

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 156: Chapter 17, Verses 16-19

(April 28 – May 4, 2021)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।

*manaḥ-prasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunam ātma-
vinigrahaḥ*

भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥ १७-१६ ॥

bhāva-sanśhuddhir ity etat tapo mānasam uchyate

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपस्तत्त्रिविधं नरैः ।

śhraddhayā parayā taptaṁ tapas tat tri-vidhaṁ naraiḥ

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते ॥ १७-१७ ॥

aphalākāṅkṣhibhir yuktaiḥ sāttvikam parichakṣhate

सत्कारमानपूजार्थं तपो दम्भेन चैव यत् ।

satkāra-māna-pūjārtham tapo dambhena chaiva yat

क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमध्रुवम् ॥ १७-१८ ॥

kriyate tad iha proktaṁ rājasam chalam adhruvam

मूढग्राहेणात्मनो यत्पीडया क्रियते तपः ।

mūḍha-grāheṇātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ

परस्योत्सादनार्थं वा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥ १७-१९ ॥

parasyotsādanārtham vā tat tāmasam udāhṛitam

TRANSLATION

- (16) Serenity of thought, gentleness, silence, self-control, and purity of purpose—all these are declared as the austerity of the mind.
- (17) When devout persons with ardent faith practice these three-fold austerities without yearning for material rewards, they are designated as austerities in the mode of goodness.
- (18) That austerity which is performed ostentatiously for the sake of honor, adulation, and reward is unstable and unenduring in this world, and is stated as of the nature of passion.
- (19) That austerity which is performed by the whims of the foolish, causing pain to oneself or for harming others, is described as of the nature of nescience.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WvQ75SobURUN_27ruoCnlhNqw6Bh-J7U/view?usp=sharing

Chapter 17

Verse 16

In this verse, Lord Krishna describes austerities of the mind, beginning with *manah-prasada* or tranquillity due to self satisfaction. The word *saumyatvam* means gentleness, serenity, and benevolence to others. *Maunam* or silence is avoidance of useless mundane conversations. *Atma-vinigraha* or self-control is directing the mind away from unrighteous activities and focusing it on spiritual activities. *Bhava-samsuddhih* or Purity of heart is freedom from hankerings and desires for sense gratification. The mental purity is due to the absence of lust, anger and greed. All these constitute austerities of the mind.

Verse 17

In this verse, the *tapah* or austerities performed through the physical body, speech and mind have been delineated as three-fold austerities by Lord Krishna. Those devout and evolved *jivas* or embodied beings, who practice the afore-mentioned threefold austerities with ardent faith and steadfast determination, and who expect no rewards or enumeration in return, and who are imbued with the consciousness that all their actions are humble offerings of worship rendered to the Supreme Lord, adhering to the absolute authority of the Vedic scriptures, are situated in *sattva guna*.

Verse 18

Lord Krishna here describes the austerities that are characterized by *raja guna*, the mode of passion. Austerities that are enacted for the sake of gaining recognition and garnering praise and respect from others, that are enacted to receive adulation and adoration and whose enactment is ostentatious and pretentious are situated in *raja guna* and whatever results derived from it are uncertain, unstable and temporary.

Verse 19

In this verse, Lord Krishna explains the austerities that are in the *tama guna* or mode of ignorance. The word *Moodha* means foolish. The word *grahena* means endeavour. Those who foolishly endeavour are the ignorant. Those who torture and give pain to themselves and diabolically cause injury and suffering to others are depraved and their dark resolves are at the pinnacle of nescience. Whatever activity they enact by such convoluted resolves, regardless of success or failure, is in the darkness of *tama guna*, the mode of nescience.