

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

2/2 (Ślōka 11-19), Saturday, 23 March 2024

Interpreter: GĪTĀ PRAVĪṆA KAVITA VERMA

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/NKU4loQZtuk>

Threefold Yajña, Dāna & Tapas

The 17th chapter of the Bhagavadgītā is '**Sraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga**' - The Yoga through Discerning the Three Divisions of Faith.

The second and last session on the subject began with the Auspicious Lighting of the traditional lamp that lights the steadfast flame, guiding us towards the path of Dharma, cleansing our Antaḥkaraṇa with the light of knowledge, shedding the path of Ignorance. It was followed by prayers to the Guru Parampara, and to the source of Divine Knowledge of Yoga, The Bhagavadgītā.

sadāśiva-samārambhāṁ śaṅkarācārya-madhyamām.

easmadācārya-paryantāṁ vande guru-paramparām ॥

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

om pārthāya pratibodhitāṁ bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayaṁ

vyāsenā grathitāṁ purāṇa-muninā madhye mahābhāratam

advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm aṣṭādasādhyāyinīm

amba tvām anusandadhāmi bhagavad-gīte bhava-dveṣiṇīm

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

Chapter 17 is a mirror for person's mind or heart. A mirror reveals one's appearance, and one can correct the looks accordingly to perfection. Similarly, this chapter is a mirror of the mind, and one can use the knowledge obtained from viewing the mirror, to rectify the vikaras/ defects. All the actions that were done in Rajasic or Tamasic way can be modified to follow the Sattvic way. In chapter 14 the three Gunas of nature and their effect on the mind were described.

- **Sattvic Guna** stands for the goodness
- **Rajasic Guna** stands for attachment and greed.
- **Tamasic Guna** stands for ignorance / dullness/ inertia.

The gunas form one's personality. If Sattvic Guna is in higher proportion, then the person becomes more Sattvic, does good for the society. But if one is Rajasic then he / she will be little more selfish, with attachment to the worldly things. When the frame of mind remains tamasic, the person will be of no use to the family or the society. So, if one wants to become useful to others as well as to self, then the person has to become Sattvic. The same is not just limited to spiritual life, it has to be overall including the way one lives, eats, sleeps etc. Bhagavan is discussing the characteristics of yajnas based upon each type of guna. Understanding the differences, one can accordingly adjust one's yajnas or karmas in order to keep those at Sattvic level.

17.11

aphalākāṅkṣibhīryajño, vidhidṛṣṭo ya iyyate, 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 Sātṭvika in character.

Pancha Maha Yajnas are the five important and compulsory Yajnas in the life of a Hindu householder. The five yajnas are like duties and it should be performed during the Grihastha Ashrama Dharma i.e. during the life of a householder. They are:

- **Brahma** Yajna
- **Pitr** Yajna
- **Deva** Yajna
- **Bhuta** Yajna
- **Atithi** Yajna

Bhagavān has told around 12 types of Yajnas in the fourth of chapter of Bhagavad Gītā.

- **Brahma** Yajna
- **Deva** Yajna
- **Dama** Yajna
- **Shama** Yajna
- **Atma Samyama** Yajna
- **Dravya** Yajna
- **Tapo** Yajna
- **Yoga** Yajna
- Swadhyaya **Yajna**
- **Jnana** Yajna
- **Prāṇayama** Yajna and
- **Prāṇa** Yajna

For the sake of understanding the shlokas, we can visualize the word Yajna either as activities that are performed around the '**havan kund**' or the pooja archanas that we do in our homes.

Bhagavan in this shloka has given following qualities of a Sattvic Yajna:

- **aphalākāṅkṣibhir yajño**: doing something without seeking fruit. When done with a motive, the yajna quality changes to Rajasic. For example, the unconditional things that mother does for her child is pure and sattvic. Similarly, we should perform every yajna / karma for Bhagavān, or

for purifying our mind. Sādhana or Tapas is different from Seva. In Geeta Parivar, people volunteer and perform roles of technical assistants, Core trainers, Group coordinators etc. They give their time and energy without seeking anything in return. It can be considered as Seva or Sādhana. If the action is done in anticipation of some result like collecting punyas, it is categorised as Seva. If the seva is done without aspiring for punyas, but purely for the sake of purifying one's mind then the seva becomes Sādhana. A question may arise as to why purified mind is required. It is required so that we make right choices.

- **vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate**: performed because that is in accordance with the scriptural injunctions, i.e. those have been prescribed by Bhagavān. For example,
 - nitya karma (Daily Upasana): we do some pooja every morning or in evening. These are actions which as a human being one should do; not doing so will result in accumulating sins
 - naimittika karma (Obligatory duties): duties to be performed on special occasions like birth and death in a family are called 'naimittika-karmas'. Example, one should take bath at the end of solar eclipse. If these injunctions are not followed, sins are likely to get added in one's account.

Above karmas are prescribed in the Śāstras. There is a reason for each duty given in the Śāstras. Hence should not doubt and just follow the instructions.

- **yaṣṭavyameveti manaḥ(s) samādhāya sa sātṭvikaḥ**: these are responsibilities that should be performed by each individual according to the roles in life. It is the duty of children to take care of parents when old; to put some feed for birds in the house terrace. This can be further explained with a story. Once a mother asked her child do you love me? The child said yes. Listening to this mother asked why do you love me? The child said I love you because you feed me with delicious food. Mother then asked the child if in future am not able to give you food, would you stop loving me? Child is little confused at this stage but says no he will still love her. Mother once again raised a question; then why do you love me? In a confused state child answer was I love you because you are beautiful. Mother said supposing I become old and no longer beautiful, would you stop loving me? In this manner mother kept on asking in various ways. A stage came when child became very irritated and raised a counter set of questions. He asked, do you love me? If you love me then why? Mother said I love you because **you belong to me**. You are my child, so I love you. **I do not have any expectations** from you. I just love you and **expect nothing in return**. This is the unconditional love with which one should do his duty. When we perform any karma / yajna we should have faith in scriptures and perform those as our duties. There should not be any thoughts as to why, what is the logic behind that, what is the result, what is the fruit etc. Same thing applies to studies. When we are able to do something without seeking for fruits then the karma becomes sattvic.

17.12

**abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ(n), dambhārthamapi caiva yat,
ijjate bharataśreṣṭha, taṃ(m) yajñam(m) viddhi rājasam. 17.12**

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

Yajnas that are performed with a self-centric and selfish motive, keeping oneself in mind, is considered as Rajasic yajna. For example, Jatesthi Yajna, performed in order to bear a child, is an example of Rajasic yajna as it is linked to fulfillment of a desire.

abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ(n): while performing karma/yajna, there is motive behind the yajna; some fruit is expected at the end of such yajna. This may give temporary happiness. These kinds of karmas are not prohibited in the Śāstras. But while one takes up such karmas one should be aware that after the yajna ends there are chances that directly or indirectly one also ends up with sorrows, because Rajasic karmas eventually end in sorrow.

dambhārthamapi caiva yat: sometimes karmas are done to show to other people and not because it said in scriptures or due to guru's guidance. For example, some people recite Bhagavad Gītā shlokas loudly just to attract attention of the people. All such deeds are incorrect.

17.13

vidhihīnamasṛṣṭānnaṃ(m), mantrahīnamadakṣiṇaṃ, śraddhāviraḥitaṃ(m) yajñaṃ(n), tāmasaṃ(m) paricakṣate. 17.13

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

vidhihīnam: ordinances given in the shastras is not followed in such yajnas. For example, while performing a yajna or anushthana or Pooja one skips certain procedures just to suit one's availability or resources. Suppose the muhurta to start the puja at 5 pm but some important guest can only come at 4 pm. So, instead of following the muhurta the yajna time is moved to 4pm. This is not the correct way. If shastras are saying to follow particular time, then that timing should be followed. But people take this lightly and make adjustments. This is called **vidhihīn** which means you are not following the correct way. The same is being performed more for show then for appeasing the Paramātmā.

asṛṣṭānnaṃ(m): in yajnas mostly food is distributed. This is a rule. But people avoid this part. So that is also makes a yajna tamasic.

mantrahīnam: sometimes in order to save time recitation of some mantras are skipped. This too makes the yajna tamasic. Similarly, while we do japa we take to skipping few beads. This is called Tamasic Yajna. It will not help in purification of mind for which one takes up doing japa.

adakṣiṇaṃ: at the end of yajna we are supposed to give some dakshina to pandit ji. Sometimes people in order to save money try skipping this part or try to bargain or fall back on the commitment. This should be avoided as it will make the yajna tamasic.

śraddhāviraḥitaṃ(m) yajñaṃ(n): Some people go through the procedure without any Shraddha / faith. Like for example, a mother due to some reason is getting irritated on her child. In order to make her feel good the child adds an adjective and calls her best mom in the world. Due to this mother gets moved and her irritation subsides. This made the child realize that in this manner he can escape mother's anger. So, he started using this often, as a means to please his mother whenever he did not listen to her or had done something wrong. Since his action lacked love and was being used again and again, mother's mood stopped changing. Same is with Bhagavān when we start performing yajnas and japas without Shraddha, HE too will not get moved seeing the person utter HIS name all the time just with the aim of fulfilling his wish. Bhagavān is great! HE of course is going to fulfill the wishes, there is no doubt about it. But one needs to think about the Psychology. HE will not feel good. So, we should try doing all the mentioned acts with Shraddha.

In following shlokas similarly Bhagavan discusses three types of Tapas (Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic).

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

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

What does Tapas mean?

Shankaracharya ji has explained this beautifully.

It means denying our mind. It needs lot of power and grit to deny one's own mind. Mind is inside us but is very powerful, and controlling it requires a lot of grit and determination. The person who is attached with the worldly objects is not free. Example, attachment to mobile phones. There are people who are all the time glued to the mobile. They are not able to control themselves from looking at each and every notification that pops up, despite knowing that all notifications are not important. Such types of people are not free, infact they are in bondage. Bondage could be attachment with anything like family, home, money, name, fame etc. Bondage means being controlled by something. The mobile notification is controlling the person's mind, and the mind is controlling his soul.

Shankaracharya ji says that real hell for a man is his own body. Body is the cause of all the attachments and due to attachments, one ends up facing sorrows, pain etc. The body will go only through illness, injury etc. **He further says that heaven for a man is destruction of cravings.** When one does not have any attachments with anything then the person is free. The person becomes the happiest person of the world. To make this happen, one must first move to a sattvic mode and then become ***trigunateeta***.

Tapas is performed through body, speech or mind. Each of three types of tapas can either be sattvic, rajasic and tamasic. Following types of tapas can be performed with the help of the body:

pūjanaṃ(m): offering prayers to following:

- ***deva***: deities
- ***dvija***: A brahmin is called dvija, means twice born. First, he is a brahmin by birth and later he becomes a true brahmin when he acquires knowledge. It's similar to a child getting teeth twice in his life time.
- ***guru***: teacher / preacher
- ***prājña***: the wise people / intelligent people, one who knows the ethics and the Śāstras. Prajnas (intelligent people) can be from any caste. There is a famous shloka about knowledge, which goes as follows:

vidyā nāma narasya rūpamadhikaṃ pracchannaguptaṃ dhanam

vidyā bhogakarī yaśaḥ sukhakarī vidyā gurūṇāṃ guruḥ

vidyā bandhujano videsāgamane vidyā parā devatā

vidyā rājasu pūjyate na hi dhanam vidyā vihināḥ paśuḥ

Meaning: Knowledge (Vidya) is beauty of man. It is the knowledge which can give all the joy / happiness. It can give name, fame, money etc.

In earlier days, intelligent people used to approach their king, with a desire to show their wisdom. If they could prove their intelligence, they would be rewarded with gifts, money etc. as a recognition of their wisdom. In current times, although kings do not exist, people can earn money, name and fame from knowledge. Vidya / Knowledge is a very important aspect of a man. It is Guru of all Gurus and can be

a friend to a person who is moving to a new unknown place. If one wishes to survive by himself in a new place, he can do this with the help of intelligence. Using intelligence, a person can earn money, whereas it is not easy to make money with money alone. Given a choice between an intelligent and a rich person, people will get attracted towards an intelligent person.

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

ārjavam: straightforwardness / simplicity

brahmacaryamahimsā: The person who thinks about the Brahmān, param tattvam, constantly / have control of senses / control over mind / celibacy. This is also true of people who have chosen the spiritual path and have joined the study program.

ahimsā: non-violence. Here it means that the person is detached from the result, just doing it for the sake of duty.

17.15

**anudvegakaram(m) vākyaṃ(m), satyaṃ(m) priyahitaṃ(ñ) ca yat,
svādhyāyābhyasanam(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.

Choice of words can make a big difference. Two brothers were into astrology. One of them approached the King and offered to foretell his future by studying his palm. During the study, the astrologer predicted that the King was going to lose his entire kingdom very soon. The King got disturbed and ordered his security to arrest the astrologer. When his sibling got to know about the arrest he decided to meet the King. During the meeting he too introduced himself as an astrologer. King once again reluctantly offered his palm for study. After reading the hand, with a smile on his face, the astrologer appraised the King that he would have the longest life among his family members. The king was happy and asked the palm reader to ask anything in return. So, he asked for the release of his brother from jail. Both the astrologers came to the same conclusion, but the way they conveyed the thing made the difference.

anudvegakaram(m) vākyaṃ(m) satyaṃ(m) priyahitaṃ(ñ) ca yat: Firstly, Bhagavān has said here that one has to say truth but the same should be conveyed appropriately. It should not offend the listener. In total three things Bhagavān has said here: The word/s should be loveable, true and it should be beneficial.

The following shloka also conveys the same essence:

**satyaṃ brūyāt priyaṃ brūyāt na brūyāt satyamapriyam □
priyañca nānṛtaṃ brūyāt eṣa dharmassanātanaḥ □ - manusmṛti**

Meaning: Speak the truth and speak favorably. Do not tell the truth if it is not favorable. Also, do not tell an untruth (although) it is favorable. This is the eternal dharma.

svādhyāyābhyasanam(ñ) caiva, vāñmayam(n) tapa ucyate: The practice of the recitation of Vedic mantras is also included in the austerities of speech. Sadhaks of the Geeta Learning Program come under this category.

17.16

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

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

Bhagavān has explained Tapas of mind, as follows:

- **manah(ph) prasādaḥ(s)**: ONE HAS TO BE HAPPY IN ALL THE SITUATIONS.
- **saumyatvaṃ(m)**: ONE HAS TO BE GOOD TO EVERYONE. It should not be limited only to family, friends or colleagues.
- **maunam**: NOT UTTERING ANYTHING EXTRA, HARSH IN SPEECH, THOUGHTS, ACTIONS. Sometimes people keep mouna vrat on Ekadashi, and refrain from uttering a single word the whole day. They keep control over their speech but indulge in typing messages on WhatsApp, or let the mind continue thinking. This, however is not a real maunam.
- **ātmavinigrahaḥ**: MAINTAINING SELF CONTROL.
- **bhāvasaṃśuddhirityetat**: THE PURIFICATION OF THOUGHTS. To accept good / positive thoughts and avoid bad thoughts.

17.17

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

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

Bhagavān has explained the characteristics of Sattvic Tapas. The threefold Tapas discussed above, qualify as being Sattvik when:

- **śraddhayā parayā taptam(n)**: one does tapas with utmost faith, and
- **aphalākāṅkṣibhiryuktaiḥ(s)**: without any expectations.

Doing japa is also a form of tapas. There are people who do japa for years. In 4-5 year time their japa mala starts shining due to constant touch, but the mind remains impure or becomes more impure. In this form of tapas the important thing is that the mind and japa should get aligned. Just recitation and not taking the mind along will not be of any use. Second, there should not be any expectations. Some people talk about it to others. Then the whole effort will be of no use.

17.18

**satkāramānapūjārtham(n), tapo dambhena caiva yat,
kriyate tadiha proktaṃ(m), rājasam(ñ) calamadhravam. 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.

kriyate tadiha proktaṃ(m): When one does tapas for sake of show off or for gaining the following, the austerity would become Rajasic:

- **satkāra**: honor,

- **māna**: respect in return, and
- **pūjārtham(n)**: shall be worshipped.

calam + adhruvam: Its benefits are unstable and transitory. Will not get any spiritual growth. By this means one may end up getting some punyas but once those gets utilized (Bhog), the person will fall back to square one. The mind will remain as it is and there will be no progress as far as purifying mind is concerned.

Here Bhagavan is highlighting that if personal motives get attached to one's Tapas, then it slips to Rajasic mode.

It has been said in Srimad Bhagvad that one gets the human body to perform karma as a duty or Sādhanā. If one desires for something in return, or remains attached with the worldly object/s, then he shall remain in bondage forever. Even after getting opportunity to learn Bhagavad Gītā with correct pronunciation, if one is still attached to worldly things, then nothing else can make one free. So, one should consider self as lucky to get the divine opportunity to learn Bhagavad Gītā, and that too with meanings.

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.

Important indicators of the lowest degree of Tapas are:

mūḍhagrāheṇātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ: austerity performed out of foolish notions / delusions and obstinacy by torturing one's own self i.e. body and mind, without following any viddhi, Śāstra, or Guru.

parasyotsādanārtham(m): penance performed in order to cause injury to others, and to destroy them. Troubling others by forcing them to do some austerities of one's liking also amounts to tamasic tapas. Suppose a person enjoys doing meditation or keeping fast; he should not impose it on others.

So far in this chapter, Bhagavān has explained the three types each of food and yajnas, and nine types of tapas. HE further proceeds to explain the three types of Danams - the mindset and feeling that one should have when giving something to someone. It will be dealt in the next session. The session ended with a short namakirtan, remembering the divine Almighty.

The session concluded with a prayer.

Questions & Answers

Lalita Ji

Question: *I have been trying to wake up early in the morning since quite some time now. But I am not successful. Could you please guide as to how I can bring about this change.*

Answer: This can be achieved in the following manners:

- On a calendar start to tick the days till it comes in your system. and

- make your goal public. The day you are not able to make it, declare the time you got up eventually.

Rekha Ji

Question: *In discussion there was a point about aligning mind with the japa. I have been doing this practice but find that the mind wanders away. How do I make this happen?*

Answer: This happens with everybody, but one can overcome this by:

- remaining alert and practice,
- other way would be to visualize while doing the japa.

Question: *When it comes to prayers, should we get up early in the morning consistently? Meaning all 7 days it has to be done early morning?*

Answer: Yes! it has to be done consistently. Best is to do early morning. If due to some genuine reason the same gets missed, then we can complete it later during the day.

Question: *Kindly throw some more light on Nitya karma and Naimittik karma.*

Answer: Nitya Karmas are daily routine duties that need to be performed by householders. There are many Nitya Karmas one has to do. Those can be found by referring to scriptures, by speaking to guru, or by following the traditions followed in our houses.

Naimittik karmas on the other hand are ones which are performed for specific reasons or occasions. Like for example, certain rituals and practices need to be followed during or after Solar or Lunar eclipse.



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

<https://vivechan.learngeeta.com/feedback/>

Thank you-For reading the summary

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

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

Har Ghar Gītā, Har Kar Gītā !

Let's come together with the motto of Geeta Pariwar, and gift our Geeta Classes to all our Family, friends & acquaintances

<https://gift.learngeeta.com/>

Geeta Pariwar has taken a new initiative. Now you can watch YouTube videos and read PDFs of all the interpretation sessions conducted earlier. Please use the below link.

<https://vivechan.learngeeta.com/>

Learn Geeta, Spread Geeta, Live Geeta
|| OM ŚRĪKṚṢṆĀRPAṆAMASTU ||