

CHAPTER 17

THE DIVISIONS OF FAITH

Connection between Chapter 16 and Chapter 17

- ❖ In Chapter 16, Krishna has established that 'faithful followers of sastra are divine' and that the 'faithless are demoniac'
- ❖ But into which category does a man fit, who follows with faith something other than sastra? Is he in goodness, passion or ignorance; where is he situated in the Banyan tree

BREAKDOWN OF CHAPTER 17

SECTION I (17.1 – 17.7) — THE MODES DETERMINE ONE'S FAITH AND ONE'S WORSHIP

- Arjuna asks about the situation of one who worships, but not according to sastra
- Krishna replies that one who doesn't follow sastra worships according to the faith dictated by his acquired modes of material nature

SECTION II (17. 8 – 17.10) — FOODS IN THE MODES

- Easiest way to discover a person's situation under the modes is by observing the food he eats
- Krishna describes foods in goodness, passion and ignorance

SECTION III (17.11 –17.13) — SACRIFICES IN THE MODES

- Sacrifices can also be performed in the modes –
 - Dutifully in goodness
 - Fruitively in passion
 - Unfaithfully in ignorance

SECTION IV (17.14 –17.19) — AUSTERITY IN THE MODES

- Austerities can be of the body, speech and mind
- Each of these can be performed in goodness, passion and ignorance

SECTION V (17.20 –17.22) — CHARITY IN THE MODES

- Charity can also be performed in goodness, passion and ignorance
- Results will differ accordingly

SECTION VI (17.23 –17.28) — THE CONCLUSION: OM TAT SAT

- All activities are contaminated by the modes
- These defects can be offset by acting, even if within the modes of nature, in Krishna's service:
"Om tat sat"
- Conclusion is that when sacrifice, penance and austerity are performed without faith in the Supreme – without a transcendental goal – they are useless in this life and next

SECTION I (17.1 – 17.7) THE MODES DETERMINE ONE'S FAITH AND ONE'S WORSHIP

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SECTION I

When one does not base his faith in sastric injunctions, his faith becomes based upon his mentality, which is a product of his particular conditioning by the modes

Text 17.1

THEME: Arjuna inquires about the situation of those who do not follow the principles of scriptures but worship according to their own imagination. Are they in goodness, passion or ignorance

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 17.1

- (a) **Faithful** – A person faithful to a particular type of worship (*Ref. Bg. 4.39*)
 - Becomes gradually elevated to a stage of knowledge
 - Attains the highest perfectional stage of peace and prosperity
- (b) **Demoniac** – One who does not follow the principles of scripture is a demon and one who follows is a demigod (*Ref. Bg. 16.23 – 16.24*)
- (c) **Intermediate category: Arjuna inquires about such categories**
 - If one with faith, follows some rules not mentioned in scriptural injunctions, what is his position
 - Are those who create some God by selecting a human being and placing their faith in him, worshipping in goodness, passion or ignorance
 - Do such persons attain the perfectional stage of life
 - Do those who do not follow the rules of scriptures but have faith in something and worship gods and demigods and men attain success in their effort

Text 17.2

THEME: Krishna says: "If one does not follow the *Vedas*, one will follow the natural instincts which will be in goodness, passion or ignorance"

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 17.2

- (a) **Who are under the modes** – Those who know the rules and regulations of scripture but out of laziness or indolence give up following these rules are governed by the modes
- (b) **Basis of acquiring modes** – Acquired according to previous activities (*Ref. Bg. 13.22*)
- (c) **How to change the influence of the modes** – By the help of the bona-fide spiritual master and if one abides by the rules of scriptures
 - Consider things carefully
 - With intelligence
 - In association with a bona-fide spiritual master
 - Blind faith in a particular mode of nature cannot help to elevate one to the perfectional stage

Text 17.3

THEME: Thus his faith will be categorized by one of the three modes

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF TEXT 17.3

- The real principle of religious faith is situated in the mode of pure goodness, but because the heart is tainted, we find different kinds of religious principles.
- Constitutional position of living entity is to have full faith in the Lord based upon realisation.
- As that pure faith and attraction from Krishna, becomes diluted, by the enjoying spirit it becomes filtered through the other modes and varieties of religion are created as pure love of God is compromised by various degrees of selfishness.

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 17.3

- (a) **Association according to the modes** – According to a particular type of faith, one associates with certain persons
- (b) **Original position of living entity** (*Ref. Bg. Chapter 15*) – Fragmental part and parcel of Supreme Lord and thus originally transcendental to the modes (*nirguna*)
- (c) **Cause of conditioned position** – Forgetfulness of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus entangled by different modes, he generates his own position
 - Resultant artificial faith and existence are only material
- (d) **Only path back to original position without fear** – Krishna consciousness
 - Although one may be conducted by some impression, or some conception of life, originally he is *nirguna*, or transcendental
 - One has to become cleansed of the material contamination that he has acquired, in order to regain his relationship with the Supreme Lord
 - Guaranteed path of perfection – Krishna consciousness
 - If one does not take to this path – One surely comes under the modes
- (e) **Shradha (Faith)**
 - Originally comes of mode of goodness – strong faith is a product of works of material goodness
 - One's faith may be in a demigod, some created god or some mental concoction
 - No works are completely purified in material conditional life
 - Pure goodness – Only in this state one can understand Supreme Personality of Godhead
 - Basis of different religious principles
 - When goodness is contaminated and heart is tainted according to different modes – Results in different types of worship and principles
 - Real principle of religious faith is situated in the mode of pure goodness
 - Different types of faith leads to different types of worship – This is the theme for the next verse

Text 17.4

THEME: Different worship according to the modes

- ❖ Goodness – Worship demigods for a particular purpose
 - e.g. Brahma, Shiva, Chandra, Indra and Sun god (purport)
- ❖ Passion – Worship demons
 - e.g. A man worshiping Hitler during Second World War (purport)
- ❖ Ignorance – Worship ghosts and spirits
 - e.g. Worshiping dead spirits, ghosts, sexual service (purport)

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 17.4

(a) Different kinds of worshipers are described according to external activities


- Scriptural injunctions: Only the Supreme Personality of Godhead is worshipable
 - Ref. SB 4.3.23 “*sattvam vishuddham vasudev sabditam*” – Man in pure goodness, worships Vasudeva
- Cause of different worships – Those not so conversant / faithful with the scriptures worship differently according to the modes

(b) Impersonalists

- Supposed to be in mode of goodness
- Worship five kinds of demigods (See SB 6.4.34 purport for further elaboration)
 - Worship impersonal Vishnu form in the material world, known as philosophized Vishnu
 - Because they do not ultimately believe in the Supreme Personality of Godhead
 - They imagine that the Vishnu form is just another aspect of the impersonal Brahman
 - Similarly, they imagine that Lord Brahma is the impersonal form in the material mode of passion
- Think that actual truth is impersonal Brahman, they dispose of all worshipable objects (e.g. Five gods) at the ultimate end

(c) Conclusion – How to purify different qualities of the material modes of nature

- Through association with persons of transcendental nature

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 17.4 & 17.5:** Srila Baladeva Vidyabhushana explains that Texts 17.2 – 17.4 describe those who have given up sastra out of laziness or because the required worship was troublesome, yet faithfully worship the demigods. Texts 17.5 – 17.6, in contrast, describe not those who have whimsically given up following sastra but those who are against Vedic practices.

Texts 17.5* – 17.6*

COMMON THEME: Defines demons – (4 points)

- ❖ Undergoes severe austerities and penances not recommended in scriptures
- ❖ Performs them out of pride and egoism
- ❖ Impelled by lust and attachment
- ❖ They are foolish and they torture the material elements of the body as well as the Supersoul dwelling within
 - Such actions are an insult to the Supreme Personality of Godhead – because acted out of disobedience to the scriptures

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORTS 17.5 – 17.6

- (a) **Manufacture modes of austerity and penance that are not mentioned in sastras**
 - e.g. Fasting for an ulterior purpose like promoting a political end or social purpose
 - Such fasting is not good for any spiritual advancement
- (b) **Importance of the word 'Achestasah' – Mised mentality**
 - Normal mentality is that one must obey the scriptures
 - Abnormal position – Neglect and disobey the scriptures
- (c) **Destiny** – Repeated demoniac births (Ref. Bg. 16.19 – 16.20)
- (d) **Rare fortune for such persons** – To be guided by the spiritual master to the direct Vedic path and achieve the Supreme goal

Text 17.7

THEME: One can make out the mode of faith by observing the activities of eating, sacrifice, austerity and charity

- ❖ **Wise** – Those who know and discriminate based on these activities
- ❖ **Foolish** – Those who consider all kinds of food, sacrifice etc. to be the same and does not discriminate
 - e.g. Missionary workers who guide that:
 - Whatever one likes one can do and attain perfection
 - No need of scriptures, one can manufacture one's own ways

SECTION II (17.8 – 17.10)
FOODS IN THE MODES

Text 17.8

THEME: Foods in the mode of goodness – Juicy, fatty, wholesome and pleasing to the heart

- ❖ **Result**
 - Increase the duration of life and purify one's existence
 - Also gives strength, health, happiness and satisfaction

Text 17.9

THEME: Foods in the mode of passion – Too bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning

- ❖ **Result** (This is explained based on Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura's purport mentioned in 'Surrender unto Me')
 - Distress – Refers to pain felt while eating such foods
 - Misery – Depression one feels after such eating
 - Disease – Results yet to be felt

Text 17.10


THEME: Foods in the mode of ignorance

- ❖ Food prepared more than three hours before being eaten
 - Except the Prasadam offered to the Lord
- ❖ Food that is tasteless, decomposed and putrid
- ❖ Food consisting of remnants and untouchable things
 - Except the remnants of Supreme Lord or saintly persons, especially spiritual master
 - Otherwise remnants increase infection or disease

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORTS 17.8 – 17.10

- (a) **Purpose of food**
- Increase the duration of life
 - Purify the mind
 - Aid in bodily strength
- (b) **Authority – Past authorities selected foods according to above mentioned purposes** *e.g.* Milk products, rice, wheat, sugar etc. (Some foods like baked corn and molasses can be made pleasant when mixed with milk and other foods)
- (c) **Fatty foods and proteins**
- Only animal fat of milk is allowed
 - This is the civilized method of obtaining the needed fat
 - It rules out any need for animal slaughter
 - Sub-human way – Fat from animal slaughter
 - Proteins are available from *split-peas, dal, whole-wheat* etc.
- (d) **The best food** – Remnants of Supreme Personality of Godhead
- Only way to make food anti-septic, eatable and palatable for all persons is to offer food to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and accept remnants
 - *Ref. Bg. 9.26 – “Patram, pushpam...”* – Love and devotion are the chief things that the Lord accepts

**SECTION III (17.11 – 17.13)
SACRIFICES IN THE MODES**

 **PLEASE NOTE:** Purport points for Texts 17.11 – 17.22 are included under the respective text themes. Therefore there are no separate ‘Focus of Learning’ sections for these verses, except for Text 17.16

Text 17.11

THEME: Sacrifice in the mode of goodness

- ❖ According to directions of scripture
- ❖ As a matter of duty
 - *e.g.* To go to temple/church as a duty and not for economic benefit
 - Duty of every civilized man
 - To obey scriptural injunctions
 - To offer respect to Supreme Personality of Godhead
- ❖ Desire no reward
 - General tendency is to offer with a purpose in mind

Text 17.12

THEME: Sacrifice in the mode of passion

- ❖ Done for some material benefit
 - *e.g.* For elevation to heavenly kingdom or some other material benefits
- ❖ For the sake of pride

Text 17.13

THEME: Sacrifice in the mode of ignorance

- ❖ Without scriptural directions
- ❖ Without distribution of prasadam
- ❖ Without chanting of Vedic Hymns and remuneration to the priests
- ❖ Without faith
 - Faith in ignorance is faithlessness
 - *e.g.* Worshiping demigods to make some money and spend for recreation
 - Ignoring scriptures
 - Ceremonial show of religiosity
 - These produce demoniac mentality

SECTION IV (17.14 – 17.19) AUSTERITY IN THE MODES

Text 17.14

THEME: Austerity of body (5 points)

- ❖ Worship of the Supreme Lord, brahmanas, the spiritual master and superiors like father and mother
- ❖ Cleanliness
- ❖ Simplicity
- ❖ Celibacy and
- ❖ Non-violence

Text 17.15

THEME: Austerity of speech (5 points)

- ❖ Speaking truthful words
 - Process of speaking in spiritual circles is to say something upheld by the scriptures
- ❖ Pleasing
- ❖ Beneficial
- ❖ Not agitating to others
 - *e.g.* Teacher can correct only his students (even if it is agitating) but not others who are not his students
- ❖ Also regularly reciting Vedic literatures
 - One should study the limitless stock of Vedic literatures available

Text 17.16

THEME: Austerity of mind (5 points)

- ❖ Gravity in thought
- ❖ Satisfaction
- ❖ Simplicity
- ❖ Self-control
- ❖ Purification of one's existence

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 17.16

- (a) **Basic principle to practice this austerity of mind** – To make mind austere, one must detach from sense gratification and train the mind to always think good for others
- (b) **Gravity in thought** – Best training for the mind –
 - Not deviate from Krishna consciousness
 - Always avoid sense gratification
- (c) **Satisfaction**
 - Obtained by taking mind away from thoughts of sense enjoyment
 - Best course to divert the mind
 - Not by the present age engagements
 - But by Vedic literatures (Satisfying stories like Puranas and Mahabharata)
- (d) **Simplicity** – Devoid of duplicity and think of others welfare
- (e) **Self-control**
 - Control of mind implies, detachment from sense gratification
 - Silence implies always thinking of self-realisation
- (f) **Purification of one's existence**
 - By straightforward dealings

Text 17.17

THEME: Austerity in goodness

- ❖ Done with transcendental faith
- ❖ Not expecting material benefits
- ❖ Only for the sake of supreme

Text 17.18

THEME: Austerity in passion

- ❖ Out of pride
- ❖ Or for the sake of respect, honor and worship
 - *e.g.* Desire to be worshipped by subordinates, let them wash their feet and offer riches
- ❖ It is neither stable nor permanent

Text 17.19

THEME: Austerity in ignorance

- ❖ Out of foolishness
- ❖ With self-torture
- ❖ Or to destroy or injure others
 - *e.g.* Hiranyakashipu praying to Brahma for immortality

SECTION V (17.20 – 17.22) CHARITY IN THE MODES

Text 17.20

THEME: Charity in goodness

- ❖ Given out of duty without expectation of return
- ❖ At proper time and place
 - *e.g.* At pilgrimage places or
 - During lunar or solar eclipses or at the end of the month
- ❖ To a worthy person
 - Spiritual perfection is the consideration
 - Example of worthy person – Qualified *brahmana* or a *vaishnava*
 - Condemned charity – Given to a poor but unworthy candidate
 - Such charity does not offer any spiritual advancement

Text 17.21

THEME: Charity in passion


- ❖ Expectation of some return
- ❖ Desire for fruitive results
 - Elevation to heavenly kingdom
 - Offering gifts to institutions where sense gratification goes on
- ❖ Grudging mood
 - *e.g.* With great trouble and repentance afterwards
 - Sometimes given under obligation at the request of a superior

Text 17.22

THEME: Charity in ignorance

- ❖ At an impure place
- ❖ At an improper time
- ❖ To an unworthy person
 - Contributions for indulgence in intoxication and gambling
- ❖ Without proper attention and respect
- ❖ Charity can also be performed in goodness, passion and ignorance
- ❖ Results will differ accordingly

SECTION VI (17.23 – 17.28) THE CONCLUSION: OM TAT SAT

 **LINK BETWEEN SECTION V & SECTION VI:** Up to this point, Krishna has described how one can recognize the modes of material nature under which a person exists by the person's worship, food, austerity, sacrifice and charity. All three modes and their combinations are defective and bind one to the material world. Now Krishna will explain that all defects can be removed from every combination of the modes of material nature. How? By chanting *om tat sat*.

COMMON THEME: Getting free from the defects in one's sacrifice, austerity and charity

Text 17.23

THEME: Analyzing the above information, one can see the basic characteristics in goodness are motivation for purification, a sense of duty and desire to please the Lord. Therefore instill this mentality in sacrifice, austerity and charity by "Om tat sat"

- ❖ From beginning of creation the three words "Om tat sat" were used to indicate the Supreme Absolute truth

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 17.23

- (a) **How to purify food, sacrifice, austerity and charity** – Although always contaminated by any one of the material modes, they can be made as the means of spiritual elevation by aiming them at the Supreme – 'Om tat sat', the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the eternal
- (b) **What does 'Om tat sat' indicate** – They particularly indicate the Absolute Truth, The Supreme Personality of Godhead
 - e.g. In Vedic hymns, the word 'Om' is always found
- (c) **What if one acts without following scriptural regulations**
 - He will not attain Absolute Truth
 - He will get some temporary result but not the ultimate end of life
- (d) **Conclusion** – Sacrifice, charity and penance must be done in the mode of goodness, otherwise they are inferior in quality, if performed in the mode of passion or ignorance
- (e) **Indication of the Vedic literatures with respect to 'Om tat sat'**
 - Three words 'Om tat sat' are uttered in conjunction with the Holy Name of the Supreme Lord e.g. 'Om tad Vishnoh'
 - Whenever a Vedic hymn or Holy Name of the Supreme Lord is uttered, 'Om' is added
- (f) **Authority for 'Om tat sat'** – These three words are taken from Vedic hymns
 - 'Om' (*Rg Veda*) – Indicates the first goal
 - 'Tat tvam asi' (*Chandogya Upanisad*) – Indicates second goal
 - 'Sad eva saumya' (*Chandogya Upanisad*) – Indicates the third goal
 - E.g. Brahma performed sacrifices by indicating Supreme Lord with these three words
- (g) **'Om tat sat' and Krishna consciousness**
 - According to *Bhagavad-gita*, any work should be done for 'Om tat sat' (For the Supreme Personality of Godhead) – That is 'acting in Krishna consciousness'

Text 17.24

THEME: Describes 'Om'

- ❖ **Purpose** – Helps one to remember the Lord
- ❖ **'Om' means 'Vishnu'** – This is placed at the beginning of the Vedic Hymns to indicate the Supreme goal and thus attain the Supreme
 - *Ref. Rg Veda 1.22.20* – The lotus feet of Vishnu are the 'Supreme devotional platform'
 - Performance of everything on behalf of Supreme Lord assures perfection of all activities

Text 17.25

THEME: Describes 'tat'

- ❖ *'Tat'* describes detached work for the sake of liberation
 - **Purpose** – Freedom from material entanglement
- ❖ These activities are done with disregard for fruitive results


Texts 17.26 – 17.27

COMMON THEME: Describes 'sat' – Help to dedicate activity to the pleasure of Lord and His devotees

- ❖ The Absolute Truth is the objective of devotional sacrifice, it is indicated by the word **'sat'**
- ❖ The performer of such sacrifice is also called **'sat'**
- ❖ All works of sacrifice, charity and penance performed to please the Lord are also called **'sat'** and they reveal the true spiritual nature

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 17.26 – 17.27

- (a) **Importance of the words "Prasaste karmani"** – This indicates prescribed Vedic duties which are the purificatory processes from the time of conception to the end of one's life
 - Purpose – Meant for ultimate liberation
 - Recommendation – In all such activities one should vibrate "Om tat sat"
- (b) **Importance of the words "Sad-bhave" and "Sadhu-bhave"** – Indicates the transcendental situation
 - Acting in Krishna consciousness is called 'sattva'
 - One who is fully conscious of Krishna conscious activities is called 'sadhu'
 - *Ref. SB 3.25.25*: Emphasizes association of devotees ("*satam prasangat...*")
- (c) **PRACTICAL APPLICATION** – 'Om tat sat' is used when initiating a person or offering a sacred thread and many other yajnas
- (d) **Importance of "Tad-arthyam"** – Implies offering service to anything which represents the Supreme
 - *e.g.* Cooking and helping in the Lords temple or any other kind of work for broadcasting Lord's glories
- (e) **Conclusion** – These Supreme words 'Om tat sat' are thus used in many ways to perfect all activities and make everything complete

 **LINK BETWEEN TEXTS 17.27 & 17.28:** After hearing which activities are sat, one naturally wishes to know which activities are asat. Krishna responds to this query in the final verse of this chapter.

Text 17.28*

THEME: Religious activity not done in proper consciousness is practically useless

- ❖ Anything without faith in the Supreme is impermanent and is called 'asat'; and is useless in this life and in the next

FOCUS OF LEARNING: PURPORT 17.28

- (a) **This verse declares that sacrifice, charity and penance without faith in the Supreme is abominable**
 - Because it is useless, being temporary
 - Without such faith and proper guidance, there can never be any fruit
 - No success is obtained without following the principle
- (b) **Why this principle of 'Faith in Supreme' is emphasized**
 - Ultimate goal of all Vedic instructions is to understand Krishna
 - Advice of all Vedas – In all Vedic scriptures 'Faith in Supreme' is advised
- (c) **Best course of work recommended to make everything successful**
 - Work from the very beginning in Krishna consciousness under the guidance of the bona-fide spiritual master
- (d) **Direct Krishna consciousness is better than gradual elevation**
 - In conditional state – One is attracted to different worship based on three modes as per Text 17.4
 - Krishna consciousness is transcendental to all three modes
 - Message of Chapter 17 – Take to the direct Krishna consciousness process by the association of Krishna conscious devotees (Best recommended method)
- (e) **How to find success in the process of Krishna consciousness**
 - First find the proper spiritual master then
 - Receive training under spiritual master
 - Then one achieves faith in Supreme
 - When that faith matures, it is called **Love of god (ultimate goal of living-entities)**

☪ END OF CHAPTER 17 ☪

CHAPTER 17 Appendix

Selected Texts extracted from “Surrender unto Me”

Introduction

Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa introduces Chapter Seventeen with Arjuna inquiring:

You have described in the previous chapter that those who study the Vedas, follow their injunctions, try to understand their meaning and have faith in their authority are devas. You have then described those who disregard the Vedas and act outside the scope of Vedic injunctions as asuras. Now I have a question: What is the position of those who have comprehended the difficult texts of the Vedas, both learning them by rote and understanding their meaning, but who—because of lack of diligence—abandon the Vedic injunctions and instead worship demigods and others with the kind of faith found in worldly conduct? What is their position relative to the above-ascertained distinctions between the devas and asuras? Please answer this, taking into consideration both their neglect of Vedic injunctions and their possession of sincere faith.

Texts 17.5 – 17.6

Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa comments:

It has been stated in the previous chapter that those who are neglectful of Vedic authority (veda-bāhya) can never be delivered from their bad fate. Now this is corroborated in the two texts beginning aśāstra- [texts 5–6]. There are those who execute austerities, in defiance of the Vedas, which are enjoined in their own concocted scriptures, and are horrible and cause distress to other living beings. These people are characterized by hankering for sense gratification and by their stubborn insistence that “We can accomplish everything on our own.” They abuse the physical elements that compose their bodies. They emaciate their bodies by unnecessary fasting and so on. By their neglect, they also torment Me, the Supersoul dwelling within their bodies. They are oblivious—devoid of understanding how to discriminate according to scripture. You should know such persons, who are outside the scope of Vedic authority, to be demons. Thus it is implied that the bad fate of such persons is unavoidable.

What conclusion can we draw from this? Those who worship Yakṣas and Rākṣasas according to their natural faith may receive the potent mercy of Vedic authorities, and then, by developing some faith in the revealed scriptures, their demoniac nature may subside. But those who worship demigods are factually in the mode of goodness, so by the mercy of saintly association it will be easier for them to develop faith in scriptural authority.

While reading these descriptions of the effects of the modes of nature on a person’s worship and activities—and the following descriptions of food, sacrifices, austerities and charity—we naturally place ourselves and others into categories of goodness, passion or ignorance.

Individuals are not, however, neatly influenced by only one mode. Rather, they are influenced by unique and individual combinations of modes. The three modes of nature are thus compared to colors: goodness to yellow, passion to red, and ignorance to blue. Nine colors are created by mixing each color with the remaining two colors. By again mixing each of those nine with the other eight colors, eighty-one varieties occur. We could continue mixing colors again and again until an unlimited palette of colors is created. Similarly, the three modes can be mixed into three, nine and eighty-one combinations, or mixed again to form even more subtle combinations. Indeed, each conditioned soul acquires an individually tailored body and set of circumstances in the material world. At times, therefore, we find a person whose modes basically agree with ours, yet who is still different from us. Our modes may correspond with another’s in terms of nine, or even eighty-one shadings, but the more subtle shadings of modes between individuals must certainly exist.

Text 17.28

Sacrifice, charity and penance should all be performed for the pleasure of om̐ tat sat, the Absolute Truth; otherwise, these activities remain within the confines of the material world, bound by goodness, passion and ignorance. The gradual process of elevation should be avoided, and Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be taken up directly. There is no need to elevate ourselves gradually on the banyan tree of the material world. Even if, because of our natures, we naturally have faith in one thing or another, we should hear transcendental literature from pure souls, transcend our faith born of the modes of nature and establish our faith on the spiritual platform. In this way, we should cut off our attachment to matter and attain the spiritual world through pure devotional service.