

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 157: Chapter 17, Verses 20-23

(May 5 – May 11, 2021)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।

dātavyam iti yad dānam dīyate 'nupakāriṇe

देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ॥ १७-२० ॥

deśhe kāle cha pātre cha tad dānam sāttvikam smṛitam

यत्तु प्रत्युपकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः ।

yat tu pratyupakārārtham phalam uddiśhya vā punaḥ

दीयते च परिक्लिष्टं तद्दानं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥ १७-२१ ॥

dīyate cha parikliṣṭam tad dānam rājasam smṛitam

अदेशकाले यद्दानमपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते ।

adeśha-kāle yad dānam apātrebhyaśh cha dīyate

असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥ १७-२२ ॥

asat-kṛitam avajñātam tat tāmasam udāhṛitam

ॐ तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः ।

om tat sad iti nirdeśho brahmaṇas tri-vidhaḥ smṛitaḥ

ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा ॥ १७-२३ ॥

brāhmaṇās tena vedāśh cha yajñāśh cha vihitāḥ purā

TRANSLATION

- (20)** Charity given to a worthy person simply because it is right to give, without consideration of anything in return, at the proper time and in the proper place, is stated to be in the mode of goodness.
- (21)** Charity given with reluctance, with the hope of a return or in expectation of a reward, is said to be in the mode of passion.
- (22)** That charity, which is given at the wrong place and wrong time to unworthy persons, without showing respect, or with contempt, is held to be of the nature of nescience.
- (23)** The words “Om Tat Sat” have been declared as symbolic representations of the Supreme Absolute Truth, from the beginning of creation. From those words, came the priests, scriptures, and sacrifice.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EYHZXvQu7vJe_051a98h6J7dYrMbwBmh/view?usp=sharing

Chapter 17

Verse 20

In this verse, Lord Krishna delineates the three-fold divisions of *daanam* or charity. To give in charity to worthy recipients is one's duty. Those who give such charity without the slightest inclination for any reciprocal return are those situated in *sattva guna*, the mode of goodness. Such aspirants will offer *daanam* at an auspicious place (such as *Kurukshetra* where Lord Krishna spoke the Bhagavad-Gita or anywhere along the banks of the holy rivers such as Ganga, Jamuna, Godavari, Narmada, Kaveri, etc.). They will offer *daanam* at an auspicious time (such as during a solar eclipse or the holy day of *Ekadashi*, the 11th lunar day in both the waxing and waning moon cycle). They will offer *daanam* to auspicious and learned personalities (such as *brahmanas* endowed with knowledge of the Vedic scriptures) or they will offer *daanam* to a temple of the Lord involved in promoting the *Sanatan Dharma*. These are all *daanam* situated in *sattva guna*. The word *patre* means a qualified person. It can be any person, who can reveal the conclusive truths of the Vedic scriptures and save one from *samsara*, the perpetual cycle of birth and death.

Verse 21

In this verse, Lord Krishna explains the *daanam* or charity that is given in *raja guna*, the mode of passion. The *daanam* that is given reluctantly, that is given grudgingly, and that is

given with the desire of receiving something in return or that is given with the hope of gaining a reward in this or next life, is known to be situated in *raja guna*.

Verse 22

In this verse, Lord Krishna describes the features of the *daanam* in the *tama guna* or the mode of nescience. The *daanam* which is given at an improper place (such as a city where cows are slaughtered or which is inhabited by degraded and unrighteous people), or the *daanam* that is given at an improper time (such as the 48 minutes of twilight during sunset or during the astrological influence of the nakshatras or stars Ashlesha, Jyeshtha and Moola), or the *daanam* that is given to unworthy recipients (such as charlatans, fools, pretenders, etc.), or the *daanam* given in an insulting, complacent or pretentious manner even if given to a worthy recipient at a proper time and place, or the *daanam* given without due respects, honors and etiquettes, is considered to be in the *tama guna*, the mode of ignorance.

Verse 23

In this verse, Lord Krishna discourses on the modalities of performance of prescribed duties and the activities that are required to be performed by mentioning OM TAT SAT which is veritably the transcendental sound vibration and names of the Supreme Lord in His abstract form. OM TAT SAT is renowned by the spiritually cognizant as the three-fold manifestation of the *Brahman* the spiritual substratum that pervades all existence, representing potencies of the Supreme Lord Krishna. This is well established from the Vedic scriptures such as *Taittiriya Upanisad I:VIII:I*, beginning “*om iti brahman, om iti sarvam*”, which states: OM is synonymous with the *Brahman*. OM is understood to be the vibratory cause and spiritual substance of existence. OM is the transcendental sound vibration chanted before commencing every Vedic activity. TAT also is synonymous with the *Brahman* as it signifies infallible, perfection and auspiciousness. SAT is as well synonymous with the *Brahman* for it denotes the ultimate reality containing all realities. These three designations--OM TAT SAT--are profusely praised to exemplify that they have the potency to redeem and rectify any defects made while performing *yajnas* or acts of propitiation and worship to the Supreme Lord Krishna or any of His incarnations and expansions as revealed in Vedic scriptures. These three-fold designations were manifested by the Supreme Lord to represent the *Brahmanas*, the Vedas and the Vedic *yajnas*. OM represented the *Brahmanas*, TAT represents the Vedic scriptures and SAT represents the performance of Vedic *yajnas* for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. Therefore, the three words OM TAT SAT are paramount in creation and eternally praiseworthy.