

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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Interpreter: GĪTĀVRATĪ JANHAVI JI DEKHANE

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

Om Tat Sat: Anchoring Actions in Divinity

The **Chapter 17** of the *Bhagavadgītā* is titled "**Śraddhātraya Vibhāga Yoga**" – *The Yoga of Discerning the Three Divisions of Faith*.

The second and concluding session on this sacred subject commenced with the auspicious lighting of the traditional lamp, symbolizing the unwavering flame that guides us on the path of Dharma. This flame is not merely physical but spiritual, representing the cleansing of the antaḥkaraṇa (inner instrument) and the illumination of wisdom that dispels the darkness of ignorance.

A quick round of Quiz

Question : What is the name of Chapter 17?

Answer : Shraddha Traya Vibhaga Yog

Question: What are the three Gunas?

Answer : Sattva (mode of goodness), Rajas (mode of passion) and Tamas (mode of ignorance).

Cheers to Ishwari Ji and Akhil Ji for answering the question right.

A quick revision of the previous session

So far, we have discussed, Arjuna question in which he asked about those who worship with faith but without following scriptures.

To that Bhagavān replies that got covered in the last discussion are:

1. **faith arises from one's nature** (sattva, rajas, or tamas):

- **Sattvic faith:** leads to worship of Devatas and pure living.
- **Rajasic faith:** chases power and worldly gains.
- **Tamasic faith:** involves ignorance, fear, or harmful practices.

2. Even **food preferences** follow the three gunas:

- **Sattvic food**: fresh, nourishing, promotes health and happiness.
- **Rajasic food**: overly spicy or stimulating, causes restlessness.
- **Tamasic food**: stale, impure, or harmful.

The type of faith and food reflects a person's inner nature.

A small glimpse of today's session

Today we shall be discussing:

- The three types of Sacrifices (Yajña);
- The three types of Austerities (Tapas);
- The three types of Charity (Dāna) and
- The meaning of Om-Tat-Sat.

Before taking up the remaining shlokas participants were asked the following question:

A quick round of question

Does yajña (sacrifice) only mean chanting mantras and performing havan, or can it be something else too?

Participants Response were:

- Doing one's work with a focused mind.
- Getting up on time,
- going to school happily.
- Fulfilling all our duties sincerely.

Cheers to Ishwari Ji, Ritvik Ji and Sushree Ji for answering the question right.

We shall now begin with the shlokas of today's session.

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.

A quick question

How many of us offer our pranam to our parents?

Palakh Ji, Ram Ji and Virat Ji answered that they offer their pranam to their parents.

Rest of us would begin from now on and offer our pranam to our parents.

Cheers for everyone who attempted to answer the question.

In this verse, Bhagavān describes the nature of a sāttvic yajña, a pure and noble sacrifice.

- It is done as a duty, not for personal benefit.
- It is performed according to scriptural guidelines, not based on personal whims.
- The person has no desire for reward and has a steady, sincere mind focused on doing what is

right.

This verse teaches that any action (not just rituals) becomes sāt̥tvic yajña when it is done:

- Selflessly
- With faith
- As per dharma
- And without expecting anything in return

Such actions purify the heart and lead one closer to Bhagavān.

Examples:

1. When parents care for their children, feeding them, teaching values, working hard, without expecting anything in return, just out of love and responsibility, that is sāt̥tvic yajña.

2. Geeta Parivar has been dedicated to teaching the Bhagavad Gītā for the past 40 years, and has been conducting online classes for the last 5 years. The entire initiative runs smoothly thanks to the selfless service of trainers, technical assistants, group coordinators, and many other devoted volunteers who work tirelessly with a spirit of seva (service) and devotion.

17.12

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

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

In this verse, Bhagavān explains what makes a rājasic yajña (sacrifice in the mode of passion):

- It is done with the intention of getting something in return, such as success, recognition, or material gain.
- It may also be performed for show, to appear religious or to gain social praise.
- Though it may look proper on the outside, the motive is selfish, not spiritual.

Examples:

1. Some of us bow down to our parents every morning with genuine respect, this is an example of sāt̥tvic behavior. But there are others who do the same only when someone is watching, just to show off. That kind of action is not sincere, it is rājasic, done for appearance and praise, not out of love or duty.

The learning would be, when we choose sāt̥tvic living, good automatically follows. We don't need to plan or show off to get results. A person living in sattva gains clarity of mind (buddhi jagriti hoti hai), works efficiently, and uses time wisely.

2. Great personalities like Swami Vivekananda and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had strong sattva guna. That gave them clarity, discipline, and the ability to make full use of their time and energy. In our case, sattva is weak, and rajas and tamas dominate. That's why we often don't realize how our time slips away.

3. For example, we plan to watch the phone or TV for just 5 minutes, but it stretches to 30 minutes or more, without us even noticing. That is the effect of rajo and tamo guna pulling our mind away from

awareness and focus.

Key learning

Therefore, by increasing sattva through sincerity, discipline, and devotion, our life becomes smoother, more efficient, and more purposeful, without the need to chase recognition.

17.13

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

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

In this verse, Bhagavān describes the tāmasic yajña, a sacrifice done in ignorance:

- It ignores proper rules (not done as per dharma or tradition)
- There is no care or sincerity, no proper preparation, food, mantras, or offerings
- Most importantly, it is done without faith (śraddhā)
- It may even be done blindly, superstitiously, or just for the sake of doing something

Such a yajña is meaningless and brings no spiritual benefit. It reflects carelessness, laziness, and ignorance.

Examples:

- **Rushing the Ritual:** Many times, people tell the pandit ji to finish the rituals quickly so they can “get back to work” or just “get it over with.” This shows a lack of respect and faith. The yajña becomes a formality, not a sacred offering.
- **Reluctant Dakṣiṇā:** Some people become miserly while giving dakṣiṇā or do so unwillingly, as if they are being forced. This too makes the act impure because it lacks devotion and gratitude.
- **Mindless Participation:** Attending a puja but talking, using phones, or being mentally elsewhere, without focus or reverence, is also a sign of a tāmasic approach.

In the next three shlokas Bhagavān talks about Tapas and explains that it is not about punishing ourselves, it is about **discipline and with devotion**. In the previous verses, Bhagavān mentioned people who perform extreme austerities. In **verse 17.6**, HE had stated:

“Tān vidyād āsura-niścayān”

– Know such people to be of demoniac determination.

Who are they?

- They perform harsh austerities not prescribed in the scriptures.
- They act out of ego, desire, and stubbornness.
- They torture their body and harm the Paramātmā residing within.

Their actions may look spiritual from the outside, they are not guided by wisdom, love, or compassion. Bhagavān warns that such extreme behavior is unnecessary and actually harmful. These people are not

following dharmic or sattvic living, but are displaying asuric tendencies.

Balanced Tapas: What Bhagavān Really Wants

Instead, HE will now explain the right kind of tapas, a balanced, joyful discipline that helps us grow spiritually while respecting our body and mind. We must remember:

- Our body is a gift from Bhagavān.
- So, we must take care of it, and at the same time, use it for spiritual growth.
- Tapas does not mean suffering, but consistent, joyful effort.

Simple Daily Examples of Tapas:

- Reading the Bhagavad Gītā regularly, even if we're tired or busy.
- Waking up with a smile, ready to accept the day joyfully.
- Doing homework or extra duties happily, instead of complaining.
- Doing what is right, even when it's not easy.

Three Types of Tapas Bhagavān Will also be explaining:

- **Śārīrika** Tapas (Tapas **of the Body**): Respecting elders, keeping the body clean, non-violence, self-control.
- **Vāchika** Tapas (Tapas **of Speech**): Speaking truthfully, kindly, and respectfully. No gossip or harsh words.
- **Mānasika** Tapas (Tapas **of the Mind**): Inner calmness, cheerfulness, discipline of thoughts, and faith.

17.14

**devadvijaguruprājña, pūjanam(m) śaucamārjavam,
brahmacaryamahimsā ca, śārīram(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, Bhagavān explains what makes up physical discipline or body-based austerity (śārīrika tapa). HE does not encourage harming the body, but instead promotes purifying and disciplining it to serve a higher purpose. Following are the key elements of śārīrika tapas:

Pūjanam (Reverence and Respect):

- Offering sincere respect to Bhagavān, teachers, elders, and the wise.
- This humbles the ego and strengthens gratitude.
- We will sincerely follow all the teachings that our respected Gurujans have given us. And also obey their instructions with devotion.
- Our respect and service towards honorable relationships like father, mother, and teachers should not be limited to special days like Father's Day, Mother's Day, or Teacher's Day. These feelings should be reflected in our conduct throughout the year, every single day.

Śaucam (Cleanliness): Maintaining external and internal purity—clean body, clean surroundings, and

clean habits. We should take bath daily and wear clean set of clothes.

Ārjavam (Simplicity/Straightforwardness):

- Living with honesty, integrity, and openness, free from deceit or crookedness.
- We should not carry excessive pride or ego about our actions.
- Whatever good happens is due to God's grace and the teachings of our Gurus. Therefore, we must always remain humble and grateful.

Brahmacarya (Self-control): It doesn't only mean celibacy. In the Bhagavad Gītā and traditional teachings, it means:

- Living with self-discipline
- Staying focused on one's goal (Brahma = the highest purpose).
- Performing duties sincerely without distraction
- Using energy wisely — in thoughts, speech, and actions.

So, when a student studies with full attention, without wasting time or indulging in distractions, that is Brahmacharya - "Watching TV for a long time is not appropriate for me, as it goes against my learning, discipline, and proper use of time. I will use my time wisely and not waste it watching too much TV."

Ahimsā (Non-violence): Avoiding harm to any living being through actions, speech, or thoughts. Practicing non-violence leads to kindness and compassion.

17.15

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

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

In this verse, Bhagavān explains what constitutes tapas (discipline) of speech. The way we speak reveals the state of our mind and has a deep effect on others. True discipline over speech includes:

- **Anudvega-karam** (Non-agitating speech): Speaking in a way that does not disturb or hurt others—calm, gentle, and composed speech.
- **Satyaṃ (Truth)**: Words must be truthful, not false or misleading.
- **Priya-hitam** (Pleasant and beneficial): Truth should be spoken in a way that is kind and helpful, not harsh or egoistic—even if it's correct.
- **Svādhyāyābhyāsanam** (Study of scriptures): Regular recitation and reflection on the Bhagavad Gītā, Vedas, or śāstras is also part of speech-discipline.

Examples:

1. A powerful example of vāñmaya tapas is seen in the life of Swami Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj, who has been giving discourses on the Bhagavad Gītā and Śrīmad Bhāgavatam since the age of 15. Through his truthful, pleasant, and scripture-based speech, countless people have found clarity, peace, and inspiration.
2. The conversation between Bhagavān Krishna and Arjuna lasted just about 45 minutes, yet even after thousands of years, millions continue to find new meaning in those divine words. People say that each time

they read the Gītā, they discover something new, as if Bhagavān is speaking directly to them.

3. In Chapter 16, we had studied about the *Daivī guṇas*—the divine qualities. How many of us still remember them? Unless we keep revisiting and reflecting on these qualities regularly, we tend to forget them. True learning happens when we make it a habit to read, recall, and practice these values in daily life. Just reading once is not enough, *manan* (reflection) and *abhyās* (repetition) are key to making these divine qualities a part of our nature.

4. Calling others by wrong names like gadha, donkey etc. or using abusive language is not acceptable. Such words do not align with the values of respectful and pure speech. They disturb others and also pollute our own mind. In addition, we should avoid using words whose meanings we do not understand. Speaking without understanding can cause confusion or hurt. True discipline of speech means speaking truthfully, kindly, and thoughtfully.

Key learning

- Just like Gītā's words never hurt but uplift, our speech too should be: truthful.
- Our speech should not be deceitful, not harsh and not useless,
- Our speech should be pleasant, useful, inspired by noble thoughts, and not by ego or anger.
- We should speak only what is necessary and helpful.
- If our words can heal, guide, or comfort, then that is true tapas of speech. If they cause hurt or confusion, we must learn to pause.

17.16

**manaḥ(ph) prasādaḥ(s) saumyatvaṁ(m), maunamātmavinigrahaḥ,
bhāvasaṁśuddhirityetat, 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, Bhagavān explains the highest form of discipline, mental austerity. It doesn't involve any outward show. It is a quiet, inner practice that builds inner strength, peace, and clarity. Let's understand the five qualities HE highlights:

- **Manaḥ-prasādaḥ** (Cheerfulness of mind): Keeping a pleasant and calm mind, even when things don't go our way. A happy mind is a sign of spiritual strength.
- **Saumyatvaṁ** (Gentleness): Thinking gently, without harshness or negativity. A gentle nature shows compassion and humility.
- **Maunam** (Silence): Silence here means mental quietness, not reacting unnecessarily, and being able to pause before responding. It also means listening more and speaking less.
- **Ātma-vinigrahaḥ** (Self-control): Controlling the wandering tendencies of the mind, not letting it run behind desires, distractions, or anger.
- **Bhāva-saṁśuddhiḥ** (Purity of intention): Doing everything with a pure heart, without selfishness, jealousy, or pride.

In this verse, Bhagavān Krishna explains mental austerity (mānasika tapas), the strength of a pure and peaceful mind. To live this:

- We should remain calm in all situations, whether success or failure, praise or criticism. *Because everything is temporary and will pass.* A cheerful and steady mind helps us face challenges without breaking down.

- Applying tilak (tika) daily, as a part of personal discipline, reminds us of sacredness and brings purity of thought. It signals that our forehead (mind) is devoted to Bhagavān.
- When we pause before reacting, control harsh thoughts, and stay gentle and silent in conflicts, that is real mental tapas.
- When we do our duties with a pure heart, without pride or selfishness, we are practicing bhāva-samśuddhiḥ, purity of intention.

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 Sātṭvika.

In this verse, Bhagavān describes what makes true tapas (austerity) sātṭvika (pure and spiritually uplifting):

- **Śraddhā parā** (Deep faith): The discipline must be done with whole-hearted devotion and firm belief in the value of spiritual growth, not out of fear or pressure.
- **Aphalākāṅkṣibhiḥ** (Without expecting results): A sātṭvika person does tapas not for name, fame, or reward, but because it is the right thing to do, as an offering to Bhagavān.
- **Yuktaiḥ** (With steadiness and discipline): Tapas must be done with focus, consistency, and inner balance, not just when it's convenient.

If we perform all the three types of tapas of body, speech, and mind, as prescribed by Bhagavān, with deep faith, consistency, and without any desire for reward, then that tapas becomes sātṭvika (pure).

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.

In this verse, Bhagavān describes what makes tapas rājasic, that is, driven by ego and personal gain rather than purity or devotion.

Key Characteristics of Rājasic Tapas:

- **Satkāra-māna-pūjārtham** – Performed for name, fame, and respect. The person wants to appear spiritual or disciplined in front of others, seeking admiration rather than transformation.
- **Dambhena** – Done with show-off or pretense. The intent is not sincerity, but display. Actions may look noble outwardly but lack purity of purpose.
- **Chalam** – It is unstable, done only when people are watching, or when it serves one's image. It lacks inner strength and lasting value.

If we perform the three types of tapas, of body, speech, and mind, with the desire to gain something in return, such as praise, recognition, or rewards, then that tapa becomes rājasika.

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.

If we perform the three types of tapas, of body, speech, and mind, with the intention to harm others, create difficulties, or out of stubbornness and ignorance, then that tapas becomes tāmasika (in the mode of darkness).

Example, during festivals like Ganapati Utsav, the celebration is meant to invoke devotion, purity, and joy. However, sometimes people play loud, unrelated, or vulgar music, causing disturbance to students, elderly, or the sick and even the animals, ignoring the discipline and scriptural intent and focusing only on show or noise.

Even though it may look like devotion on the outside, if it causes pain to others, disturbs the environment, or is done out of ignorance or stubborn pride, then according to the Gītā, such an act falls under tāmasika tapas.

So, such types of asuri happiness as per Bhagavān are tamasi and we should remain away from such practices.

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.

In this verse, Bhagavān begins explaining the three types of charity (dāna), starting with, sātṭvika dāna. Qualities of Sātṭvika Dāna:

- **Dātavyam iti** – It is done with the thought: “I must give. It is my duty.” Not for praise or reward.
- **Anupakāriṇe** – Given to those who cannot repay, expecting nothing in return.
- **Deśe, Kāle, Pātre** – Given at the right time, in the right place, and to a deserving person (pātra).

Desh Humein Deta Hai Sab Kuchh (A beautiful patriotic song often sung in schools and national events)

*Desh humein deta hai sab kuchh, hum bhi to kuchh dena seekhein.
Desh humein deta hai sab kuchh, hum bhi to kuchh dena seekhein.
Desh humein deta hai sab kuchh...*

*Suraj humein roshni deta, vaayu humein jeevan deta,
Phal, phool, anaajon se bharta, ye desh humein poshan deta.
Jeevan naya naya hum bhi isko, har din kuchh dena seekhein.*

Desh humein deta hai sab kuchh, hum bhi to kuchh dena seekhein...

Key learning

- Giving *dāna* (charity or offering) is also a part of our duty (*kartavya*).
- It should not come from pride, thinking, 'I have the capacity, so I gave.' Instead, it should come from humility and responsibility, as something we owe, not just something we choose.
- Just as being a student means it is our duty to study, being a human means it is our duty to give.
- Giving, whether it is knowledge, kindness, time, or support, is a natural responsibility that comes with being human.
- It is not optional; it is part of living a meaningful life.

17.21

**yattu pratyupakārārtham(m), phalamuddiśya vā punaḥ,
dīyate ca parikliṣṭam(n), taddānam(m) rājasam(m) smṛtam. 17.21**

A gift which is bestowed in grudging spirit and with the object of getting a service in return or in the hope of obtaining a reward, is called *Rājasika*.

In this verse, Bhagavān explains the second type of charity: *rājasa dāna*, which is not truly selfless. Its characteristics are:

- **Pratyupakārārtham** – The giver expects some favour or return (money, help, praise, influence).
- **Phalam Uddiśya** – The charity is given with the desire to get some benefit, like name, fame, or good karma.
- **Parikliṣṭam** – Given reluctantly, with an inner feeling of loss, pressure, or displeasure.

Example:

Classmates in school normally share their tiffin without any hesitation, neither from the one sharing nor the one receiving. It reflects purity, love, and friendship. But if there is any hesitation from either side, it shows that the act is not fully joyful or free. Similarly, Bhagavān explains in the *Gītā* that when charity is given with reluctance, hesitation, or expectation of something in return, it is not *sāttvika*, it becomes **rājasic dāna**.

Key learning

True charity should be done with a pure heart, willingly, and without expecting anything back.

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*.

In this final verse on the three types of *dāna* (charity), Bhagavān describes *tāmasika dāna*, the lowest kind of giving. It may seem like an act of help, but it lacks the right spirit and awareness. Characteristics of *Tāmasika Dāna*:

- **Adesha-kale** – Given at an inappropriate time or place, such as during improper circumstances or when it causes harm.
- **Apātrebhyah** – Given to those who are not deserving, or who may misuse what is given.
- **Asatkṛtam, Avajāñtam** – Given without respect, with a sense of insult, or carelessly—just to get rid of the responsibility.

Real-life Examples of Tāmasika Dāna:

- Offering ice cream to a friend who has cold and cough, though it may seem like a kind gesture, it's not appropriate to the person's condition.
- Giving chocolate to someone with tooth pain or cavities, this shows lack of thoughtfulness and may even cause harm.

Such acts, though appearing generous, lack discrimination and can be more hurtful than helpful.

Om, Tat, and Sat

Bhagavān speaks about a very beautiful and meaningful subject. HE introduces us to three sacred words, **Om, Tat, and Sat**, which hold deep spiritual significance. These are not just names, but **guiding principles for all our actions, offerings, and intentions**.

Together, they represent the spirit of devotion, purity, and truth. **We chant Om Tat Sat together, either at the beginning or end of an action, to dedicate it to Bhagavān and to keep it pure and selfless.**

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 introduces three sacred syllables — "**Om, Tat, Sat**." These three names of Bhagavān are mentioned in our scriptures as sacred and eternal. They are chanted before beginning any yajña, dāna (charity), or noble action to invoke purity, dedication, and divine connection. These carry deep spiritual significance and guide the intention behind all noble actions. These three words are:

- **Om** – The universal sound and symbol of the Supreme Brahman. It represents Bhagavān HIMSELF and is often chanted at the beginning of any spiritual activity. It reminds us that everything begins with HIM.
- **Tat** – Meaning “that”, symbolizing that all our actions are dedicated to HIM (not for personal gain). It removes ego and brings purity to the offering.
- **Sat** – Meaning “truth”, “goodness”, or “that which exists”. It refers to noble, eternal values, and indicates that any action aligned with Sat is meaningful and lasting.

17.24

tasmādomityudāhṛtya, yajñadānatapaḥ(kh) kriyāḥ, pravartante vidhānoktāḥ(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'.

After introducing the sacred names Om, Tat, Sat in the previous verse, here Bhagavān explains how they are practically used by sincere seekers and knowers of truth. Key Points:

- **Tasmād Om iti udāhṛtya** – Therefore, all spiritual actions should begin with “Om”, the name of Bhagavān. It sanctifies the act, reminding us that the action is offered to the Divine.
- **Yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-kriyāḥ** – Whether it's a sacrifice, act of charity, or personal discipline, the intention matters as much as the act. Chanting "Om" sets the tone for a pure and focused beginning.
- **Vidhānoktāḥ** – These are actions done as per scriptural injunctions, with proper discipline, not randomly.
- **Satataṁ Brahma-vādinām** – The knowers of Brahman (the seekers of truth) always begin their duties this way, showing it's not a ritual but a deeply mindful and spiritual practice.

Example:

At the beginning of every Gītā chapter, we say 'Om Parameśvarāya Namaḥ' or 'Om Paramātmāne Namaḥ.' This is a way of invoking Bhagavān and dedicating the study to HIM. It reflects the very teaching of this verse that all sacred actions like yajña, dāna, or even study should begin with 'Om', the name of the Divine.

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, Bhagavān explains the significance of the second sacred word— "Tat", which means “That”, referring to the Supreme Reality (Bhagavān).

Key learning

- **“Tat”** = That (Bhagavān) – This word is used to dedicate actions to the Supreme, indicating that we are not the doers and do not seek personal benefit.
- **“Anabhisandhāya phalam”** – These actions are done without desiring the fruits or rewards. The focus is not on outcomes, but on purity of intention.
- **Mokṣa-kāṅkṣibhiḥ** – This is the way of those who are seekers of mokṣa (liberation). They do not perform spiritual practices for wealth, fame, or praise, but for inner freedom.

17.26

**sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca, sadyetaprayujyate,
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.

Words like satguna, satpurush, satkār, and satya all begin with Sat, a term that represents truth, goodness, and the highest order of being. This shows that anything noble, pure, or of lasting value is linked to Sat.

So, when the Gita says "**Om Tat Sat**", it reminds us to dedicate all our actions to the Supreme with the hope that:

- Our actions are rooted in truth (sat)
- They are pure in intention, and
- They continue to remain of the highest standard, in line with Dharma and devotion.

By offering actions to Om Tat Sat, we are essentially praying to Bhagavān:

"May this action I perform be true, pure, and aligned with Your will. May it always remain noble and worthy."

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'.

"Sat" is not just a word, it is a guiding principle. When our thoughts, words, and actions reflect truth, goodness, and purity, they become connected to Bhagavān and are worthy of being called Sat.

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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān gives a powerful and final teaching on the indispensability of faith (śraddhā) in all spiritual and moral acts.

- He emphasizes that **faith (śraddhā)** is essential in all actions, whether it's charity, rituals, or personal discipline.
- Even if an action looks noble or spiritual, if it is done without inner faith or sincerity, it becomes meaningless. Such actions don't bring good results in this world or the next.

This verse teaches us that **intention and inner conviction** matter more than the outward form. **True spiritual acts must come from the heart, not just from habit or pressure.**

Questions & Answers

Shre Ram Ji

Question: What does “Aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktaih” mean in Bhagavad Gita 17.17?

Answer: It means "those who are engaged without expecting any reward." In this verse, Bhagavān describes the nature of sāttvic austerity. Prior to this, He explained austerities performed through the body, speech, and mind. When a person practices these disciplines with pure faith, without any desire for personal gain, and simply treats them as duties, such actions are considered sāttvic, pure and in the mode of goodness.

Krishna Ji

Question: *How to keep the mind focused while doing pāṭha (recitation or reading of scriptures)?*

Answer: The mind naturally tends to wander, and gaining control over it requires regular practice and patience. It takes time to reach a state of steady focus. Until then, whenever one notices the mind drifting, it should be gently brought back to the pāṭha. The this redirection itself is an important part of the practice.

One helpful way to stay focused is to visualize the form of Bhagavān while reciting. This transforms the pāṭha into a loving interaction with Him, rather than a mere reading. When one does this sincerely, the experience becomes more joyful, and the mind is naturally encouraged to remain centered on Him.

Ishwari Ji

Question: What is the meaning of Om Tat Sat?

Answer: The phrase "Om Tat Sat" appears in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 17, Verse 23, and it carries deep spiritual significance. The simple explanation of its meaning and context is:

1. **Om :** Paramātmā, who pervades everything, within and without, is pointed out (nirdeshita) by the sacred syllable 'Om'. It is the sound symbol of the Supreme Reality.
 2. **Tat:** 'Tat' represents the spirit of offering, the bhāvanā that everything we do or possess is not ours, but HIS.
 3. **Sat :** "Sat" refers to the eternal truth, that which truly exists and is indestructible. Though it may appear in various forms across time, such as in the avatāras of Krishna, Rama, and others, its fundamental nature never ceases to be. It is ever-existent, beyond birth and death.
- So, "Om Tat Sat" is the the Sacred Name of Bhagavān in the Śāstra

Question: *Who has made Bhagavān?*

Answer: No one has made Bhagavān. He was, is, and will always be. Bhagavān is eternal — He exists beyond time, without beginning or end. To understand this, consider an example: Suppose we're sitting in a moving train. If another train next to us is moving at the same speed, it feels as if we are not moving at all. But when you look out the other window and see the trees passing by, we realize our train is indeed moving.

In the same way, this entire universe is constantly changing. But we are able to recognize this change only because there is something that never changes, and that unchanging presence is Bhagavān. HE is the constant foundation because of whom everything functions. There is no one who created HIM. **HE is self-existent, timeless, and the cause of all causes.**

**om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyāṁ(m) yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde
śraddhātraya vibhāgayogonāma saptadaśo'dhyāyaḥ.**



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Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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