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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

सप्तदशोऽध्यायः - श्रद्धात्रयविभाग योगः

sapta daśo'dhyāyaḥ - śrddhātrayavibhāga yogaḥ

Chapter 17

Volume 2

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।

aśāstravihitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ ।

दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ 17-5

dambhāhaṅkāra saṁyuktāḥ kāma rāga balānvitāḥ ॥

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।

karśayantaḥ śarīrasthaṁ bhuta grāmama cetasaḥ ।

मां चैवान्तः शरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यसुर निश्चयान् ॥ 17-6

mām caivāntaḥ śarīrasthaṁ tānviddhyāsura niścayān ॥

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः ।

āhārastvapi sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ ।

यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु ॥ 17-7

yajñastapastathā dānaṁ teṣāṁ bhedamimaṁ śrṇu ॥

आयुः सत्त्वबलारोग्य सुख प्रीति विवर्धनाः ।

āyuh sattvabalārogya sukha prīti vivardhanāḥ ।

रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्याः आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ॥ 17-8

rasyāḥ snigdhaḥ sthirā hr̥dyāḥ āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ ॥

कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्ण तीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।

kaṭvamlalavaṇātyuṣṇa tīkṣṇarūkṣavidāhinaḥ ।

आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥ 17-9

āhārā rājasasyeṣṭā duḥkhaśokāmayapradāḥ ॥

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं स यत् ।

yātayāmaṁ gatarsaṁ pūti paryuṣitaṁ sa yat ।



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उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामस प्रियं ॥ 17-10

ucchiṣṭamapi cāmedhyam̐ bhojanam̐ tāmasa priyam̐ ॥

Sri Krishna has been talking about people whose अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* (mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*) is dominated by असुर सम्पत् *asura sampat* - the negative personal qualities pointed out in the last chapter. Such people have predominantly रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* or तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*, or both. Those people also do various forms of तपस् *tapas* in the form of religious worships to their own chosen deities in the pursuit of their life styles, prompted by the काम-क्रोध-लोभ *kāma-krodha-lobha* tendencies of their mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*. About the nature of their श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, in their forms of religious worship, भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।

aśāstravihitam̐ ghoram̐ tapyante ye tapo janāḥ ।

दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ 17-5

dambhāhaṅkāra saṁyuktāḥ kāma rāga balānvitāḥ ॥

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।

karaśayantaḥ śarīrsthāṁ bhuta grāmamacetasāḥ ।

मां चैवान्तः शरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यसुर निश्चयान् ॥ 17-6

mām̐ caivāntaḥ śarīrsthāṁ tānviddhyāsura ni ścayān ॥

ये जनाः तपः तप्यन्ते *ye janāḥ tapa tapyante* - Those who do तपस् *tapas* - religious worships in the form of prayers and rituals of various kinds, prompted by their असुर सम्पत् *asura sampat* - negative qualities

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

घोरं पीडाकरं *ghoram̐ pīḍakram̐* - They do fierce तपस् *tapas*, 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



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दम्भ अहङ्कार संयुक्ताः *dambha ahankāra saṁyuktāḥ* - Their mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* are filled with pride and egoism, and they are दम्भ संयुक्ताः *dambha saṁyuktāḥ* - they pretend to be परमेश्वर *parameśvar* - conscious

कामरागबलान्विताः *kāma rāga bala anvitāḥ* - Their mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* are governed by the forces and passions and cravings of various kinds

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्रामम *karaśayantaḥ śarīrsthāṁ bhuta grāmama* -

करणसमूहं *karaṇa samūhaṁ* - 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 *śraddhā* in concentrating on their object of worship. Why do they do that? Because

अचेतसः *acetasaḥ* - They do not think properly. They have no चिबेक ज्ञानं *viveka jñānaṁ* - discriminative knowledge. They think that they can achieve whatever they want by sheer will. They have no real discipline of अन्तः करण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*. They are driven solely by काम-क्रोध-लोभ *kāma-krodha-lobha* forces - lusts for powers of various kinds.

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

तान्विद्धि आसुर निश्चयान् *tānviddhi āsura niścayān* - Those who do such तपस् *tapas* - such forms of religious worship, must be recognized as those whose अन्तः करण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, is governed by असुर भावं *asura bhāvaṁ*, namely रजस् *rajas* and तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*. Consequently, the श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in their तपस् *tapas* must also be recognized as राजसी श्रद्धा *rājasī śraddhā* and/or



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तामसी श्रद्धा *tāmasī śraddhā*. 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 *pūrṇa śraddhā* - 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 *śraddhā*, and the quality of their अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*?

The answer is: To the extent that their modes of worship involve hurting themselves or others, such modes of worship are indeed अशास्त्र विहितं *aśāstra vihitam* - against the mandates of the Sastras, but their भक्ति *bhakti* and श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in their acts of worship may be genuine, manifesting whatever सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa* component they may have in the disposition of their अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa*. As भगवान् *bhagavān* says in Chapter 9

ये अपि अन्यदेवता भक्ताः, यजन्ते श्रद्धया अन्विताः ।

ye api anyadevatā bhaktaḥ yajante śraddhayā anvitāḥ ।

ते अपि, मां एव कौन्तेय, यजन्ति अविधिपूर्वकम् ॥

9 - 23

te apa mām eva kaunteya yajanti avidhipūrvakam ॥

also

यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि मां *yānti madyājino'pi mām* 9 - 25

Those who worship देवताs *devatās* of their own choices, in a manner not enjoined by the Sastras, so long as they worship with पूर्ण श्रद्धा *pūrṇa śraddhā*, they also worship Me, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar* only. So long as they worship Me, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar* with भक्ति *bhakti* and श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, their acts of worship will ultimately take them to Me - The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, says Sri Krishna. That means, so long as they have unqualified भक्ति *bhakti* and श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in their pursuit of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, 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 *parameśvar* will naturally



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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 *rajas guṇa* and तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*. That being so, are रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* and राजसी श्रद्धा *rājasī śraddhā* 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 *rajas guṇa* and राजसी श्रद्धा *rājasī śraddhā* are bad. Only the personal qualities of काम *kāma*, क्रोध *krodha* and लोभ *lobha* 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.

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

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

योगः कर्मसु कौशलं *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* (2 - 50)

कर्मयोग *karma yoga* 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



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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 *sve sve karmaṇi abhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ* (18 - 45) - Every person can gain संसिद्धि *saṁsiddhi* - natural success in one's endeavors, by being totally committed and totally dedicated to knowledge and service related to one's own कर्म *karmas*, whatever they are.

In terms of worldly progress, संसिद्धि *saṁsiddhi* 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.

On the other hand, if one's vision of संसिद्धि *saṁsiddhi* in life includes spiritual fulfillment through कर्म *karma*, that also can be gained by doing every कर्म *karma* as कर्म योग *karma yoga*, with the attitude of ईश्वर उपासन *īśvara upāsana* - worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, seeking ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* as प्रसाद *prasāda*. भगवान् *bhagavān* assures

स्वकर्मणा तं *svakarmanā taṁ* (परमेश्वरं *parameśvaram*) अभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः *abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ* (18 - 46) - any person can gain सिद्धि *siddhi* by worshipping परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, by one's own कर्म *karma* rooted in knowledge and service.

The सिद्धि *siddhi*, the highest spiritual fulfillment one can get through कर्म *karma* is अन्तःकरण शुद्धि *antaḥ karaṇa śuddhi* - purity of one's अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - absolute clarity of vision in one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, which makes the person fit for gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*, and ultimately the highest पुरुषार्थ, namely मोक्ष *mokṣa*. Thus by doing every कर्म *karma* as कर्म योग *karma yoga* and also worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, one gains both worldly success, and ultimately spiritual fulfillment as well. More about कर्म *karma* we will see in the next chapter.

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



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आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः ।

āhārastvapi sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ ।

यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु ॥ 17-7

yajñastapastathā dānaṁ teṣāṁ bhedamimam śrṇu ॥

सर्वस्य प्रियः आहारः अपि *sarvasya priyaḥ āhārah api* - Everybody likes food. Even in the matter of one's liking for food

त्रिविधः भवति *trividhah bhavati* - there is 3-fold distinction

तथा *tathā* - similarly

यज्ञः तपः दानं त्रिविधः भवति *yajñah tapah dānaṁ trividhah bhavati* - with respect to यज्ञः *yajñah* - religious rituals people perform

तपः *tapah* - religious disciplines people undertake, and

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

तेषां भेदं इमं शृणु *teṣāṁ bhedam imam śrṇu* - 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 *śraddhā*. What this distinction is, please listen, says Sri Krishna.

When भगवान् *bhagavān* says शृणु *śrṇu* "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 अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - the nature of one's own गुण *guṇa*, as reflected in every one of one's own कर्म *karmas*. 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 *guṇa* and one's कर्म *karma*, because there are always other interfering factors involved in any expression of श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, manifested through one's गुण *guṇa* - कर्म



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karma combination. For example, one may be eating सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa* food, simply by virtue of habit and family upbringing, but may be actually having a रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* and तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* mental disposition. Even though there is no absolute correlation between one's गुण *guṇa* and कर्म *karma*, 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 *guṇa*, from the manifestations of one's own कर्म *karmas*, in terms of the fundamental nature of the three गुण *guṇas* themselves, namely:

- The कर्म सुख *karma sukha* which generates सुख *sukha* and ज्ञानं *jñānaṁ* - happiness and knowledge, arises from सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa*.
- The कर्म *karma* which generates लोभ *lobha* - greed in any form, arises from रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa*, and
- The कर्म *karma* which generates any kind of delusion, confusion and/or intoxication, arises from तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*.

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

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

With reference to आहार *āhāra* - food, भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

आयुः सत्त्वबलारोग्य सुख प्रीति विवर्धनाः ।

āyuh sattvabalārogya sukha prīti vivardhanāḥ ।

रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्याः आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ॥ 17-8

rasyāḥ snigdhaḥ sthirā hr̥dyāḥ āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ ॥



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These are the kinds of foods which are naturally liked by those whose अन्तः करण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, has the disposition of सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa*. What are they?

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

सत्त्व विवर्धनाः *sattva vivardhanāḥ* - Foods which contribute to one's चित्त धैर्यम् *citta dhairyam* - mental strength, keeping one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* clear and alert

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

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

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

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

रस्या *rasya* - Foods which are palatable and tasty

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

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

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

आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः *āhārāḥ sātत्वikapriyāḥ* - These are the kinds of foods which are naturally liked by those whose अन्तः करण *antaḥ karaṇa*- mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, is governed by सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa*, 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 ।

kaṭvamlalavaṇātyuṣṇa tīkṣṇarūkṣavidāhinaḥ ।

आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥

17-9

āhārā rājasasyeṣṭā duḥkhaśokāmayadāḥ ॥



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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

Foods which are

अति कटु *ati kaṭu* - too bitter

अति अम्ल *ati amla* - too sour

अति लवण *ati lavaṇa* - too salty

अति उष्ण *ati uṣṇa* - too hot to touch

अति तीक्ष्ण *ati tīkṣṇa* - too hot to taste

अति रूक्ष *ati rūkṣa* - too dry

अति विदाहि *ati vidahi* - too burning for the stomach

दुःख शोक आमयप्रदाः *duḥkha śoka āmayapradāḥ* - which give rise to pain, grief and disease of some kind

आहाराः राजसस्य इष्टाः *āhārā rājasasya iṣṭā* - these are the kinds of food which are naturally liked by people whose अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* is dominated by रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa*; and

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं स यत् ।

yātayāmaṁ gatarsaṁ pūti paryuṣitaṁ sa yat ।

उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसः प्रियं ॥ 17-10

ucchiṣṭamapi cāmedhyaṁ bhojanaṁ tāmasa priyaṁ ॥

यातयामं *yātayāmaṁ* - Foods which are not cooked properly

गतरसं *gatarsaṁ* - Foods which have no taste at all

पूति *pūti* - Foods which have a bad smell

पर्युषितं च *paryuṣitaṁ ca* - foods which are too old

उच्छिष्टं अपि *ucchiṣṭaṁ api* - foods which are the left-overs after eating

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



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

भोजनं तामसः प्रियं *bhojanam tāmasah priyam* - these are the kinds of foods naturally liked by people whose अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* is dominated by तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*

Obviously, the राजसिक *rājasik* and तामसिक *tāmasik* foods are not conducive to one's spiritual growth. They should be avoided.

भगवान् *bhagavān* then talks about यज्ञ *yajña*, दान *dāna* तपस् *tapas* कर्म *karmas* which we will see next time.