the spiritual path and have just joined the study program.

**ahimsā**: here it means that the person is detached from the result. Just doing it for the sake of duty. non-violence

### 17.15

#### **anudvegakaraṃ(m) vākyaṃ(m), satyaṃ(m) priyahitaṃ(ñ) ca yat, svādhyāyābhyasanaṃ(ñ) caiva, vāñmayam(n) tapa ucyate. 17.15**

Words which cause no annoyance to others and are truthful, agreeable and beneficial, as well as the study of Vedas and other Śāstras and the practice of the chanting of Divine Name— this is known as penance of speech.

### **Question & Answers**

**Question:** *In shloka 14, Brahmins are included. Wanted to know who is a Brahmin?*

**Answer:** Brahmin actually is not the caste, but it refers to a social class within a hierarchical traditional Hindu society. There are certain occupations, requirements and duties that are divided into four categories:

- Brahmins
- Kṣatriya
- Vaishyas
- Shudras

The one who are studying and teaching scriptures are called as Brahmins. One gets tagged to the

above categories based on talent, efforts as well as on birth.

**Question:** *In shloka 14, brahmacharyam ahinsā it was explained is to be practiced at the level of speech, mind and body. What does that mean?*

**Answer:** It means observance of celibacy and non-violence.

**Question:** *I wanted to understand what do we mean by controlling of mind? Does it mean, mind is saying something to do, and one decides not to do?*

**Answer:** Yes! if one is not doing instructions given by mind that are wrong then it is called as controlling of mind.

**Question:** *Food offered to Bhagavān in the temples, if a person takes under what category will it come?*

**Answer:** If care takers of the temple allow, then taking little bit would be treated as sattvic. But eating it in volumes would become Rajasic. And eating the same without the permission would be categorized as Tamasic.



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**Thank you-For reading the summary**

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

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**Jai Shri Krishna!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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**|| OM ŚRĪKṚṢṆĀRPAṆAMASTU ||**