

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 14: Guṇatrāya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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Trigunatita - Person who rises above all the three Gunas and lives in Total Freedom byattaining Ultimate Bliss.

Chapter 14th of Śrīmadbhagavadgītā is about **The Yoga of Classification of the Three Gunas.**

The session started with recitation of prayer to Saradamba, Vyasa and Gurudeva. followed by the lighting of the lamp. A glimpse of the previous session was dwelt upon.

The other gunas are in the shadows. Both the Sun and Moon are in the sky, but only one is visible at a time. The taste of all masalas put in a vegetable is not known. Only the dominant flavor comes out. The three gunas tie down the jīva with desires.

Sattvaguna increases one's knowledge. Rajoguna increases one's greed. For example, a person during a party wants to eat more and more food and fills his plate with all delicacies. But the stomach can only take in a limited quantity, and he throws away that which he cannot eat, thus wasting precious food. A Rājasika performs actions with a selfish motive, like a student working hard to secure good marks to be praised or for gifts from his well-wishers.

A Rājasika acts for name and fame. A person goes to temple daily. It may be out of bhakti but it is also to create a dharmic impression. There is a visible restlessness in their behaviour. Ravana's restlessness made him kidnap Sita, when she was alone in the kutir.

In the 14 th Chapter, Part I the slokas described the qualities of Sattva and Rajoguna. The session started by recollecting Sattva and Rajoguna and then moved on to describe Tamoguna.

**sattvaṃ(m) sukhe sañjayati, rajaḥ(kh) karmaṇi bhārata,
jñānamāvṛtya tu tamaḥ(ph), pramāde sañjayatyuta. 14.9**

Sattva draws one to joy and Rajas to action; while Tamas, clouding wisdom, impels one to error, sleep and sloth Arjuna.

The story of the three brothers Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan stand as a fine example in explaining the three gunas. Bramha appeared before them and granted them a boon. All the three uttered a word “sona,” but each with a different meaning.

For Vibhishan it was a plea to wake him up from the illusion of life, as he wanted to know who he was and to know the reality. It showed his Sāttvika temperament.

Ravana desired action, to exercise power over Gods and to control everyone. His mind could not be controlled and being a Rājasika desired for more action.
Kumbhakaran in complete ignorance literally asks for sleep, remaining in total darkness, a Tāmasika personality.

The three gunas bind the jiva with the samsara. If one considers the gunas as chains which bind, be it made of gold or silver or iron they remain as chains only.

14.10

**rajastamaścābhibhūya, sattvaṃ(m) bhavati bhārata,
rajaḥ(s) sattvaṃ(n) tamaścaiva, tamaḥ(s) sattvaṃ(m) rajastathā. 14.10**

Overpowering Rajas and Tamas, Arjuna, Sattva prevails; overpowering Sattva and Tamas, Rajas prevails; even so, overpowering Sattva and Rajas, Tamas prevails.

The interconnections between the three are shown here. No guna stays in isolation. All the three are present in an individual. The guna which predominates makes the person who he is with its traits.

14.11

**sarvadvāreṣu dehe'smin, prakāśa upajāyate,
jñānam(m) yadā tadā vidyād, vivṛddhaṃ(m) sattvamityuta. 14.11**

When light and discernment dawn in this body, as well as in the mind and senses, then one should know that Sattva is predominant.

A Sāttvik person is filled with jñāna, knowledge. He uses his senses competently and skillfully. Depending on the way one behaves, the food one takes, the way one talks can decide his nature.

14.12

**lobhaḥ(ph) pravṛttirārambhaḥ(kh), karmaṇāmaśamaḥ(s) spṛhā,
rajasyetānijāyante, vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha. 14.12**

With the preponderance of Rajas, Arjuna, greed, activity, undertaking of action with an interested motive, restlessness and a thirst for enjoyment make their appearance. (12----

A Rājasik is ambitious, wishes that everything he does should be successful. He is greedy, result oriented and restless in behaviour.

14.13

**aprakāśo'pravṛttiśca, pramādo moha eva ca,
tamasyetāni jāyante, vivṛddhe kurunandana. 14.13**

With the growth of Tamas, Arjuna, obtuseness of the mind and senses, disinclination to perform one's obligatory duties, frivolity and stupor-all these appear.

A Tāmasik's mind and heart do not work properly. Does not differentiate between right and wrong. He does not know and will not follow any counsel. They are controlled by senses and act according to its dictates.

14.14

**yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu, pralayaṃ(m) yāti dehabhṛt,
tadottamavidāṃ(m) lokān, amalānpratipadyate. 14.14**

When a man dies during the preponderance of Sattva, he obtains the stainless ethereal worlds (heaven etc.,) attained by men of noble deeds.

The three gunas affect life and after-life. When a man dies and if he is at the height of Sattva guna, then he goes to those worlds which are lived in by men of noble deeds like swarga and other ethereal worlds. He lives there in a peaceful, happy manner.

14.15

**rajasī pralayaṃ(ñ) gatvā, karmasaṅgiṣu jāyate,
tathā pralīnastamasi, mūḍhayoniṣu jāyate. 14.15**

Dying when Rajas predominates, he is born among those attached to action; even so, the man who has expired during the preponderance of Tamas is reborn in the species of the deluded creatures such as insects and beasts etc.

If Rajas is the dominant quality at the time of death, he will be born again into the category of action-oriented men. Desire and attachment force them to do Karma. Hence they are born into a body where they do a lot of action.

Tamas dominated men do not think or use their mind properly. Swamiji says, "use whatever capabilities are there in you to the utmost." Because those who do not do it, they take re-birth in the lowly species as insects, birds or animals which depend on instinct for survival.

A Rājasika uses everything for his own self. Here it was pointed out how even small actions can make a difference. One need not be a Prime Minister to benefit others. An engineer, a doctor, a teacher in their own capacity can benefit the needy. An interesting anecdote of an old lady with very few means and a rich man was given in this context.

The old lady donated all the amount of money (though meagre) she had to perform a Yagna, whereas the rich man gave a large amount, but only half of what he had. So, who was selfless of the two? The obvious answer was the old lady only.

14.16

**karmaṇaḥ(s) sukṛtasyāhuḥ(s), sātṭvikaṃ(n) nirmalaṃ(m) phalam,
rajasastu phalaṃ(n) duḥkham, ajñānaṃ(n) tamaśaḥ(ph) phalam. 14.16**

The reward of a righteous act, they say, is Sātṭvika i.e., faultless in the form of joy, wisdom and dispassion etc., sorrow is declared to be the fruit of a Rājasikā act and ignorance, the fruit of a Tāmasika act.

A Sātṭvika's actions are human. He loves all with dispassion and detachment. In return is endowed with joy and wisdom. He lives a happy and peaceful life.

A Rājasika initially may feel happy and rewarded, but later experiences sorrow. His actions are based on desire. Desire makes one crave for more and more. He never feels satisfied which only results in pain.

A Tāmasika's actions increase his delusion and reflect his ignorance and thoughtlessness.

14.17

**sattvātsaṅjāyate jñānaṃ(m), rajaso lobha eva ca,
pramādamohau tamaso, bhavato'jñānameva ca. 14.17**

Wisdom follows from Sattva, and greed, undoubtedly, from Rajas; likewise, obstinate error, stupor and also ignorance follow from Tamas.

What they acquire for their deeds in this life are described in the next few slokas.

Sattvaguna gives rise to knowledge. Knowledge of self emerges. He gets this naturally like eating, drinking or doing other activities spontaneously. He recognizes one unifying reality of Brahman behind the changing reality.

Rajo Guna is desire driven. It opens to greed and miserliness. It is obsessed with itself and he considers himself as the doer.

Having knowledge and not sharing it with others also comes under this category.

Tamasik has a partial view and considers 'part as whole.' They are careless, lazy and ignorant. His ignorance and delusion only increase.

14.18

**ūrdhvaṃ(n) gacchanti sattvasthā, madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ,
jaghanyaguṇavṛttisthā, adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ. 14.18**

Those who abide in the quality of Sattva wend their way upwards; while those of a Rājasikā disposition stay in the middle. And those of a Tāmasika temperament, enveloped as they are in the effects of Tamoguṇa, sink down.

This sloka can be interpreted on two levels. Physically a Sattvika's soul travels up to swarga and other

worlds; a Rajasika stays in the middle and a Tamasika due to his temperament only travels down to lowly worlds.

Spiritually speaking a Sattvika goes up in life. Spiritual level depends on the quantum of desires. The more desires, the less is the spiritual life. A Sattvika gets rid of his desires. He becomes a Gnyani and earns respect from all.

The second category can neither become a knowledgeable person nor does he fall down. He has everything, but still desires for more. He works relentlessly to achieve and, in the process, sacrifices his happiness and peace.

A Tamasika has everything wrong and falls down with his lowly actions.

14.19

**nānyaṃ(ñ) guṇebhyaḥ(kh) kartāraṃ(m), yadā draṣṭānupaśyati,
guṇebhyaśca paraṃ(m) vetti, madbhāvaṃ(m) so'dhigacchati. 14.19**

When the discerning person sees no one as doer other than the three Guṇas, and realizes Me, the supreme Spirit standing entirely beyond these Guṇas, he enters into My being.

A realised soul understands that the gunas belong to the body and make one act in a particular way. Living in a world made of gunas, he realises their significance and becomes a witness. He rises above them to the supreme spirit who stands untouched by them. In this attempt he achieves HIM only.

Vedanta provides knowledge of self. It answers the question “Who are you?” Human beings are Body, Mind, Intellect and ātman. Body is the physical functioning and the mind comes into picture at the emotional level. The intellect weighs the pros and cons of an action. The ātman is the self (jivatma) which functions through body, mind and intellect.

One associates so much with the body, that in course of time, the ātman, the infinite becomes limited to the actions of the body and mind. Parameśvara advises to eliminate Tamoguna, refine Rajoguna to establish Sattva Guna.

14.20

**guṇānetānatītya trīn, dehī dehasamudbhavān,
janmamṛtyujarāduḥkhaiḥ(r), vimukto'mṛtamaśnute. 14.20**

Having transcended the aforesaid three Guṇas, which have caused the body, and freed from birth, death, old age and all kinds of sorrow, the embodied soul attains supreme bliss.

Here the effect of becoming a gunatita is explained. Once he understands the role of three gunas in the making of this materialistic body, he transcends them. He no more reacts to birth, death, old age or sorrows. They do not bind him. The realisation helps him attain supreme bliss, the *Amrutam ashnute* (immortal).

14.21

arjuna uvāca
kairliṅgaistrīnguṇānetān, atīto bhavati prabho,
kimācāraḥ(kh) kathaṃ(ñ) caitāṃs, trīnguṇānavartate. 14.21

Arjuna said :

What are the marks of him who has risen above the three Guṇas, and what is his conduct? And how, Lord, does he rise above the three Guṇas?

Hearing about three gunas and gunatita, Arjuna seeks for more explanation about the qualities and conduct of the transcended individual. He asks for suggestions on how to rise above the three gunas.

14.22

śrībhagavānuvāca
prakāśaṃ(ñ) ca pravṛttiṃ(ñ) ca, mohameva ca pāṇḍava,
na dveṣṭi saṃpravṛttāni, na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati. 14.22

Śrī Bhagavān said :

Arjuna, he who abhors not illumination (which is born of Sattva) and activity (which is born of Rajas) and even stupor (which is born of Tamas), when prevalent, nor longs for them when they have ceased.

The next four slokas are Bhagavan's answer to Arjuna. HE lays stress on the equanimity in the behaviour of a realised soul. *Prakasam* refers to sattva, *pravritti* to rajas and *moham* to tamas. The three gunas will not move him. He is neutral in his behaviour. He neither feels elated at what he has, nor does he wish for qualities which he does not have: be they sattvic illumination, rajasic activity or tamasic stupor.

14.23

Udāsīnavadāsīno, guṇairyo na vicālyate,
guṇā vartanta ityeva, yo'vatiṣṭhati neṅgate. 14.23

He who, sitting like a witness, is not disturbed by the Guṇas, and who, knowing that the Guṇas alone move among the Guṇas, remains established in identity with God, and never falls off from that state.

Gunatita is a spectator/witness to the actions of the three gunas. He understands that the gunas act out in the field of gunas. Indifferent to their performance, his entire concentration lies on the unchangeable aspect of Paramātmā. He is like *Jadbharat*, of the Puranas, who was oblivious to the comments of others. *Jadbharat* understood the reality and was content in doing his duty.

14.24

śamaduḥkhasukhaḥ(s) svasthaḥ(s), śamaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ,
tulyapriyāpriyo dhīraḥ(s), tulyanindātmasaṃstutiḥ. 14.24

He who is ever established in the Self, takes pain and pleasure alike, regards a clod of earth, a stone and a piece of gold as equal in value, is possessed of wisdom, accepts the pleasant as well as the unpleasant in the same spirit, and views censure and praise alike.

The concept of happiness and sorrow as inseparable are highlighted in this sloka. One follows the

other. A student may feel elated at achieving good marks in an exam, but the next time if he does not get that many marks he may feel depressed.

A mother may gloat over her child's health. But if the same child falls sick, she will suffer pain. A diabetic enjoys eating sweets at a party, but suffers when the sugar levels rise later.

So happiness arising out of worldly objects is temporary. It always leads to pain at a later stage.

Bhagavan emphasizes on this quality of staying stable: happiness and sorrow, likes and dislikes, praise and blame are the same. Mud, stone and gold carry the same value in the eyes of a gunatita. Wisdom shines through him.

14.25

**mānāpamānayostulyaḥ(s), tulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ,
sarvārambhaparityāgī, guṇātītaḥ(s) sa ucyate. 14.25**

He who is equipoised in honour or ignominy, is alike towards a friend or an enemy, and has renounced the sense of doership in all undertakings, is said to have risen above the three Guṇas.

All the opposites are the same to him. More importantly he has given up the idea that he is 'the doer.' In a war a soldier kills his enemies. He performs his duty within the rules and is not attached to the action.

Swamiji has established Geeta Pariwar, where teaching of Gita is undertaken as a yagna. Swamiji does not gain anything from it personally. He considers it his karma to do it.

Such a person can be described as one who has risen above the gunas, a gunatita.

14.26

**māṃ(ñ) ca yo'vyabhicāreṇa, bhaktiyogena sevate,
sa guṇaṇṣamatītyaitān, brahmabhūyāya kalpate. 14.26**

He too who, constantly worships Me through the Yoga of exclusive devotion-transcending these three Guṇas, he becomes eligible for attaining Brahma.

In order to overcome the trigunas, one should have pure bhakti and concentration. To achieve this one should control senses, mind and undertake an inquiry into existence.

A person who constantly meditates and surrenders completely to The Supreme, becomes eligible for gaining *Brahma Vidya*.

14.27

**brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham, amṛtasyāvyayasya ca,
śāśvatasya ca dharmasya, sukhasyaikāntikasya ca. 14.27**

For, I am the substratum of the imperishable Brahma, of immortality, of the eternal Dharma and

of unending immutable bliss.

Everything in this world changes like the scientific theories which are upheld today and proven wrong tomorrow. But The Supreme does not change, HE remains constant in this changing world.

Paramatma asserts that HE lives everywhere, underlies all dharma, is everlasting and provides absolute bliss.

**om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyām(m) yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde
Guṇatrayavibhāgayogo nāma caturdaśo'dhyāyaḥ.**

Thus, in the Upaniṣad sung by the Lord, the Science of Brahma, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇā and Arjuna, ends the fourteenth chapter entitled "The Yoga of Division of three Guṇas."



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Jai Shri Krishna!

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