

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

1/3 (Ślōka 1-10), Sunday, 09 March 2025

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/LAAOqrfvUd4>

## Elevating Consciousness: The Role of Faith, Food, and Austerity in Spiritual Growth

The 17th chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā is known as **Shraddha Traya Vibhaga Yoga**, - "The Yoga of the Division of the Threefold Faith."

The session commenced with a prayer to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the lighting of the traditional lamp, symbolizing the removal of ignorance and the illumination of knowledge.

### Welcoming the Students

I truly appreciate that all of you have chosen to be here today, even though it meant giving up watching the India-New Zealand Champions Trophy final match. That is a great decision! It shows that we are all deeply connected to Bhagavān and His wisdom, which is why we are gathered here to study the Bhagavad Gītā.

Today, we will explore the three Guṇas—Sāttvika, Rājasika, and Tāmasika—which shape our thoughts, actions, and faith. Looking at all of you here, I can already see Sāttvika qualities in you because only those who seek true knowledge and self-improvement would come to a session like this!

Before we begin, let us offer our respects to Bhagavān and our Gurus through prayer:

तदा शिवसमारम्भा  
व्यासशङ्करमध्यमा।  
अस्मदाचार्यपर्यन्तां  
वन्दे गुरु परम्पराम्॥  
वन्दे गुरु परम्पराम्॥  
रत्नाकराधौतपादां  
हिमालयकिरीटिनीम्।  
ब्रह्मराजर्षिरत्नाढ्यां  
वन्दे भारतमातरम्॥

वन्दे भारतमातरम्॥

Jai Śrī Kṛṣṇa!

## Beginning a New Chapter

We are starting Chapter 17, Shraddha Traya Vibhaga Yoga, which discusses the three types of faith (Shraddha).

Some of you have already studied previous chapters in this journey:

- In Level 1, you learned Chapter 12 (Bhakti Yoga) and Chapter 15 (Puruṣottama Yoga).
- In Level 2, you studied Chapter 16 (Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga).

Before diving into today's lesson, let's do a quick revision of what we've learned so far!

## Interactive Session: Revision

**Q:** What was the name of Chapter 16? Raise your hands!

**Arohi Didi:** Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga.

Very good, correct answer!

**Śrī Kṛṣṇa Ji:** *Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga.*

Excellent!

In Chapter 16, we discussed Daivi (divine) and Asuri (demonic) qualities. We also learned about 26 divine qualities that help us progress on the spiritual path.

**Q:** What is the name of Chapter 17?

Since we are starting this chapter, you may not know yet. Anyone wants to try?

**Lavanya Ji:** *Shraddha Traya Vibhaga Yoga.*

Very good!

This chapter is about the three types of Shraddha (faith). But before we explore that, let's answer another fundamental question:

**Q:** How many total Adhyāyas (chapters) are there in the Bhagavad Gītā?

**Shivans Bhayya:** **18!**

Very good!

**Q:** How many Ślokas are there in these 18 chapters?

**Bhuvan Bhayya:** Jai Śrī Kṛṣṇa! **700** Ślokas!

Very good!

So far, we have studied Chapters 12, 15, and 16 and are now moving to Chapter 17. There are 18 chapters in total, which means we are approaching the final chapters of the Bhagavad Gītā.

These last chapters are very practical, meaning that whatever we learn from them can be immediately applied in our lives. They guide us in choosing the right actions, refining our character, and progressing toward self-realization.

## Connection to Chapter 16

In Chapter 16, Śrī Bhagavān explained the Daivi and Asuri qualities and what happens to those who develop Asuri tendencies. Those who cultivate demonic qualities enter "**Adhama Yoni**" (lower births) and

do not attain a human birth in their next life. Such beings remain trapped in ignorance and are unable to take Bhagavān's name.

Śrī Bhagavān concluded Chapter 16 with a strong message:

तस्माच्छास्त्रं(म्) प्रमाणं(न्) ते, कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ।  
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं(ङ्), कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि॥ (16.24)

*"Therefore, the scripture alone is your guide in determining what should be done and what should not be done. Knowing this, you ought to perform only those actions that are ordained by the scriptures."*

This leads to an important question: What if someone has not studied the Śāstras?

## The Question of Faith

Many of us have not yet studied the Vedas, Upanishads, or Puranas. Even within the Bhagavad Gītā, we have only covered a few chapters so far. Like Arjuna, we too might wonder:

"If we do not yet have full knowledge of the scriptures, but we act based on faith, what kind of faith is that?"

This is the very question Arjuna asks in Chapter 17. He wants to know:

- What is the **nature of Shraddha** (faith)?
- Are all types of faith the same?
- How do Sāttvika, Rājasika, and Tāmasika faiths differ?

This chapter answers these questions and helps us evaluate our own faith to ensure that it leads us toward the highest spiritual realization.

## Looking Ahead

With this foundation, we are now ready to dive into Chapter 17 and explore how different types of faith influence our actions, choices, and spiritual progress.

Let's keep our minds open and our hearts engaged as we begin this journey into *Shraddha Traya Vibhaga Yoga*!

Jai Śrī Kṛṣṇa!

## 17.1

**arjuna uvāca**  
**ye śāstravidhimutsṛjya, yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ,**  
**teṣāṃ(n) niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa, sattvamāho rajastamaḥ. 17.1**

Arjuna said: Those, endowed with faith, who worship gods and others, disregarding the injunctions of scriptures, where do they stand, Kṛṣṇa, - in Sattva, Rajas or Tamas.

## The Innocence of Faith - Keshav's Story

Little Keshav had a beautiful morning routine. Every day, he would sit with his parents during their **daily Pooja**. Though his father or mother performed the rituals, Keshav watched every step with great fascination. His father had a **devghar (home shrine)** filled with beautifully adorned **murtis (idols)** of

various Devatās. His Pooja was a ritual of love and devotion:

- He would gently **bathe each murti** in warm water, ensuring they were cleansed with care.
- Then, he would **dry them with a soft cloth** and place them back in their specific positions in the devghar.
- He would apply **Tilak on their foreheads** and offer **fresh flowers** while chanting mantras for each deity.
- Next came the **incense sticks**. As he lit them, fragrant smoke would swirl gracefully, filling the room with divine energy.
- This was followed by a **soulful Aarti**, where the rhythmic movement of the lamp created a mesmerizing atmosphere.
- Finally, he would place **Prasad** before Bhagavān, offering the food with gratitude and reverence.

Keshav loved watching all of this. Though he did not fully understand the meaning of the mantras, his heart was filled with **faith and devotion**.

### The Day Keshav Performed the Pooja

One day, his **father had to travel** to another city for work, and his mother was busy with household duties. Before leaving, his father turned to Keshav and said,

*"Keshav, would you like to perform the Pooja in my absence?"*

Keshav's eyes sparkled with excitement. *"Yes, Baba! I will do it just like you."*

The next morning, Keshav woke up early, took a bath, and went to the devghar. His heart was full of enthusiasm.

He tried to **replicate everything** he had seen his father do:

- He **took out the idols**, but in his eagerness, he **placed them in different spots** than usual.
- He did not know all the mantras his father used to chant, but he remembered one—  
**"Śrī Kṛṣṇam Vande Jagadgurum."**  
So, he kept repeating it with complete sincerity.
- He lit the **incense sticks**, watching the smoke rise beautifully in circles.
- He waved the **Aarti lamp**, singing the only tune he knew.
- Finally, he placed **Prasad** before Bhagavān and folded his hands in prayer.

Keshav was filled with joy. His small heart felt connected to Bhagavān in a way he had never experienced before.

### Did Bhagavān Accept Keshav's Pooja?

When his father returned, Keshav eagerly shared his experience. But suddenly, a thought troubled him. He looked up and asked,

*"Baba, I performed the Pooja, but I did not do it exactly like you. I placed the murtis differently, and I did not know the mantras. Would Bhagavān still accept my Pooja?"*

Now, let me ask **all of you**—what do you think?

Those who believe that **Bhagavān accepted Keshav's Pooja**, fold your hands in *Namaskāra*.

I see all of you in that position! And some of you have even applied **Tilak** on your forehead. That is very

good!

Keshav's question is very important. It is the **same doubt** that Arjuna had in his heart.

### Arjuna's Question - The Faith Without Knowledge

Arjuna was wondering about **the people who worship with faith but without full knowledge of the scriptures**.

- Keshav worshipped Bhagavān **with sincerity** but did not follow the exact scriptural method.
- There are many people who **worship with deep devotion**, but they may not know the precise rituals prescribed in the śāstras.
- **Does Bhagavān accept such prayers?**
- Or does faith need to be **guided by scriptural wisdom?**

This is the question Arjuna is asking in **Bhagavadgītā 17.1**—where do such people stand? Is their faith **Sāttvika (pure), Rājasika (driven by passion), or Tāmasika (in ignorance)?**

Śrī Bhagavān will now answer this question, explaining **the three types of faith and their impact** on spiritual growth.

Are you all ready to discover the answer?

## 17.2

**śrībhagavānuvāca**  
**trividhā bhavati śraddhā, dehinām(m) sā svabhāvajā,**  
**sāttvikī rājasī caiva, tāmasī ceti tām(m) śṛṇu. 17.2**

Śrī Bhagavān said :That untutored innate faith of men is of three kinds- Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika. Hear of it from Me.

### Understanding the Three Types of Śraddhā (Faith)

Śrī Bhagavān explains that faith is determined by one's inborn nature (**Svabhāva**), which is shaped by the **three Guṇas—Sattva (purity), Rajas (passion), and Tamas (ignorance)**. Let's explore these three types of faith with some real-life examples.

#### 1. Sāttvikī Śraddhā - Faith Rooted in Purity and Selflessness

- Worship is done with a pure heart, out of love and gratitude.
- No expectation of personal gain, only devotion and service.
- Helps others, follows Dharma, respects elders.
- Parents or grandparents who do daily pooja without asking for rewards.

#### 2. Rājasī Śraddhā - Faith Driven by Expectation and Self-Interest

- Worship is done, but only with the thought, "*What will I get in return?*"
- Focuses on rewards, success, and personal benefits.
- "If I memorize the Bhagavadgītā, will you give me a video game?"
- "Give me a cycle if I come in the top five!"

Too much Rājasik thinking can trap us in the cycle of desire and disappointment.

#### 3. Tāmasī Śraddhā - Faith Rooted in Ignorance and Laziness

- No effort, no discipline, just laziness and blind beliefs.
- Kumbhakarna, who slept for six months and woke up only to eat all day.
- Watching mobile reels endlessly, promising, "Only 5 minutes," but wasting hours.

## The Role of Past Impressions (Saṁskāras) in Our Faith

Some children are naturally gifted—good singers, sharp learners, or skilled athletes. This is due to **past-life impressions (Saṁskāras)**.

- Swami Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj started teaching Bhagavadgītā at just 15.
- Lata Mangeshkar had a divine voice from childhood.
- Sachin Tendulkar played cricket exceptionally well at a young age.

Now, all of you have joined **Geeta Pariwar** and are learning **Bhagavadgītā**. What does this mean? It is due to **good deeds in your past birth**.

## Key Takeaways

1. **Sāttvikī Śraddhā** – Pure, selfless faith, dedicated to Dharma.
2. **Rājasī Śraddhā** – Faith mixed with self-interest and expectations.
3. **Tāmasī Śraddhā** – Faith that is lazy, ignorant, or misdirected.

Now tell me, **which Śraddhā should we follow?**

- Sāttvikī!  
And what should we avoid?
- Excessive Rājasik and Tāmasik tendencies!

Śrī Bhagavān is guiding us on how to **purify our faith** and walk the right path. Are you ready to learn more?

## 17.3

**sattvānurūpā sarvasya, śraddhā bhavati bhārata,  
śraddhāmāyo'yaṁ(m) puruṣo, yo yacchraddhaḥ(s) sa eva saḥ. 17.3**

The faith of all men conforms to their mental disposition, Arjuna. Faith constitutes a man; whatever the nature of his faith, he is verily that.

Śrī Bhagavān reveals a deep truth—our **faith (Śraddhā)** and **inner nature (Svabhāva)** **shape who we are and what we become**. Everyone has different **interests, talents, and tendencies**, and these are not random. They are shaped by the **impressions (Saṁskāras) from past births**.

Our Svabhāva (natural inclination) is reflected in our likings. Some of you enjoy swimming, some love singing, some are drawn to dancing, some to painting, some enjoy chanting Gītā verses, and others love cricket. Why do these differences exist? Because of a push from our past birth. These interests and inclinations are not developed overnight but carried forward across lifetimes.

Now think—if we read and understand Bhagavadgītā properly in this life, will we not grasp it more easily in our next life? Yes, right? Then, wouldn't it be wise to cultivate good impressions now?

Just as we naturally follow heroes and role models in fields of our interest, our faith also aligns with our aspirations. If someone dreams of being a chess master, they look up to Viswanathan Anand. If someone

wants to build physical strength, they worship Hanuman Ji. If someone seeks wealth and prosperity, they turn to Lakṣmī Ji. A seeker of knowledge and wisdom surrenders to Sarasvatī Ji, while an artist or dancer is drawn to Natarāja (Bhagavān Śiva in his cosmic dance form).

The person we admire, the ideal we hold high, shapes our character. If we revere those who are wise, disciplined, and noble, we naturally start absorbing their qualities. On the other hand, if we idolize the wrong influences, our thoughts and actions drift accordingly. Śrī Bhagavān emphasizes that a person becomes what they believe in—their faith molds their future, not just in this life but beyond.

### Key Takeaway

Our Svabhāva (nature) is *shaped by past impressions*. Our actions and learning in this life *will influence our future births*. Choosing the *right inspirations and role models is crucial, as they shape our mindset, character, and destiny*. Faith is not separate from us—it defines who we are and what we become.

Let us cultivate Sāttvikī Śraddhā, surround ourselves with noble influences, and walk the path of wisdom and Dharma. This effort will not just benefit us in this life but will carry forward as divine impressions for future lives.

## 17.4

### yajante sāttvikā devān, yakṣarakṣāṃsi rājasāḥ, pretānbhūtagaṇāṃścānye, yajante tāmasā janāḥ. 17.4

Men of Sāttvika disposition worship gods; those of Rājasika temperament worship demigods and demons; while others, who are men of Tāmasika disposition, worship the spirits of dead and ghosts.

Śrī Bhagavān continues to explain how **faith is influenced by one's inner nature (Svabhāva)**. The type of worship a person is drawn toward reflects their dominant **Guṇa (quality)**.

- **Sāttvika people worship Devatās** (gods like Viṣṇu, Śiva, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Hanumān, etc.) because they seek **wisdom, peace, and selfless devotion**.
- **Rājasika people worship Yakṣas (celestial beings associated with wealth) and Rākṣasas (powerful entities)** because they desire **power, success, and material achievements**.
- **Tāmasika people worship ghosts, spirits, and the dead** because they are influenced by **fear, superstition, and ignorance**.

**What we worship reflects what we value the most.**

### How Worship Reflects a Person's Nature

A person's **faith aligns with their desires**.

- If someone wants **spiritual upliftment**, they turn to **Bhagavān**.
- If they seek **material gains**, they look to **powerful but worldly beings**.
- If they are in **darkness, fear, or ignorance**, they are drawn toward **lower forces**.

Think about it—**who do we keep as our inspiration?**

- A child interested in **knowledge and wisdom** will look up to **great saints and scholars**.
- A person seeking **strength and bravery** will admire **Hanumān Ji or Bhagavān Śiva**.
- Someone focused on **money and luxury** may be drawn toward **demigods of wealth and**



power.

- Those with **fear or confusion** may fall into **worshipping spirits or engaging in blind superstitions**.

**What does this teach us?**

**The quality of our worship determines the quality of our mind and future.**

### **Application in Our Gītā Learning**

When we first joined our **Gītā class**, we did not know much. But today, we have learned a lot. We have studied **Chapters 12, 15, and 16**, and we enjoy the lessons.

- In **Chapter 16**, we learned about **Daivī Guṇas (divine qualities)**.
- In **Chapter 12**, we understood the **characteristics of a true Bhakta (devotee)**.
- As we continue learning, our **faith is growing stronger**. Right?

We all **worship Bhagavān**, and this helps us develop our **Sāttvik nature**. Now, let me ask—**which Bhagavān do you worship?**

- **Bhuvan Bhayya** likes **Hanumān Ji**.
- **Vighnaji Bhayya** likes **Śiva Ji**.
- **Abhinandan** has observed **Mahāśivarātri Upavāsa**.
- **Lavanya Ji** likes **Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān**.
- **Dau Bhayya** also worships **Hanumān Ji**.

Very good! Before beginning any study, we should **pray to Devī Sarasvatī**, as she **bestows wisdom** and helps us learn better. By doing so, we **strengthen our Sāttvik nature**.

### **Rājasika Worship - Worship of Wealth and Power**

Śrī Bhagavān tells us that **Rājasika people worship Yakṣas** (celestial beings associated with wealth) **and Rākṣasas** (powerful beings). They focus on **material wealth, status, and power**.

For example, **Kuber**, the king of **Yakṣas**, built **Suvarṇa Laṅkā** (Golden Lanka). But who ruled over Lanka later? **Rāvaṇa**, who captured it **illegitimately**.

- **Kuber represents wealth earned through effort** and used wisely.
- **Rāvaṇa represents wealth taken through arrogance and misuse**.

Both **demonstrate Rājasika characteristics**—seeking **wealth and power**, but with **different intentions**.

**Sāttvika wealth is different**. **Lakṣmī Ji** bestows **more wealth upon those who can put it to good use**—helping society, supporting Dharma, and uplifting others. This is **Sāttvik wealth**, used for **righteous purposes**.

### **Key Takeaway**

- **Sāttvika** people **worship Bhagavān and seek wisdom, devotion, and purity**.
- **Rājasika** people **worship wealth, success, and power**.
- **Tāmasika** people **fall into superstitions, ghost worship, and blind faith**.

**What we worship shapes our character and future**. If we want a **pure, strong, and noble mind**, we must **choose our faith carefully**. Who we worship **influences our thoughts, actions, and**



destiny.

Let us continue on this path of wisdom and faith.

## 17.5

### **aśāstravihitam(ñ) ghoram(n), tapyante ye tapo janāḥ, dambhāhaṅkārasamyuktāḥ(kh), kāmarāgabalanvitāḥ. 17.5**

Men who practice severe penance of an arbitrary type, not sanctioned by scriptures, and who are full of hypocrisy and egotism are obsessed with desire, attachment and pride of power;

Śrī Bhagavān continues to explain how **faith is influenced by one's inner nature (Svabhāva)**. The type of penance a person is drawn toward reflects their **dominant Guṇa (quality)**.

Some people perform **extreme austerities (Tapasya)** but **not in accordance with the scriptures (Aśāstravihita Tapa)**. They are driven by **pride (Ahaṅkāra)**, **hypocrisy (Dambha)**, and **personal desires (Kāma and Rāga)**. Their penance is meant **not for purification but for self-glorification and gaining power**.

#### **Example - Hiranyakashipu's Tapasya**

You have studied how **Hiraṇyakaśipu** performed severe **Tapasya (penance)** to please **Brahmadeva** and obtain a boon.

- He **stood on one leg, hands raised upward, enduring extreme weather for years**.
- His Tapasya was **not for spiritual upliftment or the welfare of others**.
- Instead, it was **driven by ego (Ahaṅkāra) and the desire for invincibility**.

This is an example of **Aśāstravihita Tapa**—austerity performed with selfish intent, not for Dharma or devotion.

#### **True Tapasya - Taking Pain for the Benefit of Others**

While extreme penance for **personal power** is undesirable, taking **some discomfort to help others** is considered **noble Tapa**.

For example, imagine you are traveling in a crowded **bus**, and you see an **elderly lady standing** because there are no empty seats.

- If you **offer your seat** despite your own discomfort, that is a **desirable Tapa**.
- It shows **sacrifice, humility, and care for others**.
- True **Tapa is not about self-inflicted suffering** but about **selflessness and kindness**.

Bhagavān appreciates Tapasya that **benefits others and cultivates inner purity** rather than **Tapasya done for pride and personal gain**.

#### **How Do We Recognize Such Practices?**

1. Austerities Driven by Ego – Some people perform tapasya, fasting, or extreme rituals, not for spiritual progress, but to prove their superiority to others.
2. Self-Torture in the Name of Worship – Some follow painful, harmful practices, thinking it will please Bhagavān. But Bhagavān never asks anyone to hurt themselves. True devotion brings

joy, peace, and wisdom.

3. Desires for Power and Fame – Some take up penance with the hope of gaining special powers, influence, or control over others. Their purpose is not surrender to Bhagavān but self-glorification.

Such misguided practices are not true Tapa (austerity) but false demonstrations of faith, leading a person away from true spirituality.

### How This Applies to Us

We should ask ourselves:

- Are we performing our duties with sincerity, or just for display?
- Are we fasting or doing rituals with devotion, or just because others are watching?
- Are we following Śāstras with understanding, or just creating new customs for pride?

True Tapa should lead to inner purification, humility, and devotion, not pride and self-importance.

### Key Takeaway

- True Tapasya (austerity) aligns with scriptures and Dharma.
- Austerities done with ego, pride, or to impress others are not spiritual.
- Any practice that harms oneself or others is not Bhagavān's path.
- The right Tapa purifies the mind and strengthens Sāttvikī Śraddhā.
- True austerity is when we take discomfort for the welfare of others, like giving up a seat for an elderly person.

Let us focus on **pure, meaningful Tapasya**, which brings us closer to Bhagavān with love and wisdom.

## 17.6

**karśayantaḥ(ś) śarīrasthaṁ(m), bhūtagrāmacetasah,  
mām(ñ) caivāntaḥ(ś) śarīrasthaṁ(n), tīvāddhyāsuraniścayān. 17.6**

And who emaciate the elements constituting their body as well as Me, the Supreme Spirit, dwelling in their heart- know those senseless people to have a demoniac disposition.

Śrī Bhagavān further explains the Aśāstravihita Tapa (unauthorized austerities) that were mentioned in the previous verse. Some people engage in extreme penances that harm their own body, thinking that such self-torture will bring spiritual progress. However, Bhagavān makes it clear that such people are not acting out of wisdom but out of ignorance and arrogance.

- They weaken their own body (Karśayantaḥ Śarīrastham) by depriving it of essential nourishment, rest, and care.
- They fail to recognize that Bhagavān Himself resides within their body and that harming oneself is also an insult to the Divine Presence within.
- Instead of following the balanced, righteous path of Dharma, they take pride in their extreme suffering, believing it will lead to spiritual power or recognition.
- Such actions do not lead to liberation but reflect an Asuric (demonic) mindset, as they go against the harmony and purpose of life given by Bhagavān.

### Example - Self-Torture in the Name of Tapasya

There have been cases in history where individuals practiced extreme austerities, thinking that torturing the body would bring them closer to Bhagavān. However, this is not what Bhagavān desires. Consider the example of some ascetics who practice extreme fasting, standing on one leg for years, lying on beds of thorns, or performing dangerous fire rituals without scriptural basis. Such acts harm the body unnecessarily and create suffering, which is not a path of true spiritual growth. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa emphasizes that Dharma is never about harming oneself. True austerity should be Sāttvika, performed with balance and understanding, not with blind pride and suffering.

### **The Right Approach to Tapasya - Balance and Devotion**

Instead of harming ourselves in the name of spirituality, Bhagavān encourages us to follow a balanced and disciplined life.

- Eating in moderation, exercising, and maintaining health is also Tapasya.
- Speaking truthfully but gently, avoiding gossip, and controlling anger is Tapasya.
- Practicing self-control without harming the body or mind is Tapasya.
- Offering time to serve others, helping the needy, and living a righteous life is the highest form of Tapasya.

### **How This Applies to Us**

We should ask ourselves:

- Are we practicing self-discipline in a healthy, balanced way?
- Are we taking care of our body, knowing that Bhagavān resides within us?
- Are we mistaking extreme suffering as spirituality?

True devotion is not about self-torture but about purity of heart, selflessness, and wisdom.

### **Key Takeaway**

- Bhagavān resides within our body; harming it is against Dharma.
- Self-torture does not lead to spiritual progress; it reflects ignorance.
- True Tapasya is about self-discipline, purity, and balanced living.
- A Sāttvika approach to Tapasya strengthens both the body and mind.

Let us walk the path of wisdom, devotion, and balance, keeping Bhagavān in our hearts and following His teachings in the right spirit.

## **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.

After explaining how faith (Śraddhā) and Tapasya (austerity) are influenced by the three Guṇas, Śrī Bhagavān now expands the discussion to include Ahāra (food), Yajña (sacrifice), Tapasya (penance), and Dāna (charity).

- Just as faith and austerity are shaped by a person's inner nature (Sattva, Rajas, or Tamas),
  - The kind of food one prefers,
  - The way one performs Yajña (sacrifices or spiritual practices),
  - The type of Tapasya (austerity) one engages in,
  - And the way one gives charity (Dāna),
- are all governed by the same threefold classification.

### Why Does Bhagavān Talk About Food?

Food is essential for life, health, and the mind. The type of food one eats directly influences thoughts, emotions, and actions. Since mind and body are interconnected, our choice of food impacts our spiritual and material well-being.

We have often heard the phrase: "You become what you eat." This is not just a saying but a deep truth explained in the Gītā.

- Sāttvika food promotes clarity, peace, and health.
- Rājasika food excites passion, restlessness, and ambition.
- Tāmasika food leads to ignorance, laziness, and negativity.

This applies not only to food but also to sacrifices (Yajña), discipline (Tapasya), and charity (Dāna). The way we perform these actions reflects our dominant Guṇa.

### Understanding the Threefold Classification

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa now prepares Arjuna to understand the distinctions between Sāttvika, Rājasika, and Tāmasika forms of:

- **Ahāra** (Food) – The kind of food a person enjoys.
- **Yajña** (Sacrifice) – How one performs their spiritual duties.
- **Tapasya** (Austerity) – The way a person disciplines their mind and body.
- **Dāna** (Charity) – The way one gives to others.

These four aspects of life reflect the mental and spiritual state of an individual. By observing how a person eats, sacrifices, disciplines, and gives, one can understand their Guṇa-based disposition.

### How This Applies to Us

We should ask ourselves:

- What kind of food do we naturally prefer? Is it nutritious and balanced or overly spicy and stimulating?
- Do we perform our religious duties with sincerity or for show?
- Do we follow discipline in life with understanding or just to gain admiration?
- Do we give charity selflessly or with expectations in return?

Each of these choices determines our spiritual progress. Śrī Bhagavān now explains each of these aspects in detail in the coming verses.

### Key Takeaway

- Our food, worship, discipline, and charity are influenced by our inner nature.
- By refining these aspects, we can cultivate a more Sāttvika life.
- The quality of what we consume—physically and mentally—shapes our future.

Let us be mindful of what we eat, how we pray, how we discipline ourselves, and how we give to others so that we move toward a life of purity, wisdom, and devotion.

## 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.

Śrī Bhagavān now begins explaining the threefold nature of food (Ahāra) and how it affects a person's mind, body, and spiritual progress.

People with a Sāttvika temperament naturally prefer foods that are:

- **Āyuh-Vardhaka** – Increase longevity and vitality.
- **Sattva-Vardhaka** – Enhance mental clarity, purity, and wisdom.
- **Bala-Vardhaka** – Provide strength and energy.
- **Ārogya-Vardhaka** – Promote good health and immunity.
- **Sukha-Prīti-Vivardhana** – Bring happiness and contentment.

Such foods are light, nourishing, and easily digestible. They help maintain a calm and focused mind, free from restlessness or lethargy.

#### **Qualities of Sāttvika Food**

- **Rasyāḥ** (Juicy) – Contains natural sweetness, refreshing, and enjoyable.
- **Snigdhāḥ** (Oily and Nourishing) – Includes healthy fats that provide energy and balance.
- **Sthirā** (Substantial and Sustaining) – Provides long-lasting strength and nourishment.
- **Hr̥dyāḥ** (Pleasant and Agreeable) – Naturally pleasing to the heart and mind.

#### **Examples of Sāttvika Foods**

1. Fresh Fruits – Apples, bananas, mangoes, oranges, pomegranates.
2. Fresh Vegetables – Spinach, carrots, cucumbers, bottle gourd, beans.
3. Whole Grains – Rice, wheat, millets, barley.
4. Dairy Products – Milk, ghee, butter (when taken in moderation).
5. Nuts and Seeds – Almonds, cashews, walnuts, sesame seeds.
6. Natural Sweeteners – Honey, jaggery (instead of refined sugar).
7. Mild Spices – Turmeric, cumin, coriander, fennel, cardamom.
8. Pure Water and Herbal Teas – Nourishing and cleansing for the body.

#### **How Sāttvika Food Affects the Mind and Body**

- Keeps the body energetic yet light, preventing sluggishness.
- Enhances concentration, wisdom, and clarity of thought.
- Develops a calm, peaceful, and compassionate nature.
- Supports spiritual growth and meditation.

Sāttvika food is not only about what we eat but also how we eat. Eating should be done with gratitude, mindfulness, and without overindulgence.

## How This Applies to Us

We should ask ourselves:

- Are we eating fresh, natural, and wholesome food?
- Are we mindful while eating, or do we eat in a hurry or while watching mobile screens?
- Are we eating to nourish our body and mind or just for taste and indulgence?

When we choose Sāttvika food, our body becomes healthier, our mind becomes sharper, and our spiritual journey becomes smoother.

## Key Takeaway

- Sāttvika food nourishes both body and mind, promoting health, strength, and clarity.
- It is naturally tasty, fresh, and easy to digest.
- Food should be taken with gratitude, avoiding overindulgence.
- What we eat directly influences our thoughts and actions.

Let us make conscious choices in our food habits, aligning them with Sāttvika qualities to enhance our physical, mental, and spiritual 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.

Śrī Bhagavān now describes **Rājasika food**, which is preferred by people dominated by **Rajas Guṇa (the quality of passion and restlessness)**.

People with a **Rājasika temperament** naturally prefer foods that are:

- **Kaṭu (Bitter)** – Excessively strong and sharp in taste.
- **Amla (Sour)** – Foods that are too acidic or fermented.
- **Lavaṇa (Salty)** – Foods with excess salt, leading to imbalance in the body.
- **Ati-Uṣṇa (Overly Hot)** – Spicy, heat-producing foods that disturb the mind.
- **Tīkṣṇa (Pungent and Intense)** – Foods that create excessive stimulation.
- **Rūkṣa (Dry and Dehydrating)** – Foods that lack natural moisture.
- **Vidāhin (Burning and Irritating)** – Foods that create discomfort in the digestive system.

These foods **stimulate the senses but disturb the harmony of the body and mind**. Instead of providing long-term nourishment, they lead to **temporary excitement followed by exhaustion and imbalance**.

## How Many of You Like 'Pani Puri'?

Oh! Most of you like it!! That is fine. But one day, I saw someone asking the seller, "**Add more Tikha!**" Then again, "**More Tikha!**" And again, "**More Tikha!**"

This is **Rājasika nature**—seeking more and more **spice and intensity**, not for nourishment but for **sensory excitement**. While enjoying food in moderation is fine, excess **spice, sourness, or heat**

disturbs **mental and physical balance**.

### Effects of Rājasika Food

- **Duḥkha-Prada** (Causes Suffering) – Leads to overstimulation, stress, and restlessness.
- **Śoka-Prada** (Causes Grief and Anxiety) – Increases mental agitation and impatience.
- **Āmāya-Prada** (Causes Diseases) – Leads to acidity, high blood pressure, digestive issues, and inflammation.

### Examples of Rājasika Foods

1. Overly Spicy Foods – Excessive use of chilies, peppers, or mustard.
2. Deep-Fried and Oily Foods – Pakoras, samosas, fried snacks, and excessive fast food.
3. Fermented and Extremely Sour Foods – Pickles, excessive tamarind, vinegar-based items.
4. Processed and Preserved Foods – Chips, instant noodles, artificial sauces, and canned food.
5. Overly Salty and Stimulating Foods – Excess salt, processed cheese, and salty snacks.
6. Highly Caffeinated Drinks – Excess tea, coffee, and energy drinks.
7. Excessively Sweet or Artificially Flavored Foods – Sugary sodas, candies, and synthetic desserts.

### How Rājasika Food Affects the Mind and Body

- Increases restlessness, hyperactivity, and impatience.
- Makes the mind prone to irritation, anger, and over-excitement.
- Causes long-term health issues like acidity, high blood pressure, and digestive problems.
- Prevents deep concentration and spiritual focus.

Unlike **Sāttvika food**, which promotes **peace and clarity**, Rājasika food **excites the senses but leads to imbalance and discomfort**.

### How This Applies to Us

We should ask ourselves:

- Are we eating food that truly nourishes or just stimulates us temporarily?
- Are we consuming too much spice, salt, or processed food out of habit?
- Are we aware of how our food choices affect our energy, mood, and concentration?

Many times, we eat Rājasika food **because of cravings rather than need**. However, Bhagavān teaches us that **food should not just satisfy the tongue but also benefit the body and mind**.

### Key Takeaway

- Rājasika food creates excitement but causes suffering and disease.
- It overstimulates the mind, leading to restlessness and impatience.
- Long-term consumption leads to health issues and emotional instability.
- Choosing balanced, fresh, and nourishing food promotes well-being.

Let us be mindful of what we consume, as it directly impacts our thoughts, emotions, and health. Choosing the right food is a step toward a balanced and spiritually aware life.



## **yātayāmaṃ(ñ) gatarasaṃ(m), pūti paryuṣitaṃ(ñ) ca yat, ucchiṣṭamaṃ 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.

After describing Sāttvika and Rājasika food, Śrī Bhagavān now explains Tāmasika food, which is consumed by people dominated by Tamas Guṇa (the quality of ignorance, laziness, and darkness).

People with a Tāmasika temperament naturally prefer foods that are:

- **Yātayāmam** (Overcooked or Leftover for a Long Time) – Food that has lost its natural freshness and nutrients.
- **Gata-Rasam** (Tasteless and Insipid) – Food that lacks any natural taste, such as stale or reheated food.
- **Pūti** (Foul-Smelling and Rotten) – Food that has started to decay, emit a bad odor, or is unclean.
- **Paryuṣitam** (Stale and Old) – Food that has been stored for too long, such as food kept overnight without refrigeration.
- **Ucchiṣṭam** (Leftover and Contaminated) – Food that has been half-eaten by others or exposed to germs.
- **Amedhyam** (Impure and Unhygienic) – Food that is prepared or eaten in an impure manner, including food cooked in unclean conditions.

### **Effects of Tāmasika Food**

- Increases laziness, inertia, and dullness.
- Makes the mind confused, disoriented, and weak.
- Leads to physical illnesses like indigestion, lethargy, and infections.
- Prevents clarity of thought and spiritual progress.

Unlike Sāttvika food, which nourishes both the body and mind, and Rājasika food, which overstimulates the senses, Tāmasika food weakens both the body and consciousness, leading to negativity and ignorance.

### **Examples of Tāmasika Foods**

1. Spoiled or Rotten Food – Food that has become moldy, sour, or smells bad.
2. Stale and Leftover Food – Food that has been kept for long hours and lost its freshness.
3. Unhygienic and Contaminated Food – Food that is prepared in dirty surroundings or by unclean hands.
4. Excessively Processed and Artificial Food – Preserved and junk foods with no nutritional value.
5. Intoxicating Substances – Alcohol, drugs, and fermented substances that dull the mind.
6. Excessively Oily or Burnt Food – Deep-fried food that has been reheated multiple times.
7. Food Eaten Without Cleanliness or Respect – Eating in a dirty place or without gratitude and mindfulness.

### **How Tāmasika Food Affects the Mind and Body**

- Causes laziness, depression, and a lack of motivation.
- Leads to clouded thinking, confusion, and lack of focus.
- Increases impurity in thoughts and actions.
- Causes digestive disorders, toxicity, and sluggishness.

### **How Many of You Eat Leftover or Reheated Food?**

Many people store food in the refrigerator for days and keep reheating it instead of cooking fresh food. While it may be convenient, Bhagavān warns us that such food has lost its natural vitality and Prāṇa (life force). Eating such food regularly can make the mind dull and the body weak.

Another example—fast food and junk food. Many of these foods are stored for months before consumption, filled with artificial preservatives to make them last longer. Though they may taste good, they are nutritionally empty and full of harmful chemicals.

## How This Applies to Us

We should ask ourselves:

- Are we eating fresh, clean, and nourishing food?
- Are we avoiding stale, processed, and unhygienic food?
- Are we choosing food that promotes health and clarity or just convenience?

Bhagavān teaches us that food should be chosen not just for taste but for its impact on our physical and mental well-being.

## Key Takeaway

- Tāmasika food is unhealthy, impure, and leads to dullness and confusion.
- It reduces both physical energy and mental sharpness.
- Eating fresh, clean, and Sāttvika food increases vitality and wisdom.
- What we eat determines the quality of our thoughts, emotions, and spiritual progress.

Let us be mindful of what we consume, as our food directly shapes our body, mind, and destiny. Choosing fresh and nourishing food is a step toward a healthier and spiritually aware life.

## Conclusion and Q&A Session

The session concluded with an offering of our learnings at the **Lotus feet of Bhagavān**, chanting “*Hari Sharanam Hari Sharanam*”. This was followed by an engaging **Question and Answer session**, where participants asked insightful questions related to the Bhagavad Gītā and previous discussions.

### Question and Answer Session

#### Chinmayi Didi

- **Q: Last week, I had asked a question regarding the Rāmāyaṇa. You mentioned you would find out and let us know.**
  - **A:** Rāvaṇa was under a curse (**Śhāpa**), but its execution depended on a **specific condition**, much like an *IF-THEN-ELSE* statement in programming. The curse would activate based on **Rāvaṇa’s mental state at the time of committing an act**. When he **kidnapped Mātā Sītā**, his mind was focused only on the **act of abduction itself**, without any additional sinful intent. Because of this, **the curse did not take effect at that moment**.
- **Q: I have another question. Can you explain this verse from Chapter 12?**  
समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः । शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥ 12.18॥
  - **A:** This verse describes the **qualities of a true Bhakta (devotee)**, as explained in

Chapter 12. Bhagavān says that a **devotee dear to Him** possesses the following qualities:

- Equal toward both friend and foe (does not differentiate based on personal gain).
- Unmoved by honor and dishonor (praise or criticism does not affect them).
- Maintains equanimity in heat and cold, joy and sorrow (remains unaffected by external conditions).
- Free from unfavorable attachments (detached from worldly distractions).
- Such a devotee **stays balanced in all situations** and **remains focused on Bhagavān**, rather than being influenced by temporary emotions.

### Hiral Chauhan Didi

- **Q: Can you explain the meaning of the 13th verse of Chapter 12?**

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च | निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी || 12.13||

- **A:** This verse highlights the virtues of **a devotee who is very dear to Bhagavān**:
  - **Adveṣṭā** – They hold no hatred toward any being.
  - **Maitraḥ** – They are friendly and kind-hearted.
  - **Karunaḥ** – They are compassionate and empathetic toward others.
  - **Nirmamaḥ & Nirahaṅkāraḥ** – They are free from possessiveness and ego.
  - **Sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ** – They remain balanced in both happiness and distress.
  - **Kṣamī** – They forgive easily and do not hold grudges.
- This verse teaches us that **Bhagavān loves those who are selfless, kind, and forgiving**.

### Arohi Bhageria Didi

- **Q: Didi, you mentioned that we should avoid eating too much spicy (*tīkha*) and sour (*khaṭṭā*) food. But if my parents regularly eat such food, will it still affect my mind even if I don't eat it?**

- **A:** You can gently tell them that **such strong flavors do not suit you**, and they might prepare a **milder version** of the meal for you. Generally, **home-cooked food is more balanced**, and Rājasika food is mostly found in **outside or highly processed foods**. The effect of food is **more direct when consumed**, but **the environment around us also has an influence**. So, try to be mindful of what you consume—both physically and mentally.

### Amrut Bhayya

- **Q: How did Bhagavān create this entire universe?**

- **A:** This topic is explained in **Chapter 9** of the Gītā. Bhagavān created **Puruṣa (the masculine divine principle)** and **Prakṛiti (the feminine creative force)**, and through their interaction, **the entire universe manifested**. We will explore this in detail when we study that chapter.

### Atharva Bhayya

- **Q: How many levels are there in Geeta Pariwar?**

- **A:** There are **four levels** in the **Geeta Pariwar learning program**. You have successfully completed **Level 1 and Level 2**. After completing the next two levels, you will have completed the entire course.

## Lavanya Didi

- **Q : How many Daivī and Āsurī Guṇas are mentioned in the Bhagavad Gītā?**
  - **A:** In **Chapter 16 - Daivāsura Sampad Vibhāga Yoga**, Bhagavān describes:
    - **26 Daivī Guṇas** (divine qualities) in the **first three verses**.
    - **6 Āsurī Guṇas** (demonic tendencies) in the **fourth verse**.
  - These qualities determine whether a person **progresses spiritually** or **falls into negative traits**.

## Pranika Didi

- **Q: Why does Śrī Kṛṣṇa wear a ‘Morpankh’ (peacock feather) on His crown?**
  - **A:** There is a beautiful story behind this. It is said that **a peacock once helped Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa**. I will find out the details and share them in the next session.
- **(Awyaaan Bhayya interrupts): I know the story!**
  - **A:** Wonderful! Please go ahead and share it with everyone.
- **Awyaaan Bhayya:** Śrī Rāma was walking through the forest. A peacock cleared the path ahead, ensuring Bhagavān's journey was smooth and comfortable. Seeing this act of devotion, Śrī Rāma was pleased and blessed the peacock, saying, "In my next avatāra as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, I will adorn your feather on my head as a mark of gratitude."
  - **A:** Excellent! This story beautifully illustrates how **Bhagavān always remembers and honors even the smallest acts of love and service**.

## Key Takeaways from Today’s Q&A Session

- Bhagavān rewards devotion but does not support extreme penances done with ego.
- A true Bhakta remains balanced in all situations—friend or foe, honor or dishonor, joy or sorrow.
- Sāttvika food purifies the mind, Rājasika food excites, and Tāmasika food dulls it.
- The universe was created through Puruṣa and Prakṛiti, as described in Chapter 9.
- Daivī Guṇas uplift the soul, while Āsurī Guṇas lead to downfall.
- Śrī Kṛṣṇa wears the peacock feather as a symbol of gratitude toward the peacock’s service to Śrī Rāma.

This session was filled with deep discussions, meaningful insights, and valuable learning. Let us continue this journey with enthusiasm, curiosity, and devotion!

## Jai Śrī Kṛṣṇa!



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.

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**Jai Shri Krishna!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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