

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

2/2 (Ślōka 11-28), Saturday, 17 August 2024

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/lzYkrTvbU3w>

Yajñam, Tapa, and Dāna should be performed with Śhraddhā and offered to the Divine with the Mantra OM TAT SAT

Chapter 17 of the Srimad BhagavadGītā is **Śhraddhā Traya Vibhāg Yoga - Yoga through Discerning the Three Divisions of Faith.**

The session started with the customary lighting of the lamp, followed by prayers to Śrī Bhagavān, Veda Vyasa ji, Maa Saraswati, Dnyaneshwara Maharaj and obeisance at the feet of Gurudev.

The discourse began with heartfelt greetings to everyone on the auspicious occasion of *Raksha Bandhan*, a festival symbolising the bond of protection and love. It was highlighted that **Bhagavān Sri Krishna HIMSELF provided the ultimate Raksha Sutra - a protective and guiding thread - not just for an individual, but for the entire universe.** This divine Raksha Sutra is none other than the Bhagavad Gītā, a sacred scripture that comprises 700 verses of profound wisdom.

This text serves as a spiritual guide that addresses the complexities of life, offering solutions and guidance to protect and uplift humanity. Bhagavān delivered these teachings to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, for the protection and welfare of mankind, helping individuals navigate the challenges of life with righteousness and inner strength.

Gurudev, through his simplified discourses, made the teachings of the Bhagavadgītā easily understandable and accessible, ensuring that the profound wisdom contained within could be comprehended and applied for our well-being.

The Marathi couplet showcases the importance of a Guru and explains that knowledge gained from him should be shared with one and all.

गुरुने दिला ज्ञानरूपी वसा
आम्ही चालवू हा पुढे वारसा

The seventeenth chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is a chapter of self-screening. It encourages introspection, allowing us to reflect on our actions, thoughts, and beliefs. By regularly engaging in this process of self-examination, we can embody the mantra, "**Day by day, every day, I shall become better and better.**" This commitment to continuous self-improvement helps us to steadily uplift our lives, guiding us toward the ultimate goal of spiritual growth and self-realisation.

In the previous session, we explored the concept of tripartite faith, which varies according to the dominant gunas (qualities) within an individual. This faith influences how one approaches four essential aspects of life: food, yajna (sacrificial rituals), tapa (austerity), and dāna (charity). We discussed how these aspects, when aligned with the prevalent guna—whether sattva (purity), rajasa (passion), or tamasa (ignorance)—shape one's actions and spiritual journey.

Life is not lived solely on the physical level. Our mind, intellect, and emotions, experienced through the sense organs, play a pivotal role in shaping our existence. However, there is another crucial dimension to life—the **Atma Tattva, the essence of the soul**. This spiritual aspect is often shrouded, and needs to be unfolded and realised.

Our aim in spiritual growth is to evolve from being **ego-centric**, where our focus is primarily on ourselves, to becoming **geo-centric**, where we expand our concern to include the well-being of our community and the environment. Ultimately, we strive to reach a **cosmo-centric** perspective, where our actions and intentions are aligned with the welfare of the entire universe.

All around the world, we are witnessing war, crime, and destruction, which stem from ego-centrism - a focus on self-interest and individual gain. The Bhagavadgītā offers a fundamental mantra for transcending this destructive mindset by urging us to uplift ourselves toward cosmo-centrism, where our actions and intentions are dedicated to the welfare of all beings.

सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥१२.४॥

This shift from an ego-centric to a cosmo-centric perspective is essential for fostering peace, harmony, and the well-being of the entire universe.

Our Prime Minister, in his speech from the Red Fort, highlighted an important aspect of our history spanning a thousand years. He said that within all the principles of Sanatan Dharma, there is no concept of benefiting oneself by harming others. Instead, this ancient tradition, promotes the welfare of all beings. **Bhagavad Gītā, also guides us towards a path of compassion, selflessness, and universal well-being.**

Yajna is a ritual where everyone contributes according to their capacity, working together in harmony. A live example of such a yajna is seen in this collective effort of Geeta Parivar, wherein, thousands of people are offering their contributions - some teach, some give vivechans, others manage the classes, the IT team coordinates, and someone translates etc.. This collective endeavour is what defines a Yajna. **When this Yajna is performed selflessly, without any expectation of reward, it is known as a Sattvik Yajna.**

17.11

**aphalākāṅkṣibhīryajño, 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 Sāttvika in character.

Sacrifice that is performed according to scriptural injunctions without expectation of rewards, with the firm conviction of the mind that it is a matter of duty, is sattvika in nature.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj described that one should follow one's daily svadharma (inherent duties) as gratitude to Bhagavān:

स्वधर्मु जो बापा, तोचि नित्ययजु जाण पां।
म्हणोनि वर्ततां तेथ पापा, संचारु नाहीं ॥

He explains that if someone has done something for us, whether it be our parents taking care of us or others helping us; we perform the same duties in the future out of a sense of gratitude and obligation. This selfless work, carried out with purity and without any attachment to the fruits, and the intention of offering it back as a service, is considered a Sattvika Yajna.

This resonates with the statement

तेरा तुझको अर्पण, क्या लागे मेरा ॥

We carry four types of debts: debt to the sages, debt to our ancestors, debt to the gods, and debt to society. To repay these debts, we should engage in various acts of service, such as planting trees, feeding birds, and providing grass for cows. However, these Yajnas (sacrifices) should be performed with a pure heart and known only to our inner self.

In the Mahabharata, after the Pandavas constructed Indraprastha and performed the Rajasuya Yajna, a surprising event occurred. A mongoose came and began rolling in the remnants of the leftover food. After doing so, the mongoose started laughing. Curious about this strange behaviour, the Pandavas asked the mongoose why it was laughing.

The mongoose recounted an old story. Once, there was a Brahmin and his family who had not eaten for seven days. One day, the Brahmin managed to obtain some Sattu (a type of flour mixture), which he gave to his wife to prepare. As the food was ready, a stranger arrived at their door, hungry and asking for food. Despite their own dire hunger, the Brahmin and his family chose to share their meagre meal with the stranger, prioritising the needs of another over their own.

This act of selflessness was so powerful that when the hungry mongoose rolled in the leftovers of that Brahmin's meal, it turned half of its body golden. Ever since, the mongoose had been searching for another such pure and selfless offering to complete its transformation, but nothing it encountered, not even the grand Rajasuya Yajna, had matched the sacrifice made by that poor Brahmin's family; emphasising that the true value of a sacrifice lies not in its grandeur but in the sincerity and selflessness with which it is made.

17.12

**abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ(n), dambhārthamapi caiva yat,
ijyate bhārataśreṣṭha, taṃ(m) yajñaṃ(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.

Herein Bhagavān explained Rajasika Yajna which is done with expectation to results.

This kind of sacrifice is considered a medium-level sacrifice because it is driven by ulterior motives, often done for appearance or with the expectation of some reward. The term **dambhārtham** refers to a sacrifice performed for show, where the individual seeks recognition, admiration, or other material benefits.

For example, some people might go on hunger strikes but ensure that it is publicised, hoping for media coverage, or obtain money, or gain a position of power. This kind of sacrifice is driven by ego and pride, rather than selflessness.

The phrase

फलं अभिसन्धाय यत् इज्यते

means that the sacrifice is performed with the expectation of some fruit or reward. For instance, someone might build a lake, construct new roads, or engage in social welfare work, but they do so with the hope of gaining something in return, whether it be recognition, political power, or personal gain. Such acts tainted by the underlying desire for personal rewards, make them less pure compared to selfless acts performed without any expectation of return.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj explained yajna done with selfless motive is Sattvika

ऐसा फलाशेवाचून जो यज्ञ होतो परिपूर्ण

अर्जुना तो यज्ञ जाण सात्त्विक यज्ञ

and that done with ulterior motive or expectation of results is Rajasika

दुसरा यज्ञ राजस यज्ञ, तोही सात्त्विक यज्ञासमान

भोजना द्यावे निमंत्रण राजा जैसे

Some acts may seem like Sattvika acts eg., constructing temples or places to stay for pilgrims, but they become Rajasika when done for self fame or recognition. Dnyaneshwar Maharaj gave the example of serving food during a Śhrāddha and inviting a king or a prominent leader. Such an act is considered a Rajasika yajna.

राजा जरी घरी येईल, मोठा उपयोग होईल

आणि कीर्ती सर्वत्र फाकेल, श्राद्ध तेही घडेल

This type of sacrifice is driven by a desire for publicity, status, or personal gain, rather than a genuine intent to serve or honour the divine.

17.13

**vidhīhīnamasr̥ṣṭānnaṃ(m), mantrahīnamadakṣiṇam,
śraddhāvīrahitaṃ(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.

Following this, Bhagavān goes on to describe the third type of sacrifice, which is Tāmasika yajna. This is the lowest form of sacrifice, performed without adherence to scriptural guidelines (**vidhīhīnam**), without offering food (**asr̥ṣṭānnaṃ**), without the sacred chants (**mantrahīnam**), without donations (**adakṣiṇam**), and devoid of faith (**śraddhāvīrahitaṃ**).

Such a sacrifice is not only devoid of spiritual value but can also lead to negative consequences.

Next Bhagavān described the three types of Tapa. Just as Yajna is a sacrifice performed for the welfare of society with a spirit of unity, Tapa is the discipline undertaken for the sanctity and purification of oneself, often involving physical and mental exertion or 'heating' of the body. Eg., Gold is heated to extract its pure form.

Bhagavān described Tapa in three distinct forms:

- **Physical Austerity (Śarīra Tapa):** This refers to the discipline and purification of the body through physical acts.
- **Mental Austerity (Manasika Tapa):** This form of austerity involves the purification of the mind.
- **Austerity of Speech (Vāk Tapa):** This focuses on the purification and control of speech.

Each of these forms of Tapa can be further classified into three categories Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmsika based on the dominant Guna (quality) that influences the practice.

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.

When worship of the Supreme (**Deva**), the Brahmins (**dvija**), the spiritual master (**Guru**), the wise (**prājña**), and the elders (**pūjanaṃ**), is done with the observance of cleanliness inside and outside (**śaucam**), simplicity (**ārjavam**), celibacy (**brahmacarya**), and non-violence even in thought (**ahimsā**) then this worship is declared as the austerity of the body.

In this context, Dvija is not a Brāhmanā by birth, but one who lives and behaves like one, ie., who live for the attainment of Brahmā, who are Vedic scholars and whose conduct is pure -

ब्रह्मेण चरति

Enduring life's dualities such as profit and loss, happiness and sorrow, honour and dishonour, without being swayed by them is a form of *tapasya* (austerity of the mind and self). This practice strengthens one's resolve and cultivates inner stability.

We have seen the interview of Manu Bhakar who won a bronze medal in the Olympics. She said that she follows the principles of the BhagavadGītā. All she does is pay attention to her karma without expectation of results. **To remain focused on one's higher purpose, unaffected by external circumstances is a form of Tapa or austerity.**

Going to a pilgrimage is a *Tapa*. Serving the parents, the elders and the Gurus is also a *Tapa*. It involves more than just physical discipline; it's about mental and emotional resilience.

जिन माता-पिता की सेवा की,
उन तीरथ स्नान कियो न कियो
जिनके हृदय श्रीराम बसे
उन और कोई नाम लियो न लियो

Tapa holds a profound place in Sanatana Dharma right from the inception of creation. According to ancient scriptures, when Brahmā ji, the creator of the universe, first emerged, He heard the divine instruction to engage in *Tapa* (austerity or penance).

स तपो तप्यत् स तपत्वा

This instruction was crucial because *Tapa* is seen as a means to attain wisdom, clarity, and the strength required to fulfil one's divine duties.

The effort we at Geeta Parivar are putting into memorising and understanding the Gītā can indeed be considered a form of *Tapa* (austerity) related to speech and learning. This HE explained in the next shloka.

17.15

**anudvegakaram(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.

Austerity of speech consists in speaking words that do not cause distress (**anudvegakaram**), are truthful (**satyam**), pleasing (**priya**), and beneficial (**hitam**).

Also regularly studying and recitation of the scriptures / Śāstras (**svādhyāyābhyasanaṃ**) is known as austerity of speech.

Sanatan Dharma emphasises:

**सत्यं ब्रूयात् प्रियं ब्रूयात्, ब्रूयात् सत्यम् अप्रियम्,
प्रियं च नानृतम् ब्रूयात्, एष धर्मः सनातनः**

Speaking the truth is fundamental. However, it is important to ensure that the truth is conveyed in a manner that is not hurtful.

One should be mindful of how it may affect others. The intention should be to uplift and benefit, rather than to cause harm or distress. While speaking falsehood might sometimes seem pleasing or advantageous, it ultimately undermines trust and integrity. It's important to maintain honesty, even if the truth might be uncomfortable.

Svadhya (self-study or self-learning) is a form of **literary penance**, where the effort and discipline put into learning and understanding are valued as a spiritual practice. It involves dedicating oneself to the study of sacred texts, self-reflection, and the pursuit of deeper knowledge.

Kabir Ji said:

ऐसी वाणी बोलिए, मन का आपा खोये।
औरन को शीतल करे, आपहुं शीतल होए।।

When we cultivate inner calmness and peace, it naturally influences those around us, creating a more harmonious environment.

Similarly Dnyaneshwar Maharaj said:

तैसे साच आणि मवाळ, मितुले आणि रसाळ
बोल जैसे कल्लोळ अमृताचे

Speak truthfully and gently. Speak little but those words should be sweet like nectar.

The Dnyaneshwari and the Bhagavadgītā are the store houses of nectar or Amrit Vāni.

The following story beautifully illustrates how different forms of communication / speech can reveal much about the nature of a person, even beyond physical sight. A blind sage was meditating in a forest when a king and his soldiers became separated in the same area. One of the soldiers came across the sage and asked if he had seen anyone pass by. The sage replied that he had not seen anyone. Shortly after, the king's commander arrived and asked the sage the same question. The sage responded that a soldier had come by and had gone in a certain direction. The commander then followed that direction. Finally, the king himself arrived, greeted the sage respectfully, and inquired whether he had seen anyone. The sage, addressing the king with the respect due to his status, mentioned that both the soldier and the commander had passed through.

Curious about how the blind sage could identify them, the king asked how he knew about the soldier and the commander. The sage explained that the differences in their speech revealed their identities. The soldier spoke in a casual manner, the commander with authority, and the king with respect and courtesy.

17.16

manaḥ(ph) prasādaḥ(s) saumyatvaṃ(m), maunamātmavinigrahaḥ, bhāvasaṃśuddhirityetat, tapo mānasamucyate. 17.16

Cheerfulness of mind, placidity, habit of contemplation on God, control of mind and perfect purity of inner feelings—all this is called austerity of the mind..

Bhagavān further described austerity of the mind. HE declared serenity of thought (**manaḥ prasādaḥ**), gentleness (**saumyatvaṃ**), silence (**maunam**), self-control (**ātmavinigrahaḥ**), and purity of purpose (**bhāvasaṃśuddhir**), as austerity of the mind.

It is interesting to note that Bhagavān did not categorise silence or *maunam* simply as an austerity of speech but instead HE recognised it as an austerity of the mind. This is because, to maintain a calm and balanced mind amidst the dualities of life, whether in favourable or unfavourable situations, requires a higher level of mental discipline. Also silencing the mind and focusing it on self-realisation and contemplation involves deep mental control and self-awareness.

Shifting the mind from negative thoughts to positive ones is known as *Bhāvaśuddhi* (purification of thought). It involves maintaining the sanctity of one's honor and consistently focusing on positive thinking. Even when faced with adversity, the mind should be directed toward positive thoughts, ensuring that our inner state remains pure and uplifted.

इति एतत् मानसम् तप उच्यते

This is the highest form of tapa of the mind.

The lives of great saints exemplify the austerity of the mind. Sant Dnyaneshwar and his family faced severe ostracism from their community when his father returned to the *grihasthashrama* (householder's life) after taking *Sannyasa* (renunciation). Despite the immense challenges and social exclusion they endured, Dnyaneshwar Maharaj never expressed any bitterness or contempt towards the community in his writings.

Bhagavān further stated that all three types of Tapas, physical, verbal and mental, can be Sattvika, Rajasika and Tamasika in nature.

17.17

**śraddhayā parayā taptam(n), tapastattrividham(n) naraiḥ,
aphalākāṅkṣibhiryuktaiḥ(s), sāttvikam(m) paricakṣate. 17.17**

This threefold penance performed with supreme faith by Yogīs expecting no return is called Sāttvika.

Bhagavān said that Sattvika austerity of the body, speech or mind; loses its sanctity when material benefits are sought from its performance. It must be performed in a selfless manner, without attachment to rewards (**aphalākāṅkṣibhir**). Also, our faith (**śraddhayā**) in the value of the austerity should remain steadfast in both success and failure, and its practice should not be suspended because of laziness or inconvenience.

17.18

**satkāramānapūjārtham(n), tapo dambhena caiva yat,
kriyate tadiha proktam(m), rājasam(ñ) calamadhruvam. 17.18**

The austerity which is performed for the sake of renown, honor or adoration, as well as for any other selfish gain, either in all sincerity or by way of ostentation, and yields an uncertain and momentary fruit, has been spoken of here as Rājasika.

Austerity that is performed with ostentation for the sake of gaining honour, respect, and adoration is classified as Rajasika. Bhagavān said its benefits are unstable and transitory.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj described Tapa as:

स्वरूपाचिया प्रसरा, प्राणेंद्रिय शरीरा

आटणी करे वीरा तेची तप

Tapa is the effort of the body, mind and speech to attain the knowledge of the self.

17.19

**mūḍhagrāheṇātmano yat, piḍayā kriyate tapaḥ,
parasyotsādanārtham(m) vā, tattāmasamudāhṛtam. 17.19**

Penance which is resorted to out of foolish obstinacy and is accompanied with self-mortification or is intended to harm others, such penance has been declared as Tāmasika.

Bhagavān explained that those who engage in *Tapa* (severe austerities) without adhering to the scriptures, driven by ignorance, pride, ego, lust, attachment, and the pride of power, are practicing a form of austerity classified as *Tamasika* (darkness or ignorance). Bhagavān further stated that any austerities performed with the intent to harm others or engage in vain activities, like enduring hardship merely to gain recognition, such as getting one's name in the Guinness Book of World Records, are also examples of *Tamas Tapa*.

Earlier in this chapter, Bhagavān had described Tamasika Tapa

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।

दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ १७.५॥

Some people perform stern austerities that are not enjoined by the scriptures, but rather motivated by hypocrisy and egotism.

It was reiterated that **we should strive to elevate our lives from Tamoguna to Rajoguna, and Rajoguna to Sattvaguna**. Bhagavān described the Gunas in the fourteenth chapter in detail. Now HE speaks further about charity.

We were told that actions performed for the creation and sustenance of the universe, or for the welfare of society, are called Yajna. Whatever is done for one's own spiritual growth, purification, and self-discipline is termed *Tapa*, and, offerings made for the well-being of one's ancestors or charitable acts that contribute to the welfare of others is *Dāna* or charity.

17.20

**dātavyamiti yaddānaṃ(n), dīyate'nupakāriṇe,
deśe kāle ca pātre ca, taddānaṃ(m) sāttvikam(m) smṛtam. 17.20**

A gift which is bestowed with a sense of duty on one from whom no return is expected, at appropriate time and place, and to a deserving person, that gift has been declared as *Sāttvika*.

Bhagavān now described the three-fold divisions of *dānam*, or charity. HE said that *Sattvika* donations should be given with discernment, considering the **deśe** (place), **kāle** (time), and **pātre** (worthiness or character of the recipient). It's important to ensure that the donation serves a constructive purpose. For instance, giving money to an alcoholic might only fuel their addiction rather than help them improve their situation.

Additionally, donations should not be given simply out of a sense of obligation or gratitude without considering the potential consequences. According to Shankaracharya ji there are different phases in life: a period of exchange and a period of providing. During the exchange period, such as in student life, one is more focused on receiving knowledge and support, and thus, is not in a position to give.

In contrast, the providing period is when one is capable of giving back to society, having gained the resources and wisdom to do so responsibly. Household life (*Grihastha*) represents a time of providing, where giving back what we have received becomes a virtuous form of donation. This concept of donation extends beyond just money; it includes giving time, labor, and knowledge.

When charity is given without any expectation or feeling of gratitude, it is considered Sattvika charity, the purest form of giving. Such charity not only brings holiness to life but also purifies the wealth from which it is given. Gurudev aptly compares charity to an exhaust fan - just as an exhaust fan expels impure air from a room, charity expels impurities from our lives and our wealth. This act of giving also elevates our ancestors, contributing to their spiritual well-being and our own spiritual

growth.

Sattvika charity involves thoughtful and mindful giving, taking into account the circumstances such as the country, time, and the recipient's eligibility. For instance, providing warm drink or blankets in winter exemplifies Sattvika charity, as it addresses the immediate needs of the recipient in a thoughtful manner.

The scriptures advise that charity should be given with the right attitude:

- **Shraddhāyā Deyam** - Give with faith and devotion, ensuring that the act of giving is sincere and heartfelt.
- **Ashradhāyā Na Deyam** - Do not give without faith, as giving without sincerity diminishes the value of the act.
- **Shreyā Deyam** - Give with the intention that the recipient will benefit and be well-off, focusing on the positive impact of the charity.
- **Bhiyā Deyam** - Give humbly, with a sense of reverence and respect, not with pride or arrogance.
- **Hriyā Deyam** - Give with modesty and humility, recognizing that giving is an opportunity to serve.
- **Samvidā Deyam** - Give with awareness and understanding, ensuring that the charity is meaningful and appropriate.

Tulsidas Ji asked Rahimdas Ji where did you learn to give such charity, where the more you raise your hand to give, the more your eyes droop.

ऐसी देनी देन जु, कित सीखे हो सेन।
ज्यों-ज्यों कर ऊँचौ करो, त्यों-त्यों नीचे नैन।।

Rahimdas Ji replied

देनहार कोई और है, देवत है दिन रैन।
लोग भरम हम पर करें, याते नीचे नैन।।

Someone else is giving me day and night, but people think I give, so I look down in shame.

Donation should be like this. There should be no sense of gratitude. We have a saying that even the right hand should not know the gift of the left hand. By such charity we connect with Paramātmā.

17.21

**yattu pratyupakārārtham(m), phalamuddiśya vā punaḥ,
dīyate ca parikliṣṭam(n), taddānam(m) rājasam(m) smṛtam. 17.21**

A gift which is bestowed in grudging spirit and with the object of getting a service in return or in the hope of obtaining a reward, is called Rājasika.

Charity given with reluctance (**parikliṣṭam**), and with the hope of a return (**pratyupakārārtham**) or in expectation of a reward (**phalamuddiśya**), is said to be in the mode of passion or Rajasika Charity.

Though this kind of charity is not the best kind but it is also not unrighteous.

17.22

adeśakāle yaddānam, apātrebhyaśca dīyate, asatkṛtamavajñātaṃ(n), tattāmasamudāhṛtam. 17.22

A gift which is made without good grace and in disdainful spirit out of time and place and to undeserving persons, is said to be Tāmasika.

Charity which is given at the wrong place (**adeśe**) and wrong time (**akāle**) to unworthy persons (**apātre**), without showing respect (**asatkṛtam**), or with contempt (**avajñātaṃ**), is held to be of Tamasika nature.

When a saree is donated to a household maid with respect, dignity, and genuine intent, it exemplifies Sattvika charity. Conversely, if the donation is merely thrown at the recipient or given with reluctance and without regard for their dignity, it becomes Tamasika charity. Similarly giving away what is surplus is also tamasika charity. This is often driven by a sense of obligation rather than a true desire to help.

When humans, demons, and the gods went to Lord Brahmā seeking guidance, Brahmā ji gave them the letter "D" as a profound teaching, each receiving a different interpretation based on their nature:

- **For the Gods** (*Devas*): The letter "D" was a reminder to practice *Dama i.e.* the control and restraint of the senses. Since the gods are often associated with indulgence in pleasures, they were advised to moderate their attachment to sensory enjoyments and maintain balance and discipline.
- **For the Demons** (*Asuras*): Brahmā ji instructed them to practice *Daya ie.* compassion. Demons, known for their immense power and often destructive tendencies, were urged to show mercy and refrain from causing harm to others.
- **For Humans** (*Manushyas*): The teaching for mankind was to practice *Dāna i.e.* charity. Humans, who live in a world of exchange and interaction, were encouraged to be generous and to give freely.

17.23

oṃ tatsaditi nirdeśo, brahmaṇastrividhaḥ(s) smṛtaḥ, brāhmaṇāstena vedāśca, yajñāśca vihitāḥ(ph) purā. 17.23

OM, TAT, and SAT- this has been declared as the triple appellation of Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness, and Bliss. By that were the Brāhmaṇas and the Vedas as well as sacrifices created at the cosmic dawn.

Bhagavān disclosed a powerful Mantra in this verse. **Mantra means to invoke - invoke the Gods.**

HE said to Arjuna that while transacting in the world everyone makes mistakes, either deliberately or unknowingly. The mantra **“OM, TAT AND SAT”** delivers one from these sins. These words have been declared as symbolic representations of the Supreme Absolute Truth (Sat Chit Anand), from the beginning of creation. From them came the priests (**brāhmaṇās**), scriptures (**vedās**), and sacrifice

(yajñās).

The sacred syllables "**OM**," "**TAT**," and "**SAT**" are deeply significant and foundational to understand the essence of the divine. They encapsulate the entirety of creation, the purpose of all actions, and the pursuit of truth. By invoking these mantras, either in the beginning or the completion of ones prayers; one aligns with the highest principles of the universe, ensuring that their actions and intentions, are in harmony with the divine order, leading to the perfection of their spiritual journey.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj also explained that **OM TAT SAT** is the most powerful mantra

ॐकार ज्याचे अद्याक्षर, तत् शब्द त्यानंतर
सत् शब्द येतो अखेर ऐसा मंत्र तो सर्वोत्तम

Every chapter of the Bhagavadgītā concludes with

**om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu
Brahmāvidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde ...**

This verse symbolises the offering of the recitation of the chapter to the Supreme Absolute Truth, and the reciter seeks forgiveness for any errors or shortcomings in the recitation.

Bhagavān said those seeking **Brahmāvidyā** must invoke the Gods by this mantra and ask for deliverance.

17.24

**tasmādomityudāhṛtya, yajñadānatapaḥ(kh) kriyāḥ,
pravartante vidhānuktāḥ(s), satataṃ(m) brahmavādinām. 17.24**

Therefore, acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity as enjoined by sacred precepts are always commenced by noble persons, used to the recitation of Vedic chants, with the invocation of the divine name 'OM'.

Bhagavān continued that therefore, when performing acts of sacrifice, offering charity, or undertaking penance, expounders of the Vedas always begin by uttering "**OM**" according to the prescriptions of Vedic injunctions.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj said

जे ॐकराने आरंभिले, तत् शब्दाने ब्रह्मार्पिले
म्हणून ते कर्म झाले ब्रह्मस्वरूप

Action begun with OM, and offered to HIM with TAT, becomes HE HIMSELF (**Brahmāswaroop**).

17.25

**tadityanabhisandhāya, phalaṃ(m) yajñatapaḥ(kh) kriyāḥ,
dānakriyāśca vividhāḥ(kh), kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ. 17.25**

With the idea that all this belongs to God, who is denoted by the appellation 'TAT', acts of sacrifice and austerity as well as acts of charity of various kinds are performed by seekers of liberation, expecting no return for them.

The syllable TAT signifies HIS form (tattva or swaroop), just like *balakattva* or *vridhhattva* signify the forms of a child and an old person respectively.

The fruits of all actions belong to the creator, and hence, any **yajña** (sacrifice), **tapah** (austerity), and **dānam** (charity), must be consecrated by offering the fruits for the pleasure of the Supreme; and that they are not being performed for material rewards, but for the eternal welfare of the soul through God-realisation.

17.26

**sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca, sadyetatprayujyate,
praśaste karmaṇi tathā, sacchabdaḥ(ph) pārtha yujyate. 17.26**

The name of God, 'SAT' is used in the sense of reality and goodness. And the word 'SAT' is also used in the sense of a praiseworthy and auspicious action, Arjuna.

The word "Sat" means eternal existence and goodness. It is also used to describe to describe an auspicious action.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj said that action begun with OM, offered with TAT, should end with SAT thereby relinquishing the pride associated with that auspicious action.

Offering one's *sanskars* (impressions or habits) to the universe is an act of surrender and purification, releasing the persons attachment to them. This allows for a state of inner freedom and detachment. Thus all karma should be performed with the sentiment:

जो कुछ किया तुम किया, मैं कुछ किया नाही
कहो कही ये मैं किया, तुमही हो मुझ माही

All that has been done, has been done by YOU who resides in me.

17.27

**yajñe tapasi dāne ca, sthitiḥ(s) saditi cocyate,
karma caiva tadarthīyaṃ(m), sadyevābhidhīyate. 17.27**

And steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and charity is likewise spoken of as 'SAT' and action for the sake of God is verily termed as 'SAT'.

Bhagavān said when the word "**Sat**" is invoked, it represents truth and the eternal reality. Offering sacrifice, austerity and charity when fully established in these acts is also **SAT**. These actions are then aligned with divine truth and sincerity, and are done for the sake of the Supreme.

17.28

**aśraddhayā hutam(n) dattam(n), tapastaptam(ñ) kṛtam(ñ) ca yat,
asadityucyate pārtha, na ca tatpretya no iha. 17.28**

An oblation which is offered, a gift given, an austerity practiced, and whatever good deed is performed, if it is without faith, it is termed as naught i.e., 'asat'; therefore, it is of no avail here or

hereafter.

However, HE emphasised that if Yagya, Tapa, and Dāna are performed without faith (Śhraddhā), will be termed as '**ASAT**;' as they will lack true spiritual value and benefit neither the doer nor the universe. They are useless both in this world and the next.

Faith is the foundation that infuses these actions with meaning and power. Without it, even the most rigorous penance, the most generous charity, or the most elaborate sacrifice becomes hollow and ineffective. True spiritual practices are rooted in faith, ensuring that they contribute positively to both individual growth and the well-being of the universe.

With this, the 17th Chapter is concluded, offering obeisance to Gurudev and Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj. May their wisdom and teachings continue to guide us on the path of righteousness, devotion, and spiritual enlightenment.

Question and Answer Session

Isha Ji

Question: I live abroad and so have to rely on online donations. Will this kind of dana be considered Sattvika? Also sometimes there is doubt that the donation is being spent for the cause it was done for.

Answer: If the charity is done for personal fame or recognition it becomes Rajasika in nature and then we do not get complete punya for that. If done quietly (gupt dana) this reaps full punya.

How the receiver utilises the donation should not bother us much. Use the mantra OM TAT SAT, while doing charity, offering the action and the fruits to the Almighty. This will ensure beneficial use at both ends.

Neha Ji

Question: What is Laghu Varna and Guru Varna?

Answer: In the context of Hindi *varnamala* (alphabet) or the Devanagari script, *Laghu* and *Guru* refer to the short and long *matras* (vowel sounds) respectively. They influence the rhythm, meter, and pronunciation of words in Hindi and other languages that use the Devanagari script.

Munmun Ji

Question: The Gītā path we do everyday, is it for the upliftment of the self only?

Answer: Yes it is *Svadhya* which is the highest form of *Manasika Tapa*. This is mental austerity.

स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं(ञ) चैव, वाङ्मयं(न) तप उच्यते॥

The Srimad Bhagavad Gītā is an eloquent reflection of the Divine, filled with profound mantras that guide us towards spiritual awakening. Gurudev's teaching emphasises that repeatedly remembering God with the mind is an effort born from the heart, a sincere practice of devotion. Because the mind is fickle. When we recite the Gītā, we understand the meaning through speech, through interpretation, when we love it with intellect and mind, we connect with HIM.

Dnyaneshwar Maharaj Ji has said that the verses of Gītā Ji are not actually verses, rather they are my two hands and arms with which I can embrace my God. When we connect with this text with such a feeling, we can definitely achieve the real purpose of life.

का निजकांता आत्मया, आवडी गीता मिळावया
श्लोक नव्हती बाह्या पसरू काजू

**om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyāṃ(m) yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde
śraddhātraya vibhāgayogonāma saptadaśo'dhyāyaḥ.**



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

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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