

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 14: Guṇatrāya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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The three modes of nature form the basis of every entity in this universe and influence their innate traits

Chapter 14 of the Srimad Bhagavad Gītā - Guṇa Trāya Vibhāg Yog - The Yog of understanding the three modes of material nature

The session begins with the prayer and lighting of the lamp.

By the grace of the supreme divine, each one of us have been bestowed with the blessing to engage in the study of Gītā, to implement and imbibe the same in daily life. This might be due to the karmic merits of the past or current life or by the blessings of ancestors or by the grace of a Guru.

The essence of this chapter is based on Gyana Yog. The material nature constitutes of three guṇas (modes)- sattva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (ignorance). Since the body, mind, and intellect are material in nature, they too possess these three modes, and a combination of these guṇas forms the basis of one's character. HIS supreme divine explains the traits of the three guṇas, how the pre-dominant guṇa affects the basis of one's character and also explains the characteristics of elevated beings who have risen above these three guṇas.

In this Chapter, Bhagavān says that HE would impart the Supreme wisdom, by knowing which, one is on the path to attain the elevated state of perfection. Bhagavān expounds on the three modes of nature or the three Guṇas in detail in this Chapter.

Bhagavān then says that the entire universal creation emanates from HIS material energy or Prakṛiti and HE is the seed giving father (the source of universal consciousness). HE that one who has attained liberation and who has reached HIS divine abode remains unaffected from the eternal cycle of creation, sustenance and annihilation of the material realm.

HE then explains the traits of Sattva Guṇa which is tranquillity, compassion, peace, wisdom, etc. The traits of Rajo Guṇa swirl around desires, intense action, restlessness and constant pursuit. Tamo Guṇa

exhibits lethargy, laziness, ignorance, addiction etc.

Bhagavān explains that Sattva Guna binds one to happiness; rajas directs the embodied soul toward actions; and tamas clouds wisdom leading to ignorance and delusion.

If Sattva Guna dominates, one becomes peaceful, content, virtuous, kind, helpful, serene, and tranquil. When Rajo Guna is dominant, one is in intense activities, ambitious, envious of others success, and develops an inclination towards material ambitions and pleasures. When Tamo Guna becomes prominent, one is overcome by sleep, laziness, intoxication, sloth, violence, and ignorance. In this way, the mind sways amongst the three Gunas at a given point in time and adopts their qualities.

We now begin with the shlokas of this Chapter.

14.1

śrībhagavānuvāca
param(m) bhūyaḥ(ph) praVākṣyāmi, jñānānām(ñ) jñānamuttamam,
yajjñātvā munayaḥ(s) sarve, parām(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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān says that HE shall now impart the Supreme wisdom, by knowing which, one is on the path to attain the elevated state of perfection. Bhagavān expounds on the three modes of nature or the three Gunas in detail in this Chapter. HE says that, by knowing and imbibing this supreme knowledge into one's consciousness, one can attain the perfected state of elevated consciousness.

Now let's shift the focus on our planet Earth to understand this further. According to a comprehensive study, it is believed that there are approximately 8.7 million species on Earth, but only 1.2 million of these species have been scientifically described and catalogued and 41000 amongst these catalogued species are facing the threat of extinction. However, Bhagavān says that all the species derive or inherit their traits from the three modes of nature - Sattva Guna (mode of goodness), Rajo Guna (mode of passion) and Tamo Guna (mode of ignorance). Now one might wonder how the diverse mind boggling creations of nature (spanning across millions) derive their unique traits from the three Gunas or the three modes of nature. Let's understand this further with an example.

Consider the example of the printer. The cartridge consists of four basic colors Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black (CMYK). With just the four colors, the printer is capable of generating 16 million color combinations. In the same manner, consider the LED screens. It consists of RGB technology (a combination of Red, Green and Blue) which generates millions of colors. With just 3 core colors, upto 16 million colors are generated. Now consider the example of atom. The basic entity of every element is the atom, which comprises of Protons, electrons and neutrons. Every element, molecule, entity is drilled down to an atom as the basic particle. In layman terms, an atom forms the basic building block of all matter. Anything that has mass, or anything that occupies space is composed of atoms. The protons and neutrons maintain a stable wave pattern and the electrons are considered to be dynamic.

In the same manner, the three modes of nature form the basis of every entity in this material realm. Sattva and Tamo Guna are relatively stable and Rajo Guna is dynamic. Every creation in this world is unique. The biometric details of two people never match. Even the biometric details (say fingerprint,

retina scan etc) of any living person (homo-sapians) would not match with those who have passed or even with the Neanderthal man or other ancients in the course of evolution. The three Gunas form the basis of one's personality and form the basis of every creation (irrespective of the classification of the species, the course of evolution, the external or internal traits of a being). Bhagavān now expounds on the three modes of nature in detail in the forthcoming shlokas of this Chapter.

14.2

**idaṃ(ñ) jñānamupāśritya, mama sādharmaṃyamaḡatāḥ,
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).

Before we deep dive into this shloka, let's understand universal creation with few well-known facts. Consider the example of big bang theory. Some astronomers believe that the universe evolved with a big bang. The big bang theory is the idea that the universe was formed with an explosive event 13.7 billion years ago. The expansion of the observable universe began with the explosion of a single particle. The modern science has knowledge of just one universe in space. It is estimated that there are 200 billion to 2 trillion galaxies in this observable universe.

However, the Vedas and Upanishads have mentioned about the multi-universe concept. It is mentioned that there are innumerable universes (not just one as per modern science) in the cosmos and each undergoes its cycle of creation and destruction. In the entire cosmos, there would be a big bang time and again whenever a new universes come into existence or undergoes dissolution and this process is eternal. Time is not a straight line. Instead there are eternal cycles with multi-universes being created, existing and dying, followed by recreation, existence and death. Hence, the entire cosmic creation is beyond one's imagination.

In this shloka, Bhagavān says that one who has attained liberation and who has reached HIS divine abode remains unaffected from the eternal cycle of creation, sustenance and annihilation of the material realm.

Every living entity that is born has to undergo the process of death. This is applicable to all the species on this planet (from plant and animal kingdom). Even the stars, planets, galaxies and the universes undergo the cycle of creation and annihilation. Let's understand this in detail.

As per the scriptures, there are innumerable universes in the entire cosmic creation, each pervaded by its creator. Our universe is pervaded by the four-headed Brahma Dev. He is responsible for pervading the cycle of creation of various entities in this universe. At the beginning of his day, the creations manifest and towards his nightfall (end of day), the creations cease to exist. Let's now understand from the perspective of time dimension.

We are well aware that there are four Yugas. Let's now understand the time span of these Yugas

- **Kali Yuga** : 4,32,000 years
- **Dwapar Yuga** : 8,64,000 years
- **Treta Yuga** : 12,96,000 years
- **Sat Yuga** : 17,28,000 years

One **Maha Yuga** : 4,320,000 years (adding the four Yugas)

1000 of such Yugas is called a Maha Yuga. This is equivalent to 4,320,000,000 years, which is one day in the life of Brahma Ji (called as one Kalp).

One night in the life of Brahma Ji also spans upto the same duration. It is believed that the life span of Brahma Ji is 100 years. Hence, his entire life span is equivalent to 311 trillion 40 billion human years. At the end of a kalp, there is a partial pralay where the process of annihilation occurs. Towards the end of Brahma Ji's life, there is a Maha Pralay where the entire universal creation undergoes desolution or annihilation.

The above time calculation is also explained with Manvantara (Life span of one Manu). There are 14 Manu's manifesting and unmanifesting in one day of Brahmā Ji. In certain texts, Manu is the title or name of fourteen rulers of earth, who preside over each cyclic Kalp when the universe is born anew. The title of the text Manusmriti uses this term as a prefix, but refers to the first Manu – Svayambhuva, the spiritual son of Brahmā Ji. In the Hindu cosmology, each kalpa consists of fourteen Manvantaras, and each Manvantara is headed by a different Manu. The various Manus existing in one day of Brahmā ji are as follows:

1) *Svayambhuva*, 2) *Svarocisa*, 3) *Uttama*, 4) *Tamasa*, (5) *Raivata*, (6) *Caksusa*, (7) *Vaivasvata*, (8) *Savarni*, (9) *Daksasavarni*, (10) *Brahmā-savarni*, (11) *Dharma savarni*, (12) *Rudra-savarni*, (13) *Deva-savarni* & (14) *Indra-savarni*.

The current universe is asserted to be ruled by the 7th Manu named Vaivasvata and there are 7 more Manu's to appear in the present Kalp.

Each Manvantara lasts for 306,720,000 years and repeats seventy-one Yuga Cycles (world ages). In a kalp (day of Brahmā Ji), which lasts for 4.32 billion years, there are a total of fourteen manvantaras ($14 \times 71 = 994$ Yuga Cycles). It is believed that Brahma Ji is currently in his 51st year.

Now, one might find this mind boggling Vedic time calculation in reference to the life span of Brahma Ji hard to comprehend. Let's understand this with another example. The flies or insects which are found near the lamp or light source perish on the next day. The life span of such insects is equivalent to one evening in the life of a human. Consider the ant species, they undergo the process of birth, reproduction, ageing and death in a short span of time. What a human being undergoes in a span of 70 to 80 years (birth, ageing, reproduction and death), these tiny species or microscopic creatures undergo the phases of birth and death in a day. Many generations of these species are born and embrace death in a span that is just one day or few hours in the life of a human being.

In the same manner, the life span of the celestial devatas are much longer when compared to that of humans. The time dimension is different when compared to that of planet Earth. One day in the life of a celestial devatas is equivalent to 6 months in the life of a human being. One day on Pitra loka (the abode of ancestors) is equivalent to one month on planet earth.

Consider the example of a child playing with a clay. The child moulds the clay into various shapes (say animals, buildings etc). Towards the end of play time, the mother would merge all the individual moulds as one piece of clay and pack the same into a box. On the next day, the child once again resumes and makes new moulds from the clay. In the same manner, during Brahma Ji's day, the entire universal creation manifests and during Brahma Ji's night, all creations unmanifest or undergo annihilation.

The entire material realm is under the cycle of creation, sustenance and annihilation. Hence, every entity (living or non-living) are under this eternal cycle of creation and annihilation. Even the celestial

devatas, including Brahma Ji himself are under the cycle of birth and death. It is only the Supreme Divine who remains unaffected by the cycle of birth and death and remains eternal.

Bhagavān explains here that those who equip themselves with the Supreme wisdom that HE is about to bestow, those who imbibe this wisdom into their consciousness are liberated from the bondage of material realm. Such souls remain unaffected by this eternal cycle of creation and destruction. They are not reborn at the time of creation in the next cycle nor are they destroyed at the time of annihilation.

14.3

**mama yonirmahadbrahma, tasmingarbham(n) dadhāmyaham,
sambhavaḥ(s) sarvabhūtānām(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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains about HIS material energy which is Prakṛti, which is the womb or the source of all creations. HIS material energy or Prakṛti is the womb, and HE is the seed-giving Father (the Purush tattva).

In layman terms, HIS supreme energy subdivided into two parts :

- 1. Prakṛti tattva or the material energy.
- 2. Purush tattva or the consciousness (also known as Chetana)

Bhagavān says that Prakṛti is the source of all creation and Purush is the source of consciousness within the creation. The union of Prakṛti (nature or matter) and Purush (soul or consciousness) gives rise to all the varieties of living entities in this material realm.

Let's understand the genesis order of the entire universal creation. The union or fusion of Prakriti and Purush (matter and consciousness) led to the formation of the three modes of nature - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. From the three Gunas, the Pancha Bhutas (the five elements - Ether/space, air, fire, water and earth) then emerged. The five elements form the core of every physical matter, entity or object in this universe and the three modes of nature influence the basis or traits of the entity.

The genesis order of Panchamahabhuta is that, at first the Ether or Akash originated, after that Air or Vayu, then came Fire or Agni, followed by Water or Jala and finally emerged the Earth or Prithvi respectively. After Ether mahabhuta, each succeeding mahabhuta contained the quality of preceding mahabhuta. So the Earth or Prithvi, the latest one has the quality of all the four preceding mahabhuta. We shall understand this genesis order in detail.

- The first amongst the five pancha-bhutas or the elements of nature to be created was Ether. The sound vibrations or waves travel through space/ether. The ears are the corresponding sense organs which can perceive sound.
- The next element to manifest from Prakṛti was the Wind. The characteristic of the wind is movement. This represents two attributes - sound (derived from preceding Mahabhuta which is Ether) and sensation. With the sense of touch, one would be able to perceive or feel the wind. In outer space, one will not be able to perceive with the sense of touch as it is vacuum (devoid of wind). However, on Planet Earth, one will be able to feel the movement of the wind and also hear its sound.

- The third element to manifest was Fire. Fire represents three attributes - sound, sensation and sight. With the eyes as senses, one would be able to see the fire, hear its sound and even feel the heat. Hence, it is believed that Agni Dev resides within one's eyes and bestows the power of sight.
- The fourth element to manifest was Water. This represents four attributes - sound, sensation, sight and taste. One can taste water with the tongue as the sense organ.
- The fifth element to manifest was Earth. This represents five entities - sound, sensation, sight, taste and smell. With the nose as the sense organ, one would be able to perceive the sense of smell.

Every object in the universe is composed of Panchamahabhuta. Just before the creation of universe all of these bhuta are in state of inactivity, but due to initiation of three inherent characters of Prakriti (nature) i.e. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, these bhuta move to an active state (from passive or inactive state) and this leads to the process of creation.

Since Prakriti is endowed with these gunas, the panchamahabhutas inherit and come under the influence of the three gunas or the three modes of nature. Though all of these bhuta are embraced by the three gunas, still each of them has predominance and diminution of three gunas there by making these of different qualities and actions.

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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān continues to explain that for all species that have been created in the universe, HIS material energy or Prakṛti is the womb, and HE is the seed-giving Father (the Purush tattva).

The entire plant and animal kingdom (creation of Prakṛti) are classified into the following four groups -

- **Pindaj**
 - **Andaj**
 - **Swedaj**
 - **Udbhij**
- *Pindaj* are placental or mammals which are born directly from the body or occurring by means of a placenta or placenta like organ; such as humans and other animals.
 - *Andaj* are born from an egg, such as birds, fishes, and amphibians.
 - *Swedaj* are born from or out of the sweat, dander (material shed from the body of various animals), shed skin cells and flakes, organic detritus, biotic material, or moisture generated by breathing, perspiration, saliva, and other secretions (sweda means sweat) such as insects and other tiny or microscopic creatures.
 - *Udbhij* (also spelled as Udvij) are born from the ground or grow out of earth (udbh - ud means comes up, created, or born from bhu means ground or land) such as trees and plants. First three groups belong to animal kingdom (Kingdom Animalia) and the last one belongs to the plant kingdom (Kingdom Plantae).

This can be further sub-classified into terrestrial beings (which dwell on land) and aquatic beings (which dwell within deep waters). Terrestrial animals include most mammals, like humans, dogs, cats,

and bears, as well as earthworms, crickets, ants, and beetles. They live in many different terrestrial habitats, including deserts, forests, grasslands, and mountain regions. Estimates of the number of terrestrial species vary, but some say there are 7.7 million terrestrial species. Coming to the aquatic species, around a quarter of a million species of marine creatures are currently known to us.

Bhagavān says that Prakṛti is the source of all creation and HE is the source of consciousness within the creation. The union of Prakṛti (nature or matter) and Puruṣa (soul or consciousness) gives rise to all the diverse varieties of living entities in this material realm. Each entity in the material realm derieve it's unique traits from the three modes of nature. One trait or characteristic predominate the other traits and hence makes them unique.

14.5

sattvaṁ(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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān says that the material energy consists of the three modes of nature - mode of goodness (Sattva), mode of passion (Rajas) and mode of ignorance (Tamas). These modes bind the eternal soul to the perishable body.

Let's understand this in detail by understanding the difference between the physical body and the soul. As we saw in the previous shloka, every entity or object in this universe emanates from the panchabhutas and in turn come under the influence of the three Gunas. The physical body also constitutes the panchacbhuta and hence, it's nature is material (governed by material realm). Anything that emanates from panchabhutas undergo the cycle of creation, sustenance and annihilation. This applies to the physical body as well.

The soul within the physical body is a small fragment of HIS supreme Divine soul, and hence the nature is Divine. It is the soul that provides consciousness to the body. The mind and intellect also emanate from the material realm or Prakṛiti along with the physical body. The mind and the senses are attracted towards the delusions of material realm. This in turn leads to desires, anger, greed, expectations, anxiety, so on and so forth. The basis of one's true nature is influenced by the three modes of nature. As the soul resides within the body and as one identifies oneself with the body (instead of the soul), three modes of Prakṛti (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) binds the soul to the material realm.

Tulsidas Ji has explained with the below couplet on how the soul is bounded to the material realm and entangled in the continuous cycle of birth and death

सो मायाबस भयउ गोसाईं।
बँध्यो कीर मरकट की नाई॥
जड़ चेतनहि ग्रंथि परि गई।
जदपि मृषा छूटत कठिनई॥

Tulsidas Ji uses two example to explain this concept. The first example is of a bird. A fowler (someone who catches the birds) uses a cage that is designed with wires in close proximity with each other. The grains are kept inside the cage/box which attracts the bird. When the bird approaches this trap box, the moment it steps on the wires to put its head inside to pick the grains from its beak, the wires

rotate instantly within a fraction of second, thus entangling the bird. The bird is now up-side down and clings on to the wire with anxiety and fear. If the bird refrains from clinging on to the wires, it would be able to set itself free. However, as it is devoid of this knowledge, it clings on to the wires and remains caught in the same position within the cage (as it does not let go holding on to the wires).

Consider another example of a monkey. In rural side, a hole is created near the tree and some food items are kept inside and around the hole. The monkey is attracted towards the food and inserts its hand within the hole to grab the food. However, it would not be able to remove its hand from the hole as the size of the hole is small. If the monkey leaves the food, it would be able to remove its hand easily. However, it continues to hold on to the food thinking that its hand is trapped inside the hole. The monkey is then nabbed with a net by the locals.

We are just like the monkey and the bird that is entangled in the cycle of birth and death. The reason for this entanglement is the states of desires, greed, pride, ego, ignorance, so on and so forth. One clings on or runs behind the pleasures and desires of the material realm (which is insatiable) and is not ready to let go on the same.

Hence, the samskaras or the impressions from the consciousness move along with the soul when it relinquishes the body in current life and adorns a new body in next life. One is entangled in the cycle of birth and death due to this reason.

As Adi Shankaracharya has explained in the below shloka:

**पुनरपि जननं पुनरपि मरणं, पुनरपि जननी जठरे शयनम् ।
इह संसारे बहुदुस्तारे, कृपया पारे पाहि मुरारे ।।**

Undergoing the pangs of birth again and again, passing through the throes of death again and again, lying in the mother's womb over and over again, this process of Samsara is hard to cross over. Save me from it soon, Oh, Merciful Lord!

The verse emphasizes the cycle of birth and death in Samsara, and the impermanence of life. It also urges people to seek spiritual wisdom and escape this cycle by realizing the eternal truth.

Depending upon the fate of the soul in the next birth, if one is born in plant or animal kingdom, or a human, or a celestial being or even descend down to nether regions, one is under the influence of the three Gunas. Say for example, parrot is known to be selfish, horses are known to be hardworking and the dog is known for its loyalty (and hence called as man's best friend). One trait or characteristic predominate the other traits and hence makes them unique. In this manner, every living entity derives its dominant and subtle traits from the three modes of nature.

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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the traits of Sattva guna (mode of goodness). The mode of goodness illuminates the intellect with knowledge and embeds good virtues. When Sattva Guna is predominant, there is tranquility, light, happiness, purity, calmness, harmony, compassion, patience

etc. One would also be inclined towards spirituality and seek for knowledge when the Sattva Guna is predominant.

Consider the example of a dark room. Let's say one drops an object (Say keys or coin). Now, one would then turn on the torch from smartphone and look for the object. However, if the lights of the room have been turned on, one would be able to locate the object with ease. In the same manner, Sattva Guna illumines the intellect with the right wisdom, by virtue of which, one would be able to make wise decisions from a serene state of mind.

The serenity of the mind empowers the seeker to differentiate between the right and wrong action. Hence, Saints and sages (say Swamy Ji for example) are able to guide the seekers on the best way forward when the seekers reach out to them for a solution to any challenging situations that they encounter.

However, one must remember that Sattva Guna is under the influence of the material realm. Hence, Sattva Guna binds the soul to the material realm by creating attachment for a sense of happiness and knowledge. One should use Sattva Guna as a spring board to transcend the influence of material realm and refrain from getting attached to it.

14.7

**rajo rāgātmakam(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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the traits of Rajo guna (mode of passion). It arises from worldly desires and attachments and binds the soul through attachment to fruitive actions. Those who are overpowered by Rajo guna are in a constant pursuit to achieve material goals and accumulate material assets. One is attached to the material possessions and develops a sense of proprietorship. The quality of movement, intense activity, ambition, change or action are the traits of Rajo Guna.

When Rajo Guna is predominant, one has a sense of "I or ME" consciousness. Say for example, my wealth, my property, my family, my designation, my prestige, so on and so forth. One is restricted to a limited-self perspective. One cannot see anything beyond the self in this state. One functions from a self-centered consciousness with a dominant Rajo Guna.

One is attracted towards worldly pursuits of status, prestige, career, family, or wealth. The desire to achieve more and more fuels and directs them to undertake intense activity. Hence, one is often restless and seen fidgeting. One desire leads to another, and one is stuck in a whirlpool of insatiable desires and end up performing actions to achieve the same.

The desires fuel the state of greed, comparison, jealousy, pride, ego so on and so forth. In this way, the mode of passion fuels desires, and these desires further fuel and increase of the mode of passion. This binds the soul to the physical body.

14.8

**tamastvajñānajaṃ(m) viddhi, mohanaṃ(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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the traits of Tamo guna (mode of ignorance). When the Tamoguna is predominant, one is gripped by laziness, lethargy or sleep, negligence, apathy, addiction, inertia and ignorance. One feels sluggish and lethargic all the time. One in this state also engages in harmful activities like intoxication or addiction which is detrimental effect on one's own health. However, one still engages in these activities for short term pleasure.

One is overcome by inertia and refrains from performing any fruitful activities. Although one is aware that one is not being productive by being lethargic, one still continues to do so without engaging in fruitive actions. The one overpowered by Tamo Guna might also engage in mundane tasks or engage in activities that are non-beneficial or harmful to oneself and the other. In this way, Tamo Guna binds the soul to the material realm.

One needs to understand that every entity or action is driven by the three Gunas. No being is devoid of the three Gunas. However, at one point in time, one Guna may be active while the other two Gunas might be dormant. One Guna may overpower the other two Gunas. During night fall, it is essential to have a predominant Tamo Guna to get some sleep. However, if Tamo Guna is predominant at all times, one is gripped by inertia and laziness. While Sattva and Tamas have a relatively stable state (tranquillity or laziness), Rajo Guna varies in a state of constant movement or motion - as it is a state of action and energy. In this way, the prominent or dominant Guna shapes the basic nature of an entity or action.

14.9

**sattvaṃ(m) sukhe sañjayati, rajaḥ(kh) karmaṇi bhārata,
jñānamāvr̥tya 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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that Sattva Guna binds one to happiness; rajas directs the embodied soul toward actions; and tamas clouds wisdom leading to ignorance and delusion.

Sattva Guna or the mode of goodness illuminates the intellect with knowledge and embeds good virtues. The one who is overpowered by Sattva Guna functions from a state of calmness, serenity, clarity and tranquility and this negates the state of ambiguity in decision making. The one endowed with a predominant Sattva Guna is contented with they have and never lament on what they lack. The external situations or circumstances do not taint or disturb the inner state of happiness and contentment.

As Tulsidas Ji says -

सीताराम सीताराम सीताराम कहिये, जाहि विधि राखे राम, ताहि विधि रहिये।

Those who are dominated by Rajo Guna are inclined towards intense actions. They are constant pursuit to achieve material goals and accumulate material assets.

One is attached to the material possessions and develops a sense of proprietorship. One is attracted

towards worldly pursuits of status, prestige, career, family, or wealth. The desire to achieve more and more fuels and directs them to undertake intense activity. One desire leads to another, and one is stuck in a whirlpool of insatiable desires and end up performing intense actions to achieve the same. They compromise on sleep and peace of mind to attain their goals, thereby being gripped by restlessness and anxiety. They always calculate on what they lack and end up in a pursuit to acquire more and more. As they say - Jack of all, master of none

Those who are gripped by Tamo Guna are overcome by inertia and refrain from performing any fruitful activities. Such people are gripped by lethargy, sloth, laziness, intoxication, addiction and engage in mundane activities. They engage in mundane tasks or engage in activities that are non-beneficial or harmful to oneself and the other.

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.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that although every embodied soul is under the influence of the three Gunas, one Guna will be predominant over the other two Gunas at a given point in time. The three Gunas keep gaining dominance over the individual's temperament and conditioning, which moves back and forth amongst the three modes.

If Sattva Guna dominates, one becomes peaceful, content, virtuous, kind, helpful, serene, and tranquil. When Rajo Guna is dominant, one is in intense activities, ambitious, envious of others success, and develops an inclination towards material ambitions and pleasures. When Tamo Guna becomes prominent, one is overcome by sleep, laziness, intoxication, sloth, violence, and ignorance. In this way, the mind sways amongst the three Gunas at a given point in time and adopts their qualities. Sometimes passion (rajas) dominates goodness (sattva) and ignorance (tamas), and at other times ignorance (tamas) overcomes goodness (sattva) and passion (rajas). Let's understand how to strike a balance between the three Gunas with the below instance from Sunder Kand.

Sunder Kand from Ramacharitra Manas:

Hanuman Ji's journey to Lanka in the Sundarkand of the epic Ramayana is fraught with obstacles and it offers practical life lessons that we can adopt to help us overcome challenges in our own lives. Let us understand how one can tackle challenges and obstacles encountered in the path towards the end goal.

The Vanara sena was contemplating on how to take a leap and cross the ocean to reach Ashoka Vatika. Angad says he might be able to take a leap across the ocean, however, he is unsure if he would be able to come back.

Jambhavant Ji says he has grown old and hence he might not be able to cross the ocean and return. Hanuman Ji, who is a symbol of sattva guna was silently listening. Jambhavant Ji says the below to Hanuman Ji:

कहइ रीछपति सुनु हनुमाना। का चुप साधि रहेहु बलवाना॥ पवन तनय बल पवन समाना। बुधि बिबेक बिग्यान निधाना॥

He starts to praise Hanuman Ji and he says that no task is impossible for Hanuman Ji. He reminds Hanuman Ji that his entire life purpose is to do the tasks of Bhagavān Śrī Ram.

कवन सो काज कठिन जग माहीं, जो नहिं होइ तात तुम पाहीं।

राम काज लागि तव अवतारा। सुनतहिं भयउ पर्वताकारा॥

He helps Hanuman Ji to unlock his dormant powers. Now Hanuman Ji feels prepared to embark on his journey to Lanka with full confidence. Upon listening to Jambhavant Ji, Hanuman Ji takes a gigantic form and increases his size with multiple folds.

सुनि कपि प्रगट कीन्हि निज देहा॥

कनक भूधराकार सरीरा।

समर भयंकर अतिबल बीरा॥

Hanuman Ji then takes a leap to cross the ocean to reach the destination which was Ashok Vatika. On the way, he meets Mainak - mountain in the middle of the ocean, who was a close friend of Pavan Dev (his father).

जलनिधि रघुपति दूत बिचारी।

तैं मैनाक होहि श्रम हारी॥

On his way to Lanka, the mountain Mainak suggested Hanuman to rest there for a while. Hanuman Ji responded, 'Until and unless I accomplish the task given by Bhagavān Śrī Ram, I cannot rest.' Saying so, he humbly bowed down to the mountain and took off.

हनूमान तेहि परसा कर पुनि कीन्ह प्रनाम।

राम काजु कीन्हें बिनु मोहि कहाँ विश्राम॥

Let's understand the message conveyed from this segment of Hanuman Ji's journey. Mainak represents Sattva guna. When Hanuman Ji denies resting on Mount Mainak as he has to execute the task given by Bhagavān Śrī Ram, Mainak does not disrupt Hanuman Ji's journey. Hanuman Ji tackles this obstacle with humility. Similarly, situations which are Sattva by nature do not require much effort to overcome the same.

The celestial devatas were observing Hanuman Ji during his journey and they decided to test him.

They sent Surasa, the mother of demonic serpents to test him.

जात पवनसुत देवन्ह देखा।

जानैं कहुँ बल बुद्धि बिसेषा॥

सुरसा नाम अहिन्ह कै माता।

पठइन्हि आइ कही तेहिं बाता॥

Surasa appears in the middle of the ocean.

आजु सुर मोह दी अहारा।

सुनत बचन कह पवनकुमारा॥

Surasa says that she is extremely hungry and she would like to have Hanuman Ji for her meal.

राम काजु करि फिरि मैं आवौं।

सीता कइ सुधि प्रभुहि सुनावौं॥

सोरह जोजन मुख तेहिं ठयऊ।

तुरत पवनसुत बतिस भयऊ॥

Hearing that Hanuman Ji said, "Wait, Let me complete Bhagavān Śrī Ram's work. Let me give Him the news of Mother Sita." Surasa laughs and says that he would never return if she allows him to leave. Hanuman Ji responds by saying "Once, I return, you can certainly devour me." However, Surasa did not allow him to go. Thus, Hanuman Ji said, "Alright then, I will enter your mouth. You can make me your meal!". Surasa's mouth was wide open. She extended it to 8 miles. Hanuman Ji increased his form upto 16 miles.

जस जस सुरसा बदन बढावा।
तासु दून कपि रूप देखावा।।
सत जोजन तेहिं आनन कीन्हा।
अति लघु रूप पवनसुत लीन्हा।।

Then, Surasa extended her mouth to a 16 mile. Immediately Hanuman grew double the size. He was now 32 miles huge. This continued for a while. As and when Surasa would widen her mouth, Hanuman Ji would double his size.

सत जोजन तेहिं आनन कीन्हा।
अति लघु रूप पवनसुत लीन्हा॥

At last when her mouth was widened upto a 60 mile, immediately Hanuman assumed a tiny form and entered swiftly into her mouth and comes out in a fraction of a second. Even before she realized, he immediately flew out of her mouth and bowed down before her. Hanuman Ji informs her that he has fulfilled her condition.

राम काजु सबु करिहहु तुम्ह बल बुद्धि निधान।
आसिष देइ गई सो हरषि चलेउ हनुमान॥

Surasa was impressed by Hanuman Ji and revered his might and wit. She allows him to continue with his journey.

In this section, Surasa represents Rajo Guna. Hanuman Ji initially applies his force and he overcomes this obstacle by using his intellect. From this section, we can imbibe that, at times we need to tackle the challenge at hand with wit and intellect, instead of applying force.

He then encounters another demoness who had the ability to capture one's shadow, due to which the target specie would drop down. She represents Tamo guna. She captures Hanuman Ji's shadow and this stops him from moving ahead in his journey. This time, as Hanuman Ji was dealing with a Tamo guni deamon. He knocked her out with a blow when she tried to kill Hanuman Ji by pinning his shadow.

From this section, we can imbibe that, at times, we may have to apply force and nip it in the bud before it compounds, instead of tackling at surface level. Hanuman Ji shows the way on how to handle Sattva, Rajo and Tamo guna persons.

ताहि मारि मारुतसुत बीरा। बारिधि पार गयउ मतिधीरा॥ तहाँ जाइ देखी बन सोभा। गुंजत चंचरीक मधु लोभा॥

Hanuman Ji now reaches Lanka and there was a demoness called Lankini guarding the gate. He assumes a very tiny form so that he could enter Lanka during the night without drawing any attention.

मसक समान रूप कपि धरी।
लंकहि चलेउ सुमिरि नरहरी॥

नाम लंकिनी एक निसिचरी ।
सो कह चलेसि मोहि निंदरी ॥

Lankini shouts when she sees Hanuman Ji. She calls him thief and she yells at him

जानिह नहीं मरमु सठ मोरा ।
मोर अहार जहाँ लिग चोरा ॥

Hanuman Ji knocks her down with a blow (upon hearing himself being called as thief), as it was Ravan who had held Mother Sita as captive.

मोर अहार जहाँ लिग चोरा ॥ मुठिका एक महा कपि हनी । रुधिर बमत धरनीं ढनमनी ॥ रुधिर बमत धरनीं ढनमनी ॥

Lankini drops down by coughing up blood and she gets up. She then explains that when Brahmā Ji bestowed the blessing to Ravan and his brothers, he had assured her that when Ravan's end is nearing, a monkey would enter Lanka and punch/knock her down. That moment would be an indication that Ravan's end has knocked his doorstep. She is filled with happiness that the moment has finally arrived. She is pleased to meet Hanuman Ji and praises him. She says she has been blessed to meet the ardent sevak of Bhagavān Śrī Ram himself in the below verse:

बिकल होसि तैं कपि कें मारे । तब जानेसु निसिचर संघारे ।।
तात मोर अति पुन्य बहूता । देखेउँ नयन राम कर दूता ॥

She then says that by seeing Hanuman Ji, it was equivalent to the pleasures attained in heaven. She says that even by weighing down the entire happiness attained in heavenly abodes and nether regions, this one moment of having his darshan out-weighs the happiness of heaven and hell.

तात स्वर्ग अपबर्ग सुख धरिअ तुला एक अंग । तूल न ताहि सकल मिलि जो सुख लव सतसंग ॥

Lankini represents the combination of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Hanuman Ji tried to enter Lanka by reducing down to a miniature size. He applied his intellect to tackle Lankini (who was in the state of Rajas). Hanuman Ji knocked her down when she took the first step of blocking his way (state of Tamas), he then approached her with humility when she surrendered to him with folded hands (state of Sattva)

She then says that Hanuman Ji could enter Lanka in the below verse:

प्रबिसि नगर कीजे सब काजा ।
हृदयँ राखि कोसलपुर राजा ॥
गरल सुधा रिपु करहिं मिताई ।
गोपद सिंधु अनल सितलाई ॥

From this section, we can imbibe that, in the face of challenges, instead of reacting, we need to take a pause, assess the challenge, and resourcefully apply appropriate solution based on the nature of the challenge. With proper planning and equipping ourselves with the essential knowledge and tools, we can proactively identify and prepare for any potential problems.

The session ends with the prayer and Hanuman Chalisa.

Question and Answer

Devendra Ji

Question : It was mentioned that the universal creation is due to the fusion of Prakriti and Purush tattva (material energy and consciousness). Does this fusion happen everytime the universe is born

anew?

Answer : This is an eternal cycle of creation, sustenance and annihilation. There is no beginning or end to the same (i.e., no first time or last time as it transcends time).

Hanuman Ji

Question : What was the name of the demoness who was the third obstacle during the journey of Hanuman Ji?

Answer: Sinica was the name of the demoness

Manju Ji

Question : My mind cannot remain idle and I always engage in tasks like chanting or reciting scriptures. Which category is this classified as?

Answer : A mind that is not firm and needs to be constantly engaged in an activity is a sign of Rajo Guna. The mind is silenced in Sattva. However, if one is engaged in virtuous or noble tasks, one is on the path to elevate to Sattva

Somnath Ji

Question : It is mentioned that one is the soul and not the body. If one descends down to nether regions or hellish abodes, is it the soul that suffers?

Answer : The soul adorns the body that dwells in nether regions and it is the body that undergoes suffering.

Manisha Ji

Question : How can a grihasta give up on Moh and worldly duties?

Answer : One needs to discharge the worldly duties and attach the mind to the Divine. Say for example, instead of seeing the children as My children (ME consciousness), one should see oneself discharging the duty of the mother with a perception that nursing the children (bestowed by the Divine) is the service to the Divine.

Rekha Ji

Question : If one contemplates on the Divine, then would challenges in life dissipate?

Answer : Facing adversity with Grit is the quality that one develops with Gita.

Praneesh Ji

Question : Do ghosts and spirits exist?

Answer : Yes, they are made up of Vayu tattva whereas a human is made up of Pancha Tattva. Hence, they cannot overpower the living beings. They reside in nether regions.



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You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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