

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/L3wtyPG63Ww>

The Threefold Classifications of Faith and Practice: Understanding Material Modes in Religious Activities and Their Transcendence through Om Tat Sat

Chapter 17 of the Srimad Bhagavadgītā is **Shraddhā Traya Vibhāg Yoga - Yoga through Discerning the Three Divisions of Faith.**

The session commenced with deep prajwalan, the customary lighting of lamp, prayers to the Supreme, and salutations to all the Gurus.

**vasudevasutaṁ devaṁ kaṁsacāṇūramardanam
devakī paramānandaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ vande jagadgurum**

An important announcement follows: From **January 20th to February 12th**, Swami Ji's blessings will guide the **Gītā preaching sessions at the Maha Kumbh**. Those interested in joining this divine service are encouraged to register. Kindly invite friends, family, and relatives to participate in these Vivechan Satra sessions in large numbers.

There is also a unique opportunity to engage in seva during this period. The Gītā family is organizing **Maha Prachar** activities at the Maha Kumbh. Volunteers will come together to spread the teachings of the Gītā. Additionally, on **January 24th**, during the **Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj**, a **Geeta Maitri Milan** will be held. This will be a joyful occasion where Swami Ji, Guru Sharananand Ji Maharaj, Ashu Bhaiya, and Sanjay Bhaiya will grace the event, creating a memorable experience for all participants.

The session focuses on **Chapter 17: Shraddhā Traya Vibhāga Yoga - the Yoga of discerning the three divisions of faith.** Let us begin with the invocation:

**sadā śiva samāramabhāṁ śaṅkarācārya madhyamām..
asmadācārya paryantāṁ vande guru paramparām**

In the previous session, the discussion revolved around the **three types of Shraddha (faith): Sāttvik, Rājasik, and Tāmasik**. It was observed that our faith shapes our thoughts, mindset, and goals. Understanding and cultivating the right kind of Shraddha is essential as it governs the direction of our lives. Moving forward, today's discussion highlights the practical aspects of the Bhagavad Gītā, particularly its teachings on food.

The Bhagavad Gītā, a spiritual scripture and essence of the Vedas and Upanishads, offers practical wisdom for daily life. It acknowledges that as human beings, fulfilling basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter is fundamental. Without meeting these necessities, higher spiritual pursuits like understanding Brahman or seeking Moksha become unattainable.

The Gītā classifies food into three categories: Sāttvik, Rājasik, and Tāmasik. Consuming **Sāttvik food leads to purity and upward spiritual progress (Urdhvam Gachchhati Sattvasthā)**. Such food fosters a clear and balanced mind, enabling individuals to live a life of purpose and direction. In contrast, **Rājasik and Tāmasik foods disrupt mental clarity and impede spiritual growth**. The adage “**You are what you eat**” aptly reflects this teaching. The type of food consumed influences not only physical health but also mental disposition.

For instance, the serene and glowing faces of sages seen at the Maha Kumbh reflect their Sāttvik lifestyle. This natural radiance is a result of their inner purity, cultivated through Sāttvik food and disciplined living. Unlike superficial cosmetic enhancements, their glow emanates from their sattva guna.

Thus, the Bhagavad Gītā emphasizes the importance of mindful eating as the foundation for spiritual and practical well-being. In the discourse, we delve into these teachings, beginning with an exploration of the types of food and their impact on our lives.

Let us immerse ourselves in this profound knowledge and strive to incorporate these principles into our daily lives.

17.7

**āhārastvapi sarvasya, trividho bhavati priyaḥ,
yajñastapastathā dānaṃ(n), teṣāṃ(m) bhedamimaṃ(m) śṛṇu. 17.7**

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

In verse 17.7, Śrī Krishna speaks about the nature of food, sacrifices, austerities, and charity, categorizing them into three distinct types—Sāttvik, Rājasik, and Tāmasik. This categorization reflects the inherent qualities of individuals and their preferences, which align with their dominant guna (attribute).

Śrī Krishna begins by explaining that food, which is essential for all beings, is also of three types, corresponding to the three gunas. Sāttvik individuals are naturally drawn to Sāttvik food, which is pure, nourishing, and promotes longevity, strength, and clarity of mind. Rājasik individuals prefer food that is overly spicy, bitter, salty, or pungent, often leading to restlessness and discontent. Tāmasik individuals, on the other hand, gravitate toward stale, tasteless, or impure food that dulls the senses and hampers spiritual growth.

The verse subtly underscores the principle that “you are what you eat.” To cultivate a Sāttvik disposition, one must adopt a Sāttvik diet and lifestyle. This transformation requires conscious effort and adherence to Sāttvik practices, not only in diet but also in actions, thoughts, and habits.

Beyond food, the verse introduces the broader concept of **yajña** (sacrifices), **tapas** (austerities), and **dāna** (charity), which are foundational practices in leading a righteous life. These three—yajña, tapas, and dāna—are indispensable duties, especially for householders. They embody selflessness and discipline, helping individuals elevate their spiritual journey. Bhagavān Krishna emphasizes that these actions, when performed in alignment with Sāttvik principles, lead to purity, harmony, and spiritual upliftment.

The Gītā thus provides a roadmap for becoming a Sāttvik individual. By adopting Sāttvik habits, starting with diet and extending to other aspects of life, one can gradually embody the qualities of sattva guna. These teachings serve as practical guidance for living a balanced and fulfilling life, rooted in spirituality and self-awareness.

17.8

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

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

In verse 17.8, Śrī Krishna expounds upon the characteristics and benefits of Sāttvik food. Such food enhances **āyuh** (longevity), **sattva** (mental clarity and purity), **bala** (strength), **ārogya** (health), and **sukha-prīti** (happiness and contentment).

Bhagavān explains that Sāttvik food is naturally nourishing, pure, and harmonious. It is described as **rasyāḥ** (juicy), **snigdhāḥ** (unctuous), **sthirā** (stable and wholesome), and **hr̥dyā** (pleasing to the heart). Such food supports the body’s vitality and mental equilibrium, creating a sense of inner peace and joy.

Bhagavān highlights the connection between food and one’s qualities. A person’s diet profoundly influences their mind and disposition. Consuming Sāttvik food not only nurtures the body but also cultivates Sāttvik tendencies, such as purity, serenity, and a balanced outlook. Conversely, indulging in Rājasik or Tāmasik food can increase restlessness or inertia, detracting from spiritual progress.

This verse also underscores the subtle science behind breathing and longevity. The Gītā explains that life is measured in breaths, and Sāttvik food aids in regulating and balancing the breath, which, in turn, promotes health and prolongs life. Practices such as pranayama, when coupled with a Sāttvik diet, help align the body and mind for optimal living.

Furthermore, the verse serves as a mirror for self-reflection. By analyzing their dietary preferences, individuals can discern their dominant qualities—whether Sāttvik, Rājasik, or Tāmasik. Those aspiring to cultivate Sāttvik traits must consciously adopt Sāttvik food and habits, thereby transforming their disposition over time.

The teachings emphasize the importance of milk, ghee, and other wholesome dairy products as part of a Sāttvik diet. These traditional foods, consumed during youth, contribute to physical strength and long-term stability, further exemplifying the enduring benefits of a balanced and nourishing diet.

Sāttvik food not only sustains the body but also purifies the heart and mind, fostering spiritual growth and well-being.

17.9

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

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

This verse elaborates on the characteristics of rājasic food and its impact on those who consume it. The word "**kaṭvam**" refers to foods that are excessively bitter, "**amlalavaṇa**" to foods that are overly sour and salty, and "**atyuṣṇa**" to those that are excessively hot. Similarly, "**tīkṣṇa**" denotes sharp foods, "**rūkṣa**" indicates rough or dry foods, and "**vidāhinaḥ**" highlights foods that cause burning sensations.

Such foods are favored by individuals with a predominance of rājasic tendencies. However, Bhagavān emphasizes that these foods bring undesirable consequences. They lead to **duṣkha** (suffering), **śoka** (grief), and **āmaya** (illness). In essence, while these foods may initially please the palate, they ultimately cause harm to the body and mind.

Bhagavān uses this description to highlight the principle of moderation and balance in one's diet. While consuming bitter, sour, salty, or spicy foods is not inherently harmful, their excessive intake is discouraged. Such foods can inflame the digestive system, causing discomfort both during consumption and afterward. Prolonged consumption of rajasic foods fosters restlessness, greed, and heightened desires, contributing to a rajasic state of mind.

The connection between food and the mind is central to this teaching. When one habitually consumes rajasic foods, the mind becomes unsettled and driven by excessive ambition and desire. This, in turn, increases suffering and attachment, further entangling the individual in worldly struggles. Bhagavān underscores the importance of adopting a diet that supports inner harmony and aligns with sattvic principles to foster well-being, both physically and spiritually.

To maintain physical health and cultivate a peaceful mind, it is crucial to avoid excessive consumption of overly stimulating foods. Instead, one should strive to adopt a balanced approach to eating, aligning dietary choices with sattvic principles. By doing so, the individual can move towards inner peace, reduced suffering, and a life of spiritual growth.

17.10

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

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

This verse elaborates on the nature of tamasic food, which is associated with darkness, ignorance, and stagnation. Bhagavān Krishna explains that such food is preferred by people dominated by tamas guna (the quality of inertia and ignorance).

- **Yātayāmaṃ** refers to food that has been cooked and left to stand for more than three hours. After this duration, the food loses its freshness and vitality, making it tamasic in nature.
- **Gatarasaṃ** indicates food that has lost its natural taste and nutritional essence, becoming stale or devoid of life energy (Prāṇa).
- **Pūti** describes food that has started to emit a foul odor due to spoilage or fermentation, often caused by improper storage or excessive aging.
- **Paryuṣitaṃ** refers to food that has been reheated or kept for long durations, such as leftovers. While practical challenges may necessitate consuming such food occasionally, it is considered tamasic as it lacks purity and freshness.
- **Ucchiṣṭaṃ** means food that has been partly eaten by others or leftovers from someone else's plate. Such food is viewed as impure and unhygienic.
- **Amedhyaṃ** refers to food that is unclean or contaminated, either physically or spiritually, including food that has been touched or defiled by animals or handled carelessly.

Tamasic food is not just unhealthy for the body but also impacts the mind and consciousness negatively. Consuming such food leads to lethargy, confusion, and disconnection from higher purposes in life. It brings about mental dullness, promotes unhealthy cravings, and disrupts the balance needed for spiritual growth.

Śrī Krishna emphasizes that food habits have a direct impact on one's nature. By avoiding tamasic foods and adopting satvik alternatives, individuals can cultivate clarity, vitality, and spiritual progress. While modern circumstances such as work, travel, and lifestyle may sometimes necessitate compromises, the importance of striving for purity and balance in food is underscored.

Thus, **the shloka inspires individuals to consciously choose their diet as a reflection of their desired state of mind and spiritual aspirations.** Through gradual efforts, one can adapt to satvik foods and align with higher qualities of life.

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.

This verse describes **the characteristics of a sattvik yajna, an act of sacrifice performed with a pure and selfless attitude.** Śrī Krishna emphasizes that when one performs yajna as a duty, without attachment to the results, and in accordance with the prescribed guidelines of the scriptures, it is considered sattvik.

- **Aphalākāṅkṣibhiḥ yajñāḥ:** A sattvik yajna is performed by those who are free from any desire for personal gain or material rewards. Such individuals engage in the sacrifice purely for the sake of fulfilling their dharma (duty) or for the collective good, without expecting recognition, praise, or tangible benefits in return. Their focus is solely on the act itself, not the outcomes.
- **Vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate:** The yajna is conducted according to the prescribed methods and guidelines found in the scriptures. These guidelines ensure that the act is performed with purity, discipline, and reverence, avoiding unnecessary or harmful practices.
- **Yaṣṭavyameveti manaḥ samādhāya:** The performer approaches the yajna with a resolute mindset, driven by a sense of duty and responsibility. They recognize that it is their role to contribute selflessly, whether through their actions, resources, or time. This mindset reflects

clarity, dedication, and alignment with spiritual principles.

- **Sa sātṭvikāḥ:** Such a yajna, performed without selfish motives, adhering to scriptural injunctions, and undertaken with steadfast resolve, is considered sattvik (pure and virtuous). The one who engages in it is also regarded as a sattvik person, reflecting qualities of purity, selflessness, and spiritual alignment.

The essence of this teaching lies in understanding that true sacrifice is not about achieving personal gains but about contributing to the greater good. Whether it is serving society, performing one's duties, or engaging in spiritual practices, the sattvik approach emphasizes selflessness, discipline, and adherence to dharma.

This shloka encourages individuals to cultivate a sattvik mindset in all their actions, viewing life itself as a yajna. By dedicating one's actions to a higher purpose without attachment to results, one can purify their heart, elevate their consciousness, and progress on the path of spiritual growth.

17.12

**abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ(n), dambhārthamapi caiva yat,
ijyate 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.

In this verse, Śrī Krishna explains the nature of a rajasic yajna and contrasts it with the selfless sattvik yajna. A rajasic yajna is performed with selfish motives and a desire for recognition.

- **Abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ:** A rajasic yajna is driven by the performer's focus on the fruits of their actions. The act of sacrifice is undertaken with a specific goal or reward in mind—be it material wealth, social recognition, power, or any other personal benefit. Such individuals engage in yajna primarily for the results it can bring, not for the sake of duty or devotion.
- **Dambhārthamapi caiva yat:** Another defining feature of rajasic yajna is **dambha**, which refers to arrogance, pretentiousness, or a desire to show off. These sacrifices are often performed as a display of wealth, power, or devotion, with the intent to impress others rather than as a sincere spiritual act. For example, some people may organize grand rituals or charitable events not for the benefit of others or as an offering to the divine but to gain social prestige or to satisfy their ego.
- **Ijyate bharataśreṣṭha:** Śrī Krishna addresses Arjuna as "**Bharataśreṣṭha**" (the best among the Bharatas) to remind him of the importance of understanding the higher principles of selfless action. He emphasizes that sacrifices performed with selfish motives and vanity are not aligned with spiritual growth.
- **Taṃ yajñam viddhi rājasam:** Such yajnas, characterized by attachment to outcomes and a desire for recognition, are classified as rajasic. These actions, though outwardly appearing virtuous, are ultimately tainted by personal desires and lack the purity of sattvik yajnas.

Key Characteristics of Rajasic Yajna

- **1. Motivated by Results:** The performer seeks material or personal rewards.
- **2. Driven by Ego:** Acts are done for self-glorification, often to impress or gain approval from others.
- **3. Superficial Devotion:** While the rituals may outwardly seem grand, the underlying intentions are not aligned with true devotion or selflessness.

Śrī Krishna warns against performing such sacrifices as they strengthen one's attachment to desires and ego, which ultimately hinders spiritual progress. This teaching urges individuals to introspect and align their actions with purity, selflessness, and devotion rather than vanity and selfish motives.

17.13

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

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

In this verse, **Śrī Krishna describes the nature of a Tamasik Yajna**. He says that when a Yajna is performed without following the prescribed rituals (**vidhihīn**), without chanting the mantras (**mantrahīnam**), and without proper faith (**śraddhāvirahitam**), it is considered a Tamasik Yajna. The ritual must be performed with complete adherence to the guidelines laid out in the scriptures. This includes proper distribution of the offerings at the end of the Yajna, such as food grains, to the participants, symbolizing the sharing of the blessings.

A Yajna conducted with half-heartedness, without proper devotion or faith, and under pressure to finish quickly for the sake of convenience, is considered Tamasik. The idea is that the ritual should be performed with sincerity and respect, not merely as a form of show or as a task to be rushed through. Skipping mantras or altering the procedure is against the essence of the Yajna, which aims to establish a connection with the divine.

Furthermore, it is explained that a **Yajna should be done with faith, as a lack of śraddhā (faith) renders the Yajna ineffective**. There are individuals who attend grand events like the Maha Kumbh with the sole purpose of capturing photos or videos for social media, without any genuine spiritual intent. Though this may appear superficial, it is still better than doing nothing at all. At least, they are participating in some form of good work, even if motivated by fame or recognition.

Therefore, **performing a Yajna or any spiritual practice without genuine faith, devotion, and understanding is a Tamasik act**. However, even a Yajna done for fame or recognition is considered better than doing nothing, as it still carries some positive impact. In comparison, a Sattvic Yajna, performed with full devotion, faith, and adherence to the prescribed rituals, is the highest form of worship and brings the most spiritual benefit.

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.

In this verse, Śrī Krishna elaborates on the concept of śārīra tapa (physical penance), which includes practices such as worshiping the divine, honoring the **Dvijās** (Brahmins), gurus, and wise scholars (**Prāgjña**). The verse emphasizes the importance of external and internal purity as an integral part of spiritual discipline.

First, Bhagavān highlights that physical penance involves acts of worship, including reverence for the

deities, Brahmins (**who are considered twice-born due to their upanayan ceremony**), and learned individuals. These scholars, with their wisdom, must be respected by all, as they possess knowledge that guides society. **Dev, dvij, guru, and prāgjña** are all worthy of veneration, as their wisdom and purity lead others toward spiritual growth.

Bhagavān further explains that external purity is as important as internal purity. While some may believe that only internal purity matters—where the mind is free from desires and attachments—it is essential to recognize that external purity also plays a crucial role, especially for those still engaged in worldly desires. True purity arises when both the mind (**antahśuddhi**) and the body (**bahyashuddhi**) are purified. The practice of external cleanliness, such as bathing, is not merely ceremonial; it prepares the mind for deeper spiritual work by fostering clarity and focus.

The mind must be free from negative traits like jealousy, hatred, and attachment, which are obstacles to spiritual progress. In addition, a seeker must practice **rju** (honesty) in their thoughts, speech, and actions. Bhagavān emphasizes that what we think, say, and do should be consistent and transparent. A seeker must avoid deceit and hypocrisy, as these are detrimental to both personal growth and the well-being of others.

In the discussion of **brahmacharya** (celibacy), Bhagavān notes that true celibacy is not just about physical restraint but a mental and spiritual commitment to focusing on the divine. A brahmachari is one who directs their thoughts and energy toward the pursuit of Brahman (the Supreme). True celibacy is natural and arises from a deep inner longing for spiritual connection, not from external imposition.

Non-violence (**ahimsa**) is another key aspect of physical penance. It is not limited to refraining from hurting others physically but extends to speech and thought as well. Using words that harm others or thinking ill of them, even silently, constitutes violence. Real non-violence, therefore, requires us to cultivate kindness and compassion not just in our actions but in our thoughts and speech.

Thus, **this verse encourages us to maintain both physical and mental purity, practice celibacy in the true sense of the term, and embrace non-violence in all aspects of life—body, speech, and mind. These are the practices that lead to true tapa and spiritual growth.**

17.15

**anudvegakaram(m) vākyaṃ(m), satyaṃ(m) priyahitaṃ(ñ) ca yat,
svādhyāyābhyasanaṃ(ñ) caiva, vāñmayaṃ(n) tapa ucyate. 17.15**

Words which cause no annoyance to others and are truthful, agreeable and beneficial, as well as the study of Vedas and other Śāstras and the practice of the chanting of Divine Name— this is known as penance of speech.

In this verse, Śrī Krishna speaks about **vāñmaya tapa** (penance of speech), which involves using words in a manner that is truthful, loving, beneficial, and aligned with one's spiritual practice. The verse emphasizes the power of speech and how it can either uplift or harm others depending on how it is used.

Bhagavān begins by advising that one should never speak words that cause agitation or distress to others. The words should not provoke unnecessary irritation or create discord. Hence, a person should always strive to speak in a way that does not disturb the peace or calm of others. This is a key

element of **anudvegakaram vākyaṃ**—speaking words that do not create anxiety or agitation in others.

Furthermore, Bhagavān stresses the importance of speaking the truth (**satyam**), but in a manner that is also **priyahitam** (loving) and **hitam** (beneficial). While truth is important, it should always be communicated in a way that is gentle, loving, and constructive. Words of truth that are harsh or unkind may be damaging, even if they are factually correct. The ultimate goal of speech is to benefit others, not to hurt or cause them pain. Thus, one must carefully consider the impact of their words on others before speaking.

In addition to careful speech, Bhagavān also refers to **svādhyāyābhyasanam** (self-study and practice), which is another form of penance related to speech. Self-study, especially in the study of sacred texts like the Bhagavad Gītā, Vedas, and other scriptures, is a form of spiritual practice that purifies speech. Reciting these sacred words, whether one memorizes them instantly or takes time to learn them, is beneficial. The more one repeats these teachings, the greater the benefit to both their mind and speech, as it helps cultivate a deeper connection with the divine.

The verse highlights that even if one cannot memorize the verses quickly, the mere act of reciting them repeatedly is valuable. Through consistent practice (**abhyasa**), the speech becomes a tool for spiritual development, enhancing one's understanding and connection with the sacred knowledge. Therefore, engaging in the study of scriptures and incorporating their teachings into daily life is a form of **vāñmaya tapa**, which purifies the mind and speech.

Thus, **Bhagavān teaches that the penance of speech involves speaking truthfully, lovingly, and beneficially, while also engaging in self-study of sacred texts, to purify and elevate the mind and words.** This practice helps the individual grow spiritually, creating a harmonious balance between thought, speech, and action.

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..

In this verse, Śrī Krishna outlines tapas of the mind (**manasika tapa**), which consists of cultivating mental purity, inner calm, and self-discipline. The verse mentions key qualities such as **prasāda** (mental peace), **saumyatva** (gentleness), **mauna** (silence), **ātma-vinigraha** (self-control), and **bhāva-saṃśuddhi** (purification of feelings), all of which together form the mental penance that leads to spiritual growth.

Bhagavān begins by describing **manah prasādah** (mental peace), which is the first aspect of mental penance. For a person engaged in spiritual practice, mental peace is crucial. A peaceful mind is a mind that is free from agitation, restlessness, and negative emotions. This is not easily achieved, as the mind is often influenced by external circumstances and inner desires. However, through dedicated practice, such as the study and application of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā, one can attain a state of inner peace and happiness. Bhagavān emphasizes that true happiness is a sign of spiritual progress—when one's mind is calm and content, it reflects the application of the wisdom imparted in the Gītā.

The second quality described is **saumyatva** (gentleness), which refers to the ability to maintain a calm and serene demeanor, no matter what challenges arise. This gentleness extends not only to others but also to oneself, promoting a peaceful internal environment. **The mind should be gentle and not agitated by external events.**

Mauna (silence) is also mentioned, but not merely in the conventional sense of refraining from speaking. Śrī Krishna elevates the concept of silence to the level of mental discipline. True silence, in this context, is the ability to control the thoughts and the internal dialogue within the mind. While physical silence can be easily practiced, controlling the constant chatter of the mind is far more challenging and is the true **mauna**. By cultivating silence within, one gains mastery over the mind, which is a significant aspect of spiritual discipline.

Another key component of mental penance is **ātma-vinigraha** (self-control). This refers to the ability to control the senses, desires, and impulses. The mind and senses often lead individuals into distractions, attachments, and indulgences. By practicing self-control, one restrains the mind from seeking unnecessary pleasures and develops greater focus on the pursuit of higher spiritual goals.

Finally, Bhagavān speaks of **bhāva-saṁśuddhi** (purification of feelings). This refers to the cleansing of negative emotions and attachments that cloud the heart and mind. By purifying one's emotions, the individual becomes more aligned with divine qualities and is able to act with a sense of compassion, love, and understanding.

Śrī Krishna's teachings on mental penance highlight that true control over the mind is the essence of spiritual growth. A person who practices mental discipline, controls their inner dialogue, and purifies their emotions, becomes capable of experiencing true peace, joy, and fulfillment. Through consistent practice of these qualities, one gradually attains a state of harmony with the self and the universe, leading to spiritual enlightenment.

In essence, **tapas of the mind involves the cultivation of inner peace, self-discipline, mental silence, and emotional purity.** These qualities, when developed, help a person transcend the turbulence of everyday life, allowing them to experience the true nature of the soul. This is the mental penance that Śrī Krishna speaks of in this verse, which forms a vital part of one's spiritual journey.

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.

Śrī Krishna explains the **nature of sāttvika tapasya (austerity in the mode of goodness)**. This form of penance is performed with **parā śraddhā** (supreme faith) by individuals who are free from desires for any fruits of their actions (**aphalākāṅkṣibhiḥ**). Such people are disciplined (**yuktaiḥ**), and their penance is not motivated by selfishness or personal gain.

This tapasya encompasses physical, verbal, and mental disciplines, as described earlier, but it is carried out with selflessness and devotion. It is performed with a pure intention to achieve spiritual growth and align with higher principles rather than seeking worldly recognition or material rewards. Bhagavān emphasizes that only when penance is practiced with unwavering faith and detachment from outcomes does it qualify as sāttvika tapasya. **This form of penance fosters inner purification and leads the practitioner toward self-realization and liberation.**

17.18

**satkāramānapūjārtham(n), tapo dambhena caiva yat,
kriyate tadiha proktaṁ(m), rājasam(ñ) calamadhruvam. 17.18**

The austerity which is performed for the sake of renown, honor or adoration, as well as for any other selfish gain, either in all sincerity or by way of ostentation, and yields an uncertain and momentary fruit, has been spoken of here as Rājasika.

In this verse, Bhagavān describes **rājasika tapasya (penance in the mode of passion)**. This form of austerity is performed with the desire for **satkāra** (honor), **māna** (respect), and **pūjā** (worship) from others. It is carried out with **dambha** (pretentiousness) to showcase one's virtues or deeds for personal gain or societal admiration.

In the modern era, such behavior is often amplified by the desire for public acknowledgment, particularly through social media and other platforms. People may engage in charitable acts, rituals, or penance but primarily for the sake of fame, recognition, or to inflate their ego. Bhagavān warns that such penance is **calam** (unstable) and **adhruvam** (impermanent). While it may bring temporary benefits or applause, it does not lead to lasting spiritual growth or inner contentment.

Bhagavān advises individuals to move beyond such superficial motives and strive for actions rooted in sāttvika qualities, focusing on selflessness and spiritual development.

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.

In this verse, Śrī Krishna elaborates on **tāmasika tapasya (penance in the mode of ignorance)**. This form of penance is characterized by ignorance, causing unnecessary pain to oneself or harm to others. It is undertaken with a stubborn mindset (**mūḍhagrāha**), devoid of wisdom or understanding, and often results in self-inflicted suffering (**ātmano pīḍayā**). Such penance may include extreme practices that harm the body, such as severe austerities performed without proper knowledge or purpose.

Additionally, Bhagavān points out that when penance is performed with malicious intent (**parasyotsādanārtham**), to cause harm, trouble, or destruction to others, it is also categorized as **tāmasika tapasya**. For instance, historical examples like **King Drupada in the Mahabharata**—who performed a yajna with the sole aim of obtaining a son to avenge his rivalry with Dronacharya—illustrate how such acts may fulfill personal desires but lead to moral and spiritual degradation.

Bhagavān cautions against these harmful and ignorant practices. While they may yield short-term gains, they ultimately burden the mind with impurity and further entrench the individual in ignorance. **HE emphasizes that true penance should align with spiritual growth and purification rather than selfish motives or harmful intentions. Thus, tāmasika tapasya should be avoided as it neither benefits the individual nor promotes higher consciousness.**

17.20

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

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

In this verse, Śrī Krishna explains the **nature of sātṭvika dāna (charity in the mode of goodness)**. A gift or donation is considered sātṭvika when it is given with a sense of duty (**dātavyam iti**), without expecting anything in return (**anupakāriṇe**). Such charity is offered at the right place, the right time (**deśe kāle**), and to a deserving recipient (**pātre**). This type of donation is pure, selfless, and aligned with righteousness. It is given to help those in genuine need, such as the poor, the needy, or those working for the greater good, and is an expression of compassion and responsibility.

17.21

**yattu pratyupakārārthaṃ(m), phalamuddiśya vā punaḥ,
dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṃ(n), taddānaṃ(m) rājasikaṃ(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.

Here, Bhagavān describes **rājasika dāna (charity in the mode of passion)**. This type of donation is made with selfish motives (**pratyupakārārthaṃ**), such as expecting a favor in return or seeking some tangible benefit (**phalamuddiśya**). Often, such charity is done reluctantly or with hesitation (**parikliṣṭaṃ**). It may be performed to gain recognition, status, or admiration from others, such as giving large sums of money for public acknowledgment or showcasing wealth through extravagant gifts. While it may appear generous on the surface, the underlying intention lacks purity and selflessness.

17.22

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

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

In this verse, Bhagavān explains **tāmasika dāna (charity in the mode of ignorance)**. Such charity is performed without consideration of time, place, or the worthiness of the recipient (**adeśakāle** and **apātrebhyaḥ**). It is done without respect or regard (**asatkṛtam**), often with disdain or to insult the recipient (**avajñātaṃ**). For example, offering inappropriate gifts, such as items that are harmful or irrelevant to the recipient, or giving aid to undeserving individuals who may misuse it, falls under this category. Additionally, **charity performed with arrogance, insensitivity, or with the intent to humiliate the recipient is considered tāmasika**. Bhagavān advises avoiding such acts, as they neither benefit the giver spiritually nor serve any meaningful purpose.

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, **Śrī Krishna introduces the sacred syllables Om, Tat, and Sat, describing them as the threefold designation of Brahmān, the Supreme Reality that embodies Truth (Satya), Consciousness (Chit), and Bliss (Ananda). These terms signify the eternal and infinite nature of the Divine.**

At the dawn of creation, these appellations were used to establish the sacred order. By invoking these syllables, the **Brāhmaṇas** (seers of wisdom), the **Vedas** (sacred scriptures), and sacrifices (**yajñas**) were created to uphold righteousness. These words serve as divine indicators, connecting the finite to the infinite, and remind practitioners of their spiritual purpose.

- **Om** signifies the all-encompassing sound of the universe and the primal vibration of creation.
- **Tat** denotes selflessness and detachment, emphasizing that all actions should be dedicated to the Supreme.
- **Sat** represents truth, purity, and existence, embodying the ultimate reality that sustains all creation.

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'.

Here, **Śrī Krishna explains the significance of beginning all sacred activities with the invocation of Om.** Acts of sacrifice (**yajña**), charity (**dāna**), and austerity (**tapah**), as prescribed in the scriptures, are always commenced with the utterance of this divine syllable. Noble individuals, well-versed in the Vedic teachings and devoted to Brahman, recognize Om as the eternal name of the Supreme.

By starting these virtuous actions with Om, one invokes divine energy, ensuring that the acts are sanctified and aligned with spiritual principles. It emphasizes the need for mindfulness and devotion in every deed, transforming even mundane tasks into acts of worship. **The use of Om reinforces the connection to the eternal law and guides practitioners to remain focused on the higher purpose of their endeavors.**

17.25

**tadityanabhisandhāya, phalaṁ(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.

In this verse, **Śrī Krishna explains that actions such as sacrifices (yajña), austerities (tapah), and acts of charity (dāna) performed without any desire for personal gain are carried out by those who seek liberation (mokṣa).** The word Tad signifies that these actions are done with the mindset that all belongs to the Supreme (**Paramātmā**).

A person on the path to mokṣa dedicates every action to the Divine, surrendering all results to Brahman. This selfless approach reflects their detachment from material desires and a deep sense of devotion. By renouncing the fruits of their labor, such individuals purify their minds and align themselves with the ultimate goal of liberation.

17.26

**sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca, sadyetadprayujyate,
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.

Here, Śrī Krishna elucidates the significance of the word **Sat**. **The term Sat is used to represent reality, goodness, and auspiciousness.** It is associated with noble and praiseworthy actions. Bhagavān explains to Arjuna that Sat embodies purity and divine vibrations present in all sacred and virtuous deeds.

For example, the term is employed to describe actions like **Satkarma** (righteous deeds) or **Satvichar** (noble thoughts), which reflect goodness and truth. **The word Sat serves as a reminder of the Divine's presence in all positive endeavors and encourages individuals to imbue their actions with sincerity and devotion.**

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'.

In this verse, **Śrī Krishna explains the significance of Sat in actions like sacrifice (yajña), charity (dāna), and penance (tapas).** When these actions are performed with steadfastness, devotion, and sincerity, they are considered Sat—imbued with goodness and truth.

Additionally, any action done with the intent of dedicating it to the Supreme (**Paramātmā**) is termed as Sat. This highlights the importance of performing all deeds with a sense of reverence, devotion, and alignment with the divine will. **Actions guided by Sat purify the mind and elevate the soul.**

17.28

**aśraddhayā hutam(n) dattam(n), tapastaptam(ñ) kṛtam(ñ) ca yat,
asadyucyate 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.

Here, **Śrī Krishna stresses the importance of shraddha (faith) in all spiritual practices.** He states that sacrifices (**yajña**), charity (**dāna**), penance (**tapas**), and any other virtuous deeds, if performed without faith, are considered **asat—devoid of spiritual value**. Such actions neither bear fruit in this world nor in the hereafter.

The term **asat signifies the absence of truth, sincerity, and alignment with divine principles.** Bhagavān underscores that faith is the cornerstone of all spiritual efforts. Without shraddha, even the noblest actions lose their essence and fail to yield any benefit.

The 17th chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, titled Shraddhatraya-Vibhaga Yoga, focuses on the classification of faith and its influence on an individual's actions and nature. The chapter highlights the significance of performing sacrifices (**yajña**), penances (**tapas**), and acts of charity (**dāna**) with **shraddha** (faith) and the alignment of actions with the principles of **Sat** (truth, goodness). **Śrī Krishna elaborates on the importance of intent and sincerity in all spiritual practices, asserting that only actions imbued with faith and dedication to the divine lead to spiritual growth and liberation.**

Geeta Promotion Service at Maha Kumbh 2025

During the auspicious Maha Kumbh from January 20 to February 12, 2025, the revered Swami Ji and the Gītā Pariwar will organize various spiritual initiatives aimed at spreading the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gītā. A dedicated team of volunteers will engage in selfless service, including distributing materials and facilitating registrations.

Special Events:

Geeta Maitri Milan: Scheduled for January 24, 2025, at Prayagraj, fostering unity and spiritual growth among devotees.

Geeta Bhakti Mahotsav: A grand celebration on January 25, 2025, marking the birth anniversary of Pujya Swami Ji.

This unique opportunity offers divine blessings, the presence of saintly figures, and the spiritual merit of a sacred Sangam Snan (holy dip at the confluence). Participants are encouraged to register via the provided link and actively engage in the activities, including turning on their cameras during virtual sessions for a shared experience.

These events provide a platform for selfless service, devotion, and a chance to immerse in the spiritual essence of the Kumbh Mela.

Question and Answer

Sambhu Ji

Question: In the first part, you mentioned vegetarian and non-vegetarian food being categorized as rajasic, tamasic, or sattvic. Could you explain this further?

Answer: Regarding food, sattvic food is loved by the heart (hridya). Non-vegetarian food is considered tamasic, while vegetarian food can fall under sattvic, rajasic, or tamasic depending on preparation. Vinegar, for instance, though vegetarian, is rajasic or tamasic. Non-vegetarian food was consumed in certain circumstances historically, but it's primarily tamasic in nature. While not outright wrong, tamasic food doesn't align with higher spiritual practices.

Akila Ji

Question: Can you provide the explanation in Tamil? Will it be shared in the group?

Answer: Yes, the Tamil team is preparing explanations, and the Tamil PDF should be shared in the group by Thursday. You can refer to it for better understanding.

Anjaneyulu Ji

Question: What are your views regarding sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic nature? In today's world, it's hard to be completely sattvic. How can one maintain a balance, and what proportions do you recommend?

Answer: It depends on one's role and mindset. For someone in academics, inspiring others, at least 70% of their actions should be sattvic. For others, like corporate employees, 60% may suffice. Ultimately, it's a personal choice based on your spiritual goals and practices. Strive for balance in alignment with your aspirations.

Sree Lakshmi Ji

Question: If we miss a level one discourse, can we revisit it?

Answer: Yes, you can revisit any level of discourse through the 'Learn Gita' social media channels or website. Recorded sessions are available, and you can listen to them anytime to deepen your understanding.

Alpa Ji

Question: My son, who is 18, is surrounded by junk food like pizza and burgers. How can I motivate him to eat sattvic food? He rejects sattvic options, preferring instant noodles like Maggi. Is onion and garlic sattvic or tamasic?

Answer: It's challenging in today's environment, but you can try making sattvic food more appealing by preparing tasty, healthy alternatives at home. While onion and garlic are tamasic due to their strong smell and energy, moderation is key. Encourage balance, allowing occasional indulgence while promoting sattvic food as a primary diet.

Sravanthi Ji

Question: I read somewhere that Ganapati wrote the Bhagavad Gita as dictated by Ved Vyasa. Is this true?

Answer: The Bhagavad Gita is part of the Mahabharata, composed by Ved Vyasa and written down by Lord Ganesha. There's a popular story where Ganesha agreed to write as long as Vyasa did not stop dictating, and Vyasa posed complex verses to maintain the pace. This reflects the depth of the scripture.

Ashish Ji

Question: Swami Vivekananda consumed fish as part of his culture in Bengal. Does this make him less spiritual? I've given up mutton and chicken and am working towards giving up fish.

Answer: Cultural practices like consuming fish in Bengal don't diminish Swami Vivekananda's spiritual greatness. Everyone progresses at their own pace.

The session concluded with prayers and chanting Hanuman Chalisa.

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



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

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