

Newsletter on Bhagavad Gita by Dr. P.V. Nath

The following text is a compilation of the single issues of a regular newsletter by e-mail, composed by Dr. Pathikonda Viswambara Nath. It includes the original slokas of the Gita as well as the transliteration, translation and commentaries by Dr. Nath.

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**OM SAHA NAVAVATU SAHA NAU BHUNAKTU
SAHA VEERYAM KARAVAVAHAI
TEJASWI NAVADHEETAMASTU
MAA VID VISHAVAHAI**

May He protect us both (the teacher and the pupil)

May He cause us both to enjoy (the Supreme)

May we both exert together (to discover the true inner meaning of the scriptures)

May our studies be thorough and fruitful.

May we never misunderstand each other.

The Gita is in the form of dialogue between Krishna, the preceptor and the disciple Arjuna. Sanjaya, the narrator to King Dhritarashtra, intercepts now and then with a comment of his own. There are a total of 18 chapters with 701 verses (slokas.) Each of the chapters has a title and the title ends with the word "Yoga".

The word "**Yoga**" is derived from the word "Yuj" which means "Unite."

Study of every chapter assists the seeker to unite with the Lord and hence the use of the word "Yoga."

The seeker is he/she who is looking for attaining the union with the "Parabrahman" and experience the "Eternal Bliss." In Sanskrit the name for the word "seeker" is "Sadhaka". The efforts of the sadhaka is known as "Sadhana".

To undertake the task, the seeker must have "Faith" and "Devotion" in the subject, the teacher and "Parabrahman."

Chapter 17: ŚRADDHĀTRAYA-VIBHĀGA-YOGA

The Yoga of three-fold Faith

INTRODUCTION

Quote:

Rabindra Nath Tagore:

Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark. (It has faith that the dawn will come and expel the darkness.)

Henry Ford: “if you think you can”, “and if you think you can’t”,

Both are right because “you can and you can’t” are your faiths that guide you till your last breath.

Let me start with the mantra from Tatva Bodha of Sri Adi Shankaracharya.

In answer to the question: “Sraddha Kee drushee”?

“What is the nature of Sraddha”?

The answer is:

“Guru Vedanta vakyadishu viswasaha” meaning,

“Faith in the words of Guru and Vedanta is Sraddha”.

Faith is:

Shastrasya guru vakyasya

Satya budhyavaa dharana

Sa sraddha kathithaha sadbhihi

Meaning,

Unshakeable conviction in the Sastras, words of Guru is Faith.

Faith plays an important role in the lives of all. Faith is towards something unknown. The known, really speaking does not need any faith.

For example, I know it is my hand and I do not need to have any faith in the belief.

On the other hand, when my mother tells me, this lady is your sister, I need to have faith in that statement.

Sloka 39. Chapter 4:

**SRADDHA AVAAN LABHATE JNANAM TATPARAHA SAMYATENDRIYAH JNANAM
LABDHVAA PARAAM SHANTIM ACHIRENA ADHIGACHATI**

The man of faith having knowledge as his supreme goal, the devoted, having controlled the senses, obtains knowledge of Atma, and having obtained that, enjoys “Peace” for ever.

That which is enveloping us all and beyond the universe we know of is described in the Vedas as “Paramatman.”

To start off, first of all we must have faith in the concept of that “Supreme Parabrahman”.

Sri Krishna, the Jagadguru through the medium of the Bhagavad Gita has given us the summary of all the Upanisads and we should develop faith in His words.

The great spiritual masters have given commentaries on the sacred text and there needs to be faith in their teachings, in order to understand the complex study of the “Eternal”.

What is the benefit from developing “Faith”?

Faith enables us to listen with attention and respect, to the discussion/discourse by the Guru on the subject of Vedas and Upanisads. Faith also encourages us to reflect upon what has been taught, in order to realise the Truth.

It helps in Sravana, Manana and Nidhi dhyasa, the three basic conditions for Self-realisation.

It does not apply to blind faith.

What happens to those who have no faith?

Sloka 40, Chapter 4:

**AJNASCHA ASRADHAVANASCHA SAMSHAYATMA VINASHYATI NAAYAM LOKO'STI
NA PARAAM NA SUKHAM SAMSHAYATMANAHA.**

The ignorant, faithless, doubting man goes to destruction. For the doubter, there is neither this world nor the other world nor the happiness.

The subject matter “Faith” is very deep and Sri Krishna takes us through this chapter explaining what faithful activities are and how they can be classified into three main groups - “Satvika, Rajasika and Tamasika (Pure, passionate and lazy)”.

The last sloka of the last chapter:

“Therefore let the scriptures be your authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known the commandments of the scriptures you should work here.”

What is “Sradha”?

It is the natural inclination and respect for an idea, thought, and personality. It is the disposition of the mind. As we have studied, especially in chapter 14, the mind is the seat of vasanas/thought imprints. Depending upon the nature of the thought imprints, each one of us has one of the three types of inclinations namely, Satvic, Rajasic or Tamasic.

For example,

natural desire and respect for knowledge is a Satvic Sraadda,

natural desire for personal name and fame is Rajasic Sradha and

having no desire or respect for knowledge and sticking to ignorance is Tamasic Sradha.

The sastras advocate faith in the following seven:

The Mantras (sacred message or text often repeated during/for meditation);

Tirtha - Holy places of pilgrimage;

Daiva (higher divinities, illumined ones);

Guru;

Brahmana;

Daivajna (knower of Brahman and divinity) and

Vaidya (physician).

It is important to remember that the results of actions depend upon the inherent gunas inside us. Pure satvic actions give long lasting benefit. Passionate rajasic actions and lazy tamasic actions are not beneficial in the long run.

Each one of us is born with a responsibility to:

Our body;

The society

and

The nature.

Every day we make use of these three and gradually wear them out. This chapter is giving us the knowledge to replenish what is lost by us, by society and by nature, due to our actions. For this we need to keep our body as fit as possible. This is the way we can make our life fruitful and please the Lord who is within and all around us.

How do we replenish what is lost by our actions?

- a) Yajna - dedicated acts with attitude of “Sacrifice”;
- b) Dana - acts of Charity;
- c) Tapas - acts of Penance for purity of thought, speech and actions.

Yajna/sacrifice is to reimburse/repay what we have taken from society and nature.

Dana is a way to repay our debt to the society.

Tapas is to remove the defects in mind, speech and body and to maintain the bodily equilibrium.

Our sraddha/faith should not only be in the Lord, the Scriptures and the Guru but should also be in ourselves.

Each one of us can lift ourselves or drown ourselves by our speech, thoughts and actions. Having faith that we can lift ourselves will give us enormous courage to face the challenges of life.

This comes from:

Dedication

Devotion and

Dependence on the higher pure power and knowledge that guides us.

Sloka 5, Chapter 6:

**UDDHARED ATMANATATMANAM NATMANAM AVASADAYET
ATMAIVA HYATMANO BANDHURATMAIVA RIPURATMANAHA**

Let a man raise himself by the Self, not let the Self go down. For, this Self is the friend of the self and the self is the enemy of the Self.

The Vedas give us the knowledge of the Supreme and of Nature but they are hard to understand. Acharya’s and gurus direct us towards that Vedic knowledge (direct knowledge) and help us to understand.

Having faith in both the Vedas and the Guru will make the spiritual journey easy for the seekers.

How can one know the sastras? We are told that the Vedas are so vast and that one single life is not enough to master them.

Just like the child having to go through so many classes before graduation, we have to go through so many births and deaths before understanding them clearly.

Sri Krishna gives the knowledge to Arjuna to enable him to analyse eating habits, dedicated activities (Yajna), acts of self-denial (Tapas) and acts of charity (Dana).

Sraddha therefore can be expressed as “trust or reliance in the religious doctrines believed in”.

Sraddha gives us the direction needed, to progress on the spiritual path and the determination to reach our destination in life. As this is the main tool for “Moksha” this chapter comes just before the final chapter “Moksha Sanyasa yoga”.

अर्जुन उवाच ।
ये शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।
तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ॥१॥

arjuna uvacha

ye śhāstra-vidhim utsṛijya yajante śhraddhayānvitāḥ ।
teṣhām niṣṭhā tu kā kṛiṣhṇa sattvam āho rajas tamah ॥1॥

Sloka 1

**ARJUNA UVACHA
YE SHASTRA-VIDHIM UTSRIJYA YAJANTE SHRADDHAYANVITAH
TESHAM NISHTHA TU KA KRISHNA SATTVAM AHO RAJAS TAMAH**

Arjuna said:

O Krishna! Those who perform worship with faith, though contrary to the law of the scriptures: what is their condition? (Is it) Satvic, Rajasic or Tamasic?

ye: those, who;
sastra vidhim: the ordinance/law of the sastras/scriptures;
utsrijya: setting aside/contrary to;
yajante: worship;
shraddhayanvitaha: endowed with faith;
teshaam: their;
nishtaa: condition;
tu: verily;
kaa: what;
sattvam: satvic;
aho: or;
rajas: rajasic;
tamah: tamasic.

Poet Veda Vyasa, through the medium of Arjuna is putting forth the question on behalf of those who:
Do not know what the scriptures are,
Know what the scriptures are but have not read them,
Have read them but not understood
and those
Who have misunderstood the scriptures,
Yet, by having faith in a higher power, conduct various acts of worship as part and parcel of their daily life with faith.

It is evident that such people are not the asuric type mentioned by the Lord in sloka 4 of chapter 16 who do not have belief/faith in God. The people He is referring to in this sloka are earnest in following the path of self-perfection. Their motive may be right but the path followed is wrong. When the motive is good, should they be considered as conducting worship as “Satvika” or should be considered as “Rajasika or Tamasika”?

He wants to know what is their fate?

The important word in this sloka is “Nishta”.
What is their condition? Arjuna asks.

If we do not know the sastras but have blind faith in God can we get salvation?
Where will we end up if we do things that are contrary to the sastras?

To cross the road one needs to have knowledge of the road and its condition. It is also true that one cannot cross the road blind-folded.

The same can be said for those who want to attain Moksha but are blind to the knowledge, and leading a life in ignorance of the sastras.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।

सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥२॥

śhrī-bhagavān uvācha

tri-vidhā bhavati śhraddhā dehinām sā svabhāva-jā ।

sāttvikī rājasī chaiva tāmasī cheti tām śhrīṇu ॥२॥

Sloka 2

SHRI-BHAGAVAN UVACHA

TRI-VIDHA BHAVATI SHRADDHA DEHINAM SA SVABHAVA-JA

SATTVIKI RAJASI CHAIVA TAMASI CHETI TAM SHRINU

The Lord said:

Born of the nature of beings, the faith is three fold, Satvika, Rajasika and Tamasika. Now hear about it.

trividhaa: threefold;

bhavati: is;

sraddha: faith;

dehinaam: of beings;

saa: that;

swabhavaja: born of own nature;

satvikaa: satvika;

rajasikaa: rajasika;

tamasika: tamasic;

eva cha: and also;

taam: that;

shrunu: hear.

We have studied already that each one of us are born into this world with a bundle of vasanas carried from the previous births. These are our unfulfilled thought imprints. In reply to the question by Arjuna, Sri Krishna is reiterating this fact.

Our thought imprints are our own inherited qualities and accordingly we are born with different objects of faith. The inborn nature (pent up vasanas from the past) is what is meant by the word “Svabhava”.

My actions will be according to my inner dispositions. Faith will add fuel to my actions.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥३॥

sattvānurūpā sarvasya śhraddhā bhavati bhārata |
śhraddhā-mayo ‘yam puruṣho yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ ॥3॥

Sloka 3

**SATTVANURUPA SARVASYA SHRADDHA BHAVATI BHARATA
SHRADDHA-MAYO ‘YAM PURUSHO YO YACCHRADDHAH SA EVA SAH**

The faith of each person is in accordance with his nature, O Bharata, the very essence of the jiva is faith. What his sraddha is, that he is verily.

Bharata: another name for Arjuna;
satvanuroopa: according to the nature;
sarvasya: of all beings;
sraddha: faith;
bhavati: is;
sraddhamayaha: of the nature of qualities;
ayam: this;
puruṣho: the puruṣha;
yo: who;
yat sraddhaha: what faith;
saha: he;
sa eva: that only.

There are two ways by which the Atman who is associated with the body relates to the world around.

- The soul within (Atman) identifying with the body becomes “Jivatma”.
- Jivatma becomes “Jiva” when it forgets its true identity.

The third way is when it releases itself from the false mental attachment to the body and the surroundings and realises its own true identity as “Kshetrajna” (Chapter 13).

The mind, (the seat or store house of all the vasanas), considering itself to be “the person” and forgetting its complete dependence on “Atman” for its existence, becomes an independently operating unit, this is known as the “Jiva”: the ego.

The mind operating as if alone is the jiva/person.
The Lord says: “The very essence of the jiva is Faith”.

He is referring to the inherent vasanas which form the basis of one's faith. The qualities stored are what the individual is, so one tends to say "as a man's faith is, so he is."

If the mind is carrying "pure thought imprints", purity becomes the essence of that man.

In this sloka, the word "Satvanuroopa" refers to the mind which forms the basis of the nature of the individual. The shapes of the desires that reflect through the mind become the "Roopa" (mental form) of that person. These reflect in the future actions of that individual.

Having understood this sloka and reflecting on what was discussed in chapter 14 relating to the "Gunas", one has to infer that it is the duty of the parents in the earlier days, guru and the society in the later days to give the correct directions to follow.

The individual himself has to develop the wisdom of life (Vijnana) as he grows up, cultivating pure ideas and thoughts and dropping any rajasic or tamasic traits.

In other words, as per the title of chapter 13, the seeds of purity and jnana have to be instilled in the "Kshetra", the mind. Under favourable circumstances and after a period of time the seeds sprout and become intellectual flowers of wisdom. These flowers should be offered to the Lord.

Of course the final stages involve dropping even the satvic temperament and achieving the state of "Suddha Satva."

This is the final goal for the sincere seeker.

One final point to ponder about in this sloka:

Some might put forward a question:

Can we change our Faith in this life?

The answer is:

Even in this life we can gradually transform from one type of existence to another. The birth as humans is to give us an opportunity to change the colour of our qualities for the better. It is possible to take up the spiritual practice and change our faiths from tamasic to suddha satva. This is the true sadhana for the sincere spiritual seekers.

The man of true sraddha has confidence in himself, faith in the ideal he has chosen and reverence for the person who guides him.

Faith in Jagadguru Krishna and His gift to the mankind "The Srimad Bhagawadgita" will lift us towards Him.

यजन्ते सात्विका देवान्यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।
प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥४॥

yajante sāttvikā devān yakṣha-rakṣhānsi rājasāḥ |
pretān bhūta-gaṇānśh chānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ ॥४॥

Sloka 4

**YAJANTE SATTVIKA DEVAN YAKSHA-RAKSHANSI RAJASAH
PRETAN BHUTA-GANANSH CHANYE YAJANTE TAMASA JANAH**

The satvika men worship the devas. The rajasika men worship yakshas and rakshasas. The tamasika men worship the ghosts and the hosts of bhutas.

yajante: worship;
satvikaa: men of satva guna;
devaan: the devas;
yaksha: the yakshas;
rakshasas: the rakshasas;
rajasee: men of rajoguna;
pretaan: the hosts of departed souls;
bhoota ganaan: hosts of bhutas;
ca: and;
anye: others;
tamasaa janaha: men of tamoguna.

The main emphasis in this sloka is on “Worship”: it does not matter whether they are of satvika, rajasika or tamasika temperament. All the three types do conduct worship but the way the worship is conducted and expressed differs from one type to the other.

The satvika men believe in the higher, the divine and worship one of the various forms of God. They have faith and belief in that form of God. The Hindus have so many different forms of God. There is also another tier of gods in the pantheon of Gods for the Hindus. These are the demigods supposed to be rulers of the various powers of nature like the “Wind, Rain, Fire” etc. Their worship reflects the nobler qualities in them.

People with this temperament go to the temples, mosques, churches, synagogues etc. They also make it a habit to take their children to these places for worship. They look for divine help in fulfilling their wishes.

The rajasika on the other hand worship yakshas and rakshasas. Who are they? Why do they worship them?

Yakshas are brothers of Kubera, the Lord of wealth. They are supposed to abide in “Gandharva Loka” which is the sphere immediately above the sphere of earth where we, the mortals live.

Rakshasas are men of supernatural demonical power and live the life of tyranny. They rule by their immense power and make life hell for the holy men and those who follow the path of dharma.

The rajasika, with passion for power and wealth and with an ulterior selfish motive, express strongly the “ego”. When they are unable to get what they want from their own wealth/power they do not hesitate to approach one of the deities from a higher rank to fulfil that wish. Not just that, when the wish does not get fulfilled, they are ready to change their allegiance to another source of power.

Even when one wish is fulfilled, they do not hesitate to change their allegiance to another power to fulfil a different wish. Many a times they aim to become as wealthy and powerful as the power they adore and worship.

Ordinarily the word “Worship” is used with reference to religious practices as “reverence and adoration of God.”

In the context of rajasic faith it is the same “reverence and adoration” but to those in higher stations in life.

The tamasika on the other hand worship Pretas and Bhootas. These are the dead spirits.

Those of tamasika faith are thoughtless men of criminal intention. To fulfil ugly and personal self-gratifications they are ready to worship the bad elements in society. Some go to the extent of invoking dead spirits.

Here, I would like to say that the bad elements in society are technically dead (as good as dead) to the society. They have no feelings regarding the welfare of common men, women or children in this world and I personally consider these as the pretas and bhootas, the so called dead spirits. Hired men/gangsters/thugs belong to this group.

Some people ask if there really are “bhootas and Pretas” roaming about in this world and the straight forward answer is “we do not know.”

But we know that those with bad intentions unfortunately do exist and if anyone is associated with those whose actions harm the innocent, let us not know about them. It is always better to be as far away as possible from such people. Nearness even out of curiosity to know or understand them, may impart their beliefs/attitude to us and before we realise it, we may become victims ourselves or become one of that kind.

Slowly and steadily by self-analysis, the seeker will be able to climb up the spiritual mountain and rise from tamasika to rajasika, from rajasika to satvika and finally achieve “Salvation.”
The aim of life is to make such progress spiritually.

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।
दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥5॥

aśhāstra-vihitam̐ ghoram̐ tapyante ye tapo janāḥ |
dambhāhankāra-sanyuktāḥ kāma-rāga-balānvitāḥ |5||

कर्षयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।
मां चैवान्तःशरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यसुरनिश्चयान् ॥6॥

karṣhayantaḥ śharīra-stham̐ bhūta-grāmam̐ achetasāḥ |
mām̐ chaivāntaḥ śharīra-stham̐ tān̐ viddhy āsura-niśhchayān̐ ||6||

Sloka 5

**ASHASTRA-VIHITAM GHORAM TAPYANTE YE TAPO JANAH
DAMBHAHANKARA-SANYUKTAH KAMA-RAGA-BALANVITAH**

Those men who practice horrible austerities not enjoined by the Sastras, who are possessed by pretension and pride, impelled by lust, longing and animal strength,

Sloka 6

KARSHAYANTAH SHARIRA-STHAM BHUTA-GRAMAM ACHETASAH MAM CHAIVANTAH SHARIRA-STHAM TAN VIDHY ASURA-NISHCHAYAN

Senselessly torturing all the elements in the body, and Me, also dwelling within the body, devoid of understanding, you may know such a person to be of demonical resolve.

ashastra vihitam: not according to the sastras/not enjoined by the sastras;
ghoram: horrible;
tapyante: practice;
tapo': austerities;
ye janaha: which/those men;
damba: pretension;
ahamkara: pride;
samyukta: possessed by;
kama raga balanvitaha: impelled by lust, longing and animal strength.

karshayantaha: torturing;
shareerastham: dwelling within the body;
bhootagramam: all the elements in the body;
achetasaha: devoid of understanding;
maam: Me;
cha: and;
eva: also;
shareerastham: dwelling in the body;
antaha: within;
taan: them;
viddhi: know;
asuraan: demonical;
nischayaan: resolve.

Asastra vihitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janaha: those men who practice horrible/severe austerities not enjoined by the sastras.

The first half of sloka 5 is very important to understand. Unfortunately many have a wrong notion of what "Tapas" really is. This is partly because of the Puranic stories where men in search of great boons (for selfish gains) from the almighty, are depicted undertaking painful rituals or torturing their bodies. We come across episodes where men in search of super powers, stayed in the scorching sun, sometimes standing on one leg, for days, months or even years. Arjuna was probably familiar with these practices, because he had seen or heard of those conducting such austerities.

Sri Krishna (wanting to dismiss this wrong notion from the mind of Arjuna) and sage poet Veda Vyasa (wanting to dismiss this notion from the minds of seekers) have therefore given us these important instructions, as to what is not to be done by the seekers in search of "Eternal peace."

Asastra Vihitam: not enjoined in the sastras.

Krishna has already stressed on the conduct of actions enjoined by the sastras and now He is talking of actions not enjoined in the sastras. The sastras at no point advocate severe, torturous or painful methods of conducting tapas at any time, by anybody.

This brings us to the question “what is Tapas”?

“Tapas” is an act of austerity to purify the speech, body and the mind.

“Austere” in austerity means “harsh, severe, strict, without luxury”.

It stems from the Greek word “Austeros” which also means “harsh”.

Purifying the mind of evil tendencies is real tapas. As a matter of fact we will be taken later on in this chapter into the theme of tapas of mind, speech and body. The sastras have given us several methods to purify the mind.

The dangers that arise from severe austerities (severe acts of harsh denial and torture of the body and mind) are bodily injury and real harm to the mind.

Not just that, they also prevent the seeker from undertaking real acts of purity and studying to understand the sastras clearly.

There is also harm caused to family and society by such acts.

It is a fact that the mind cannot withstand physical torture of the body.

Meditation on God is a good act but not by torturing one’s own body.

Damba Ahamkara samyukta: possessed by pretension and pride.

Damba is pretension to appear greater than what one really is and this we have discussed in chapter 16, sloka 4.

Ahamkara: (refer to sloka 18, chapter 16). It is expression of the ego.

These two bring out:

Kama Raga (lust and longing) which in turn bring out:

Balanvitahaa: express animal strength.

We have already discussed about kama several times.

Lust is that desire which is contrary to dharma.

Kama in this context refers to lust in particular and not for desires in general.

Raga is a sense of attraction to what one likes.

If these two are simply for desire gratification then they should be considered as asuric.

Why?

Lustful desire makes an individual lose his sense of judgement and brings out the animal strength in him.

Lust (Kama) and longing (Raga) for sensual pleasures take away the inherent divine qualities in a man.

We have examples of asuras like Ravana who conducted severe penance (tapas) but the power he achieved by it was used only to instil terror and bring havoc to others.

Correct tapas is acts that kill the animal instincts within and create mental purity.

The word “shareerastham” in the first half of sloka 6 refers to the five elements.

Karshayanta shareerestham means torturing the body and the mind.

Let us be clear that the sastras do not advocate harm to any part of the body.

They do advocate moderation (chapter 6, sloka 17 - Yuktahara Viharasya) in all activities concerning the body.

When the rule of moderation is not adhered to, it becomes an act of torture to the body.

For example, the sastras do advocate fasting at certain times and certain days in a month. They also advocate fasting when one is conducting vratas.

They also make it clear that if one is ill and unable to undertake total fasting, he can consume milk and fruits during the conduct of the rituals.

Withering away of the body by fasting is asuric in nature.

On the other hand fasting for acquiring self-discipline is a divine act that is accepted by the sastras.

When the true enemy is the mind with its impure thoughts, torturing the body is of no use. The body is not our enemy. Acts of self-discipline are to be taken only as a means to an end and not an end in themselves.

Acetasaha: devoid of understanding. Ignorance of the sastras.

Understanding what?

- a) Not understanding the scriptures properly or
- b) Not having true knowledge of the scriptures or
- c) Ignorance of the sastras.

The mind instead of the intellect rules and this leads to self-destruction.

(Karshayantam) Maam chaiva antaha shareerastham: (torturing) even Me also dwelling within the vehicle of the body.

Maam Antaha Shareerastham in the second half of the sloka, refers to the Atman within.

By acts of self-denial as discussed, it is not just the physical body and the mind that is hurt. The Lord says that He (as the indwelling Atman) also undergoes torture. Why?

The Lord wishes welfare of all. For that reason He stays within the individual throughout his sojourn of births and deaths (Vasamsi jeernani – sloka 22, chapter2). He would like each one of us to be totally pure and become eligible to unite with Him but until then He is trapped like a bird in a cage. By asuric behaviour we are prolonging the day of union between Atman with the Paramatman. This is the torture referred to here.

There is another reason why He says He is undergoing torture.

He is constantly wishing welfare and Mukti for the jivatman who has forgotten his true identity. As the “Antaratma” He is in constant communication with the jiva through the inner divine voice (antarvani). It is us, who have kept our ears closed to the inner voice of the Antaratma.

He is hurt by this act of negligence on our part.

This is also the torture He is referring to.

Taan viddhy asuran nischayaan: know such person to be of demonical nature.

It is self-evident that he who is torturing the body and the Atman within is a demon on earth.

Self-torture is to be considered as “Himsa”. The Lord has advocated “Ahimsa” all along for all the sincere seekers.

Not hurting Him who is residing within is the main point to note from this sloka.

The Atman dwelling in all, including one’s own body.

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः ।

यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु ॥7॥

āhāras tv api sarvasya tri-vidho bhavati priyaḥ ।

Sloka 7

**AHARAS TV API SARVASYA TRI-VIDHO BHAVATI PRIYAH
YAJNAS TAPAS TATHA DANAM TESHAM BHEDAM IMAM SHRINU**

The food dear to each of the three types of men is also three fold. So also is Sacrifice, Austerity and Dana (Charity). Now hear their difference.

aharastvapi: and also the food;
sarvasya: of all people;
trividha: threefold;
priyaha bhavati: is dear;
yajnas: of sacrifice;
tapah: of Tapas;
daanam: of charitable acts;
teshaam: of them;
imam: this;
bhedam: difference;
shrunu: hear.

From now onwards the Lord takes us into the temple called “Sradhdha”, the main theme of discussion in this chapter. As it is the sradhdha/faith that gives the final result in any endeavour, it is important to understand the different results which can arise due to actions conducted with Satvic (pure), Rajasic (passionate) or Tamasic (indolent) faiths.

Of these the first section is concerning the types of food consumed by us.
Why food, one may ask?

The mind is the centre for all actions undertaken and the mind is formed of food. We consume food several times a day and our actions are therefore directly in proportion to the type of food consumed. Certain foods have intoxicating effects on the mind which reflect in the actions that follow. On the other hand there are foods that have a calming effect on the mind too.

All of us do express our inner nature in our actions. As we have discussed before, the inner nature has an admixture of the three gunas of which only one guna is expressed at any one time. Also, each of us has a preponderance of one guna and it is what we are.

If we can learn the art of analysing our actions, we can find out what is our main guna. Once we know what our main guna is, if we want to make progress in the spiritual journey, we can start working at strengthening or improving our predominant guna.

What is given in these slokas which we are going to study should act as a guide to improve ourselves.

It is true that we are good at analysing others actions and can comment or be critical of them. There is nothing wrong in analysing others actions but there should not be a critical analysis to find fault in others.

What we should do by analysing others' actions is: question if we have expressed such actions ourselves.

If we are expressing wrong actions, then we must think how to correct this.

Let us not forget that at the end of the day, it is the God who comes in so many different ways to teach us the lessons of life.

We all have the dormant divine potential within us and it is our duty to express the divinity by learning the art of self-analysis.

Such acts not only uplift us spiritually but also help in bringing joy all around.

आयुःसत्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धनाः ।

रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्या आहाराः सात्विकप्रियाः ॥८॥

āyuh-sattva-balārogya-sukha-prīti-vivardhanāḥ ।

rasyāḥ snigdhaḥ sthiraḥ hṛidyā āhārāḥ sāttvika-priyāḥ ॥८॥

Sloka 8

**AYUH-SATTVA-BALAROGYA-SUKHA-PRITI-VIVARDHANAH
RASYAH SNIGDHAH STHIRA HRIDYA AHARAH SATTVIKA-PRIYAH**

Foods which augment life-span, purity, strength, joy and cheerfulness, which are savoury and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable are dear to the Satvika type of man.

ayuhu: life span;

satva: pure;

bala: strength;

arogya: health;

sukha: happiness/agreeable;

preeti: cheerfulness;

vivardhanaha: augment;

rasyaha: savoury;

snighdhaha: oleaginous;

sthira: substantial;

hrudya: agreeable;

aharaha: food;

satvika priyaha: dear to satvika type of man.

Good diet is one of the best holistic approaches to treat the ill.

As a doctor I can say that this is what the medical profession and dieticians often advise their patients. The public health department in any country is eager to promote health and long life for its citizens and the W.H.O. is eager to promote health and long life to all the citizens of the world.

Ayuhu: Whatever we eat has to help in increasing life expectancy. Due to the advancement of scientific technology, now the average life expectancy for men/women has gone up considerably. We should therefore make a habit of eating such foods that increase life expectancy.

Satva: Purity: the food has to be pure. Members from the public health department are very particular when it concerns the purity of food to be consumed by consumers. From a spiritual point of view, pure foods have a direct bearing on spiritual health. We come across so many ascetics who were or are living a healthy life on fruits, root products and milk. By a direct bearing on the mind, the pure food gives substantial energy for spiritual purposes.

The purity should be reflected in all these fields: harvesting, cultivating, exporting, selling, bringing the food to the house for consumption, cooking, eating, washing the plates etc.

Bala: what we eat must give us strength. We need to be strong to fight against many illnesses. When we are ill, we are given multivitamins, calcium, iron etc. to give the strength to get better. We also need a strong will power so that the mind can exercise control over the senses and control the animal behaviour which is harmful in the long run. The food we eat should have adequate vitamins and other products that are good for health.

We also know that if we maintain good health in our younger days and prepare well for the oncoming of middle and old age, we will be stronger to fight the health problems, which we may face later in life. Also, we can recover quickly from any ailments or surgical procedures we may have to undergo.

Arogya: Health. The food should give us the strength to grow and fight illnesses. What has been said concerning life expectancy, purity and strength applies to arogya also.

Sukha preeti: Joy and Cheerfulness. It refers to the pure state of the mind. What gives us good health brings joy and cheerfulness along with it. We certainly will not be cheerful when we are ill or weak.

Vivardhana: Augment. This applies to all aspects discussed so far. Augment of life span, strength, purity, joy and cheerfulness.

Rasyaha: Savoury. The food consumed must be desirable to the consumer. A balanced diet should include items that are savoury too.

Snigdha: Oligeanous. A certain amount of fats should be part of the balanced diet. Fatty food increases the reserve fats in the body that insulate and also give beauty. The energy stored in the fatty tissues will also come to help in fighting illness.

Sthira: Substantial. On average an adult male needs about 2000 to 2500 calories from food per day. This should have a balanced proportion of carbohydrates, fats and proteins. A hard manual labourer like farmer needs to have a higher calorie intake. A Sedentary worker needs a lower calorie intake. A very heavy meal at midday reduces efficiency at work by making the person drowsy.

Hrudya: Agreeable. The tastes vary from individual to individual and from people from one region to the other. When one moves from one country to another, depression could set in if the type of food which is personally agreeable is not available in the new place. We all develop food habits from childhood. Our tongue can be our friend or our enemy depending on how we develop our habits.

There is a famous Vedic declaration: “Sarvam jayati raso’ jayati” meaning: One can win all if he can win over his taste.

The parents and society have a large role to play in the health of the nation and this sloka is for the positive aspects of good eating. The next two slokas highlight the negative aspects in relation to eating habits.

**कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।
आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥९॥**

**kaṭv-amlā-lavaṇāty-uṣhṇa- tikṣhṇa-rūkṣha-vidāhinaḥ ।
āhārā rājasasyeṣṭhā duḥkha-śhokāmaya-pradāḥ ॥९॥**

Sloka 9

KATV-AMLA-LAVANATY-USHNA-TIKSHNA-RUKSHA-VIDAHINAH AHARA RAJASASYESHTA DUHKHA-SHOKAMAYA-PRADAH

Foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning are liked by the Rajasika. They produce pain, sorrow and disease.

katuhu: bitter;
amla: sour;
lavana: saline;
atyushanaha: excessively hot;
teekshnaha: pungent;
rukshaha: dry;
vidahinha: burning/causing thirst;
ahara: food;
rajasasya: of the rajasika;
ishtaha: are liked;
dukha: sorrow/pain;
sokha: grief;
amaya: disease;
pradaha: productive.

What types of food are liked by rajasika?

What are the food habits found in a rajasika?

By analysing our own tastes in the foods we consume we can get an idea of which category we belong to.

The active, passionate men/women enjoy the foods that have a strong flavour and taste. Foods that have a salty taste and which are spicy are liked by them. Tears tend to trickle down profusely and nostrils water copiously while they are eating extra hot pickles. They add extra salt and additional spices on to their plates. They experience a burning sensation in their throat and are thirsty but continue to enjoy what they are eating.

What is the effect on the individual who likes such food?

Even though there is happiness to start off by eating such food, there are many who develop a number of health problems later on in their lives. These bring sorrow along with them. They need medical help and the physicians advocate reducing salt and spices. But, alas, the mind which has become a slave to the taste, finds it impossible to resist the temptation of eating such foods. They feel depressed because they are forced to avoid the foods they like so much.

Amaya pradaha: cause for diseases.

Salty foods bring on raised blood pressure and associated diseases of the heart and kidneys;
Spicy, hot foods bring on stomach ulcers that may need surgery;
The life span gets reduced and so on and so forth.

The mind which is addicted to such foods cannot concentrate on sadhana/spiritual practice. As one gets into middle age there is a feeling that he/she should work at spiritual practices. But it is too late and concentration on spiritual life becomes impossible.

It is therefore very important that elders do not introduce such foods to their children. Moderation in whatever one eats has to be the rule in preparing a balanced type of food.

We, as adults, on the other hand must develop self-discipline in our food habits. We cannot educate our children in right food habits when we, ourselves cannot set an example for them.

We have examples in nature concerning the food habits.

We have on one hand gentle animals like cows and sheep and on the other hand fierce animals like lions, tigers, wolves.

Is there a type of food these animals eat that makes them gentle or fierce?

The medical profession are unanimous in their verdict that the ill health of today can be attributed in many cases to the foods consumed earlier in one's life.

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं च यत् ।
उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम् ॥10॥

yāta-yāmam̐ gata-rasam̐ pūti paryuṣhitam̐ cha yat |
ucchiṣṭam̐ api chāmedhyam̐ bhojanam̐ tāmasa-priyam̐ ॥10॥

Sloka 10

**YATA-YAMAM GATA-RASAM PUTI PARYUSHITAM CHA YAT
UCCHISHTAM API CHAMEDHYAM BHOJANAM TAMASA-PRIYAM**

That which is stale, tasteless, putrid and rotten, remnants eaten after being eaten by others, (eating what is left-overs on a plate) and impure, is the food liked by the tamasika.

yatayamam: stale;
gata rasam: is tasteless/dried up;
puti: putrid;
paryushitam: rotten;
cha: and;
yat: which;
ucchishtam: remnants after being eaten by others;
api: also;
cha: and;
amedhyam: impure;
bhojanam: food;
tamasa priyam: liked by the tamasic natured.

Yata yamam: stale. What makes an item stale? It refers to that food that has been kept out for many hours after being cooked.

It is interesting to analyse what makes food stale?

In the olden days when there were no refrigerators like what we have today, there was a rule of thumb in defining what was stale. Food that was kept for more than three hours after cooking was considered stale. The three hour period was one unit and known as “one Yaama”.

When there was not even clocks like we are used to now, the time was measured by the movement of the sun in the sky. The 24 hour day was divided into 8 periods of 3 hours each. Each 3 hour period was “one Yaama”. At prominent public places there were massive bells that were rung by the soldiers on duty at the beginning of each 3 hour period. This was heard by the citizens of the city who measured their day according to the “Yaama” period.

The Lord states that food that is kept for longer than 3 hours is stale and should not be eaten. This rule probably applies to savoury foods and not to sweet dishes. On a broad rule of thumb we have to agree with this statement but have to use a sense of discrimination. (For example, there are certain foods that cannot be eaten immediately after cooking and are maybe eaten sometimes days later. There are some special sweet items that are eaten more than a day after cooking.)

We now have the most advanced storage facilities to keep food fresh but I do not think that the three hour period should be broken up.

When we are seeing so many outbreaks of food poisoning all over the world one has to take this guide of three hours more seriously. I do not think that the medical experts can contradict this statement.

Not just that, the food that is kept for long hours loses its taste (gata rasam) too. The word “rasa” applies to the taste in food. When the taste is gone it is “gata rasam.” To make the food tasty we add more salt and this in turn brings more health problems of which we all know.

Puti: foul smelling. The food left for too long, soon becomes foul smelling.

There are certain foul smelling items one tends to develop a special liking to and I am not being critical of this habit. One can say that the sea foods belong to this category.

Paryushitam: stale food. Old food becomes stale.

Again, people develop certain special food habits. For example, we have wine and special drinks stored for years in cellar and some develop a special liking for such drinks. I would like to stress again that I am not critical of this habit. What I am commenting is on what the Lord has said. He has made it a point to stress about its tamasika nature and effect of making the mind dull.

Uchhishtam: the food already tasted (I refer to the habit of taking a spoon from the food that is being cooked, tasting the food and putting the spoon back in the dish that is being cooked).

In the Hindu tradition, remnants left over on a plate are not fit to be served to others and should not be even tasted by others.

Amedhyam: this is the most important word. It means “Not offered to the Lord”. The food before eating has to be symbolically offered to the Lord.

The Hindu tradition is in taking a plateful of cooked food to the prayer room and symbolically offering it to the deity;

Taking another plate of food and offering it with respect to a poor individual who may be at the door of the house; and

Reciting sloka 24, chapter 4, and sloka 14, chapter 15, before eating food.

This spiritual dictum is only to develop universal love and share what we have by the Grace of God with those who are not blessed with that gift of daily food.

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्यज्ञो विधिद्रष्टो य इज्यते ।
यष्टव्यमेवेति मनः समाधाय स सात्त्विकः ॥11॥

aphalākāṅkṣhibhir yajño vidhi-driṣṭo ya ijjate ।
yaṣṭavyam eveti manaḥ samādhāya sa sāttvikaḥ ॥11॥

Sloka 11

**APHALAKANKSHIBHIR YAJNO VIDHI-DRISHTO YA IJATE
YASHTAVYAM EVETI MANAH SAMADHAYA SA SATTVIKAH**

That sacrifice which is offered by men desiring no fruits and as enjoined by the sastras, with their mind fixed on the yajna only for its sake is “Satvika.”

aphalakankshibhi: by men desiring no fruits;
yajno, yajna: sacrifice;
vidhi drushto: enjoined by the sastras;
ya: which;
ijyate: is offered;
yashtavyam: ought to be offered/for its sake;
eveti: only thus;
manaha: mind;
samadhaya: fixed;
sa: that;
satvikaha: satvika.

The sloka brings out the following points:

- 1) aphalakankshihi: desiring no fruits (results from the actions conducted)
- 2) yajno, yajna: act of sacrifice
- 3) ijyate: is offered
- 4) vidhi dhrušta: enjoined by the sastras
- 5) yashtavyam: offered for its sake
- 6) eva eti: only thus
- 7) manaha samadhaya: mind fixed (on the yajna-action)

And then only it is considered as an act of satvika.

Let us analyse this:

First rule is that the actions should not be carried out with the intention of desiring a result for personal benefit. “Sloka 47, chapter 2: karmanyevadhikarasthe” is the direction for the conduct of actions. There should not be any selfish motive behind the act of yajna.

Yajno: an act of sacrifice, provided it is according to the rules enjoined in the sastras. It applies to any of the actions performed in a day. (Pancha maha yajnas - chapter 3 and 4.)

Havan, A ritual conducted by many Hindus wherein offerings are made to the Fire God (Agni). It is an external symbol of the intention to perform the yajna as an act of dedication to the Supreme.

Ijyate: is offered. What should be offered and whom should it be offered to and why?

The results of actions conducted for the benefit of others, should be offered to the Supreme Brahman as an act of worship. The word used is “Loka Kalyana” meaning “acts of welfare (to the needy) in the loka we live in.”

Vidhi dhushtha: as enjoined by the sastras.

Sri Krishna is not tired of repeating this statement and He does not say “offer to Me”. Even though the final result is the attainment of “Moksha” (Eternal Peace and tranquillity), for the seeker it cannot come unless there is a wish for the universal welfare of all life on this planet (all forms of plant and animal life) from the results of the yajna.

The Vedas have classified actions into four types and we have already discussed these in detail in chapters 3 and 4 (Nitya, Naimittika, Kama and Nishiddha karmas).

Yashtavyam: ought to be offered for its own sake.

It is the attitude to the dedicated work that counts. It is on the principle of “work for the sake of God/work’s sake”. Many people do not understand the meaning of this statement. Let us try to analyse its meaning and significance.

It means one has to work. This refers to the first word “work” in this statement.

God’s/Work’s sake: every type of work has a result whether one wants it or not. One has to understand that the aim should not be the results of actions. Not desiring the results of the work before the results are due but continuing to work is the way to “work for work’s sake”. How one is to deal with what one gets as a result of work, is an important issue on its own, let us briefly look into it.

The results that come have to be used:

- 1) To fulfil one’s own basic needs. The body is the suit over the Atman within and the in-dweller within us has to be shown due respect. Acts to maintain the body in good order are also one of the aims of work.
- 2) To maintain the family/dependants,
- 3) To help the needy in society (every member of the society is an expression of divinity),
- 4) To benefit the temples/institutions that propagate Sanatana Dharma.
- 5) To benefit other forms of plant and animal life.

All of these are duties to fulfil and they become acts of yajna and constitute “Pancha Maha Yajnas” (chapter 3: deva, rishi, pitru, nara and bhoota yajnas) and it has to be the duty of each one of us.

Eva iti: thus. The actions have to be conducted as specified in the above explanation.

Manas samadhaya: the mind fixed.

The mind has so many thoughts stored in it and they have to be expressed as actions. The thoughts to be expressed at any time should be with the mind fixed on the idea: “work for God’s sake and dedicate the results to the Lord in one form or the other.”

We hear about some who as a result of a misunderstanding of the scriptures, undertake animal sacrifice as part of the yajna.

The Lord clearly wants us to sacrifice the “animal instincts” in us and not sacrifice innocent animals.

Satvika men are those who undertake actions in the spirit of:
Nishkama karma
Karma phala tyaga
Spirit of Sri Krishnarpanamastu.

Fix their mind on actions: they consider pros and cons of any action before deciding to act. Then they undertake the action by fixing their mind and putting all their efforts into it.

Half-hearted attempts, we all know do not bring the best results.
It has to be in the spirit of “it is my duty to work” and not with the feeling of desire to enjoy the results of actions conducted.

It is like a mother taking care of the needs of her baby, she does so with no expectation of reward for the same but only with total love towards the baby and its needs.

अभिसन्धाय तु फलं दम्भार्थमपि चैव यत् ।
इज्यते भरतश्रेष्ठ तं यज्ञं विद्धि राजसम् ॥12॥

abhisandhāya tu phalam dambhārtham api chaiva yat ।
ijyate bhārata-śhreṣṭha taṁ yajñam viddhi rājasam ॥12॥

Sloka 12

**ABHISANDHAYA TU PHALAM DAMBHARTHAM API CHAIVA YAT
IJYATE BHARATA-SHRESHTHA TAM YAJNAM VIDDHI RAJASAM**

O best of Bharatas, the sacrifice which is performed with desire for fruit, and only for the sake of ostentation, know that to be rajasika.

abhisandhaya: desire/verily seeking;
tu: for;
phalam: fruit;
dambhartham: ostentation, self- glorification;
api: also/even;
chaiva: and only;
yat: what;
ijyate: is performed;
bharata shreshta: best of Bharatas;
tam: that;
yajnam: sacrifice;
viddhi: know;
rajasam: is rajasika.

Best of Bharatas: addressed to Arjuna and also to all the seekers of the spiritual light of knowledge.

Abhisandhaya tu phalam: Desiring the fruits for acts of sacrifice.

These rajasic people also have a higher power in mind to which they are addressing while conducting acts of sacrifice. These higher powers are many and vary from one need to another. It is like approaching different heads of departments, to get sanction for necessary work.

They are full of praise to the powers they are addressing but as soon as their needs are fulfilled they forget the power and immediately spend time enjoying the results. Then very soon they start looking for the higher power to get them further benefits. Their desires are never ending.

By addressing Arjuna as Bharatashreshta the Lord is:

- a) Boosting Arjuna's ego (by saying you are the best in the dynasty of Bharata Kingdom); and
- b) Reminding Arjuna to look for "The light of spiritual knowledge."

Dambartham: with ostentation.

The rajasic not only look for fruits of action but also hope for name and fame by such so called meritorious acts. They look for getting their name in the news media and praise from the lips of others (Like saying: oh, look at that person, what a great service he has performed). These people would like to display their superiority in wealth or knowledge in front of others and expect to receive praise for their actions.

Two wrongs from such acts:

Attachment to the fruits of action and
Pretension of doing a good act.

The result:

The act loses its purity and divinity.

The rajasic actions fall under mainly "Kamyas" (desire fulfilling actions) and in some cases could also come under "nishiddha karmas" (Forbidden actions).

Let us not forget the "Purushartha" (the purpose of birth as human) which is: "Moksha" and the steps to achieve it are:

Dharma: Learn what righteousness is (it is the first condition to fulfil),

Artha: Earn what is needed in life by sticking to dharma: (second condition) and

Kama: Do strive for the fulfilment of desires which are according to dharma.

Only then it becomes an act of satva. Or else it is either rajasic or tamasic.

विधिहीनमसृष्टान्नं मन्त्रहीनमदक्षिणम् |

श्रद्धाविरहितं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते ||13||

vidhi-hīnam asṛiṣṭānnaṁ mantra-hīnam adakṣhiṇam |

śhraddhā-virahitaṁ yajñaṁ tāmasaṁ parichakṣhate ||13||

Sloka 13

**VIDHI-HINAM ASRISHTANNAM MANTRA-HINAM ADAKSHINAM
SHRADDHA-VIRAHITAM YAJNAM TAMASAM PARICHAKSHATE**

Yajna performed contrary to the sastras, in which no food is distributed, no mantras are recited, no gifts are given, which is devoid of faith, is considered tamasika.

vidhi heenam: contrary to the sastras;
asrushtannam: no food is distributed;
mantraheenam: no mantras are recited;
adakshinam: no gifts are given;
sraddhavirahitam: devoid of faith;
yajna: yajna;
tamasam: as tamasa;
parichakshyate: is considered.

Let us not forget what the sastras have said concerning the yajnas:
No actions to be conducted that are contrary to the sastras,
Distribute the food,
Recite mantras,
Offer gifts to the priests/guru,
Conduct the act with faith in the guru and the sastras.

The sastras have defined what is “Nishiddha karma - prohibited acts.”

Actions should fulfil dharma at the spiritual, moral and social level of one’s existence.

But, the tamasika conducts actions that are:
Vidhiheenam: contrary to the sastras.

The actions should include not only scriptural injunctions but also moral (universal moral laws) and social laws relating to the place of residence.

Breaking the law of the country is also contrary to the sastras.
Immoral living in any part of the world is also contrary to the sastras.

Asrushtannam: without distribution of food.

This advice is in the spirit of universal brotherhood. We should not forget the needs of brothers and sisters in this universe because we are all born to the same father - Parabrahman. It also includes providing food for other forms of life. During times of drought the livestock will go without fodder and it is our duty to provide the animals with food.

To bring out this action in humans, our scriptures recommend offering food to the needy during special occasions like wedding ceremonies, birth days, anniversaries, passing exams, getting a job, getting promotion at work etc. We are also advised to offer food/money to the poor.

After all, every day of life is really a holy day because the Lord has given one more day for us to make amends for our mistakes.

Mantraheenam: what are mantras?

Mantras are sacred prayers/hymns recited during acts of worship and acts of offering food. They are said to have a potent force that brings their own rewards in course of time.

Tamasika, if they offer food, they do so grudgingly and do not recite mantras (or recite it only as a lip service).

Adakshinam: Dakshina is gift offered to the learned person for his/her services.

It could be the priest at the temple, the priest who assists in the conduct of rituals etc. These learned people spend their time in properly understanding the sacred texts and learning the correct procedures to conduct rituals etc. It is their professional duty.

As a matter of fact, they are not expected to ask for specific rewards and remuneration for the service. This was possible in the olden days when there were kings and businessmen who supported the learned.

The system is changed now and it is the duty of the general public to offer rewards for the services provided by the learned. If not, it becomes a tamasika act.

Śraddhāvīrahitam: Finally the Lord stresses again on the importance of faith in the God, the guru and the scriptures. Faith in divinity will increase one's capacity to put forth the best efforts in the work undertaken. Absence of faith reduces one's efficiency in the work undertaken and it becomes an act of tamas.

Any act contrary to public welfare falls under tamasika.

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञपूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शरीरं तप उच्यते ॥14॥

deva-dvija-guru-prājña- pūjanam śhaucham ārjavam |
brahmacharyam ahimsā cha śhārīram tapa uchyate ॥14॥

Sloka 14

**DEVA-DVIJA-GURU-PRAJNA-PUJANAM SHAUCHAM ARJAVAM
BRAHMACHARYAM AHIMSA CHA SHARIRAM TAPA UCHYATE**

Worship of the devas, the twice-born, the gurus and the wise, purity, straight-forwardness, celibacy, non-injury, these are considered “the austerity of the body.”

deva: illumined ones;
dvija: twice born;
guru: the preceptor;
prajna: the wise;
poojanam: worship;
shoucham: pure;
arjavam: straight-forward;
brahmacharya: celibacy;
ahimsa: non-injury;
cha: and;
shareeram: bodily;
tapa: tapas;
uchyate: is said.

Sloka 14, 15 and 16 are on the subject of tapas which is an act for purification. In our body there are three instruments that can get polluted and need purification. These are:

The body;
The mind; and
The speech.

Shoucham: Purity.

We are familiar with the act of cleanliness of the physical body which is one act of purification undertaken by the majority.

All the other points highlighted in this sloka in a way are also acts of purification.

The sloka brings out these points:

- 1) Pooja - worship (intellectual purity);
- 2) Cleanliness (physical purity);
- 3) Being straight-forward, (mental purity);
- 4) Celibacy (purity with regard to sexual relationships);
- 5) Non-injury (purity when conducting actions using the organs of action).

Let us take these in detail and understand them better.

Pooja: pooja is an act of worship.

Worship of: Deva, dvija, guru and prajna:

Worship of:

The Devas,
The twice born,
Guru and
The wise.

Deva: Illumined ones.

Worship of the illumined ones is the first condition for purity. Our sacred texts have given us the names and forms of several deities to worship. One can worship anyone of the deities. We have been given the freedom to select the deity of worship. Mythological and Puranic stories guide one to the deity of their choice.

There are different ways one can interpret the meaning of the word “Deva”.

Worship of the devas is really respecting Mother Nature.

The five gross elements, earth, water, air, fire and space constitute Nature.

Earth: Bhoomata (Mother Earth);

Water: sacred rivers like Ganges;

Air: Vayu,

Fire: Agni,

Space: Antariksha devatas.

Each of the sense organs also has a particular/specific deity associated to it.

(The word “illumines” should be understood as the particular sense organ cannot function in the absence of that Deva.)

The five gross elements that make the five sense organs function are to be considered as the “Devas”.

(Sun: eyes; space: ears; nose: earth, tongue: water, skin: air)

Deva is also the name used to denote higher powers in worlds above the sphere of the earth. The denizens of the heavens and other higher spheres are devas.

There are a number of other Gods and Goddesses who are considered as Devas.

Dvija: Twice born. Those who get initiated into the study of the sastras.

The first birth is the entry into the physical world from the womb of the mother,
The second birth is entry into the spiritual world after undergoing the traditional sacred thread ceremony (Between the ages of 7-15 yrs).

In the days gone-by, the children of Brahmin and Kshatriya families had the sacred thread ceremony and then went to the gurukula (residence of the preceptor) to get initiated into the Vedas and Upanisads. Those who are initiated into the study of the sacred texts and live the life as dictated by the sacred texts are to be considered as “dvijas”.

Strictly speaking coming out of the world of ignorance into the world of knowledge is the real second birth.

The learned ones guide one to come out of the layer of “maya” (ignorance, illusory world) into the world of spiritual knowledge.

Guru: The preceptor who guides the seekers into the world of spiritual knowledge as enshrined in the sacred texts is the Guru.

“Prajna: the wise”.

Note here the Lord uses the word “wise and not, the learned”. It is not theoretical knowledge but practical application of knowledge that makes one “Wise”. The “Mahavakya” “Prajnanam Brahma” declares that the true wisdom is “Brahma”.

Poojanam: “Worship”.

The pre-requisites for worship are:

Worship needs the acceptance of someone other than oneself (age not criterion) as the authority.

Worship needs the expression of love and devotion to that higher power.

Worship is in recognising the divine qualities in the higher powers and paying respects to them.

Worship of the: “Deva, Dvija, Guru and Prajna” with the fulfilment of the above prerequisites, is advocated in the first quarter of the sloka.

There is a common belief amongst many that going to the temple, conducting regular pooja in the house daily are acts of worship.

No doubt these are acts of purification to be undertaken in the spiritual journey but true worship will be when the seeker pays his respects to the Almighty (in whatever form he chooses to recognise the Almighty) with his mind, speech and actions by following the principle of “Satya and Dharma.”

“Deva, Dvija, Guru and Prajna” represent the various facets of the Almighty. They are the living Gods on this earth.

Shoucham: “Purity”.

The mind has to be totally pure (meaning all thoughts have to be pure) and the purity has to be reflected in speech and all Nitya Karmas: (pancha maha yajnas - sloka 13, chapter 3).

There should be:

purity of thoughts (mind),

purity of the surroundings and

purity of the physical body.

Arjavam: „Being straight forward”

Harmony in thought, word and deed is “Arjavam”. It is known in the spiritual context as “Trikarana shuddhi” (purity of the three limbs of action). This is the pathway to the Truth and Truth is the gateway to “Brahma Jnana”.

Brahmacharyam: “Celibacy”.

Not living a life of pleasures is celibacy.

In general it applies to the life of the students who are expected to have a single pointed concentration on the studies of their choice and not deviate towards the world of sensual pleasures.

From the spiritual point of view, Brahmachari is he who concentrates all of his thoughts on the “Supreme Brahman” and nothing else.

Brahmachari is he who perceives the objects around with “Chitta Drishti” (intellectual level of reasoning) and not with “Mano drishti” (mental level of selfish thinking). He cognises Brahman in all.

Constant thinking on the Brahman is Brahmacharya - “Brahmam charati ity Brahmachari.”

Ahimsa: Himsa is cruelty and “Ahimsa” is “not being cruel.”

There should be no cruel thoughts in the mind and cruelty should not be expressed in speech and actions.

Injury to our own physical body (acts of severe penance) is also himsa. The sastras say that each one of us is in reality, the “Atman within with a physical body”. Torture of the physical body is in a way equal to hurting the Atman within.

Non-injury also means to not harm other forms of life like plants and animals.

Let us be clear that “tapas” should not be “injury to our body”.

Tapas should be an act to conserve the energy that can be diverted to meditate on the Lord.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥15॥

anudvega-karam vākyaṁ satyaṁ priya-hitam cha yat|
svādhyāyābhyasanaṁ chaiva vāṅ-mayaṁ tapa uchyate ॥15॥

Sloka 15

**ANUDVEGA-KARAM VAKYAM SATYAM PRIYA-HITAM CHA YAT
SVADHYAYABHYASANAM CHAIVA VAN-MAYAM TAPA UCHYATE.**

Speech which does not excite others, which is truthful, pleasing and beneficial, and practice of the study of the Vedic scriptures, these are called “Tapas of the speech.”

anudvegakaram: causing no excitement in others;
vakyam: speech;
satyam: truthful;
priya: pleasing;
hitam: beneficial;
cha: and;
yat: which;
swadhyayabhyasanam: practice of the study of the scriptures (Vedas and Upanisads);
chaiva: and also;
vangmayam: pertaining to the speech;
tapa: austerity;
uchyate: is said.

Quote from the Upanisads:

Yadarthavadi loka virodhi: He who sticks to the truth and does not use discrimination as to when and how to say what he wants, becomes an enemy of the world.

After telling us what is tapas of the body, the Lord now gives us the conditions to be fulfilled that can comply with “Tapas of the speech”.

What are the conditions that constitute “Tapas of the speech”?

The Lord has given us a four way test as to what constitutes “Tapas of the speech.”

These are:

The speech:

- a) Should not excite others;
- b) Has to be beneficial to others;
- c) Has to be truthful;
- d) Has to be pleasing.

To this list, the Lord has added a condition and that is:

Practice of study of the scriptures.

Speech is part and parcel of social life and one of the main means of communication. It can also be a very powerful weapon.

The outcome of elections depends many a times on how cleverly the politicians deliver their speech.

The speech reflects the intellectual calibre and mental discipline of the individual. Without our knowledge we spend a lot of energy on speech and it is a common experience that after a long speech we feel tired and exhausted.

The seeker must learn not to waste his/her energy on unnecessary talk.

Quote from “Upanisad”:

That which is not expressed through speech,

That by which speech is expressed,

Is “Brahman.”

It means that we cannot explain or express Brahman through speech because Brahman is beyond the field of speech, mind and the intellect.

“He” is transcendental and cannot be perceived as such.

The only way to understand Him is by becoming one with Him.

The same Brahman has blessed us with the capacity to express ourselves through the medium of speech. We are able to speak because we are alive and it is due to the spark of Brahman who is within us.

Let us analyse the four conditions:

a) Anudvegakaram: should not excite others.

Speech should not:

Unduly excite/disturb the mental balance in others;

Should not irritate or excite others;

Should not trouble or injure others. (One of the causes of civic disturbances that cause great havoc to the community, is speech that is contrary to this discipline)

There is a saying that speech is like a sword that can kill others.

What is said cannot be retrieved and can do long lasting harm in many cases. What is said at the spur of the moment can break relationships.

Speech can also ruin one’s career.

So the first rule is “Let the speech be gentle and peaceful”.

b) Satyam: Truthful. Being truthful to oneself and to the God within constitutes satvic speech.

The speech that is spoken has to be also:

c) Priyam: delightful and

d) Hitam: beneficial.

It is important to know the art of speaking:

One should know:

When to speak;

What to speak;

How to speak.

In certain situations it is better to withhold from talking.

At no time one should utter a lie.

There is a story about a rishi who was once conducting tapas under a tree in a forest.

One day when he was meditating, someone came running and went to hide behind the tree where the rishi was meditating.

Within a short while a few soldiers came running and asked the rishi if he had seen a person passing by that way.

The rishi remained silent and after sometime the soldiers realising he was meditating moved on.

The rishi in this situation was not sure if the person who looked for shelter was a good person or not. He was also not sure what drastic action the soldiers would have undertaken if they had found the person.

In this situation, by keeping silent he did not utter a lie.

Even while speaking the truth, it would be good if what is said is pleasing and delightful.

It is a fact that the truth is in some cases very unpleasant to hear.

Also, undue flattery is very pleasant to hear but it boosts the ego. It may be possible that because of the flattery the individual might conduct wrong actions that may be harmful.

The learned therefore say that it is an art, to know how to speak.

Swadhyayabhyasanam: by the study of the scriptures.

The Lord insists that everyone should spend a part of the day studying the sacred texts. It goes without saying that there should a learned person/guru who can explain the scriptures. No one can become expert just by self-study without the medium of the learned.

The Upanisads say that even the teachers/gurus should spend the first part of the morning (before meeting the students) studying the sacred text every day.

There is no barrier because of sex, religion, caste, age for the study of the scriptures. Swadhyaya also means reflection upon one's own self on a regular basis.

Sandhyavandanam: mandatory religious rituals to be performed by the initiated.

It should be an opportunity to reflect on what has happened in the immediate past, realise the mistakes committed knowingly or unknowingly and to develop the wisdom not to repeat such mistakes next time.

मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥16॥

manah-prasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunam ātma-vinigrahaḥ ।
bhāva-saṁśuddhir ity etat tapo mānasam uchyate ॥16॥

Sloka 16

**MANAH-PRASADAH SAUMYATVAM MAUNAM ATMA-VINIGRAHAH
BHAVA-SANSHUDDHIR ITY ETAT TAPO MANASAM UCHYATE**

Serenity of the mind, gentleness, silence, self-control and purity of disposition/mind, this is called the mental austerity/manasika tapas.

manah: of the mind;
prasadam: serenity;
soumyatvam: gentleness/pleasing expression;
mounam: silence;
atma vinigraha: self-control;
bhava samshuddhi: purity of one's own nature;
ity: thus;
etat: this;
tapo: austerity;
manasam: of the mind;
uchyate: is called.

We have been given five qualities that constitute “Tapas of the Mind”.

This is the last section on the subject matter known as “trikarana shuddhi” meaning “purification of the three instruments (limbs)”:

Manas (mind),

Vak (speech) and

Kaya (body, the instruments of action)

Manah prasadam: serenity of the mind.

The lake has a serene atmosphere. It is calm and without any ripples. The Himalayas are surrounded by so many lakes the largest being “The Manasa lake”. The mind, like the “Manasa Lake”, should not have any ripples of waves of thoughts. Really speaking the mind of the seeker has to be without trace of any thoughts including the thought of achieving the ultimate aim of “Salvation.” This ultimate state of thoughtless-ness of the mind is known as “mano nasha”.

The two conditions for union with the Parabrahman are “Mano nasha and Vasana kshaya.” (Total clearance of all thought imprints and destruction of the mind which is the state where there are no more vasanas left in the mind and no new vasanas enter the mind.)

The entire human life is a series of:

Thoughts entering into the mind via the medium of the five sense organs,
storing the thoughts (vasanas) received,
brooding over the thoughts,
converting the thoughts into actions,
reaction to the actions conducted and
storing many new thoughts.

One single thought in the course of time gets converted into so many vasanas imprints in the mind. The life is spent without realising/being aware of this chain of actions and reactions. The resulting storage of many vasanas in turn leads to births and re-births into this world.

The ultimate aim of the seeker is to:

Realise who he really is ,and

What is the purpose of life,

and

Work at achieving the objective.

Contemplating on the Atman and withdrawing from the sense objects that distract is the means to do this.

To achieve this perfection the mind has to be calm, quiet and clear like the lake.

An agitated mind cannot concentrate on the Self.

By developing the art of “Being happy” and not trying to “become happy”, the seeker will achieve the state of “Manah Prasada.”

The word “Prasada” refers to “Prashantata”, the state of tranquillity of the mind.

This can be achieved when one can transcend the dual qualities of desires and hatreds. The ripples in the mind are due to these two qualities.

Just by dropping the qualities one cannot achieve the state of tranquillity.

With a full heart and not by force one should learn the art of transcending these two qualities and only then is it the state of “manah prasadam.”

This is the “Brahma Jnana” (knowledge of the Brahman), the present, by the guru to the sincere seeker. It is really the prasadam from the Lord to all the sincere seekers.

A satvic mind is an untroubled mind,
Rajasic mind is troubled, disturbed, unbalanced and
Tamasic mind is dull and morose.

Let us therefore realise that:
That which is not thought by the mind,
But,
By which the mind is made to think
Is “Brahman”. (quote: Upanisads)

Soumyatvam: pleasing expression.
Being of kind disposition towards all is gentleness and soumyatvam is an expression of this nature.

There is saying that the face is the index of the mind.
An agitated mind has a very un-pleasing expression whereas a calm mind has a pleasing expression.
Transcending the quality of “anger” is the pre-requisite for developing this state of the mind.

Just by observing the facial expression one can see anger, hatred, fear, greed in the face of the person in front.

We must develop the art of seeing ourselves in front of a mirror in the above said situations and see how ugly that face will be to look at.

Such a mind with pleasing expression brings out a glow of affectionate nature.

It is the expression one can see in saintly souls/mahatmas.

Mahatma Gandhi is one such example.

He who has matured to this state sees simply divinity all round and nothing else.

One can get this feeling just by observing the beauty of nature. Seeing the beauty of sunrise/sunset and dropping all thoughts from the mind gives the feeling of “soumyatvam.” Whereas, a businessman who observing the beauty of nature whilst developing plans to convert that beauty into profit, will not have that pleasing expression on his face.

Mounam: Silence. The silence of the mind is what the Lord is telling us in this sloka. This can come when one realises the futility of the worldly attachments and learns the art of “detachment in attachment.”

The mind which has no disturbances from the thoughts stored within is said to be silent. It is not a forcible suppression of the thoughts that is needed but a gentle pushing down of the thoughts that arise, this is the real silence of the mind. This way the vasanas stored gradually lose their potency and in course of time disappear without being converted to actions.

Vairagya (no raga - no attachments) is the means to achieve mental silence.

“Mounam charati its munihi” say the scriptures. It means, “Muni is he who walks the path of silence.” He has silenced his sense organs from disturbances from external sources and at the same time he has silenced his own mind from getting disturbed by the stored vasana imprints.

Atma vinigrahaha: control of the “self” (Not control of the “Self”).

The control of the ego (my’ness) expressing through bodily actions is Atma Vinigrahaha. It is permitting pure thoughts and noble emotions alone to crop up in the mind and not giving an opportunity for the sprouting forth of wicked emotions and impure thoughts that may have been stored. A good driver is he who has a good hold on the steering wheel and the brakes that controls the car while he is driving.

This can be understood by studying the picture of the “Gitopadesham”.

Arjuna, the ego (expression of my’ness), is letting Sri Krishna (Divinity), the Atman/Buddhi, control the horses (senses).

The animal in us is always trying to run amok. By conducting the jnana yajnas and sacrificing the animal instincts in us we can get the prasadam of “Atma Jnana.” The animal instinct in us is our lower nature and the divine instinct in us is the higher nature. The seeker has to strive to exhibit the divine nature.

Narada bhakti sutra tells us of eight types of intellectual flowers of wisdom one has to learn to offer the Lord. These are:

Ahimsa,

Atma vinigraha (control of oneself),

Sarvabhootahita ratah (wishing welfare of all forms of life),

Kshama (acts of pardon),

Shantihi (Peace),

Tapas,

Dhyana, and

Satyam.

Bhava samshuddhi: it is honesty of the motive. The thoughts and feelings have to be absolutely pure. Shuddhi is pure and samshuddhi is absolute purity. Our mind has to be absolutely pure like a mirror without any speck of dust on it.

Nishkama karma and Karma phala tyaga will assist in clearing the dust of impurities on the mind. Outward show of tapas while contemplating on the worldly objects is called “mithyachara” (false expression of actions).

External silence by not talking but contemplating on thoughts within the mind is mithyachara.

The seeker has to be “Sadachara sampanna” meaning, “develop constant divine thoughts and reflect them as divine actions”.

The seeker who has achieved this perfection has done so by:

Transcending the desires, hatreds,

Transcending the anger,

And by realising the futility of the worldly possessions.

The test of true success in life is to achieve and maintain this state of perfection: constant divine expressions.

At this juncture I would like to briefly enumerate the answers from Bhishma to Yudhishtira after the war of Kurukshetra which are related to the above three slokas concerning the purity of body, speech and mind.

Mahabharata: Parva 10: (after the war): Final words of advice by Bhishma to Yudhistira on the duties of a king:

Yudhistira’s question to Bhishma was:

What are the duties of a man who has hopes of passing through this world pleasantly and who has hopes of reaching the next world?

Bhishma does not give a direct answer, but enumerates 10 acts relating to body, speech and mind which have to be avoided by the seeker who is aspiring for a place in the next world.

These are:

Acts to be avoided in relation to the body:

Destruction of lives of other creatures,

Theft of what belongs to others,

Wishing to enjoy a woman who is the wife of another person (in relation to the present day, I would put it as avoiding carnal pleasures),

Acts in relation to the speech:

Evil conversation,

Harsh words,

Publishing/making public/talking about other people's fallacies,

Falsehood;

Acts in relation to the mind:

Coveting possessions of others,

Thought of injuring/harming others,

Disbelief in the ordinances of the Vedas.

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपस्तत्रिविधं नरैः ।

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते ॥17॥

śhraddhayā parayā taptam tapas tat tri-vidham naraiḥ ।

aphalākāṅkṣhibhir yuktaiḥ sāttvikam parichakṣhate ॥17॥

Sloka 17

**SHRADDHAYA PARAYA TAPTAM TAPAS TAT TRI-VIDHAM NARAIH
APHALAKANKSHIBHIR YUKTAIH SATTVIKAM PARICHAKSHATE**

The three fold austerity performed by men desiring no fruits with the highest faith and with single minded devotion is declared to be Satvic.

sraddhayaa: with faith;

parayaa: highest;

taptam: practiced;

tapas: tapas;

tat: that;

trividham: threefold;

naraih: by men;

aphalakankshibhih: desiring no fruit;

yuktaha: single minded (in divine contemplation);

satvika: satvic;

parichakshate: is said/declared.

The practice of the three fold austerity of the body, mind and speech as enumerated in the last three slokas is the pre-requisite for satvic tapas.

The Lord has added three more conditions necessary to consider the austerity as satvic:

Desiring no fruits for the actions conducted,

Having highest faith,
Single minded devotion.

All the three practices (tapas of mind, body and speech) should have these three conditions attached.

Śraddhaya: total faith in the Lord, the guru and the scriptures is the essence of this chapter and that the Truth taught (towards attaining Moksha) will one day dawn on us. The firm belief that “What has been taught by scriptures/learned masters (which is for our welfare) when put into practice will happen,” is the Faith. It is the most powerful weapon that brings victory.

Once the faith is fixed strongly on the Parabrahman, there will not be any more distractions that will happen due to the changes to the physical body. (Jara, vyadhi, mrutyu - old age, disease or death). To stress on the faith, the Lord says “paraya” meaning “Supreme.” Have Supreme faith in the Supreme is the message.

When the results of past actions bring dukha one should not falter in the faith and when the results of past actions bring happiness one should not forget the Lord.

Yuktaha: Single minded concentration on the Supreme is the next condition to be fulfilled. Thinking divine and acting divine (expressing divinity) is the way of the yuktaha.

Aphalakankshibhir: desiring no results for the good actions conducted, is another condition to be fulfilled. Desiring the fruits for actions conducted is selfishness and is in a way an expression of ego.

The Lord says “Naraih”. This is to say that He has included all men/women with no exception. All of us, the humans on this earth exhibit one of the three types of faith. It is up to us to recognise this and make amends in our spiritual journey by strengthening the gunas pertaining to the satvic temperament.

सत्कारमानपूजार्थं तपो दम्भेन चैव यत् ।
क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमधुवम् ॥18॥

satkāra-māna-pūjārtham tapo dambhena chaiva yat |
kriyate tad iha proktam rājasam chalam adhravam ॥18॥

Sloka 18

**SATKARA-MANA-PUJARTHAM TAPO DAMBHENA CHAIVA YAT
KRIYATE TAD IHA PROKTAM RAJASAM CHALAM ADHRUAM**

That austerity which is practiced with hypocrisy, with the object of gaining reputation and earning fame is said to be Rajasika. It is unstable and transitory.

satkara maana poojartham: conducting good actions with the object of gaining name, honour and reverence;
tapo’: austerity;
dambhena: with hypocrisy;
chaiva: and also;
yat: which;
kriyate: conducted;

tad: that;
iha: in this (world);
proktam: is declared;
rajasam: rajasic;
chalam: unstable;
adhruvam: transitory

What constitutes Rajasic tapas?

This is explained in this sloka.

It is about those who conduct good actions but with an impure motive.

What are their motives then?

Satkara maana poojartham: Their motive is to gain reputation and earn fame for themselves for the good acts conducted.

One can immediately see the similarities with the present day politicians. To gain political prominence and recognition and thereby secure a position in the society, they tend to show off their so called generosity and charitable nature. They bring in the media to promote their charitable deeds. Many a times what wealth they spend/distribute on special occasions is probably not really earned by them with honesty.

Dambhena: with hypocrisy. When one is not true to oneself it is considered an act of hypocrisy. The reverence/respect from the public has to come automatically. The respect cannot be bought. Also it is important to remember that the Lord as the consciousness within is the eternal witness, who has an account of all the thoughts generated in the mind.

The Lord ends the sloka with the words: “Chalam Adhruvam”
Unstable and Transitory:

The benefits one gets out of such acts are only temporary. The general public will sooner or later find out the true colour of the person and the individual loses his/her respect in the society.

But the salvation one achieves from following the satvic principles in life is permanent and leads in the course of time, to no further rebirths into this world.

King Ravana, in the epic Ramayana, conducted severe penance to please Lord Shiva and gained several boons in return. His show of satvic nature by performing the penance for a limited period of time brought out the good qualities in him. All his demonical qualities that were dormant came to surface after he received the benefit for his tapas. He started his normal cruel/rajasic activities after he received the boons.

Adhruvam: transitory.

This word has come from “dhruvam” referring to the king Dhruva (Refer: Srimad Bhagavatham). According to mythology Dhruva was given the position of the pole star in the sky. This is known as “Dhruva nakshatra”.

The pole star holds a constant position in the sky and has been a guide for navigators, throughout history.

During the Hindu wedding ceremony the name of Dhruva is recited by the priests to symbolise the constancy of bond between the couple. The priests bless the couple with the wish, “let the marriage bond between the two of you be firm and permanent.”

मूढग्राहेणात्मनो यत्पीडया क्रियते तपः ।

परस्योत्सादनार्थं वा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥19॥

mūḍha-grāheṇātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ |
parasyotsādanārtham vā tat tāmasam udāhṛitam ॥19॥

Sloka 19

MUDHA-GRAHENATMANO YAT PIDAYA KRIYATE TAPAH PARASYOTSADANARTHAM VA TAT TAMASAM UDAHRITAM

That tapas which is practiced with a foolish notion, with self-torture, for the purpose of destroying others, is said to be Tamasika.

moodhagrahena: with foolish notion;
atmano': of the self;
yat: which;
peedaya: with torture;
kriyate: is practiced;
tapaha: tapas/austerity;
parasya: of another;
utsadaanartham: for the purpose of destroying;
vaa: or;
tat: that;
tamasam: tamasic;
udahrutam: is declared.

What constitutes a tamasic austerity?

- Moodagrahena atmana: with the foolish notion of the self;
- Peedaya: with torture of the body;
- Parasya utsadanartham: for destroying another.

We all have to undertake resolutions/vows with full knowledge of why and what we are expected to do after undertaking those resolutions. It is important to be aware of what the consequences of such actions are. One has to be mature in understanding what such an act means. To do so it is necessary to know what is "Self" and what is "non-self".

We have to take the example of Ravana conducting tapas to receive the boons from the Lord. He conducted severe austerities for a long time.

His physical body underwent a great torture in the process.

The purpose of his tapas was to get the boon which would give him immense strength to destroy others.

He did not realise that the Lord was within him as the Atman and his body was the abode of the Atman.

His act of tapas as a matter of fact was hurting the Atman within.

His tapas therefore has to be looked upon as the Tamasika type.

Atmanaha peedaya: Torture of one's own Self.

By physically torturing oneself, it is indirectly torturing the Atman within. The physical torture inflicted on the body would not facilitate the path to Moksha and the individual has to take many more

rebirths into this world. This is the torturing of the Atman within, the Lord is referring to. Even though, the Atman is only a witness for bodily actions, He has to remain with that subtle body till there is total Manonasha and vasana kshaya.

Parasyodanartham: for destroying/injuring others.

The term “others” when applied broadly refers to:
One’s own body,
Family,
Society and
Nature.

No acts should bring harm to any of the above four. God is present in all and torturing others is like torturing the God within.
The sastras prohibit such acts, says the Lord.

The purpose of tapas is to come out of body consciousness and realise ones identity with the Atman.

With this understanding given in the last few slokas, the seeker can undertake acts of fasting, silence and such similar vows.
There should be due consideration and discrimination before undertaking tapas.

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।
देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ॥20॥

dātavyam iti yad dānam dīyate ‘nupakāriṇe |
deśhe kāle cha pātre cha tad dānam sātṭvikam smṛitam ॥20॥

Sloka 20

**DATAVYAM ITI YAD DANAM DIYATE ‘NUPAKARINE
DESHE KALE CHA PATRE CHA TAD DANAM SATTVIKAM SMRITAM**

That charity which ought to be given, knowing it to be a duty, in proper time and place, to a deserving person from whom one expects nothing in return, is declared to be Satvic.

datavyam: that ought to be given;
iti: thus;
yat: which;
danam: charity;
deeyate: given;
anupakarine’: to one who can do no service in return;
deshe’: in holy places;
patre’: on auspicious occasions;
cha: and;
tad: that;
danam: charity;
satvikam: satvika;
smrutam: is declared.

We now enter into the domain of acts of charity.
This sloka is about Satvika/pure charitable acts.

Datvayam iti: “That which ought to be given as charity”, (given out of a feeling of “my duty”) is the first consideration before giving anything.

There should not be a feeling of “I have lost some of my possession belonging to me by this act.”
Dharma/righteousness in such acts should fit in with the injunctions of the Vedas.

It is no good having just theoretical knowledge of what the Vedas proclaim, implementation of the commands of the Vedas is necessary for making good spiritual progress.

These come under nitya and naimittika karmas that are common to all, irrespective of the caste, creed etc.

Nitya karmas are obligatory daily duties.

Of these, charitable acts towards:

Nara yajna: welfare of the deprived sections of the community and

Bhoota yajna: welfare of other forms of life and nature in general (environmental friendly acts),

Is danam in the truest sense.

Naimittika karma are charitable acts to be undertaken on special occasions. (like special pooja days, religious ceremonies, wedding in the family, celebrating birth days, Satyanarayana Pooja etc).

Deeyate anupakarine: “to a deserving person from whom one expects nothing in return”.

This is very important point to note. Many a times there is an expectation of return favour after a so called charitable act.

It is important to note that the benefit of a real charitable act is “receiving punya” (merit points). The one who receives the charity utters words like “may you live long and happy, God bless you”. In such situation the one who receives danam is on a higher platform and he who gives danam is on a lower platform. The attitude when giving danam has to reflect: “It is me who is going to be benefitted from this act and I should not feel/act superior and I must show respect to the person to whom I am giving this charity.”

Therefore let the charitable act be not a business transaction expecting favourable returns.

Deeyate iti danam: danam should be given to a deserving person.

The individual receiving the same has to have the “arhata” (deserving) to receive the same. The person who receives it should be able to benefit from such an act. A poor person has arhata to receive the danam, poor children have the arhata to receive charitable assistance to study and so on and so forth. Assistance given to persons/life in distress comes in this category.

What we give to others can be classified into the following four headings:

- a) Danam should be given to a Brahmin who by his knowledge about the rituals will assist the karta in conducting the rituals. One can give clothes, food, money to the Brahmin who conducts the ritual.
- b) Satkaram: what is given to honor individuals like pandits (learned scholars) is considered “satkara.” (Good deed)
- c) Dakshina: what is given to the guru in return for what he has taught comes under dakshina.
- d) Dharma: Whatever that is given to deserving poor persons becomes an act of dharma because it is our dharma/duty to do so. It is our dharma/duty to see/understand the suffering of the poor and help them. This is a real charitable act.

What time and place can one give charity?

“Deshe’ kale’ cha” says the Lord. At holy places and auspicious occasions is the message from Krishna.

Krishna is referring to “Naimittika karma” referred to in the earlier part of this sloka.

Visiting holy places/centres of pilgrimage is strongly recommended for all.

Visiting temples should be part of daily ritual and acts of charity should be undertaken during those times. Visiting the temple should not be an act of business transaction where one goes to beg the Lord to bestow His grace.

Even in one’s own house, there are specific rules to give danam. In olden days poor people used to come to the house and beg for alms. One should have a dedicated place to give alms near the house which is clean and tidy and there should be respect shown to the person who asks for charity/danam. Before having the meal the householder is expected to give a part of what is cooked to the needy that come to the house.

Why such an attitude, one may ask?

Is it not true that what we have is by His Grace? After all we are only trustees of what He has bestowed on us.

“The Lord out of mercy has given me what I have and made me wealthy. I must learn to share what I have with others and be compassionate to the needy. At no time should I express ego and show off what I have” is the attitude we should all learn to express every day of our lives.

It has nowadays become routine to boldly announce in the papers the name of people who undertake acts of charity. The charitable act loses its potency by such publicity.

Patre’: it should be given to a deserving person.

In simple words charity is sharing what one has with others who need it.

What can one give as charity?

Anna danam: food,

Samaya: time, (spare some time to help),

Shrama: effort,

Vastra: clothes,

Jnana: knowledge,

Sthala: place/land,

Dhana: wealth,

Jala: water.

Sri Shankaracharya has given Danam of knowledge for us all, let us make use of that knowledge and convert all our daily actions into satvic tapas.

यत्तु प्रत्युपकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः ।

दीयते च परिक्लिष्टं तद्दानं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥21॥

yat tu pratyupakārārtham phalam uddīshya vā punaḥ ।

dīyate cha pariklīṣṭam tad dānam rājasam smṛitam ॥21॥

Sloka 21

YAT TU PRATYUPAKARARTHAM PHALAM UDDISHYA VA PUNAH DIYATE CHA PARIKLISHTAM TAD DANAM RAJASAM SMRITAM

That gift which is given with a view to receive some benefit in return, or looking for fruits (benefits) therefrom or given reluctantly, is said to be Rajasika.

yat: which;
pratyupakarartham: with a view to receive in return;
phalam: fruits;
uddhishya: looking/expecting;
vaa: or;
punaha: again;
deeyate: is given;
cha: and;
pariklishtam: reluctantly;
tad: that;
danam: charity/gift;
rajasam: as rajasika;
smritam: is said.

This type of danam embraces most of the charitable acts wherein there is an expectation of favour in return.

There is an element of sanctity when one undertakes satvic danam.

But, on the contrary, rajasic danam has a greater element of publicity attached to it for self-glorification.

With this rajasic tendency we either:

Have no wish to part with our possessions but give what we have with a sense of discomfort. This is the meaning of the word “pariklishtam” used in this sloka.

Or

Grumble while giving danam or after giving the danam and feel that we have lost some of our possessions.

Or

We consider that we were compelled to make the gift.

We make plans to regain what we have given and if possible to regain double/treble of what we have lost. This is what is meant by the word “pratyupakarartham.” When such gifts are made it becomes a social celebratory act and does not fall under the category of “danam.”

There is a saying: “let not the right hand know what was given by the left hand”.

Universal love (loka sangraha) enables us to undertake satvic charity.

Love of oneself/egoistic nature is the basis of rajasic danam.

अदेशकाले यद्दानमपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते |

असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ||22||

adeśha-kāle yad dānam apātrebhyaśh cha diyate |

Sloka 22

**ADESHA-KALE YAD DANAM APATREBHYASH CHA DIYATE
ASAT-KRITAM AVAJNATAM TAT TAMASAM UDAHRITAM**

Charity that is given at the wrong place and time, to unworthy persons, without respect and given insultingly is said to be Tamasika.

adeshakale’: wrong place and (wrong) time/occasion;
yad: which;
danam: charity;
apatrebhascha: and unworthy persons;
deeyate: is given;
asatkrutam: without respect;
avajnatam: given insultingly;
tat: that;
tamasam: tamasa;
udahrutam: is said/declared.

The Lord has used strong words to express His condemnation of so called acts of danam which express/denote tamasic nature.

What then expresses tamasic nature of charitable act?

- 1) Adeshakale
- 2) Apatrebhascha
- 3) Asatkrutam
- 4) Avajnatam

Adeshakale: wrong place, wrong occasion. The place where one should give charity and the time/occasion to give it has been highlighted in the last few slokas. Anything contrary to those instructions is tamasic.

Apatrebhascha: unworthy persons. What is given to unworthy people cannot be labelled as charity.

Asatkrutam: we should give due respect to the person to whom we are offering the charity.

In some centres of pilgrimage there are instances where people in a moving vehicle start throwing money to those who are standing on the side of road and begging for alms. Sometimes it is given uttering insulting words. This is not correct.

Acts like these lead to chaos on the street which might end up with injury to the bystanders including those asking for alms.

Avajnatam: attitude expressing insult to the ones we are offering charity has to be condemned.

ॐ तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः ।
ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा ||23||

om tat sad iti nirdeśho brahmanas tri-vidhaḥ smṛitaḥ |
brāhmaṇās tena vedāśh cha yajñāśh cha vihitāḥ purā ||23||

Sloka 23

**OM TAT SAD ITI NIRDESHO BRAHMANAS TRI-VIDHAH SMRITAH
BRAHMANAS TENA VEDASH CHA YAJNASH CHA VIHITAH PURA**

Om Tat Sat. This has been declared the triple designation of Brahman. By that Brahmanas,
Vedas and Yajnas were created formerly.

Brahmanas (6th word in first line): of Brahman;
Om iti: thus Om;
tat: that;
sat: truth;
nirdesho: instruction/advice;
trividhaha: threefold/triple;
smrutaha: has been declared;
brahmanas (1st word in second line): brahmanas (referring to brahmajnanis);
tena: by that;
Vedas: Vedas;
cha: and;
vihitaha: created;
puraa: formerly.

“Om Tat Sat”. This has been declared the triple designation of Brahman:
Please refer to the introduction where there is a detailed description of “OM”.
Let us analyse this first half of the sloka.

We have studied about the sacred syllable “Om” several times in the preceding chapters. Om is a very potent mantra for all the Hindus, be it a Shaivite worshipping Lord Shiva, a Vaishnavite worshipping Vishnu or those belonging to other groups of worshippers. When recited on its own, it is the most potent mantra and when it is pre-fixed to any other mantra it adds potency to that mantra.

The revered saints utter the mantra “Om” before any karma they undertake and it should be a practice every-one of us should nurture.

Our ancient masters, studying the origin of life without any scientific tools of the present, using their intellect and intuition said it was “Divine Energy”. (Please look at its detailed description in the Introduction.)

- a) It is Eternal.
- b) It is absolutely pure. It has no contamination in its absolute state.
- c) It is un-manifest. It is not recognisable by the sense organs.
- d) It is Omnipresent. It is within and all round each of us and supports all life.
- e) It is Omniscient. Being present at all times (in all) one has to deduce it is all knowing.
- f) It is Omnipotent. It is all powerful. The divine energy is more powerful than all the strongest weapons of combat we know of (The power of the atom bomb is only a spark of the divine energy).

For this reason our ancient masters advocated OM as a point of concentration for meditation.

They designated the word “Parabrahman” to address this energy and came up with the most beautiful way of expressing it with the word “OM”.

“OM” is only a sound, it has form but no qualities to it. It is “Sakara, Nirguna Brahman”.

The first step in Upasana is meditation on the simple, most potent mantra, “OM”. This has been handed over to us from the ancient sages. They considered it to be the means of ultimate Liberation from earthly bondage.

The sixth word “Brahmana” in the first half of the sloka refers to Brahman: the Parabrahman. The word Brahmanas in the second line refers to the Brahmanas, belonging to the four different classes in the society (Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra.).

The spiritual masters conjoined the mantra “Om Tat Sat” to designate Brahman.

Om is what we have described so far.

“Tat”: means “That” which has been described above to express absolute divinity.

It is also the Goal for all seekers.

We all have come from “That” and have to merge back into “That” and it is the spiritual goal:

“Moksha” (Liberation).

“Tat”, The Absolute State of Parabrahman. It is described as “Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam” which is “Existence, Knowledge, Eternal”.

And not referring to any named individual.

Sat: “Eternal Truth”.

Nirdesha: This is the instruction/advice by the spiritual masters to meditate on this triple designation.

By using this powerful and potent mantra with devotion and knowledge of what it signifies, the Lord says the defects in performance of any worship are removed.

We should repeat this mantra daily with:

Bhavana: true feeling, recollecting the real meaning and

Devotion: true absolute selfless love.

This will make us pure and eligible to walk in the path of a true seeker for Moksha.

“Om” is also considered as “Nada Brahma”. (Nada: sound) meaning “Sound of Brahman”.

तस्माद् ॐ इत्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः ।

प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् ॥ 24॥

tasmād om ity udāhṛitya yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-kriyāḥ ।

pravartante vidhānoktāḥ satatam brahma-vādinām ॥24॥

Sloka 24

**TASMAD OM ITY UDAHRITYA YAJNA-DANA-TAPAH-KRIYAH
PRAVARTANTE VIDHANOKTAH SATATAM BRAHMA-VADINAM**

Therefore, the knowers/followers of Brahman always begin the various acts of sacrifice, charity and tapas as enjoined by the sastras, with the utterance of the sacred word “Om”.

tasmat: therefore;
Om: Om;
iti: thus;
udahrutya: utter;
yajna, dana, tapas kriyaha: various acts of yajna, dana, tapas;
pravartante': begin;
vidhanokta: as enjoined by the sastras;
satatam: always;
Brahma vadinaam: knowers/followers of Brahman.

One cannot stay without the conduct of one action or another. It is a true fact.
The sastras therefore recommend that we conduct any one of these three acts:
Yajna, Dana or Tapas.

- a) Let the actions be in the spirit of Yajna (dedicated actions):
Pancha maha yajnas: They are the five great acts of sacrifice to be conducted regularly (Sloka 13, chapter 3);
- b) Depending upon the situation, let the action become an act of charity to the needy (dana);
- c) Let the action be an act to purify (tapas).

No doubt these are meritorious acts. But there is always a possibility that there may be a defect in the way they are conducted.
But one cannot stop conducting actions.

One such defect is the expression of “ego” in such acts.
Either ignorance or ego make the effect of such actions lose or reduce their potency.
The best solution for the mistake is by prefixing the sacred mantra “Om” before conducting any action.

It is also true in many cases, that the actions are conducted mechanically with no faith or bhakti.
What is “Faith”?

Unshakeable conviction in Sastras, words of Guru is Faith. In the beginning it is true that one cannot have a full understanding of the sacred text but Sastras and the guru are there to teach us.

Faith is that capacity in us to accept that what the sastras and the guru teach is true and that we will understand the same as we progress in our studies. It is like the educational system we are used to in the present day. Faith in the text books prescribed by the authorities, faith in the teachers who teach us, faith within us that we will understand it as we progress and the faith that it will help us in our future life.

Uttering the mantra “Om” with faith and bhakti will potentiate the results from the meritorious acts of Yajna, Dana and Tapas. The Mantra OM should not be uttered as a mechanical act.

Not just that, the scriptures also recommend that the above acts also conclude with the utterance of the sacred mantra “Om”.

Why do the knowers of Brahman utter Om before and after conducting the act?

These masters/evolved souls were aware that they themselves are just a small drop in the ocean of life. They were aware that their existence is only due to Brahman.

They attributed the blame for any of their sufferings to themselves and did not blame others or the God.

For all the beneficial results in their life they attributed the hand of divinity and thanked Him for the same.

So, to start the work they advise reciting “Om” to clear the defect in the work;

And end with “Om” and offer the results to the Brahman.

Suppose we look upon the numerical number “1” as designating “Brahman” and us, the individuals as “0” (meaning nothing), we can understand:

By the prefixing of “1” (Brahman) to what we (the zeros) do, the zero gets more potency:

1000 is a thousand

10000 is ten thousand etc.

The number one carries a great value to all the zeros that come after it.

So let all our actions be in harmony with the divinity (Parabrahman) and let us learn the habit of prefixing and post fixing “Om” to all our acts, that comply with the injunctions of the sastras.

तदित्यनभिसन्धाय फलं यज्ञतपःक्रियाः ।

दानक्रियाश्च विविधाः क्रियन्ते मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ॥25॥

tad ity anabhisandhāya phalaṁ yajña-tapaḥ-kriyāḥ ।

dāna-kriyāśh cha vividhāḥ kriyante mokṣha-kāṅkṣhibhiḥ ॥25॥

Sloka 25

**TAD ITY ANABHISANDHAYA PHALAM YAJNA-TAPAH-KRIYAH
DANA-KRIYASH CHA VIVIDHAH KRIYANTE MOKSHA-KANKSHIBHIH**

Uttering “Tat” without aiming at fruits of action, all acts of Yajna, Tapas and various acts of charity are performed by the seekers of Moksha.

“tat iti” joined together grammatically becomes “taditi”.

tat: that;

ity: thus;

anabhisandhaya: without aiming at;

phalam: fruits;

yajna: yajna;

tapah: tapas;

kriyaha: acts;

dana: charity;

cha: and;

vividhaha: various;

kriyante: are performed;

Moksha: Moksha;

kankshibhihi: seekers of.

In sloka 23 we studied about the triple designation of Brahman as “Om Tat Sat.”

In Sloka 24 we studied about the “Om” aspect of “Om Tat Sat”.

In this sloka we will study about “Tat” aspect of “Om Tat Sat”.

A true and sincere seeker of spiritual knowledge (subject matter of the Sastras) needs to possess the wealth of four qualifications which are together known as “Sadhana Chatushtaya”. (Viveka, Vairagya,

Shatsampadi, Mumukshatva - refer to introduction. For a detailed understanding the advice is to study the text Tatva Bodha – Chinmaya Mission)

Mumukshatva: burning desire in the heart of the aspirant for “Liberation” from earthly bondage and union with Parabrahman.

It is this “Mumukshatva” which is referred to in this sloka with the word “Moksha Kankshibhihi”.

To live in this world there is no other option than to conduct “Karma” (action). There is no exception to this rule.

Every action conducted will bear its fruits in the course of time.

Action is “present” and fruit of action is “future.”

The majority of us work to enjoy the benefits of fruits of action and would like to use the results of action for our personal needs/pleasures. “Selfishness” (ego/for me) predominates in most of the actions. Conducting actions in this spirit will bind us to this world and we will then have to go through innumerable cycles of births and deaths.

Those who have learnt the lessons of life, will eventually start analysing what life is about and take up the spiritual path to attain the ultimate freedom.

Such people will realise the true significance of the mantra “Om Tat Sat” and know what “Tat” stands for.

“Tat” stands for “Parabrahman” (Supreme Consciousness). It is the aim of every seeker to realise and unite with “Parabrahman”. This would put a stop to the cycle of births and deaths in this mortal world.

We have already studied that the actions conducted by the spiritual seekers fall under the category of Yajna, Tapas and Dana. They fulfil the criteria described in the sacred text, which we have studied in the preceding chapters. Actions contrary to this performed with a selfish motive are considered to be “evil” - these block the path to Liberation.

Even the simplest of actions performed with the true understanding of the mantra “Tat” will pave the way for ultimate Liberation. By uttering this part of the mantra the fruits of the actions to come are offered to the Parabrahman. As the results of the action (good actions as per the sastras) are offered to the Lord, the actions automatically become “actions of service to the Lord”.

Finally there are one group of seekers who reach such dizzy heights in spiritual evolution that they do not have even the faintest desire for Moksha. They continue to discharge their duties with their mind totally absorbed in the Parabrahman. These are true “Jivanmuktas”, The Liberated souls living on this earth.

This maturity will come when the seeker realises that he is part of a wide family (Paramatma Kula Gotra). He has the attitude of “Universal Oneness” at all times.

His way of thinking will be:

I am part of my own family I am living in and I love all members of my family. My actions will be for welfare of my loved ones in my family.

My family is part of the community and I love my community and work for the welfare of the community I am part of.

My community is part of my country and I love my country and work for the welfare of my country.

My nation is part of the universe and I love my universe and work for the welfare of the life in this universe.

I am part of the universe and part of the life in this universe. My work is therefore for the welfare of life in this universe.

“He” (Tat) has no form or shape, “He” pervades all, “He” sustains all and it is our duty to offer the results of actions to “Him”.

To work for the universe we live in, to work for welfare of humanity and welfare of nature is to overlook personal interest in the results of actions conducted.

Each higher step in spiritual evolution is a better step than the immediate lower steps.

The final step is the best of all and it is what the seeker should be aiming at.

The main tenet of the sacred text we are studying is “Renunciation of fruits of action” and the meaning of this sloka fits in with that criterion.

सद्भावे साधुभावे च सदित्येतत्प्रयुज्यते ।

प्रशस्ते कर्मणि तथा सच्छब्दः पार्थ युज्यते ॥26॥

sad-bhāve sādhu-bhāve cha sad ity etat prayujyate ।

praśhaste karmaṇi tathā sacchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate ॥26॥

Sloka 26

**SAD-BHAVE SADHU-BHAVE CHA SAD ITY ETAT PRAYUJYATE
PRASHASTE KARMANI TATHA SACCHABDAH PARTHA YUJYATE**

O Partha, the word “Sat” is used in the sense of reality and goodness and also in the sense of an auspicious act.

sad bhave: in the sense of reality;
sadhuhave: in the sense of goodness;
cha: and;
sat: sat;
ity: thus;
etat: this;
prayujyate: is used;
prashaste: auspicious;
karmani: in action;
tatha: so also;
sacchabdaha: the word “sat”;
Partha: Partha;
yujyate: is used.

“Sat” is used in the sense of reality (true) and goodness:

“Satkarma” means “good act” and “Sat” in this word means “goodness.”

And

“Sadbhava” means true/real/good expression and “Sat” in this word means “reality” (true expression).

The learned scholars say that “Sat” represents the “Eternal Truth”.

There are three ways we look at the reality of any statement. These are:

a) The statement is false/not real;

b) The statement is a relative truth. It is limited by time, space and causation;

Time:

What is true today was not the truth 1000years ago. What is the truth today may not be the truth in a few years' time. Example: what the boundary of a country is today is not the same as it was a thousand years ago.

Space:

What is true in one part of the world, is not true in another part of the world. What is true in our universe is not true when compared to other galaxies in the vast universe. Example: 8am in the morning is 8pm in another part of the world.

Causation:

There are so many theories on the causation of this universe. What the scientists give as the cause of this universe is not what the scientists were saying hundreds of years ago and it might be different in the next millennium.

c) The statement is Absolute Truth.

Everything in the world we know of and assess with the power of the sense organs, the mind and the intellect is not "Absolute Truth". There is only one Absolute Truth and it is "The Primordial Energy". The absolute "energy co-efficient" is constant but the way it is expressed is different.

The energy pervades and sustains the entire universe.

The energy is inside each of us and sustains us.

This energy was the same yesterday, same today and will be same tomorrow.

The energy is not partial to anybody. The way one uses it/misuses varies from individual to individual.

We either reap the benefit by using it correctly or suffer by misusing it.

Example: If we sow the seeds they germinate into plants. The conditions to fulfil are:

The seeds have to be of good quality.

The seeds to be used have to agree with the soil and the energy content in the soil.

The environmental conditions have to be suitable.

The seeds need to be tenderly cared for till they become crops.

The farmer has to,

Clear the weeds,

Protect from those that destroy the crops,

Protect from adverse weather conditions,

Provide a good source of water,

And add suitable manure.

If these conditions are followed then mother earth blesses him/her even if they are sinners, it does not grant the good crops just because the farmer is a holy saint.

The various forms of energy in the soil, water or space, sustain life.

The energy is not seen by anybody. It is said to be un-manifest.

It is so subtle that it is beyond the comprehension of the individual.

Because of these attributes, the learned scholars brought out the sacred mantra:

Hari OM Tat Sat.

"The Primordial Energy" is "The Absolute Truth" and they expressed it as "Sat." (No form or qualities: nirakara, Nirguna).

To comprehend “Sat”, they came with the mantra “Om”. This represented Parabrahman with no qualities but with a form (Sakara, Nirguna).

Later they came up with the concept of:

“Hari” (Hari, Shiva etc.) for comprehension by attributing form and qualities. (Sakara, Saguna).

“Tat” to point to any of the forms of the Supreme with name and quality from the pantheon of Gods, Goddesses.

This “Tat” is the “Sat” defined by our ancient sages and it has been in vogue from time immemorial.

“Yes, it is the truth and that is good” is the way the elders pat the back of youngsters when the youngsters are truthful and conduct actions that are good.

The word of praise assists in fostering the goodness in such individuals and encourages them to be good in future.

However, really speaking Brahman is the one and only absolute Truth and Absolute Goodness. Sri Krishna is saying that the word “Sat” is used in the world by the learned elders to encourage and bring goodness in us and encourage us to be truthful.

We, the representatives of God on earth with a specific role to play, should express what the divinity wishes us to do and that is “Contribute towards Universal welfare”.

This is the only way to express Brahman, the Supreme, by us, the humans on this earth.

We should all be working in the true spirit of “sadbhave and sadhubhave.”

“Sat” is expressed in the sense of “an auspicious act”:

All acts that have the “Sadbhava and Sadhubhava” in them, become auspicious acts towards the welfare of life in this universe and the word “Sat” is to be used in this sense also, says the Lord.

In short the word “Sat” according to this sloka is what is used by elders approving and appreciating truthfulness, good thoughts and actions in us.

यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सदिति चोच्यते ।

कर्म चैव तदर्थीयं सदित्येवाभिधीयते ॥27॥

yajñe tapasi dāne cha sthitiḥ sad iti chochyate

karma chaiva tad-arthīyaṁ sad ity evābhidhiyate ॥27॥

Sloka 27

**YAJNE TAPASI DANE CHA STHITIH SAD ITI CHOCHYATE
KARMA CHAIVA TAD-ARTHIYAM SAD ITY EVABHIDHIYATE**

Steadfastness in Yajna, Dana and Tapas is called “Sat” and also actions performed for the sake of the Supreme Brahman is called “Sat.”

yajne’: in acts of sacrifice;

dane’: in acts of charity;

tapasi: in acts of tapas;

sthithihi: steadfastness;

sad: sat;
ity: thus;
cha: and;
uchyate: is called;
tad artheeyam karma eva cha: and also actions in connection with these (yajna, dana, tapas) or actions performed for the sake of Brahman;
sad ity eva: as Sat even;
abhideeyate': is called.

Yajna, Dana and Tapas are acts for self-purification as we have discussed before. Only when we are steadfast in carrying out these acts, is it then called as "Sat". These will then become "True" (and hence the word "Sat") to the Divinity within us. The Divinity is constantly inside each of us but we mask it by our own selfishness.

Steadfastness in these acts of self-purification finally leads the seeker towards Brahman which is "Liberation". Such actions performed with real understanding of the Truth are called "Sat" and the word "Sat" is used also in this context, says the Lord.

These acts should be performed for the sake of Brahman:
Refer to:

Sloka 15, chapter 3

**KARMA BRAHMO DBHAVAM VIDDHI BRAHMAKSARAMUDBHAVAM
TASMAT SARVAGATAM BRAHMA NITYAM YAJNE PRATISTHITAM**

**Know that the actions arise from the Vedas.
The Vedas are born from the imperishable Brahman.
Therefore, know that the Supreme Being is established in Yajna.**

Brahma: the Creator in action,
Vedas: the sacred texts,
Karma: actions to be conducted by us (as dictated in the sacred texts),
Yajna: dedicated, selfless actions,
This is the "Dharma Chakra" (wheel of dharma) which has to be in constant motion for the survival of life on this earth.

Brahma started the wheel of Dharma,
Gave us the Vedas to understand the Dharma,
We have to carry on keeping the wheel in motion, which was set in motion by Brahma,
Conduct dedicated selfless acts for the welfare of the life in this universe,
And this results in showers of goodness on earth granted by "Brahma".

"Actions for the sake of Brahman" is also called "Sat", says the Lord and concludes this sloka. It is to warn us that none of the acts of Yajna, Dana or Tapas should be for selfish gains, but, must be only for universal welfare. Then only they are fit to be called "Sat".
The principle of "Divinity in actions" has been brought out in this verse.

In sloka 25 the Lord has said that acts of Yajna, Dana and Tapas are to be dedicated to "Tat" and this then becomes the means for Liberation.
In this sloka it is indicating "Sat" pointing to the end of the path for the seekers of Liberation.
The means with which the seeker practices the spiritual act will take him/her to "That" goal.

The Lord is reminding us to conduct actions accordingly and the word “Sat” is used in this sloka in this context. It is the advice for the mankind.

Let us remember the prayer:

OM ASATO MA SAD GAMAYA,
TAMASO MA JYOTIR GAMAYA,
MRTYOR MA AMRTAM GAMAYA;
OM SANTI SANTI SANTI

Oh Lord, lead me from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality; OM, Peace, Peace, Peace.

Let us recite it with the correct understanding of the word “Sat” as brought out in this sloka.

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।
असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥28॥

aśhraddhayā hutam dattam tapas taptam kṛitam cha yat |
asad ity uchyate pārtha na cha tat pretya no iha ॥28॥

Sloka 28

**ASHRADDHAYA HUTAM DATTAM TAPAS TAPTAM KRITAM CHA YAT
ASAD ITY UCHYATE PARTHA NA CHA TAT PRETYA NO IHA**

O Partha, whatever is sacrificed, given up as charity, whatever tapas is performed, and whatever actions are performed without faith are called “asat”. They do not produce (good) in this world or hereafter (after death).

ashraddhaya: without faith;
hutam: sacrificed;
dattam: given (as charity);
tapas: tapas;
taptam: is practiced;
krutam: is conducted;
cha: and;
yat: whatever;
asat: untruth;
iti: thus;
uchyate: is said;
Partha: Partha;
na: not;
cha: and;
tatpretya: produce hereafter;
iha: in this world.

This is the concluding verse in this chapter. We have been given so far a clear cut idea of what constitutes “Sraddha” and about the three types of Sraddha that depend upon our nature.

Whatever we want to achieve in life, whatever actions we conduct to achieve the same will have the enhancement of potency of success if there is an element of faith in it. The greater the faith, the greater the resulting benefits will be.

The same law applies to the benefits “hereafter” (pretya).

The last quarter of the sloka:

“They do not produce (good) in this world or hereafter”

should be read as:

“It is (referring to acts of yajna, dana, tapas) of no account here or hereafter, if there is no faith associated with these acts”.

Actions come first and results come later is a fact everyone is aware of.

There are some actions that give benefits very quickly and some actions give benefits after a long time or interval.

Even bad actions also give results. Apparently good results may come from bad actions immediately but certainly they bring sorrow at a later date.

The common factor in all is “Faith”. The greater the faith, the greater is the result from the actions conducted.

Let us look at it from the perspective of life in this world.

Faith in the teacher, faith in the text books will enhance the understanding of the subject by the students.

The mechanical act of going to the college, reading the prescribed texts will not give the same success in the exams compared to the student who does so with “Faith”.

The degree of success depends upon the degree of Faith put in.

Actions carried out without Faith fall under the heading of “Asraddha”.

Actions with the Faith in the Lord and the Guru become true spiritual actions for attaining “Moksha” and these then are called “Sat” (true actions). All other actions without Faith in the Lord, the scriptures and the guru become “asat” (untrue to oneself in the spiritual journey). The prayer “asato maa sadgamaya” has this meaning attached to it.

We are studying the sacred text, The Srimad Bhagawadgita, and have come to the end of 17 chapters. The next chapter is “Moksha Sanyasa Yoga” which is all about “Moksha” (“Liberation from earthly bondage”).

The sloka is directed to this aim of “Moksha” and the word “Pretya” refers to this aspect of the effort by the spiritual seeker. (True satvic actions according to the scriptures pave the way for the life hereafter which is Moksha and it is the subject of the next chapter).

We have accumulated so many vasanas in our subtle bodies in our sojourn so far. The Lord has given us the means to clear the vasanas and achieve “mano nasha and vasana kshaya”. We need to have faith in the Lord and His message.

To understand this we must have a learned master (Guru) to guide us and should have full faith in his guidance.

Sadhana is the effort we put in and Sadhya is the result we achieve from the efforts put in. The goal is Moksha and the guiding force for it is Sradha in all acts of Yajna, Dana and Tapas.

Actions carried out without Sradha become only mechanical actions. We are not supposed to be automatic machines in this world. We are asked to make use of our intellect guided by the “Antaratma

(inner consciousness)” within and the sacred text and the gurus so that we will become useful members of the society carrying out actions of universal welfare.

Of course there are bound to be defects in the actions conducted and the Lord has given us the mantra “Om Tat Sat” to help us to clear the defect. At the end it is for achieving Moksha.

Yajna, Dana and Tapas are the utensils to cook with (with faith),
The mind and the intellect are the vessels used,
And the stored vasanas are the materials to cook.

This is to produce the best food - Peace.

Just like in daily cooking even though we may have all the ingredients and vessels for cooking, the food that we cook without faith will not be tasty.

Iti Srimadbhagavadgitasupanisatsu brahmavidyayam yogasastre

Srikrnarjuna-samvade sraddhatrayavibhagayogo nama saptadaso'dhyayah

Thus ends the seventeenth chapter, “SRADDHATRAYA-VIBHAGA-YOGA“, from Srimad Bhagavadgita, which is Upanishad, Brahma Vidya and Yoga Shastra, in the form of a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna.