



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

श्रीमद्भगवद् गीता

श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगः

Chapter 17

Volume 1

The Yoga of Three-fold श्रद्धा

अर्जुन उवाच

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

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श्री भगवानुवाच

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।
सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥

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

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यजेन्ते सात्त्विका देवान् यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।
प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥

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अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।
दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥

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कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः
मां चैवान्तः शरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्युसुरनिश्चयान् ॥

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ब्रह्मज्ञानं - ईश्वरज्ञानं - आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge has been unfolded, in various details in the first 15 chapters of the भगवत् गीता. The last three chapters of the भगवत् गीता are focused on कर्म. In spite of our apparent familiarity with कर्म and its different ramifications in daily life, there is a lot more we need to learn about कर्म, particularly with respect to what to do, and what to avoid in life, in order to realize fully the content of Self-knowledge within ourselves. That is why knowledge about कर्म, focused on Self-knowledge becomes a part of ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge, The भगवत् गीता is.

Obviously, from a practical stand point, the last three chapters of The भगवत् गीता are the most important ones for every human being, because of their immediate relevance to the daily life of every person. This 17th chapter of the भगवत् गीता is focused on an important aspect of कर्म, namely श्रद्धा.

We cannot really translate the word श्रद्धा, but we all understand what श्रद्धा is. श्रद्धा is often understood simply as "Faith". It is indeed faith, far more than simple blind faith. It is a Superior Faith beyond definition. When fully realized, श्रद्धा is

- ❑ Faith in oneself
- ❑ Faith in one's culture
- ❑ Faith in one's ultimate meaningfulness of life
- ❑ Faith in one's very Being
- ❑ Faith in one's innermost consciousness
- ❑ Faith in परमेश्वर - generally referred to as God.

श्रद्धा is the closest to identifying oneself with the Supreme Self in oneself, परमेश्वर Itself. श्रद्धा is the best and the highest in one's entire personality, one's स्वभाव. With respect to ordinary human beings, श्रद्धा is a manifestation of one's गुणs in the form of



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one's attitude towards everything one does. In other words, what one's श्रद्धा is, that is what one is.

Since गुणs are three-fold in nature, so is श्रद्धा, which is also three-fold in nature. A clear knowledge, a clear recognition of the three-fold nature of श्रद्धा is itself योग, a ज्ञानसाधनं, a help in realizing आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge. Such three-fold श्रद्धा is the subject matter of Sri Krishna's discourse in this chapter.

As we may recall, Sri Krishna concluded the last chapter advising अर्जुन as follows:

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥

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ते - "For you Arjuna, in determining what is to be done and what is not to be done in any given situation, the *Sastras*, meaning the mandates of the Vedas and the Upanishads, are your guide. With clear knowledge and understanding of what is said in the *Sastras*, which means in-keeping with the eternal laws of धर्म, concerned with proper conduct in everyday life"

This statement from Sri Krishna gives rise to a question from Arjuna. Arjuna says:

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

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कृष्ण - O! Krishna, a little earlier you assured me that I was born with देव संपत्, which means I already have a preponderance of सत्त्व गुण in me. Now, you are telling that *Sastras* are the means of knowledge and guide for my daily life, and I must always act in accordance with the stipulations of the *Sastras*. I presume that this is not an advice for me alone, and it is a general advice for anybody.



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Now, if that is so, I would like to know, what is the status of the disposition of mind and बुद्धि of those people who do not know the stipulations of the *Sastras* with respect to how one should do Vedic कर्मs, such as हवन्s, पूजाs, etc. and yet they do them anyway, with tremendous faith - पूर्ण श्रद्धा? What is the disposition of their अन्तःकरण? Are they endowed with सत्व गुण, रजस् गुण or तमस् गुण? That is Arjuna's question. This is how he asks this question.

ये - Those people, not anyone in particular, but people in general, who have no शास्त्र ज्ञानं - no knowledge of the Vedas and the Upanishads, and therefore

शास्त्र विधिम् उत्सृज्य - ignoring the stipulations of the *Sastras* - the strict rules of the *Sastras* pertaining to the performance of different Vedic rituals, they ignore the stipulations of the *Sastras*, because they do not know what exactly these stipulations are, in detail, still

यजन्ते - they worship, they perform the Vedic rituals like हवन्s, पूजाs, etc. and worship deities in various forms and names

श्रद्धया अन्विताः - with full श्रद्धा - पूर्ण श्रद्धा - total unqualified faith and earnestness in performing such rituals

They are endowed with श्रद्धा, but they do not have the Vedic knowledge relating to those rituals. Consequently, their performance of the rituals is not always strictly in accordance with the rules of the *Sastras*. Some improprieties do occur. Their श्रद्धा in performing such rituals arises from the traditions of the family and the practices of the elders in the family, and the community at large.

Such people ignore शास्त्र विधानं - the details of the rules stipulated in the *Sastras* for the performance of such rituals, but they do not lack any faith in the *Sastras*. They are not performing the rituals for pretension (दंभ), nor do they mean any disrespect to the knowledge of the *Sastras*. Further, they have no काम, क्रोध, or लोभ in the performance of the rituals. They do not follow the rules of the *Sastras* simply because



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they have no शास्त्रज्ञानं, but then, their श्रद्धा in performing the rituals is second to none. With respect to such people

तेषां निष्ठा तु का - सत्त्वं आहो रजः तमः - What is the status of the disposition of their अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि? Is it one of सत्त्व गुण, रजस् गुण or तमस् गुण? That is Arjuna's question.

What Arjuna is talking about is common occurrence in society. But his question is not specific enough for a simple answer, because the nature of श्रद्धा varies from person to person and also from time to time even for the same person. This is pointed out by Sri Krishna in His reply which constitutes the rest of this chapter. भगवान् says:

श्री भगवानुवाच

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।

सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥

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देहिनां - For every human being

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा - the श्रद्धा is three-fold

सा श्रद्धा स्वभावजा - that श्रद्धा is natural to every person, manifesting the in-born nature of one's अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि . It is the type of mind and बुद्धि one has that determines the type of श्रद्धा one has, at any given time.

There are three distinct manifestations of श्रद्धा, depending on the prevailing nature of one's अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि. The nature of one's अन्तःकरण is ever subject to change, in the wake of knowledge, understanding, appreciation and self-discipline, and so is one's श्रद्धा. The three types of श्रद्धा are

सात्त्विकी राजसी तामसी चैव -



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a श्रद्धा that manifests, in attitude, one's सत्त्व गुण is सात्त्विकी श्रद्धा

a श्रद्धा that manifests, in attitude, one's रजस् गुण is राजसी श्रद्धा and

a श्रद्धा that manifests, in attitude, one's तमस् गुण is तामसी श्रद्धा

Since every person has all the three गुणs to different extents, so also is one's श्रद्धा.

Thus every person's श्रद्धा is uniquely different from that of others, and it is ever subject to change.

च इति तां शृणु - and, more about these three types of श्रद्धा . Please listen.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।

श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥

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सत्त्व अनुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति

सत्त्व - here stands for the disposition of one's entire अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि.

सत्त्व अनुरूपा - in-keeping with the entire disposition of one's अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि, which means, in-keeping with the tendencies, value structure, understanding, priorities, etc., in-keeping with such disposition of one's mind and बुद्धि , which is born of

one's पूर्व जन्म कर्मफल - fruits of one's actions in the previous lives, their वासनाs - the lingering tendencies , and also, by virtue of one's actions in one's present life, all that is सत्त्व अनुरूपा

सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत - O! Arjuna, for all people, the श्रद्धा is determined by such सत्त्व अनुरूपा - the entire disposition of one's अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि. Consequently

श्रद्धामयः अयं पुरुषः - every individual जीव, every individual person is श्रद्धामयः - one who is permeated by, and saturated with one's श्रद्धा, which means, every individual



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person is an embodiment of one's श्रद्धा. Whatever is one's culture, tendencies, values, understanding, priorities, etc. that is what one is. The श्रद्धा of every person is in keeping with one's अन्तःकरण. As is the mind and बुद्धि, so is the श्रद्धा. As is the श्रद्धा, so is the person, which means one's स्वभाव manifests itself as one's श्रद्धा. All of one's interests, activities, etc. are only a manifestation of one's श्रद्धा. Therefore

यो यत् श्रद्धः स एव सः - यः श्रद्धामयः यत् श्रद्धः सः एव सः The one who is saturated with that श्रद्धा, whatever be that श्रद्धा, that श्रद्धा alone is what one is, which simply means one is exactly what one's श्रद्धा is. When you see the श्रद्धा of the person, you are seeing the person. श्रद्धा is not an object.

Then how do you see the श्रद्धा of a person? You cannot see the श्रद्धा. You can only infer from the लिङ्ग - from the characteristics of the person's actions, motives, etc. Sri Krishna is going to illustrate how the nature of one's श्रद्धा is manifested in one's actions, on the basis of which one can try to understand and recognize the nature of one's own श्रद्धा, and hence, the overall disposition of one's own अन्तःकरण. With that knowledge, together with the knowledge of the teachings of the भगवत् गीता and the Upanishads, one can try to order and reorder one's life style, to set it in सन् मार्ग - path of सत्यं and धर्म, leading ultimately to Absolute Happiness and Total Fulfillment in life. That is the purpose of trying to understand the nature of one's own श्रद्धा.

Illustrating the manifestations of the different types of श्रद्धा, भगवान् says:

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान् यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।

प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥

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The deities one worships are an indication of the type of **श्रद्धा** one has. For example

सात्त्विका देवान् यजन्ते (पूजन्ते) - The people whose **अन्तःकरण** (mind and **बुद्धि**) is endowed predominantly with **सत्त्वगुण**, have **श्रद्धा** in worshipping **देवताs** - the presiding deities of **ईश्वर** power, **ईश्वर शक्ति**, such as **अग्नि**, **वायु**, **वरुण**, **शिव**, **विष्णु**, **राम**, **कृष्ण**, **गणेश** etc. They worship such deities as **परमेश्वर** itself, seeking the Grace of **परमेश्वर** for gaining **सुख**, **ज्ञानं** and **अन्तःकरण शुद्धि** - praying for happiness, health, and welfare of oneself and others, and also for cultivating knowledge of various kinds, both objective knowledge and spiritual knowledge, and/or simply for purification of one's mind and **बुद्धि**, meaning elimination of **राग-द्वेष** forces from one's mind, and gaining clarity of knowledge in one's **बुद्धि**.

For such worship of **परमेश्वर**, no particular *Sastra or Mantra* is necessary. All that is necessary is **ईश्वर भक्ति** and **श्रद्धा**, as **भगवान्** said earlier

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति
तदहं भक्ति उपहृतम् अश्रामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

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A leaf, a flower, a fruit, or simply water offered to **परमेश्वर** with pure devotion is a manifestation of their **श्रद्धा**, in their worship. Such **श्रद्धा**, in worship of **परमेश्वर** is **सात्त्विकी**, indicating the **सत्त्वगुण** of one's **अन्तःकरण**. In such worship of **परमेश्वर**, the question of any transgression of **शास्त्रविधि** - mandates of any *Sastras* simply does not arise. On the other hand,

राजसाः यक्षरक्षांसि यजन्ते - Those whose **अन्तःकरण** (mind and **बुद्धि**) is endowed predominantly with **रजस् गुण** - greed and craving for powers of various



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kinds, worship celestial beings such as यक्षs and रक्षs who are possessed of destructive powers of various kinds. By worshipping them with श्रद्धा, total dedication and perseverance, they seek to gain such powers themselves, which they can use in their own pursuits of greediness, power and destruction. The श्रद्धा in such kinds of worship is a manifestation of राजसी श्रद्धा. Further

तामसा जनाः अन्ये प्रेतान् भूतगणान् यजन्ते - Those whose अन्तःकरण is endowed predominantly with तमस् गुण - ignorance, delusion, confusion and stupidity, they worship many kinds of spirits and ghosts possessed with powers of deceit, black magic, fear, terror, etc. By worshipping such spirits and ghosts with श्रद्धा - total dedication, austerities, etc., they seek to gain such powers themselves for use in their own pursuits of deceit and self-destruction. The श्रद्धा of such kinds of people is a manifestation of तामसी श्रद्धा.

There is also another version of राजसी श्रद्धा and तामसी श्रद्धा which भगवान् points out as follows:

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।

दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ 17-5

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः

मां चैवान्तः शरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यासुरनिश्चयान् ॥ 17-6

We will see these verses next time.