

Chapter 17: Shraddhatreya Vibhaag Yoga – Yoga of Threefold Division of Faith

This chapter is known as *Shraddhatreya Vibhaag Yoga* or the Yoga of Threefold Division of Faith.

In the previous chapter, Arjuna was told that persons, who did not have faith in and did not act in accordance of the Shaastras, were unable to lift themselves in this world and beyond. Arjuna had a suspicion regarding those people who had faith in Him but were not knowledgeable with the regards to Shaastras. He wanted to know as to what fate awaited them? In what category would they be placed? The Lord replied that *shraddha* was of three types as determined at birth, according to the accumulated *Karma Phalas* (fruits of actions) of previous births. They are *Sattva shraddha*, *Rajas shraddha* and *Tamas shraddha*. The inner quantum of *Shraddha* in individuals is expressed in their forms of worship externally. People, having *Sattva Shraddha*, worship *Devas* (Demigods). People with *Rajas Shraddha* worship *Yaksha* and *Rakshasas*. People with *Tamas Shraddha* worship the dead spirit.

Humans have been divided as belonging to five categories. Those belonging to the first two categories are able to lift themselves to Godhood. The second two categories are capable of upliftment with the grace of Guru and God. It is not possible for the person of the fifth category to attain upliftment. In the first category are those persons having knowledge of shaastra also have full shraddha in God e.g. great sage Sukhdeo. In the second category are persons having no knowledge of shaastras but have full shraddha e.g. Shabri (who gave berries to Sri Rama). In the third category are persons who have no knowledge of the shaastras but have heard about shraddha e.g. a small child. In the fourth category are persons having knowledge of the shaastras but no shraddha like the people who read out the religious scriptures at gatherings in the temples.

To the fifth category belong those persons who have knowledge, have shraddha for God also, but whose behavior is against the prescribed by Shaastras and also against God. They consider themselves eligible to start a new religion and do not regard the Lord as Supreme, example being, the demon kings Ravana, Kamsa and Hiranyakashipu etc.

In this chapter, is also described the types of food which are partaken by the different categories of individuals. The food one partakes everyday has influence on our mind, body and character. The food can be categorized according to the prevalence of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas gunas into Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic types.

That food which increase longevity, intelligence, strength, health etc and are containing syrup and oils are known to be Sattvic foods. The Sattvic person likes to have food, which increases Sattvic tendencies and happiness. The food is easily digestible and congenial to him. They are generally milk, fruits, oily foods and cereals, which aids digestion and are able to stay in the body for a long time blending into his body. Sattvic food also has pleasing effect on the mind. That food, which is bitter, sour, containing chilli, very hot, dry and cause burning sensations, are harmful to the body and produce illness is known as Rajasic food.

That food which is half cooked, without oils, having bad smell, left overnight, leftovers and impure are called Tamasic food. This includes non-vegetarian foods. Consumption of Tamasic food leads to diminishing in vitality of body, mind and the embodied soul, every day. The Lord then also tells about the three types of *Daan* or donations.

The aim, with which a donation is given, determines the classification of the donation into Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic categories. Sattvic donation is one which is given to one from whom no return is expected and with due consideration to place, time and recipient. It should not be given reluctantly or under duress. One should donate, taking it to be one's duty and not with a selfish motive or with a fruit in mind. The donations given for self-grandiosement or showing one's superiority is said to be Rajasic in nature. The donations given to an undeserving recipient (at an improper place and time) who may perform unholy actions are said to be Tamasic in nature.

In the same way, Yajna or sacrifice has been categorized. Sacrifice if performed for the welfare of the society is said to be Sattvic. If performed with a fruit in mind or for self grandiosement is called Rajasic. If these are performed for the destruction of other persons then it is said to be Tamasic.

The *Tapas* or Penance (austerity) can be performed with the control of body, speech or mind and therefore divided accordingly as *Tapas* of Body, *Tapas* of Speech and *Tapas* of Mind. Devotional services to Spiritual Teachers, Purity, Simplicity, Celibacy and Non-violence and ingredients of *Tapas* of the Body.

Speaking the truth in a sweet and soothing way, for the benefit of all, is called the *Tapas* of speech. Studying and recitation of holy books are parts of *Tapas* of Speech. The practice of keeping the mind, in a happy quiet and controlled state along with inner purity is known as *Tapas* of the Mind.

Those *Tapas* of body, speech or mind, which is performed without attachment or without the desire of the fruit and with full faith, is termed as *Sattvic Tapas*. *Tapas* performed with a fruit in mind, for selfish reasons, or for the showing off is known as *Rajasic*. That *Tapas*, which is performed in foolishness or obstinacy or is done to cause loss or ill effects on others, is termed as *Tamasic Tapas*. Sattvic deeds should be done while Tamasic deeds should never be done.