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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

सप्तदशोऽध्यायः - श्रद्धात्रयविभाग योगः

sapta daśo'dhyāyaḥ - śrddhātrayavibhāga yogaḥ

Chapter 17

Volume 1

The Yoga of Three-fold श्रद्धा śraddhā

अर्जुन उवाच arjuna uvāca

ये शास्त्रं विधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

ye śāstra vidhimutsrjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ ।

तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ॥ 17-1

teṣāṁ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvamāho rajastamaḥ ॥

श्री भगवानुवाच śrī bhagavān uvāca

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।

trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṁ sā svabhāvajā ।

सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥ 17-2

sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceta tāṁ śṛṇu ॥

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।

sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata ।

श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥ 17-3

śraddhāmayo'yaṁ puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ ॥

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान् य क्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।

yajante sāttvikā devān ya kṣarakṣāṁsi rājasāḥ ।

प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥ 17-4

pretānbhūtagaṇāṁścānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ ॥

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।

aśāstravihitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ ।

दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ 17-5

dambhāhaṅkāra saṁyuktāḥ kāma rāga balānvitāḥ ॥

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।



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karaśayantaḥ śarīrsthāṁ bhuta grāmama cetasaḥ |
मां चैवान्तः शरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यसुर निश्चयान् ॥ 17-6
mām caivāntaḥ śarīrsthāṁ tānviddhyāsura ni ścayān ||

ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* - ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānaṁ* - आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge has been unfolded, in various details in the first 15 chapters of the भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā*. The last three chapters of the भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā* are focused on कर्म *karma*. In spite of our apparent familiarity with कर्म *karma* and its different ramifications in daily life, there is a lot more we need to learn about कर्म *karma*, 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 *karma*, focused on Self-knowledge becomes a part of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge, The भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā* is.

Obviously, from a practical stand point, the last three chapters of The भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā* 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 *bhagavat gītā* is focused on an important aspect of कर्म *karma*, namely श्रद्धा *śraddhā*.

We cannot really translate the word श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, but we all understand what श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is. श्रद्धा *śraddhā* 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 *śraddhā* 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 *parameśvar* - generally referred to as God

श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is the closest to identifying oneself with the Supreme Self in oneself, परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself. श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is the best and the highest in one's entire personality, one's स्वभाव *svabhāva*. With respect to ordinary human beings, श्रद्धा



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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

śraddhā is a manifestation of one's गुणs *guṇas* in the form of one's attitude towards everything one does. In other words, what one's श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is, that is what one is.

Since गुणs *guṇas* are three-fold in nature, so is श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, which is also three-fold in nature. A clear knowledge, a clear recognition of the three-fold nature of श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is itself योग *yoga*, a ज्ञान साधनं *jñānam sādhanam*, a help in realizing आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - Self-knowledge. Such three-fold श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is the subject matter of Sri Krishna's discourse in this chapter.

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

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्या कार्यं व्यवस्थितौ ।

tasmācchāstram pramāṇam te kāryā kārya vyavasthitau ।

ज्ञात्वा शास्त्र विधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥ 16-24

jñātvā śāstra vidhānoktaṁ karma kartumahārhasi ॥

ते *te* - "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 *dharma*, concerned with proper conduct in everyday life"

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

अर्जुन उवाच *arjuna uvāca*

ये शास्त्र विधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

ye śāstra vidhimutsṛjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ ।

तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ॥ 17-1

teṣāṁ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvamāho rajastamaḥ ॥

कृष्ण *kṛṣṇa* - O! Krishna, a little earlier you assured me that I was born with दैव संपत् *daiva sampat*, which means I already have a preponderance of सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa* 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 *buddhi* of those people who do not know the stipulations of the *Sastras* with respect to how one should do Vedic कर्म *karmas*, such as हवन् *havans*, पूजा *pūjās*, etc. and yet they do them anyway, with tremendous faith - पूर्ण श्रद्धा *pūrṇa śraddhā*? What is the disposition of their अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa*? Are they endowed with सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa*, रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* or तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*? That is Arjuna's question. This is how he asks this question.

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

शास्त्र विधिम् उत्सृज्य *śāstra vidhim utsṛjya* - 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 *yajante* - they worship, they perform the Vedic rituals like हवन् *havans*, पूजा *pūjās*, etc. and worship deities in various forms and names

श्रद्धया अन्विताः *śraddhayā anvitāḥ* - with full श्रद्धा *śraddhā* - पूर्ण श्रद्धा *pūrṇa śraddhā* - total unqualified faith and earnestness in performing such rituals

They are endowed with श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, 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 *śraddhā* 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 *śāstra vidhānam* - 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 (दम्भ *daṁbha*), nor do they mean any disrespect to the knowledge of the *Sastras*. Further, they have no काम *kāma*, क्रोध *krodha* or लोभ *lobha* in the performance of the rituals. They do not follow the rules of the *Sastras* simply because they have no शास्त्र ज्ञानं *śāstra jñānam*, but then, their श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in performing the rituals is second to none. With respect to such people



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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

तेषां निष्ठा तु का सत्त्वम् आहो रजः तमः *teṣāṃ niṣṭhā tu kā sattvam āho rajah tamaḥ* - What is the status of the disposition of their अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*? Is it one of सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa*, रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* or तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*? 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 *śraddhā* 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 *bhagavān* says:

श्री भगवानुवाच *śrī bhagavān uvāca*
त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।
trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṃ sā svabhāvajā ।
सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥ 17-2
sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceta tāṃ śṛṇu ॥

देहिनां *dehināṃ* - For every human being

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा *trividhā bhavati śraddhā* - the श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is three-fold

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

There are three distinct manifestations of श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, depending on the prevailing nature of one's अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*. The nature of one's अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* is ever subject to change, in the wake of knowledge, understanding, appreciation and self-discipline, and so is one's श्रद्धा *śraddhā*. The three types of श्रद्धा *śraddhā* are सात्त्विकी राजसी तामसी चैव *sāttvikī rājasī tāmasī caiva*

- ✓ a श्रद्धा *śraddhā* that manifests, in attitude, one's सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa* is सात्त्विकी श्रद्धा *sāttvikī śraddhā*



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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

- ✓ a श्रद्धा śraddhā that manifests, in attitude, one's रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* is राजसी श्रद्धा *rājasī śraddhā* and
- ✓ a श्रद्धा śraddhā that manifests, in attitude, one's तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* is तामसी श्रद्धा *tāmasī śraddhā*

Since every person has all the three गुणs *guṇas* to different extents, so also is one's श्रद्धा śraddhā. Thus every person's श्रद्धा śraddhā is uniquely different from that of others, and it is ever subject to change.

च इति तां शृणु *ca iti tāṁ śṛṇu* - and, more about these three types of श्रद्धा śraddhā. Please listen.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।

sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata ।

श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥ 17-3

śraddhāmayo'yaṁ puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ ॥

सत्त्व अनुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति *sattva anurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati*

सत्त्व *sattva* - here stands for the disposition of one's entire अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*.

सत्त्व अनुरूपा *sattva anurūpā* - in-keeping with the entire disposition of one's अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, which means, in-keeping with the tendencies, value structure, understanding, priorities, etc., in-keeping with such disposition of one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, which is born of one's पूर्व जन्म कर्मफल *pūrva janma karama phala* - fruits of one's actions in the previous lives, their वासनाs *vāsanās* - the lingering tendencies, and also, by virtue of one's actions in one's present life, all that is सत्त्व अनुरूपा *sattva anurūpā*

सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत *sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata* - O! Arjuna, for all people, the श्रद्धा śraddhā is determined by such सत्त्व अनुरूपा *sattva anurūpā* - the entire disposition of one's अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*. Consequently

श्रद्धामयः अयं पुरुषः *śraddhāmayah ayaṁ puruṣah* - every individual जीव *jīva*, every individual person is श्रद्धामय *śraddhāmaya* - one who is permeated by, and



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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

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

यो यत् श्रद्धः स एव सः yo yat śraddhah sa eva saḥ

यः श्रद्धामयः यत् श्रद्धः स एव सः yaḥ śraddhāmayah yat śraddhah sa eva saḥ -

The one who is saturated with that श्रद्धा śraddhā, whatever be that श्रद्धा śraddhā, that श्रद्धा śraddhā alone is what one is, which simply means one is exactly what one's श्रद्धा śraddhā is. When you see the श्रद्धा śraddhā of the person, you are seeing the person. श्रद्धा śraddhā is not an object.

Then how do you see the श्रद्धा śraddhā of a person? You cannot see the श्रद्धा śraddhā. You can only infer from the लिङ्ग liṅga - from the characteristics of the person's actions, motives, etc. Sri Krishna is going to illustrate how the nature of one's श्रद्धा śraddhā 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 śraddhā, and hence, the overall disposition of one's own अन्तःकरण antaḥ karaṇa. With that knowledge, together with the knowledge of the teachings of the भगवत् गीता bhagavat gītā and the Upanishads, one can try to order and reorder one's life style, to set it in सन् मार्ग san mārga - path of सत्यं satyaṁ and धर्मम् dharmam, 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 śraddhā.

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

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान् यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।

yajante sāttvikā devān yakṣarakṣāṁsi rājasāḥ ।

प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥ 17-4

pretānbhūtagaṇāṁścānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ ॥



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

सात्त्विका देवान् यजन्ते sāttvikā devān yajante (पूयजन्ते pūyajante) - The people whose अन्तःकरण antaḥ karaṇa (mind and बुद्धि buddhi) is endowed predominantly with सत्त्व गुण sattva guṇa, have श्रद्धा śraddhā in worshipping देवताs devatās - the presiding deities of ईश्वर īśvara power, ईश्वर शक्ति īśvara śakti, such as अग्नि agni, वायु vāyu, वरुण varuṇa, शिव śiva, विष्णु viṣṇu, राम rāma, कृष्ण kṛṣṇa, गणेश gaṇeśa etc. They worship such deities as परमेश्वर parameśvar itself, seeking the Grace of परमेश्वर parameśvar for gaining सुख sukha, ज्ञानं jñānam and अन्तःकरण शुद्धि antaḥ karaṇa śuddhi - 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 buddhi, meaning elimination of राग-द्वेष raga-dveśa forces from one's mind, and gaining clarity of knowledge in one's बुद्धि buddhi.

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

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं, यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।

patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati ।

तदहं भक्ति उपहृतम् अश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

9 - 26

tadahaṁ bhakti upahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ ॥

A leaf, a flower, a fruit, or simply water offered to परमेश्वर parameśvar with pure devotion is a manifestation of their श्रद्धा śraddhā, in their worship. Such श्रद्धा śraddhā, in worship of परमेश्वर parameśvar is सात्त्विकी sāttvikī, indicating the सत्त्व गुण sattva guṇa of one's अन्तःकरण antaḥ karaṇa. In such worship of परमेश्वर parameśvar, the question of any transgression of शास्त्र विधि śāstra vidhi - mandates of any Sastras simply does not arise. On the other hand,



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राजसाः यक्षरक्षांसि यजन्ते *rājasāḥ yakṣarakṣāṁsi yajante* - Those whose अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* (mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*) is endowed predominantly with रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* - greed and craving for powers of various kinds, worship celestial beings such as यक्षs *yakṣas* and रक्षs *rakṣas* who are possessed of destructive powers of various kinds. By worshipping them with श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, 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 *śraddhā* in such kinds of worship is a manifestation of राजसी श्रद्धा *rājasī śraddhā*. Further

तामसा जनाः अन्ये प्रेतान् भूतगणान् यजन्ते *tāmasā janāḥ anye pretān bhūtagaṇān yajante* - Those whose अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* is endowed predominantly with तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* - 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 *śraddhā* - total dedication, austerities, etc., they seek to gain such powers themselves for use in their own pursuits of deceit and self-destruction. The श्रद्धा *śraddhā* of such kinds of people is a manifestation of तामसी श्रद्धा *tāmasī śraddhā*.

There is also another version of राजसी श्रद्धा *rājasī śraddhā* and तामसी श्रद्धा *tāmasī śraddhā* which भगवान् *bhagavān* points out as follows:

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।
aśāstravihitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ ।
दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ 17-5
dambhāhaṅkāra saṁyuktāḥ kāma rāga balānvitāḥ ॥

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।
karaśayantaḥ śarīrsthāṁ bhūta grāmama cetasaḥ ।
मां चैवान्तः शरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यसुर निश्चयान् ॥ 17-6
mām caivāntaḥ śarīrsthāṁ tānviddhyāsura ni ścayān ॥

We will see these verses next time.