

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/tSIT9xEgOc0>

Different Types of Faith and Their Influence on Sacrifice, Austerity, and Charity

The **17th Chapter** of the Bhagavad-Gītā is **Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga Yoga — The Yoga of the Classification of the Threefold Faith.**

The session began with the auspicious lighting of the lamp, followed by melodious prayers to Mā Sarasvatī and respectful salutations to the Guru Paramparā, starting from Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and culminating in the blessings of our revered Pujya Guruji.

By the merit of our good deeds (puṇya karma) in this and previous lives, we have been granted the precious opportunity to learn the Bhagavad-Gītā, to teach it, to spread its timeless wisdom, and to embody its teachings in our daily lives.

Bhagavān declares in Chapter 18:

य इमं परमं गुह्यं मद-भक्तेष्व् अभिधास्यति ।
भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा माम् एवैष्यत्य् असंशयः ॥ ६८ ॥

न च तस्मान् मनुष्येषु कश्चिन् मे प्रिय-कृत्तमः ।
भविता न च मे तस्माद् अन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि ॥ ६९ ॥

“Whoever learns this supreme secret from Me, and who, having made their devotion to Me supreme, will surely come to Me without doubt. There is no one among men dearer to Me, nor will there ever be another dearer than that person.”

Thus, by embarking on the path of the Bhagavad-Gītā and sincerely following its teachings, we may consider ourselves among Bhagavān’s most beloved devotees.

Chapter 17, as the title suggests, discusses Śraddhā, faith or belief, and the threefold classification of faith that one may possess.

Bhagavān earlier explains in Chapter 4:

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं तत्-परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।

ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिम् अचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥ ३९ ॥

“The one who has faith and controls the senses attains knowledge; having gained knowledge, he quickly attains supreme peace.”

This verse highlights the indispensable role of faith and self-control in the pursuit of spiritual wisdom and inner tranquility.

To illustrate, a student sitting in a classroom who listens without respect or belief will never truly learn. Likewise, a disciple sitting before a Guru without faith in the Guru’s teachings cannot receive knowledge. To attain true wisdom, one must develop this crucial eligibility, faith. Without faith, true understanding remains out of reach.

For example, if someone refuses to believe in the existence of a country like America, that disbelief does not negate its reality. Similarly, if one doubts the epics like the Mahābhārata or Rāmāyaṇa, their disbelief does not diminish the truths within these sacred narratives.

In the spiritual journey, unwavering faith is the essential starting point; it is the foundation upon which all progress is built.

The Scriptures describe a three-step process for acquiring spiritual knowledge:

- **Śravaṇam (Listening)** - hearing the teachings from a qualified Guru.
- **Mananam (Contemplation)** - reflecting deeply to resolve doubts and grasp meaning.
- **Nididhyāsanam (Meditation/Fixation)** - steadfastly meditating on the knowledge until it becomes fully assimilated and doubt-free.

Śraddhā is also recognized as one of the six treasures (Śaṭsampatti) essential for the seeker of liberation:

- **Śama:** Restraining the restless mind
- **Dama:** Controlling the senses
- **Titikṣā:** Forbearance or endurance
- **Śraddhā:** Deep, unwavering faith or belief
- **Upratiṣṭhā:** The ability to withdraw from worldly attachments
- **Samādhāna:** Concentration and mental focus leading to clarity of thought and action

The Vedas define Śraddhā as faith in the words of the Guru:

“गुरु वेदान्त वाक्येषु विश्वासः श्रद्धा”

“Faith is trust in the Guru’s words and the teachings of Vedānta.”

In the previous session, we learned about the three types of food: Sāttvik, Rājasic, and Tāmasik. Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa proceeds to explain the three types of Yajña (Sacrifice), Tapas (Austerity), and Dāna (Charity) corresponding to these different types of faith.

17.11

**aphalākāṅkṣibhīryajño, vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate,
yaṣṭavyameveti manaḥ(s), samādhāya sa sāttvikaḥ. 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.

Sacrifices, like all actions, are classified into three types according to the nature of the performer:

- Sāttvika Yajña (Virtuous Sacrifice)
- Rājasa Yajña (Passionate Sacrifice)
- Tāmasa Yajña (Ignorant Sacrifice)

In this verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains the nature of the Sāttvika Yajña, the sacrifice performed in the mode of goodness.

Sāttvika Yajña (Virtuous Sacrifice)

This type of sacrifice is performed strictly in accordance with scriptural injunctions (vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate). It is carried out without any expectation of reward or personal gain (**aphalākāṅkṣibhiḥ**). The motivation behind it is a pure sense of duty (yaṣṭavyameva iti), free from pride, ego, or desire for recognition. The mind remains firmly fixed on fulfilling the duty itself (manaḥ samādhāya).

For example, donating 10% of one's income towards the cause of Dhan Shuddhi (purification of wealth) exemplifies a sāttvika sacrifice.

Thus, a sacrifice performed dutifully, in accordance with scriptural ordinances, without any expectation of return or egoistic attachment, is said to be in the mode of goodness (Sāttvika).

17.12

**abhisandhāya tu phalaṁ(n), dambhārthamapi caiva yat,
ijyate bharataśreṣṭha, taṁ(m) yajñaṁ(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.

- **abhisandhāya tu phalam** — Performed with attachment to a specific result or desire for a particular fruit.
- **dambhārtham api ca eva yat** — Done for show or out of pride and conceit.
- **ijyate bharataśreṣṭha** — O Arjuna, best among the Bharatas,
- **taṁ yajñaṁ viddhi rājasam** — That sacrifice is known to be of the nature of passion (rājasam).

A sacrifice performed with the expectation of material gain or done ostentatiously to display pride and vanity is classified as rājasika yajña, the mode of passion.

17.13

**vidhihīnamasṛṣṭānnaṁ(m), mantrahīnamadakṣiṇaṁ,
śraddhāvirahitaṁ(m) yajñaṁ(n), tāmasaṁ(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.

- **vidhihīnaṁ asṛṣṭānnaṁ** — Performed without following the prescribed scriptural rules.
- **mantrahīnaṁ adakṣiṇaṁ** — Lacking the chanting of mantras and the offering of dakṣiṇa

(gifts or remuneration to priests).

- **śraddhāvirahitaṃ** — Completely devoid of faith.
- **yajñaṃ tāmasaṃ paricakṣate** — Such a sacrifice is said to be in the mode of ignorance (tāmasika yajña).

A sacrifice performed in defiance of scriptural injunctions, without distribution of food, without proper chanting of mantras, and without giving dakṣiṇa to the priests, and which is done without faith, is classified as tāmasika yajña, the mode of ignorance.

Any sacred ceremony should be conducted strictly according to the vidhi prescribed in the scriptures, which meticulously outline the proper procedure for a yajña. However, when one performs a yajña according to personal convenience, ignoring essential ordinances such as skipping difficult rites, neglecting to offer food or dakṣiṇa to the priests, or chanting mantras improperly, such a yajña is considered tāmasika.

A simple illustration can be seen in court or registered marriages, where no mantras are chanted. The couple merely signs legal documents and considers themselves married. While legally valid, this practice is not ideal spiritually. Mantras are meant to invoke positivity and sacred energy in a union like marriage.

Chanting of mantras is an integral part of the Vedic tradition, ensuring physical and mental well-being by generating positive vibrations and energy. Performing yajñas without faith or mantra chanting renders them ineffective. A yajña done in this manner, due to its tāmasika nature, will not bring prosperity or happiness to the performer.

Similarly, just as yajñas have guidelines, austerities (tapas) must also follow certain principles. Bhagavān explains three types of penance: **physical (kāya), verbal (vāch), and mental (mānasa).**

17.14

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

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

Austerity (Tapas) is classified into three categories, one of which is bodily austerity (śārīraṃ tapa). Bodily austerity involves purifying and disciplining the body through reverence, self-control, and ethical conduct. It includes:

- **Worship of the Divine, Brahmins (Dvijas or "twice-born"), Gurus, and wise persons (Prājña)** — honoring these noble beings with devotion and respect.
- **Śaucam (Purity)** — maintaining cleanliness and purity of the body.
- **Ārjavam (Straightforwardness)** — being sincere, honest, and straightforward in speech and action.
- **Brahmacarya (Celibacy)** — controlling sensual desires and leading a disciplined, celibate life.
- **Ahimsā (Non-violence)** — practicing non-violence in thought, word, and deed.

The term Dvija means "twice-born." Brahmins receive this title because they undergo the Upanayana (sacred thread ceremony), which symbolizes a spiritual rebirth into a life devoted to learning, compassion, and strict adherence to dharma.

For instance, Duryodhana once addressed Dronacharya as Dvijottama (“the best among the twice-born”), implicitly urging him to abandon the compassionate qualities traditionally associated with Brahmins.

Thus, bodily austerity (śārīraṃ tapa) emphasizes devotion, purity, simplicity, self-restraint, and harmlessness as essential practices for spiritual discipline.

17.15

**anudvegakaram(m) vākyam(m), satyam(m) priyahitam(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.

Vāñmayam Tapa (Austerity of Speech)

Austerity of speech involves speaking words that are truthful (satyam), pleasant (priyam), beneficial (hitam), and free from causing agitation or distress (anudvegakaram). It also includes the disciplined practice of studying and chanting sacred scriptures such as the Vedas and the Bhagavad-Gītā (svādhyāyābhyāsanam).

This form of austerity emphasizes speaking in a way that neither offends nor disturbs the listener. Bhagavān provides clear guidance on how one’s speech should be: it should be honest, kind, and pleasing, avoiding harshness or fault-finding that might alienate others.

The essential qualities of vāñmayam tapa are:

- **Anudvegakaram vākyam** — Speech that does not cause agitation or disturbance.
- **Satyam** — Speech that is true.
- **Priyahitam ca** — Speech that is both pleasant and beneficial.
- **Svādhyāyābhyāsanam** — Regular study, practice, and chanting of scriptures.

When a person speaks, their words should never irritate or repel listeners through rudeness or unnecessary criticism. Thoughtful selection of words before speaking is crucial. While honesty and truthfulness are indispensable, speech should also have a gentle and positive effect on others. Genuine praise should be offered generously when deserved, without resorting to flattery.

Regular engagement in listening, reading, chanting, and participating in sessions such as the Vivechan on the Gītā naturally cultivates pleasantness and discipline in speech, making vāñmayam tapa a consistent habit.

17.16

**manaḥ(ph) prasādaḥ(s) saumyatvam(m), maunamātmavinigrahaḥ,
bhāvasamśuddhiritetat, 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..

Mānasam Tapa (Mental Austerity)

Mental austerity involves cultivating a serene and disciplined mind through:

- **Manah prasādaḥ** — Cheerfulness and calmness.
- **Saumyatvaṃ** — Gentleness and kindness.
- **Maunam** — Silence and focused contemplation.
- **Ātmavinigrahaḥ** — Self-control over thoughts and impulses.
- **Bhāvaśuddhiḥ** — Purity of inner feelings and intentions.

These qualities foster a tranquil and clear mind, enabling one to act with dignity and self-restraint. Some naturally possess a cheerful and pleasant disposition that uplifts others, while others practice silence to strengthen self-control and mental purity.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa also explains that austerities of body, speech, and mind are influenced by the three guṇas (qualities) of nature, sattva, rajas, and tamas, which shape the manner in which these penances are performed.

17.17

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

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

Bhagavān explains that any of the three types of tapas, when performed with **supreme faith (śraddhayā parayā) and free from desire for reward (aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktais)**, is considered sātṭvika.

- **Śraddhayā parayā taptam** — one who performs austerity with the highest faith.
- **Tapastad trividham naraiḥ** — performing the threefold austerity sincerely.
- **Aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktais** — without any expectation of fruits or rewards.

When bodily, verbal, and mental austerities are practiced with utmost sincerity, supreme faith, self-control, and without any attachment to results, such tapas is classified as sātṭvika tapa, the austerity in the mode of goodness.

17.18

**satkāramānapūjārtham(n), tapo dambhena caiva yat,
kriyate tadiha prokṭam(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.

Conversely, when austerities are performed for honor, respect, or show (satkāra-māna-pūjārtham), or with hypocrisy and ostentation (dambhena), they are classified as rājasika.

- **Satkāra-māna-pūjārtham** — done for the sake of seeking honor, respect, and admiration.
- **Tapo dambhena caiva yat** — performed with ostentatious intent.
- **Kriyate calam adhruvam ca** — such actions yield unstable and temporary results.

This type of austerity produces only fleeting, unreliable fruits and is therefore called rājasika tapa, austerity in the mode of passion.

17.19

**mūḍhagrāheṇātmano yat, pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ,
parasyotsādanārthaṁ(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.

When austerities are performed out of foolishness, self-inflicted suffering, or with the harmful intention to injure others (parasyotsādanārthaṁ), they fall under the category of tāmasika tapas, the austerity of ignorance.

Imagine someone punishing their own body through extreme fasting, harsh physical trials, or even acts of anger aimed at others, all the while convinced that this is a noble spiritual practice. This is the kind of misguided austerity Bhagavān describes as **mūḍhagrāheṇātmano** — born of ignorance and stubbornness. Such actions, often fueled by pain, confusion, or a desire for sympathy, lack true purpose and only deepen suffering.

Sometimes, in their frustration, these individuals blame others for their troubles and perform austerities meant to harm or destroy. But they fail to realize that the root cause lies in their own past karma, a cycle they must break with wisdom, not anger.

Bhagavān's teaching here is not to endorse or encourage these actions but to clearly categorize the types of austerity so we can recognize what is wholesome and what is not. The power to choose the right path lies with each of us.

This vivid contrast invites us to reflect deeply: Are our spiritual practices rooted in clarity and faith, or clouded by ignorance and harmful intentions? The path we choose shapes our growth.

17.20

**dātavyamiti yaddānaṁ(n), dīyate'nupakāriṇe,
deśe kāle ca pātre ca, taddānaṁ(m) sātṭvikaṁ(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.

Sātṭvika Dāna (Virtuous Donation)

Sātṭvika dāna is the purest form of charity, given with a deep sense of duty (**datavyam iti**), without any expectation of reward or favor (**anupakāriṇe**). It is offered at the right time (kāle), in the right place (deśe), and to the right person (patre).

For example, during a pandemic, donating food, medicines, or other essentials to those affected exemplifies **sātṭvika dāna** — charity given timely, to those truly in need, and without any desire for return. However, it is important to verify the genuineness of the organizations receiving such donations.

Gita Pariwar, for instance, never asks for donations, as solicitation often reflects an expectation that diminishes the virtue of charity. True charity must be done properly with discernment about the right place, right time, and right recipient.

Giving with the attitude that charity is a sacred obligation, rather than a means to gain favor or status, is the hallmark of sātṭvika dāna. Expecting servility or gratitude from the recipient after

donating reveals attachment and contradicts the spirit of pure giving.

In practical terms, donating food packets during a crisis or sending aid to flood victims through trustworthy organizations reflects sātṭvika charity. Likewise, helping destitute individuals, orphans, and those truly in need embodies this selfless giving.

Ultimately, sātṭvika dāna is characterized by the genuine intention to help, free from obligation or expectation, a pure act of kindness and duty.

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.

Rājasika Dāna (Passionate Donation)

Rājasika dāna is characterized by giving with the expectation of receiving something in return (**pratyupakārārthaṃ**), or with the specific aim of gaining a desired result or reward (**phalam uddiśya**). It may also be given unwillingly or with feelings of distress and reluctance (parikliṣṭaṃ).

- **Yattu pratyupakārārthaṃ** — charity given with the hope of some return.
- **Phalam uddiśya** — motivated by the desire for fruits or rewards.
- **Dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṃ** — given grudgingly or with disdain.

Such charity reflects the mode of passion (rājasika) because the giver is driven by ambition, greed, or social prestige rather than genuine generosity. For example, a person may donate money publicly to gain praise or status among relatives, while secretly focused on personal gain.

When charity is offered with feelings of resentment, obligation, or with the expectation of favors in return, it falls under **rājasika dāna** — charity done with attachment and selfish motives.

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.

Tāmasika Dāna (Ignorant Donation)

Tāmasika dāna is charity given at the **wrong time or place (adeśakāle)**, to **undeserving recipients (apātrebhyaḥ)**, **without respect (asatkṛtam)**, and **often with insult or disdain (ajñātaṃ)**.

Charity performed improperly, whether by giving to unworthy people, at inauspicious moments, or with a disrespectful and indifferent attitude, is considered to be in the mode of ignorance (tāmasika).

Bhagavān highlights the need to correct such mistakes in acts of sacrifice, austerity, and charity. Giving charity merely for show, without genuine compassion, or to individuals who misuse it (such as spending on harmful habits like alcohol) reflects tāmasika donation. Charity given with disdain rather

than kindness is equally improper.

For example, Gita Pariwar, dedicated to the sacred knowledge yajña, never solicits donations, as asking for contributions is not considered sātṭvika. The organization is supported by a few committed individuals who bear full responsibility for its functioning.

Just as all auspicious actions have a proper vidhi (method), there is a right time, place, and recipient for charity. Giving donations should be done with reverence, remembering Bhagavān, and observing the correct procedure to ensure the act remains pure and fruitful.

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 verse, Bhagavān explains the profound significance of the mantra "**Om Tat Sat.**"

- **Om:** The primordial sound, the origin of all creation. Every act of sacrifice, charity, and austerity should begin with the utterance of Om to purify and sanctify the action. From the very beginning of creation, the three syllables Om, Tat, and Sat have symbolized the Supreme Absolute Truth. Brahmānas invoke these sacred sounds while chanting Vedic hymns and performing sacrifices. Om is the primordial vibration through which the Vedas, Brahmān, and yajña themselves came into existence. It represents the impersonal, transcendent aspect of Brahmān.
- **Tat:** Meaning "That," it signifies that everything belongs to Bhagavān, the Supreme Reality beyond all forms and limitations.
- **Sat:** Denotes the eternal truth, being, and goodness, the unchanging essence of Bhagavān.

Together, Om Tat Sat encapsulates the essence of the Supreme Truth — the source, the ownership, and the eternal reality behind all existence.

17.24

**tasmādomityudāhṛtya, yajñadānatapaḥ(kh) kriyāḥ,
pravartante vidhānuktāḥ(s), satataṁ(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'.

- **Satatam Brahmāvādinām** — The austere and devoted who constantly recite the Vedas,
- **Pravartante vidhānuktāḥ** — perform their duties strictly according to scriptural injunctions,
- **Yajña-dāna-tapaḥ kriyāḥ** — engaging in sacrifice, charity, and austerity,
- **Tasmād om ity udāhṛtya** — always begin with the sacred utterance of Om.

Om is the auspicious primordial sound, the first vibration that emerged at the dawn of creation. It is the source from which the Gayatri mantra and, subsequently, the entire body of Vedic knowledge arise.

All noble actions by the enlightened and devoted begin with the chanting of Om. Disciples who study the Vedas initiate their spiritual practices, yajña (sacrifice), dāna (charity), and tapa (austerity), by invoking this sacred syllable as the very name of Bhagavān.

Om signifies that all actions are dedicated to the Supreme Brahman. Therefore, acts of sacrifice, charity, and austerity are always commenced by noble souls with the invocation of the divine name Om, seeking to unite with the Supreme Reality.

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.

Tat: Everything belongs to the Divine. When one performs any act, be it **yajña (sacrifice), dāna (charity), or tapa (austerity)**, with the understanding that all belongs to Bhagavān, denoted by the term Tat, and offers it selflessly without desire for personal gain, one follows the path to **liberation (mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ)**.

This verse highlights the essence of Tat: recognizing that all actions are offerings to the Supreme. Those who desire liberation perform their duties with the deep conviction that everything is dedicated to the Paramātmā, expecting nothing in return.

Such selfless dedication purifies the heart and leads steadily toward the ultimate freedom.

17.26

**sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca, sadityetatprayujyate,
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.

This verse reveals the profound meaning of **'SAT'**.

Sat signifies the eternal truth, that which always exists and can never be destroyed. It represents the ultimate reality, the constant existence underlying all.

All acts of yajña (sacrifice), dāna (charity), and tapa (austerity) should be performed with the chanting of Om and the understanding of *Tat*, that everything belongs to Bhagavān. The virtues and merits gained from such sincere actions are eternal and carry forward into future lives.

Thus, Sat symbolizes not only truth and existence but also auspiciousness. It affirms that steadfastness and sincerity in spiritual practice are real and enduring, leading one closer to the Supreme.

17.27

**yajñe tapasi dāne ca, sthitiḥ(s) saditi cocyate,
karma caiva tadarthīyaṁ(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’.

Steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity, and charity is described as “Sat.” Actions performed solely for the sake of Bhagavān are truly termed “Sat.” It also signifies the infinite, eternal nature of the Supreme.

- **Karma caiva tadarthīyaṁ** — actions performed for Bhagavān
- **Sadit yevābhidhīyate** — Bhagavān is indeed called Sat

The word Sat signifies true existence. The supreme reality alone is real and eternal; everything else is Asat (unreal or transient). When actions are done with the conviction that all belongs to Bhagavān, their virtues merge with Him and endure forever.

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.

- **Aśraddhayā hutam dattam** — That which is offered without faith
- **Asad ity ucyate** — is termed asat (worthless, unreal)
- **Na ca tat pretya no iha** — and is of no use here or hereafter.

Any action performed without faith yields results that are asat, transient, and ineffective. Such acts bear no lasting merit and do not benefit the doer, neither in this life nor beyond.

The session concluded with the Pushpika prayer and an uplifting Harinam Sankirtan, followed by a lively Questions and Answers segment.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Vikramji

Question: I feel happy when I do charity and see the other person happy. But I also feel guilty because I believe I should be detached and not get any personal satisfaction, even happiness. Is feeling happy a problem?

Answer: Feeling happy when you give charity is perfectly natural and not a problem at all; it's a good sign. According to the concepts of Sāttvika, Rājasika, and Tāmasika Dāna, pride or arrogance is considered Rājasika, but genuine happiness is Sāttvika. Happiness (ānanda) is our original nature, and it's natural to feel joy when doing something virtuous. This happiness is not about taking something from charity, but rather connecting with your true, joyful self.

Hariharaji

Question: In Verse 14, what does the term Dwij mean? Does it only refer to a Brahmin who has undergone the Upanayana (sacred thread) ceremony, or can it also mean a Sāttvic

person who follows the scriptures, even if not a Brahmin?

Answer: The term Dwij literally means “twice-born.” It traditionally refers exclusively to Brahmins who have undergone the Upanayana ceremony, marking their second birth into spiritual life. It is not used to describe a Sāttvic person who follows scriptures unless they have undergone this ceremony. So, in this context, Dwij specifically denotes the second birth conferred by Upanayana, rather than one’s level of sattvic qualities or study.

Jayarajuji

Question: In our village, we publicly mention the names of donors for our temple and cowshed to encourage others to donate. Is this considered Rājasika Dāna?

Answer: If the donor seeks fame or recognition, it is indeed Rājasika Dāna. However, if the intention behind mentioning names is genuinely to inspire others toward charity, then it is a good action. The virtue gained from such charity might be slightly reduced because of the element of pride or desire for recognition, but the loss varies depending on how much the donor values fame. It could be a small percentage or more.

Question: The Bhagavad Gītā says food cooked and kept for more than four hours is tāmasika and should not be eaten. However, nowadays we use refrigerators that keep food fresh longer. Is it okay to eat refrigerated food stored for over four hours?

Answer: Refrigeration does prevent physical spoilage, but it does not prevent the gradual decline in the food’s sāttvic quality, its subtle energy, and nutritional value diminish over time. The Gītā’s teaching is about this loss of sāttvic essence, not just physical freshness. Eating refrigerated food is not strictly forbidden, but one should be aware that its sāttvic nature is reduced. Ideally, strive for fresh sāttvic food, tolerate rājasika food occasionally, and avoid tāmasika food altogether (which is spoiled or impure).

Urjitji

Question: Why do we start reading the Bhagavad Gītā with Chapter 12?

Answer: Chapter 12 is often chosen as the starting point because it is the shortest and most accessible chapter, which helps build confidence in reading the Gītā. Completing it quickly motivates learners to continue. Additionally, it focuses on ***Bhakti Yoga—the yoga of devotion***, so even if one doesn’t finish the entire text immediately, they have gained the essential foundation of devotion. Many saints and organizations, including Geeta Parivar, recommend this approach as effective for learning and spiritual growth.

KRM Raoji

Question: What is the meaning of Shraddha? Is it the same as faith or concentration?

Answer: Shraddha does not have a direct English equivalent but is often translated as “***unconditional and unwavering faith***” or deep trust. It is more than just concentration; it is a profound, steadfast conviction in the scriptures or a higher power that sustains spiritual practice.

Question: My son is not getting married, so I have started doing dāna (charity) based on advice from some Brahmins. I give through a person who is not fond of money and does japa and tapa on my behalf. Is this a good approach?

Answer: Yes, this is a valid and commendable approach. Donating through a sincere and spiritually inclined person who performs austerities and prayers on your behalf can be very effective and fruitful.

The discourse concluded with a prārthanā (prayer) at the padakamala (lotus feet) of Śrī Hari, followed by the recitation of the **Hanumān Chalisa**.

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



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

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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