



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगः

**Chapter 17**

**Volume 5**

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इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे  
श्रीकृष्णार्जुन संवादे श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगो नाम  
सप्तदशोऽध्यायः ॥

As we may recall, Sri Krishna concluded the last chapter (Chapter 16) advising Arjuna as follows:

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।  
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥ 16-24

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,



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do what you need to do in life, in keeping with the eternal laws of धर्म, the सनातन धर्म - Vedic mandates, for proper conduct in daily life. The above 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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There are people who perform यज्ञकर्मs - Vedic rituals of various kinds, with utmost श्रद्धा, but without strictly following शास्त्र विधि - the mandates of the Sastra, with respect to the proper performance of such rituals. श्रद्धा and गुण being directly related, what is the state of disposition of the अन्तः करण - mind and बुद्धि of such people. Is it one of सत्त्व गुण, रजस् गुण or तमस् गुण? That is Arjuna's question.

भगवान् points out one's गुण, manifested through one's कर्म, depends upon one's श्रद्धा in performing the कर्म involved. Just like गुण, the nature of श्रद्धा also is three fold, namely सात्त्विक श्रद्धा, राजसश्रद्धा, and तामस श्रद्धा, corresponding to सत्त्व गुण, रजस् गुण and तमस् गुण respectively.

When one talks about any कर्म, as one done 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. राजस श्रद्धा and तामस श्रद्धा only indicate absence of सात्त्विक श्रद्धा. Any कर्म done with सात्त्विक श्रद्धा is naturally a सात्त्विक कर्म manifesting the सत्त्व गुण of the mind and बुद्धि of the person involved. Then the question is, can a यज्ञकर्म - a Vedic ritual, done with पूर्णश्रद्धा, be a सात्त्विक कर्म if it is done



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improperly in terms of शास्त्र विधि - the strict rules of the Sastras pertaining to the proper performance of the ritual involved?

The answer is, Yes, even such a यज्ञकर्म can be a सात्त्विक कर्म provided it is totally dedicated to परमेश्वर, by simply uttering, with worshipful attitude, any one of the three Veda mantras ओँ, तत् or सत्, either individually or collectively, with understanding and appreciation of their contents, as unfolded by the Upanishads, because each one of the above three Veda mantras reveals ब्रह्मन्, the परमेश्वर, already in oneself, available for recognition by one's own बुद्धि.

By such devotional utterance of ओँ, तत् or सत्, or, any यज्ञकर्म, even though done improperly in terms of शास्त्रविधि, naturally becomes transformed into शास्त्रविधान उक्त कर्म - कर्म done totally in accordance with the mandates of the Sastras, not in form, but in effect. That is the power of the mantras ओँ, तत् and/or सत्. Thus, with the devotional utterance of ओँ, तत् or सत् mantra, every कर्म done with श्रद्धा, whatever be its form, becomes सात्त्विक कर्म manifesting the सत्त्व गुण nature of the mind and बुद्धि of the person involved.

Having said that, भगवान् talked about ओँ mantra last time, and now says something more about the तत् and सत् mantras

तदित्यनभिसंधाय फलं यज्ञतपः क्रियाः ।

दानक्रियाश्च विविधाः क्रियन्ते मोक्ष कङ्क्षिभिः ॥

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The word तत् literally means "that", referring to some object. But, when the word तत् is used without reference to any particular object, तत् refers to परंब्रह्म, as in the



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Upanishad declaration तत् त्वं असि - That परंब्रह्म You are. For example, while doing any कर्म, if one says तत् अर्पणं अस्तु, it means ब्रह्मार्पणं अस्तु - whatever I do, may it be total dedication to परमेश्वर. That is the attitude behind the action. Therefore, भगवान् says here:

तत् इति (उदाहृत्य) - with the devotional utterance of the word तत्

फलं अनभिसंधाय - without seeking or expecting any fruit of action, any result in view

विविधाः यज्ञक्रियाः तपःक्रियाः दानक्रियाः च मोक्ष कङ्क्षिभिः क्रियन्ते - various kinds of यज्ञ कर्मs, तपस् कर्मs and दानकर्मs are done with श्रद्धा, by those who live a life in the exclusive pursuit of मोक्ष, such as कर्मयोगीs and संन्यासीs.

यज्ञ कर्मs, तपस् कर्मs and दानकर्मs are to be done by everybody, whether one is a संसारी or कर्मयोगी or संन्यासी. Even though Sanyasis have freed themselves from their obligations to do many worldly duties, still they have यज्ञ, दान and तपस् कर्मs to do from time to time. And, when they do such कर्मs, they always commence their कर्मs with the word तत् अर्पणं अस्तु, thus dedicating the कर्म totally to परमेश्वर.

A Sanyasi does not do any कर्म for any result, because मोक्ष is his only goal and reaching that goal is not the result of any कर्म. मोक्ष is gained only by knowledge, not by कर्म. Then why should Sanyasis do any कर्म? A Sanyasi does a कर्म only for अन्तःकरण शुद्धि - to keep the mind and बुद्धि clear. We must understand that अन्तःकरण शुद्धि is not a कर्मफल, because अन्तःकरण is शुद्ध - clean by nature, but अन्तःकरण being only an instrument, it is also subject to collecting dust every



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day, and that dust has to be removed by सात्त्विक कर्म, and indeed, that is the purpose of any कर्म for every person.

Therefore, by doing the कर्म with श्रद्धा - फलं अनभिसंधाय - without seeking or expecting any result, the श्रद्धा for the कर्म becomes सात्त्विक श्रद्धा. By dedicating that कर्म with सात्त्विक श्रद्धा totally to परमेश्वर, by devotional utterance of तत् - तत् अर्पणं अस्तु, that कर्म becomes a means for gaining अन्तःकरण शुद्धि.

Usually, the word तत् is uttered in the form

ओं तत् सत् or

तदर्पणं अस्तु

Devotional utterances of ॐ and or तत् and or सत् have the same effect. In the next two verses, भगवान् tells something about the word सत् in particular.

सद्भावे साधुभावे च सदित्येतत्प्रयुज्यते ।

प्रशस्ते कर्मणि तथा सच्छब्दः पार्थ युज्यते ॥ 17-26

यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सदिति चोच्यते ।

कर्म चैव तदर्थीयं सदित्येवाभिधीयते ॥ 17-27

सत् इति एतत् प्रयुज्यते सत् भावे साधुभावे च - The word सत् is particularly used referring to सत् भाव and साधुभाव. सत् भाव refers to something good and auspicious, which has come into existence as a perceptible entity. For example, the birth of a child is auspicious. That child is सत्.

The word सत् literally means "Is", indicating something in existence. In reality, the only existence is परमेश्वर. Therefore, the very utterance of the word सत् refers to



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something that manifests शुभं and पवित्रं - auspicious and purifying. When you say "this is, that is, something else is" and so on, what you are really telling is "परमेश्वर is सत्, परंब्रह्म is" because ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं - all that is manifest is indeed परमेश्वर.

साधुभाव is सत्पुरुष भाव - the disposition of one who is committed to the pursuit of ईश्वर ज्ञानं - such a person is a साधु. Here again, one who has come into existence as a साधु, which means, the person was not a साधु before, but he is a साधु now, because of his new awakening to सत् बुद्धि.

तथा पार्थ - In a similar manner, O! Arjuna

सत् शब्दः युज्यते प्रशस्ते कर्मणि - the word सत् is used for any sacred कर्म, any sanctifying कर्म. For example, marriage, Upanayanam, etc. are considered सत् कर्मसः. Any कर्म done with श्रद्धा and ईश्वर अर्पण बुद्धि is a प्रशस्त कर्म - auspicious कर्म, and such कर्म is सत् कर्म.

We may briefly recall here how Sri Krishna described कर्म in Chapter 8. Arjuna asks the question किम् कर्म - What is कर्म? भगवान् says:

भूतभाव उद्भवकरः विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः - कर्म is विसर्ग कर्म, which means ईश्वर अर्पित कर्म - कर्म dedicated to परमेश्वर. श्रद्धा here is understood, because without श्रद्धा, there can be no dedication to परमेश्वर. The कर्म dedicated to परमेश्वर, what does it do?

भूतभाव उद्भवकरः - It becomes the cause for the birth of दृष्ट फल and अदृष्ट फल - results seen and unseen, helpful for gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं, ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, आत्म



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ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge. Such कर्म is सत् कर्म, a शुभ कर्म, a प्रशस्त कर्म, an auspicious कर्म.

यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सत् इति उच्यते - A committed steadfastness in the performance of any यज्ञ कर्म, तपस् कर्म and दान कर्म, with श्रद्धा is also called सत्, which means such steadfastness itself is a direct manifestation of परमेश्वर. Not only that

तदर्थीयं कर्म च एव सत् इति एव अभिधीयते - any कर्म related to the above यज्ञ दान तपस् कर्म's said above, again done with श्रद्धा, that कर्म also is called सत्. It is also a manifestation of परमेश्वर Itself, or any कर्म done with श्रद्धा, for the sake of परमेश्वर, i.e., with the attitude of being simply an instrument to serve the will of परमेश्वर, that कर्म also is called सत्, that कर्म is also a manifestation of परमेश्वर Itself.

Thus, in the foregoing verses, भगवान् has pointed out that any कर्म done with श्रद्धा and totally dedicated to परमेश्वर, simply by the devotional utterance of the mantra ओं तत् or सत्, either individually or collectively, makes that कर्म a सात्त्विक कर्म, manifesting the सत्त्व गुण component of अन्तःकरण of the person involved.

Thus it is one's attitude in performing the कर्म, and not the actual mode of performing the कर्म, that determines whether the कर्म is a सात्त्विक कर्म or a राजस कर्म or तामस कर्म. That is the complete answer to Arjuna's question at the beginning of this discourse.

Having answered Arjuna's question, भगवान् now concludes this discourse with the following important message.



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अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।

असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥

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पार्थ - O! Arjuna, please understand this

यत् अश्रद्धया हुतं - any Vedic ritual performed without श्रद्धा

यत् अश्रद्धया दत्तं - any charity given without श्रद्धा

यत् अश्रद्धया तपः तप्तं - any religious act of personal discipline undertaken without श्रद्धा, and indeed

यत् अश्रद्धया कृतं च - any duty performed, or any action done without श्रद्धा

तत् असत् इति उच्यते - that action is called असत्, such action is असत् कर्म

तत् न इह न प्रेत्य च - that असत् कर्म is as good as not done. It is fruitless, both here and hereafter, both while living and after death.

Why that is so, must be understood. As भगवान् has already pointed out, सत् is existence of ब्रह्मन्, existence of परमेश्वर. Therefore असत् कर्म is a denial of the very existence of ब्रह्मन्, existence of परमेश्वर.

As we have already seen in the Taittiriya Upanishad

असन्नेव स भवति - असत् ब्रह्मेति वेद चेत्

(2 - 6)

By denying the very existence of ब्रह्मन्, one denies one's own very existence. Hence

असत् एव स भवति - one becomes as good as non-existent. That means, such a person has no पुरुषार्थ - has no overriding purpose in life. There is no such thing as धर्म

or अधर्म for that person. That is why there is no श्रद्धा in that person. For such a person, life is only a matter of expediency. Such a person is always propelled and enslaved by one's own राग-द्वेष forces - forces of likes and dislikes. Such a person is never free.



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Consequently, such a person does not hesitate to degrade oneself into any action, to meet the immediate demands of his fancies, leading ultimately to one's own self-degradation and self-destruction.

The one who cannot recognize the existence of ब्रह्मन् - the existence of परमेश्वर, cannot pursue anything of lasting value in life. Therefore, श्रद्धा - सात्त्विक श्रद्धा which involves सत् बुद्धि - आस्तिक्य बुद्धि - परमेश्वर consciousness, is all important for every person. With this important message, Sri Krishna concludes this discourse on श्रद्धात्रय विभागयोग as the 17th chapter of भगवत् गीता.

We will go to the last chapter, Chapter 18 next time.

इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे  
श्रीकृष्णार्जुन संवादे श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगो नाम  
सप्तदशोऽध्यायः ॥