

Of tyaga and knowledge

Author : Swami Brahmailandananda

Categories : [Freedom and renunciation \(ch.18\)](#)

Date : April 3, 2015





Knowledge which enables you to see the whole universe as one all-pervading awareness would be considered Sattvic.

In the fourth verse of the 18th chapter, Krishna says that all *tyaga* can be classified as *Sattvic*, *Rajasic*, or *Tamasic*. What is *Tamasic tyaga*? In the Indian context, the concept of duty is very clear—when you're playing any role, there are certain things that the role demands. As we're living in an unstructured society, a lot of what we do as a role is by way of negotiation. However, once you have accepted your role, then giving up what is considered as your duty would be a *Tamasic tyaga*, because you're doing it from sheer ignorance of what the role entails. Therefore, any 'giving up', especially of duties, etc., out of ignorance will be considered *Tamasic*. E.g. Giving up one's duties in the name of being spiritual is *Tamasic tyaga*.

Niyatasya tu sannyasah karmano nopapadyate

Mohat tasya parityagastamasah parikirtitah

Renunciation of enjoined action is not proper. Renunciation of it (enjoined action), out of delusion, is called tamasika. (Verse 7)

Krishna then talks about *Rajasic tyaga*. *Rajasic tyaga* is giving up what one is supposed to do not out of ignorance but because it is a headache, a hassle. However glamorous a job may be, every job involves certain hassles, certain headaches, and to give up one's duties because of the hassles involved is *Rajasic tyaga*. There's no growth involved in it. Growth can happen when one confronts something and overcomes it, but if you're going to run at the first sight of trouble, how is growth possible? This is a problem I find among many of the modern youngsters; they want to quit if a job has hassles. But there will be hassles in every job, and quitting at the first sign of trouble is not the answer. The same thing happens in relationships. First sign of trouble, you want to walk out. Every relationship has its downside. Are you going to confront it and grow or are you going to give up? If you're giving up because it's trouble instead of trying to build on it and grow, then that type of giving up is *Rajasic tyaga*. One has the freedom of choice,

of course, but recognize that this type of giving up is *Rajasic tyaga*.

Duhkham ityeva yatkarma kayaklesabhyat tyajet

Sa krtva rjasam tyagam naiva tyagaphalam labhet

One may give up the karma as indeed painful out of fear of affliction to one's physical body. Having done that rajasika renunciation, one would certainly not gain the result of renunciation. (Verse 8)

What is *Sattvic tyaga*?

Karyam ityeva yatkarma niyatam kriyate 'rjuna

Sangam tyaktva phalam caiva sa tyagah sattviko matah

'It is to be done,' thinking thus when only the enjoined karma is done, giving up attachment and result, Ajuna! It is considered to be a sattvic renunciation. (Verse 9)

One would assume that giving up certain things out of proper understanding would be the answer. But Krishna turns it on its head and says, 'Doing what you have to do in the spirit of *karma yoga* is *Sattvic tyaga*'. There is growth in doing what has to be done, and by doing this you are also giving up your laziness, your indolence, your immaturity. Earlier on also, Krishna has said that *karma yoga* is *tyaga*. Therefore, doing what has to be done in the spirit of *ishwara arpana* and *prasada buddhi* is *karma yoga*, and it becomes *Sattvic tyaga* because it would lead one to have a *sanyasi's* mind.

The same thing happens in relationships. First sign of trouble, you want to walk out. Every relationship has its downside. Are you going to confront it and grow or are you going to give up? If you're giving up because it's trouble instead of trying to build on it and grow, then that type of giving up is *Rajasic tyaga*.

In the previous post, I had narrated a story about the boy who loved to play with marbles. Here's the sequel to that story. The boy grows into a young man and then becomes a father to a 10-year-old. One day, the kid tells his father, "Dad, all my friends have gone out and I have no one to play with...Please play marbles with me." Surely, the father is not going to tell his son, "Son, I had promised your grandfather that I will not play marbles ever again...I'm afraid I'll get involved." The man is now at a stage when it does not matter if he plays or not. He can play and enjoy it too. When one has this attitude with respect to everything in the world, then one has the *sanyasi's* mind.

Krishna goes ahead to say that any action will involve *jnanam* (knowledge), *karma* (action), and *karta* (the doer). You, the I-awareness, are free from all, but action involves *jnanam*, *karma*, and *karta*, and Krishna further divides these three into *Sattvic*, *Rajasic*, and *Tamasic*. All these are meant for a self-evaluation so that one understands if one's knowledge is *Sattvic*, if one's action is *Sattvic*, and if one himself—the *karta*, doer—is *Sattvic*. The whole thing is meant for self-evaluation. Therefore, Krishna starts by asking, 'What is *Sattvic* knowledge?' 'That knowledge by which you see the oneness in all things', says Krishna in verse 20. In other words, *Vedanta jnanam*, spiritual knowledge, which enables you to see the whole universe as one all-pervading awareness and everything as nothing but a manifestation...That knowledge would be considered *Sattvic*.

What is *Rajasic* knowledge?

Prthaktvena tu yajjnanam nanabhavan prthagvidhan

Vetti sarvesu bhutesu tajjnanam viddhi rajas am

On the other hand, may you know that knowledge by which one knows distinctly the manifold nature of different kinds of beings, as rajasa. (Verse 21)

It is that knowledge which is based on difference. All knowledge, whether it is scientific or otherwise in the field of Arts or Science or Economics, etc., is *Rajasic*. Previously, science was just one body of knowledge and now there are so many sub-disciplines. Therefore, knowledge that is useful for our lives, which gives us a better quality of life is *Rajasic* knowledge.

What is *Tamasic* knowledge?

Hanging on fanatically to a point of view would fall under *Tamasic* knowledge. That point of view may be right in a limited context, but holding on to that and excluding all other possibilities, excluding all other disciplines of knowledge is *Tamasic* knowledge. A fad diet, for example, is *Tamasic* knowledge because you hold on to one thing— 'I will only have fruit juice and I will lose weight.' It is knowledge alright, but the damage you will be causing to yourself will be much more. Fanatical, tinged with misunderstanding, knowledge which lacks understanding of the big picture is *Tamasic* knowledge.

Yattu krtsnavad ekasmin karye saktam ahaitukam

Atattvarthavad alpam ca tat tamasam udahrtam

Whereas that (knowledge by) which (one is) committed to one object, as though it is everything (and) which is illogical, without truth, and very limited, that (knowledge) is called tamasa. (Verse 22)

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