

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 153: Chapter 17, Verses 04-07

(April 7 – April 13, 2021)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान्यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।

yajante sātṭvikā devān yakṣha-rakṣhānsi rājasāḥ

प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥ १७-४ ॥

pretān bhūta-gaṇānśh chānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।

aśhāstra-vihitaṁ ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ

दम्भाहंकारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ १७-५ ॥

dambhāhankāra-sanyuktāḥ kāma-rāga-balānvitāḥ

कर्षयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।

*karṣhayantaḥ śharīra-stham bhūta-grāmam
achetasāḥ*

मां चैवान्तःशरीरस्थं तान्विद्वद्यासुरनिश्चयान् ॥ १७-६ ॥

*mām chaiivāntaḥ śharīra-stham tān viddhy āsura-
niśhchayān*

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः ।

āhāras tv api sarvasya tri-vidho bhavati priyaḥ

यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु ॥ १७-७ ॥

*yajñas tapas tathā dānam teṣhām bhedam imam
śhṛiṇu*

TRANSLATION

- (04)** Those in the mode of goodness worship the celestial gods; others in the mode of passion worship the *yakṣhas* and *rākṣhasas*; those in the mode of ignorance worship ghosts and spirits.
- (05)** Some people perform stern austerities that are not enjoined by the scriptures, but rather motivated by hypocrisy and egotism. Impelled + by desire and attachment, they torment not only the elements of their body, but also, I who dwell within them as the Supreme Soul. Know **(06)** these senseless people to be confirmed demons.
- (07)** There three kinds of food persons prefer according to their dispositions. The same is true for the performance of sacrifice, austerity, and charity. Now hear of these distinctions from me.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KOVBA-XrlerlFKPjtnUGQQwrob-BjAfr/view?usp=sharing>

Chapter 17

Verse 04

In this verse, Lord Krishna ascertains that there are three-fold natures of *shraddha* or faith, which can be determined by a *jiva's* or an embodied being's mode of worship. Those situated in *sattva guna*, the mode of goodness, worship the celestial gods or the Supreme Lord Krishna Himself. Those situated in *raja guna*, the mode of passion, pay homage to demoniac entities for power, wealth, fame and pleasure. Those situated in *tama guna*, the mode of ignorance, pray to abstract gods with vague characteristics and qualities as well as to ghosts and spirits. Thus, their position and quality of faith can be clearly discerned by their actions, including their mode of worship, whom they worship, and whether or not the worship is abstract or finite, etc.

Verse 05 + Verse 06

In these two verses, Lord Krishna provides further incriminations regarding those situated in *raja guna* and *tama guna* or the mode of passion and the mode of ignorance, respectively. He elaborates on ignorant *jivas* who indifferently disregard the Vedic scriptures while performing their own religious rituals with faith. These individuals practice extreme vows of self deprecation such as emaciating, fasting, masochistic flagellation, sadistic tormenting of the physical body, etc. all of which are not enjoined and sanctioned

by the Vedic scriptures. They simply enact them out of ostentation and egotism out of delusion in an attempt for perverse material gains. Abusing and torturing the physical body containing the *atma* or immortal soul, they disrespect themselves and the Supreme Lord as well who abides within and cause the *atma* to enter lower degraded species of existence where misery and suffering are unending. Know that such living entities possess the demoniac nature and should be vigilantly avoided by all means because they flagrantly disobey the commands of the Supreme Lord by disregarding the Vedic scriptures. Because the demoniac transgress the Vedic scriptures willfully and even spitefully, they never can obtain lasting happiness because they constantly engage in activities antagonistic to the Supreme Lord. Instead, they fall into the foulest and excruciating of hells to suffer interminably.

Verse 07:

After having described in the above two verses, 5 and 6, the demoniac qualities and characteristics to be rejected and avoided, Lord Krishna establishes the quality-based gradations of activities performed in the three *gunas* or modes of material nature. Activities such as rituals, penance and charity if characterized with the quality of *sattva guna* are to be embraced, but if they are contrarily characterized by the quality of *raja guna*, the mode of passion, or *tama guna*, the mode of ignorance, they are to be avoided. Lord Krishna commences with the gradations of food as food is the support of all life and the purity of the mentality is dependent upon the purity of the food. This is confirmed in *Chandogya Upanisad VI.VI.III*, beginning “*apam somya piyam ananam*” which states: The essence of whatever food is eaten rises up and becomes the mind. From pure nourishment manifests a pure nature; for the mental disposition determines the quality of propitiation by rituals, which is influenced by the *guna* one is situated in. The food of every human being is eaten according to circumstances regarding likes and dislikes which is governed by their innate nature, corroborated by their specific preponderance to one of the three *gunas*.