

CHAPTER 17

|| *THREE KINDS OF FAITH* ||

O my Master, your quiescent meditation (*yoganidra*) releases the hold of this universe of name and form: my obeisance to you, who are verily *Ganesha*, the Lord of *ganas* (*demigods*). The embodied Self, confined in the body, was released by your remembrance, like *Lord Shankar* who was trapped in the three cities of *demon Tripura*. If you are weighed with *Shri Shankara*, you tip the scale, but on the other hand, you are like a light raft, to carry a person safe across the sea of worldly existence. To those who are ignorant of your true nature, you seem to have a crooked face (*vakratunda*), but you always appear straight to the wise. Your Divine eyes look small, but by opening and closing them you bring about sportingly, the creation and dissolution of the universe (1-5). When you flap your right ear in the form of activity, then the wind fragrant with your rut blows, attracting the bees, in the form of embodied Selves. When these bees sit on your temples, they appear like a wreath of blue lotuses, offered to you in worship. When you flap the other (left) ear in the form of renunciation, then the worship is concluded and then your bodily form is revealed in its pristine glory. This illusive world appearance is only due to your sportive dance. You display your skill by performing the *Tandava* dance (the violent dance of *Lord Shiva*). This apart, the wonderful thing about you is, that with whomsoever you form a kinship, that person is deprived of this kinship (with the loss of the sense of dualism). When you remove their bonds of *karma*, they feel that you are the brother of the world and joyfully render you service (6-10) and lose their body-consciousness. But those who think, that you are separate from them and run to reach you by diverse means, you remain hidden beyond their ken. You are never seen in the vicinity of those who meditate upon you; but the one who loses his body-consciousness in such meditation becomes dear to you. He who does not know your eternally self-same nature, shows himself off as all-knowing. Even when the all-knowing *Vedas* propound you, you do not lend your ears to them. From your *rashi* (sign of the zodiac) in which you were born, may be you have received the name of *mouni* i.e. the silent one. Then how can I aspire to sing your praise? Whatever is perceptible is all your *Maya*, an illusion; how then can I worship you (11-15)? If I wish to be your servant, I become liable to the charge of considering myself distinct from you. So it is best not to do anything for you. It is only when one drops all notions of duality, then one attains to your non-dual nature. O my Master, who are adorable one, I have now come to know this secret of yours. You should accept my obeisance, like water, which does not regard salt as separate from it, but allows it to get dissolved in it. What more can I say? An earthen pitcher dipped in water, comes out brimful with water. When the wick comes into contact with the lamp, it becomes the lamp itself. In that way, O my Master, I have attained fulfillment, by bowing to you.

Now I shall proceed with the interpretation of the *Gita* (16-20). The Lord concluded, in the last stanza of Chapter sixteen, that the scripture should be accepted as the sole authority, to determine what is proper to be done and what is not. Then Arjuna said to himself, "How is this? Is there no other way of undertaking action without reference to the scripture? This is like taking out the gem from the hood of a snake and pulling out a hair from the nostril of a lion and then wearing

the ornament by stringing the gem in the hair. If this is not possible, should one keep the neck bare (21-25)?” In the same way, who would be able to bring together, the different scriptures and gather the fruit of consensus from them? Even if such a consensus is secured, will there be sufficient time to act according to it? How can one be fortunate enough to bring about a concatenation of all materials to achieve this, such as long life, study of scriptures, their interpretations, the suitable time and place for it? So it may not happen on many occasions, that actions will be done in accordance with the scriptures. Then how are the dull-witted seekers to fare? The subject which has been broached by Arjuna to seek a clarification of this doubt is contained in chapter seventeen (26-30). So Arjuna, who is desireless in regard to all worldly objects and proficient in all arts, and wonder of wonders, who in his role as Arjuna attracts even Shri Krishna, who dwells in the heart of the Lord, who is the support of bravery, the ornament of the lunar race, the lover of intelligence, the resting place of the *Brahmic* lore, spoke thus:

Arjuna Said:

1. *Those who, laying aside scriptural rules, offer sacrifice full of faith – what is their standing, O Krishna? Is it one of purity (satva), passion (rajas) or darkness (tamas)?*

O Lord, who are dark-coloured like a leaf of *tamal* tree (*Laurus Cassia*) and the embodiment of Supreme *Brahman*, manifest to the senses, your speech has raised some doubts in my mind. How did you say, that no one can attain salvation without strict adherence to the scriptures (31-35)? Many persons may not find suitable time, place, a teacher and other facilities, for the study of the scriptures or as a result of their past deeds, possess the necessary intelligence to study them. For these reasons, some men’s study of scriptures may come to a stop or some may give it up, as they have no flair for it (36-40). Still they, longing to be like those who have performed actions as laid down by the scriptures and enjoyed happiness in the next world, would like to follow their path.

O Gracious Master, just as a child copies letters after seeing them in a lesson or a blind person goes behind one with good sight walking ahead, so they regard as authoritative, the conduct of persons proficient in all scriptures and follow their path in full faith. They perform the worship in great faith, of gods such as *Lord Shiva*, give liberal gifts of lands and perform sacrifices such as offering daily oblation to the fire (*agnihotra*). Tell me, O Supreme Person, the fate of such persons, whether it is *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic* (41-45). Then spoke Lord Krishna, the Lord of *Vaikuntha*, who is like pollen in the lotus in the form of the *Vedas*, in whose shade this universe subsists, who is *kala* (Time), endowed with great dignity and majesty and with power through which all virtues receive acclaim, who is one without a second, mysterious and blissful,

The blessed Lord said:

2. *Three-fold is the inborn faith of embodied beings. It is pure, passionate and dark, hear about it.*

The Lord said, O Partha, I know what is in your mind. You find the study of scriptures difficult, and wish to attain liberation only with faith, but that too, O wise one, is not so easy (46-50). O Arjuna, it is not proper to place your confidence in any kind of faith. Does not a *Brahmin* become a *Shudra* in the company of a low-caste person? One should not drink anything from a liquor pot, even if it is the holy water of the *Ganga*. It is true that sandalwood is cool, but if it is set on fire and held in hand, will it not burn the fingers? If an alloy is

added to pure gold while melting it, will not the gold become impure and cause a loss? So even if faith by itself is pure, it does not remain so, when it becomes a part of a being (51-55). For beings are, by nature, constituted by the three *gunas* under the sway of beginningless *Maya*. When two of them become feeble and the third becomes strong, then the mental tendencies of a person follow the dominant *guna*. The mind follows the tendencies, actions follow the mind, and then beings take birth, according to their past actions. The seed disintegrates and grows into a tree, and then the tree becomes stored in a seed after destruction. In this way even after a lapse of numerous epochs, the species of the tree does not become extinct. So even if beings undergo innumerable births, there is no change of the *gunas* in their constitution (56-60). So whatever faith falls to the lot of beings, is formed according to these three *gunas*. When the *sattva* becomes dominant, it gives rise to knowledge, with the other two *gunas* opposing it. The *sattvic* faith leads to liberation, but how could *rajas* and *tamas* remain quiet? When the *rajas* quality becomes dominant overcoming *sattva*, then this faith makes one clear the rubbish of actions. When the *tamas* quality becomes inflamed, it transforms this faith in such a way, that it involves beings in undesirable sensuous enjoyments (61-65).

3. *The faith of everyone, O Bharata, conforms with his nature. A person is made up of faith; he is verily what his faith makes him.*

So, O wise Arjuna, there is no faith in the assemblage of beings, which is independent of the *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, qualities. For this reason, faith too is three-fold, as it is constituted by the three *gunas* in different proportions. Although water is a preserver of life, it becomes fatal when mixed with poison, pungent when mixed with black pepper and sweet when mixed with sugarcane juice. When the *tamas* quality becomes dominant, one gets born and dies again and again and his faith also takes the *tamas* form. As there is nothing to choose between lamp-black and ink, so *tamasic* faith is not different from the being (66-70). Likewise in the case of a *rajas*-dominated person, the faith is of the *rajas* quality and in the case of a *sattva*-dominated person the faith is of *sattva* quality. In this way, the whole world is cast in the mould of faith. But take note of the fact, that this faith has different marks, as it is under the domination of one of the three *gunas*. The fruit of a tree can be guessed from its flower, or the mind of a person is known, from the way he talks or the past actions of a person can be inferred from the pleasure and pain he experiences in the present life. In the same way, the three kinds of faith are known by their different signs. Hear about them now (71-75).

4. *Sattva-type of men worship gods; the rajas-type worship gnomes and demons; and tamas-type worship ghosts and hosts of spirits.*

The mind of those whose body is moulded in the *sattvic* faith, is usually inclined towards heaven. They study all lores, perform select sacrifices and go to heaven. O great warrior, those whose body is moulded in the *rajas* faith, worship the gnomes and demons who roam in the sky. Now I shall tell you about persons whose bodies are moulded in the *tamas*. They are corrupt souls, very harsh and cruel. They kill beings and worship with their flesh and blood, ghosts, spirits etc. in the cemeteries (76-80). Such persons, who are formed from the essence of *tamas* quality are the very homes of *tamasic* faith. These are the three kinds of faith and I am telling them to you with the sole object that you should conserve only the

sattvic faith and discard the other two faiths. He who preserves this *sattvic* faith, has no apprehension about the attainment of liberation. He may not have studied the *Brahmasutras* or the scriptures or become acquainted with the *Vedanta* doctrines (81-85), but if he follows the footsteps of those who have comprehended the meaning of the *Vedas* and the *Smritis* and who, by their exemplary conduct, have become worthy of being adored by the whole world, he wins the same place as they do. If a person succeeds with great effort in lighting a lamp, and another without effort lights his lamp on the former, does he get cheated in respect of the light? If a person builds a mansion at a great cost, would not another person derive the same comfort if he lives in that house? If a tank is built by a person, will it satisfy the thirst of the builder only and not of others? When food is cooked in the house, does it give satisfaction only to the cook and none else (86-90)? Does the river *Godavari* become holy *Ganga* only to sage *Gautama*, who brought it to the earth and a brook for others? Therefore, he who follows in good faith, those who act according to the precepts of scriptures, more assiduously than himself, becomes liberated, even though he is ignorant.

5. *Men who undertake severe austerities, not prescribed by the scriptures, out of ostentation and egotism, overpowered by passion and attachment,*

Then there are those, who are utterly wanting in the study of scriptures and are not prepared to permit those proficient in the scriptures, to cross even the boundary of their town. They mock at their elders, who offer worship and prayer to God and clap the hands in derision at the discourses given by learned men. They follow the austerities, practiced by the heretics being full of conceit of their greatness and intoxicated with their riches (91-95). They draw out flesh and blood from their own bodies and those of others, by means of a woodbill and fill up sacrificial posts to the brim. Then they pour these in the burning sacrificial fires and offer them as oblations to minor deities. They sacrifice child-victims to them, in fulfillment of the vows taken by them and observe fasts for seven days at a time, perversely to propitiate minor deities in boons from them. O wise one, in this way they sow the seeds of self-torture and torture of others in the fields, in the form of their hearts possessed of the *tamasic* quality and reap the crop. The state of the demoniacal persons is like that of a cripple, who finds himself in the sea without arms to swim across or a boat in which to cross it (96-100), or like a patient who being cross with the doctor, kicks the medicine and suffers the agonies of his disease or like a person who scoops out his eyes in a quarrel and becomes confined to his house. This is because, they abandon the path, prescribed by the scriptures and wander about aimlessly in the jungle, in the form of infatuation. They act as directed by desire, get into the clutches of wrath and belabour others, and what is more, they bury me (who abides in their hearts) in a pit, in the form of misery.

6. *Mindlessly torturing all elements forming their bodies and Me too within their bodies – know them to be of demoniacal resolves.*

By causing misery to their body or the bodies of others, they afflict Me, who abides in them as their Self (101-105). One should not sully one's speech by uttering the names of such sinners; but I had to mention them, in order that you may avoid them. One has to remove a corpse out of the house or avoid a low-caste person by sweet talk or wash off the filth from the bottom. All these things are done in the interest of cleanliness and so do not defile anyone.

In the same way, as the demoniacal persons are described, so that you can shun their company, their mention does not cause pollution. Even when you see such a person (from a distance), remember me, for there is no other way to atone for it. Therefore, one should always foster the growth of the *sattvic* quality (106-110). One should keep company and eat food, so as to promote the growth of the *sattva* quality. There is no way other than the food you take for the formation of your disposition. As you can see for yourself, a sober person becomes intoxicated after drinking liquor. As a result of the food that you eat, you are afflicted with bodily disorders such as phlegm and cough. If you get fever, will it subside by drinking milk? As a sip of nectar prevents death or a drink of poison brings about death (111-115) so the food that you take nourishes the primary fluids (*Dhatu*) of your body, which also foster the primary emotions in the minds of men. Just as when the pot is heated, the water in it also becomes hot, so the mental disposition is also conditioned by these fluids. If you take *sattvic* food it fosters the growth of *sattva* quality; but if other kinds of food are taken, the *rajas* and *tamas* quality are fostered. Now I shall explain to you, what is *sattvic* food and what are the characteristics of *rajasic* and *tamasic* food; hear it attentively.

7. *Food also preferred by all, is of three kinds; so are sacrifice, austerity and charity; Listen to this distinction of them.*

Now I shall explain to you clearly how the same food comes to be of three kinds (116-120). The food has to be prepared according to the taste of one eating it and the eater of the food is the servant of the *gunas*. The embodied Self who is the doer and the experiencer, acts according to three kinds of his mental disposition formed by the three *gunas*. So food is of three kinds and so are sacrifice, charity and austerities. Now I shall proceed to describe to you, the characteristics of food first.

8. *Food that promotes long life, energy vigour, as also health, comfort and pleasure, are tasty, oily, wholesome and agreeable; they are preferred by the *sattva*-type.*

If a person is luckily disposed towards *sattvic* type of food, he becomes inclined to eat sweet things (121-125). The *sattvic* articles of food are naturally savoury, sweet, oily and well cooked. They are well shaped, soft to touch, succulent and tasty. They are juicy and soft and their liquidity is reduced by heating. Just as even a few words from the lips of the preceptor brings about a great transformation of the mind, so the *sattvic* food taken in small quantities gives immense satisfaction. Such food tastes good at the time of eating it, and it also produces good effects. The *sattvic* person has a special liking for such food (126-130). Such are the characteristics and effects of *sattvic* food, which promotes long life. When the cloud in the form of *sattvic* food floods the body, the river in the form of longevity becomes swollen day by day. Just as the sun is the cause of the advance of the day, this kind of food is suitable to nourish the quality of *sattva*. Physical and mental strength is also promoted by this food; then how can ailments affect such a body? If a person takes such *sattvic* food, he enjoys sound health (131-135) and as a result, he becomes happy and makes others happy. So his activities bring happiness to all and joy to him. In this way, the *sattvic* food produces good results and proves beneficial to the body both internally and externally. Now I shall tell you, as the occasion demands, what kind of food is dear to the *rajas*-type.

9. *Food that are very bitter, sour, salty, very hot, pungent, rough and burning are liked by the rajas-type; they produce discomfort, misery and sickness.*

The food which is bitter but not fatal like poison, which burns the tongue and is sour, which is mixed with salty ingredients in the same proportion as water is required to moisten the flour, is liked by the *rajas*-type person (136-140). He likes to eat food so hot, that it is like swallowing fire. He demands such hot food, that a wick can be ignited by the steam arising from it. He takes food as hard as the tip of iron crow-bar, which hurts him without causing a wound. He likes food which is dry in and out like ashes and gives a burning sensation to the tongue. He enjoys eating solid food, for chewing which, he has to grind his teeth (141-145). He likes to eat such hot and pungent food with mustard added to it, that his nostrils and mouth smart under it. A spicy dish (*rayate*), which surpasses fire in giving a burning sensation, is dearer to him than his life. Not satisfied with this kind of food, this crazy person swallows fire in the form of food. After eating cloves and dry ginger, he rolls on the ground in great pain and goes on drinking water without a stop. This is not really food, but is like eating something which excites and wakes up the serpent in the form of ailment (146-150). Ailment after ailment immediately raises its head, vying with one another to overtake him. In this way, *rajasic* food yields only the fruit of misery. O Archer, thus I have described to you the nature of *rajas* food with its effects. Now I shall tell you, the nauseating food which the *tamas* type person likes. Like the buffalo which eats hash of grain, bran etc. he eats only petrified and left-over food and does not pause to think that it will cause him harm.

10. *The food that is kept overnight, tasteless, smelling foul and stale, as also unclean left-overs of a meal is preferred by the tamas-type.*

He eats with great relish, the food cooked in the morning, at noon or the next-day (151-155). He also eats food half-cooked or half-burnt and also the food which is not savoury. He does not like savoury food or food which is well cooked. If by chance he gets wholesome food to eat, he keeps it like a tiger until it gives a foul smell. He eats from one plate, along with his family, food that was cooked many days back, that has lost all its flavour and has become dry, that has rotted or become infested with worms or food that has been crushed and squeezed by children like clay or a hotch-potch (*bodana* in Marathi) made by married and virgin women sitting together (156-160). When he eats such foul and dirty food, he feels that he had a satisfactory meal. But the wretch that he is, he is not even satisfied with such food. The marvel of it is, that he craves for food or drink which is prohibited by the scriptures and which is not fit for eating or drinking. O brave Arjuna, he is very fond of such food and he reaps the fruit of it immediately. When he partakes of such food, he commits sin (161-165). When he takes such food, he does not feed himself but stuffs himself with trouble. By eating such food, he experiences and suffers agonies, somewhat like that of a person who is being executed or who has entered a blazing fire, so said Lord Krishna. The effect of the *tamasic* food is not distinguished from the *tamasic* disposition. Now sacrifice is also of three kinds, like food. O noblest one, I shall now tell you, the characteristics of a *sattvic* sacrifice (166-170).

11. *That which is offered according to injunction by persons without desiring fruit, with the conviction that one ought to sacrifice, is of sattva quality.*

Just as the chaste wife does not allow her desire to grow for anyone other than her husband,

or the river *Ganga* does not go forward after joining the sea or the *Vedas* observe silence after the vision of the Supreme Self, they become absorbed in the performance of sacrifices in furtherance of their weal and do not entertain a desire for the fruit. When the roots of a tree are watered, the water does not recede but soaks into all the parts of the tree. In the same way, they decide to perform sacrifices and become absorbed in their heart and soul, in a disinterested spirit (171-175). Giving up the desire for their fruit and becoming indifferent to all things, except their religious duty, they complete the sacrifice, perfect in all ways. Just as one sees clearly, his own face in the mirror, or the jewel placed on his palm in lamp-light, or the way after sun-rise, they observe all the injunctions laid down by the scriptures and prepare all materials like sacrificial pit, pavilions, altar etc. as if the scriptures incarnate have come there and made all preparations. Just as ornaments properly worn on their respective limbs look nice, all the things needed for the sacrifice are arranged in a proper order (176-180). In what words should I praise the *sattvic* sacrifice? It is as if the sacrificial lore has assumed that glamorous form. Just as a *tulsi* plant is grown by irrigation water without the expectation of fruit, flower or shade (which it does not give), so a sacrifice performed as prescribed without a desire for its fruit or fame, is *sattvic* sacrifice.

12. *But that which is offered, O Bharata, keeping in view its reward as also for the sake of ostentation, know that sacrifice to be of rajas quality.*

O great warrior, this *rajasic* sacrifice is also performed as prescribed (181-185). But, just as a king is invited to a *shraddha* ceremony with the hope, that in addition to the completion of the ceremony, his visit to one's house would be useful and bring one fame, so a sacrifice is undertaken in the hope, that when performed, it would lead to heaven and also bring one public honour as a sacrificer. Such sacrifices, which are performed in the expectation of their fruit as also fame in the world, are *rajasic* sacrifices.

13. *They call that sacrifice of tamas quality which is empty of faith and contrary to scriptural injunctions, and which is offered without distributing food, without chanting mantras and giving gift.*

As in the mating of animals and birds, only lust is required and not a priest, so in a *tamas* dominated person, his pertinacity becomes the cause. If ever the wind will have to find where to blow or death will wait for an auspicious moment or the fire will be afraid to burn forbidden things (186-190), then alone the *tamasic* sacrifice would come under the regulation of scriptures. O archer, the conduct of the *tamas*-type person is whimsical. He does not care for the precepts laid down by the scripture, not does he feel the necessity of incantation of the *mantras*. Even the housefly does not find food there. When the *Brahmins* are treated with hostility, what scope is there for the distribution of gifts (*dakshina*) to them? Just as the fire flares up and becomes a conflagration when aided by the wind or the property of a person without an issue is plundered after his death, money is squandered on the sacrifice with little faith in it. This semblance of a sacrifice, is known as *tamasic* sacrifice: so said Lord Krishna, the Lord of goddess *Lakshmi* (191-195) .

Just as the *Ganga* water, while flowing through different courses, is unclean at some places and pure in others, so the austerities are of three kinds, according to the three *gunas*. One kind yields sin, the other leads to deliverance. If you desire to know how the austerities become three-fold, then try to understand them. Now I shall explain to you the nature of austerities

and then tell you how they become three-fold according to the three *gunas*. There are three kinds of austerities of body, speech and mind (196-00). Now hear about the austerities of the body - whether *Lord Shankara* or *Lord Vishnu* is his favourite God.

14. *The worship of gods, teachers and wise men, cleanliness and straightforwardness, continence and non-injury, are called the austerities of the body.*

His feet are occupied throughout the day in visiting the temple of his favourite deity or undertaking pilgrimage. His hands are ever engaged in decorating the precincts of a temple, or gathering the articles required for worship or rendering other services to Me. When he sees the *linga* of *Lord Shiva* or the image of *Lord Vishnu*, his body prostrates itself before it, like a stick, which drops down on the floor. He serves the *Brahmins* who have, through their virtues, such as learning, humility etc., have become worthy of respect (201-205). He brings happiness to those who are in distress, because of fatigue of travel or adverse circumstances. He waves his body in the service of his parents, who stand foremost among all holy places. He renders service to his *Guru*, who imparts knowledge out of compassion and grants relief to those who see him, from their fatigue due to the worldly existence, which is difficult to cross. He burns in the fire of his religious duties, the alloy of body-consciousness, by giving coatings of *yogic* practices. With the full knowledge that the Supreme Self abides in all beings, he bows to them. He is always ready to bestow favours on others and restraining his senses, he avoids meeting with women (206-210). His only contact with a woman was at the time of his birth, but after that he avoids such contact and remains clean all his life. He does not walk over green grass knowing fully well, that there is life in all things and avoids breaking things. In this way, when the activities of his body remain pure, then know that his austerities of body, have become perfect. O Partha, when all such things take place in relation to his body, I call them austerities of the body. I have thus told you the characteristics of the austerities of the body. Now hear about the austerities of speech, which are flawless (211-215).

15. *Speech, which causes no annoyance and is truthful, pleasant and beneficial, as also study of scriptures is called austerity of speech.*

The philosopher's stone transforms iron into gold, without reducing its shape or weight. In the same way, his speech is so guileless, that one is pleased to hear it, without being hurt. Just as the watering of a tree helps grass to grow in its vicinity, so his speech addressed to a particular individual becomes beneficial to all. A sip from the river of nectar makes one immortal, a dip in it removes sin and afflictions, and the tongue savours its sweetness. In the same way, his talk removes indiscrimination and brings one, realisation of one's true Self. One is never bored by hearing it often, as one never becomes tired of sipping nectar (216-220). He talks only when somebody accosts him; otherwise he is engaged in the study of the *Vedas* or in muttering the name of God. He installs all the three *Vedas* in the shrine of his speech and makes his organ of speech, as it were, a seminary of *Vedic* studies. The name of either *Lord Shiva* or of *Lord Vishnu* or any other God, ever remains on the tip of his tongue. These are what are known as the austerities of the speech. Now I shall tell you, the characteristics of the austerities of the mind, so said Lord Krishna, the Lord of the guardians of the world.

16. *Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-control and purity of the heart are called austerities of the mind.*

Like the lake without waves, the sky without clouds, or the garden of sandalwood trees without serpents (221-225) or the full moon without its phases, or the king without anxiety or the *Milky Sea* without the *Mandara* mountain, his mind remains steady in the Supreme Self, free from entanglements. He realises his own Self, like light without heat, food without fat or the sky without space. Just as the benumbed limbs are not afflicted by cold, so he is rid of his fickle nature. Then his mind becomes clear and full of love like the unchanging and spotless moon's disc (226-230). In this state, he does not feel the hardship of dispassion, his mind becomes free from desire and fear, and there remains only the warmth of Self-knowledge. The mouth which was used to give instruction on the scripture, does not now use the faculty of speech and observes silence. Just as the salt, when dropped in water, which is its original state, becomes merged in it, so the mind, having realised the Self, loses its essential nature. How then could emotions and other tendencies arise in such a mind? How could his mind rush along the road of the senses and reach the town of sense-objects? Then the tendencies of the mind become pure, in the way the palm of a person is free from hair (231-235). O Arjuna, when the mind reaches this state, it is said to possess the austerity of the mind. Such are the characteristics of the austerity of the mind. I have explained to you, the three classes of austerities, viz., of body, speech and mind. I shall now tell you, how this three-fold austerity gets transformed because of its association with the three *gunas*. Bring to bear upon it, your powerful intellect and listen.

17. *This three-fold austerity, performed with supreme faith by self-controlled persons, without the expectation of a reward, is said to be of sattva quality.*

O wise Arjuna, you should practise this three-fold austerity with full faith, dropping all desire for its fruit (236-240). When this three-fold austerity is performed faithfully, with a pure mind, the wise call it *sattvic* austerity.

18. *That austerity performed with ostentation to gain respect, honour and homage, is declared to be of rajas quality; it is unstable and transient.*

This austerity is also performed to secure the top-ranking position in society or the top-most honour in the three worlds by depriving others or a seat of honour in the audience or at a feast or to win universal praise. It is also practiced with the motive, that people should come to see him, seek his support to the exclusion of others and render homage to him and that he alone should be able to enjoy all the important pleasures of life (241-245). Just as a deformed person puts on a glittering dress (to hide his deformity), he performs the austerity sanctimoniously, to enhance his own importance. The austerity, which is undertaken with the desire of securing riches and respect, is known as *rajasic* austerity. When the teats of a cow big with young are infested with worms, it yields no milk after calving. The field does not yield any harvest after its standing crop is allowed to be grazed by cattle. In the same way the austerities undertaken for the sake of publicity become futile. Then seeing that his austerities are fruitless, he leaves them half-way and is not steadfast in performing them (246-250). The unseasonal clouds which appear in the sky, make the whole world resound with their thunder, yet do they last long? In the same way, the *rajasic* austerity proves barren and its practice does not last long. But if that austerity is of *tamas* quality, then it does not lead to renown in this world or heaven.

19. *The austerity, which is practiced under a wrong notion with self-torture, or the destruction of others, is said to be of 'tamas' quality.*

O Archer, some persons out of foolishness, treat their body as an enemy and perform sacrifices in the following way. Some apply the flame of the five sacred fires (*panchagni*) and scorch the body like firewood (251-255). Some keep a pan on their head and burn fragrant gum in it, or pierce their backs with iron hooks or scorch their bodies by keeping blazing fire around themselves. They suspend breathing and observe fasts, or with heads hanging downwards, they inhale smoke or remain standing in water as cold as ice upto their neck or tear out their own flesh, sitting on a rock or a bank. O *Dhananjaya*, they perform austerities through self-torture for causing harm to others. A big and heavy boulder dislodged from its position from a mountain, rolls down with a crash, gets broken into smithereens and crushes whatever comes in the way (256-260). In the same way, they carry on austerities by tormenting the body, in order to outdo persons who are happy and prominent. O Arjuna, that, which is evil and full of self-torture is *tamasic* austerity. Thus, I have explained to you, the austerities of three kinds, based on the three *gunas*. I shall tell you, as the occasion demands, how charity is also of three kinds because of the three *gunas*. Now hear about the *sattvic* charity. (261-265)

20. *Alms given with the idea that it ought to be given to one who cannot return the favour, at the right place and time and to a deserving person – that charity is known to be of sattvic quality.*

He gives with due regard something in charity, out of the income earned by him, by performing his duty. Sometimes if good seed is available, there is a dearth of good soil and water, similar is the case in regard to charity also. If a precious stone comes to hand, one is in want of gold for making a socket for it, and if both are available, a beautiful body to wear that ornament is lacking. Only good luck brings together a festive occasion, the visits of dear ones and wealth. In the same way, when the *sattva* quality comes to help charity, there assemble automatically suitable place and time, wealth and a person fit to receive the gift (266-270). In order to make suitable charities, one should repair to *Kurukshetra*, *Kashi* or similar holy place. In that sacred place, one should choose an auspicious occasion, such as an eclipse of the sun or the moon. At such a time and place, one should select a deserving person, who is purity incarnate. One should contact a worthy *Brahmin*, who is the abode of good qualities and the dwelling place of the *Vedas* and give him gifts of money, by surrendering one's rights in it. Just as a wife surrenders her person to her dear husband with modesty (271-275), or one returns the deposit kept with him in trust to the depositor and becomes free from his obligation, or a page offers humbly a roll of betel leaves to the king, so he should give in charity land etc. to a *Brahmin* in a disinterested spirit, without expectation of its fruit. He should select such a person for giving charity as is incapable of returning it in any form. A person receives no reply if he accosts the sky, he does not see his reflection in the mirror if he sees into its rear side, does not get the ball in his hand with a rebound, if he dashes it against water (276-280). He expects no return if he feeds a bull dedicated to God or if he grants a favour to an ungrateful person. In the same way, he should ensure that the charity is given to one, who does not return it in any form and should not entertain in his mind a feeling of distinction between him as the donor and the donee. O great warrior, the charity given under such favourable conditions, is known as the *sattvic* charity and is the best of all charities. Alms

given under suitable conditions such as place, time and a worthy recipient is flawless and just charity.

21. *But that which is given grudgingly in order to get a favour in return or with the hope of a reward – that charity is known to be of rajas quality.*

Just as one feeds the cow for its milk, or sows the seed after constructing a grain-cellar to store the grain (281-285) or invites relations to a function in order to get presents, or gives presents to a married woman who has taken a religious vow (not to accept such presents) or to lend money after recovering interest in advance, or charges a fee from a patient before treating him, so charity is given with a view to gain some advantage. Charity of this type is *rajasic* charity. If one meets an itinerant deserving *Brahmin* on his way and has no hope of receiving anything in return, he gives him a *pice* (a small coin) in charity and makes him pray for the atonement of the sins, not only of himself but also of the members of his family (286-290), or he gives gifts to a *Brahmin* expecting the reward of enjoyments in heaven. But the gifts given are so scanty that they are hardly enough for a single meal, and when the donee leaves with that paltry gift, he thinks that he has sustained a loss and feels as though he has been cheated of all his possessions. O wise Arjuna, know that this charity given with this mental attitude, is *rajasic* charity.

22. *But alms given to the undeserving at the wrong time and place, without hospitality and with contempt is said to be of tamas quality.*

Now alms are given literally out of moneys secured by theft, during the evening or at night, in the habitations of barbarians, in the forest, in the rustic regions, in camps or in the meeting place of the town (291-295). These alms are also given to bards, jugglers, harlots, gamblers or sorceresses out of infatuation. They are infatuated with the beauty and skill of the dancing women, and the praise offered to them by the bards lingers in their minds. Besides, the intoxicating smell of flowers and scents turns them into infatuated kings of ghosts. Thus, they give in charity, riches secured by robbing others in the same way as persons of low caste, open free eating-places. Alms given in this way are *tamasic* charities. Now hear of another kind of charity, which takes place by a lucky chance (296-300). Just as an insect bores a piece of wood and by chance carves letters upon it or a crow is caught in the hands while a person claps them, so when a *tamasic* person happens to find himself at a holy place at an auspicious time and a deserving person comes to beg alms from him, seeing his prosperous look, he resolves to give him something out of vanity. But lacking in faith, the *tamasic* person does not bow to him and does not offer him hospitality himself or through another in the form of water (*arghya*) or a seat. Then why talk of doing homage to him, with sandal paste and consecrated rice? In this way, the *tamasic* person is rude to the person who begs and dismisses him unceremoniously like a debtor, by placing something on his palm, addressing him rudely (301- 305). Whatever he gives, he gives after counting it and gets rid of him by talking to him in a humiliating and insulting tone. Charity given in this way which results only in expense, is called *tamasic* charity. I have thus explained to you the characteristics of *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* charity.

O Arjuna, if only *sattvic* actions can free one from the bonds of worldly existence, you may raise a doubt and ask as to why I have described to you the faulty actions (306-310). But

one cannot get hold of a buried treasure, without driving away the goblin sitting on it or one cannot kindle the fire without suffering smoke to start with. In the same way what is wrong if I remove the veil of *rajas* and *tamas* quality obscuring the *sattva* quality? I have mentioned in the last verses, that the actions from faith to charities are all pervaded by the three *gunas*. While in fact, I had not thought of mentioning the other two *gunas*, I had to do so to show the *sattva* quality clearly. When a thing occurs along with two other things, it can be seen clearly. When the two are eliminated, as evening becomes clear after the close of the day and before night-fall (311-315), so when the *rajas* and *tamas* qualities are avoided, *sattva* quality alone is attained, in its noblest aspect. So I had to mention the characteristics of *rajas* and *tamas* qualities in order to show you clearly, the *sattva* quality. You should, therefore, take recourse to the *sattva* quality by abandoning the other two and accomplish your object. So perform all your actions including sacrificial rites, with the help of *sattva* quality and attain to your pristine nature. If the sun is there to show you, is there anything which you cannot see? In the same way, if there is *sattva* quality to guide you, how will your actions not yield the fruit? It is true that the *sattva* quality does possess this power, and yet that which conduces to liberation (316-320) is something else. When one secures the aid of this thing, one steps into the domain of deliverance. Even if one has pure gold of the highest quality (fifteen annas in a rupee), it serves as currency, only if it bears the royal insignia. There may be pure, cool and fragrant water, which gives pleasure; but it becomes holy when it is connected with a holy stream. However big a stream might be, it gains access to the sea, only if it joins a big river. In the same way, that which removes the obstacles, in the way of one, seeking deliverance with the help of *sattvic* actions, is entirely different (321-325). After hearing this, Arjuna could not contain his eagerness within himself and said, 'O Lord, kindly tell me, what it is'. Then the merciful Lord said, 'I shall now tell you how a *sattvic* person secures this gem, in the form of emancipation'.

23. *Om Tat Sat*, this is known as the three-fold designation of Brahman; by that the Vedas, the Brahmanas and sacrifices were ordained of old.

The Supreme *Brahman* without beginning, which is the resting place of the whole universe, has a triple name. Truly speaking, it has no name or caste; but the *Vedas* have given it a name, so that persons who live in the darkness of ignorance, may be able to identify it. A child is born without a name; but it answers and gets up, when it is called by a name given to it (326-330). When people tormented by the worries of the world, approached *Brahman* with their grievances, the name by which they call it and which evokes a response from it, is its symbolic name. In order to end the glum silence of *Brahman* and to realise it in its non-dual form, the *Vedas* discovered a sacred formula (*mantra*) out of kindness for the world. If God is called by this symbolic name, he stands in front of the caller, though he is formless. But only those, who come upto the level of God *Brahma*, sitting by his side in the city, in the form of *Upanishads* on the summit of the mountain in the form of the *Vedas*, know this formula. In fact, god *Brahma* attained the power to create the world, through the chanting of this formula (331-335). O great warrior, before the creation of this world, god *Brahma* was alone and had become crazy. He had ceased to recognise Me and was unable to create the world. He achieved greatness by chanting this name and acquired the capacity to create the world by contemplation and chanting of this three-syllabic formula. Then he created the *Brahmins*, and after directing

them to follow the *Vedas*, he provided them the means of livelihood, in the form of sacrificial rites. Then he created countless beings and gifted them for their livelihood, the three worlds with a hereditary right over them (336-340). Now hear about this formula, signifying the name of God, which made god *Brahma* pre-eminent in this world, so said the Lord of *Lakshmi*.

He added: know that its first syllable is *Om*, the king of all sacred formulae, its second syllable is *Tat* and the third is *Sat*. In this way, *Om Tat Sat* is the triple name of *Brahman*. You should smell this beautiful flower of the *Upanishads* in the form of this name. If you become one with this name and perform *sattvic* actions, emancipation becomes a domestic servant in your house. If a person secures ornaments of camphor through good fortune, he finds it difficult to know how to wear them (341-345). In the same way, even if one performs good actions and chants the name of *Brahman*, he may not know the secret of its proper application as laid down in the scripture. Just as one loses merit, by not showing proper respect to saintly persons who visit one's house or one longing to wear beautiful ornaments of gold puts them in a bundle and hangs it round one's neck, so the chanting of the name of God and performance of good actions, are of no avail, if one does not know its proper application, consisting of three syllables in performing such action. O Arjuna, there is food and hunger side by side and yet if an infant does not know how to eat it, it starves (346-350). Or oil, wick and fire may be all available at one place, still, O warrior, if their use is unknown, no light can be had. So even when there is timely action and the appropriate formula (*mantra*) comes to mind; yet they are of no use without the knowledge of their proper application. I shall now tell you, how one should properly apply the three syllabic names of *Brahman*.

24. Therefore, by uttering the syllable *Om*, acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity are begun as prescribed by the knower of *Brahman*.

The three syllables of this name of *Brahman* should be used at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of every action. O Arjuna, by using this method, the knowers of *Brahman* have become one with *Brahman* (351-355). According to the prescription of the religious texts, they do not abstain from performing sacrifices and other rites, in order to attain unity with *Brahman*. They first meditate on *Om*, by stamping its nature on their mind and then pronouncing it with their tongue, commence their action. This utterance at the commencement of action, is as valuable as a lamp with a steady light in darkness or the company of a strong man in the forest. The knowers of *Brahman*, get the *Brahmins* to offer sacrifices to titular deities, by spending their legitimate earnings (356-360). They offer oblations as prescribed in the three sacred fires, *Ahavaniya*, *Garhapatya* and *Dakshina*. In this way, by performing sacrifices of various kinds, they destroy their limitations (*upadhis*), which they abhor. They give in charity to holy *Brahmins*, at proper place and time, land or riches obtained by them justly. They perform austerities and chasten their bodies, by eating on alternate days or observing the *chandrayana* vow every alternate month. In this way, if sacrifices, charity and austerities, which are well known as the means of causing bondage, are performed after uttering *Om*, they conduce easily to emancipation (361-365). We can cross the sea on boats, which seem heavy on land. In the same way, with the help of this God's name, one gets release from the bonds of action. So sacrifices, charities, austerities and other rites are commenced with the utterance of *Om*. When these actions show signs of coming to fruition, then the second syllable *Tat* is brought into operation.

25. *By uttering Tat and without seeking reward, the various acts of sacrifice and austerity, as also, acts of charity, are performed by those desiring liberation.*

That which is beyond the world and which is witness to all things is the Supreme *Brahman* known by the name *Tat*. They (the seekers) should bear in mind that it is the origin of all, meditate upon its essential nature and pronounce it loudly and clearly (366-370). Then they should say, 'We dedicate all these actions along with their fruit to the *Brahman* represented by the word *Tat*, with nothing left for us to enjoy'. Thus by surrendering all actions to the *Brahman* known as *Tat*, they should repudiate all responsibility for these actions by uttering the words, 'not mine'. Now the action commenced by uttering the word '*Om*' and surrendered to God by uttering the word '*Tat*' may seem to have become one with *Brahman*, but it is not so. This is because the egoistic feeling of duality still remains, in the doer of the action. Salt certainly gets dissolved in water, but its saltish taste remains behind. To think that action has become one with *Brahman* is itself duality (371-375). So long as this consciousness of duality lasts, the mundane existence continues to daunt us, so said the Lord with his own mouth and this is also declared by the *Vedas*. The syllable *Sat* is reserved for the purpose, that one should not feel oneself as distinct from *Brahman*, but should experience one's unity with it. When the action, begun by uttering the word *Om* and continued by uttering the word *Tat*, becomes one with *Brahman*, with the elimination of the egoistic feeling that 'I am the doer', it is praised as right action. I shall explain now, how the word *Sat* is specially applied in regard to right action.

26. *The word Sat is used to decide that which is and that which is good; likewise, O Partha, the word Sat is used for any praiseworthy act.*

By the use of this syllable *Sat*, the counterfeit coin in the form of the illusory world, gets destroyed and one experiences the flawless nature of Existence (376-380). This '*Sat*' undergoes no change at any place or time; it always abides in the form of the Supreme Self. As the visible world is illusory, it is not classed under *Sat*, which is known only as the Supreme Self. That which becomes one with all-pervasive *Brahman* and by the use of word *Sat*, results in the experience of unity by eliminating the duality of the doer, is the right action. That action which becomes united with *Brahman* through the utterance of *Om* and *Tat* gets dissolved and remains as *Sat*, pure and simple. One should know this secret application of the term *Sat*, so said *Shri Hari*.

(*Jnanadeva* says), It is not I, who says this (381-385). If I say so, it will be sullied with the taint of duality in respect of *Shri Hari*. So I say, that this is what the Lord has said. This syllable *Sat* is also beneficial to *sattvic* action in another way. Even if these good actions are performed well, according to one's qualification, they may become defective in some way. Just as when a body has a defective limb, its activity comes to a stop or if a chariot is deficient in one part, it comes to a dead halt, so even if an action is right on the whole, it may become bad being deficient in some quality (386-390). In this situation, with the help of the words *Om* and *Tat*, the *Sat* syllable restores the defective action. It removes the defect by its power of *sattva* and brings it to perfection. Like divine medicine, which is given to a patient or help rendered to a despondent person, this syllable *Sat*, helps in making defective action perfect, in all respects.

Otherwise it so happens, that due to heedlessness, action takes to the wrong path, transgressing

the precepts of scriptures, even as the wayfarer sometime misses his way or the connoisseur becomes confused. In such cases, is there any limit to what may happen (391-395)? In this manner, if the indiscriminate action transgresses the prescribed rules, then it tends to become evil action. When the *Sat* syllable, which is better than the other two, is employed, it turns the bad action into good action. O warrior, the application of syllabic word *Sat* is beneficial to faulty action like the rubbing of the philosopher's stone on iron, the meeting of a stream with the river *Ganga* or a shower of nectar on a dead person, such is the greatness of the *Sat* syllable. In the way, if you understand the secret of the *Sat* syllable and utter that name properly, you will realise that it is nothing but *Brahman* (396-400). The syllables *Om Tat Sat* take the seeker to that abode which illumines this visible world. Thus *Om Tat Sat* is the name, which shows the inner essence of pure *Brahman*, which is without attributes. But just as the sky is the support of itself, so *Brahman* supports its name *Om Tat Sat*. Just as when the Sun rises on the horizon, it illumines itself, so the utterance of this name brings liberation. So know, that this is not the triple name of *Brahman*, but *Brahman* itself, and so whatever actions you will perform (401-405),

27. *In sacrifice, austerity and charity steadfastness is said to be good; and action undertaken for the sake of the Supreme is verily called good.*

Whether consisting of sacrifice, charity and austerities, although too rigorous, may reach successful termination or develop some defect and remain incomplete. But if they are dedicated to *Brahman*, they become one with it, in the same way as gold produced from iron with the touch of philosophic stone, when tested, is seen to be pure gold and no one can talk of it as impure. Just as the rivers after joining the sea, cannot be identified separately, so the actions do not show any distinctions as imperfect or perfect. In this way, O wise Arjuna, I have described to you, the power of the name of *Brahman*, I have also explained to you, the different applications of the three-syllabic name, when taken singly (406-410). Have you now realised the secret of the name of *Brahman*? If this faith increases in your mind, you will get rid of the bonds of birth and death. If you perform action by the application of this *Sat* syllable in the best way possible, the action will become perfect according to the injunctions of the *Vedas*.

28. *Whatever sacrifice is offered, charity given, austerity practised, and whatever is done without faith, is said to be 'asat'; it is of no use here or after death.*

If one gives up this path of faith and performs, on the strength of obduracy, numerous sacrifices, gives in charity the whole earth, full of gems, practises thousands of austerities, standing on the toes (411-415), or constructs lakes as big as the sea, all that is of no avail. Like rain fallen on rocks, oblations made into ashes, or like an embrace given to a shadow, or the slapping of the sky, all actions undertaken become fruitless. Just as by crushing pebbles in an oil-mill, one gets neither oil nor oil-cake, such action is worthless. If a person ties up potsherds in the hem of his garment and goes on a journey in his country or to a foreign land, he suffers starvation (416-420). In the same way, if actions do not bring him happiness in this world, how could he expect it in the next world? So any transaction undertaken in this world, without faith in the name of God, is so much labour lost in this and the next world.

So said Shri Krishna, the Lord of *Lakshmi*, the bravest among warriors, the lion who destroys the elephant in the form of sin, the sun who dispels the darkness in the form of three-fold

misery. Like the moon who gets lost in the moonshine, Arjuna was drowned in the bliss of Self. O King, this war is verily a merchant with the sharp arrows as his weights, with which he measures the flesh of the lives fallen on the battlefield. In such a terrible crisis, how did Arjuna come to enjoy the kingdom of bliss? Such a good fortune has not become the lot of any other person. *Sanjaya* said, O king of *Kurus*, I am enthralled to see such merit in the enemy. He has become as if our preceptor and brought us happiness. For had he not asked any questions of the Lord, would the latter have disclosed the secret of his heart and how could we have got a glimpse of the absolute Truth? We were going through the rounds of births and deaths, in the darkness of ignorance, but Arjuna brought us to the temple of self-knowledge. He has lavished so much favour upon us, that I deem him as our preceptor like sage *Vyasa* (426-430). Then *Sanjaya* said to himself, 'Such extravagant praise of Arjuna may displease *Dhritarashtra*, and so it is better to stop it'. So dropping this subject, *Sanjaya* began to narrate what Arjuna next asked Lord Krishna. *Jnanadeva*, the disciple of *Nivritti* says, "I shall tell you now what *Sanjaya* narrated, so please give me your attention (431-433)."

