

Shraddha

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

Shraddha is usually translated as faith, but in the Theosophical and *Gupta Vidya* current it must not be confused with blind belief. It is not credulity, emotional comfort, dogmatic assent or refusal to think. *Shraddha* is a calm and confident spiritual conviction, a deep orientation of the whole being toward truth, practice and transformation. It is faith before it becomes knowledge, but not faith opposed to knowledge. It is the trust that makes verification possible.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P. Blavatsky distinguishes belief based on knowledge from acceptance resting merely on authority. Spiritual intuition and testimony may open an inquiry, but the student remains responsible for understanding. Professor Iyer gives this responsibility a practical form: conviction is to be directed towards experiential confirmation. One begins with sufficient trust to undertake the discipline, observes its effects honestly, and allows experience to refine the original conception. Faith thus participates in a movement towards knowledge.

Professor Iyer gives the exact yogic definition in his treatment of Patanjali. *Samadhi* is approached through *Shraddha*, *Virya*, *Smriti* and *Prajna*: faith, energy, retentiveness and insight. *Shraddha* is “the calm and confident conviction that yoga is efficacious,” joined to the wholehearted orientation of the psychic, moral and mental nature toward experiential confirmation. This means that *Shraddha* is not merely believing that the path exists. It is turning one’s whole being toward the path so that experience and discipline can confirm what the heart has first intuited.

Shraddha therefore naturally leads to *Virya*, the energy and courage needed to persist. Faith that does not release energy remains incomplete. H.P. Blavatsky’s teaching in *The Secret Doctrine* is decisive: “faith” in the saying about moving mountains should be translated as will, for faith without will is like a windmill without wind. True faith is dynamic. It gathers the scattered powers of the being and directs them toward the real.

Professor Iyer carefully distinguishes true faith and spiritual will from blind acceptance or petty wilfulness. True *Shraddha* is not stubbornness, lower mental insistence or emotional excitement. It points to mental control, concentrated determination and effortless confidence. This confidence is not the ego saying, “I can have what I want.” It is the soul aligning itself with law, truth and the Higher Self.

The link between *Shraddha* and Dharma is central. Professor Iyer speaks of *Kamadeva-Agni* as the allegorical son of Dharma and *Shraddha*. Dharma is sacred law, moral duty, necessity and

harmony; *Shraddha* is spiritual conviction and creative assurance. Their union gives birth to divine creative power. *Shraddha* without Dharma can become fantasy or fanaticism. Dharma without *Shraddha* can become dry compulsion. Together they become a living force of transformation.

This makes *Shraddha* both cosmic and human. In “Kriyashakti,” Professor Iyer says that pure cosmic creativity includes an element of *Shraddha*: an unshakeable conviction in the inherent value of divine creative action, independent of visible results. Human *Shraddha* reflects this cosmic assurance in a smaller key. It helps one work with invisible causes, like the good gardener who plants seeds, waters patiently and waits for the cyclic harvest.

In ordinary life, *Shraddha* is tested in obscurity. It appears when one returns to meditation after distraction, to kindness after irritation, to truthfulness after self-protection, and to service after discouragement. It is easy to speak of faith when the mind is bright and conditions are favorable. *Shraddha* becomes real when one continues after disappointment, dullness and fatigue.

A useful test is the difference between confidence in a principle and certainty about a prediction. We may trust the value of truthfulness without knowing how a difficult conversation will unfold. We may believe that generosity is worth practising without promising that a particular gift will be understood. *Shraddha* can sustain the right action through this uncertainty. It does not authorize us to turn hope into a guarantee or to describe our wishes as knowledge of the future.

This gives *Shraddha* a compassionate meaning. Past mistakes need not become a permanent definition of a human being. The Theosophical teaching of a spiritual nature and a lawful process of development opens a longer view. Responsibility remains: what has been harmed may need repair. Yet a person can learn, choose differently and cultivate capacities that were previously dormant. Such hope gains substance through action. Confidence in growth becomes credible as it is accompanied by patient work upon the causes of change.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception helps faith become less dependent on immediate personal results. A teacher may work carefully with a student whose understanding ripens much later. A person may preserve a friendship through a period when little response seems possible. In each case the field of meaning includes another life and a longer span of growth. This larger view can steady a generous commitment while leaving room to reconsider the method. Trust in a purpose need not bind us to an ineffective way of serving it.

Shraddha also matters in relationship. To live in Human Solidarity requires some faith in the hidden dignity and educability of others. This does not mean naive trust in every behavior. It means refusing to reduce a being to present confusion. It leaves room for the higher nature of

another, just as one tries to leave room for one's own. In this way *Shraddha* supports Universal Brotherhood through truthful patience.

At the same time, *Shraddha* requires discernment. Blind faith may attach itself to personalities, institutions, psychic claims or group certainties. True *Shraddha* is not mesmerized by outer authority. It reverences teachers and traditions, but it does not surrender responsibility for thought, motive, practice and observation. It is faithful without becoming servile, open without becoming gullible, devoted without becoming possessive.

The companion virtue of *smriti*, recollection, gives faith continuity. A lesson honestly learned can be remembered when discouragement narrows the view. We may recall that an apology once restored trust, that patient study clarified an apparent contradiction, or that asking for help strengthened the work. These memories support confidence through experience. They also protect us from rehearsing only failures. To remember accurately is to include the evidence of growth alongside the evidence of limitation, and then return to the present with a more balanced sense of what is possible.

This balance permits questions. A teaching that matters deserves examination, and an admired teacher remains distinguishable from the truth being sought. We can express uncertainty respectfully, check a reference, and acknowledge a limit in our understanding. Such inquiry strengthens a commitment to truth because it removes the need for pretence. A quietly reasoned faith has room to listen, to learn and, when necessary, to change its mind.

The living image of *Shraddha* is the good gardener carrying seeds in the dark. The soil is not yet flowering, and the season is not under personal command. But the gardener prepares the ground, plants with care, waters without anxiety, and waits without despair. *Shraddha* is that sacred confidence in the hidden law of growth. It lets the human being continue faithfully until the invisible seed of the higher life breaks through the soil of ordinary consciousness and offers its fragrance to all. The patient work is itself an expression of trust. Each honest return places another small seed in the ground, without requiring the whole garden to flower today.

Glossary

Atma / Atman — The universal spiritual Self, beyond the changing personality.

Bhakti — Devotion or divine love; the wholehearted orientation of life towards a spiritual ideal.

Buddhi — Spiritual intelligence or intuition; the vehicle of *Atman*.

Buddhi Yoga — The discipline of spiritual intelligence, uniting discernment, devotion and selfless action.

Dharma — Law, duty and the fitness of action within the larger order of life.

Karma — The law of action and consequence, linking individual and collective experience.

Kriyashakti — Creative thought and will; its highest expression requires compassionate, universal motives.

Manas — The human principle of self-conscious thought, capable of reflecting spiritual intelligence.

Prajna — Wisdom, insight and the capacity for perception, considered at universal and human levels.

Samadhi — Meditative absorption, proceeding through progressively subtler stages.

Shraddha — Spiritual conviction directed towards experiential confirmation through practice.

Smriti — Recollection of essential lessons, sustaining a conscious thread of learning.

Universal Brotherhood — The spiritual kinship of humanity and all life, expressed through mutual responsibility.

Virya — Energy, courage and perseverance directed towards truth and the welfare of beings.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. R.N. Iyer — “Samadhi Pada”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume III, p. 273.

“*Shraddha* is the calm and confident conviction that yoga is efficacious, coupled with the wholehearted orientation of one’s psychic, moral and mental nature towards experiential confirmation.”

Meditation thought: Give conviction an opportunity to be tested. Choose a practice whose effect on conduct you can honestly observe.

2. R.N. Iyer — “Samadhi Pada”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume III, p. 273.

“*Smriti* implies the refinement of memory which helps to extract the essential lesson of each experience without the needless elaboration of irrelevancies.”

Meditation thought: Remember a lesson rather than rehearsing an injury. Let experience strengthen intelligent confidence.

3. R.N. Iyer — “Kriyashakti”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume III, p. 198.

“Something of the supreme self-confidence of self-existence is conveyed in the hymn of the *Atharva Veda* which portrays *Kamadeva* as the offspring of Dharma and *Shraddha*.”

Meditation thought: Contemplate faith together with moral law. Creative assurance needs an allegiance wider than personal desire.

4. R.N. Iyer — “Kriyashakti”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume III, p. 198.

“At the same time, there is in that pure cosmic *Kriyashakti* an element of *shraddha* or faith. This faith is an unshakeable conviction of the inherent value of the action of *Kriyashakti*, independent of entropy and of the reflection of creativity in the complex processes of change.”

Meditation thought: Consider confidence in the value of a good action even when its result is unseen. Let the act be complete in its sincerity.

5. R.N. Iyer — “Kriyashakti”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume III, p. 198.

“It is the unbroken assurance of the Divine, which is unborn and undying; it is the full freedom of selflessness, the formless joy and boundless beneficence that gives freely of itself without a shadow or hint of calculation.”

Meditation thought: Hold this cosmic image as an ideal of uncalculated generosity. Let it soften a demand for immediate reassurance.

6. R.N. Iyer — “The Fires of Creation”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume I, p. 152.

“It is essential to enter the invisible realm of germinating seed ideas and, like the good gardener, to learn to work with and through Nature.”

Meditation thought: Care for the conditions of growth. A good seed still asks for patience, attention and the right season.

7. R.N. Iyer — “The Fires of Creation”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume I, p. 152.

“Disinterested in visible results, which are but the flowers of yesterday, one must learn to wait patiently for the cyclic harvest, sustaining a lightness of heart, an ardent love for the soil and a joyous gratitude for the generosity of Nature.”

Meditation thought: Continue the useful work whose harvest is not yet visible. Make patience warm enough to sustain it.

8. R.N. Iyer — “The Fires of Creation”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume I, p. 152.

“True faith and spiritual will have nothing to do with blind acceptance or petty wilfulness bound by likes and dislikes. They point instead to mental control, concentrated determination and unbounded effortless confidence which can be brought together in a mystic marriage or fusion of the higher faculties.”

Meditation thought: Distinguish spiritual confidence from insistence. Be willing to revise an opinion while remaining faithful to truth.

9. R.N. Iyer — “The Joy of Devotion”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, p. 168.

“True devotion comes to birth through the firm recognition of the unity of all life and the universality of the highest ideals and ideas conceived, transcending the human capacity to formulate and transmit them.”

Meditation thought: Let shared life enlarge the object of devotion. The ideal becomes more trustworthy as it grows more universal.

10. R.N. Iyer — “The Joy of Devotion”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, p. 168.

“When devotion continues undiminished through the trials that it necessarily brings — just as light increases the shadow — it renews itself. It must be put to the test, and it surely will be.”

Meditation thought: Meet a difficulty without making it a verdict upon your whole path. Let the experience refine your commitment.

11. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume II, p. 59.

“Only the word ‘faith’ ought to be translated by will. Faith without Will is like a wind-mill without wind — barren of results.”

Meditation thought: Read will as the power to embody a conviction. Give a worthy intention a concrete act.

12. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 125.

“I mean, if it is the difference between the two that you want to know, then I can tell you that between faith on authority and faith on one’s spiritual intuition, there is a very great difference.”

Meditation thought: Examine the ground of your trust. Reverence for a teacher should deepen the responsibility to understand.