

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 14: Guṇatraya-Vibhāga-Yoga

1/2 (Ślōka 1-8), Saturday, 13 May 2023

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/ya-COEKOK-M>

The Three Innate Qualities of Prakriti

The session started with lighting of lamp and prayers to *Shri Bhagwan*. The 14th chapter is about - **The Yoga of Classification of The Three Gunas**. In this chapter, The Supreme will talk about the nature of Mind. Mind is one of the most powerful tools, present in humans that can be a friend as well as an enemy. In the pursuit of success, control over mind is essential. This yoga helps one to understand the psychology, nature and function of the mind.

What is success and why does one pursue it?

Success is fulfilment of desires which results in happiness. Success is an important metric in one's life. Everyone wants to become successful. Whether in material or other form, one pursues success for happiness. Everyone wants to be happy. The source of every desire and action is happiness. Those who have complete fulfillment of desire are deemed successful.

Consider two types of students, one with the score of 80% and the other scoring more than 90%, have almost similar IQ level. The difference is in the consistency of effort put up by those in the first category who are irregular in studies, sometimes putting in long hours and other days not studying at all, whereas the ones in the later category consistently study even if only for few hours. Similarly in *Geeta Pariwar* classes, there are a few students who are **consistent** in their efforts in learning Gita, whereas some are not. Both try their best in learning, yet the first category of seekers find it easier to memorize Gita shlokas-verses..

The consistency in efforts is very important for any kind of success and that can only be achieved by control over one's mind. The knowledge of how to achieve this control over one's mind, will be explained by *Shri Bhagwan* in this chapter.

This yoga describes the nature of mind and importance of controlling the mind.

14.1

śrībhagavānuvāca
paraṃ(m) bhūyaḥ(ph) praVākṣyāmi, jñānānāṃ(ñ) jñānamuttamam,
yajñātvā munayaḥ(s) sarve, parāṃ(m) siddhimito gatāḥ. 14.1

Śrī Bhagavān said :

I shall expound once more the supreme knowledge, the best of all knowledge, acquiring which all sages have attained highest perfection, being liberated from this mundane existence.

Sri Bhagwan restates the entire knowledge to Arjuna through various chapters of the Gita.

Why was this repetition required?

A mother keeps feeding a toddler despite the child continuously denies to eat. She runs behind him and goes on feeding him, until required amount of food is consumed. Here, she is aware of his needs better than the child. *Sri Bhagwan* also knows that Arjuna needed to hear this knowledge repeatedly to free himself from his delusion. One's wants and needs are not always same. For example, one wants to live in a lavish mansion but needs just a room. Similarly we want to meditate only for a few minutes but actually we need to do that for longer time to get its benefits.

Gita is an ocean of knowledge containing massive and intense philosophy. Various sages like *Adi Shankaracharya, RamSukhdas ji, Vallabhacharya ji* and many more, have elaborated on it in their commentaries. Even a single shloka is explained in several different ways by these knowledgeable persons. Gaining knowledge is easy, its application is difficult. In the 12th shloka of chapter 12th the Supreme elucidated that knowledge is better than practice without awareness. Meditation on God is superior to knowledge and renunciation of the fruit of actions is even superior to meditation; Thus knowledge is truly useful only if it is applied in one's life.

Gandhiji found solution for all his problems from the Gita. So also if we apply the knowledge gained from the Gita in our life we too can find solutions to all our problems. **Without application, knowledge only remains as words and is meaningless.** Everyone experiences anger and various other emotions in one's life. **Absence of the three bad qualities of desire, anger and greed are essential in the spiritual path; yet they can only be achieved slowly with practice.** Hence even though difficult to achieve at once, one must persevere to apply the knowledge attained from Gita in one's life. Apart from the sacred scriptures, knowledge comes in various forms e.g. Maths, Science, Dance, Arts, Music, etc.

Shri Bhagwan proclaimed that this knowledge was superior to all the various forms of knowledge. Once the seeker has gained this ultimate knowledge he would be free from sorrow and would be detached from this Samsara (material and immaterial world of existence). The state of permanent happiness is free from sorrow, joy and fear of pain ultimately leading to bliss. The application of this Supreme knowledge leads to vairagya (renunciation) and ultimate liberation.

14.2

idaṃ(ñ) jñānamupāśritya, mama sādharṃyamāgatāḥ,
sarge'pi nopajāyante, pralaye na vyathanti ca. 14.2

Those who, by practising this knowledge have entered into My being, are not born again at the

cosmic dawn, nor feel disturbed even during the cosmic dissolution (Pralaya).

One becomes free of all attachments whereby the Jiva (living being) becomes one with the Supreme. This does not mean attainment of Swarga loka - which is free of sorrows and pain - as one has to take birth in the mortal world after exhausting their punya karmas (pious deeds), but this Supreme Knowledge would allow one to attain ultimate liberation, free of the cycle of birth and death.

Attachment is the cause of all sorrow and pain. Many people think of their friends and family sometimes even about their enemy when they are about to leave this mortal body.

This Ultimate knowledge leads one to detachment from pain when it is time to die or even when the world itself is destroyed.

14.3

**mama yonirmahadbrahma, tasmingarbhaṁ(n) dadhāmyaham,
sambhavaḥ(s) sarvabhūtānāṁ(n), tato bhavati bhārata. 14.3**

My primordial Nature, known as the great Brahma, is the womb of all creatures; in that womb I place the seed of all life. The creation of all beings follows from that union of Matter and Spirit, O Arjuna.

The concept of *Prakriti* (nature) of *Shri Bhagwan* is elucidated in this verse. In the Vedanta philosophy the material world is termed as Maya, whereas in *Sankhya* philosophy as Prakriti. Here it is to explain the nature of *Shri Bhagwan*.

In the Chapter 10, *Shri Bhagwan* describes himself as the Supervisor of Prakriti (Nature) but here HE has taken the role of the Father of all the creation (*Jagat Pita*) and proclaims the Prakriti as the Mother of the Universe (*Jaganmata*). Prakriti is considered as *Jad* (lifeless) and *Paramesvara* is Chaitanya (life force).

One can understand this by an example of a fan that is like Prakriti. However without the electricity it cannot function. *Paramesvara* is like that electrical energy, without which the fan does not function.

14.4

**sarvayoniṣu kaunteya, mūrtayaḥ(s) saṁbhavanti yāḥ,
tāsāṁ(m) brahma mahadyoniḥ(r), ahaṁ(m) bījapradāḥ(ph) pitā. 14.4**

Of all embodied beings that appear in all the species of various kinds, Arjuna, Prakṛti or Nature is the conceiving Mother, while I am the seed giving Father.

Shri Bhagwan reiterates HE is the Father whereas *Prakriti* (nature) is the Mother for all creations in existence. As per the *Puranas* (scriptures), there are 84 lakh *yonis* (species) of existence of beings. These Species/Creatures are categorized into four forms, based on the way they are born:

- **Jarayuj** (viviparous): Born from the womb, e.g. humans, mammals
- **Andaj** (oviparous): Born of eggs e.g. reptiles, birds
- **Udibhej**: Born from the earth e.g. trees
- **Svadhej**: Born from sweat, excreta .e.g. Insects

Thus their existence is controlled by *Shri Bhagwan* through *Prakriti* (nature).

14.5

sattvaṃ(m) rajastama iti, guṇāḥ(ph) prakṛtisambhavāḥ, nibadhnanti mahābāho, dehe dehinamavyayam. 14.5

Sattva, Rajas and Tamas-these three Guṇas born of Nature tie down the imperishable soul to the body, Arjuna.

The entire *prakṛiti* could be categorized into 3 *Gunas* (virtues) that are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Prakṛiti is made up of three gunas (virtues) or the three gunas make the prakṛiti. These gunas bind the Jiva to the body and to the world as they attract a mind to do various actions.

The three Gunas are as follows:

- **Sattva**: It involves goodness. The 16th chapter has explained all the 26 divine qualities of goodness namely fearlessness, purification of heart, steadfastness, alms-giving, self-restraint, purity, knowledge, and harmony etc.
- **Rajas**: It is characterized by a feeling of attachment, a longing for satisfaction of desire and resultant actions .
- **Tamas**: It manifests itself as impurity, laziness, and darkness, complete ignorance.

Every living being has all three gunas in different proportion. The dominant guna defines the personality of an individual.

A beautiful story from Ramayana sheds light on deeper understanding of these gunas.

Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan are the principal characters in Ramayana. Once they were involved in performing severe austerities (*tapasya*) for Lord Bramha, who was pleased and appeared before them to ask for a boon. All of them asked for exactly the same boon "**Sona**".

Was it the same boon they asked?

Vibhishan was *Sattvika*, he asked for *So Na*, that is no sleep, to be awakened from ignorance, here sleep alludes to ignorance, illusion and desires. He wanted to understand the real purpose of his life and didn't want to waste it in useless pursuits like sleeping.

Ravan being a *Rajasika*, on the other hand asked for Sona (Gold) symbolic of power, name, material desires. He was able to control the demi gods. He is a good example to show that gaining superficial knowledge is insufficient. He had the knowledge of every sacred scripture, yet he kidnapped Sita Mata knowing fully well the powers of Shri Rama, due to excessive attachment to desires.

Excessive Rajasika guna could lead to losing control over mind and being attached to various desires e.g. a diabetic craves to eat sweets knowing fully well that they are forbidden or restricted.

Kumbhakaran being a *Tamasika*, asked for Sona (sleep) that is a wasting of the boon, as one cannot cherish one's desires while sleeping. This is a result of sheer ignorance.

All three gunas bind the soul with the world even the satvika guna.

14.6

**tatra sattvaṃ(n) nirmalatvāt, prakāśakamanāmayam,
sukhasaṅgena badhnāti, jñānasaṅgena cānagha. 14.6**

Of these, Sattva being immaculate, is illuminating and flawless, Arjuna; it binds through attachment to happiness and knowledge.

Though the *Sattvaguna* is acquired by doing good deeds, it still leads to attachment. HE here mentioned that one guna cannot exist without the other, e.g. when one does *yajnas*, one would perform good karmas which can lead to happiness, but if one gets attached to this cause of happiness like wealth, children etc. he would be dependent on the outside world for his happiness whereas the one who finds happiness within oneself would attain eternal bliss.

When one seeks happiness from external sources, one forms an attachment, binding themselves to the illusory world as emphasized by The Supreme.

An example would be of *Swetaketu*, who after gaining knowledge from the Gurukul, was full of pride. On returning home he was able to answer various questions posed by his father except on *Brahmavidya* where he was silent. Thus study in pursuit of knowledge is good but if one becomes attached to the results of gaining that knowledge and starts taking pride, it would lead to attachment making the *atma* bound to the materialistic world. One should aim to renounce even the *Satvika* guna and thus become *Trigunatit* (the one who has renounced the attachment formed due to the three gunas).

14.7

**rajo rāgātmakaṃ(m) viddhi, tṛṣṇāsaṅgasamudbhavam,
tannibadhnāti kaunteya, karmasaṅgena dehinam. 14.7**

Arjuna, know the quality of *Rajas*, which is of the nature of passion, as born of desire and attachment. It binds the soul through attachment to actions and their fruit.

A person with attachment is *Rajoguni* but *Shri Bhagwan* also asks us to perform our duty (action). Doing karma is not an issue but attachment to the said karma causes *Rajas*. Here it is described as *Trishna* meaning extreme level of thirst, '*sangena*' meaning attachment. Extreme desires are created leading to illusion like in the desert when thirsty you see a mirage.

However *Rajas* is not all bad, as some attachment may also be utilized as motivation. If a student starts learning physics, he may put in extra efforts as he knows that gaining good knowledge in it, could make him a professor. He can get respect from his students and all these thoughts can motivate him to work hard. However one should be alert, as it is a slippery slope where the excessive attachment towards the goals could lead the *atman* to be bound to the desire of achievements.

Here an example of Geeta class was given. All learners are asked to submit their voice recording for their trainer to evaluate their performance. If one student is very good at reciting the shlokas and gets appreciation from the trainer, he should not submit his recording for appreciation but for learning nor should he get discouraged from attending classes if he stops getting appreciation. His aim should be to learn Geeta.

14.8

tamastvajñānaṁ(m) viddhi, mohanaṁ(m) sarvadehinām, pramādālasyanidrābhiḥ(s), tannibadhnāti bhārata. 14.8

And know Tamas, the deluder of all those who look upon the body as their own self, as born of ignorance. It binds the soul through error, sleep and sloth, Arjuna.

Tamoguna is an indicator of ignorance. One can gain insights into people's dominant quality by asking few questions about their wishes.

If one describes that :

one wants to learn - Sattvaguna is dominant.

One likes to be active (sports, walk, etc) - Rajoguna is dominant.

One wants to only eat and sleep - Tamoguna is dominant.

Pramad means not doing something that is your duty to do or doing something which is not right. If one is supposed to cook for the family and not cooking when the entire family is hungry or like having an ice-cream before the dinner on a winter night.

Alasya means Laziness. Not taking actions on time or postponing actions, is called Alasya.

Every individual has some part of all three gunas but an individual can uplift himself from one guna e.g. Rajasik to another, like Sattvik or degrade himself to Tamasik. If a person is Rajasika and performs Seva in various organisations like Geeta Pariwar and performs social service, he will increase his Sattva guna, however if he gets into bad company he could become Tamasika.

The session was concluded with Sankirtan.

Question & Answer Session

Dilip ji

Question: In verse number 5 it was said all the Trigunas are born from Prakriti. Can it be explained what Prakriti means? Is it the natural environment?

Answer: Prakriti has been defined differently in many philosophies. In Vedanta it means Illusion. In sankhya it is not totally illusion but it cannot be seen nor felt but is completely manifested in the world.

Soumendra ji

Question: Is it possible to get Sattva guna in one lifetime?

Answer: Sattva guna comes with practice and control of mind. It takes many lifetimes. Slowly the practice enables us to get knowledge of the Supreme and with that knowledge one can attain Liberation.

Question: So is it that we cannot get sattva guna in the present lifetime?

Answer: If one had done sadhana in previous lifetimes one may acquire it in the present. But if one

did not then he would have to take many births to get to that state of liberation.



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Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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