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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

सप्तदशोऽध्यायः - श्रद्धात्रयविभाग योगः

sapta daśo'dhyāyaḥ - śrddhātrayavibhāga yogaḥ

Chapter 17

Volume 3

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्यज्ञो विधितृष्टो य इज्यते ।

aphalākāṅṣibhiryajñō vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate ।

यदृव्यमेवेति मनः समाधाय स सात्त्विकः ॥ 17-11

yadr̥vyameveti manaḥ samādhāya sa sāttvikaḥ ॥

अभिसंधाय तु फलं दम्भार्थमपि चैव यत् ।

abhisandhāya tu phalaṁ dambhārthamapi caiva yat ।

इज्यते भरत श्रेष्ठ तं यज्ञं विद्धि राजसं ॥ 17-12

ijjate bhārata śreṣṭha taṁ yajñam viddhi rājasam ॥

विधिहीनमसृष्टान्नं मन्त्रहीनमदक्षिणं ।

vidhihīnama sṛṣṭānnaṁ mantrahīnamadakṣiṇam ।

श्रद्धा विरहितं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते ॥ 17-13

śraddhā virahitaṁ yajñam tāmasam paricakṣate ॥

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञ पूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।

devadvijaguruprajña pūjanam śaucamārjavam ।

ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ॥ 17-14

brahmacayamahimsā ca śārīraṁ tapa ucyate ॥

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।

anudvegakaram vākyaṁ satyaṁ priyahitaṁ ca yat ।

स्वाध्यायाभ्यासनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥ 17-15

svādhyāyābhyasanam caiva vāṅmayam tapa ucyate ॥



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मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।

manaḥ prasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunamātmavinigrahaḥ ।

भावसंशुद्धिरित्येत् तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥

17-16

bhāvasaṁśuddhirityet tapo mānasamucyate ॥

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तप्तस्तत्रिविधं नरैः ।

śraddhayā parayā taptam taptastattrividham naraiḥ ।

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते ॥

17-17

aphalākāṅkṣibhiryuktaiḥ sāttvikam paricakṣate ॥

सत्कार मान पूजार्थम् तपो दाम्भेन चैव यत् ।

satkāra māna pūjārtham tapo dāmbhena caiva yat ।

क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमध्रुवं ॥

17-18

kriyate tadiha proktam rājasam calamadhruvam ॥

मूढग्राहेणात्मनो यत् पीडया क्रियते तपः ।

mūḍagrāheṇātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ ।

परस्योत्सादनार्थम् वा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥

17-19

parsyotsādanārtham vā tattāmasamudāhṛtam ॥

In to-days verses, Sri Krishna first talks about the three types of श्रद्धा śraddhā manifested by people in their performances of यज्ञकर्मs *yajña karmas* - Vedic rituals. Generally speaking, a यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* is any Vedic ritual, big or small. Every यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* is essentially a form of worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*. Therefore, as worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, all यज्ञकर्मs *yajña karmas* - all Vedic rituals are the same. There is no difference.

But, in the श्रद्धा śraddhā of the persons doing the यज्ञकर्मs *yajña karmas*, there are always differences depending on their motives and attitudes, reflecting the सत्त्व *sattva*, रजस् *rajas* and तमस् *tamas* dispositions of their अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*. These differences in the dispositions make the यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* performed by the person as सात्त्विक यज्ञ *sāttvik yajña*, राजस् यज्ञ *rājas*



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yajña or तामस यज्ञ *tāmasa yajña*. These names are not descriptions of the यज्ञकर्म's *yajña karmas* themselves, but they are descriptions of the differences in the श्रद्धा *śraddhā* shown by the persons involved, in the performance of their यज्ञकर्म's *yajña karmas*. Describing such differences, भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

अफलाकङ्क्षिभिर्यज्ञो विधिदृष्टो य इज्यते ।

aphalākāṅkṣibhiryajño vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate ।

यदृच्यमेवेति मनः समाधाय स सात्त्विकः ॥ 17-11

yadr̥vyameveti manaḥ samādhāya sa sāttvikaḥ ॥

यः यज्ञः अफलाकङ्क्षिभिः इज्यते *yah yajñah aphaḷākāṅkṣibhih ijjate*- That

यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* which is performed by people who are not motivated by any फल - any result, by the people who neither seek, nor expect any particular fruit of action, now or later. Again,

विधिदृष्टः इज्यते *vidhidṛṣṭah ijjate* - that यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* performed as a Vedic mandate, which means "every यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* is worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*. Every Vedic mandate is ईश्वर आदेश *īśvara ādeśa* - a command from परमेश्वर *parameśvar* itself. I am only an instrument to serve the will of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*. Therefore, I perform this यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* " That is the attitude here. Therefore, any यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* which is performed with that attitude. Again

यष्टव्यं इति एव इज्यते *yaṣṭavyaṁ iti eva ijjate* - That यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* which is performed just because it is considered as कर्तव्यं कर्म *kartavyaṁ karma* - it is कर्म *karma* to be done as a matter of duty, whether it is duty dictated by one's conscience, or duty dictated by family and tradition, it is just a duty to be done. Any यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* which is performed with that attitude. Again

मनः समाधाय इज्यते *manaḥ samādhāya ijjate* - That यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* which is performed with one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* totally at peace within oneself, with a sense of self-fulfillment

स यज्ञः सात्त्विकः *sa yajñah sāttvikaḥ* - That यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* is सात्त्विकः

सात्त्विक यज्ञ *sāttvik yajña* - a manifestation of सात्त्विक श्रद्धा *sāttvik śraddhā*.



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We may note here that in this verse, भगवान् *bhagavān* has put together all the essential components of कर्म योग *karma yoga*. Doing any कर्म *karma*, neither seeking nor expecting any result, regarding the कर्म *karma* as an order under the eternal law of धर्म *dharma*, and doing the कर्म *karma*, being only an instrument to serve the will of परमेश्वर *paramēśvar*, and doing the कर्म *karma* just as a matter of duty with one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* totally at peace within oneself, all these are the essential components of कर्म योग *karma yoga* attitude. Therefore, any यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma*, any Vedic ritual performed with कर्म योग *karma yoga* attitude becomes a यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* performed with सात्त्विक श्रद्धा *sāttvik śraddhā*.

For a कर्म योगी *karma yogī*, every कर्म *karma* is a यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma*, and being so, यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* includes all of one's duties, whatever they are. Here, Arjuna is not being asked to perform any Vedic ritual, but he is being asked to do his duty as सात्त्विक यज्ञकर्म *sāttvik yajña karma*. For every person, every such सात्त्विक यज्ञकर्म *sāttvik yajña karma* is a पुण्य कर्म *puṇya karma*, contributing to one's अन्तःकरण शुद्धि *antaḥ karaṇa śuddhi*, and hence contributing to one's spiritual progress. On the other hand

अभिसंधाय तु फलं दम्भार्थमपि चैव यत् ।

abhisandhāya tu phalaṁ dambhārthamapi caiva yat ।

इज्यते भरत श्रेष्ठ तं यज्ञं विद्धि राजसं ॥ 17-12

ijyate bharata śreṣṭha taṁ yajñaṁ viddhi rājasam ॥

विधिहीनमसृष्टान्नं मन्त्रहीनमदक्षिणं ।

vidhihīnamasṛṣṭānnaṁ mantrahīnamadakṣiṇaṁ ।

श्रद्धा विरहितं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते ॥ 17-13

śraddhā virahitaṁ yajñaṁ tāmasaṁ paricakṣate ॥

अभिसंधाय फलं यत् यज्ञः इज्यते *abhisandhāya phalaṁ yat yajñaḥ ijyate* -

That यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* performed by people for the sake of a फल *phala* - a result in view, seeking or expecting a definite result now or later; and/or



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दम्भार्थम् अपि यत् यज्ञः इज्यते *dambhārtham api yat yajñah ijyate* - That यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* which is performed by people just for दम्भ *dambha* - vanity, pretension or some form of self-glorification

तं यज्ञं राजसं विद्धि *taṁ yajñam rajasaṁ viddhi* - please understand that यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* as one performed with राजस श्रद्धा *rājas śraddhā*. Further

यत् यज्ञः इज्यते *yat yajñah ijyate* - that यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* performed by people

विधिहीनम् *vidhihinam* - in a form which is improper, contrary to the form prescribed in the Sastras

असृष्टान्नं *asṛṣṭānnaṁ* - that यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* for the performance of which, food is not freshly prepared specifically for the worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, and subsequently distributed to people as प्रसाद *prasāda*

मन्त्रहीनम् *mantrahīnam* - that यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* in the performance of which, mantras are not chanted properly, or, partially or totally omitted

अदक्षिणं *adakṣaṇaṁ* - that यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* in which the symbolic gifts to the priests are not given adequately and respectfully

श्रद्धा विरहितं *śraddhā virahitaṁ* - that यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* in which a person who performs the यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* has no श्रद्धा *śraddhā* at all in doing the यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma*

तं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते *taṁ yajñam tāmasaṁ paricakṣate* - that यज्ञकर्म *yajña karma* is well-recognized as one performed with तामस श्रद्धा *tāmas śraddhā*.

The राजस श्रद्धा *rājas śraddhā* and तामस श्रद्धा *tāmas śraddhā* as described above, are detrimental to one's spiritual progress, and hence they should be avoided. That is the teaching here. Next, Sri Krishna talks about तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* - acts of self-discipline. All acts of self-discipline fall under three broad headings, namely

शारीर तपस् *śārīra tapas* - Discipline at the body level, in general. This is also called काय तपस् *kāya tapas*

वाक् तपस् *vāk tapas* - Discipline at the level of speech in particular, and



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मानस तपस् *mānas tapas* - Discipline at the level of mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* - faculty of thinking and judgment

Describing the nature of this three-fold discipline, भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञ पूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
devadvijaguruprājña pūjanam śaucamārjavam ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ॥ 17-14
brahmacaryamahimsā ca śārīram tapa ucyate ॥

देव पूजनं *deva pūjanam* - Worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* in any form and name
द्विज पूजनं *dvija pūjanam* - showing respect to those who are awake to ईश्वर *īśvara*
-consciousness in daily life

गुरु पूजनं *guru pūjanam* - showing respect to teachers of any kind of knowledge

प्राज्ञ पूजनं *prājña pūjanam* - showing respect to scholars and scholarship in any field of knowledge

शौचम् *śaucam* - cleanliness of body at all times

आर्जवम् *ārjavam* - straight forwardness, straight alignment among one's thoughts, words and deeds

ब्रह्मचर्यम् *brahmacaryam* - total commitment to the pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge, total commitment to knowledge and service at all times

अहिंसा *ahimsā* - total commitment to non-violence towards all beings

शारीरं तप उच्यते *śārīram tapa ucyate* - all these together, is called शारीर तपस् *śārīra tapas* - self-discipline at the body level. This is also called काय तपस् *kāya tapas*. Further

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।
anudvegakaram vākyaṁ satyaṁ priyahitam ca yat ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥ 17-15
svādhyāyābhyasanaṁ caiva vāṅmayam tapa ucyate ॥



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अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं *anudvegakaram vākyaṃ* - Speech which does not hurt, irritate or excite another person in any way

सत्यं वाक्यं *satyaṃ vākyaṃ* - speech which tells the truth, as it is

प्रियहितं *priyahitaṃ vākyaṃ* - speech which manifests love and care for the person, and at the same time, is also beneficial to the person spoken to, and

स्वाध्याय अभ्यसनं च एव *svādhyāya abhyasanaṃ ca eva* - daily practice of scripture readings, chanting वेद मन्त्रs *veda mantras*, or their equivalents, such as devotional recitation of prayers, singing भजन्s *bhajans*, contemplative repetition of जप मन्त्रs *japa mantras*, or simply uttering the words हरिःॐ *hariḥ om*, ॐ नमः शिवाय *om namaḥ śivāya*, etc. with the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* firmly set in ईश्वर ध्यानं *īśvara dhyānaṃ*.

वाक् मयं तप उच्यते *vāk mayam tapa ucyate* - all these together is called वाक् तपस् *tapas* - self-discipline at the level of speech. Further

मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।

manaḥ prasādaḥ saumyatvaṃ maunamātmavinigrahaḥ ।

भावसंशुद्धिरित्येत तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥

17-16

bhāvasaṃśuddhirityet tapo mānasamucyate ॥ 16

मनः प्रसादः *manaḥ prasādaḥ* - Cheerfulness in mind, brought about by a deliberate process of thinking, which means, a process of thinking which brings about

- clarity of understanding free from depression and confusion
- an attitude of acceptance of oneself as one is, for the time being
- an attitude of acceptance of the situation in which one finds oneself, for the time being
- a readiness in the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* to do whatever needs to be done, just as a matter of duty to oneself, and
- an attitude of prayerful surrender to the will of परमेश्वर *paramēśvar*

That is मनः प्रसादः *manaḥ prasādaḥ* - cheerfulness in mind. Again

सौम्यत्वं *saumyatvaṃ* - spontaneous external expressions revealing the above cheerfulness in mind such as a cheerful face together with a gentle disposition in one's behavior



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मौनम् *maunam* - ability to remain silent, which is a deliberate mental restraint in speaking, based on one's clarity in thinking and judgment, which means, even when there is some kind of internal pressure to talk, if it is better not to talk, or, if there is no need to talk, don't talk. That is मौनम् *maunam*. That ability to deliberately restrain one's faculty of speech, when necessary, is called मौनम् *maunam* - silence, in terms of mental self-discipline.

आत्म विनिग्रहः *ātma vinigrahaḥ* - mastery over all of one's ways of thinking, a total control over the wandering ways of one's thoughts, and

भावसंशुद्धिः *bhāvasaṁśuddhiḥ* - absolute purity of one's intents and motives in dealing with people; total absence of any deceit in one's interactions with people

इति एतत् तपः मानसं उच्यते *iti etat tapah mānasam ucyate* - all the above, together, is called मानस तपस् *mānasa tapas* - self-discipline at the level of mind.

Thus, internal cheerfulness in mind, brought about by a deliberate process of thinking, the spontaneous external expressions in appearance and behavior, revealing the above cheerfulness in mind, ability to deliberately restrain one's faculty of speech when necessary, a total control over the wandering ways of one's thoughts, and absolute purity of one's intents and motives in one's interactions with people, all these together constitute मानस तपस् *mānasa tapas* - self-discipline at the level of mind.

Thus the three-fold nature of तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* - self-discipline, has been described as शारीर तपस् *śārīra tapas* (or काय तपस् *kāya tapas*) - discipline at the body level, वाक् तपस् *vāk tapas* - discipline at the speech level and मानस तपस् *mānasa tapas* - discipline at the mind level. These three types of self-discipline are not mutually exclusive. They always go together. One cannot have one without the other two, naturally, because body, speech and mind are all components of one and the same person.

Therefore, when we talk of श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in तपस् *tapas*, we refer to श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in शारीर तपस् *śārīra tapas*, वाक् तपस् *vāk tapas* and मानस तपस् *mānasa tapas* together. In such श्रद्धा *śraddhā* also, there is a three-fold distinction, which is now being pointed out as follows

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तप्तस्तन्त्रिविधं नरैः ।



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śraddhayā parayā taptam taptastattrividham naraiḥ ।

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते ॥ 17-17

aphalākāṅkṣibhiryuktaiḥ sāttvikam paricakṣate ॥

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपः तत् तपः त्रिविधं नरैः *śraddhayā parayā taptam tapah tat tapah trividham naraiḥ* - The तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* performed by the people with supreme faith is of three kinds

परया श्रद्धया *parayā śraddhayā* - means "with supreme faith", which means "with आस्तिक्य बुद्धि *āstikya buddhi* - with immense unqualified faith in परमेश्वर *parameśvar*", faith in oneself. It is only with such faith, all the requirements of the three-fold तपस् *tapas*, namely काय तपस् *kāya tapas*, वाक् तपस् *vāk tapas* and मानस तपस् *mānas tapas* - can be realized. Even "with such परया श्रद्धा *parayā śraddhā* - supreme faith in परमेश्वर *parameśvar*", faith in oneself, the तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* people do differ in three ways as follows

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिः युक्तैः तप्तं तपः *aphalā kāṅkṣibhiḥ yuktaiḥ taptam tapah* - The काय-वाक्-मानस तपस् *kāya vāk mānas tapas* observed by अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिः *aphalā kāṅkṣibhiḥ* - people who neither seek nor expect any fruit of action, any result whatsoever, and also, युक्तैः *yuktaiḥ* - by people whose अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* is peaceful, composed and steadfast in the practice of such तपस् कर्म *tapas karma*

तत् तपः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते *tat tapah sāttvikam paricakṣate*- that तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* is called सात्त्विक तपस् *sāttvik tapas*, done with सात्त्विक श्रद्धा *sāttvik śraddhā*

Thus any काय वाक् मानस तपस् कर्म *kāya vāk mānas tapas tapas karma* done, just as a matter of duty to oneself, with no result in view, and with a sense of fulfilled mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, is सात्त्विक तपस् *sāttvik tapas* and hence done with सात्त्विक श्रद्धा *sāttvik śraddhā*. On the other hand

सत्कार मान पूजार्थम् तपो दाम्भेन चैव यत् ।

satkāra māna pūjārtham tapo dāmbhena caiva yat ।

क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमधुरुचं ॥ 17-18



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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

kriyate tadiha proktam rājasam calamadhruvam ||

यत् तपः क्रियते सत्कार मान पूजार्थम् *yat tapah kriyate satkāra māna pūjārtham*

- That तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* practiced by a person, for the purpose of projecting oneself, as the doer of good actions, as a तपस्वी, as a person of spiritual discipline, deserving honor, respect, and words of praise, and for receiving acts of worship from others, and also

यत् तपः क्रियते दम्भेन एव *yat tapah kriyate dāmbhena ca eva* - that तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* practiced by a person merely for दम्भ *dambha* - vainfullness and ostentation

तत् तपः इह प्रोक्तं राजसं *tat tapaḥ iha proktam rājasam* - that तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* is well known in this world as राजसं *rājasam* - as one performed with राजस श्रद्धा *rājas śraddhā*. Such राजस श्रद्धा *rājas śraddhā* is

चलम् अधरुवं *calam adhravam* - unstable and unsteady. It is transient in effect, which means, whatever result one gets out of such तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* is also transient, and all that honor and acts of worship one receives for such तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* will also disappear soon. Further,

मूडग्राहेणात्मनो यत् पीडया क्रियते तपः ।

mūḍagrāheṇātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ |

परस्योत्सादनार्थम् वा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥ 17-19

parsyotsādanārtham vā tattāmasamudāhṛtam ||

मूडग्राहेण *mūḍagrāheṇa* - Due to deluded understandings arising from अविचेक बुद्धि *aviveka buddhi* - lack of discrimination

आत्मानः पीडया यत् तपः क्रियते *ātmānaḥ pīḍayā yat tapaḥ kriyate* - that तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* practiced by a person afflicting pain on one's own body

परस्य उत्सादनार्थम् वा *parsya utsādanārtham vā* - or, for the purpose of hurting or destroying another person



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

तत् तपः तामसं उदाहृतम् *tat tapaḥ tāmasam udāhṛtam* - that तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* is declared as तामसं *tāmasam*, one performed with तामस श्रद्धा *tāmas śraddhā*

Obviously राजसं *rājasam* and तामसं *tāmasam*, which means तपस् कर्म *tapas karma* done with राजस श्रद्धा *rājas śraddhā* or तामस श्रद्धा *tāmas śraddhā* are detrimental to one's spiritual progress, and hence they should be so recognized, and avoided at all times. That is the teaching here.

Then भगवान् *bhagavān* talks about श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in दानं *dānam* - any gift given as an act of charity which we will see next time.