

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 17: Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/-h5RmMm2AvM>

The Threefold Nature of Dāna, the Refinement of Speech, Mental Serenity, and the Essence of Tapas Across Sāttvika, Rājasika, and Tāmasika Modes

Chapter 17 of Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā is **Śhraddhā 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.

Vasudeva Sutam Devam Kansa Chānūra Mardanam
Devakī Paramanandam Krishna Vande Jagadgurum
Yogesham Satchidānandam Vāsudeva Priyam
Dharma Sansthāpakam Vīram Krishna Vande Jagadgurum
Śrī Guru Charan Namah

By the immense and auspicious grace of Bhagavān, a rare fortune has awakened for everyone, providing an opportunity to make this life meaningful, to elevate it to the highest purpose, and to attain the ultimate goal—not just in this life but beyond, in the spiritual realm as well. Whether it is the result of meritorious deeds from this birth, the accumulated virtues of past lives, the blessings of our ancestors, or the compassionate glance of a saint or a Mahāpuruṣa at some point in time, something has drawn us towards the study of the Bhagavad Gītā.

It is as if one has been chosen to delve into the Bhagavad Gītā, the supreme scripture that holds no parallel in its ability to uplift and guide humankind. Brahmaśrī Seth Jayadayal Goyandka once remarked that after studying all the scriptures, he reached the firm conclusion that there exists no other text as beneficial for human welfare as the Bhagavad Gītā.

For the past two weeks, reflections on the seventeenth chapter—**Śraddhātraya Vibhāga Yoga**—have been underway. This time, by Bhagavān's grace, three sessions were received instead of

the usual two, allowing for a deeper exploration of the subject.

Previously, the discussion revolved around **Manah Prasādaḥ**, the serenity of the mind. Bhagavān describes this as the tapas of the mind—an essential discipline. The different ways to cultivate this inner peace, its various forms, and its significance were explored in detail.

Attention was also given to the refinement of speech—how one's words should be, and the austerity of the body—how physical discipline should be upheld. Bhagavān elaborates on tapas in three modes—**sāttvika**, **rājasika**, and **tāmasika**—in terms of body, speech, and mind. These were examined up to the nineteenth shloka.

From the twentieth shloka onwards, Bhagavān introduces the concept of **dāna** (charity). Addressing Arjuna, Bhagavān explains that **dāna**, like tapas, is also of three kinds. This profound teaching continues, revealing the nature of selfless giving and its classifications.

17.20

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

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

The act of giving, when performed with the firm belief that it is a duty (**dātavyam iti**), without any expectation of reciprocation, and with careful consideration of the right place (**deśa**), time (**kāla**), and recipient (**pātra**), is known as **sāttvika dāna**.

A revered text called **Dharma Śataka**, speaks of the four Yugas—**Satya**, **Tretā**, **Dvāpara**, and **Kali**. Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa beautifully encapsulates this in the lines:

"प्रगट चारि पद धर्म के कलि महुँ एक प्रधान। जेन केन बिधि दीन्हें दान करइ कल्याण।".

It is said that the four pillars of dharma are **satya** (truth), **dayā** (compassion), **dāna** (charity), and **tapas** (austerity). In **Satya Yuga**, all four pillars stood firm—the truth was upheld in its absolute form, severe austerities were practiced, compassion flourished, and charity was abundant. In **Tretā Yuga**, the truth began to decline, leaving the remaining three pillars intact. As **Dvāpara Yuga** arrived, both truth and compassion weakened, leaving only tapas and dāna. Finally, in **Kali Yuga**, even tapas diminished, leaving dāna as the sole pillar of dharma.

Thus, Manusmṛti declares: "**Dānamekaṃ kalau yuge**"

In Kali Yuga, dāna alone remains the fundamental pillar of dharma.

Within the discourse on dāna, twenty-five forms of charity are described, each holding its unique significance.

- **1. Arthadāna (Donation of Wealth)** – The most common form of charity, involving the donation of money, gold, or material resources to those in need. Wealth should be used for noble purposes, and giving a portion of one's earnings ensures the well-being of society.
- **2. Bhūmidāna (Donation of Land)** – Offering land for higher purposes such as building

temples, schools, hospitals, or institutions that serve humanity and preserve sacred texts like the Vedas and Gītā. Land donation has long been considered an act of immense virtue.

- **3. Annadāna (Donation of Food)** – Considered the highest form of charity (**annadāna mahādāna**). Food should be given freely to anyone in need, without any discrimination. Unlike other forms of charity, annadāna does not require considering the recipient's worthiness—feeding even the most immoral or sinful person is an act of dharma.
- **4. Oṣadhidāna (Donation of Medicines and Healthcare)** – Just as food is given without discrimination, medical aid should also be provided to all who need it. Whether rich or poor, moral or immoral, every sick individual deserves treatment.
- **5. Vastradāna (Donation of Clothes)** – Providing clothing, especially during winter or on auspicious occasions like **Ekādaśī** and **Amāvasyā**, is a form of **dāna**. It is common to distribute blankets to the poor during harsh weather conditions.
- **6. Prāṇadāna (Sparing a Life)** – The highest form of compassion, where one saves someone from death or harm. This could be done by a ruler who grants mercy, a doctor who heals a patient, or an ordinary person who rescues another from danger.
- **7. Yaśodāna (Donation of Credit and Recognition)** – A selfless act where one allows another to receive recognition instead of claiming it for oneself. This cultivates humility and removes the ego-driven desire for praise.
- **8. Prasannatādāna (Gift of Joy)** – The simple act of giving happiness through a smile, positive words, or encouragement. Greeting someone with a warm smile uplifts their spirits, momentarily freeing them from their burdens. A reassuring statement such as, **“Do not worry, Bhagavān will take care of everything,”** can provide immense relief to a distressed soul.
- **9. Adhikāradāna (Sacrifice of Privileges and Rights)** – A noble practice of renouncing one's entitlements in favor of others. Many conflicts arise due to people fighting for their rights. By voluntarily giving up privileges—such as allowing someone else to be served first—one cultivates harmony and humility. **Pragya Chakshu Swami Śaraṇānanda** emphasized, **“If one desires everlasting love and a beautiful family, one must protect others' rights while renouncing their own.”**
- **10. Jñānadāna (Donation of Knowledge)** – Considered one of the greatest acts of charity. True knowledge should be shared freely, without expecting anything in return. In our like Learn Gītā, individuals selflessly impart wisdom, believing that what they have received should be passed on.
- **11. Bhaktidāna (Donation of Devotion)** – Encouraging devotion in others by greeting them with Bhagavān's name, such as **“Rām Rām”** or **“Jai Śrī Kṛṣṇa,”** instead of a mere hello. By doing this, one spreads spirituality naturally. Encouraging others to attend satsangs, listen to the Gītā, or visit temples is also considered **bhaktidāna**.
- **12. Tṛptidāna (Gift of Contentment)** – Teaching the virtue of contentment by refusing unnecessary material gifts and desires. This prevents attachment and cultivates inner peace, allowing one to be satisfied with what they have.
- **13. Mantradāna (Sharing Sacred Verses and Prayers)** – Teaching others spiritual mantras, such as those used for offering water to the sun or consecrating food, is a form of **dāna**. Such knowledge empowers individuals on their spiritual journey.
- **14. Dīkṣādāna (Spiritual Initiation)** – The sacred transmission of spiritual knowledge and practices by a guru to a disciple. This initiation is a deeply significant act, given only to worthy individuals.
- **15. Putradāna (Donation of a Son)** – The practice of dedicating a child to a noble or spiritual cause. Historically, this included sending sons to serve temples, monasteries, or gurukuls for the greater good.
- **16. Kanyādāna (Giving a Daughter in Marriage)** – One of the most revered acts in Hindu tradition, where a father offers his daughter in marriage, entrusting her to another family (gotra). This is considered an act of great responsibility and sanctity.

- 17. **Dātavya Mukti Dāna (Liberation from Debt)** – Forgiving debts, especially for those who are unable to repay, is a high form of charity. A wealthy man suffering from cancer in Bengaluru once forgave all debts owed to him before his death, ensuring no unresolved karmic ties followed him into his next life.
- 18. **Satkāra Dāna (Donation of Respect and Hospitality)** – Showing respect to all, regardless of their social status. True greatness is reflected in how one treats people of all backgrounds—with dignity and warmth.
- 19. **Āsana Dāna (Offering of a Seat)** – A mark of humility, where one gives up their seat for others, especially elders and those in need. It reflects good manners and respect for others.
- 20. **Priya Dāna (Giving What is Cherished)** – Offering gifts that are dear to others, such as a beloved book or sentimental item. The value lies not in the object itself but in the thoughtfulness behind the act.
- 21. **Śreya Dāna (Offering Ultimate Benefit)** – Providing things that bring lasting spiritual benefit, such as the Gītā, sacred malas, or tilaks, which enhance a person's journey toward enlightenment.
- 22. **Sukha Dāna (Gift of Comfort and Happiness)** – Bringing joy to others in any form, whether through material means or acts of kindness. The aim is to provide happiness and relief to those who are suffering.
- 23. **Brahma Dāna (Supreme Knowledge Donation)** – The highest form of dāna, leading one to self-realization and ultimate liberation. It is granted only by an enlightened **sadguru**. The **Rāmāyaṇa** states, “**mama darasana phala parama anūpāḥ | jīva pāva nija sahaja sarūpā ||**”—the mere sight of Bhagavān grants a being their true divine nature.
- 24. **Parama Dāna (Spiritual Presence at the Time of Death)** – The greatest gift one can give is to be present with a dying person, reciting Bhagavān's name, reading the Gītā, or singing kīrtan. This ensures that the soul departs with divine grace.
- 25. **Sātvik Dāna (Righteous Charity)** – The purest form of giving, performed selflessly and in alignment with righteousness. Charity should be done at the right place, at the right time, and to the right recipient (**deśa-kāla-pātre**). It is not an act of generosity but a fundamental duty, as emphasized in the Bhagavad Gītā: “**dātavyam**” (**charity must be done as a duty**).

Each of these acts of **dāna** is meant to cultivate selflessness, uplift both the giver and the recipient and lead one toward spiritual elevation. The habit of giving—whether through wealth, service, knowledge, or compassion—is a key principle in attaining peace and ultimate liberation.

Br̥haspati Nīti prescribes donating ten percent of one's income, while **Śukra Nīti** advises twenty percent. True giving expects nothing in return—not even gratitude. If one gives with the expectation of acknowledgment, the act loses its sanctity. Bhagavān has provided more to some so that they may distribute it to those in need. The moment one wonders what they will receive in return, the purity of the act diminishes.

A truly selfless donation considers the place (**deśa**), the time (**kāla**), and the recipient (**pātra**). The act of giving is not just an option—it is a sacred duty, an essential path toward higher living.

During the time of the pandemic, people stood on the streets, distributing food and essentials. This was an act of immense generosity, a true example of “**sātvik dān**,” the highest form of charity. It was needed at that time, fulfilling the principle of “**deśa-kāla-pātre**”—giving according to time, place, and recipient.

Charity should be given where it is most required. Whether at a pilgrimage site or during a great festival like Kumbh, giving must align with righteousness and the recipient's need. “**Deśa kāle ca pātre ca dānam sātvikam smṛtam**”—a truly selfless donation is that which considers the place, time,

and deserving recipient.

A saint once shared profound wisdom: one has 21,600 breaths in a day, and 2,160 of them should be dedicated to devotion. It means one should devote at least two hours and forty minutes daily to prayers and selfless acts for the welfare of the world. Giving is not limited to wealth; it extends to one's abilities and time.

There was once a kingdom facing a severe drought. The righteous king, upon the advice of his royal priest, decided to perform a grand **yajña**, believing that the sacred fire ritual would bring rain. The king, being pious, influenced the wealthy merchants and noblemen of his kingdom to contribute generously. Some arranged for food, others for palanquins for the elderly, and many donated gold and grain. The yajña lasted for a month, and as soon as it concluded, the kingdom received abundant rainfall.

As the yajña concluded, the people began their journey back home. Since it was an ancient time, they traveled together for safety from wild animals and bandits. A saint walking among them observed something remarkable—while the sun blazed upon them, a single cloud moved above, shading the travelers. It followed their every move, turning as they turned, stopping when they stopped.

The saint shared his observation, and the people speculated on its cause. Some believed it was due to the saint's spiritual power, but when he stepped aside, the cloud did not follow him. Others thought it might be because of a wealthy merchant who had donated a chest of gold, but when he stepped away, the cloud remained with the group.

Curiosity grew, and they tested one person after another. Finally, only an old woman in tattered clothes remained. When she was urged forward, the cloud followed her. It was then revealed that the divine grace was upon her. The saint bowed to her and asked what she had done.

The old woman, overwhelmed, said, "What could I possibly give? I had nothing but a single worthless coin, a '*phūṭī kauṛī*,' which I gave with all my heart. And every day, from my meager food, I kept only one piece for myself and shared the rest with the stray animals around me. That was all I could do."

The saint proclaimed, "Your service is the greatest of all. The wealthy gave from their abundance, but you gave your all. True charity is not about the amount but the sacrifice and intent behind it."

It is not about how much one gives but what proportion of their means they dedicate to others. At Kumbh, there were those with nothing but worn-out sandals who still donated ₹21 or ₹51 with immense devotion. On the other hand, some arrived in luxurious cars and argued over giving ₹100. The essence of charity lies in sentiment, not numbers.

A story from Buddha's life further illustrates this. Each day, Buddha sought alms from the people. Among them was an ill-tempered old woman who, instead of giving, hurled abuses at him daily. Still, Buddha visited her door. His disciples questioned why he endured such insult. Buddha smiled and said, "I may not receive food, but I do receive something—her words. If she chooses to give curses, that too is a form of giving."

One day, after years of insults, the old woman, in frustration, threw ashes from her stove into Buddha's bowl. The disciples were aghast. But Buddha rejoiced, saying, "Do you not see? Her hand, which never gave, has finally risen in the act of giving. It matters not what she gave; it matters that she has learned to give."

The woman was deeply moved. The next day, she humbly offered a piece of bread to Buddha. It is the habit of giving that matters. **A person must cultivate the practice of offering something each day—be it kindness, service, or material help. Giving should not be a transaction but a selfless duty.**

Bhagavān teaches that charity should be done with thoughtfulness, in the right place, at the right time, and to the right recipient. The value of charity is determined not by its monetary worth but by the sincerity and devotion with which it is given.

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.

The Bhagavad Gītā explains the nature of **dāna**, or charity, categorizing it into different types based on intent and execution. **Rājasic dāna** is that which is given with a sense of expectation, seeking something in return. It is given reluctantly, often with discomfort or compulsion.

A common example can be observed in neighborhoods when people come asking for contributions for religious gatherings or community events. Many hesitate to answer the door, pretending not to be home. Some promise to contribute later, hoping the collectors will not return. If pressed, they reluctantly part with a small amount but feel burdened by the act. This is dāna given unwillingly, with inner resistance—**parikliṣṭm dāna**.

Another example of **rājasic dāna** is when charity is given with a desire for recognition. Some donate large amounts to ensure their names appear on plaques, banners, or newspaper articles. Others contribute to secure positions of power, such as being named a trustee or a key member of an organization. During challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, some engaged in charity with an ulterior motive—to post their generosity on social media rather than for genuine service. This form of dāna is known as **pratyupakārārtham**, given with the expectation of a return.

However, Bhagavān clarifies that even this type of dāna is far superior to not giving at all. While it is not the highest form of charity, it is still an act of giving. Those who criticize such charity by saying, "It is done only for publicity," fail to see the larger picture. It is better to give with some expectation than to not give at all. Those who donate with pure intent, without desiring recognition or reward, engage in **sāttvika dāna**, which is the highest form.

Rājasic dāna is often linked to a transactional mindset. Some people give to accumulate **punya** (spiritual merit), believing that specific donations during auspicious occasions will lead to rewards in the afterlife. This expectation of personal gain makes the dāna rājasic rather than **sāttvika**.

Bhagavān describes these nuances to emphasize that while all acts of giving are valuable, the purity of intention determines the true worth of dāna. The highest form of charity is that which is given selflessly, with no desire for recognition or reward, solely for the welfare of others.

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.

When charity is given at an improper place or time, to an unworthy recipient, or with disdain and disrespect, it is considered tāmasika dāna. Bhagavān emphasizes that any act of giving that is accompanied by insult or disregard is far from true generosity. For instance, if one carelessly throws a sari at a household worker and dismissively says, "Take it on your way out," or tosses money at a beggar without a second thought, such giving is marked by **apamāna** (insult). Even worse is when the recipient is ridiculed—"You keep coming back to beg! Have you no shame?"—this kind of charity is not an act of kindness but an expression of ego and dominance.

True **dāna** should never make the recipient feel humiliated. It should be done with due respect, with a heart that uplifts rather than belittles. Bhagavān warns that charity given to make the receiver feel inferior is not just futile but also demeaning. As Tulsi Das says:

"तुलसी पञ्छी के लिए, घटे न सरिता नीर। दान दिए धन न घटे, जो सहाय रघुवीर।।"

(Just as a river does not dry up if one drinks from it, and the human body does not lose its essence by drinking water, similarly, wealth never diminishes by giving in charity, for Raghubīra Himself, safeguards it.)

Charity, when done with purity of heart, never depletes wealth. Bhagavān ensures that such a person's treasure remains full. Another saying reinforces this:

"पानी बाढ़े नाव में, घर में बाढ़े दाम। दोऊ हाथ उलीचिए, यही सयानो काम ।।"

(Just as a boat takes in water when overloaded, a household flourishes when charity is abundant. The noble person gives freely with both hands.)

Thus, giving is a significant virtue, but it must be done with sincerity. Bhagavān has placed individuals in different positions not to accumulate wealth selfishly but to share it with those in need. The very hands that reach out in prayer should also be the hands that give.

There are countless forms of **dāna**—more than can be listed—but what matters most is the intention behind it. Among the most vital acts of giving is ensuring that the hungry are fed and the sick are treated, regardless of their background. Bhagavān emphasizes that in matters of **annadāna** (giving food) **oṣadhidāna** (giving medicine), one should not consider the worthiness of the recipient. Even if the person is undeserving in other aspects, if they are hungry or unwell, they must be helped.

Interestingly, it is often easier to donate to strangers than to those within our immediate surroundings. Many people prefer giving to temples or distant charities rather than supporting their household staff or relatives in need. When giving to those close to us, thoughts such as "I gave you a sari last time, and now you're asking for a leave?" or "I've already done so much for you, now you should work harder" creep in. This conditional giving, where one expects a return, diminishes the value of **dāna**.

The purest form of charity is that which expects nothing in return—not even gratitude. The moment one desires acknowledgment, the giving becomes transactional. Bhagavān reminds us that **dāna should never be flaunted**. If one must declare, "I gave this to you because I received it from elsewhere," then the act itself is tainted. **The highest form of giving is when even the giver**

does not attach their identity to the act—when charity flows as naturally as a river without seeking recognition.

कद ऊँचा तो कर लिया, ऊँचे रखो विचार। दान धर्म जो न किया, जीवन है बेकार।।

Bhagavān's wisdom thus guides one towards an ideal of dāna that is untainted by pride, expectation, or insult. Charity should elevate both the giver and the receiver, leaving behind only a sense of fulfillment and humility.

17.23

**oṃ tatsaditi nirdeśo, brahmaṇastrividhaḥ(s) smṛtaḥ,
brāhmaṇāstena vedāśca, yajñāśca vihitāḥ(ph) purā. 17.23**

OM, TAT, and SAT- this has been declared as the triple appellation of Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness, and Bliss. By that were the Brāhmaṇas and the Vedas as well as sacrifices created at the cosmic dawn.

The phrase "**Oṃ Tat Sat**" is considered the threefold designation of the eternal, ever-blissful Brahman. It is from this primordial essence that, at the beginning of creation, the **Brāhmaṇas**, the **Vedas**, and the **Yajñas** were established. With this verse, Bhagavān introduces a new subject and, over the next four verses (17.23–17.26), expounds upon the profound significance of "**Oṃ**."

Oṃ, in its essence, is beyond mere syllables. The scriptures proclaim that "**śabdaṃ brahma**"—sound itself is Brahman. **The sacred syllable Oṃ is composed of three phonetic components: 'A,' 'U,' and 'M,' which, when combined, manifest as the indivisible Oṃ.** It is revered as **Prāṇava**, the supreme vibration, encompassing both the nirguṇa (formless) and saṅguṇa (with attributes) aspects of Brahmān. It is worshipped as the embodiment of the absolute, the eternal sound that pervades all existence.

The resonance of Oṃ is deeply connected to the universe. The reverberation of the final 'M' in Oṃ is akin to the lingering sound of a temple bell. When a bell is struck, its tone extends into a fading hum, much like the reverberation of Oṃ. This sacred vibration is considered the primal sound from which creation emerges. Before anything else came into being, Oṃ resonated in the cosmos—its vibration forming the foundation of all existence.

The significance of sound as the origin of creation is not limited to the Vedic tradition. Even in the Bible, a profound verse states, "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**" **The concept of the Word, the divine vibration, is parallel to the idea of Oṃ—an eternal resonance that gives rise to the cosmos.**

The five great elements (**pañca-mahābhūta**) begin with space (**ākāśa**), which is inherently linked to sound. The fundamental attribute (**tanmātra**) of **ākāśa** is **śabda** (sound). Sound arises from vibration, and vibration, in turn, results from movement and collision. Without impact, sound cannot be produced. Even within the human throat, sound emerges from the friction between the vocal cords.

The interaction of **ākāśa** (space) and **vāyu** (air) generates sound. The friction between these two elements results in the first manifestation of audible vibration. When **vāyu** moves and collides within **ākāśa**, it creates sound. As **vāyu** continues its movement and intensifies, it leads to the formation of fire (**agni**). The process of creation follows this sequence—**ākāśa** gives rise to **vāyu**, **vāyu** to **agni**,

and from the agitaGītāgītātion of sound within these elements, existence unfolds.

Thus, **Om** is not merely a sound; it is the very essence of creation, the first manifestation of existence, the vibration from which all reality emerges. The deeper one contemplates **Om**, the closer one comes to understanding the cosmic order that governs all that is seen and unseen.

LEARN GEETA
तत्त्वार्थ योगी भगवद्गीता

ॐ - अ, उ, म, ्

श्री गुरुदेव परमहंसजी महाराज
गीता परिवार

प्रणव, ब्रह्म, निर्गुण, सगुण, साकार, निराकार, शब्द, ईश्वर, माया, ओंकार
एक अनंत यात्रा (प्रभव-प्रलय-प्रभव....)

खंड

उच्चारण	शब्द	स्थान	रूप	देव	स्थिति	कार्य	करण	गुण	
अ	अकार	बैखरी	कंठ	स्थूल	ब्रह्मा	जाग्रत	उत्पत्ति	कर्मेन्द्रियाँ	रजोगुण
उ	उकार	मध्यमा	हृदय	सूक्ष्म	विष्णु	स्वप्न	पुष्टि	ज्ञानेन्द्रियाँ	सतोगुण
म	मकार	पश्यन्ति	नाभि	कारण	शंकर	सुषुप्ति	संहार	अंतःकरण	तमोगुण
्	हलंत	परा	व्यापक	शून्य	ब्रह्म	तुरीय	सत्ता	अस्तित्व	गुणातीत

The syllable "Om" is formed of three fundamental sounds: A (अ), U (उ), M (म), and an additional aspect known as halanta, the silent ending.

The Four Aspects of Om: A, U, M, and Halanta

Each component of "Om" holds profound philosophical and scientific significance:

- **1. A-kāra (a)** – The first syllable, "A," emerges from the throat. It is audible, tangible, and represents the gross aspect of reality. Brahmā is the presiding deity of this sound, and it corresponds to the **jāgrat** (waking state). It signifies creation, with **karmendriyas** (organs of action) as its instruments. The associated **guṇa** is **rajas**, which is linked to activity and movement.
- **2. U-kāra (u)** – The second syllable, "U," originates from the heart and is subtler. Unlike spoken words, expressions can convey meaning through gestures and glances. This form of communication is considered higher than spoken words. Bhagavān Viṣṇu is the presiding deity of "U," and it corresponds to the **svapna** (dream state). It signifies preservation, with **jñānendriyas** (organs of perception) as its instruments. The associated **guṇa** is **sattva**, the quality of wisdom and harmony.
- **3. M-kāra (m)**
 - The third syllable, "M," originates from the navel and is subtler than both "A" and "U." Here, events manifest purely through intention (**saṅkalpa-mātra**). In earlier states, the action was required for manifestation, whereas in this state, mere thought is sufficient. Bhagavān Śiva is the presiding deity of "M," and it corresponds to the **suṣupti** (deep sleep state). It signifies dissolution, with **antaḥkaraṇa** (the inner instrument of mind, intellect, and ego) as its medium. The associated **guṇa** is **tamas**, representing inertia and potentiality.
- **4. Halanta** – The final aspect is beyond even **saṅkalpa**. It is referred to as **parā** (supreme

transcendence), a state unattainable through thought alone. As **Sant Jñāneśvara** illustrates in "**anubhav gamya kah jaha santa**," the great saints perceive this realm beyond experience. A famous example is the story of **Jñāneśvara Maharaj** making a lifeless wall move at will (**bhittikā sajīva sī cala de**). This state is beyond wakefulness, dreaming, and deep sleep—it is **turiya** (pure consciousness). The presiding principle here is **Param Brahman**, where **śūnya** (emptiness) is not mere void but the boundless presence of the Supreme.

The Completion of All Actions: "Om Tat Sat"

At the conclusion of every chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, a **puṣpikā** is inscribed by **Vedavyāsa**, affirming the divine nature of the scripture:

"Om Tat Sat iti Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītāsu Upaniṣatsu Brahmavidyāyām Yogaśāstre Śrī-Kṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde..."

This concluding invocation signifies that whatever imperfections may exist in the discourse are rectified by the divine. This is why great sages and scholars conclude their discourses with "**Hari Om Tat Sat**", acknowledging that the Supreme compensates for any shortcomings.

Bhagavān states that "**Om Tat Sat**" represents the eternal, blissful Brahman. It is not merely a phrase but an expression of the absolute reality—**Sat-Cit-Ānanda**.

17.24

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

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

The prescribed acts of **yajña** (sacrifice), **dāna** (charity), and **tapah** (austerity), as enjoined in the scriptures, are always commenced by the seekers of Brahman with the utterance of '**Om**'.

In the English language, there are twenty-six alphabets, starting from A to Z. If one picks only a single letter, say 'H', and considers it as complete in itself, it would be a mistaken notion, for it is merely a part of the whole alphabet system. Similarly, many individuals become attached to one aspect of the divine—some venerate **Viṣṇu**, others **Śiva**, some worship **Devī**, while others revere **Gaṇeśa**. But in doing so, they confine themselves to only a fragment of the entire truth.

This concept is beautifully illustrated in the story of **Gajendra Mokṣa**. When Gajendra called out for divine intervention, he did not specifically invoke **Viṣṇu**; he simply uttered '**Tat**'—that Supreme. Yet, Bhagavān Viṣṇu manifested before him. Why? Because Gajendra's intent was deeply aligned with the essence of Viṣṇu, even if he did not articulate His name. The Upaniṣads expound upon this '**Tat**'—the **Ultimate Reality**.

The first verse of many Upaniṣads declares:

**om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṃ pūrṇātpūrṇamudacyate|
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate||**

That (the Absolute) is complete; this (the manifested world) is also complete. From the complete emerges the complete, yet even upon taking the complete from the complete, what remains is still complete.

This completeness can be understood through the analogy of zero. Divide zero in half, and it remains zero. Add another zero to it, and it remains unchanged. Subtract from it, and yet it does not diminish. This is the nature of Brahman—eternally whole, beyond increase or decrease.

In contrast, the English alphabet follows a finite system. If one removes 'H' from the series of twenty-six letters, only twenty-five remain. However, the sound of 'Om̐' does not diminish even if something is taken away from it—it remains as it is, unaltered, infinite.

In the Upaniṣadic understanding, '**Idam**' refers to that which is perceptible, while '**Ataḥ**' indicates that which is beyond perception. Thus, '**Tat**' signifies the Supreme beyond form, yet encompassing all forms. Whether one envisions Viṣṇu, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, or Devī, they are all but manifestations of the same principle—Tat.

Forms such as a Guru, ancestors, deities, or sacred chants are transient.

Jagadguru Adi Śaṅkarācārya affirms this truth: "**eko brahma, dvitīya nāsti.**"
There is only One Brahmān; nothing else truly exists.

Thus comes the sacred phrase—**Om̐ Tat Sat.**

Om̐ signifies the eternal, the sound of the Supreme. **Tat** signifies the wholeness beyond name and form. **Sat** signifies the essence of truth—unchanging and everlasting.

Truth (Satya) has two dimensions—one that remains unchanged through all time, and another that signifies the very essence of existence. The **Guru Granth Sāhib** expresses this beautifully: "**ādi sat, jugād sat, hai bhī sat, nā ho sach nā hī bhī satya.**"
Truth was, truth is, and truth shall always be.

Thus, after expounding a truth, nothing remains further to be said—it is complete. Therefore, it is concluded with the sacred words: **Hari Om̐ Tat Sat.**

17.25

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

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

The term "**tad**" here refers to that Supreme, the ultimate reality. With this understanding, those who seek liberation perform various acts of **yajña** (sacrifice), **tapa** (austerity), and **dāna** (charity) without attachment to their fruits. The significance of "**tad**" is in directing all actions towards the Divine, transcending personal gain or recognition.

17.26

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

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

The word "**sat**" signifies goodness, truth, and auspiciousness. It is used to represent noble intentions and virtuous actions. When one associates with enlightened beings, it is called **satsaṅga**—the company of truth. When actions are rooted in righteousness, they are referred to as **satkarma**. Any pure intention, any deed performed in sincerity, is marked by "**sat**." This word is intrinsically connected to the Divine, as everything that is eternal and unchanging is **sat**.

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'.

The essence of "**sat**" also pervades **yajña**, **tapa**, and **dāna**. When these are performed with steadfastness and dedication to the Supreme, they are considered "**sat**." Any action undertaken for the ultimate truth, for the higher purpose beyond worldly motives, is itself imbued with "**sat**."

Thus, the profound phrase "**Hari Om Tat Sat**" encapsulates the entire spiritual journey. It signifies the completeness of the Divine reality. "**Om**"—the primordial sound, "**Tat**"—the absolute beyond all definitions, and "**Sat**"—the eternal truth. This phrase marks the conclusion of sacred discourses, signifying that whatever has been said or done is now offered to the Divine. If any imperfection remains, it is the Supreme who shall fulfill it.

Bhagavān instructs that while all these truths hold immense significance, without **śraddhā** (faith and devotion), even the highest teachings remain incomplete. **Śraddhā** is the foundation upon which the pursuit of truth rests. With it, **yajña**, **tapa**, and **dāna** bear fruit; without it, they lose their essence.

Thus, in response to Arjuna's inquiry about the nature of faith, Bhagavān provides the ultimate wisdom, concluding this discourse by affirming the supreme importance of devotion and sincerity in all spiritual pursuits.

17.28

**aśraddhayā hutaṁ(n) dattaṁ(n), tapastaptaṁ(ñ) kṛtaṁ(ñ) ca yat,
asadityucyate pārtha, na ca tatpretya no iha. 17.28**

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

The essence of the seventeenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, "**Śraddhā-Traya-Vibhāga-Yoga**," culminates in the significance of faith. In the final verse, Bhagavān declares that any act of **yajña**, **dāna**, or **tapa** performed without **śraddhā** (faith) is deemed **asat**—it holds no real value. Such actions neither yield merit in this world nor in the next. Thus, faith is the very foundation of spiritual practice. Whether one engages in **yajña** (sacrificial offerings), **dāna** (charity), or **tapa** (austerities), their efficacy depends entirely on **śraddhā**. Without it, even the most righteous deeds remain incomplete and unfruitful. On the other hand, when undertaken with **śraddhā**, even an imperfect action attains completeness and meaning.

The concluding invocation of this chapter resounds with the profound syllables—**Om Tat Sat**—signifying the absolute reality.

Om Tat Sat—these sacred words encapsulate the ultimate truth. **Om** represents the **Supreme Brahman**, **Tat** denotes that all actions should be directed towards the Divine without attachment to the fruits, and **Sat** signifies the eternal, the unchanging, the essence of truth itself. This invocation marks the conclusion of the seventeenth discourse of the Bhagavad Gītā, which is both an **Upaniṣad** and a **śāstra** of **Brahmāvidyā** and **Yoga**, as conveyed in the divine dialogue of **Śrī Kṛṣṇa**.

With reverence, gratitude is offered to those who have listened with **śraddhā**. May this path of Bhagavad Gītā continue to illuminate lives, leading seekers towards its divine wisdom. Let all dedicate themselves to the practice and contemplation of its teachings, striving to embody them in daily life.

Let us immerse ourselves in the divine remembrance:

Hari Śaraṇam! Hari Śaraṇam! Hari Śaraṇam!

May Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa bless all seekers on this sacred journey.

Questions and Answers

Malay Ji

Q: When I go outside, sometimes people ask me for food. If I ask them what they want, they sometimes request non-vegetarian food. Now, I feel that giving non-vegetarian food as charity is incorrect, as it would result in accruing sin. So, what should I say in such situations? Should I refuse to give it?

A: You are there to fulfill their hunger, not to cater to their taste. If someone is truly hungry and needs food for sustenance, you will certainly offer it. But charity is not meant to fulfill one's cravings, whether for ice cream or fritters—let alone non-vegetarian food. Charity means providing for a person's essential needs, not luxury. The intention behind charity is to fulfill a person's necessity, not their desires. If someone is genuinely hungry and in need of food, then offering them a meal is an act of kindness. However, if someone asks for specific food out of taste or preference, then that is not true charity. Charity is meant to nourish, not to indulge. Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable to explain that one is offering food to satisfy hunger, not to fulfill cravings.

Q: You mentioned that the syllables in "Om"—'A,' 'U,' and 'M'—represent Brahman, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, respectively. I don't fully understand this. You also mentioned that every sound has a presiding deity, and that in "Om," there are four divine presences: Brahman, Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Param Brahman. Could you clarify their positions and roles within Om? Since Bhagavān Brahman, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are the creators, sustainers, and dissolvers of the universe, where does Param Brahman fit in within Om?

A: The syllables in "Om" symbolically represent the cosmic functions of Brahman (creation), Viṣṇu (sustenance), and Śiva (dissolution). However, beyond these three, there is the unchanging, eternal reality—Param Brahman, who transcends creation, sustenance, and dissolution. In "Om," these divine principles are inherent, with Param Brahman being the substratum that holds and encompasses all. "Om" is not merely a composition of three syllables but a representation of the absolute, eternal reality.

Q: You spoke about Sāttvika, Rājasika, and Tāmasika qualities and how the entire cosmos is composed of these three elements. If everything in creation consists of these three, does that mean Om also contains them? Also, does Tāmasika always imply something negative?

A: Let us understand this with an example, sleeping at night is an act of tamas (darkness/inertia), but it is necessary and beneficial. If darkness didn't exist, light would have no significance. This does not mean tamas is inherently bad. Indeed, the universe operates through the interplay of Sattva (purity, balance), Rajas (activity, passion), and Tamas (inertia, darkness). Tamas is not inherently negative; it

has its place in maintaining balance. For instance, rest and sleep are necessary for rejuvenation, and both are influenced by *tamas*. The key is balance—excess *tamas* can lead to ignorance and stagnation, but its absence would create chaos. Just as darkness is necessary for light to be perceived, *tamas* is an essential component of existence.

Q: You mentioned that even if any syllable—'A,' 'U,' or 'M'—is removed from Om, it still remains complete. What does this mean?

A: "Om" is not merely the sum of its syllables; it is a transcendental sound. The letters 'A,' 'U,' and 'M' are used to articulate its presence, but the actual essence of Om exists beyond these letters. Even if we attempt to isolate or remove a syllable, the fundamental sound and essence of Om remain intact. The vibration of Om is an eternal, indivisible reality.

Manoj Ji

Q: Suppose someone is engaged in a noble activity, like reading the Bhagavad Gītā, and finds immense joy and peace in it. When they express this to others, they may receive praise, which can sometimes lead to feelings of pride. While it is natural to feel uplifted, how can one prevent pride from setting in?

A: We are not completely detached beings, so such emotions will arise. Feeling joy and fulfillment from spiritual pursuits is natural. The key is to remain mindful of not becoming attached to the praise or recognition. If one finds themselves dwelling too much on appreciation, it indicates a Rajasic tendency. A Sāttvika approach would be to accept the experience as divine grace rather than personal achievement. Reciting "Om Tat Sat" serves as a reminder that all actions and their outcomes ultimately belong to the Supreme and not to the individual. It helps in maintaining humility and detachment.

R M Thakur Ji

Q: You mentioned that the topic of charity deserves an entire session on its own. Have you previously conducted a detailed discourse on charity? Is it available on YouTube or any other platform?

A: I do not recall if I have conducted a dedicated session on charity, but you can search for it. However, the points discussed today cover the essence of charity comprehensively. If you wish to explore it further, you can simply revisit this discourse, as it contains sufficient insights on the subject.

Yogesh Ji

Q: Bhaiya, yesterday, in your discussion of L2, you mentioned that for all living beings, death is certain according to their karma. If death is certain, then their birth is also certain according to their karma. If everyone's birth is certain, then how and when will one attain moksha?

A: Moksha can only be attained in human life. When you follow the path of devotion or knowledge, you burn your karmic fruits in the fire of wisdom. Once you clear your karmic account, your next birth will not happen, and you will attain moksha. The remaining balance in your karmic account is cleared by God, allowing your soul to merge with the Supreme Soul. However, do not think that the number of souls decreases in creation. The universe is infinite, beyond numerical calculations. Once moksha is attained, the soul does not take birth again.

Q: When a person is nearing death, you mentioned that it is beneficial to recite the Bhagavad Gītā to them. You also said that even six hours after death, the soul can still hear. If we place the Bhagavad Gītā on the deceased's chest after reading it, what should we do with it afterward? Should it remain with the body until the cremation?

A: Yes, there is no harm in keeping the Gītā with the deceased's body until the cremation. There is no specific restriction regarding this.

Udham Ji

Q: What is the name of the story about the 25 types of charity that you mentioned?

A: It is called Dharma Shatak.

Geetha Ji

Q: You told us about Sattvic, Rajasic, and Tamasic foods, I have a question regarding fermented foods such as fermented rice, beetroot kanji, etc. Under which category do they fall? Are they good to consume or not?

A: Fermented food, such as rice left overnight for probiotics, is considered basi (stale). It falls under Rajasic and Tamasic categories. It is not considered Sattvic.

Q: Since I am vegetarian, what are the sources of Vitamin B12 and other essential nutrients?

A: Milk is a good source of B12. However, if you are concerned about milk adulteration, you should find a pure source. Powdered milk also contains B12. If you still need supplements, there is a company called Unived in Pune that provides plant-based vegetarian supplements for B12, calcium, Vitamin D3, and more. You can find their products on Amazon and other online platforms.

Q: What about instant pre-mix food that we prepare at home or packaged food? Does it fall under Sattvic, Rajasic, or Tamasic?

A: Packaged food, even if it is ready-to-cook, falls under Rajasic and Tamasic categories. Only fresh food is considered Sattvic. The more fresh food you consume, the more Sattvic your diet will be.

Nalini Ji

Q: When we complete a vrat (fasting ritual), we invite people for food. Ideally, we should feed Brahmins, but some rituals require feeding young girls or married women (Suhaagans). Nowadays, I see that even widows are invited to partake in such meals. Is this correct?

A: In general situations, it is fine to offer food to anyone. However, in specific rituals, you should follow the prescribed method. If the ritual specifies feeding Brahmins, then only Brahmins should be fed.

Rajkumari Ji

Q: My question is related to the one previously asked. If a sage manifests something through pure willpower, why is it considered Tamasic?

A: I did not call it Tamasic. The problem is that we often see Tamas as negative, but it is simply an element of nature. Darkness itself is not evil; it is a natural state. In spiritual context, Tamasic qualities have a different meaning. Shiva, for example, is associated with Tamas, but that does not mean he is negative.

Q: Should women avoid chanting "Om Namah Shivaya" while offering water (Jal Abhishek) to Shiva?

A: It is fine to say "Namah Shivaya" while offering water, but repeatedly chanting "Om Namah Shivaya" as a japa is not recommended for women.

Q: If someone wrongs us at work or in life, is it wrong to share our experience with family members?

A: No, it is not wrong. Sometimes, it is necessary to discuss such matters. However, the issue arises when one starts enjoying talking negatively about someone repeatedly. If you are simply sharing for awareness, it is fine. But if you keep repeating it to derive pleasure from criticizing the person, then it becomes problematic.

Chetna Ji

Q: I have some confusion about the concept of giving away credit (Shrayadaan). Does it mean giving credit to someone else for your work?

A: Yes, Shrayadaan means attributing all the credit to another person, even if you were involved in

the work.

Q: What is Brahm Daan?

A: Brahm Daan refers to the knowledge of the Supreme (Brahm Gyan), which a guru imparts to a disciple.

Q: What are the 25 types of charity you mentioned?

A: There is no fixed list of 25. I just mentioned them as examples during our discussion.

Q: What is Daatavya Mukti?

A: It refers to forgiving a debt. If someone owes you money but cannot repay it, you clear the debt so that there is no unresolved karmic account between you.

Renu Ji

Q: Which chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā should be read daily?

A: Read the chapter you are most comfortable with. If you are familiar with all the chapters, you can rotate them daily. The entire Gītā is divine, so ideally, one should read all chapters rather than selecting only a few. The session concluded with prayers and chanting Hanuman Chalisa.

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



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

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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