



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

श्रीमद्भगवद् गीता

श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगः

**Chapter 17**

**Volume 2**

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Sri Krishna has been talking about people whose अन्तःकरण (mind and बुद्धि) is dominated by असुर सम्पत् - the negative personal qualities pointed out in the last chapter. Such people have predominantly रजस् गुण or तमस् गुण, or both. Those people also do various forms of तपस् in the form of religious worships to their own



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chosen deities in the pursuit of their life styles, prompted by the काम-क्रोध-लोभ tendencies of their mind and बुद्धि. About the nature of their श्रद्धा, in their forms of religious worship, भगवान् says:

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।

दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ 17-5

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः

मां चैवान्तः शरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्युसुरनिश्चयान् ॥ 17-6

ये जनाः तपः तप्यन्ते - Those who do तपस् - religious worships in the form of prayers and rituals of various kinds, prompted by their असुर सम्पत् - negative qualities

अशास्त्रविहितं - the forms of such worship are not mandated or set by the *Sastras*. The Vedas and the Upanishads do not say that ईश्वर उपासन should be done in the manner they do. Still they do. How?

घोरं पीडाकरं - They do fierce तपस्, causing pain both to themselves as well as others. For example, they inflict pain on themselves and they also do animal sacrifices in the name of worship of their chosen deities. Further

दम्भ अहङ्कार संयुक्ताः - Their mind and बुद्धि are filled with pride and egoism, and they are दम्भसंयुक्ताः - they pretend to be परमेश्वर-conscious

कामरागबल अन्विताः - Their mind and बुद्धि are governed by the forces and passions and cravings of various kinds

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्रामम् - करणसमूहं - They hurt their bodies and all their instruments of action and perception. For example, they prick their bodies with needles, they stand on one leg for a long time, they refrain from eating, seeing, hearing, speaking, etc., and thus they exhibit श्रद्धा in concentrating on their object of worship. Why do they do that? Because



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**अचेतसः** - They do not think properly. They have no **विवेक ज्ञानं** - discriminative knowledge. They think that they can achieve whatever they want by sheer will. They have no real discipline of **अन्तःकरण** - mind and **बुद्धि**. They are driven solely by **काम-क्रोध-लोभ** forces - lusts for powers of various kinds.

**मां च अन्तः शरीरस्थं कर्शयन्तः** - By hurting their own **शरीर**s - their own physical bodies, they are hurting ME too - The **परमेश्वर**, in every body. That means by not following **ईश्वर शासनं** - the eternal laws of **धर्म**, they are hurting **धर्म** in the society, which is the same as hurting **परमेश्वर** itself. Such **तपस्** - such forms of religious worship is far from worship of **परमेश्वर**. Therefore

**तान् विद्धि आसुर निधयान्** - Those who do such **तपस्** - such forms of religious worship, must be recognized as those whose **अन्तःकरण** - mind and **बुद्धि**, is governed by **असुर भावं**, namely **रजस्** and **तमस्** **गुण**. Consequently, the **श्रद्धा** in their **तपस्** must also be recognized as **राजसीश्रद्धा** and/or **तामसी श्रद्धा**. So recognizing, such forms of worship should be avoided, so teaches Sri Krishna.

Sri Krishna's teaching in the above two verses gives rise to two important questions. The first question is this. Even today, there are many people who, following their own family or community traditions, worship their chosen deities on certain specific occasions, in a particular manner. While they worship with **पूर्ण श्रद्धा** - utmost sincerity and devotion, their modes of worship do involve hurting themselves and/or others in some form. What is the nature of their **श्रद्धा**, and the quality of their **अन्तःकरण** - mind and **बुद्धि**?

The answer is: To the extent that their modes of worship involve hurting themselves or others, such modes of worship are indeed **अशास्त्रविहितं** - against the mandates of the Sastras, but their **भक्ति** and **श्रद्धा** in their acts of worship may be genuine, manifesting



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whatever सत्वगुण component they may have in the disposition of their अन्तःकरण.

As भगवान् says in Chapter 9

ये अपि अन्यदेवताः भक्ताः यजन्ते श्रद्धया अन्विताः

ते अपि मां एव कोन्तेय यजन्ति अविधिपूर्वकम् ॥ 9 - 23

also

यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि मां 9 - 25

Those who worship देवताs of their own choices, in a manner not enjoined by the Sastras, so long as they worship with पूर्ण श्रद्धा, they also worship Me, The परमेश्वर only. So long as they worship Me, The परमेश्वर with भक्ति and श्रद्धा, their acts of worship will ultimately take them to Me - The परमेश्वर, says Sri Krishna. That means, so long as they have unqualified भक्ति and श्रद्धा in their pursuit of परमेश्वर, whatever be their present mode of worship, it is no more than a transient stage in their continuing spiritual development . As they grow up in their spiritual maturity, all forms of violence in their modes of worship of परमेश्वर will naturally disappear. Therefore, there is no need to condemn or criticize such practices or such people.

The second question is this: In the competitive world in which we live today, all worldly successes involve intensive pursuits of worldly desires of various kinds, which may be considered as expressions of one's रजस् गुण and तमस् गुण. That being so, are रजस् गुण and राजसी श्रद्धा really bad for one's material as well as spiritual progress, as the Gita seems to teach?

The answer is, the Gita does not teach that all expressions of रजस् गुण and राजसी श्रद्धा are bad. Only the personal qualities of काम, क्रोध and लोभ and their expressions are bad, and they should be given up totally by every person, because they are surely detrimental to one's real progress in life. That is The Gita teaching.



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सत्त्व गुण, रजस् गुण and तमस् गुण, all the three together, constitute the very nature of life. Everybody has all the three गुणs to different extents. Every गुण and every combination of गुणs make every individual person uniquely fit for certain कर्मs for the benefit of both oneself and the society as a whole, and this unique fitness manifests itself as the श्रद्धा and the duties of the individual for the time being. Consequently, every person, naturally seeks, from time to time, that कर्म which befits one's own unique गुण, and that गुण is ever subject to change. As the गुण changes, the corresponding श्रद्धा also changes, though not necessarily in form and name. At any given time, every person is endowed with a combination of गुण, कर्म and श्रद्धा.

Whatever be the nature of one's pursuits seeking any kind of progress in life, so long as that pursuit is totally rooted in सत्यं and धर्मम्, the progress sought after is surely achievable, so assures The Gita Teachings, such as:

योगः कर्मसु कोशलं (2 - 50)

कर्मयोग is overriding excellence in action. Such excellence in action is possible only when action is done totally for its own sake, absolutely unconcerned, unaffected and uncontaminated by anything other than action itself. Such excellence in action is a process of constant endeavor, and it is an expression of one's identity with the best and the highest in oneself.

स्वे स्वे कर्मणि अभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः (18 - 45) - Every person can gain संसिद्धि - natural success in one's endeavors, by being totally committed and totally dedicated to knowledge and service related to one's own कर्मs, whatever they are.

In terms of worldly progress, संसिद्धि means whatever professional progress and material success one seeks. In order to gain that kind of worldly progress, one needs only to focus one's endeavors entirely on the cultivation of one's level of knowledge and service, and, in particular, there is no need for any one to dissipate one's time, energy and resources in competing with anyone else, on any account.



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On the other hand, if one's vision of संसिद्धि in life includes spiritual fulfillment through कर्म, that also can be gained by doing every कर्म as कर्मयोग, with the attitude of ईश्वर उपासन - worship of परमेश्वर, seeking ब्रह्मज्ञानं as प्रसाद. भगवान् assures

स्वकर्मणा तं (परमेश्वरं) अभ्यर्च्य सेद्धिम् विन्दति मानवः (18 - 46) - any person can gain सिद्धि by worshipping परमेश्वर, by one's own कर्म rooted in knowledge and service.

The सिद्धि, the highest spiritual fulfillment one can get through कर्म is अन्तःकरण शुद्धि - purity of one's अन्तःकरण - absolute clarity of vision in one's mind and बुद्धि, which makes the person fit for gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं, and ultimately the highest पुरुषार्थ, namely मोक्ष. Thus by doing every कर्म as कर्मयोग and also worship of परमेश्वर, one gains both worldly success, and ultimately spiritual fulfillment as well. More about कर्म we will see in the next chapter.

So much in response to the two questions raised. Continuing the description of the three-fold श्रद्धा, भगवान् says:

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः ।

यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु ॥

17-7

सर्वस्य प्रियः आहारः अपि - Everybody likes food. Even in the matter of one's liking for food

त्रिविधः भवति - there is 3-fold distinction

तथा - similarly

यज्ञः तपः दानं त्रिविधः भवति - with respect to यज्ञः - religious rituals people perform



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तपः - religious disciplines people undertake, and

दानं - religious gifts people give on different occasions, there is 3-fold distinction

तेषां भेदम् इमं शृणु - What this distinction is, please listen

The kinds of foods people like, the attitude of people doing religious rituals, in undertaking religious disciplines and in giving religious gifts of various kinds on different occasions, even in each of these most common kinds of human activities, there is 3-fold distinction in terms of expression of one's श्रद्धा. What this distinction is, please listen, says Sri Krishna.

When भगवान् says शृणु "listen", it means that what is going to be said is not just a matter of information, it is knowledge to be understood properly. The following illustrations are meant to guide one to recognize the nature of one's own अन्तः करण

- the nature of one's own गुण, as reflected in every one of one's own कर्मs. In particular, these illustrations are not meant for the purpose of judging others.

Further, we must understand that there is no absolute correlation between one's गुण and one's कर्म, because there are always other interfering factors involved in any expression of श्रद्धा, manifested through one's गुण-कर्म combination. For example, one may be eating सत्त्वगुण food, simply by virtue of habit and family upbringing, but may be actually having a रजस् गुण and तमस् गुण mental disposition. Even though there is no absolute correlation between one's गुण and कर्म, still, they influence each other significantly at all times.

Therefore, one must make an effort to recognize the composite nature of one's own गुण, from the manifestations of one's own कर्मs, in terms of the fundamental nature of the three गुणs themselves, namely:



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- The कर्म which generates सुख and ज्ञान - happiness and knowledge, arises from सत्त्वगुण.
- The कर्म which generates लोभ - greed in any form, arises from रजस् गुण, and
- The कर्म which generates any kind of delusion, confusion and/or intoxication, arises from तमस् गुण.

Seeing every one of one's own कर्म's in terms of the fundamental nature of the three गुण's, as indicated above, one can recognize the prevailing nature of one's own गुण, and consequently, one's own श्रद्धा at any given time.

Since every human being is endowed with the faculty of choice over one's own कर्म, one can try to order and reorder one's कर्म's from time to time in such a manner that the nature of one's own गुण progressively changes to predominance of सत्त्वगुण; because, only सत्त्वगुण can help one to uplift oneself, ultimately, from all the three गुण's, including सत्त्वगुण itself. That is the purpose of भगवान्'s discourse on आहार, यज्ञ, तपस् and दानं in the next 15 verses.

With reference to आहार - food, भगवान् says:

आयुः सत्त्वबलारोग्य सुखप्रीति विवर्धनाः ।

रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्याः आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ॥ 17-8

These are the kinds of foods which are naturally liked by those whose अन्तः करण - mind and बुद्धि, has the disposition of सत्त्वगुण. What are they?

आयुः विवर्धनाः - Foods which contribute to one's long life





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सत्त्वविवर्धनाः - Foods which contribute to one's चित्तधैर्यम् - mental strength, keeping one's mind and बुद्धि clear and alert

बल विवर्धनाः - Foods which contribute to one's physical strength

आरोग्य विवर्धनाः - Foods which are good for one's general health and welfare

सुख विवर्धनाः - Foods which contribute to one's sense of comfort and cheerfulness

प्रीति विवर्धनाः - Foods which contribute to one's sense of satisfaction

रस्या - Foods which are palatable and tasty

स्निग्धाः - Foods which have some oil in them; some oil, but not too oily

स्थिराः - Foods which are substantial for the strength and sustenance of body elements such as bones, etc.

हृद्याः - Foods which are both dear to one's heart, and pleasing to one's senses - eyes, smell, etc.

आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः - These are the kinds of foods which are naturally liked by those whose अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि, is governed by सत्त्वगुण, which means, these are the kinds of foods which are the normal ones, good for everybody. They are the normal ones because they are naturally conducive to one's spiritual growth. On the other hand

कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्ण तीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।

आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥

17-9

Foods which are

अति कटु - too bitter

अति अम्ल - too sour

अति लवण - too salty

अति उष्ण - too hot to touch



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अति तीक्ष्ण - too hot to taste

अति रूक्ष - too dry

अति विदाहि - too burning for the stomach

दुःखशोक आमयप्रदा - which give rise to pain, grief and disease of some kind

आहाराः राजसस्य इष्टाः - these are the kinds of food which are naturally liked by people whose अन्तःकरण is dominated by रजस् गुण ; and

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं च यत् ।

उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियं ॥

17-10

यातयामं - Foods which are not cooked properly

गतरसं - Foods which have no taste at all

पूति - Foods which have a bad smell

पर्युषितं च - foods which are too old

उच्छिष्टं अपि - foods which are the left-overs after eating

अमेध्यं - foods which are unfit for offering as worship to परमेश्वर, or foods which are unfit for offering to guests

भोजनं तामसः प्रियं - these are the kinds of foods naturally liked by people whose अन्तःकरण is dominated by तमस् गुण.

Obviously, the राजसिक् and तामसिक् foods are not conducive to one's spiritual growth. They should be avoided.

भगवान् then talks about यज्ञ दान तपस् कर्मs which we will see next time.