

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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Om-Tat-Sat: Gateway to Divine Realization

Chapter 17 of the Srimad Bhagavad Gītā - *Śhraddhā Traya Vibhāg Yog - Yog through Discerning the Three Divisions of Faith.*

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

Upon the sacred plains of Kurukshetra, the Bhagavad Gītā emerged from the divine lips of Sri Bhagavān as an immortal fountain of wisdom. It was this profound dialogue that illuminated the path for Arjuna, who stood confounded at the brink of battle, uncertain of his duty. The Gītā, with its melodious verses, is a celestial symphony composed by the Sri Bhagavān, transcending mere words in its expression of truth.

The Bhagavad Gītā is not just a text; it is a transformative experience that infuses our lives with joy, guides our progress, purifies our existence, and steers us toward our ultimate purpose. It serves as a luminous beacon, illuminating the journey of the soul.

In this spiritual odyssey, the 17th chapter presents pivotal guidance. It is here that we delve into the nuances of faith and the essence of the threefold nature of austerity.

Sri Dnyaneshwar Maharaj, anointed by his Guru's blessings, crafted the Dnyaneshwari—a magnificent ode to the Gītā spanning 9,000 verses. This Marathi commentary not only elucidates the Gītā's teachings but also embodies the joyous essence of life as envisioned by Sri Dnyaneshwar Maharaj. He contemplates the Gītā's significance, pondering, "Why do I speak of the Gītā?" It is because the Gita is the compass that navigates us through life's tumultuous seas, towards the shores of bliss and enlightenment. It is the key to unlocking a life brimming with happiness, and devoid of sorrow. The Dnyaneshwari is the crowning jewel of the Gītā, a testament to the timeless wisdom that continues to guide seekers on their spiritual quest.

तैसा वाग्विलास विस्तारु, गीतार्थे विश्व भरु
आनंदाचे अवरू मांडू जगा
दिसो परा तत्त्व डोळा

पाहु सुखाचा सोहळा दिगो महाबोध सुखाला माझी विश्व

“I shall expand my speech playfully, to fill the world with the essence of the Bhagavad Gītā. I shall cover the world with a blanket of joy, gently urging it to awaken. Let the fundamental principles sway and reveal the celebration of true happiness. Let the great enlightenment dry up the ocean of suffering, making my universe serene.”

This verse speaks to the idea of spreading spiritual wisdom and joy throughout the world, using the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā as a guiding light. It suggests a transformation of the world into a place of enlightenment and happiness, where the deeper truths of life are embraced, leading to the alleviation of suffering. The verse carries a message of hope and spiritual upliftment, envisioning a world imbued with peace and contentment.

The discourse unfolds with Arjuna’s inquiry, setting the stage for profound revelations. In the sixteenth chapter, we encounter the verse:

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ |
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि || 16. 24||

Śāstra, in its essence, serves a triune purpose: it governs, enlightens, and safeguards, establishing the principles by which we must abide. It is the beacon that dispels the fog of uncertainty, bestowing upon us the light of understanding. Within its folds, we find both the pragmatic and the spiritual, a comprehensive guide for the journey of life.

Arjuna’s question resonates with those who may not be versed in the scriptures yet possess an unwavering faith. It is akin to the transformation of raw iron into an indispensable component of a space shuttle; so too can the process of life refine our existence. The Bhagavad Gītā aspires not merely to inform but to transmute, elevating the value of our lives to celestial heights.

On this auspicious day, we commemorate the revered **Bhagavan Adi Shankaracharya’s Jayanti**, honoring his monumental contributions to the revival of Sanatan Hindu Dharma. His establishment of Mathas across Bharat stands as a testament to his dedication to spiritual enlightenment and cultural renaissance.

Adi Shankaracharya bestowed upon us an invaluable legacy, enriching the lives of all who seek the wisdom of the Bhagavadgītā. He forged a sacred bond with Bhagavān Sri Krishna, offering a key to divine communion. By recognizing and presenting the Bhishma Parva’s discourse as the Bhagavadgītā, he illuminated a path for humanity.

The noble endeavors of such enlightened beings continually elevate our existence, nurturing its purity and sanctity. In the profound verses of the Shatpadi Stotram, Adi Shankaracharya implores:

अविनयमपनय विष्णो दमय मनः शमय विषयमृगतृष्णाम् । भूतदयां विस्तारय तारय संसारसागरतः ॥

“O Supreme Vishnu, dispel my insolence, tame the restless wanderings of my mind, and quench my worldly desires. Expand my heart’s compassion for all beings, and guide me across the tumultuous sea of samsara.”

This prayer encapsulates a seeker’s yearning for humility, inner peace, and universal love, seeking the grace of the divine to navigate the eternal cycle of existence. It is a call to transcend our limitations and embrace a higher purpose, a journey toward ultimate liberation. May we all find inspiration in his teachings to lead a life of virtue and spiritual fulfillment.

Embarking on the latter portion of the 17th chapter, we delve into the profound guidance Sri Bhagavān

offers for the enrichment of our daily lives, alongside the elucidation of Samādhi.

Sri Bhagavan enlightens Arjuna on the tripartite nature of faith, declaring:

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत |

“The faith of every person is in accordance with the disposition of their mind, shaped by their upbringing.”

This concept of faith, or Shraddha, was previously introduced in Chapter 4:

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः | ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति || 4.39||

“The devoted and disciplined, whose senses are controlled, attain knowledge; and from knowledge, they swiftly find supreme peace.”

Shraddha is the vessel that carries us to the shores of truth, transcending mere intellectual reasoning. It is a lineage of belief, cascading from guru to disciple, parent to child, generation to generation. It is the discernment of faith, coupled with the rejection of blind belief, that heralds the dawn of our good fortune.

As we establish Shraddha in our sages and seers, we embark on a journey of auspiciousness. We build upon faith with faith, never denying its essence, for we are more than the sum of our intellect. Sri Bhagavān counsels the embrace of the Yoga of Intellect:

बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव || 18.57||

“Constantly engage your mind in intellectual yoga, aligning with me.”

Our minds, swayed by emotions, are ultimately sculpted by the faith we foster. Thus, in this pivotal chapter, Sri Bhagavān categorizes our sustenance into three types—sattvik, rajasik, and tamasik—charting a course from the inertia of tamas to the activity of rajas and the purity of sattva. Our existence unfolds across five dimensions: body, senses, mind, intellect, chitta, and the Atma principle. Advancing through these layers is a voyage of self-discovery.

In this collective journey, Yagna emerges as a symbol of communal endeavor. Any collaborative effort is akin to a Yagna, a sacred act that binds us together. It is through this synergy that we must cultivate our sattvic nature while harmonizing it with our rajasic energy, propelling us towards a balanced and enlightened life.

17.14

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

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

This verse outlines various forms of austerity (tapas) related to the body (sharira). Let's break it down:

1. **Devapujanam:** Worship of the gods. This refers to the practice of showing reverence and devotion to the divine, acknowledging higher powers and seeking their blessings through rituals, prayers, and offerings.

2. **Dvijapujanam:** Worship of the twice-born. The twice-born refers to those who have undergone the sacred thread ceremony (upanayana) in Hindu tradition, which symbolizes their initiation into the study of the Vedas. This involves showing respect and honor to learned individuals, teachers, and spiritual guides.
3. **Gurupujanam:** Worship of the guru. The guru, or spiritual teacher, is revered as a guide who leads disciples from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge. Gurupujanam involves honoring and serving the guru, following their teachings, and seeking their guidance on the spiritual path.
4. **Prajñapujanam:** Worship of the wise. Prajna refers to wisdom or intelligence. Prajñapujanam involves respecting and venerating those who possess wisdom, insight, and spiritual understanding. It emphasizes learning from wise individuals and seeking their counsel in matters of life and spirituality.
5. **Shaucham:** Cleanliness or purity. This refers not only to physical cleanliness but also to purity of mind, speech, and actions. It involves maintaining cleanliness in one's surroundings as well as purifying one's thoughts and intentions.
6. **Aarjavam:** Straightforwardness or sincerity. This means being honest, transparent, and straightforward in one's dealings with others. It involves speaking the truth, acting with integrity, and avoiding deceit or hypocrisy.
7. **Brahmacharyam:** Celibacy or chastity. Traditionally, brahmacharya refers to a lifestyle characterized by self-restraint and moderation, particularly in the context of sexual behavior. It involves controlling sexual desires and channeling one's energy towards spiritual pursuits.
8. **Ahimsa:** Non-violence. Ahimsa is a fundamental principle, advocating the avoidance of harm or violence towards all living beings. It involves practicing compassion, kindness, and empathy towards others and abstaining from causing harm through thoughts, words, or actions.

These practices collectively constitute tapas (austerity) related to the body (sharira). Tapas involves self-discipline, self-control, and spiritual austerity aimed at purifying the mind, body, and soul, and ultimately leading to spiritual growth and realization.

When Yaksha queries Yudhishtir about the most sublime entity in existence, Yudhishtir responds with profound wisdom:

"तपसा विन्दते महत"

Tapasā vindate mahat, signifying that greatness is attained through tapas (austerity). He elucidates that those committed to rigorous tapas, particularly pertaining to the body, ascend to the pinnacle of greatness. Tapas, in its essence, epitomizes unwavering dedication to endure strenuous challenges, thereby transcending limitations and achieving spiritual elevation.

These tapas, delineated into physical, verbal, and mental practices, serve as conduits for purifying and elevating the individual across the realms of body, speech, and mind. Furthermore, they embody three distinct qualities—Sattvik, Rajasik, and Tamasik—reflecting the purity and intention underlying the austerity undertaken.

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.

This verse teaches us that the practice of disciplined speech is a powerful form of austerity. It is not merely about avoiding falsehood but encompasses speaking in a way that is harmonious, kind, and constructive, and also includes the discipline of studying and reflecting upon sacred texts. This practice helps to purify one's speech and, by extension, one's mind and soul, leading to spiritual growth and harmony with others.

- **Anudvegakaram Vakyam:** This refers to speaking words that do not cause distress or agitation to others. It emphasizes the importance of being considerate of other's feelings when we speak.
- **Satyaṃ:** It means speaking the truth. However, the truth should be spoken in a way that is not harmful or hurtful.
- **Priyahitam Cha Yat:** This phrase suggests that our words should not only be true but also pleasing and beneficial to others. They should be kind and promote the well-being of others.
- **Swadhyayabhyasanam:** This part of the verse encourages the regular study and recitation of sacred texts, which is considered a form of self-discipline and purification of speech.
- **Vangmayam Tap:** Here, 'Vangmayam' refers to speech, and 'Tap' refers to austerity. Together, they denote that disciplined speech is a form of spiritual practice.

Saint Dnyaneshwar Maharaj emphasizes the importance of words and their impact:

जैसे साच आणि मवाळ मितुले आणि रसाळ
बोल जैसे कल्लोळ अमृताचे

Here's a breakdown of the couplet:

- **साच (Truth):** Words should be truthful, reflecting reality without distortion.
- **मवाळ (Softness):** They should be delivered with gentleness, avoiding harshness to prevent hurt.
- **मितुले (Concise):** Speech should be concise and to the point.
- **रसाळ (Juiciness):** Words should be full of substance and meaning, not empty or superficial.
- **कल्लोळ (Tumult):** The impact of words should be powerful and profound, like a surge of emotions.
- **अमृताचे (Nectar):** Ultimately, speech should be life-giving and enriching, like the mythical nectar that bestows immortality.

Saint Kabir Das says:

ऐसी वाणी बोलिए, मन का आपा खोय ।

औरन को शीतल करे, आपौ शीतल होय ।।

Speak such words that your ego (pride) is dissolved, And let your words cool others, so you too become tranquil.

One must strive to cultivate such a manner of speech, just as one endeavors to achieve goals in life, a pursuit known as tapas.

The interplay between behavior and speech finds vivid illustration in an anecdote. It recounts the tale of a King, his Minister, and their Servant, who, while hunting in a forest, lost their way and each other. Amidst their plight, they encountered a blind Yogi, whose keen perception allowed him to discern their identities based solely on their manner of speech. The servant exhibited rudeness, the minister displayed casualness, while the King exuded utmost politeness and respect.

17.16

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

This verse speaks about the austerity of the mind, which is considered one of the most profound forms of spiritual practice. The components of austerity of mind as described in this verse are as follows:

- **Manaḥ Prasādaḥ:** This refers to the serenity or tranquility of the mind. It's about maintaining a calm and peaceful state of mind, free from agitation and disturbance.
- **Saumyatvaṃ:** This denotes gentleness or mildness in one's disposition. It's the quality of being kind, compassionate, and considerate towards others.
- **Maunam:** Silence here is not just the absence of speech, but also signifies a deeper state of introspection and self-awareness. It involves quieting the incessant chatter of the mind to achieve inner stillness.
- **Ātmavinigrahaḥ:** Self-restraint or control over oneself. It's the discipline that restrains one's impulses, desires, and even thoughts that are not conducive to spiritual growth.
- **Bhāvasaṃsuddhiḥ:** Purity of purpose or intention. It's about having noble and pure intentions behind one's thoughts and actions.

Collectively, these practices constitute **mental austerity**. It's a process of purifying one's thoughts and emotions, leading to a higher state of consciousness. By cultivating these qualities, one can achieve a state of inner purity and peace, which is essential for spiritual progress.

The significance of mental austerity is that it's considered superior to physical austerity because the mind is the root of all actions. If the mind is pure and disciplined, the actions that follow will naturally be righteous and beneficial. This form of austerity is about refining one's inner world, which in turn positively

influences one's external behavior and interactions with the world.

Bahinabai Chaudhari, a revered Marathi poet reflects on the nature of the human mind:

मन लहान लहान
जसा खाकसचा दाना
मन महान महान
आभाळात बी मायेना

"The mind is small, small like a particle of dust, The mind is great, greater even than the expanse of the sky."

This couplet captures the paradoxical nature of the mind: it can focus on the minutest details, akin to a tiny speck of dust, and yet, it possesses the capacity to expand and encompass the vastness of the sky. It's a beautiful reflection of the boundless potential and the inherent limitations of the human mind.

मन कभी हिलने न पाये
आये जाए लाख गम
मन अगर मुरझ गया तो
डग मगा जायेंगे कदम
क्या धरा हमने बनायी ?
क्या बुना हमने गगन ?
क्या हमारी ही वजह से
बह रहा सुरमीत पवन ?

"The mind should never waver, even if a myriad of sorrows come and go. If the mind withers, then our steps will falter. Have we created the earth? Have we woven the sky? Is it because of us that the sweet breeze flows?"

This verse emphasizes the importance of maintaining a steady and unwavering mind. It suggests that our inner stability should not be disturbed by external events. The rhetorical questions imply that the grandeur of nature and the universe is not our doing, and thus, our problems are relatively insignificant in the larger scheme of things.

The reference to **tapas** (austerity) by the mind is about cultivating a state of contentment and happiness within oneself, which is considered a form of spiritual discipline. According to the Bhagavad Gita, as mentioned by Sri Bhagavān to Arjuna, there are three types of **tapas**—those performed by the body, speech, and mind—and each has three categories. This form of internal discipline is said to free one from the sorrows of worldly life, leading to spiritual liberation. The practice of **tapas** by the mind involves training the mind to remain joyful and undisturbed by external circumstances.

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.

The verse elucidates the essence of austerities executed with utmost faith and devoid of any yearning for rewards, termed as Satvik tapas.

- **Śraddhayā parayā:** This phrase indicates that the austerity is performed with ‘supreme faith’ or ‘transcendental faith’. It implies a deep, unwavering belief in the value and spiritual significance of the austerity, beyond any materialistic or transactional mindset.
- **Taptaṃ:** ‘Taptaṃ’ means ‘practiced’ or ‘performed’. It refers to the act of engaging in austerities with dedication and discipline.
- **Tapas tat trividhaṃ:** ‘Trividhaṃ’ means ‘threefold’, referring to the three types of austerities mentioned earlier in the chapter—those of the body, speech, and mind.
- **Naraiḥ:** ‘Naraiḥ’ means ‘by men’ or ‘by people’. It signifies that these practices are universal and can be undertaken by anyone.
- **Aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktauḥ:** This compound word means ‘without desires for fruits’ or ‘without yearning for material rewards’. It emphasizes the selfless nature of the practice, where the practitioner is not motivated by the desire for personal gain.
- **Sāttvikam:** ‘Sāttvikam’ refers to the mode of goodness. Austerities performed in this mode are pure, harmonious, and conducive to spiritual growth.
- **Paricakṣate:** ‘Paricakṣate’ means ‘is declared’ or ‘is said’. It concludes the verse by stating how such austerities are recognized or defined.

In essence, this verse teaches that the highest form of austerity is one that is done with a pure heart and spiritual focus, without any selfish motives or desire for personal benefits. Such practices are considered sattvic because they promote purity, harmony, and spiritual advancement. They are performed not for the sake of reward but out of a sense of duty and devotion to the divine. This selfless approach is what elevates the austerity to a sattvic level, making it a true act of spiritual discipline.

Some practices such as the practice of fasting on Ekadashi, which occurs every fifteen days, are rooted in spiritual traditions and are believed to have direct benefits for physical well-being. It is seen as a way to detoxify the body and has been associated with various health benefits. For instance, Ekadashi fasting is said to lower cholesterol, reduce insulin resistance, and improve mental stability for those suffering from depression and anxiety. It also enhances digestion, respiration, and circulation, and can reduce oxidative stress caused by free radicals. Regarding cancer, while there is ongoing research, some studies suggest that fasting may make cancer cells more sensitive to chemotherapy and protect normal cells, potentially aiding in cancer treatment.

Faith plays a significant role in such practices, as it often provides the mental and emotional strength to adhere to the discipline required for fasting and other austerities advised in the scriptures. Spiritual faith and belief in the process can enhance the experience and potentially contribute to the perceived benefits.

17.18

**satkāramānapūjārthaṃ(n), tapo dambhena caiva yat,
kriyate tadiha proktaṃ(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.

The verse delineates the characteristics of austerities executed with ulterior motives, known as Rajasik tapas.

- **Satkāramānapūjārtham:** This phrase indicates that the austerity is performed for the sake of receiving respect, honor, and worship from others. Typical indicators of such austerities include their ostentatious display on social media platforms.
- **Tapo dambhena chaiva yat:** 'Tapo' means austerity, 'dambhena' means with hypocrisy, and 'chaiva yat' implies that which is done. It refers to austerities performed with pretense and deceit.
- **Kriyate tadiha proktaṃ:** 'Kriyate' means is performed, 'tadiha' means that here, and 'proktaṃ' means is declared. It suggests that such actions are acknowledged in this world as being of a certain nature.
- **Rājasam chalamadhruvam:** 'Rājasam' refers to the mode of passion, 'chalam' means flickering or unstable, and 'adhruvam' means impermanent. It describes the transient and unreliable nature of such austerities.

In essence, this verse teaches that austerities performed for the sake of ego, recognition, and praise, rather than for spiritual advancement, are considered Rajasik. They are driven by passion and desire for self-aggrandizement, rather than self-discipline or devotion. Such practices are not stable or lasting because they are based on external validation rather than internal growth. They are considered inferior in the spiritual context because they do not lead to true self-improvement or enlightenment.

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.

The verse addresses the nature of austerities performed with misguided intentions, termed as Tamasik tapas.

- **Mūḍhagrāheṇa:** This term refers to a deluded or misguided grasp or understanding. It implies that the person performing the austerity is doing so with a confused or incorrect perception of its purpose.
- **Ātmano yatpīḍayā:** 'Ātmano' means 'of the self', and 'yatpīḍayā' means 'which causes pain'. Together, it indicates austerities that are self-torturing or inflict pain upon oneself. Sometimes hunger strikes (indefinite fasts) are utilized to garner attention for a particular cause. While fasting has its advantages, excessive fasting can be detrimental to both personal health and the effectiveness of the cause for which it is employed as a tool.
- **Kriyate tapaḥ:** 'Kriyate' means 'is performed', and 'tapaḥ' refers to 'austerity'. This phrase describes the act of performing such austerities.

- **Parasyotsādanārtham vā:** ‘Parasya’ means ‘of others’, ‘utsādanārtham’ means ‘for the purpose of destroying or harming’, and ‘vā’ means ‘or’. It suggests that austerity is performed either to cause harm to oneself or to others. The tapas performed by Ravana falls under the category of Tamasik tapas.
- **Tattāmasamudāhṛtam:** ‘Tat’ means ‘that’, ‘tāmasam’ refers to ‘the mode of ignorance’, and ‘udāhṛtam’ means ‘is declared’. It concludes that such austerities are declared to be in the mode of ignorance.

In essence, this verse teaches that austerities performed without proper understanding, or those that are self-destructive or intended to harm others, are considered to be in the mode of Tamas. Such practices are not only misguided but also counterproductive to spiritual growth. They stem from ignorance and do not lead to any positive spiritual outcome. Instead, they reinforce negative qualities and behaviors that are obstacles on the path to enlightenment.

17.20

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

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

Sri Bhagavān has thus far elaborated on food, yajña, tapas, and in this verse, elucidates the nature of charity (dāna). The verse describes the essence of giving or charity (dāna) that is deemed pure and sattvik.

- **Dātavyam iti:** ‘It should be given’—this phrase indicates that the act of giving is considered a duty, something that ought to be done.
- **Yad dānaṃ:** ‘That which is charity’—refers to the act of giving. Whatever one has in excess, sharing it with others is Satvik dāna.
- **Dīyate anupakāriṇe:** ‘Is given to one who does not return the favor’—emphasizes that the gift is given without any expectation of reciprocation or benefit.
- **(Deśe kāle ca pātre ca:** ‘In the right place, at the right time, and to the right person’—signifies that the act of giving is done with discernment, ensuring that the charity is appropriate to the circumstances and the recipient is deserving.
- **Tad dānaṃ sāttvikam smṛtam:** ‘That charity is considered sattvic’—concludes that such an act of giving is pure and of the mode of goodness.

In essence, this verse teaches that the highest form of charity is performed as a selfless act, without any desire for personal gain, recognition, or gratitude. It is done out of a sense of duty and moral obligation, at an appropriate time and place, and to someone who truly needs it and is capable of utilizing it wisely. Such giving is aligned with the sattvic quality, which is characterized by purity, harmony, and balance, and is

conducive to spiritual growth.

Four types of indebtedness one owes namely that of Rushi, ancestors, Society, and Gods. These are applicable to every human being. Giving away wealth is not the only dana. Giving time or knowledge also falls in the category of charity. Among them, the sharing of knowledge is considered to be a superior austerity.

**गुरुंनी दिला ज्ञान रूपी वसा
आम्ही चालू हा पुढे वारसा**

“The guru has given us the legacy of knowledge, we shall carry this forward as our heritage.”

The knowledge imparted by a guru (teacher) is a valuable legacy that should be carried forward and passed on to future generations. It's a commitment to continue the tradition of learning and wisdom, acknowledging the importance of the teachings received and the responsibility to preserve and share this knowledge. It's a tribute to the lasting impact of a guru's guidance on an individual's life and the broader community.

True charity flows silently; when one hand gives, the other remains unaware. This form of giving, pure and discreet, is known as Sattvic Charity.

The following couplet is a conversation between two great poets of the medieval era, Tulsidas and Rahim. Tulsidas, noticing Rahim's humility while giving alms, composed this couplet.

**ऐसी देनी देन जू कित सीखो हो सैन।
ज्यों ज्यों कर ऊच्यो करो त्यों त्यों नीचे नैन॥**

“Such a way of giving you have adopted, where did you learn it, O noble one? As your hands go higher (in giving), your eyes look down.”

Rahim would give with his hands raised, but his eyes would be cast down. Tulsidas inquired about this unique way of giving, suggesting that as Rahim's hands rose to give, his gaze lowered, indicating modesty and humility. Rahim responded with another couplet, which goes:

**देनहार कोई और है भेजत जो दिन रैन।
लोग भरम हम पे करै तासौ नीचे नैन॥**

“The Giver is someone else, giving day and night. The world has a misconception that I am the giver, hence my eyes are low.”

Rahim's reply emphasizes that the true giver is God, and he is merely a medium. He lowers his gaze because he feels that taking credit for God's work is misleading. This exchange highlights the concept of selfless giving where the act of giving is done without any pride or sense of ego, acknowledging that everything ultimately comes from a higher power. It's a beautiful portrayal of the humility and grace that should accompany acts of generosity.

The essence of charity is revealed through its execution. When an offering is adorned with Kumkum tilak before being given, the gesture transcends mere material exchange, imbuing the act with auspiciousness and sattvic purity.

Taittiriya Upanishad outlines the principles of giving as listed below:

- **śraddhayā deyam:** Give with faith and reverence. Giving should be done with a sense of devotion and trust, as it reflects a deep respect for the act itself and the recipient.
- **aśraddhayā adeyam:** Do not give without faith. Giving without faith or sincerity is discouraged, as it lacks the spiritual and emotional quality that imbues the act with meaning.
- **śriyā deyam:** Give according to your means. One should give generously within their capacity, reflecting their prosperity and gratitude for their wealth.
- **bhiyā deyam:** Give with fear. This implies a sense of awe and recognition of the divine or the moral order, acknowledging that what we possess is not entirely ours and must be shared.
- **hriyā deyam:** Give with modesty. When giving, one should do so humbly, without arrogance or the desire for recognition.
- **saṁvidā deyam:** Give with empathy. The act of giving should be accompanied by compassion and understanding of the recipient's circumstances.

These principles emphasize that giving is not just a physical act but a spiritual and moral one. It should be performed with the right attitude and intention, making it a meaningful and transformative experience both for the giver and the receiver.

17.21

yattu pratyupakārārthaṁ(m), phalamuddiśya vā punaḥ, dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṁ(n), taddānaṁ(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.

The verse describes the nature of charity performed with selfish motives is called Rajasik charity. Rajasik charity, while still a charitable act, is not considered as pure as Sattvik charity due to the underlying motives of the giver.

- **Yattu:** 'But'—this word contrasts the nature of this charity with the previously described sattvic charity.
- **Pratyupakārārthaṁ:** 'For the sake of getting some return'—it indicates that the giver expects some favor or benefit in return for the charity.
- **Phalamuddiśya:** 'Desiring a result'—the giver has a specific outcome or reward in mind that they wish to achieve through the act of giving.
- **Vā punaḥ:** 'Or again'—suggests that there might be multiple motives behind the charity.

- **Dīyate ca parikliṣṭam:** 'Is given grudgingly'—the charity is given reluctantly or with a sense of discomfort.
- **Taddānaṁ rājasam smṛtam:** 'That charity is considered Rajasic'—such giving is categorized under the mode of passion due to the selfish intentions behind it.

In essence, this verse teaches that when charity is performed with the hope of receiving something in return, with the aim of gaining material benefits or given reluctantly, it is influenced by Rajas, the mode of passion. Such charity is not pure because it is tainted by personal desires and lacks the selflessness that characterizes sattvic charity. It is considered less spiritually beneficial because it reinforces attachment and ego rather than promoting detachment and purity of heart

17.22

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

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

The verse describes the nature of charity that is considered to be influenced by the mode of ignorance, Tamas.

- **Adeśakāle:** 'At an inappropriate place and time'—this indicates that the charity is given without consideration for the suitability of the location or the timing.
- **Yaddānam apātrebhyaś ca dīyate:** 'Charity given to unworthy persons'—it suggests that the recipients are not deserving of the charity, either because they do not need it or are not virtuous.
- **Asatkṛtam avajñātam:** 'Without proper respect or with contempt'—the giver lacks respect for the act of giving or shows disdain towards the recipients.
- **Tattāmasam udāhṛtam:** 'That is declared to be Tamasic'—such actions are characterized by darkness, ignorance, and negativity.

In essence, this verse teaches that charity should not just be about the act of giving, but also about the consciousness behind it. When charity is performed without respect, at an unsuitable place or time, and to those who are not in true need or are of questionable character, it is considered Tamasic. Such actions are driven by ignorance and do not contribute to spiritual growth or societal well-being.

The question arises: can anyone truly adhere to all the rules outlined for charity? Any potential discrepancies can be resolved by simply chanting the mantra "ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय" twelve times. This invocation of Bhagavān's name completes any incomplete acts of charity. Sri Bhagavān provides the exact method in the subsequent verse.

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.

The Bhagavadgītā elucidates the threefold designation of the Supreme Absolute Truth, known as **Brahman**, with the sacred syllables 'Om Tat Sat'. This profound declaration signifies the essence of the ultimate reality and is considered the foundation of all spiritual activities. It is recommended that any endeavor, whether mundane or spiritual, be commenced with the invocation of Sri Bhagavān's name, encapsulated by these divine syllables. By doing so, one sanctifies the act, aligning it with the highest spiritual truth. The completion of such tasks should also be dedicated to Sri Bhagavān, reaffirming the surrender of all actions to the divine will and the cycle of cosmic order.

- **Om:** This sacred syllable is considered the sound of the universe and represents the Supreme Absolute Truth. It is the primordial sound from which all other sounds and creations emerge.
- **Tat Sat iti:** 'Tat' means 'that', and 'Sat' means 'truth'. Together with 'Om', these words signify the ultimate reality or the essence of existence.
- **Nirdesho:** 'Indication' or 'designation'—these terms are used to describe the Supreme.
- **Brahmanas trividhaḥ:** 'Threefold representation of Brahman'—it refers to the three aspects of the Supreme Truth represented by 'Om Tat Sat'.
- **Smṛtaḥ:** 'Have been declared'—this indicates that these representations are recognized and established in the scriptures.
- **Brahmanas tena:** 'By them, the Brahmanas'—suggests that the Brahmanas, or the priestly class, were created from these representations.
- **Vedas cha:** 'And the Vedas'—the ancient scriptures that contain spiritual knowledge and truths.
- **Yajnas cha:** 'And the sacrifices'—refers to the ritualistic offerings and practices performed to honor the divine.
- **Vihitāḥ:** 'Have originated' or 'have been prescribed'.
- **Purā:** 'Since ancient times'—indicating that this concept is timeless and has been part of spiritual practice since the beginning.

In essence, this verse encapsulates the profound concept that the entire creation, including the Vedas and the sacrificial rituals, originated from the sacred syllable 'Om Tat Sat', which symbolizes the ultimate reality, Brahman. These syllables are used during spiritual practices to invoke the presence of the divine

and to sanctify the rituals and scriptures. They are considered to be the essence of all Vedic mantras and are thought to contain the entire cosmic vibration within them.

17.24

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

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

The verse emphasizes the importance of the sacred syllable 'Om' in the commencement of rituals and practices.

- **Tasmād:** 'Therefore'—this word connects the current verse to the previous discussions about the significance of 'Om Tat Sat'.
- **Om ity udāhṛtya:** 'Uttering Om'—the sacred syllable 'Om' is invoked at the beginning of spiritual practices.
- **Yajñadānatapaḥkriyāḥ:** 'Acts of sacrifice, charity, and austerity'—these are the three fundamental spiritual practices in Hinduism.
- **Pravartante:** 'Commence' or 'begin'—it indicates the start of these practices.
- **Vidhānuktāḥ:** 'Prescribed by the scriptures'—the practices are performed according to the guidelines set forth in the Vedas.
- **Satataṃ:** 'Always'—this signifies the consistent practice of beginning rituals with 'Om'.
- **Brahmavādinām:** 'Those who expound the Vedas'—refers to the scholars and practitioners who adhere to the Vedic teachings.

In essence, this verse teaches that the sacred syllable 'Om' is traditionally invoked at the beginning of any Vedic ritual, including sacrifices, acts of charity, and the practice of austerities. This invocation is a way to sanctify the act and align it with the highest spiritual truth. The continuous repetition of 'Om' by those who follow the Vedic path underscores its importance as a foundational aspect of spiritual discipline.

Saint Dnyaneshwar Maharaj says:

जे ओंकारने आरंभिले
तत् शब्दाने ब्रह्मार्पिले
म्हणून कर्म ते झाले
ब्रह्मस्वरूप

Actions initiated with 'Om', the sacred sound that embodies the ultimate reality, are inherently imbued with a higher purpose. Such actions, including **Yagnya** (sacrifice), **Dana** (charity), and **Tapas** (austerity), transcend their material form and embody the nature of **Brahman**, the Supreme Consciousness.

By consecrating these actions with the utterance of 'Tat', which denotes the Supreme Brahman, they are purified and dedicated to the divine. This dedication is an acknowledgment that the true doer is the Supreme Being, and we are merely instruments in the divine play.

To further relinquish the ego and the sense of personal doership, these acts are offered to 'Sat', the eternal truth. This surrender liberates one from the bonds of the action, ensuring that the act remains a selfless service aligned with the divine will.

17.25

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

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

The verse highlights the selfless nature of spiritual practices performed by those who desire liberation.

- **Tad ity anabhisandhāya:** 'Uttering 'Tat' without aiming'—'Tat' refers to the Supreme Reality or Brahman, and 'anabhisandhāya' means without any intention or desire for personal gain.
- **Phalaṃ:** 'Fruits'—this refers to the results or rewards that one might expect from performing these actions.
- **Yajñatapaḥkriyāḥ:** 'Acts of sacrifice and austerity'—these are spiritual practices that are meant to purify the practitioner and bring them closer to the divine.
- **Dānakriyāś ca vividhāḥ:** 'And various acts of charity'—refers to the giving of alms or support to those in need.
- **Kriyante:** 'Are performed'—indicating the action of carrying out these practices.
- **Mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ:** 'By those who desire liberation'—these are individuals who seek moksha or release from the cycle of birth and death.

In essence, this verse teaches that true spiritual practices are those performed without any selfish motives. The practitioners who desire liberation engage in sacrifices, austerities, and acts of charity without any attachment to the outcomes. They perform these actions as an offering to the Supreme, signified by the utterance of 'Tat', which represents the ultimate truth. Such selfless actions are considered purer and more spiritually elevating because they are free from the desire for personal benefits.

17.26

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

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

The verse discusses the use of the word 'Sat' in the context of actions and intentions.

- **Sadbhāve sādhubhāve cha:** In goodness and also in intention of truth. This refers to the mode of goodness (sattva guna), which is characterized by qualities such as purity, knowledge, and harmony. Here, it implies performing actions with virtuous intentions and in a state of purity and righteousness.
- **Sadyetatprayujyate:** It is called 'sat' or goodness. This line emphasizes the significance of actions performed in the mode of goodness. Such actions are considered noble and righteous because they promote harmony, welfare, and spiritual growth.
- **Prashaste karmaṇi tathā:** In actions that are laudable. This refers to actions that are praiseworthy, virtuous, and conducive to spiritual evolution. It suggests engaging in activities that are morally upright, beneficial to oneself and others, and in alignment with spiritual principles.
- **Satchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate:** O Arjuna, the word 'sat' is used. Sri Bhagavān addresses Arjuna, emphasizing the importance of the term "sat" or goodness. It highlights the significance of recognizing and understanding the virtue and righteousness inherent in actions performed in the mode of goodness.

Overall, this verse underscores the importance of performing actions with a virtuous mindset and in accordance with moral and spiritual principles. Actions performed in goodness, with righteous intentions, and in alignment with dharma (duty/righteousness), are considered noble and praiseworthy. Sri Bhagavān encourages Arjuna to engage in such actions, which ultimately lead to spiritual growth, inner peace, and harmony with the divine.

17.27

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

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

The verse explains the significance of the word 'Sat' in relation to actions performed for a higher purpose.

Yajñe tapasi dāne cha: In sacrifice, penance, and charity. Here, Sri Bhagavān mentions three important acts of spiritual practice:

1. **ajña:** Sacrifice or ritualistic offering. Yajña encompasses various forms of religious ceremonies and rituals performed with devotion and a spirit of selflessness. It involves offerings made to the divine, often accompanied by chants and prayers, with the intention of fostering harmony and spiritual growth.

2. **Tapas:** Penance or austerity. Tapas refers to voluntary acts of self-discipline and self-control undertaken for spiritual purification and growth. It involves practices such as fasting, meditation, and self-denial, aimed at overcoming desires, purifying the mind, and realizing higher truths.
3. **Dāna:** Charity or giving. Dāna involves the act of giving freely and selflessly to others, without expecting anything in return. It includes donating wealth, food, clothing, or any other resources to those in need, with the intention of alleviating suffering and promoting welfare.

Sthitiḥ saditi chocchyate: The state of being established in these practices is called 'sat' or goodness. This line emphasizes that being steadfast in the performance of these acts of sacrifice, penance, and charity leads to the attainment of the mode of goodness (sattva guna). It suggests that when one consistently engages in these spiritual practices with sincerity and dedication, it results in a state of inner purity, harmony, and spiritual elevation.

Karma chaiva tad arthiyam sadityevābhidhiyate: Even action for the sake of these is called 'sat' or goodness. This part of the verse emphasizes that performing actions with the intention of fulfilling these spiritual practices—sacrifice, penance, and charity—is also considered to be in the mode of goodness. It suggests that actions undertaken with the purpose of promoting spiritual growth, helping others, and serving the divine contribute to the cultivation of goodness in oneself and in society.

In essence, this verse underscores the importance of engaging in acts of sacrifice, penance, and charity as means to cultivate the mode of goodness and attain spiritual elevation. It highlights the transformative power of these spiritual practices in purifying the mind, uplifting consciousness, and fostering inner harmony and well-being.

Sri Bhagavān advises Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gītā that he should perform his duty as a warrior without attachment to success or failure. This concept is known as **Karma Yoga**, the yoga of selfless action. By dedicating all actions to the Supreme (referred to as 'Tat' or 'That'), and considering them as offerings to the divine, even actions like war can be purified and become 'Sat' (truth or reality). This way, Arjuna can fight in the war without being bound by the karma associated with the actions of warfare.

17.28

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

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

The verse addresses the futility of actions performed without faith.

Aśhraddhayā hutam dattam tapas taptam kṛtam cha yat: Whatever is offered in sacrifice, given in charity, practiced as penance, or performed as a religious duty...

This part of the verse lists various religious actions or spiritual practices:

1. **Hutam:** Offered in sacrifice. This refers to offerings made in religious rituals or yajñas. These offerings could include grains, ghee, fruits, or other items that are ceremonially presented to deities.

2. **Dattam**: Given in charity. This refers to acts of giving, such as donating money, food, or other resources to those in need, without expecting anything in return.
3. **Tapas taptam**: Practiced as penance. Tapas refers to voluntary acts of self-discipline and austerity undertaken for spiritual growth. This could include practices such as fasting, meditation, or self-denial.
4. **Kritam cha**: Performed as a religious duty. This encompasses various religious duties or rituals prescribed in scriptures, such as daily prayers, rituals for ancestors, or observances of religious festivals.

Asadityuchyate pārtha: O Arjuna, it is called asat.

Na cha tatpretya no iha: Neither here nor hereafter does it lead to good results.

In this part of the verse, Sri Bhagavān explains the consequence of performing these religious actions without faith or sincerity. When these actions are undertaken without genuine belief or conviction, they are termed 'asat' or not good. Such actions, devoid of faith, lack the spiritual potency to yield positive results, neither in this world nor in the hereafter.

Overall, this verse underscores the importance of faith, sincerity, and devotion in spiritual practices. It emphasizes that religious actions performed with genuine belief and sincerity lead to positive outcomes, while those performed without faith are devoid of spiritual merit and fail to produce beneficial results, both in this life and in the afterlife.

The session reached its reverent conclusion by expressing homage to the esteemed Gurus, venerating the divine Deities, and specifically honoring the wisdom of **Sant Dnyaneshwar Mauli**. His profound teachings, encapsulated in the timeless **Dnyaneshwari**, illuminate the path of knowledge and devotion, guiding seekers towards the realization of the ultimate truth.

Question & Answer session

Bhavana Didi ji

Q: Can you elaborate on the classification of terrorists in the context of this chapter?

A: Terrorist organizations are often well-funded and operate based on a particular set of beliefs. In the context of the Bhagavad Gita's teachings, their actions could be metaphorically described as **Tamsik Yagnya**. This term refers to actions performed with harmful intentions, driven by the quality of **Tamas** (ignorance or darkness). Such actions, characterized by ulterior motives that aim to cause harm to others, stand in stark contrast to the **Sattvik Yagnya**, which is conducted with purity, selflessness, and for the greater good. It is essential to recognize and understand these Tamsik activities, as they may have significant implications for society and individuals alike.

Rita Didi ji

Q: If something good happens in our family, we thank Bhagavān by offering a joint prayer, simply expressing our gratitude to God. Does this fall under Satvik activity?

A: Yes, indeed. The essence of Bhagavadgītā teaches us to transform our lives into expressions of gratitude. Therefore, expressing gratitude to Sri Bhagavān for any positive occurrences in the family, such as passing an exam, constitutes a Satvik activity. However, if prayers are offered before the examination with the sole intention of achieving favorable results, then it becomes a Rajsik activity. While there is nothing inherently wrong with Rajsik activities, one should strive to embody the Satvik path whenever possible.

Dolly Manto Ji

Q: How can we get the self-realization?

A: Sri Bhagavān has shown us a variety of paths for achieving self-realization that includes Yog. Ashtang Yog as given by Patanjali Muni provides the 8 limb process of reaching the Samādhi which is the self-realization.

The eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga as outlined by Patanjali are:

1. **Yama** : Ethical standards and sense of integrity, focusing on our behavior and how we conduct ourselves in life. Yamas are universal practices that relate best to what we know as the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
2. **Niyama** : Self-discipline and spiritual observances. Regularly attending temple or church services, saying grace before meals, developing your own personal meditation practices, or making a habit of taking contemplative walks alone are all examples of niyamas in practice.
3. **Asana** : Posture practice, which we practice in yoga classes. Patanjali considers asana to be a steady and comfortable posture.
4. **Pranayama** : Breath control, which includes techniques designed to gain mastery over the respiratory process while recognizing the connection between the breath, the mind, and the emotions.
5. **Pratyahara** : Sensory transcendence. It is about withdrawing from external phenomena and outside stimuli so you can draw attention internally.
6. **Dharana** : Concentration. By teaching the mind to focus on one point or image, dharana keeps the attention within.
7. **Dhyana** : Meditation or contemplation. It is the uninterrupted flow of concentration. Dhyana is the stage when the mind has been quieted, and in the silence, it produces few or no thoughts at all.
8. **Samadhi** : A state of ecstasy. At this stage, the meditator merges with their point of focus and transcends the Self altogether. The meditator comes to realize a profound connection to the Divine, an interconnectedness with all living things.

Our desire for self-realization should grow stronger.

Saint Dnyaneshwar Maharaj says:

देवाचिये द्वारी उभा क्षणभरी
तेणे मुक्ती चारी साधियेल्या

We should stand before Bhagavān and earnestly seek His grace, even for a fraction of a moment. This alone can pave the path to our liberation, not to mention self-realization! Just as water from the sacred Ganga, when collected in a pot, becomes our personal possession, similarly, although Sri Bhagavān is all-pervading and exists in everything, when we seek Him for ourselves, He becomes a part of us and embodies our Atma-swaroop. We must cultivate a strong desire for self-realization, ensuring that all our actions are directed towards this goal. This will lead to daily interactions with a divine purpose. It's essential to keep the mind anchored in the present moment, resisting the urge to dwell on the past or future.

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



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Thank you-For reading the summary

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

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar - Creative Writing Department

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