

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

1/2 (Ślōka 1-8), Sunday, 23 June 2024

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/ctSSVjQHae4>

Affiliation to the Guna is Detrimental to the Type of Faith.

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

The session begins with the prayer and customary lighting of the lamp.

The date of 23rd June marks the completion of four years since the Learngeeta program began. The Learngeeta program is an inception of Param Pujya Swami Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj when the world was gripped by pandemic during 2020. By the grace and the guidance of Swamy Ji, the volunteers of the Learngeeta program put in their best-efforts day in and day out to carve a niche for this sacred initiative of making the Gītā available to one and all. At the time of its inception, the volunteers could not foresee that this sacred initiative would ripple across 80 countries, 13 languages, 21 time slots (starting from 5:00 am IST until 2:00 am IST) and over 1500 zoom classes running each day with approximately 10 Lakh learners. This overwhelming outcome is purely by the grace of the Supreme Divine himself and by the resolute and pious Spiritual Guru like Swamy Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj. Although the participants interact with the trainers, technical assistants, group coordinators and occasionally the batch coordinators, there are 81 departments in the Learngeeta program, with over 10,000 volunteers offering their selfless service to the Supreme Divine.

When most seekers begin their journey with the Learngeeta program, they are apprehensive about learning the shlokas and their meaning as they are in the Sanskrit language. However, due to the encouragement of the trainers and group coordinators, one starts to feel confident about learning the Gītā with time. As time passes by, one tends to feel the sense of void during the weekends as the classes are scheduled during the weekdays only. One also tends to feel the sense of void due to a couple of weeks gap between moving to the next level.

Bhagavān has mentioned, Gītā is the heart of the Supreme Divine. The divine wisdom of Gītā was spoken by Bhagavān Himself and it is a manifestation of HIM in this age of Kaliyug. It is by the grace of the Supreme Divine that one has been blessed with an opportunity to learn the Gītā and imbibe the divine wisdom in daily lives. 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 is one of the easiest scriptures to comprehend, which puts one on the path of virtuousness, benediction and well-being. The Gītā imparts the skill to come out of 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 needs to understand that it is the Supreme Divine who chooses one to learn the Divine knowledge of Gita and not vice versa.

In Chapter 16, Bhagavān explains the characteristics of saintly people and demoniac people. Bhagavān then explains the significance of adhering to the instructions of the scriptures in Shloka 23 and 24 as started below:

**यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ।
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ॥ 16.23॥**

**तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥ 16.24॥**

In the above two shlokas from Chapter 16, Bhagavān has explained the fate of those who deviate from the guidelines provided by the scriptures. They provide us with knowledge and understanding, which lights the path to attain higher levels of consciousness. The scriptures impart the instructions on what to do and what not to do - i.e., the directives of Do's and Don't's. By faithfully following both these kinds of injunctions, human beings can proceed toward perfection. However, those with demoniac nature refrain from the directives and engage in prohibited actions. Bhagavān explains that those who deviate from the prescribed directives of the scriptures and engage in prohibited ones, achieve neither true knowledge, nor the perfection of happiness, nor liberation from material bondage. Bhagavān had concluded Chapter 16 by saying that the scriptures are the supreme authority in determining what should be done and what should not be done, thereby instructing Arjuna to comprehend the teachings of the scriptures and act according to them.

Chapter 17 begins by Arjuna asking Bhagavān on the fate of those persons who disregard from the directives of the scriptures as the knowledge of the scriptures is unknown to them, but practice faith. Arjuna wishes to know more about the same as Bhagavān had emphasized on faith in the previous chapter and then declared in the preceding chapter that the scriptures are the supreme authority in determining what should be done and what should not be done. Bhagavān explains this further in the forthcoming shlokas.

17.1

**arjuna uvāca
ye śāstravidhimutsrjya, yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ,
teṣāṃ(n) niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa, sattvamāho rajastamaḥ. 17.1**

Arjuna said: Those, endowed with faith, who worship gods and others, disregarding the injunctions of scriptures, where do they stand, Kṛṣṇa, - in Sattva, Rajas or Tamas.

In the preceding chapter, Bhagavān had concluded by explaining about those people who disregard and violate the guidelines mentioned in the scriptures. The scriptures have instructions about the Dos and Don'ts. When one follows the directives of the scriptures, one moves towards perfection. However, those who deviate from the directives of the scriptures (with an assumption that they possess higher intellect and understanding) neither acquire true knowledge, nor the perfection of happiness, nor liberation from material bondage. Hence, substituting the directive of the scriptures

with one's own partial understanding is not the best way to proceed. Demonic nature persons engage in prohibited acts and deviate from performing the recommended acts.

This chapter begins from this shloka where Arjuna enquires about the fate of those people who disregard the directives of the scriptures (knowingly or unknowingly) but practice immense faith. Although Arjuna was well versed in scriptures and the Vedas, he is curious to know about the fate of those who lack the scriptural knowledge and deviate from the instructions of the scriptures but have immense faith. He enquires from Bhagavān (by addressing HIM as Krishna) on how the faith of such people are categorized - i.e., Sattva (mode of goodness), Rajas (mode of passion) or Tamas (mode of ignorance).

Let's understand the meaning of śraddha (faith or trust). In Sanskrit, śrad implies to truth and Dha refers to the path. Hence, Shraddha or faith refers to the path which leads to the truth. On the contrary, Shanka - i.e., doubt or uncertainty becomes the opposite of śraddha (faith or trust). Bhagavān has explained in Chapter 14 that one who has immense faith will attain the true knowledge. One who is devoid of faith will not be able to attain true knowledge, devotion (Bhakti) and will fail to reach the perfected state of Karma Yog. The one who is gripped by doubt or uncertainty will be devoid of faith or trust and the one with immense faith will be free from doubt or ambiguity. Hence, one would either be gripped by doubt and uncertainty or would harbor immense faith. Faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other. It is also unlikely that one can be devoid of both doubt and faith.

As mentioned by a poet:

संदेह करके तिल तिल मरने से अच्छा है यकीन करके बेवफाई से मर जाँँ।

Faith always sees the day and doubt always sees the darkest night.

As they say - "In faith, there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who don't." Certain crime series aired on television encircle around the quality of doubting one and all, including one's own family members. One needs to cast out doubt and cultivate the quality of faith.

In Ramayana, when Bhagavān Śrī Ram, Lakshman Ji and Mother Sita were seated outside their hut, they saw a deer and other jungle animals scurrying away and a cloud of dust on the jungle road indicating that a group was approaching. Just then a forest dweller told them the news that Bharat Ji was arriving there along with an army, and courtiers and would soon reach Chitrakoot. Lakshman Ji was upset to hear this. He said, "Look at him; like mother, like son! This Bharat thinks Śrī Ram is alone and unprotected in the forest. He has evil intentions; that is why he is coming with soldiers, but as long as Lakshman is alive, none of his plans will succeed!. He has with him no small army complete in its four limbs (viz., foot, horse, elephants and chariots)." Lakshman Ji accuses Bharat Ji and Shatrughan of transgressing the bounds of virtuousness due to the desire of ruling the kingdom of Ayodhya. Bhagavān Śrī Ram hears out to Lakshman Ji with a calm smile and then assured Lakshman Ji that even in his dreams, Bharat Ji would never falter from his high ideals and spotless character. "You should not get so disturbed without any real cause!" he told Lakshman Ji. Bhagavān Śrī Ram then says the below words:

तिमिरु तरुन तरनिहि मकु गिलई। गगनु मगन मकु मेघहिं मिलई।।

गोपद जल बूड़हिं घटजोनी। सहज छमा बरु छाड़ै छोनी।।

मसक फूँक मकु मेरु उड़ाई। होइ न नृपमदु भरतहि भाई।।

लखन तुम्हार सपथ पितु आना। सुचि सुबंधु नहिं भरत समाना।।

Darkness may swallow the midday sun, and sooner may the heavens be absorbed into a cloud or the jar-born sage Agastya (who is stated to have drunk off the ocean in a single draught) be drowned in the water collected in a cow's footprint: the earth may abandon its natural forbearance and Mount Meru be blown away by a puff of wind discharged from the mouth of a mosquito; but Bharata will never be intoxicated by kingly power, O brother. Lakshmana, I swear by you as well as by our father that there is no brother so good and innocent as Bharata. God, dear brother, creates the world by mixing the milk of goodness with the water of evil; while Bharata is a swan, born in the lake of the solar race, that has sifted goodness from evil. Choosing the milk of goodness and discarding the water of evil he has illumined the world by his glory. The swan is used as an analogy as it has the ability to separate water from mud. It is believed that swans can separate milk from water and drink only milk, thereby using the comparison with a swan on the ability and wisdom of separating good from the evil.

One needs to understand the depth of the above words. For a period of 14 years, Lakshman Ji served Bhagavān as HIS ardent sevak continuously during the day and stayed up every night to ensure that Bhagavān Śrī Ram and Mother were safe. However, Bhagavān Śrī Ram declares that no brother so good and innocent as Bharat Ji, who is the jewel-crest amongst all. Bhagavān Śrī Ram was devoid of doubt or suspicion towards Bharat Ji. Hence, where there is faith, there is no room for suspicion or doubt.

The following example is from the life of Mahatma Gandhi Ji. Once, Gandhi Ji was questioned by a journalist if a highly educated man like him believed in the integrity of scriptures like Ramayana, Mahabharat, so on and so forth. When Gandhi Ji was around 8 years old, he had seen a silent film on Harishchandra in a bioscope, which is a movie projector that was used from 1895. When Gandhi Ji saw the silent film on Harishchandra in a bioscope, he was impacted by a firm resolve to walk on the path of truth for the rest of his life. Gandhi Ji responded to the journalist by saying that a glimpse of few rotating pictures in the film made him walk on the path of truth throughout his life and this experience of his life itself speaks volumes about the integrity of the scriptures.

The following instance is once again from the life of Mahatma Gandhi Ji. When he was travelling to London via ship, an insurance agent at the port advised him to opt for an insurance plan of Rupees Five thousand, in case of any eventuality during the journey. Gandhi Ji agreed and opted for the policy. During the entire journey of 10 days, Gandhiji realized that in case of any eventuality, his brothers would surely ensure the well-being of his wife and children. He felt guilty for opting for the insurance policy as it is an indication of doubt towards his brothers. Once he reached London, he sent a telegram to one of his brothers about this insurance policy and asked him to get it cancelled immediately. With this instance, one can understand the gravity of the quality of faith. However, sad reality of current times is such that one does not trust one's own kinsman.

There is a subtle difference between faith and belief. When one follows the directives of the scriptures or the instructions of great sages and acharyas, one is said to have faith in the same. However, when one experiences this wisdom imparted by the acharyas, sages or scriptures, one develops belief. Faith is when one trusts someone or something deeply which is not based on any proofs, whereas belief in something or someone is tangible. In Rama Charitra manas, Tulsidas Ji has explained by choosing to describe with the word 'faith' at some instances and choosing to describe with the word 'experience' at many instances:

Say for example:

उमा कहँँ मैं अनुभव अपना, सत हरि भजन जगत सब सपना.

Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya Ji has described the quality of faith in Vivek Chudamani as stated in the below shloka:

शास्त्रस्य गुरुवाक्यस्य सत्यबुद्ध्यवधारणम् ।

सा श्रद्धा कथिता सद्भिर्यया वस्तूपलभ्यते ॥ २५ ॥

Acceptance by firm judgment as true of what the Scriptures and the Guru instruct, is called by sages Śraddhā or faith, by means of which the Reality is perceived.

Let's understand the significance of a Guru. The word 'Guru' indicates a teacher of any subject, a religious leader, or a spiritual guide. A Guru is the counsellor and the ideal of a seeker in his spiritual journey. It is in this sense that some texts interpret guru as indicative of the one who reveals the deep and secret Truth, or of the one who removes from the seeker from the darkness of ignorance and leads him to spiritual illumination. Among the various types of gurus recognized by the Hindu tradition, the most important ones are the Shiksha-guru (teaching guru) and the Deeksha-guru (initiating guru). The former teaches his pupils the sacred scriptures and the related sciences. The latter, on the other hand, has the specific function of giving initiation to worthy candidates in a spiritual discipline and awakening. Some people are skeptical about finding a true Guru and seeking initiation or Deeksha from the Guru. However, if one has surrendered to a true Bonafide Guru and has immense faith towards his spiritual master, one will surely attain the divine wisdom of the scriptures.

When Goswami Tulasidas ji began to write the holy and sublime Epic "Ram Charitra Manas", he first prayed to Bhagavān Shiv and Devi Parvati as:

भवानीशंकरौ वन्दे श्रद्धाविश्वासरूपिणौ।

याभ्यां विना न पश्यन्ति सिद्धाः स्वान्तःस्थमीश्वरम्॥

The saint poet firmly believed that the great Epic being written by him through divine inspiration could not serve the purpose of enlightening the masses and liberating them from the agonies and sufferings of the world without the divine grace of Bhavani Shankar (Parvati and Śiva). Therefore, he ardently invoked the grace of Bhavani Shankar.

The above shloka (couplet) originated from the depths of his aspiring soul and is the key to the understanding of the basic divine attributes of masculine-feminine divinity, which actually manifests as Śiva-Shakti or Bhavani Shankar. This evening, we too have prayed to Bhavani Shankar. Let us try to grasp the great message conveyed through the above salutation. "Bhavani Shankarau Vande" means "We pray to the Goddess Bhavani (Parvati) and God Shankar (Śiva)". In the charan - "Shraddha Vishwasa Rupinau", Devi Parvati is shraddha (faith) and Śiva is Vishwaas (belief), hence Śiva is referred to as Guru on whom one has immense faith. Shraddha or absolute intrinsic faith that inspires and inculcates divine virtues and values, and Vishwaas is the unperturbed confidence and inner belief, together prepare the ground for the manifestation of the divine force of Śiva-Parvati. We have to clearly understand that the key to receiving divine grace lies in shraddha and Vishwaas. The charan "Yabhyam Bina Na Pashyanti" implies without which, no one, not even a siddha, can have a vision of the Indwelling Divinity. Hence, Bhagavān Shiv narrated Ramayan to Devi Parvati (as she had faith) and not to Devi Sati (as she lacked faith).

Tale of Devi Sati doubting Bhagavān Śrī Ram

एक बार त्रेता जुग माहीं। संभु गए कुंभज रिषि पाहीं॥

संग सती जगजननि भवानी। पूजे रिषि अखिलेस्वर जानी॥1॥

Bhagavān Shiv was extremely inclined towards hearing the Ram Katha. HE would always reach out to a sage to listen to the same. Once, when TretaYug was in progress, Bhagavān Shiv desired to hear The Ramayana from Rishi Agastya. Bhagavān Shiv and his first consort Sati - traveled to Rishi Agastya's ashram. Rishi Agastya welcomed them with a pooja, a simple religious ceremony

expressing due honor, and proceeded to relate the story of The Ramayana.

कहत सुनत रघुपति गुन गाथा। कछु दिन तहाँ रहे गिरिनाथा ॥

मुनि सन बिदा मागि त्रिपुरारी। चले भवन सँग दच्छकुमारी ॥

As Bhagavān Shiv drank the nectar of the story through his ears, Sati was inattentive and was not keen on listening to the nitty gritty aspects of Ramayana. Devi Sati was of the opinion that she was the wife of Bhagavān Shiv himself and HE is the source of all knowledge. She thought that her husband should be the one narrating to the other and not vice versa where he listens to the Ramayana from someone else who would not be able to measure up to her husband's intellect. Thus, narrating and listening to Ramayana went on for a few days.

मुनि सन बिदा मागि त्रिपुरारी।

चले भवन सँग दच्छकुमारी ॥

Now, Tulsidas Ji is addressing Devi Sati as Dakshakumari - The daughter of Prajapati Daksha, instead of addressing her as Sati - the wife of Bhagavān Shiv.

मुनि सन बिदा मागि त्रिपुरारी।

चले भवन सँग दच्छकुमारी ॥

Later, while returning back from the ashram, they happened to witness Bhagavān Śrī Ram searching for Mother Sita (as Treta Yug was in progress at this point in time). Bhagavān Śrī Ram, his dutiful brother Lakshman frantically searching the woods for the kidnapped Sita. The devastated Bhagavān Śrī Ram was enquiring from flora and fauna of the forest if they happen to know the whereabouts of Sita. Recognizing Bhagavān Śrī Ram, Bhagavān Shiv was full of devotion and offered his respects from afar, as HE dint want to disturb the Leela (divine pastime) of Bhagavān Śrī Ram.

संभु समय तेहि रामहि देखा।

उपजा हियँ अति हरषु बिसेषा ॥

भरि लोचन छबिसिंधु निहारी।

कुसमय जानि न कीन्हि चिन्हारी ॥

When Bhagavān Shiv was offering his obeisance to Bhagavān Śrī Ram from a state of devotion, Sati was taken aback with Shiv Ji's action of offering his obeisance with folded hands to a mere human in forest.

जय सच्चिदानंद जग पावन।

अस कहि चलेउ मनोज नसावन ॥

Bhagavān Shiv explains to Sati that it was Śrī Ram himself and hence he is full of devotion with folded hands. Sati however, seeing Bhagavān Śrī Ram in such a grievous state of longing for Sita, began to doubt his divinity. Bhagavān Shiv realized that his wife was not convinced and asked her to go and verify the truth for herself. Sati does not trust her husband's words about Bhagavān Śrī Ram and decides to test the divinity of Bhagavān Śrī Ram herself.

इहाँ संभु अस मन अनुमाना। दच्छसुता कहुँ नहि कल्याना ॥

मोरेहु कहें न संसय जाहीं। बिधि बिपरीत भलाई नाही ॥

Bhagavān Shiv thinks that even upon explaining the divinity of Śrī Ram, Sati still lacks faith and trust on his words and wants to test Śrī Ram's divinity herself as she is gripped by doubt.

होइहि सोइ जो राम रचि राखा। को करि तर्क बढ़ावै साखा ॥

अस कहि लगे जपन हरिनामा। गई सती जहँ प्रभु सुखधामा ॥

Shiv Ji then thinks that whatever unfolds next would be as per Śrī Ram's will and went to Samādhi by

chanting the name of Ram. Sati goes ahead to test Śrī Ram's divinity. Sati takes the form of Sita and goes to the forest to test the divinity of Śrī Ram. She doubts that Śrī Ram is the avatar of the supreme divine and hence disguises herself as Sita to test his divinity, if he would be able to identify her true form.

लछिमन दीख उमाकृत बेषा। चकित भए भ्रम हृदयँ बिसेषा॥

Lakshman Ji spots Sati and is astonished to see her disguised as Sita.

निज माया बलु हृदयँ बखानी। बोले बिहसि रामु मृदु बानी

Śrī Ram also witnesses the same. As HE is the avatar of the Supreme Divine, an antaryamin, he realizes that she is Sati disguised as Sita and is astonished to see how the Maya or HIS material energy has gripped Sati with doubt and suspicion.

जोरि पानि प्रभु कीन्ह प्रनामू। पिता समेत लीन्ह निज नामू॥

कहेउ बहोरि कहाँ बृषकेतू। बिपिन अकेलि फिरहु केहि हेतू॥

Śrī Ram offers his obeisance to Sati by addressing her as Maata Sati (As Shiv Ji is his Ishta Dev). Śrī Ram enquires from Sati about the Shiv Ji not being present with her in the forest, as she was all alone.

मैं संकर कर कहा न माना। निज अग्यानु राम पर आना॥

जाइ उतरु अब देहउँ काहा। उर उपजा अति दारुन दाहा॥

Sati does not reply to Śrī Ram Ji's question and desires to leave the forest immediately. She now realizes her ignorance and lack of faith in the words of her husband. She regrets her decision to test Śrī Ram and feels sad about the same.

जाना राम सतीं दुखु पावा। निज प्रभाउ कछु प्रगटि जनावा॥

सतीं दीख कौतुकु मग जाता। आगें रामु सहित श्री भ्राता॥

Śrī Ram, being an antaryamin, understands the state of her emotion. When Sati starts to walk away in a different direction, he then shows his divinity. Sati sees Śrī Ram, Sita and Lakshman in any direction or turn that she took in the forest. She then sees every Flora and fauna offering obeisance to Śrī Ram. She also witnesses the celestial devatas, great sages, even Shiv Ji and Brahmā Ji offering their obeisance to Śrī Ram. She then realizes her mistake of not having faith on her husband's words. She then reaches Kailash and does not reveal all that unfolded and all that she witnessed in the forest. Shiv Ji enquires from her on what happened in the forest and she does not reveal any details. Shiv Ji understands as he is an antaryamin and was able to see her internal state.

सतीं समुझि रघुबीर प्रभाऊ। भय बस सिव सन कीन्ह दुराऊ॥

कछु न परीछा लीन्हि गोसाईं। कीन्ह प्रनामु तुम्हारिहि नाईं॥

Sati understood the divine glory of the finest amongst Raghus Śrī Ram, but out of fear she concealed the facts from Lord Shiv. She replied, "Oh Lord of senses (Shiv ji), I did not test Lord Ram, just like yourself I paid obeisance to Him."

Although she denies testing the divinity of Śrī Ram and does not reveal all that unfolded in the forest. Shiv Ji being an antaryamin, meditated and understood what had unfolded. He is disappointed with Sati's action. He then tells Sati that Sita is like his mother and Śrī Ram is his Ishta Dev - a divine father. Sati had disguised herself as Sita ji and this pained Shiv Ji's heart deeply. Shiv ji thought that if he is affectionate towards his wife Sati now, it will not only be unwise but it will also put an end to the path of devotion. Since Sati had disguised as Sita, who was his divine mother, he rejected Sati as his wife. Seeing the devotion of Shiv Ji, the celestial devatas showered flowers from the heaven. Sati was gripped by guilt, anxiety and regret.

Sati was sad with the change of attitude of Shiv Ji but she stayed on at Mount Kailash, the abode of Shiv. Later, Sati's father Daksha organized a yagna, but did not invite Sati or Shiv Ji as he had an altercation with Shiv Ji in the court of Brahma. But, Sati who wanted to attend the Yagna, went even though Bhagavān Shiv did not appreciate the idea. To her great anguish, Daksha ignored her presence and did not even offer Prasad for Shiv Ji. Sati felt humiliated and was struck with profound grief. She was gripped by guilt that she tested the divinity of Śrī Ram by not having faith on the words of her husband and she once again violated his words by visiting Daksha. She jumped into the yagna fire and immolated herself.

Shiv Ji became extremely furious when he heard the news of Sati's immolation. Carrying the body of Sati, Shiv Ji began to perform Rudra Tandava or the dance of destruction and wiped out the kingdom of Daksha. Everybody was terrified as Shiv Ji's Tandava had the power to destroy the entire universe. In order to calm Bhagavān Shiv, Bhagavān Vishnu severed Sati's body into 12 pieces and threw them on earth. It is said that wherever the pieces of Shakti's body fell, there emerged a Shakti Peetha.

Shiv Ji was now alone, undertook rigorous penance and retired to the Himalayas. Devi Sati took a re-birth as Devi Parvati in the family of God Himalaya. She performed penance to break Shiv meditation and win his attention. Devi Parvati undertook severe penance to win over Shiv Ji. Through her devotion and persuasion by sages and devas, Devi Parvati, also known as Uma and Aparna (one who even relinquished leaves during penance), was finally able to convince Shiv Ji into marriage and away from asceticism. Devi Parvati now desired to listen to Ramayana from Shiv Ji with immense faith. She apologizes to him for all that unfolded during her previous birth. Shiv Ji then narrates the Ramayana to Devi Parvati and Tulsi Das Ji has derived Ram Charitra Manas from the same in 15th Century. Sati's lack of faith led to her downfall and Devi Parvati's immense faith led to her spiritual elevation.

17.2

śrībhagavānuvāca trividhā bhavati śraddhā, dehinām(m) sā svabhāvajā, sāttvikī rājasī caiva, tāmasī ceti tām(m) śrṇu. 17.2

Śrī Bhagavān said :That untutored innate faith of men is of three kinds- Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika. Hear of it from Me.

Bhagavān says that there are three categories of Shraddha - Sattva (mode of goodness), Rajas (mode of passion) and Tamas (mode of ignorance). HE expounds on this further.

Let's understand the three categories of people with Shraddha or faith as an entity of measurement.

1. Devoid of scriptural knowledge:

The directives of the scriptures are unknown to this category of people. Hence, due to the lack of scriptural knowledge, they end up engaging in faith by deviating from the directives of the scriptures. Karmic rules are not applicable in this scenario as these people are ignorant and devoid of knowledge. Hence they reap the benefits of their faith.

2. Being aware but being casual:

In this category, people have the knowledge on the directives of the scriptures. Let's say a pundit had advised a seeker to arrange for woods from a mango tree. The seeker begins his search and finds woods of other kinds instead of the prescribed ones. Due to laziness and casual approach, the seeker buys the available wood instead of the one instructed by the pundit. In this scenario, the seeker will not reap the benefits of the religious pooja as he was aware about the requirements of the religious

practice.

3. Opposing the directives of the scriptures:

This category of people end up in argument with the pundit and oppose his instructions by seeking for proof of directives. They challenge the directives by questioning and reasoning. Such people attract the repercussions of not adhering to the directives of the scriptures.

Now, let's understand the three modes by which one develops the quality of faith.

1. Based on the practices of sampradaya

If one is in an environment where the kinsman practice faith and adhere to the directives of the scriptures, one automatically develops faith due to the effect of the practice of sampradaya by the kinsman and ancestors. Even if one does not study the scriptures, one develops faith based on the practices followed by the kinsman.

2. By the study of scriptures:

It does not matter who one is or what one is. If one studies the scriptures, one develops the quality of faith. Prahalad Ji was the son of Hiranyakashipu, a demon who had wrecked havoc in all the three lokas. Prahalad Ji had the divine knowledge of the scriptures and was hence situated in an elevated state of devotion.

3. By being in the company of those who practice faith:

The company of others or Satsang can influence one's faith. Say for example, if one is in the company of people who have material goals (Say investment banking), one would automatically have material thoughts. If one is in the company of people who have health goals, one would automatically strive to maintain good health. Short term association is not as impactful as long-term association.

Once, Garud Ji reached out to Shiv Ji by expressing his wavering faith on Śrī Ram. Shiv Ji advises Garud Ji to approach Kakbhushundi, the crest jewel of all birds to dispel his doubts.

तबहि होइ सब संसय भंगा।

जब बहु काल करिअ सतसंगा।।

Shiv Ji says in the above couplet that only when one practices Satsang or virtuous association for a long period of time, only then one can see the effects of Satsang.

Consider the example of pouring oil over water. In few moments, the film of oil floats over water. If one puts a finger in this water, one will realize that the surface is a film of oil and the deep layers are only water. However, if this mixture is kept aside for a month and one puts the finger once again, the oil is uniformly present within the water. Hence, being in the company of Satsang takes time to show its effects. As they say - "You're the average of the five people spend the most time with" and this shapes up one's direction in life. Hence, one needs to constantly practice devotion and be in the company of virtuous people or Satsang. Only then, the devotion that is experienced sporadically becomes a constant experience or a habit.

17.3

**sattvānurūpā sarvasya, śraddhā bhavati bhārata,
śraddhāmāyo'yaṃ(m) puruṣo, yo yacchraddhaḥ(s) sa eva saḥ. 17.3**

The faith of all men conforms to their mental disposition, Arjuna. Faith constitutes a man; whatever the nature of his faith, he is verily that.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that the internal state determines the quality of faith and belief. If one believes that material assets brings happiness, one would seek to fulfil material goals and wealth creation. If one believes that health is important that anything else, one would have health oriented goals. Similarly, if one believes that devotion brings about eternal happiness, one would engage in devotion. Hence, the quality of faith and belief that one harbors shapes up one's personality.

Once, a king invited a sculptor who had a unique quality of speaking to the stones. By speaking to the stones, he was able to identify the quality of the stones. The king expressed his desire of constructing a temple of Bhagavān Krishna. The sculptor agreed and requested for a huge stone to carve the idol of the divine. The king ordered his soldiers to look for a huge stone as described by the sculptor and brought them to the court of the king. The sculptor then started to work on the stone in seclusion. When he started to chip the first stone, the stone started to yell by saying that it dint want to transform itself into an idol of the divine. The sculptor discarded the first stone and then started to chip the second stone. After working on the stone for a duration of 6 months, the second stone told him that it is unable to transform into the idol. The sculptor discarded the work done on the second stone and started working on the third stone. After a duration of a year, the third stone requested the sculptor that it is unable to bear the chipping and it wont be able to transform into the idol. The sculptor then touched the fourth stone and the stone surrenders to him by saying that it is ready to be chipped into the idol of the divine. After a span of the year, the sculptor was able to transform the stone into a beautiful idol of the divine.

The king was impressed with the sculptor's art and rewarded him with a golden chain. The idol was installed in the temple and it attracted tourists from all places. The stone had surrendered to the sculptor and hence was able to transform itself to a beautiful idol of the divine. The stone is now the divine himself due to its immense faith. The other stones which were chipped partially were installed as idols near the entrance or were installed as stairs that lead to the temple. Hence, one can conclude that greater the faith, higher is the spiritual evolution.

Even in the human race, some of them live a mediocre life. Some of them try to make a difference by uplifting the society. Some of them engage in research and publish papers and some of them transform themselves into a saint and propagate the teachings of the divine. Hence, shaping up one's personality is in one's own hands. The quality of faith and belief determines the fate of one's personality and direction of one's life.

17.4

yajante sāttvikā devān, yakṣarakṣāṃsi rājasāḥ, pretānbhūtagaṇāṃścānye, yajante tāmasā janāḥ. 17.4

Men of Sāttvika disposition worship gods; those of Rājasika temperament worship demigods and demons; while others, who are men of Tāmasika disposition, worship the spirits of dead and ghosts.

Those in *tamo guṇa* are drawn toward ghosts and spirits, despite the evil and cruel nature of such beings. Those who have Rajo guna tattva get drawn to the *yakṣhas* (semi-celestial beings who exude power and wealth) and *rākṣhasas* (powerful beings who embody sensual enjoyment, revenge, and wrath). Those who are imbued with *sattva guṇa* become attracted to the worship of celestial gods in whom they perceive the qualities of goodness. It is a common sight where each person engages in the worship of a specific diety on each day. Like how the water takes the color of the entity with which it mixes up, the nature of predominant guna shapes up one's state of devotion.

The song below explains the same where the mind is compared to a mirror, which stores both the good

and bad and reflects the tattva or state influencing the devotion.

तोरा मन दर्पण कहलाये ॥

भले बुरे सारे कर्मों को, देखे और दिखाये
तोरा मन दर्पण कहलाये ॥

मन ही देवता, मन ही ईश्वर, मन से बड़ा न कोय ॥
मन उजियारा जब जब फैले, जग उजियारा होय,
इस उजले दर्पण पे प्राणी, धूल न जमने पाये,
तोरा मन दर्पण कहलाये ॥

सुख की कलियाँ, दुख के कांटे, मन सबका आधार ॥
मन से कोई बात छुपे ना, मन के नैन हज़ार ,
जग से चाहे भाग लो कोई, मन से भाग न पाये ,
तोरा मन दर्पण कहलाये ॥

तन की दोलत, जल की छाया मन का धन अनमोल ॥
तन के कारण मन की धुन को मत मट्टी में रोल,
मन की कदर भूलने वाला हीरा जनम गवाए
तोरा मन दर्पण कहलाये ॥

17.5

**aśāstravihitam(ñ) ghoram(n), tapyante ye tapo janāḥ,
dambhāhaṅkārasamyuktāḥ(kh), kāmarāgabalanvitāḥ. 17.5**

Men who practice severe penance of an arbitrary type, not sanctioned by scriptures, and who are full of hypocrisy and egotism are obsessed with desire, attachment and pride of power;

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that faith is visible even in people who perform severe austerities, but it is devoid of wisdom and knowledge. Such people do possess deep conviction in the effectiveness of their practices, but their faith is in the mode of ignorance. Some people perform stern austerities that are not enjoined by the scriptures, but rather motivated by hypocrisy and egotism. HE continues to explain this in the next shloka.

17.6

**karśayantaḥ(ś) śarīrastham(m), bhūtagrāmamacetasah,
mām(ñ) caivāntaḥ(ś) śarīrastham(n), tānviddhyāsuraniścayān. 17.6**

And who emaciate the elements constituting their body as well as Me, the Supreme Spirit, dwelling in their heart- know those senseless people to have a demoniac disposition.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that those who abuse and torture their own physical body disrespect the Supreme Soul who resides within. All these are contrary to the recommended path of the scriptures.

Hiranyakashipu also engaged in severe penance to get a boon from Brahmā Ji. Raavan also performed

intense penance to obtain a boon from Brahmā Ji. However, their penance was devoid of devotion and pious intention. In current times, during Navaratri or Ganesh Chaturthi, the idol of the divine is installed in tents for people to gather and offer their prayers. However, the focus is deviated from the divine and set on the organizer. At times, film songs are being played in the name of devotion. Such people exhibit devotion superficially and are devoid of pure bhakti from within.

17.7

āhāstvapi sarvasya, trividho bhavati priyaḥ, yajñastapastathā dānaṃ(n), teṣāṃ(m) bhedamimaṃ(m) śrṇu. 17.7

Food also, which is agreeable to different men according to their innate disposition is of three kinds. and likewise sacrifice, penance and charity too are of three kinds each; hear their distinction as follows.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that the food that people prefer is according to their dispositions. The same is true for the sacrifice, austerity, and charity they are inclined (or predisposed) toward. He now explains the three modes of food consumption in the forthcoming shlokas.

17.8

āyuh(s) sattvabalārogya, sukhaprītivivardhanāḥ, rasyāḥ(s) snigdhaḥ(s) sthirā hr̥dyā, āhārāḥ(s) sāttvikapriyāḥ. 17.8

Foods which promote longevity, intelligence, vigor, health, happiness and cheerfulness, and which are juicy, succulent, substantial and naturally agreeable, are liked by men of Sāttvika nature.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that persons in the mode of goodness prefer foods that promote life span, and increase virtue, strength, health, happiness, and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, succulent, nourishing, and naturally tasteful. Consider the example of Dal. Amongst the varieties of Dal, Moong Dal is considered as Sattvik, Arhar Dal is seen as Rajasik and Urad Dal is seen as a Tamasik form of diet. However, based on the quantity and the time consumed, Moong Dal can also turn Tamasik. If one consumes a cup of Urad dal, one will develop the required strength. Hence, if one consumes a mixture of Moong Dal and Urad Dal, one will gain the required strength along with the Sattvik tattva.

Some people consume Chavanprash and fruits for health benefits. As they say – an apple a day keeps the doctor away. People with sattva tattva prefer juice and milk. Those with Rajasik or Tamasik tattva prefer soft drinks, coffee, tea, protein shakes and beverages. However, these have only short-term benefits. However, on the other hand, desi Ghee, and butter (which is devoid of bad cholesterol) does not cause harm to one's health and has long term benefits until old age. The food consumed can turn Sattvik, rajasic or tamasic based on age, time of consumption, appetite, and quantity. Consuming water early morning, butter milk in the afternoon and milk at bedtime is considered Sattvik. However, if the time of consumption is changed, it loses its effect on aiding good health. If one consumes Desi Ghee in recommended quality, one can maintain good health. However, if one consumes the Desi Ghee in excess, it will have a detrimental effect on one's health in a long run.

The effect of consuming food also depends upon the person who cooks and serves the food. If one does not maintain cleanliness and purity, if one is in a stressful state of mind (anxiety, anger, frustration, irritation, fear, so on and so forth), the same states or energies get infused into the food and the Sattvik food can turn into tamasic food. By eating pure food, the mind becomes pure. As they

say - You are what you eat.

Once, Guru Nanak Ji with his disciples Bala and Mardana was traveling from one village to another and he refrained from staying at one place for more than a day. They would visit houses in every village and request for food as alms. In one such village, when Guru Nakan Ji and his disciples were gripped by hunger as they did not receive anything to eat as alms, a wealthy man noticed Guru Nanak Ji. He offered three silver plates of various delicacies. The disciples were very happy upon seeing the delicious delicacies. Guru Nanak Ji did not engage in consuming the delicacies and did not permit his disciples to consume the delicacies even after a long time. Then, a poor girl reached out to Guru Nanak Ji with few Rotis stating that her mother had prepared the Rotis for him. Guru Nanak Ji was delighted to see the girl with Rotis. He blessed the girl and humbly accepted the Rotis from her. The disciples were taken aback as the girl seemed to be unclean and got just few Rotis whereas the wealthy man had prepared a variety of delicacies and offered the same on a silver plate. Guru Nanak Ji held the Roti offered by the girl on one hand and the Roti offered by the wealthy man on the other hand. He squeezed the Rotis held in each of his hands. The Roti offered by the girl had pure milk dripping from it while the Roti offered by the wealthy man had drops of blood dripping from it.

Guru Nanak Ji then explained that the girl's mother had prepared the Rotis with hard earned money from a pure intention. Hence, pure milk dripped from those Rotis. The wealthy man had earned his wealth by resorting to unfair or unethical means and by hurting others. Hence, drops of blood dripped from his Rotis. He then told his disciples to refrain from consuming the food that is derived from unfair or unethical means. With this example, one needs to understand that the negative states of the one serving the food gets infused in the food which makes it Tamasik. Hence, one needs to be mindful while consuming food at public places as it can keep one away from attracting positive karmic reactions.

The session ends with prayer and Hanuman Chalisa.

Question and Answer

Murali Ji

Question: It was told in the session that Devi Parvati did intense penance to attain Shiv Ji as her husband. But it is also told to refrain from practices that trouble one's own body. Please clarify.

Answer: Parvati Ji abided the instructions of Narad Ji. She attained the Divine himself due to her severe penance and hence her austerities are justified. She abided by all the instructions of the scriptures.

Anamika Ji

Question: How can one learn the shlokas by heart?

Answer: <https://kk.learngeeta.com> is the website to help seekers to learn the shlokas by heart.

Prem Ji

Question: I am trying to set a habit to refrain from engaging in untruth or falsehood, but still unable to attain that perfection.

Answer: It takes some time to cultivate a new habit. with practice, one can attain perfection.

Gunjan Ji

Question: How can one encourage children to study Gita

Answer: Kids batch have been launched and they would have separate vivechan sessions.

Sumit Ji

Question: Mrityu Bhoj offered to a group of people is Tamasik?

Answer: Only the kinsman along with Brahmins are entitled to consume this kind of Bhoj. Rest of them will be refrained from attracting positive karmic reactions by engaging in consuming this Bhoj.

Achyut Ji

Question: If one does not abide by the directives of the scriptures, one will not be able to attain the divine. Then what is the point of the three gunas (sattva, Rajas and Tamas)?

Answer: Raavan and Hiranyakashipu also performed intense penance. Ravan had studied the scriptures, however he was devoid of devotion. Hence, devotion and faith in the divine is also necessary along with the directives of the scriptures. Where there is confusion in the directives of the scriptures, one can always clarify the same from a Bonafide Guru.



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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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