

## Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 152: Chapter 17, Verses 01-03

(March 31 – April 6, 2021)

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### ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

### TRANSLITERATION

अथ सप्तदशोऽध्यायः

**ATHA SAPTADASHODHYAYAH**

अर्जुन उवाच ।

*arjuna uvācha*

ये शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

*ye śhāstra-vidhim utsrijya yajante śhraddhayānvitāḥ*

तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ॥ १७-१ ॥

*teṣhām niṣṭhā tu kā kṛiṣhṇa sattvam āho rajas  
tamaḥ*

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

*śhrī-bhagavān uvācha*

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।

*tri-vidhā bhavati śhraddhā dehinām sā svabhāva-jā*

सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥ १७-२ ॥

*sāttvikī rājasī chaiva tāmasī cheti tām śhṛiṇu*

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।

*sattvānurūpā sarvasya śhraddhā bhavati bhārata*

श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥ १७-३ ॥

*śhraddhā-mayo 'yam puruṣho yo yach-chhraddhaḥ  
sa eva saḥ*

## TRANSLATION

**(01) Arjun said:**

O Krishna, where do they stand who disregard the injunctions of the scriptures, but still worship with faith? Is their faith in the mode of goodness, passion, or ignorance?

**(02) The Supreme Divine Personality Krishna said:**

Every human being is born with innate faith, which can be of three kinds—*sāttvic*, *rājasic*, or *tāmasic*. Now hear about this from me.

**(03) The faith of all humans conforms to the nature of their mind. All people possess faith, and whatever the nature of their faith, that is verily what they are.**

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## Chapter 17

### Verse 01

At the close of Chapter 16, Lord Krishna commented that one who disregards the injunctions of the Vedic scriptures, but instead foolishly follows the impulses of the body and the whims of the mind, will not achieve perfection, happiness, or freedom from the cycle of life and death. He thus recommended that people follow the guidance of the scriptures and act accordingly. This instruction led to the present question by Arjuna. He desires to know the spiritual standing of those who worship with utmost faith but without any regard to Vedic injunctions. In particular, he wishes to understand the answer in terms of the three modes of material nature, including Saatvic, Raajasic, and Taamasic *gunas*.

### Verse 02

In this verse, Lord Krishna elaborates on how *shraddha* or *faith* differentiates itself under the auspices of one of the three *gunas* or modes of material nature, which are *sattva guna* the mode of goodness, *raja guna* the mode of passion and *tama guna* the mode of ignorance. These three archetypes apply to all beings and all things within the material nature. Those who have no knowledge of the Vedic scriptures and are indifferent to them languish in *tama guna*. Those who have some knowledge of the Vedic scriptures yet chose to disrespect and oppose them due to insidious motives and nefarious intrigues are

bewildered in *raja guna*. Those who faithfully follow the ordinances and injunctions of the Vedic scriptures are safely situated in *sattva guna* due to having performed pious activities in innumerable past lives without selfish motivations. Their faith is directed to the worship of the Supreme Lord, and as such, is conducive for *moksha* or liberation from material existence. The inherent characteristics one possesses in present life are determined by activities performed in previous lives that were voluntarily followed. These innate characteristics catapult a *jiva* or embodied being into one of the three *gunas* and the corresponding type of faith one possesses is in accordance with the *guna* they are situated in.

### **Verse 03:**

The word *sattvanurupa* means according to the mental characteristics. The *shraddha* or faith of everyone is dependent upon and molded to their individual mental constitution. The quality of faith is determined by one's mental disposition which is the intellectual characteristics or lack of and the impressions that the mind is imbued with, which is the impetus which propels one into one of the three *gunas* or modes of material nature. Although by nature intellect is essentially of *sattva guna* the mode of goodness, yet because intellect is a product of the ego it still promotes desires and attractions which are threefold even as are the types of food and drinks one finds appealing. All this is due to *samskaras* or impressions from past lives where such activities were engaged in habitually. At the very moment of birth itself, one is born with a preponderance of either *sattva guna* with attraction to the divine energy, *raja guna* or mode of passion with attraction to demoniac entities and *tama guna* or mode of ignorance with an attraction to ghosts and spirits. In the human race, it can be seen that the intellect is mixed but still there will be a preponderance for one of the *three gunas*. But because the intellect of everyone is situated only in the quality of *sattva guna*, the element of faith itself is characterized by goodness. But one who is situated in *raja guna* has faith but in passion and hence deluded, one who is situated in *tama guna* has faith but in ignorance and thus perverted. Whereas one who is situated in *sattva guna* has faith that is in goodness which is the natural state of the intellect and thus they are not subject to delusion and perversion. The *jivas* or embodied beings revolving in *samsara* the perpetual cycle of birth and death have not qualified for *moksha* or liberation from material existence; yet they are all constituted of faith and whatever the nature of their faith, indeed that is what they verily are. In the word *shraddhamaya* the suffix *maya* meaning constitutes, expresses the preponderance towards one of the three types of faith. The qualities of *sattva guna*, *raja guna* and *tama guna* are discerned by the activities that a *jiva* engages themselves in. Those established in *sattva guna* advance and evolve spiritually. Those who are rooted in *raja guna* stay where they are, unable to advance and evolve and those who are enveloped in *tama guna* sink deeper into lower species and existences.