

## Chapter 17 (Of Religion by the Threefold Kinds of Faith)

### Chapter 17: Of Religion by the Threefold Kinds of Faith

Arjuna. If men forsake the holy ordinance,  
Heedless of Shastras, yet keep faith at heart  
And worship, what shall be the state of those,  
Great Krishna! Sattwan, Rajas, Tamas? Say!  
Krishna. Threefold the faith is of mankind, and springs  
From those three qualities, — becoming "true,"  
Or "passion-stained," or "dark," as thou shalt hear!  
The faith of each believer, Indian Prince!  
Conforms itself to what he truly is.  
Where thou shalt see a worshipper, that one  
To what he worships lives assimilate,  
[Such as the shrine, so is the votary,]  
The "soothfast" souls adore true gods; the souls  
Obeying Rajas worship Rakshasas  
Or Yakshas; and the men of Darkness pray  
To Pretas and to Bhutas. Yea, and those  
Who practise bitter penance, not enjoined  
By rightful rule — penance which hath its root  
In self-sufficient, proud hypocrisies-  
Those men, passion-beset, violent, wild,  
Torturing — the witless ones — My elements  
Shut in fair company within their flesh,  
(Nay, Me myself, present within the flesh!)  
Know them to devils devoted, not to Heaven!  
For like as foods are threefold for mankind

In nourishing, so is there threefold way  
Of worship, abstinence, and almsgiving!  
Hear this of Me! there is a food which brings  
Force, substance, strength, and health, and joy to live,  
Being well-seasoned, cordial, comforting,  
The "Soothfast" meat. And there be foods which bring  
Aches and unrests, and burning blood, and grief  
Being too biting, heating, salt, and sharp,  
And therefore craved by too strong appetite.  
And there is foul food — kept from over-night,  
Savourless, filthy, which the foul will eat,  
A feast of rottenness, meet for the lips  
Of such as love the "Darkness."  
Thus with rites;-  
A sacrifice not for rewardment made,  
Offered in rightful wise, when he who vows  
Sayeth, with heart devout, "This I should do!  
Is "Soothfast" rite. But sacrifice for gain,  
Offered for good repute, be sure that this,  
O Best of Bharatas! is Rajas-rite,  
With stamp of "passion." And a sacrifice  
Offered against the laws, with no due dole  
Of food-giving, with no accompaniment  
Of hallowed hymn, nor largesse to the priests,  
In faithless celebration, call it vile,  
The deed of "Darkness!" — lost!

Worship of gods

Meriting worship; lowly reverence

Of Twice-borns, Teachers, Elders; Purity,

Rectitude, and the Brahmacharya's vow,

And not to injure any helpless thing,-

These make a true religiousness of Act.

Words causing no man woe, words ever true,

Gentle and pleasing words, and those ye say

In murmured reading of a Sacred Writ,-

These make the true religiousness of Speech.

Serenity of soul, benignity,

Sway of the silent Spirit, constant stress

To sanctify the Nature, — these things make

Good rite, and true religiousness of Mind.

Such threefold faith, in highest piety

Kept, with no hope of gain, by hearts devote

Is perfect work of Sattwan, true belief.

Religion shown in act of proud display

To win good entertainment, worship, fame,

Such — say I — is of Rajas, rash and vain.

Religion followed by a witless will

To torture self, or come at power to hurt

Another, — 'tis of Tamas, dark and ill.

The gift lovingly given, when one shall say

"Now must I gladly give!" when he who takes

Can render nothing back; made in due place,

Due time, and to a meet recipient,

Is gift of Sattwan, fair and profitable.

The gift selfishly given, where to receive

Is hoped again, or when some end is sought,

Or where the gift is proffered with a grudge,

This is of Rajas, stained with impulse, ill.

The gift churlishly flung, at evil time,

In wrongful place, to base recipient,

Made in disdain or harsh unkindliness,

Is gift of Tamas, dark; it doth not bless!

HERE ENDETH CHAPTER XVII OF THE

BHAGAVAD-GITA,

Entitled "Sraddhatrayavibhagayog,"

Or "The Book of Religion by the Threefold

Kinds of Faith."