

Give and take

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There are three kinds of danam...Sattvic, Rajasic, Tamasic

Further on, in Chapter 18, Krishna speaks about '*danam*,' meaning charity or sharing. Again, there are three kinds of *danam*: *sattvic*, *rajasic*, *tamasic*. *Danam* is *sattvic* when the attitude of the person is 'I have, therefore I share.' Why does the sun shine? Why does the tree give fruits? Because it can. It's the same for *sattvic danam* and is made without expecting any favour in return, keeping in mind the time, place, and the person. In the Indian context, this *danam* could be done at the time of an eclipse, for example. This is a good time to share. A religious occasion is also a good time to share. The sharing is to be done with someone who needs it, to someone who is scholarly, someone who will put that object or money to good use. That would be *sattvic*. This person will not give money to a drunkard outside a bar, this wouldn't be considered *sattvic danam*, because you are encouraging an unhealthy pattern of behavior. Institutionalized giving has caught on because this is one way of ensuring the *danam* goes to the deserving.

What is *Rajasic danam*? That which is done with a motive. For example, when a person gives something to build up his favour bank, it could be considered as *rajasic danam*. Corporate gifting is one example. It is one way of advertising oneself or making sure you get something in return. When a person does a favour and expects a favour in return, it is considered a *rajasic dana*. It's not a whole-hearted giving, because it may be given with a sense of obligation, because it is expected of a person. In these cases, it's a social obligation and, clearly, the giver is not happy with the giving. Nothing wrong with this because the person who receives it does benefit from it, but the giver does not grow. However, it is a sharing and it is better than not sharing.

Traditionally, the attitude would be 'The Lord has come to me in the form of this monk/*sanyasi/sadhu*', therefore, I share what I can'. The monk, the receiver, in turn believes that the Lord has come to him in the form of a giver.

Danam which is given to the wrong person at the wrong time at the wrong place is *tamasic danam*. Giving money to a drunkard outside a bar is certainly *tamasic*, because that guy is going to abuse it. *Danam* given without respect is also *tamasic*. In India, all monks live on alms, and the attitudes of the giver and the receiver are very beautiful. The person who gives food or money to the monk/*sanyasi* has respect for the monk. Traditionally, the attitude would be 'The Lord has come to me in the form of this monk/*sanyasi/sadhu*', therefore, I share what I can'. The monk, the receiver, in turn believes that the Lord has come to him in the form of a giver. Therefore, both are blessed in the giving and receiving. This is the ultimate *sattvic* giving and receiving. In *tamasic* giving, there is no respect for the receiver. In this case, you give because the guy is a disturbance for you and you want to get him out of your way. In India, you will see beggars, and you feel disturbed and guilty by the very sight and, therefore, you give something. Yes, the receiver is still benefited and may end up using or abusing the thing, but this sort of giving is *tamasic*.

There is a custom among spiritual people in India—at the end of a ritual or a sharing or even a class, the person will always end it by saying 'Om Tat Sat'. What does it mean? As we have seen before, 'Om' is the name for the Lord, and so you begin something by saluting the Lord, and you end it also by remembering *Ishvara* with *Om*. 'Tat' is indicative of the truth, both *Ishvara* and the Reality. All the words stand for Reality as well as *Ishvara*. Similarly, *Sat* stands for the Absolute existence. Therefore, by uttering *Om Tat Sat*, you are invoking *Ishvara* and the Reality behind *Ishvara*. That's how the whole custom of saying 'Om Tat Sat' has come about. Therefore, Krishna adds here in the *Gita* that any act that is done may have some lack in it, something may not have been done properly, something may have not been done the way it was meant to be out of one's ignorance or heedlessness. So, he says, if you end anything by saying 'Om Tat Sat', you are offering the whole thing to the Lord before beginning and before ending and, hence, are free from the guilt of that unknown action.

This itself reveals a beautiful attitude. The person recognizes that his actions may not have been perfect, there may have been something lacking, mistakes may have been made inadvertently, and then invokes the grace of the Lord to make up for those mistakes by saying *Om Tat Sat*. This helps the person to focus on his actions, his goals and, at the same time, be humble.

Om Tat Sat.

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