

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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The acts of sacrifice, austerity, and charity performed without faith is futile

Chapter 17 of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita - *Śhraddhā Traya Vibhāg Yog - The Yog of three-fold divisions of faith*

The session begins with the prayer.

By the grace of the Supreme Divine, each one of us have been blessed with an opportunity to learn and imbibe the divine wisdom of the Srimad Bhagavad Gītā. This would be the result by the grace of a Guru or a saint with whom one might have crossed path in the current previous lifetimes, or due to the positive karmic reactions of one's ancestors or due to the good karmic deeds of oneself in present and past lifetimes.

The Gītā enables one to elevate to higher levels of consciousness in the path to attain the Supreme goal of liberation. The Srimad Bhagavad Gītā imparts wisdom which puts one on the path of virtuousness, benediction and well-being. The Gītā imparts the skill to overcome ignorance and leads one to the path of knowledge and veracity. It has all the answers to help the seeker sail through every situation encountered in life from a serene state of mind. One must remember that it is the Supreme Divine who chooses the seeker to learn the divine knowledge of Gītā and not vice versa.

The month of December marks the celebrations of Gītā Jayanti on December 11, which occurs on the day of Mokshadayi Ekadashi. On the occasion of Gītā Jayanti, the Learngeeta program has initiated offline Gītā parayana programs commencing from 26th of November (recitation of all 18 chapters at a stretch) from across 40 countries over the world with over 1000 locations conducting the parayana programs.

On the day of Gītā Jayanti, the learngeeta program would conduct an **Akhanda parayana** (continuous recitation of the Gītā) for about 36 hours at a stretch with over 3.5 Lakh seekers participating in this program from all over the world. The Learngeeta program would step into this

milestone of creating a record on the 11th and 12th December 2024 with the most number of Akhanda Gītā recitation, with seekers joining live from all over the world.

In this Chapter, Bhagavān explains the three-fold division of faith that is based on the three modes of nature i.e., mode of goodness (Sattva Guna), mode of passion (Rajo guna), mode of ignorance (Tamo guna).

Let's understand the term Faith. Faith is confidence, complete trust or a strong conviction in a person, thing or a concept. In context of spirituality, faith is a belief in the Divine or in the doctrines of teachings. It is a firm belief in a person or a thing (for which there is no proof).

Say for example, those who are inclined towards spiritual studies (Say the Gītā) and have a staunch faith on its teachings and remain engrossed in contemplating on the Divine wisdom at all times. Some advanced seekers not just restrict themselves in learning the Gītā, but they even teach the Gītā and live the Gītā by walking on its principles in daily lives. On the contrary, those who have material goals (say wealth creators) lay their path on the belief or faith that achieving material goals would bring them happiness. In the same manner, few others would be inclined towards sports, studies, preaching or teaching and believe that their chosen path would bring them happiness. Irrespective of the belief system (i.e., material goals or spritual goals), there is a leap of faith that is applicable for one and all.

The quality of faith cannot be objectified or measured theoretically. It is to be developed and experienced from within. Consider the example of colors. A color is a visual experience or a visual perception that enables one to differentiate otherwise identical objects. It is hard to explain or comprehend a color theoretically as it is a visual perception or experience (say white paper, black purse, red book etc.). In the same manner, the quality of faith is an internal state and cannot be objectified or measured in theory. The quality of faith or belief shapes up one's true nature or personality. As they say - "You are what you believe".

A seeker needs to understand that there is no absolute Sattvik, Rajasik or Tamasik faith. At any given point in time, one Guna would be predominant over the other two Gunas. Those who are endowed with Sainly qualities have a predominant Sattva Guna. Those who are passionate about material goals are overpowered by Rajo Guna. Those who are inclined towards sloth or who are sluggish are automatically gripped by laziness or sleepiness which is a sign of the predominant Tamo Guna.

Even in the case of elevated sages, the Sattva Guna is predominant and the Tamo Guna might be dormant. However, during nightfall when there is a need to sleep, the dormant Tamo Guna would be active and predominate over the other two Gunas. Even the most Sattvik soul in this material realm would have all the three Gunas and the Tamo Guna might be dormant (but still present). Every entity in this material realm is under the influence of the three Gunas with one guna being predominant while the other might be dormant.

One who elevates beyond or transcends sattva Guna attains the state of Gunateeta. Whereas one who descends downwards from Sattva would be gripped by a predominant Rajo Guna. In the same manner, one who has a predominant Rajo guna attains the traits of Sattva upon elevating upwards. On the contrary, the one who descends downwards from Rajo Guna would be gripped by a predominant Tamo Guna (Say sleeping for 12 hours or more in a day; gripped by sloth and sluggishness etc would be the predominant traits).

Only the one who has transcended the three Gunas and attained the state of Gunateeta is free from the influence of these Gunas. Hence, a seeker needs to aim to increase the proportion of Sattva tattva (mode of goodness) in all walks of life.

Bhagavān then explains the three-fold classification of food and their impact on humans. HE then explains that yagya(sacrifice), daana (charity) and Tapah (austerities) also inherit their three-fold classification based on the three modes of nature.

HE then explains the significance of AUM tat sat and mentions that it refers to the absolute truth or the Supreme Divine. HE then concludes the chapter by saying that the acts of sacrifice, austerity and penance devoid of faith is futile. This will be discussed in detail in this session.

17.11

aphalākāṅkṣibhiryajño, vidhidrṣṭo 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.

Bhagavān now explains the three-fold classification of Yagna. The term Yagna here refers to sacrifice or discharging the duties. In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that sacrifice that is performed without any expectations of rewards and which inline with the directives of scriptures is of the nature of goodness. One who discharges the Yagna or sacrifice with a firm conviction that it is a matter of duty is said to be a Yagna emanating from the nature of goodness.

When one performs Yagna without any expectations of rewards, it is a trait of Gunateeta. Let's understand this with an example. Consider the example of prostrating or offering obeisance to elders or a Guru. This act of offering obeisance to a Guru or a spiritual master is inline with the directives of the scriptures. The one who has transcended Sattva would offer his/her obeisance even if the Guru does not notice the same.

Those with a predominant Sattva would expect the Guru to notice them offering obeisance and would expect a blessing in return.

On the contrary, those who do not expect any blessings (with a belief that they do not the good wishes) nor abide by the rules of the scriptures by prostrating to a Guru would be deemed as a Tamasik natured Yagna.

Those who truly abide by the directives of the scriptures and perform the Yagna or sacrifice without any expectations of rewards in return eventually transcend tattva and attain the state of Gunateeta.

17.12

abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ(n), dambhārthamapi caiva yat, ijjate 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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the characteristics of a Rajasik Yagna. Although the Sattvik Yagna and the Rajasik Yagna appear similar externally, the intent differs internally. Those who engage in Yagna from the mode of goodness do not seek for rewards. Whereas those who function from the mode of passion seek for acknowledgement and appreciation for the task performed. Where there is expectation of a reward or return, it is of Rajasik natured Yagna.

When the predominant Rajo Guna is fuelled by Tamo Guna, such persons even sabotage the efforts of others in order to highlight themselves or take credit for the task performed by others. They believe in rubbing off the line drawn by other to make their line look longer. They fail to understand that "Blowing out someone else's candle doesn't make yours burn brighter".

On the contrary, those who function from the mode of goodness remain unaffected by the externals and execute their duties with a pure intent. It is therefore advised on one's own business happenings rather than to focus one's energies on how to overtake and undermine one's competition.

17.13

vidhihīnamasrṣṭānnaṃ(m), mantrahīnamadakṣiṇam, śraddhāviraḥitaṃ(m) yajñaṃ(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.

In this shloka, Bhagavan explains that those in the mode of ignorance do not have faith in the scriptures. They carry out religious ceremonies but disregard the ordinances of the scriptures. Sacrifice in which such injunctions of the scriptures are ignored and a self-determined process is followed, due to laziness, indifference, or belligerence, is in the mode of ignorance. Such faith is actually a form of faithlessness. Sacrifice devoid of faith and contrary to the injunctions of the scriptures, in which no food is offered, no mantras chanted, and no donation made, is to be considered in the mode of ignorance.

Let's understand this deeper with one such anecdote involving the lives of Guru Dronacharya and King Drupada.

Dronacharya and Drupada were disciples in the same Gurukul. Over a period of time, both of them became good friends. Drupada was the only heir to his royal family, and that way, a future king. Dronacharya, on the other hand, was the son of a saint named Bharadwaja, a poor Brahmin by birth. He was therefore worried about his future even though he was skilled in all fronts - academic, warfare, sports, and others. He was an exceptional warrior of that era even though he was a Brahmin, not a Kshatriya who were known to be good at war skills. Drupada, however, was not so skilled; so, he used to seek Dronacharya's help in all his tasks during their entire tenure in the Gurukul.

One day, it struck to Drupada's mind that he must express his gratitude to Dronacharya for all his timely help in the tasks he was given at the Gurukul. So, he called on Dronacharya and pledged before him that he would love to help him unconditionally in the time of his need. He also asked Dronacharya to feel free to seek any kind of help whenever there is a need.

Many days passed, and when the time came for both of them to leave the Gurukul after completion of their formal studies, Drupada promised Dronacharya to offer him half of the kingdom, which he would rule over, to alleviate his poverty. Dronacharya was too self-respecting an individual to accept such an offer. He expressed sincere thanks to Drupada for that gesture. He also expressed that he would not hesitate to seek Drupada's help when there is an absolute need. Thus, they departed.

Time and milieu changed with the changing cosmos. With them were forgotten many a promise and many a pledge. Drupada became the King of Panchala. His growing power and the ensuing prestige boosted his ego, thus converting him to a different person than the one who was Dronacharya's friend

at the Gurukul.

On the other hand, the lady luck did not smile at Dronacharya for quite long. He was still languishing in poverty. By that time, he had married Krupi, the twin sister of Kripacharya, and had become the proud father of Ashwatthama. However, he had to struggle hard to make both ends meet.

On one occasion, when Ashwatthama was being ridiculed by a bunch of his friends, Dronacharya overheard their conversation. The basis of the ridicule was that Dronacharya was not able to afford milk for Ashwatthama, and therefore, Ashwatthama was tricked to believe a beverage made with rice powder as milk. That incident saddened the poor father in Dronacharya and he was not at peace with himself. Over a deep thought, he was reminded of his last meeting with Drupada and his promise. Then, he decided to meet Drupada and beg a few cows to nurture them.

As Dronacharya reached King Drupada's palace, the gatekeepers were stunned to see him. They did not allow him in, because of his poor attire and dejected look. He was ridiculed more when he called King Drupada as his childhood friend. Despite all that, Dronacharya was hell-bent on meeting the King. That compelled the gatekeepers to pass on his message to the King. King Drupada allowed him entry into his court but did not identify him as his childhood friend. He mocked Dronacharya by saying, "How a rich King and a poor Brahmin be friends?"

Pissed off with such unexpected, irrational behaviour of a childhood friend, who once promised to offer him half of his kingdom, Dronacharya returned empty-handed. He cursed his fate and took a promise to take revenge on Drupada at a suitable time later.

The vengeful Drona, leaving aside his interest in the Brahminic studies, made up his mind to teach war skills to the Kshatriyas. His brother-in-law Krupacharya referred his name before Bhīṣma Pitāmaha to train the Kuru Dynasty in war skills. Bhīṣma Pitāmaha took a tough test before offering Dronacharya the new responsibility.

As time passed by, Dronacharya discovered the latent talent of Arjuna, among all others, and trained him meticulously. Thus, Arjuna came up as an undisputed warrior. At the end of the formal training, when the disciples asked Dronacharya about his *Guru Dakshina* (return gift to the Guru), he desired them to defeat King Drupada in direct war and bring the defeated King to him.

The Kauravas led by Duryodhana were highly ambitious and boastful. So, they jumped the gun and hurriedly raised a war against the Panchala kingdom and were defeated. Duryodhana was taken as a prisoner. Then, the Pandavas reiterated the war against Drupada, to honour their Guru's wishes and to free Duryodhana as well.

As expected, Arjuna, after a fierce fight, won the war and brought the defeated King Drupada before Dronacharya. Dronacharya blessed Arjuna for his bravery. He then reminded Drupada about their Gurukul days of friendship and his false promise, allowing him to relish his shameful defeat. Drupada was ashamed of his ruthless behaviour. He repented and asked Dronacharya to forgive. Dronacharya was humane enough to listen to his appeal, and forgave Drupada, then and there. But as per Drupada's promise made earlier, he took away half of the Panchala kingdom and made Ashwatthama the king of that. He returned the other half to Drupada.

The helpless King Drupada pretended to be friendly at that time. But in his heart of hearts, he pledged again to take revenge on Dronacharya for that offence. He came back and arranged to offer prayers to the Almighty seeking divine favor to punish Dronacharya. He performed yajnas, aspiring to father a child who could help him make friendship with Arjuna, be the cause of Dronacharya's death, and wipe

away the Kuru Dynasty forever, directly or indirectly.

King Drupada's prayers were heard, and he was blessed with a son Dhrushtadyumna. Now, King Drupada ordered his associates to find a Guru of Dronacharya's calibre, who could train his son in warfare skills so that he could slay Dronacharya. King Drupada's associates informed him that there were none in that era who measured upto Dronacharya's skills on warfare arts and Dronacharya alone could mentor a boy to equip him to slay Dronacharya himself. King Drupada approached Dronacharya to mentor his son on warfare arts. Dronacharya was well aware that Dhrushtadyumna was born to slay him one day. However, he whole heartedly accepted Dhrushtadyumna as his disciple and endowed him with warfare skills.

Dhrushtadyumna later killed Dronacharya in the Mahabharata war, and a daughter Draupadi who married Arjuna, thus helping his father make friendship with him, and was the sole indirect reason for the end of Kuru Dynasty.

The point to be understood here is, Dronacharya was well aware that Dhrushtadyumna was born to slay him one day. However, he discharged his duties as a Guru and trained him whole heartedly. This is an example of Sattvik Yagna. On the contrary, Drupada engaged in a Yaga with an intent to be blessed with a son who could slay Dronacharya. The intent of the Yagna was vengeance and is hence deemed to be Tamasik. Hence, it is the intent that determines if a Yagna is Sattvik, Rajasik or Tamasik when compared to the externals.

17.14

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

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

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the three-fold clarification of austerities or Tapah based on the three modes of nature. Let's first understand the significance of austerities.

Austerity refers to a disciplined spiritual practice or a Sādhanā that purifies the mind and the body (of anything that prevents or blocks connection with the higher self or the Divine). Austerity is a mystical process that enables a seeker to purify the mind and brings them closer to the Divine.

By sincerely practicing austerity, the seekers can uplift and transform their lives from the mundane to the divine. Such austerity should be performed without show, with pure intent, in a peaceable manner, in conformance with the guidance of the spiritual master and the scriptures.

Bhagavān classifies such austerity into three categories - austerities of the body, speech, and mind.

When worship of the Divine, the Brahmins, the spiritual master, the wise, and the elders is done with the observance of cleanliness, simplicity, celibacy, and non-violence then this worship is declared as the austerity of the body.

Say for example, during cold winters, one might feel reluctant to take a shower in order to engage in worship of the Divine. However, taking a shower and maintaining bodily cleanliness is deemed as austerity of the body (Even if the externals are unfavourable). It is recommended by Adi Shankaracharya to worship five dieties. Panchayatana Puja centres around the worship of five primary

deities: Ganesha, Adi Shakti (the Primordial Divine Mother), Shiva, Vishnu, and Surya (the Sun). The worship of these deities in Panchayatana Puja fosters a holistic approach to spirituality, enabling devotees to connect with different dimensions of the divine and attain spiritual growth, balance, and enlightenment. Refraining from Divine worship or offering obeisance to spiritual masters or elders is a deviation from the directives of the scriptures.

One should also engage in austerities of the mind and speech. One should be mindful to refrain from hurting the other by actions or words. Along with practicing non-violence against flora and fauna, one should also practice non-violence from within and harbor compassion towards one and all. Let's say there is a repair work at home. One could opt for interior work to be done during scorching heat and then opt for exteriors during evening hours. By doing this, one shows compassion towards the labourers during scorching heat.

It is also equally important to refrain from using words that are intentionally meant to hurt other people's feelings. This is the main point to remember when practicing austerity of speech. One needs to be mindful in performing the austerities of the body, mind and speech.

Once, there was a man by named Satyanarayana Rathi from Bikaner. He is known for his simplicity and humbleness. He believes in discharge his duties without seeking for any credit or appreciation. On a usual day, he started from his workplace to have a lunch break. But he returned to his workplace in a minute without leaving for his home. The co-workers enquired the reason for the same. He replied by saying that he would leave after few mins. This pattern repeated a couple of times where he would step out and return in a minute. Upon being enquired by the co-workers, he then informed them that a puppy was sleeping under his scooter and would wake up if he moves his scooter. Practicing compassion in all the subtle activities should be the aim of every seeker.

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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the austerity of speech. Words that do not cause distress, are truthful, inoffensive, and beneficial, as well as regular recitation of the Vedic scriptures are considered as austerity of speech.

Some people take pride that they speak the truth upfront (without using any sugar coated words). Harsh truth might wound the heart of the other for a lifetime. One might recover from a physical wound, but might never be able to recover from the inner wound or emotional wound caused by the harsh words. The choice of words that one uses should not create ripples or inner disturbance in the other.

Kabir Das Ji teaches us to speak in such a manner that keeps us harmonious and composed thereby making the listener feel a sense of joy in the communication in the below Doha:

ऐसी वाणी बोलिए मन का आपा खोए |
औरन को शीतल करे, आपहुं शीतल होए ॥

Words once spoken cannot be retrieved. Hence instead of being apologetic or remorseful later on, it is

better to maintain the proper checks and balances on one's speech. The words spoken affects both the speaker and the listener. Soothing, compassionate and loving words resonates togetherness, while harsh speech resonates hatred.

Some people take pride when they put down the other or demean the other with their choice of words. Some people tend to speak harsh and bitter by masking the ill words with the perception of putting across the truth. Such persons are not affected if the other moves into distress due to the choice of their words. The quality of truth is pure and hence, when words are spoken truthfully from the core of one's heart, it can never cause distress to the other. When one speaks bitter truth when it is unnecessary for the other to know or when one speaks partial truth, one causes distress to the other. The way the words are expressed creates an impact on the other. It is not about what one says it, it is about how one says it.

The below shloka from the scriptures provides a guideline on the quality of speech.

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

(Manu Smṛiti 4.138)

One should speak the truth and speak it pleasantly. However, speaking an unpleasant truth should be avoided, and likewise, speaking a pleasing falsehood should also be avoided. This is the path of Sanatan dharma.

Let's understand the power of words from the below instance. Once, a famous debate took place between the two very renowned scholars - Adi Shankaracharya and Mandana Misra. Adi Shankaracharya and Mandan Mishra debated Advaita Vedanta in the 8th-9th century. The debate was held in Mahishi, and the loser would become the winner's disciple. The judge for the debate was Mandan Mishra's wife, Devi Bharti. Before the debate, the two scholars were strung two identical garlands from fresh flowers.

The flowers wither due to heat. When one's words do not resonate the truth or reality, the body temperature rises. Thus, the flowers on the garland strung was used to decide the winner of the debate. Although Madan Mishra was a learned scholar, his words lacked the purity when compared to Adi Shankaracharya and hence the flowers on his garland withered. Hence, Adi Shankaracharya was declared the winner of the debate. The choice and purity of words impacts the listener. If the choice of words are negative, it would have a negative impact and if the words are positive, it would have a positive impact on the listener.

Once, there was a Zen master who was around 100 years old and was on his death bed, waiting for his final moments to pass by to embrace death. He then asked his disciples to describe what they could see within his mouth wide open. He asked if they could see his teeth. The disciples replied by saying a no and they could see only his tongue. The Zen master then replied by saying that the teeth is hard in nature and hence could not sustain for so long whereas the tongue is soft by nature and is hence present till the last moment of his life.

Once, there was a quarrel between the teeth and the tongue. The teeth threatened the tongue that it can be chewed by the teeth. The tongue responded by saying that it would be in pain for a span of few hours, but with the power of its speech and choice of words, it could uproot all the 32 teeth. This is the impact of one's words and hence one should be mindful with the choice of words.

As Tulsidas Ji says -

तुलसी मीठे बचन ते सुख उपजत चहुँ ओर। बसीकरन इक मंत्र है, परिहरु वचन कठोर ॥

Pleasant words invoke happiness all around and giving up harsh words is the mantra (secret) of power.

शब्द सम्हारे बोलिए, शब्द के हाथ न पाँव। एक शब्द औषधि करे, एक शब्द करे घाव।।

One should refrain from using harsh, hurtful, or abusive words. As they say - Words one spoken cannot be taken back and it can wound the other for a lifetime. Insensitive words can inflict a psychological scar. Words can hurt or heal. Hence, one needs to think before speaking and be mindful about the choice of words.

17.16

**manaḥ(ph) prasādaḥ(s) saumyatvaṃ(m), maunamātmavinigrahaḥ,
bhāvasaṃśuddhiritetat, 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..

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the austerity of the mind. Serenity of thought, gentleness, silence, self-control, and purity of purpose - all these are declared as austerity of the mind. If one is firm on the austerities of the mind, one would automatically gain control over the austerities of the body and speech.

One should harbor pure thoughts and intent. One should be gentle and mindful in speech and action. The choice of words should be toned down and sound gentle. One's actions should also be gentle and polished. The thoughts and words should emanate from a state of compassion instead from a state of negativity. Refraining from being untruthful, deceitful etc and consciously embracing the saintly traits helps one purify the mind.

Silence here refers to contemplation. Say for example, if one listens to a vivechan, one needs to contemplate on the teachings or wisdom and imbibe the same in daily lives. The root cause of all the problems is due to expectations from the other. If the other does not align to one's own expectations, one is gripped by anger, greed, sadness or misery. If one is devoid of expectations, the negative states (Say anger, disappointment, sadness etc.) are rooted out automatically.

As they say -

सीताराम सीताराम सीताराम सीताराम कहिये, जाहि विधि राखे राम ताहि विधि रहिये।।

One needs to be contented with what one has. One needs to count the blessings instead of lamenting on what one lacks. Life would throw bitter lemons at every stage. One can choose to remain bitter or make a lemonade out of it.

The primary goal is to cleanse the mind or purify the inner self. If one engages in intense sadhana (say chanting or reciting the shlokas from the scriptures) externally but devoid of the spiritual wisdom from within, one would not be able to elevate to higher states of consciousness. The external world is a reflection of our internal world and if the inner self is disturbed by negative states(anger, pride, fear etc), the ripples will be felt in the external situations. One needs to focus on cleansing the mind and the inner self in the path of spiritual evolution.

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.

Bhagavan now explains the three-fold classification of penance or austerities based on the three modes of nature. In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that an austerity loses its sanctity when material benefits are sought when it is performed. It must be performed in a selfless manner, without attachment to rewards. When devout persons with immense faith practice these three-fold austerities without any desires for material rewards, they are designated as austerities in the mode of goodness.

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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that austerity performed for pomp and glory, prestige, fame or to paint an unreal picture of oneself to seek appreciation or desire for any other material rewards, this method of austerity is classified as the mode of passion (Rajo guna).

17.19

**mūdhagrāheṇātmano yat, pīḍayā 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.

Austerity that is performed by those with confused notions, and which involves torturing the self or harming others, is described to be in the mode of ignorance. Some people end up torturing their body or harm others in the name of austerity and deviate from the directives of the scriptures. Such austerity which is limited to the body alone is classified as Tamasik form of austerity.

17.20

**dātavyamiti yaddānam(n), diyate'nupakāriṇe,
deśe kāle ca pātre ca, taddānam(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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān mentions that the act of charity derives its three-fold classification based on the three modes of nature.

Dharma or righteousness rests on four pillars - **Satyam** (Truthfulness), **Daya** (compassion), **Tapah** (penance or austerities) and **Daana** (Charity). In Sat-Yuga all the four pillars were robust. During Treta Yuga, Dharma or righteousness rested only on three pillars - Daya (compassion), Tapah (penance or austerities) and Daana (Charity). Dwapar Yuga was devoid of truthfulness and compassion. Hence,

righteousness was based on Tapah (austerities) and Daana (Charity). However, the present Yuga (Kali Yuga) is devoid of truthfulness, compassion and austerities. Kali yuga rests on only one pillar of righteousness which is Daana (Charity). It is said that engaging in Daana or charity is equivalent to practicing all the four attributes or pillars of the Dharma in Kali Yuga.

**प्रगट चारि पद धर्म के कलि महुँ एक प्रधान।
जेन केन बिधि दीन्हें दान करइ कल्याण॥**

Bhagavān now explains the three-fold classification of Charity based on the three modes of nature. In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the nature of charity performed from the mode of goodness. Charity given to a worthy person whole heartedly, without expecting anything in return, at the proper time and in the proper place, is stated to be in the mode of goodness.

Charity is not to be perceived as a favour that is bestowed on the receiver. Instead, the giver should engage in the same by virtue and not by choice. Some people take pride or engage in self-promotion or seek to be praised or expect a give-and-take approach when engaging in charity. The charity which longs to publish itself ceases to be charity. It is not about how much we give, but how much we put into giving.

One needs to always give without remembering and always receive without forgetting. Real charity is giving from the heart without taking credit and qualifies as Sattvik Daana.

Let's understand the true meaning of Sattvik Daana (charity in the mode of goodness) from the example of Mr.Goenka, the founder of Geeta Press. He was into diamond business and had established a branch of workspace in West Bengal. Once, during the pre-independence era, the region of Bengal was stuck by famine and the locals were not able to make ends meet for a living.

Mr.Goenka decided to help the locals by distributing groceries (as he had acquired a lot of profit from his business in Bengal). He decided with his associate to distribute groceries to those who participated in satsang (to avoid the misuse of his charity) - an interim give and take approach.

The locals from all over Bengal region would come down to participate and reap the groceries in return. The associate realised that a huge amount of funds were being spent in charity and enquired from Mr.Goenka if there would a threshold amount that could be set to stop the wastage of funds.

Mr.Goenka denied and informed the associate that the groceries shall be distributed until the last penny he owns. The East India company which covered Bengal facilitated Mr. Goenka for his efforts to help the people of Bengal during the famine. However, during the felicitation ceremony, Mr. Goenka mentioned that the amount of wealth that was donated to Bengal during famine was nothing compared to the wealth he acquired from Bengal region and he was unable to repay with the same returns to the Bengal region.

Mr. Goenka did not hesitate to donate a huge amount to the famine stricken Bengal. He considered himself fortunate to have been able to engage in charity. The greatness was not in what he had, but what he gave. Charity does not decrease wealth and no one has ever become poor by giving. Charity done with this perception is said to be in the mode of goodness.

The scriptures have advised to donate 10% of the total earnings in charity. Say for example, if one's income is 1Lakh rupees, one should donate 10,000 rupees in charity.

The saints have advised that if one takes 21000 breaths, one should spend the time taken for 2100

breath cycles by being absorbed in the Divine. If there are 24hrs in a day, one needs to set aside 2.5 hrs to engage in devotion, chanting, meditation etc.

Charity is not restricted to donation of wealth alone. One can donate time, food (Annadaana), knowledge or wisdom, clothes, donate blood, so on and so forth. Amongst all the above types of charity, Annadaana is seen as the highest form of charity.

In the Learngeeta program, the volunteers donate their time and have no expectations in return. The trainers spend hours to help us chant the shlokas and do not expect even a thank you in return. The volunteers feel blessed to make a difference by volunteering and without expectations of rewards or appreciation.

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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the category of charity that is classified as Rajasik (mode of passion). When charity is done with reluctance or compulsion, with the expectations of returns or rewards, is said to be in the mode of passion.

Consider the example where volunteers from an NGO request for donation (say Rupees 500). Now, if one gives happily or whole-heartedly upon being requested for it, the charity becomes Sattvik.

However, if one bargains and brings down the requested amount to Rupees 100 or if one regrets later that one could have donated a smaller amount, then it is classified as Rajasik. Such charity, which is done only when one sees an opportunity of any return or reward is classified as Rajasik.

The persons who engage in charity by expecting rewards or appreciation, who harbor a give-and-take approach, who bargain, who donate out of compulsion, who believing in painting a good image about themselves, who expect recognition so on and so forth are categorised as Rajasik natured charity. It is not wrong to seek for appreciation or returns, but this type of charity is deemed unfit to be termed as Sattvik. Rajasik natured charity is better than no charity.

17.22

adeśakāle yaddānam, apātrebhyaśca dīyate, asatkṛtamavajñātam(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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains charity performed in the mode of ignorance (Tamasik). Charity in the mode of ignorance is done without consideration of proper place, person, attitude, or time. When charity is done to undeserving persons or by hurling hurtful words on the other and then donating is deemed to be Tamasik.

Charity done to those who would use the donated amount to engage in addiction or alcohol, gambling etc also becomes Tamasik.

About two decades ago, it was a common practice to arrange Bhandara (where food is donated free of cost) and needy people in the locality would benefit from the same. During later years, this practice lost its charm and significance as people started to misuse the same. In the name of Bhandara, fast food was being sold to make more profit. People would attend every Bhandara and gather food from every outlet and then pick the best food by throwing away the rest of it.

Annadaana is a virtuous deed and wastage would be deemed as Tamasik. Charity when done at the right place, at the right time and to the right people is deemed to be Sattvik.

As Kabir Das Ji says

जो जल बाडै नाव में, घर में बाढ़े दाम। दोनों हाथ उलीचिए, यह सज्जन को काम।।

This means that a boat with water would eventually increase the risk of sinking.

In the same context, even if one's wealth increases at home, one should whole heartedly donate with two hands. Whether there is adversity or prosperity in life, we should always act wisely. In both the situations, we should maintain balance and take decisions thoughtfully when it comes to charity.

चिड़ी चोंच भर ले गई, नदी न घटियो नीर।

दान दिए धन न घटे, कह गए दास कबीर।

This means that one needs to donate whole heartedly. The happiness and contentment that one experiences upon giving cannot be described in words. True bliss is experienced only by the one who gives lovingly and generously.

ऊंचा रखो विचार दान धर्म न किया तो जीवन है बेकार

Life becomes fruitful by giving. No charity is ever a wasted effort as long as it is given from the heart.

17.23

**om 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 now explains the significance of the words Om Tat Sat, which symbolize different aspects of the Absolute Truth. From them came the priests, scriptures, and sacrifice.

Let's understand the meaning of "**AUM**" or "**OM**". This sacred syllable is said to be the primordial sound that pervades the universal creation. AUM represents the Brahman, the impersonal aspect of the Divine. The syllable AUM is composed of the three sounds a-u-m (in Sanskrit, the vowels a and u coalesce to become o).

'AUM' mystically embodies the essence of the entire universe. It is infinite and represents the essence of the supreme absolute consciousness, Brahmān or the cosmic world. It is the beginning and the end of all creations. The **syllable 'AUM' is also referred to as Omkara.**

There are four parameters of 'AUM.' The three syllables A-U-M are said to represent the trinity or Tridev - Brahmā ji (the creator), Bhagavān Vishnu (the preserver) & Bhagavān Śiva (the destroyer).

The four states of consciousness that resonates with AUM, the first three of which are avasthas, include:

- **Jagrat** – the waking state in which consciousness is focused outward (vibration "A")
- **Svapna** – the dream state in which consciousness is focused inward.(vibration "U")
- **Sushupti** – the deep sleep state in which consciousness roams the universe separate from the mind. (Vibration "M")
- **Turiya** – the state of transcendental, or pure, consciousness in which the focus with both outward and inward at the same time.

The one syllable AUM refers to form or the formless Divine. It represents the absolute reality.

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 continues to explain that when performing acts of sacrifice, offering charity, or undertaking penance, expounders of the Vedas always begin by uttering "**AUM**" according to the prescriptions of Vedic injunctions, to invoke auspiciousness.

17.25

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

In this shloka, Bhagavan says that "**Tat**" signifies that everything belongs to the Supreme Divine. Like how "**AUM**" is associated with yajna, dana and tapas, and with all religious performances, so is "**Tat**."

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.

Bhagavān now explains the significant of Sat. This is the third symbol, which signifies goodness. Say satsang for example is derived from the word '**Sat**'. Whenever there is something good, pure or saintly, it is prefixed with "**Sat**." Hence, "**Aum Tat Sat**" refers to the supreme absolute truth or the Supreme Brahmān.

Gurunanak ji said:

आद सच, जुगाड़ सच, है भी सच, नानक होसे भी सच।"

Adi Shankaracharya ji said:

एको ब्रह्म द्वितीयो नास्ति।

Hence, by saying **AUM Tat Sat** iti or Hari *AUM Tat Sat*, it refers to the whole or absolute. Ved Vyaas Ji has composed the Pushpika at the end of every chapter with the words "**Aum Tat Sat Iti**," so that if incase of any error or transgression by the reader of the shloka, the same shall be forgiven.

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'.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that being established in the performance of sacrifice, penance, and charity, is also described by the word "**Sat.**" And so any act for such purposes is named "**Sat.**"

As the Ik Omkar states - The Supreme being is one, truth by name, creator, fearless, without hatred, of timeless form, unborn, self-existent, and known by the Guru's grace.

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.

In this shloka, Bhagavan concludes this Chapter by reiterating the importance of faith. HE says that whatever acts of sacrifice, charity, or penance are done without faith, are termed as "**Asat**" and are deemed to be incomplete, imperfect or useless. The one engaging in acts of sacrifice, austerity or penance by being devoid of faith will not be able to attain positive fruits as it is imperfect, futile or incomplete.

Even if one says Hari "**Aum Tat Sat**" by being devoid of faith is deemed to be unfit or futile. Thus, one's faith should not be based upon one's own impressions of the mind and intellect. Instead, it should be based upon the infallible authority of the Vedic scriptures. It is the quality of faith that helps one attain the ultimate goal or the Divine.

The session ends with the prayer and Hanuman Chalisa.

Question and Answer

Rajnish Ji

Question: It was told that left hand practices are Tamasik. But the elders are often seen saying that sprits and ghosts do not exist. Kindly clarify.

Answer: The embodied soul is made up of five elements of nature - Earth, water, wind, Fire and Ether. Whereas the ghosts or sprits have only the element Wind and are hence seeker. They depend on a physical body to experience anything. Those who are week minded or faint hearted can be

overpowered by such energies while those who are firm remain untouched by the same. Tantrik pooja is deemed to be Tamasik.

Question: During havan, if one prays for the well-being of other, is it Sattvik?

Answer: This would be Rajasik as one is connected to kinsman. It is indirectly asking for the self.

Rukmini Ji

Question: Which book can one read to comprehend the meaning of shlokas in Gita?

Answer: Sadhak Sanjivini by Geeta Press is the recommended book for seekers.

Geeta Ji

Question : How can one organise Gītā Jayanti oversees?

Answer: One can log in to Learngeeta website and select "Find your volunteers" by providing your city. The volunteers will help in organising the Geeta Jayanti or parayana as per Geeta Pariwar rules.

Gayathri Ji

Question : Is it mandatory to chant Nyasa before reciting Gītā?

Answer: For those who chant with devotion and are on the path of Bhakti, it is not mandatory to chant Nyasa.

Sudha Ji

Question: Do the celestial starts like the Sun have the three Gunas?

Answer : Every entity or creation in the material realm will have the presence of the three Gunas.

Kamlesh Ji

Question: Is it ok to give away unused entities or used entities (Like clothes or shoes) as charity?

Answer: When one buys new shoes or clothes, one needs to give away the unused ones in charity.

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



We are sure you enjoyed reading the Vivechan write- up. Please invest three minutes of your time to provide us your feedback. Use the link below:

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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.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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