

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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Only when one has immense faith, one can elevate to higher levels of consciousness and walk on the path to attain Supreme Realization

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.

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.

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 the directives and instructions about the Do's 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. Demoniak nature persons engage in prohibited acts and deviate from performing the recommended acts.

This chapter begins by Arjuna enquiring from Bhagavān 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 hence end up deviating from the directives of scriptures but have immense faith. He enquires further from Bhagavān on how the quality of faith of such people are categorized - i.e., Sattva (mode of goodness), Rajas (mode of passion) or Tamas (mode of ignorance). Bhagavān expounds on the nature of faith and how it shapes up one's personality. HE then categorizes food into three categories - i.e., Sattvik, Rajasik or Tamasik and then explains the impact of each category upon humans. HE explains the category of food towards which the Sattvik, Rajasik and Tamasik persons are inclined to and prefer to consume.

Bhagavān then explains the subject of yajna (sacrifice) and explains that based on the modes of nature, sacrifice can manifest into varied forms. He also discusses tapah (austerity) and describes the austerities of the speech, body, and mind. Again, based on the modes in which these austerities are performed in the mode of goodness, passion, or ignorance, they take different forms. HE then explains charity and classifies the same into three-fold division based on the modes of nature.

Some seekers wonder why Bhagavān has used the term Puruṣa in the Gītā and if the same refers to men only. In Gītā, Bhagavān addresses the entire human clan as Purush, and it does not refer to men in specific. It is a generic term which refers to a man and a woman - i.e., an embodied soul which is under the influence of the material realm.

Now, consider the concept of a color. In theory, the physical color of an object depends on how it absorbs and scatters light. One will not be able to comprehend a color theoretically without understanding the same visually. For example, if one needs to comprehend and perceive the color white, one needs to understand 'white' visually by seeing a white piece of paper or a white cloud. If one needs to understand red visually, one needs to see a red object or entity - say a rose or an apple to understand the color red visually. If one does not see the rainbow, one will not be able to visualize the color spectrum. In the same way, if one needs to perceive the quality of faith, one needs to measure the quality of faith one has towards the Divine, Guru, parents or any concept or deed on which one has faith.

Faith can be defined as an unquestioning belief that does not require any evidence. People can have faith and trust on the Divine, a person, a concept, religion, a principle or a theory, a place, ideals or on any object/entity (say a medicine). For example, if one has faith on the Divine, the faith can translate in the form of worship and devotion. With the variable or the entity of worship/devotion, one can gauge the quality of faith. Say for example, in context of spirituality, everyone knows the definition of the Supreme Divine - HE is the creator and sustainer of the entire cosmos, HE resides within one and all, HE is all-pervading, HE is the reason for causeless grace and mercy, so on and so forth. But the point is, we understand this in theory but lack the faith or belief on the Divine. The saints excelled in the quality of faith which enabled them to elevate to higher levels of consciousness and their insights reflected in the compositions and couplets. The quality of faith of one's ancestors or older generations could be perceived with variable of sampradaya or tradition that they followed. Hence, the quality of faith shapes up one's personality.

Let's understand how the quality of faith has an impact on one's personality. Consider an example of an 18-year-old boy. If the boy is engaged on smart phone, social media or spending time with friends, it reflects the mindset of the boy. On the contrary, if a boy is studious at college and engages in assisting with his father's business after college, it reflects his level of maturity and ability of sharing the family responsibility at a very young age. If the faith of an eighteen-year-old boy or girl is focused on uplifting the society with initiatives such as planting trees, sustainable environment projects or empowering the unprivileged section of the society, it reflects a higher level of foresightedness and

vision at a very young age.

Rupal Ji and Kavita Ji, the program coordinators of the Learngeeta program, have studied the Advaita Vedanta along with many other scriptures and deliver discourses at the age of 25. Consider the example of Mahatma Gandhi who had immense faith and belief on the path of truthfulness and non-violence. His unbreakable faith had an impact on the entire nation which responded to his call on following the path of truth and non-violence, which eventually lead to an independent India. Hence, the object of faith shapes up one's personality and determines the direction of one's life. The nature of one's mind determines the quality of faith.

Hence Bhagavān has explained that:

यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः

All people possess faith, and whatever the nature of their faith, that forms the basis of one's personality.

Bhagavān then classifies food into three-fold division based on the three modes of nature. HE then explains how the nature of food (Sattvik, Rajasik or Tamasik), influences one's mind and how one functions.

As they say -

जैसा खाये अन्न, वैसा बने मन :

You are what you eat. HE explains the nature of Sattvik diet or food in the below shloka:

आयुःसत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धनाः ।

रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्या आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ॥ 17.8॥

HE explains the significance of consuming a Sattvik diet, then he highlights the categories of Sattvik food and explains the nature of food towards which the Sattvik people are inclined to. HE explains that persons in the mode of goodness (sattva guna) prefer foods that promote life span, and increase virtue, strength, health, happiness, and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, succulent, nourishing, and naturally tasteful, which yield long-term benefits on health. The food consumed can turn Sattvik, rajasic or tamasic based on age, time of consumption, appetite, and quantity. 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 - "A healthy mind in a healthy body". HE now explains the classification of Rajasik and Tamasik diet in the forthcoming shlokas.

17.9

**kaṭvamlalavaṇātyuṣṇa, tīkṣṇarūkṣavidāhinaḥ,
āhārā rājasasyeṣṭā, duḥkhaśokāmayapradāḥ. 17.9**

Foods which are bitter, sour, salty, overhot, pungent, dry and burning, and which cause suffering, grief and sickness, are dear to the Rājasika type of men.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the category of Rajasik food and how it influences the one who consumes the same. Foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, very hot, pungent, dry, and full of chillies which makes it spicy, are dear to Rajasik persons (mode of passion). HE then explains that such foods produce pain, grief, and disease.

The Rajasik people (mode of passion) prefer foods that are high in spice/chilies, sugar, salt, or any of the categories described in the above paragraph. They give prominence to taste over health. Such foods can lead to weight gain or obesity, heart burn, acidity, nausea, fluctuations in cholesterol, blood pressure or sugar levels which open up the gates to many more diseases in the long run. The Rajasik natured people are aware that these categories of food only bring temporary happiness with its taste and have no long term health benefits. However, they prefer pleasure over good health and engage in consuming such foods.

On the contrary, Sattvik people (mode of goodness) see the health benefit before consuming the food and they refrain from consuming foods that can lead to distress or diseases in the long run. Sattvik people are health conscious and engage in mindful eating for long term health benefits. As they say - "Eat right with a healthy bite". However, Rajasik people are inclined to short term happiness and prefer tasty food over health. They give in to temptations which can lead to poor health in a long run. The quality of food impacts the nature of one's mind. Swamy Ji also has the practice of consuming food, which is less hot, as very hot food has a negative effect on one's health.

17.10

**yātayāmaṃ(ñ) gatarasaṃ(m), pūti paryuṣitaṃ(ñ) ca yat,
ucchiṣṭamapi cāmedhyaṃ(m), bhojanaṃ(n) tāmasapriyam. 17.10**

Food which is ill-cooked or not fully ripe, insipid, putrid, stale and polluted, and which is impure too, is dear to men of a Tāmasika disposition.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the category of Tamasik food. Foods that are overcooked, partially cooked, stale, those which produce foul odor, unclean and impure are categorized as Tamasik foods and are dear to those who are in the mode of ignorance (Tamo guna). For example, if Mango is overcooked, it is not fit for consumption. Some seasonal foods are deep frozen and stored for many months in order to consume the same even after the season elapses. Storing fruits for a long time after the season elapses or deep freezing of any other consumable entity for a long duration is also considered to be Tamasik. However, Bhagavān does not elaborate on the consequences of consuming a Tamasik diet.

Mr. Goenka, one of the founders of Geeta Press, has recommended that one needs to consume the fruits which are available within the radius of 50 km for best health benefits. Some people engage in importing fruits from far off places (say beyond 1000 Km) or even from foreign countries, which might not suit one's health as the body is acclimatized to the local environment. Foods which are extremely dry and devoid of juice/water and certain fermented foods (say grape juice which is fermented into wine), strong odor foods such as garlic or onions, are classified as Tamasik. The foods which contain salt and water, that are kept overnight are considered to be stale the next day. On the contrary, foods that are prepared with milk and desi ghee (say pedas, jalebi, etc.,) are not considered to be stale when kept overnight and are edible until they are fresh. Consuming half eaten food from the plate of another is also seen as Tamasik as half eaten foods are consumed by birds like crow or other animal species.

Meat and egg are also classified as Tamasik. When one is in the proximity of a mortal remains of the dead, one needs to have a shower and then resume any other activity. Hence, consuming meat (derived by the slaughter of an animal) is considered as Tamasik. The Jain community refrains from consuming veggies that grow below the surface of the ground (near the roots of the plant). In naturopathy, one is advised to refrain from consuming excess of sugar, salt and Maida as they can open up a gate to many diseases in a long run. The detrimental effects of excessive sugar intake on

health, ranging from weight gain and obesity to an increased risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. High salt diet can lead to high blood pressure and other chronic illness. If one is able to refrain from consuming salt just for a day, one can loose up to 1 Kg of weight as salt consumption causes water retention within the body. In India, Khand is preferred for good health when compared to processed and refined sugar. Maida or refined flour does not have any nutritional value and excess consumption on a daily basis can lead to weight gain and obesity.

Now, in current times, one cannot reach the absolute state of sattvic diet. One needs to engage in mindful eating and consume a higher proportion of Sattvik diet, reduce the proportion or frequency of Rajasik diet and refrain from consuming Tamasik diet. The inclination towards taste and the category of food is derived from habit. One can change the habit in a span of 15 days. It is also said that a person takes 21 days to learn or unlearn a new habit. In Patanjali ashram, food that is devoid of salt is served to the seekers. If one is able to consume this salt free food for over 7 days, they are able to continue their stay at the ashram for many more days. Hence, the intense craving towards Rajasik, Tamasik, tea or coffee can be changed with a regular habit.

17.11

aphalākāṅkṣibhīryajño, vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate, yaṣṭavyameveti manah(s), samādhāya sa sātṭvikaḥ. 17.11

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

Bhagavān now explains the three-fold classification of yajña or sacrifice based on the three modes of nature (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). Before deep diving into this shloka, let's understand a little more on the influence of the three gunas on one's nature. If the path of spiritual journey, for those where the Sattva Guna predominant, the sattva tattva is seen as an elevated state or upward direction of progression. Upon descending downwards (or transiting to lower states of consciousness), one can see the influence of Rajo Guna significantly. For those where the Rajo Guna is predominant, the transition to lower states or descending downwards leads to the influence of Tamo Guna whereas elevating upwards would eventually enable one to transit towards Sattva tattva. For those where the Tamo Guna is predominant, the transition to lower states or descending downwards leads to deeper states of ignorance, being devoid of wisdom and inertia whereas elevating upwards would enable one to transit towards Rajo Guna.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the type of sacrifice that is performed from the mode of goodness or the Sattva Guna. In this state, one performs the sacrifice without any expectations on the returns and the sacrifice performed is in line with the scriptural directives. One perceives the sacrifice as a prescribed duty without expecting any rewards. Say for example, if one prostrates and touches the feet of parents without any expectations, it is a trait of sattva guna. However, if one touches the feet of parents with a desire to seek blessings, it is a trait of Rajo guna. In Sattva guna, one is devoid of expectations and functions selflessly whereas in Rajo guna, one harbors expectations and desires.

Consider the example of parenting. When the parents, or let's say the mother engages in upbringing of her son with an expectation that he would stay with her during old age, it is similar to a give-and-take relationship. When the son grows into a young man, he may have worldly goals such as moving abroad for better career prospectus or prioritize his wife and children over others. When this reality dawns upon the mother, she is gripped by disappointment and sadness due to her unfulfilled expectations. The root cause of most of the problems and miseries is expectation. On the other hand, if the mother brings up her son by discharging her duties without any future expectations from her

son, her selfless service is classified as the sacrifice performed from the mode of goodness (Sattva Guna).

17.12

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

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

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the nature of sacrifice performed from the mode of passion (Rajo Guna). Such people perform the sacrifice for the sake of returns. They harbor the desire of reaping the fruits of sacrifice. People who function from this state of consciousness are inclined towards prestige, material benefits, pomp and glory, so on and so forth. They have a strong urge to paint a perfect picture of themselves and seek for appreciation from others. Say for example, flaunting on newly purchased clothes or home accessories or any other material assets.

Consider another example where one engages in prayers for a period of 15 minutes in a day. Let's say one has visitors at home. One will then engage in prayers and devotional service for a longer duration (say 40 minutes) to paint a picture of portraying to be highly devotional. Or, let's say if one has visitors at home, one will now tune into devotional channels on television to paint a devotional image of oneself.

Now, let's understand the difference between the sacrifice performed from the mode of goodness (Sattva Guna) and from the mode of passion (Rajo Guna). Those with Sattva Guna continue to discharge their duties and perform the sacrifice irrespective of what the other thinks. They discharge their duties selflessly without seeking for appreciation or expectation. For those who function from the state of Rajo Guna, they are in a constant pursuit of seeking returns and looking for gains for every act of sacrifice. They function from a state of self-centered consciousness. Although externally both Sattva Guna and Rajo Guna persons appear to perform the same task or sacrifice, it is the intention, mindset and the state of consciousness that differentiates the two gunas.

There is no harm if one has a predominant Rajo Guna. However, when one descends downwards on the quality of Rajo Guna, one transits towards Tamo Guna. Consider the example where one's daughter-in-law cooked the entire meal for lunch or dinner and the dish was served by one's daughter. The head of the family hands over a note of Rupees hundred as a token of appreciation, thinking it was the daughter who cooked the dish. Although one was aware about the daughter-in-law's efforts in preparing the dish and if one silently witnesses the daughter taking all the credit, it will count as a transgression.

People whose Rajo Guna is fueled by Tamo Guna take credit for the work executed by others and their accomplishments. Some of them even mess up the task of the other if they fail to execute the same, as they cannot digest the success of the other. They believe in glorifying oneself and putting others down. If a line has been drawn and if one needs to rise above the other, one should refrain from rubbing the line of the other and draw a bigger line. However, such people believe in rubbing the line belonging to others to make their line more prominent. As they say - **"Blowing out someone else's candle won't make yours shine any brighter."**

17.13

**vidhihīnamasrṣṭānnaṃ(m), mantrahīnamadakṣiṇaṃ,
śraddhāvirahitaṃ(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, Bhagavān explains the nature of sacrifice that is performed from the mode of ignorance (Tamo Guna). Such sacrifice is devoid of faith and deviates from the directives of the scriptures. People who engage in sacrifice from a state of Tamo guna end up executing the prohibited actions and refrain from performing the recommended actions as per the scriptures. No food is offered during a sacred pooja, no mantras chanted, and no donation made, is to be classified as the sacrifice from the mode of ignorance.

Adi Shankaracharya Ji has advice that one needs to practice worshipping at least five forms of the Divine - Manifestation of Bhagavān Vishnu (say Sri Ram or any other forms), manifestation of Bhagavān Shiv in the form of Hanuman or Shivling, worship of Ganesh Ji, manifestation of Devi (say Devi Durga, Devi Lakshmi or Devi Saraswathi) and offering Jal or holy water to Surya Dev.

Let's say one observes a fast on a specific day and accidentally ends up consuming food which breaks the fast midway. One can continue and complete the fast, although it may not be counted as a complete fast. However, those people with Tamo Guna are of the mindset that since the fast is already broken, they desire to consume variety of delicacies. Once, during Swamy Ji's childhood days, a man approached Swamy Ji's father asking him to perform the wedding ceremony of his daughter in a shorter span of time. Swamy Ji's father declined the request. The man was ready to give a higher donation as offering to him being the priest, however the request was still declined. Swamy Ji enquired from his father on the reason for declining the request as it was the wedding ceremony arranged by someone else, which has no significance to their family. His father replied that although there is no link with their family, he is not willing to compromise on his principles and habit of executing all the rituals prescribed by the scriptures for a wedding.

During the festive season of Navaratri or Ganesh Chaturthi, there is a tradition of placing the idol of the divine in large tents and people gather in big numbers to offer their prayers. However, when this is performed from the mode of ignorance, one focusses more on decorations, glorifying the organizer, playing loud non-devotional music, engage in consuming liquor, violating the directives of the scriptures and following a self-determined process and refraining from offering food and donation to the priest are considered to be Tamasik mode of sacrifice.

17.14

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

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

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the three-fold divisions of Tapah or austerities influenced by the modes of nature. When worship of the Supreme 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. If a spiritual master advises that his disciple should be devoted to him alone, it is not a trait of Sattvik austerity as the Supreme Divine himself has mentioned that one needs to surrender to one's guru but is free to offer obeisance to another learned

scholar or guru.

Once, there was a man by name Satyanarayan Rathi, who owned a garment shop in Bikaner. He was also supervising a gowshala. He had a practice of going back home during lunch time and then returning to his shop. One day, he stepped out for lunch and then returned to his garment shop within a minute. His staff enquired the reason for him returning to the shop and he responded by saying that he would travel back home after some time. He stepped out and returned to the shop once again within a span of a minute and repeated the same pattern three times. When the staff enquired once again, he then responded by saying that there was a small puppy under his scooter and he did not want to wake the puppy from its sleep by starting his scooter. This is a trait of compassion which is seen in those who function from the mode of goodness (sattva guna).

In another instance, during intense summer, the workers who were engaged in renovation work of a house were working outside in scorching heat. The owner then asked the workers to continue their activities within his home, so that they do not fall sick due to the intense heat. When the body is dedicated to the service of the pure and saintly, it is considered as austerity of the body. Such austerity should be done with cleanliness, simplicity, and care for not hurting others. Austerity performed from the mode of goodness refers to keeping the interest of the other above oneself and function from a state of compassion. One is other centered instead of being self-centered.

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.

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 बोलिये मन का आपा खोय।

औरन को शीतल करै आपहूं शीतल होय।।

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.

The choice of words and the quality of speech speaks volumes about one's personality. With the choice of words, one is able to gauge if the other is elevated in wisdom, quality of education, etiquettes, so on and so forth.

A poet once said -

नापसंद थी खुदा को सख्ती जुबां में । इसलिए तो नहीं दि हड्डी जुबां मे।।

Once, there was a Zen master who was around 120 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 परिहरू बचन कठोर।

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

शब्द सम्हारे बोलिये ,शब्द के हाथ न पाँव , एक शब्द औषध 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 reduce a person's self-esteem and it can inflict a psychological scar. Emotional wounds always take a much longer time than physical ones. Words can hurt or heal. Hence, one needs to think before speaking.

17.16

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

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

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. One is not the slave of one's mind but the master of one's mind. Austerity of the mind is higher than the austerity of body and speech, for if one learns to master the mind, the body and speech automatically get mastered. One needs to elevate oneself through the power of mind and not degrade oneself, as the mind can be the friend and also the enemy of the self. One with a pure mind elevates to higher states of consciousness and hence they say

मन चंगा तो कठौती में गंगा -

If the mind is pure and clean, then in the pot beside, the holy Ganga resides.

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.

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

**mūḍhagrāheṇātmano 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 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 yaddānaṃ(n), dīyate'nupakāriṇe,
deśe kāle ca pātre ca, taddānaṃ(m) sātṭvikaṃ(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 Sātṭvika.

Bhagavān now explains the three-fold divisions of charity and highlights the charity performed from the mode of goodness in this shloka. Charity given to a worthy person whole heartedly, without consideration of anything in return, at the proper time and in the proper place, is stated to be in the mode of goodness. It has been stated in the scriptures that from the wealth one has earned by rightful means, one needs to donate one-tenth in charity, and as a matter of duty. Say for example, if one's annual income is Rupees one Lakh, one needs to donate Rupees ten thousand in charity. Charity is not confined to donation of wealth alone. There are 25 types of charity as stated below:

- 1. Donation of Wealth
- 2. Donation of Gold
- 3. Donation of Land
- 4. Donation of rice or Annadaan
- 5. Donation of food
- 6. Donation of clothes
- 7. Donating to save a life
- 8. Donating by uplifting one to success
- 9. Donating a smile to spread happiness (Smile is contagious)
- 10. Donation of one's entitlement towards an entity (Giving up one's rights towards an entity)
- 11. Donation by spreading the word of Bhakti or devotion
- 12. Donation by imparting knowledge in the profession of teaching
- 13. Donation by spreading happiness
- 14. Donation by imparting wisdom
- 15. Donation of a mantra
- 16. Donation by imparting a deeksha
- 17. Donation of Putra or son
- 18. Donation of daughter or Kanyaadaan
- 19. Waiving off someone's loan - Mukti Daan
- 20. Donation by hospitality
- 21. Donation of a designation
- 22. Donation of Preya
- 23. Donation of Shreya
- 24. Donation of Brahmā Vidya
- 25. Param Daan - Reciting Gītā to a person on death bed is considered the highest amongst all.

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. It is not about how much one gives; it is about love and affection one puts in the act of giving. Charity is an act of selflessness without expecting in return. The it is considered as Sattvik. If one expects returns or appreciation, then the charity is classified as Rajasik. Bhagavān explains this further in the next shloka.

17.21

**yattu pratyupakārārthaṃ(m), phalamuddiśya vā punaḥ,
dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṃ(n), taddānaṃ(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. However, one needs to understand that one experiences immense happiness with the act of giving. As it is said - "Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened."

17.22

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

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

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. This kind of charity does not benefit the receiver.

Let's say if one gives money to an alcoholic or an addict, the money would be spent in buying liquor or to smoke, which is non-beneficial. If one ends up helping an unworthy person and the entity of charity received by the unworthy person causes harm to the other or engages in any unethical activity, then the person who gave the charity will also be culpable for the offence. This is an example of charity in the mode of ignorance that is given to an undeserving person. If one needs to pay the salary for the home-staff for their services and if one throws the money at them with an attitude of being rich or superior, it is considered to be Tamasik. One should never demean or disrespect the other with the act of charity as this attitude is classified as Tamasik Daan or charity from the mode of ignorance.

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.

In this shloka and the following shlokas, Bhagavān 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. Therefore, when performing acts of sacrifice, offering charity, or undertaking penance, expounders of the Vedas always begin by uttering "Om" according to the prescriptions of Vedic injunctions. It is placed in the beginning of many Vedic mantras as a *bīja* (seed) mantra to invoke auspiciousness.

ॐ - अ, उ, म, ः



प्रणव, ब्रह्म, निर्गुण, सगुण, साकार, निराकार, शब्द, ईश्वर, माया, ओंकार
एक अनंत यात्रा (प्रभव-प्रलय-प्रभव....)

खंड	उच्चारण	शब्द	स्थान	रूप	देव	स्थिति	कार्य	करण	गुण
अ	अकार	बैखरी	कंठ	स्थूल	ब्रह्मा	जाग्रत	उत्पत्ति	कर्मेन्द्रियाँ	रजोगुण
उ	उकार	मध्यमा	हृदय	सूक्ष्म	विष्णु	स्वप्न	पुष्टि	ज्ञानेन्द्रियाँ	सतोगुण
म	मकार	पश्यन्ति	नाभि	कारण	शंकर	सुषुप्ति	संहार	अंतःकरण	तमोगुण
ः	हलंत	परा	व्यापक	शून्य	ब्रह्म	तुरीय	सत्ता	अस्ति	गुणातीत

Let's understand the meaning of "AUM" or "OM". This sacred syllable is said to be the primordial sound from which the universe was created. The syllable *om* is composed of the three sounds *a-u-m* (in Sanskrit, the vowels *a* and *u* coalesce to become *o*), which represent several important triads: the three worlds of earth, atmosphere, and heaven; thought, speech, and action; the three qualities (*gunas*) of matter (goodness, passion, and darkness); and the three sacred Vedic scriptures (Rigveda, Yajurveda, and Samaveda). Thus, AUM mystically embodies the essence of the entire universe.

When the entire universe came into existence, the first *tatva* or entity that came into existence is space or Akash. From space, emerged the word AUM that corresponds to *Brahmā*. 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 *Omkaara*.

There are four parameters of AUM. The three syllables A-U-M are said to represent the trinity or *Tridev* - *Brahmā* (the creator), *Vishnu* (the preserver) and *Śiva* (the destroyer). The sound "A" in AUM resonates to the throat region and represents *Brahmā* (the creator), which relates to the material entity. It represents an awakened state that is focused outward and is related to *Rajo Guna*; *Karmendriya* is its *Sādhana*. The sound "U" in AUM represents the heart region and corresponds to *Vishnu* (the preserver). It is linked to emotions and sensitivity. Its function corresponds to *Pushti* - i.e., Confirmation, Healthy, wealth and prosperity, Nourishment, Endorsement, etc., This sound resonates with *Sattva Guna* and corresponds to *Gyanendriya* or the sensory system. It represents the dream state of consciousness that is focused inward. The sound "M" in AUM resonates to the naval region that is presided by *Śiva* (the destroyer). This resonates *Tamo Guna* of the *Prakṛti* and represents the state of deep sleep consciousness.

The fourth entity is *Ananth* or infinite that is beyond description Even if one describes *Rasagulla* theoretically, the taste can only be experienced by consuming the same.

Similarly, the infinite *Para Brahmān* can be experienced by attaining the state of absolute realization. This transcends above the three *gunas* and is *Gunateeta*. The state of transcendental, or pure, consciousness in which the focus with both outward and inward at the same time. The four states corresponding to each of the sound by AUM is summarized below:

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.

By entering sushupti, the yogi experiences the subtle, intuitive consciousness that is neither mental nor intellectual. Because of its separation from the world and worldly concerns, sushupti creates a state of bliss and happiness. It is one of the stages on the path to yoga's ultimate goal, union with the higher Self.

Once, Chandra Dev came towards sixteen year of Dhyaneswar Maharaj by riding on a tiger. Dhyaneswar Maharaj speaks to a wall beside him that "Come, let's welcome Chandra Dev" and the wall actually starts to walk along with him. This is the state of AUM.

Consider the below shloka:

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Meaning: Aum, That (Outer World) is Purna (Full with Divine Consciousness); This (Inner World) is also Purna (Full with Divine Consciousness); From Purna is manifested Purna (From the Fullness of Divine Consciousness the World is manifested), Taking Purna from Purna, Purna indeed remains (Because Divine Consciousness is Non-Dual and Infinite). It means that what is visible is the infinite. What is invisible is also the infinite. Out of the Infinite Being the finite has come, yet being infinite, only infinite remains.

Bhagavān now explains the vibration "Tat". Persons who do not desire fruitive rewards, but seek to be free from material entanglements, utter the word "Tat" along with acts of austerity, sacrifice, and charity. Chanting *Tat* along with austerity, sacrifice, and charity symbolizes that they are not to be performed for material rewards, but for the eternal welfare of the soul in the path of spiritual evolution and realization. The sound of Tat reminds a seeker to renounce any reward for the work or sacrifice he engages in. Tat also refers to the supreme divine or the personal form of the divine (say Śrī Ram or Śrī Krishna).

As they say:

तेरे नाम अनेक, तू एक

- Multiple forms and manifestations of the Supreme Divine

Bhagavān now explains the sound vibration "Sat". The word "Sat" means eternal existence and goodness. The sound of Sat serves as a reminder of what is good and true. It is also used to describe an auspicious action. 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." *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* are associated with the other letter, Tat, in the same way as Om is associated with *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*, and with all religious performances. Sat is the third symbol, which signifies goodness. We say *satsanga*, *sant*, saint, mahatma, which all come from the word 'Sat'. Whenever there is something good or saintly, we call that Sat. Whenever there is something auspicious, then also we use the word Sat in regard to that auspicious

beginning. The words *yajna*, *dana* and *tapah* - sacrifice, austerity and charity become stable and meaningful, and bear the requisite fruit, only when they are associated with Sat, or Pure Existence.

The terms 'Tat' and 'Sat' signify the transcendent aspect of Brahman and the immanent aspect of Brahman, both of which are blended together in a universalized connotation, or denotation, which is AUM. The whole Brahman manifests the whole universe, and the whole Brahman enters wholly into this whole universe. Though the whole Brahman enters wholly into this universe, the transcendent aspect of Brahman is not in any way affected by this entry of Brahman into the cosmos. Hence, Aum Tat Sat refers to the threefold dimension of supreme absolute truth or the Nirguna Brahman.

Ved Vyaas Ji has composed the pushpika at the end of every chapter with the words Aum Tat Sat Iti, so that in case of any error or transgression by the reader of the shloka, the same shall be forgiven.

17.24, 17.25, 17.26, 17.27, 17.28

**tasmādomityudāhṛtya, yajñadānatapaḥ(kh) kriyāḥ,
pravartante vidhānuktāḥ(s), satataṁ(m) brahmavādinām. 17.24
tadityanabhisandhāya, phalaṁ(m) yajñatapaḥ(kh) kriyāḥ,
dānakriyāśca vividhāḥ(kh), kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ. 17.25
sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca, sadityetatprayujyate,
praśaste karmaṇi tathā, sacchabdaḥ(ph) pārtha yujyate. 17.26
yajñe tapasi dāne ca, sthitiḥ(s) saditi cocyate,
karma caiva tadarthīyaṁ(m), sadityevābhidhīyate. 17.27
aśraddhayā hutaṁ(n) dattaṁ(n), tapastaptaṁ(ñ) kṛtaṁ(ñ) ca yat,
asadityucyate pārtha, na ca tatpretya no iha. 17.28**

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'.

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

The 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.

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'.

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 explains that any vedic activity, austerity, charity, penance and sacrifice that is performed without faith is called "Asat". He says that those who act without faith in the scriptures, engage in austerity, charity, penance and sacrifice without the quality of faith, fail to get good fruits in this life, as their actions are not perfectly executed. As a consequence, they do not receive good fruits in the next life either. Thus, one's faith should not be based upon one's own impressions of the mind and intellect. Hence, the quality of faith is important to achieve the higher states of consciousness and walk on the path to attain the supreme realization. The day one has immense faith is the day when one starts to elevate to higher states of consciousness.

The session ends with prayer and Hanuman Chalisa.

Question and Answer

Manju Ji

Question: One would have both saintly and demoniac qualities. how can one differentiate between the right and wrong?

Answer: This can be explained with Shreya and Preya. Shreya is the path of auspiciousness and virtue. It appears difficult at the beginning but it yields good results. On the other hand, Preya is short term happiness, it appears pleasurable initially and later turns out to be poisonous.

Question: How can vegetarians go on high protein diet without meat?

Answer: Meat might be prescribed for medical reasons. However, even when one consumes Dal and pulses, one would get the required amount of protein. The human digestive system is designed to digest vegetarian diet instead of meat diet.

Chandrashekar Ji

Question: The austerity, charity and penance (mentioned as per the three modes of nature) are to be aligned with scriptures?

Answer: Yes, all these are to be performed as per the directives of the scriptures to get the complete fruit of the same.

Murali Ji

Question: It is difficult for people living abroad to cook on a daily basis. Has it been advised to consume freshly cooked food as there were no refrigerators in the olden days?

Answer: The modern science has also stated that freshly prepared food is preferred over refrigerated food. Even in current times, people are shifting to organic farming for health benefits.

Question: What is Putra Daan?

Answer: In Ramayana, King Dasharath had to give his son as donation to rishi Vishwamitra for a temporary duration. This kind of temporary or permanent donation is Putra daan.

Gauri Ji

Question: During pilgrimage, there are various categories of darshana (each with different fares) which allows quick darshan. Is it allowed to opt for quick darshan?

Answer: Darshana is considered as bodily penance. The easier the darshan, the lesser the fruits.

Alka Ji

Question: It is said that the supreme divine is all-pervading. Then why the differentiation between clean and unclean?

Answer: Consider the example of fire. It manifests upon rubbing two entities, due to the friction. Once it manifests, it has the power to burn. Prior to the friction between two entities, it is in unmanifest form. Similarly, the supreme divine manifests where there is purity, although HE is all-pervading.

Urmila Ji

Question: Garlic and onions are classified as Tamasik?

Answer: Yes, anything that produces unpleasant smell after consumption is classified as Tamasik.

Meera Ji

Question: when one has visitors at home, serving them with an expectation that one would attract positive karma is Sattvik?

Answer: Once can have the expectations of good karma but should refrain from having expectations from the person. Having expectations of Punya is Sattvik whereas executing karma without any expectations is Nishkama Karma.

**om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyām(m) yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde
śraddhātrayavibhāgayogonāma saptadaśo'dhyāyaḥ.**



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Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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