
अथ सप्तदशोऽध्यायः

Chapter 17

अर्जुन उवाच

ये शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ॥१॥

Arjuna uvāca

ye śāstravidhim utsrjya
yajante śraddghayā `nvitāḥ
teṣām niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa
sattvam āho rajas tamaḥ [1]

Translation — Arjuna said, “Oh Śrīkṛṣṇa! What is the merit of faith of those who worship devotedly, albeit in violation of the scriptural procedures? Is it sātvik, rājasik or tāmasik?”

श्रीभगवानुवाच

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।

सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥२॥

Śrībhagavān uvāca

trividhā bhavati śraddhā
dehinām sā svabhāvajā
sāttvikī rājasī cai `va
tāmasī ce `ti tām śṛṇu [2]

Translation — Śrībhagavān said, “Natural faith of embodied beings is of three types - sātvik, rājasik and tāmasik; now give heed to its description.”

Exposition — Persons, with the consciousness of immense mind confined to the body, cherish faith at three levels of merit - sātvik, rājasik and tāmasik. Bhagavān Śrīkṛṣṇa now describes these as follows.

Those, who realize their limitedness within the physical boundaries and endeavor through the yoga-karma to awaken their immense consciousness to surpass these physical limitations, are said to have a sātvik faith. Those, who have a preference for the body, have an intellect that has no reach beyond the body, have an obsession for satisfying the senses and act in accordance with these desires, such people pledged only to the sensuous enjoyments are said to have a rājasik faith. And those, who have most of their consciousness in a dormant state and do not know why and for what purpose their actions are being performed, are said to have a tāmasik faith.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।

श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥३॥

sattvānurūpā sarvasya
śraddhā bhavati bhārata

śraddhāmayo `yam puruṣo
yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ [3]

Translation — Oh Bharat! Everybody has a faith that conforms to his mental setup. This puruṣa is full of faith, everyone is characteristic of the type of faith he has.

Exposition — It is only one's mind that motivates one towards different types of acts. The mind, along with its immense consciousness, is set up on the support of the body. Those who know, as well as those who don't know the immensity of the mind are motivated to act through the inspiration the mind itself. As the level of consciousness differs, the individuals are found to have a faith on the karma that is in accordance with that level. As is the level of an individual's consciousness, likewise will be the direction and level of his karma.

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान्यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।

प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥४॥

yajante sāttvikā devān
yakṣarakṣāmsi rājasāḥ
pretān bhūtagaṇamś cā `nye
yajante tāmasā janāḥ [4]

Translation — Sātvik persons worship the gods, rājasik ones worship the yakṣas and the demons and tāmasik ones worship the ghosts and the fiends.

Exposition — Sātvik persons are keen to know the nature of Vāsudev, who resides in everybody's mind, by awakening their entire consciousness. Those who are said to be rājasik are occupied only with the task of preservation of their bodies; above everything else, they exert themselves to appease their senses and to promote their self-gratification. The ones with a tāmasik consciousness pass their life with minimal consciousness for the sake of food and sex and live in the terror of ghosts that they worship.

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।

दम्भाहंकारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥५॥

aśātravīhitam ghoram
tapyante ye tapo janāḥ
dambhāhamkārasamyuktāḥ
kāmarāgabalanvitāḥ [5]

Translation — Hypocritical, arrogant and vested with desire, attachment and might, these people perform a terrible penance in violation of scriptural procedures.

Exposition — Those, who consider the scriptures that have preserved the wisdom and the vision of Time-conscious ancient sages in the form of memory as well as the procedures for knowing the truth mentioned in these scriptures as a flight of imagination, they, with their addiction for sex and with their brimming vanity and arrogance, yearn only to appease the body and the senses, and continue to burn in the terrible fires of anger.

कर्षयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।

मां चैवान्तःशरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यासुरनिश्चयान् ।।६।।

karśayantāḥ śārīrastham
bhūtagrāmam acetasaḥ
mām cai 'vā 'ntāḥśārīrastham
tān viddhy āsuraniścayān [6]

Translation — Such stupid persons are liable to demean the group of spirits (earth, water, fire, air and sky) present in the body as well as Me, who dwells in the body. Know them to have demonic fixations.

Exposition — Being the ones to limit the immense consciousness to the dormant state, they limit the consciousness of the mind to the sensuous pleasures. It is as if such persons, with their demonic characteristics, dishonor Vāsudev who is latent within them.

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः ।

यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु ।।७।।

āhāras tv api sarvasya
trividho bhavati priyaḥ
yajñas tapas tathā dānam
ṭeṣām bhedam imam śṛṇu [7]

Translation — Even everybody's choice of food is of three types and so are the yajnas, the penance and the charity. Know their distinguishing characteristics from Me.

Exposition — Persons with sātvik, rājasik and tāmasik characteristics are found to have a taste for three types of foods for nourishing their body; and based on these three mental dispositions, all their actions (karma) can be classified into three types.

आयुःसत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धना ।

रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्या आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ।।८।।

āyusattvabalārogya-
sukhaprītivivardhanāḥ
rasyāḥ snigdḥāḥ sthirā hr̥dyā
āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ [8]

Translation — Juicy, unctuous, durable, and cherished food that enhances longevity, intellect, health, happiness and cheerfulness are preferred by sātvik persons.

Exposition — The foods and the eatables, which are not spoiled over long durations of storage, which abound in oily juices that preserve the body over long periods owing to their property of durability, whose sight is conducive to good feelings, such a diet is preferred by sātvik personalities who have been inspired to awaken their immense consciousness.

कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।

आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ।।९।।

kātvamlalavaṇātyuṣṇa-
tīkṣṇarūkṣavidāhināḥ
ādārā rājasasye `ṣṭā
duhkhaśokāmayapradāḥ [9]

Translation — Eatables that are bitter, sore, salty, very hot, pungent, dry, and caustic and which produce sorrow, lamentation and sickness are preferred by rājasik persons.

Exposition — Persons with rājasik characteristics have a taste for food which is excessively spicy, salty, and heavy and which further fuels the fires of passion in the body. The effect of all such foods, in addition to its relish, is sorrow and lamentation as it causes physical sickness.

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्यषितं च यत् ।
उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम् ।।१०।।
yātayāmam gatarasam
pūti paryuṣitam ca yat
ucchiṣṭam api cā `medhyam
bhojanam tāmasapriyam [10]

Translation — The food, which has been cooked a long time back, whose juices have dried up, which is spoiled and stale, which is rejected (left over) and unclean, that is preferred by tāmasik persons.

Exposition — The food that begins to spoil after three hours, like animal flesh, and which causes a foul smell in the body, and which is availed of by chopping a dead body and is therefore stale and unclean and contains no life-juice, this along with alcohol, which is an abstract of some degenerated spoiled material, all these foods are extremely dear to the persons having tāmasik characteristics.

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्ज्ञयो विधिदृष्टो य इज्यते ।
यष्टव्यमेवेति मनः समाधाय स सात्त्विकः ।।११।।
aphalākāṅkṣibhir yajño
vidhidrṣṭo ya ijyate
yaṣṭavyam eve `ti maṇaḥ
samādhāya sa sāttvikāḥ [11]

Translation — The yajna, which is as per the dictates of the scriptural procedures, is performed by persons without a desire for fruit and with the satisfaction that it is the duty; such yajna is called sattvik.

Exposition — Those, who are motivated by an awareness of their limits to awaken their immense consciousness, endeavor to get initiated in the practice of yoga by understanding the hints given by ancient sages through the scriptures. They are able to get the advice of the ancient yoga-karma as a result of their efforts. Such persons become desireless as an effect of their practice of yoga. This entire karma is said to be sātvik karma.

अभिसंधाय तु फलं दम्भार्थमपि चैव यत् ।
इज्यते भरतश्रेष्ठं तं यज्ञं विद्धि राजसम् ।।१२।।

abhisamdhāya tu phalam
dambhārtham api cai 'va yat
ijyate bharataśreṣṭha
tam yajñam viddhi rājasam [12]

Translation — Oh Bharatśreṣṭha! Inspired by hypocrisy and conducted to yield gains, presume such yajna to be rājasik.

Exposition — The actions which specifically block the consciousness within the physical limitations and which are conducted with an objective of gaining the sensuous satisfaction while enhancing hypocrisy and vanity are termed as rājasik.

विधिहीनमसृष्टान्नं मन्त्रहीनमदक्षिणम् ।
श्रद्धाविरहितं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते ।।१३।।
vidhihīnam asṛṣṭānnam
mantrahīnam adakṣiṇam
śraddhāviraḥitam yajñam
tāmasam paricakṣate [13]

Translation — Conducted haphazardly, with no provision for food, in an unformulated manner, carelessly and without faith, such yajna is called as tāmasik.

Exposition — Haphazard and mindlessly carried out acts, which do not call for alertness and which are not even premeditated, such acts being devoid of faith are tāmasik.

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञपूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ।।१४।।
devadvijaguruprājñā-
pūjanam śaucam ārjavam
brahmacaryam ahimsā ca
śārīram tapa ucyate [14]

Translation — Worship of gods, Brahman, guru and wise persons, purity, simplicity, continence and nonviolence; this is called the penance regarding the body.

Exposition — Those, who are practicing yoga to know the true character of the immense unmanifest Time on receiving its advice from a Brahmajna great guru, pay heartfelt respects to other yoga practitioners, to their own guru and to other Brahmajna great persons.

Fully aware that the holiness of the body is pertinent, they observe continence to awaken their immense consciousness by restraining the loss of virile fluid of the body through the practice of yoga. Being awakened, their consciousness cherishes no desire for their own body and for others. For them, the feeling of violence has come to an end. Such great persons perform physical penance through the medium of body to know the Immense.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ।।१५।।

anudvegakaram vākyam
satyam priyahitam ca yat
svādhyāyābhyasanam cai `va
vānmayam tapa ucyate [15]

Translation — The speech that does not provoke, is true, affable and benevolent, this along with a constant practice of self-study is assuredly the penance related to speech.

Exposition — The great persons, who are awakening the immensity of their consciousness by means of the body, speak only the truth while gradually perceiving that immense Truth. They study themselves through themselves and speak a benevolent language that entuses others.

मनःप्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥१६॥
maṇaḥprasādaḥ saumyatvam
maunam ātmavinigrahaḥ
bhāvasamśuddhir ity etat
tapo mānasam ucyate [16]

Translation — Happiness of mind, gentleness, silence, self-restraint and purity of thought; these are said to be the mental penances.

Exposition — They become happy when their conscious mind realizes the immensity of mind. Placed in immensity, they appear placid and calm. Because of their awakened consciousness, they appear silent to others. By knowing their limits, they become unlimited, and owing to their awakened consciousness, their mind becomes sacred.

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपस्तत्रिविधं नरैः ।
अफलाकाङ्क्षिभ्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते ॥१७॥
śraddhayā parayā taptam
tapas tat trividham naraḥ
aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktaḥ
sāttvikam paricakṣate [17]

Translation — Performed by accomplished persons with an extreme devotion and without a longing for fruit, these three types of penances are called sātvika tapa.

Exposition — Sthitaprajna great persons, who have achieved desirelessness and who have been established in Samadhi through yogakarma, have termed the valorous practice of the three principal stages of yogakarma as sātvik karma.

सत्कारमानपूजार्थं तपो दम्भेन चैव यत् ।
क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमध्रुवम् ॥१८॥
satkāramānapūjārtham
tapo dambhena cai `va yat
kriyate tad iha proktam
rājasam calam adhravam [18]

Translation — An occasional and unstable penance performed pretentiously to earn felicitations, honors and adorations has been called rājasik in this world.

Exposition — Performed by men of limited intellect who are confined in physical limitations and are fuming in anger due to their subservience to their desire for self-adoration, for earning more and more respect which they ill deserve and for procuring more and more sensuous pleasures; all such karma that give momentary results by reason of their being performed by a limited gross consciousness are called rājasik karma.

मूढग्राहेणात्मनो यत्पीडया क्रियते तपः ।
परस्योत्सादनार्थं वा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ।।१९।।

mūḍhagrāheṇā 'tmano yat
pīḍayā kriyate tapah
parasyo 'tsādanārtham vā
tat tāmasam udāhṛtam [19]

Translation — The penance that is performed foolishly and forcibly through self-torture or performed to harm others is called tāmas.

Exposition — The acts, which are carried out by persons with a torpid mind while burning in the fires of their own foolishness and while harming themselves and others, are called tāmasik.

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।
देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ।।२०।।

dātavyam iti yad dānam
dīyate 'nupakāriṇe
deśe kāle ca pātre ca
tad dam sāttvikam smṛtam [20]

Translation — The charity, given with a feeling that it is the duty, to a deserving recipient at an appropriate place and time, to him who does not oblige in return, is called sātvik.

Exposition — The sattvik charity is the bestowal of the advice of yoga, with due judgment of the seeker's suitability, by the persons who have become Time Conscious by concentrating on the unmanifest truth of the Time the entire immensity of their mind which they have awakened by rising above the physical limitations, to those seekers who are intent upon knowing the true character of the Time by awakening the immensity of the mind by rising above the physical limitations.

यत्तु प्रत्युपकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः ।
दीयते च परिक्लिष्टं तद्दानं राजसं स्मृतम् ।।२१।।

yat tu pratyupakārtham
phalam uddīśya vā punaḥ
dīyate ca parikliṣṭam
tad dānam rājasam smṛtam [21]

Translation — But that which is done with an expectation of reciprocal favors or for gains, in a hurtful manner; such a charity is called as rājasik.

Exposition — The people who help others with the expectation that the obliged person would continue to sing their praise and would continue to serve them all through his life, and the charity that is done in an offending manner while causing anguish; all such acts performed with a mentality of give and take are termed as rājasik.

अदेशकाले यद्दानमपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते ।
असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ।।२२।।
adeśakāle yad dānam
apātrebhyaś ca dīyate
asatkṛtam avajñātam
tat tāmasam udāhṛtam [22]

Translation — And the charity given to the undeserving at an inappropriate place and time, without courtesy, is called tāmasik.

Exposition — Those who have no judgment at all of the deserving and the undeserving, and who harm themselves along with the others by their foolishness, the effect of whatever is done by such persons is invariably harmful to someone or the other. Such persons, in hopes of small gains, do not hesitate to commit any crime. All actions of such persons are called tāmasik.

तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः ।
ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा ।।२३।।
aum tat sad iti nirdeśo
brahmanas trividhaḥ smṛtaḥ
brāhmaṇās tena vedāś ca
yajnāś ca vihitāḥ purā [23]

Translation — 'Om Tat Sat' are said to the three directives of Brahma. It is only from these that Brahman, Veda and Yajna first originated.

Exposition — 'Om' itself is that omnipresent unmanifest Brahma that yogis are able to know through the successful practice of the three stages of ancient yoga; and such great yogis, who were earlier able to realize the truth of the Time and to achieve oneness with It, have preserved in the scriptures the indicators towards that ultimate Truth, through the word 'Om Tat Sat' for the seekers to come.

तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः ।
प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् ।।२४।।
tasmād aum ity udāhṛtya
yajñadānatapaḥkriyāḥ
pravartante vidhānoktāḥ
satatam brahmavādinām [24]

Translation — It is for this reason that the acts of the proponents of Brahma in the form of yajna, charity and penance begin with the recitation of 'Om'.

Exposition — The procedures of yoga, specified by the Time Conscious Brahmajna great souls, that lead to the knowledge of the unmanifest Truth through rising above the physical limits, have been manifested from the same unmanifest truth of the Time whose signifying symbol is 'Om'.

तदित्यनभिसंधाय फलं यज्ञतपःक्रियाः ।

दानक्रियाश्चविविधाः क्रियन्ते मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ॥२५॥

tadityanabhisamdhāya
phalam yajñatapahkriyāḥ
dānakriyāścavividhāḥ
kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ [25]

Translation — Several procedures like yajna, penance and charity are performed by persons seeking liberation without any longing for the fruit.

Exposition — The consciousness of the Void, in which is instilled the consciousness of the Time that is symbolised by the letter 'Om', is connoted by the word 'Tat' and It pervades everywhere. The seekers of Samadhi practice the stages of yoga for their establishment in It.

सद्भावे साधुभावे च सदित्येतत्प्रयुज्यते ।

प्रशस्ते कर्मणि तथा सच्छब्दः पार्थ युज्यते ॥२६॥

sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca
sad ity etat prayujyate
praśaste karmaṇi tathā
sacchabdah pārtha yujyate [26]

Translation — The word 'Sat' is used to denote the sense of Truth as well as the sense of the follower of Truth. Similarly, 'Sat' is also employed in propitious rites.

Exposition — The great men, who were established in the consciousness of the Void by successfully passing the stages of yoga and who could have a direct darshan of its four armed embodiment, such men employed the symbolic word 'Sat' to denote the unmanifest Time immanent in the Void by knowing Its true character. They were able to know that the one and only truth in this world is the unmanifest Time.

यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सदिति चोच्यते ।

कर्म चैव तदर्थीयं सदित्येवाभिधीयते ॥२७॥

yajñe tapasi dāne ca
sthitih sad iti co 'cyate
karma cai 'va tadarthīyam
sad ity evā 'bhidhīyate [27]

Translation — And, the establishment in yajna, penance and charity is also termed as 'Sat', and karma performed towards it is also termed as 'Sat'.

Exposition — This creation that is manifested by the ultimate, imperishable Brahma, the Time, all the three stages of yoga that lead to the knowledge of Its truth, and the practice of those stages and its advice to the deserving; all these three being the manifestations of the unmanifest Time, are called 'Sat'.

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।

असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ।।२८।।

aśraddhayā hutam dattam
tapas taptamkṛtam ca yat
asad ity ucyate pārtha
na ca tat pretya no iha [28]

Translation — Oh Partha! Without faith, an oblation offered, a charity given, a tempered penance, and other acts are said to be 'Asat'. These bear no influence either in this world or in the world beyond.

Exposition — All such karma, which strengthen the physical limitations and are performed with a desire of satisfying the senses by the persons of limited consciousness who presume the dormant immense consciousness of their mind as fictitious and have no faith in it, are called as 'Asat'. Established in 'Asat', the people who don't know death, lead their lives in its fear and because of this fear, after their death they beget a greater fear beyond death as well.

Thus ends the seventeenth chapter named Shraddha-tray Vibhag Yoga in the Upanishad of the Shrimadbhagavad Gita, Brahma-Vidhya (the discipline of knowing the Absolute), the yogic scripture, and the dialogue between Arjuna and Lord Krishna.