



ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

श्रीमद्भगवद् गीता

श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगः

Chapter 17

Volume 4

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In the verses we saw last time, Sri Krishna has been talking about the three types of श्रद्धा manifested by people in their यज्ञकर्मs - acts of worship of परमेश्वर through Vedic rituals of different kinds, and also तपस् कर्मs - acts of self-discipline at the body, speech and mind levels. भगवान् now talks about the three types of श्रद्धा manifested by people in their दान कर्मs - acts of giving gifts to people as charity on different occasions. भगवान् says:



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दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।

देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ॥

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दातव्यम् इति यत् दानं दीयते - That gift which is given just because it is दातव्यम् - it is to be given, it is a कर्म to be done, just as a matter of sacred duty, in terms of one's sense of values. How does one know that it is a कर्म to be done? Only by one's विवेक बुद्धि - one's faculty of discriminative judgment, which means such gift is given with कर्मयोग बुद्धि for one's own self-fulfillment, neither seeking nor expecting anything in return. Giving gifts with such attitude is दातव्यम् - a कर्म to be done. Further

अनुपकारिणे - Such gifts given to a person who never helped you before in any way, nor is there any perceived possibility that you may receive some help from that person any time in the future. That means, दानं - giving a gift to a person is not an investment for gaining some future profit for oneself. Further

देशे काले च पात्रे च - gift given at the proper place, such as a sacred place, at the proper time, such as an auspicious occasion, and to a proper person, or a proper cause, such as a deserving person or a worthy cause

तत् दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् - that gift is always considered as सात्त्विकं - a gift given with सात्त्विक श्रद्धा.

We must understand that gifts are of many kinds. In addition to giving money as gift, food, clothing, shelter, and timely help and advice are also great gifts. The greatest of all gifts is the gift of knowledge, any kind of knowledge, most especially ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge. All such gifts given to deserving people, with कर्मयोग बुद्धि is indeed a manifestation of सात्त्विक श्रद्धा. On the other hand,



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यत् प्रत्युपकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः ।

दीयते च परिक्लिष्टं तद्दानं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥

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तु - whereas

यत् दानं प्रत्युपकारार्थं दीयते - that gift given with expectation of some form of help in return

फलम् उद्दिश्य वा दीयते - or, any gift given expecting some अदृष्ट फलं - unseen result in this life or later, such as पुण्य, heaven, a better life in one's next birth, etc., or

परिक्लिष्टं दीयते - any gift given reluctantly with a sense of pain or loss

तत् दानं राजसं स्मृतम् - that gift must always be recognized as राजसं, a gift given with राजस श्रद्धा. Further,

अदेशकाले यद्दानम् अपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते ।

असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥

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यत् दानम् अदेशकाले अपात्रेभ्यः च दीयते - that gift given at a wrong place, or at an inappropriate time, or to an unworthy person or cause, or

असत् कृतम् - that gift, given disrespectfully, or

अवज्ञातं - that gift, given insultingly or contemptuously

तत् दानम् तामसं उदाहृतम् - that gift is declared to be तामसं, a gift given with तामस श्रद्धा

Obviously, राजस श्रद्धा and तामस श्रद्धा in giving any gift to anybody at any time are totally detrimental to one's spiritual progress, and hence they should be so recognized and avoided at all times.

From the point of view of one's own spiritual progress, श्रद्धा means only सात्त्विक श्रद्धा. राजस श्रद्धा and तामस श्रद्धा have no content of श्रद्धा at all. They are only



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expressions of अश्रद्धा - absence of श्रद्धा. That is why the basic Vedic teaching is अश्रद्धया अदेयं. If a person has only राजस श्रद्धा or तामस श्रद्धा in any act of gift-giving, it is better that person does not give any gift at all, because giving gift of any kind without सात्त्विक श्रद्धा is no gift at all, and such gift is not good for one's spiritual progress. One must first grow to a certain level of spiritual maturity in कर्मयोग यज्ञकर्म attitude, even to qualify oneself to give any gift with सात्त्विक श्रद्धा. That is the teaching here.

In the last 15 verses, Sri Krishna talked so much about श्रद्धा in यज्ञकर्मs, तपस्कर्मs and दान कर्मs, because these three kinds of कर्मs are कर्तव्यम् कर्मs - कर्मs to be done under the eternal laws of धर्म - सनातन धर्म, by every person, whether one is a संसारी, कर्मयोगी, or ज्ञानी. We will see more about कर्मs in the next chapter.

As we may recall, this chapter opened with this question from Arjuna:

ये शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ॥

17-1

There are people in the society who do perform various kinds of यज्ञकर्मs - Vedic rituals, with utmost श्रद्धा (श्रद्धया अन्विताः), but their modes of performance of such rituals are improper in terms of the rules of the *Sastras* (शास्त्र विधि)

In doing the various Vedic rituals, people simply follow the family and/or community traditions, and they ignore शास्त्र विधि - the strict rules relating to the proper mode of performing such rituals. They do not mean any disrespect to शास्त्र ज्ञानं - Knowledge of the *Sastras*. Further, they are not doing such rituals for दंभ - pretension, nor are they being pushed into doing those rituals by their काम-क्रोध-लोभ forces. They do not



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follow शास्त्र विधि in the performance of their rituals simply because they do not know what the rules are. They do not have any शास्त्र ज्ञान, but their श्रद्धा in what they do is second to none. With respect to such people,
तेषां निष्ठा का सत्त्वं आहो रजस् तमः - What is the status of the disposition of their अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि, in terms of श्रद्धा - is it one of सात्त्विक श्रद्धा, or राजस श्रद्धा or तामस श्रद्धा? That is Arjuna's question.

This question involves two aspects, one with respect to श्रद्धा in doing कर्म, and the other with respect to the impropriety in terms of the शास्त्र विधि involved. In order to answer this question, Sri Krishna first points out that with respect to any कर्म, whatsoever, one's श्रद्धा in doing the कर्म can, in fact, be either सात्त्विक श्रद्धा, or राजस श्रद्धा or तामस श्रद्धा, depending upon the person's गुण, governing the performance of the कर्म involved at the time of action.

When any person considers oneself as doing any कर्म with श्रद्धा, that श्रद्धा is generally assumed to be सात्त्विक श्रद्धा, because, सात्त्विक श्रद्धा is the only kind of श्रद्धा that deserves to be called श्रद्धा. Even though that is the case, still the श्रद्धा of every person needs to be confirmed by oneself, as a matter of duty to oneself, through one's own enquiry about one's own attitudes and motives with respect to the performance of every कर्म that one does. If a person does a यज्ञकर्म - a Vedic ritual with utmost श्रद्धा, as Arjuna says (श्रद्धया अन्विताः), then that श्रद्धा is indeed सात्त्विक श्रद्धा, and a कर्म done with such श्रद्धा is naturally a सात्त्विक कर्म.

Then the question is, can a यज्ञकर्म - a Vedic ritual, be सात्त्विक कर्म even when it is done improperly in terms of शास्त्र विधि - the mandates of the *Sastras*, pertaining to the proper mode of performing the ritual involved?



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Sri Krishna says: YES, because all the improprieties in the mode of performance of any Vedic ritual, in terms of शास्त्र विधि, have no effect when the कर्म itself is totally dedicated to परमेश्वर with श्रद्धा. श्रद्धा is already there. Then how does one dedicate the यज्ञकर्म - the Vedic ritual to परमेश्वर ? भगवान् says: "Simply by a contemplative and devotional utterance of the word औँ or तत् or सत् or औँ तत् सत् both at the beginning and at the end of the यज्ञकर्म being done."

You start every कर्म with the word औँ - uttering The औँ mantra. By such utterance, the यज्ञकर्म, the Vedic ritual, being done improperly in terms of शास्त्र विधि, naturally becomes transformed into शास्त्र विधान उक्त कर्म - कर्म done totally in accordance with the mandates of the Sastras, not in form, but in effect. That is the power of औँ mantra, the औँ शक्ति. The same is also true with the mantras तत् and सत्. Thus, with a contemplative and devotional utterance of औँ, तत्, सत् or औँ तत् सत् mantra, every कर्म done with utmost श्रद्धा, whatever be its form, becomes a सात्त्विक कर्म done with सात्त्विक श्रद्धा, that is Sri Krishna's answer to Arjuna's question. This is how Sri Krishna gives that answer; please listen.

औँ तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः ।

ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा ॥ 17-23

ब्रह्मणः त्रिविधः स्मृतः - The thought of ब्रह्मन् - The परमेश्वर consciousness, can be brought into your mind and बुद्धि, naturally and spontaneously, by any one of these three means, namely

औँ तत् सत् इति निर्देशः ब्रह्मणः - By simply uttering, with contemplative and worshipful attitude, any one of these three words, namely औँ, तत् or सत्, or all the three words together औँ तत् सत्, with understanding and appreciation of their



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contents, as unfolded by the Upanishads, which means, by contemplative and devotional utterance of the words ओँ, तत्, सत् or ओँ-तत्-सत्, as mantras, as words of power, one can get one's अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि naturally set in the all-pervading परमेश्वर indicated in the Upanishads as ब्रह्मन् - सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म, because, the three mantras ओँ, तत् and सत्, both individually and collectively, unfold ब्रह्मन्, revealing परमेश्वर already available for recognition in one's own बुद्धि.

Upanishads are our प्रमाण - means of knowledge, for recognition of the all-pervading ब्रह्मन्, The परमेश्वर. We may briefly recall here, as we did before in Mundaka Upanishad (2 - 2 - 3 and 4) how the content of ओँ mantra reveals ब्रह्मन् as It is.

Sri Krishna has already said in Chapter 7 (7 - 8):

अहं प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु - I am the प्रणव मन्त्र ओँ in all the Vedas. When Sri Krishna says "I am ओँ", that means the content of the word ओँ is ब्रह्मन् Itself, परमेश्वर Itself, and not simply a sound symbol for परमेश्वर. Therefore, when one recites the ओँ mantra in a contemplative and devotional mood of ईश्वर उपासन, worship of परमेश्वर, one's mind and बुद्धि spontaneously get set, get established in परमेश्वर consciousness.

Further, on the content of the ओँ mantra, the Mandukya Upanishad says:

ओँ इति एतत् अक्षरं इदं सर्वम् । तस्य उपव्याख्यानम् ।
भूतं भवत् भविष्यत् इति सर्वम् ओँकार एव ।
यत् च अन्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तत् अपि ओँकार एव ।
सर्वम् हि एतत् ब्रह्म । अयं आत्मा ब्रह्म ।
सोऽयमात्मा चतुष्पात् ॥



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The अक्षर ब्रह्मन्, The unchanging, unchangeable, ever existent ब्रह्मन्, The परमेश्वर, revealed by The word ओँ, the ओँ mantra, pervades this entire creation, in and out. Everything that existed in the past, everything that exists at present, and everything that will ever exist in the future, all that is only ओँ. Not only that, whatever else that exists, transcending all the three periods of time, that too is only ओँ. Thus, everything indicated above as ओँ is indeed that अक्षर ब्रह्मन्, unfolded by the Upanishad expression सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म, which means ओँ and ब्रह्मन् are inseparable (just as a word and its meaning). Further, The आत्मा, The Self I in every person is ब्रह्मन् Itself. Thus ओँ is ब्रह्मन्, आत्मा is ब्रह्मन्. The words ओँ, ब्रह्मन्, and आत्मा indicate the same ONE Supreme Being, The परमेश्वर, identical with the ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा - The Self effulgent Light of Pure Consciousness, Absolute Happiness, existing as चतुष्पात् - ONE अमात्र unbound by time, accommodating all three, any three मात्रs, each bound by time, which means, ONE limitless state of existence, accommodating all three, any three transient states of existence, namely past, present and future, each bound by time.

Unfolding ब्रह्मन् further, छन्दोग्य Upanishad adds:

तत् त्वं असि, सत् एव सौम्य इदं अग्र आसीत् - That ब्रह्मन् you are. That ब्रह्मन् existed as सत् even before all this manifest creation came into existence.

From the foregoing Upanishad knowledge, it is clear

ओँ तत् सत् इति निर्देशः ब्रह्मणः -- the ओँ, तत् and सत् mantras, being pointers to ब्रह्मन्, unfold themselves, reveal themselves, as ब्रह्मन् Itself.

तेन - By the very utterance of the ओँ mantra



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ब्राह्मणाः वेदाः च यज्ञाः च विहिताः पुरा

ब्राह्मणाः - all the Upanishads, and also

वेदाः च - all the Vedas, meaning the entire कर्मकाण्ड in all the Vedas, and also

यज्ञाः च - all the Vedic injunctions for the proper performance of all Vedic rituals, all of them

विहिताः - sprung forth spontaneously and gloriously in the mind of the creator Brahmaji. When?

पुरा - Long time ago, at the very beginning of this cycle of creation.

According to our Upanishads* (G 4-32, M.U. 1-1-1 and T.U. 1, 4-1) all the Vedas and Vedic rituals arose directly from ब्रह्मन् Itself, because, they are all manifestations of ईश्वर शक्ति - The ओँ शक्ति - inseparable from ब्रह्मन् Itself, परमेश्वर Itself. At the very beginning of this cycle of creation, ब्रह्मन् - The परमेश्वर, manifesting Itself as Brahmaji, The Creator, uttered the ओँ mantra from which sprung forth in His Mind all the Vedas and the Upanishads as knowledge, which He revealed to His मानस पुत्र - Atharva, from whom that knowledge has come to us through successive generations. That is what is indicated in the above verse.

**Recall these verses which we have seen already*

एवं बहुविधा यज्ञाः वितता ब्रह्मणो मुखे
कर्मजान् विद्धि तान् सर्वान् एवं ज्ञात्वा विमोक्ष्यसे ॥(G.4-32)

ब्रह्म देवानां प्रथमः सम्बभूव
विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता
स ब्रह्मविद्याम् सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठाम्
अथर्वाय ज्येष्ठपुत्राय प्राह ॥ (मु1-1-1)

यश्छन्दसाम् ऋषभो विश्वरूपः
छन्दोभ्योऽध्यमृतात् संबभूव ॥ (ते 1-4-1)



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तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः ।

प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् ॥

17-24

तस्मात् - Therefore, ओँ reveals ब्रह्मन्. ओँ is ब्रह्मन्, ओँ is direct and immediate manifestation of ब्रह्मन्. Therefore

ओँ इति उदाहृत्य - with the devotional utterance of the word ओँ, the ओँ mantra, with understanding and appreciation of its content

यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः - all the यज्ञकर्मs, दानकर्मs, तपस् कर्मs, indeed all कर्मs

सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् प्रवर्तन्ते - are always begun and performed with श्रद्धा by the followers of the Vedic tradition. The followers of Vedic tradition always begin all कर्मs with the devotional utterance of the word ओँ, and then do the कर्मs with utmost श्रद्धा.

By so doing, all such कर्मs become

विधान उक्ताः - as if they are done exactly in accordance with the mandates of the *Sastras*, which means, they become as effective as those done exactly in accordance with the mandates of the *Sastras*, whatever be the shortcomings in their actual mode of performance.

In other words, by commencing every कर्म with the devotional utterance of ओँ mantra, the कर्म done with utmost श्रद्धा becomes totally dedicated to परमेश्वर, and whatever be the shortcomings in the actual mode of performance of the कर्म involved, the कर्म does reach परमेश्वर and becomes ONE with परमेश्वर itself. Thus the कर्म itself gets totally fulfilled, which is indeed the destination of every सात्त्विक कर्म and सात्त्विक श्रद्धा.

The same is true with respect to the words तत् and सत्, about which भगवान् says something more in the concluding verses of this chapter, which we will see next time.