

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 14: Guṇatrāya-Vibhāga-Yoga

1/3 (Ślōka 1-9), Saturday, 28 December 2024

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/QOECP4WHdc>

## The three gunas Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, are born of Prakṛti or Nature

The 14th chapter of *Bhagavad gītā* is **Gunatrāya Vibhaga Yoga- Understanding the three modes of nature.**

The session started with the customary lighting of the lamp and obeisance to *Krishna Bhagavān*, *Vedvyas ji* and *Saraswati mata*.

We are all very fortunate to be able to be associated with the *Bhagavad Gītā* with the blessings of the *Bhagavān Krishna* and the blessings of our *gurus*. Due to our good deeds we are able to learn, teach and implement *Gītā* in our lives and are steadfast on this spiritual path.

In the 15th Chapter Śrī Paramātmā said to Arjuna that those who understand the most principal secret in the Vedic scriptures, will become enlightened and they will fulfil whatever that must be accomplished.

**iti guhyatamaṁ śhāstram idam uktaṁ mayānagha,  
etad buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛita-kṛityaśh cha bhārata (15.20)**

HE also said in the 18th chapter, those who read and teach *Gītā* will be HIS favourites on this earth.

**na ca tasmānmanuṣyeṣu, kaścinme priyakṛttamaḥ,  
bhavitā na ca me tasmād anyāḥ priyatara bhuvi. 18.69**

Hence, we must walk in this path as that is how we can become closer HIM.

At the end of the 13th chapter, *Bhagavān* talks about *Jnana Chakshushah*.

**kṣhetra-kṣhetrajñayor evam antaraṁ jñāna-chakṣhuṣhā,  
bhūta-prakṛiti-mokṣhaṁ cha ye vidur yānti te param (13.35)**

Those with the eyes of wisdom can differentiate between *Kshetra* (body) and *kshetrajna* (knower of the body), and are liberated from this material world and attain the supreme.

HE says that those who can demarcate between *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* only can have this *jnana*. What is

this *Jnana*? What should be done to attain it easily? What is the value of such Wisdom? The questions raised by *Arjuna* at the end of 13th chapter are answered by the *Paramātmā* in the 14th chapter as *param guhya jnanam*. In this chapter, HE describes the three *gunas* - *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamo gunas* in detail. Further in the 15th chapter, *Bhagavān* tells about the *Trigunas*- "***Guna Pravrudhaha Vishaya Pravalaha***" -this material world is getting nourished by the three *gunas* and explains how to separate the *gunas* to reach the *Trigunateetha* stage so as to attain liberation.

## 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.

*Paramātmā* starts this sloka by saying

**"Param bhuyah Pravakshyami Jnananam"**

"I AM repeating this Knowledge again and again".

Why is HE saying "repeating Knowledge"? It is because HE explained about "this knowledge" in 9th, 13th, and other chapters also.

According to *Chhandogya Upanishad* the following procedure of "***Shat tatparya lingani***" should be followed to understand the essence or meaning of a *sashtra*.

***upakramopasaṃhārāv abhāyaso'pūrvatā phalam,  
arthavāḍopapattī ca liṅgaṃ tātparya-nirṇaye***

When understanding the *sashtras*, we must pay attention to:

- 1. ***Upakrama*** and ***Upasamhara*** – the origin and end of something.
- 2. ***Abhyasa*** – repetition of the message again and again.
- 3. ***Apoorvata***: Declaration of something unique, which has been not said anywhere else before.
- 4. ***Phalam*** – The result or the outcome of learning this.
- 5. ***Atharvada*** – Promotion – Focussed means to achieve a specific end. Promotion can be in the form of praise (*stuti*) or criticism (*ninda*). The essence of *upaniṣad* should be glorified and its opposite criticized.
- 6. ***Upapati*** – Substantiation. The essence of a statement is often substantiated, reinforcing the same essence.

Among the six rules, the third rule, *Abhyasa* should be followed by all the *sadhaks*. By doing this *Abhyasa of the uttama jnanam*, all the *yajjnatva* (sages) attained supreme perfection and they attained liberation from this *mrutyu loka*.

Shankara Bhashya offers a different perspective on what is the real knowledge. It says:

अस्मात् देहबन्धनात् ऊर्ध्वं गताः प्राप्ताः

**"Asmat dehobandhanath urdhvam gatah praptah"**

Through the attainment of real knowledge, one's attachment to the body dissolves. *Kaivalya*, or complete liberation, typically occurs at death; however, realizing our true nature before this is

considered **Jeevan Mukti**—a state of liberation while still alive. In this state of *Jeevan Mukti*, the individual's attachment to the body ceases. Once complete liberation is achieved, ignorance is entirely eradicated, and thus, there is no longer any attachment to the body.

In 15th chapter, *Bhagavān* tells us to get liberation by cutting down the roots of attachment by "*drudhena chittva*" strong axe of detachment using *uttama jnana* (knowledge) thus leading to self realisation when we are still alive. *Bhagavān* gives us this possibility of getting liberation or moksha through self realisation and becoming a "*Jeevan Mukhta*". So we should detach from the roots of attachment and get ourselves liberated by using this *paramguhya jnanam*.

## 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).

Paramātmā says that by embracing this knowledge, individuals become one with HIM, adopting HIS nature.

**Sadharma**, a form of liberation, signifies becoming one with Sri Paramātmā or realizing our true nature. Shri **Paramātmā is synonymous with Vishuddha Chaitanya, the pure consciousness**. The individual soul (*Jīvātmā*), which is enveloped by the body, is also a part of this pure energy. Just as a drop of water merges with the ocean and loses its individual identity, the *Jīvātmā*, once self-realized, merges into the ultimate consciousness. This self-realized *Jīvātmā* will no longer be subject to rebirth in the realm of mortals (*Mrityu Loka*). Once a person achieves liberation through this supreme knowledge and attains HIS nature, he will not be reborn at the time of creation nor will he be destroyed at dissolution.

**"Punarapi jananam punarapi maranam,  
Punarapi janani jathare shayanam"**

This verse from Shri Adi Shankaracharya reflects the repeated cycle of birth and death and the suffering of being reborn in the womb again and again. However, by attaining this supreme knowledge and becoming one with the Supreme Soul, one will transcend this cycle of birth and death and will not experience pain at the time of dissolution (**Pralaya**).

Pralay is of 4 types

- **Nitya pralaya** - Occurs during normal state of deep restful sleep.
- **Naimittika pralaya** - Occurs at the end of one kalpa that represents a complete cycle of the cosmos, from creation to destruction.
- **Prakṛtika pralaya** - Happens when the entire Brahmānd or universe dissolves into Prakṛti.
- **Atyantika pralaya** - The final dissolution, or Moksha.

There are six philosophies in the shastras, giving different perspectives of creation and destruction.

- 1. **Samkhya** Philosophy
- 2. **Yoga** Philosophy
- 3. **Vaisheshika** Philosophy
- 4. **Nyasa** Philosophy.
- 5. **Purva** Mimansa
- 6. **Uttara** Mimansa (Vedanta)

The vedanta philosophy describes the creation of the world (**Atmanaha Akaasha Sambhootan**) as follows:-

- *Paramātmā* (*Atmanah*) emits the *Ether* (*Akasha*)
- Ether gives rise to Air (*Vayu*)
- Air gives rise to Fire (*Agni*)
- Fire gives rise to Water (*Rapah*)
- Water gives rise to Earth (*Prithvi*)

But the *Sāṃkhya* Philosophy has a different explanation, as follows:

- The intellect (***Buddhi***) arises from *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*.
- From the intellect, the sense of 'I' (***Ahamkara***) is born.
- *Ahamkara* gives rise to the sensory objects—sound (***Shabda***), touch (***Sparsha***), form (***Roopa***), taste (***Rasa***), and smell (***Gandha***)—which are associated with the ***Pancha Bhootas*** (five great elements).
- From *Ahamkara* emerge the sensory organs (***Jnanendriyas***) and the organs of action (***Karmendriyas***).

**The vedanta philosophy says the *Paramātmā* is responsible for the *Panchabhootas* & *Panchatanmatras* (five sensory capacities).**

The 5 senses and their objects as per this philosophy are as follows:-

- ***Akasha - Shabda* (sound)**
- ***Vayu - Sparsha* (touch)**
- ***Fire -Roopa / Drushya* (form)**
- ***Water- Rasa* (Taste)**
- ***Prithivi - Gandha* (Smell)**

During ***Prakṛtik Pralay***, the sequence is reverse to that followed in the *Naimittika Pralay*.

- Earth dissolves in Water
- Water dissolves in Fire
- Fire dissolves in Air
- Air dissolves in Ether
- Ether goes back to *Paramātmān*.

***Aatyantika Pralay***:- The final dissolution, or Moksha happens when the false ego is cut with knowledge and there is no more ignorance. When this happens, a person will not be born again and will not be affected by the dissolution in any manner.

The sages who attained liberation or self realisation are not effected by the creation or destruction of the *srushti*. *Avidya* is completely destroyed, and they do not feel the pain nor enter into the cycle of *Karya - karana*. They are not attached to the body. Even at the time of death also , these people do not get affected.

Saint *Ramsukhdas ji Maharaj* who was suffering from cancer did not show any pain when his cancer wound was being cleaned by the doctors. He used to say to his followers that he is not attached to the body and hence he does not feel any pain.

**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.

Śrī Paramātmā says that HE seeds the womb of *Prakṛti* and all living beings are born from that seed. HE says all the beings are born from that womb where the seed has been given by HIM.

According to Sāṃkhya Philosophy, *Puruṣa* plants the seed in *Prakṛti*, and the *Prakṛti* generates the rest. Sāṃkhya Philosophy accepts *Prakṛti* as the cause of this world. It also says that Sattva, Rajas and Tamo gunas are the basic causes of this world.

But Vedantha Philosophy does not accept this. It says we need some Chaitanya to create something. Something inert cannot create or reproduce. All the three modes of nature are inert and hence cannot reproduce anything. However, Vedanta accepts that everything has come from ParaBrahmā, and with HIS power, *Prakṛti* or *maya* creates everything.

While Sattva Guna is about purity and Rajo Guna is about action, Tamo Guna has two qualities - **Maya** and **Avidya**. *Avidya* covers the authentic or the original and recreates something else that was not there.

Śrī Paramātmā says in chapter 9:

**mayadhyaksena prakṛtiḥ suyate sacaracaram  
hetunanena kaunteya jagad viparivartate (9.10)**

*This material nature is working under MY direction and it is producing all moving and unmoving beings.*

By HIS rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again. Vedanta accepts this Philosophy. Vedanta has three sources of authority, referred to as **Prasthanatrayi**. Upanishads, Brahma Sutra and Srimad Bhagavad Gītā are the three sources from which the different schools of Vedanta derive their authority.

Thus the essence of this sloka is that all the living beings are born from one womb where the *Beej* (seed) is given by the *Paramātmā*. It means all the living beings are born from ONE *Beej* and ONE Womb.

**14.4**

**sarvayoniṣu kaunteya, mūrtayaḥ(s) sambhavanti yāḥ,  
tāsām(m) brahma mahadyoniḥ(r), aham(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.

Sri Paramātmā says, that for all species of life forms created by different wombs, *Prakṛti* or nature is the mother, while HE is the seed giving father.

*Sashtras* follow certain *Srutis* which give *pramana* for the creation of the *Srushti* by the *Paramātmā*:-

- 1. **Aatmanaha Aakasha** - Process of creation from Paramātmā.

- 2. **Ekaki narakate dūitya maikshita** - creation of *Prakṛti* as no other living being is seen by Paramātmā.
- 3. **Bahushyami Prajaiva** - Paramātmā was alone for longtime so HE created the Srushti with many living beings from HIMSELF.

## 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.

Bhagavān explains about the three modes born from the *Prakṛti* (**Prakṛti Sambhavaha**).

- 1. **Sattva** -Purity
- 2. **Rajas** - Passion
- 3. **Tamas** - Inertia or ignorance.

The indestructible soul gets attached to the body through these three gunas (**nibadhnanti dehe dehinamavyayam**). In the 2nd chapter, Bhagavān had said that the soul is indestructible.

**vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya  
navani grhnati naro 'parani,  
tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany  
anyani samyati navani dehi ( 2. 22)**

*Just like a person wearing new clothes and discarding the old, the imperishable soul enters new bodies and gives up the old.*

Paramātmā confirms that those who attain self realisation cross over these three gunas and attain the "**TRIGUNATEETHA**" or "**JEEVANMUKTI**" state. He or she has transcended the three modes of nature and is established in the identity with the Supreme.

## 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.

Addressing Arjuna as **ānagha (sinless one)**, Bhagavān explained the attributes and characteristics of the Sattva Guna.

- **sattvaṃ** - The quality of goodness
- **Nirmalatvāt**- The quality of purity and cleanliness
- **prakāśakamanāmayam**- luminous and faultless and healthy in nature

Those people who have Sattvik qualities are very quick and sharp in making right decisions. Their mind is clear and has no confusion and works efficiently. Control of Tamasik qualities leads to a clear mind with concentration and clarity.

They are free from inertia and prioritize doing what is right over personal preferences or choices. This

attachment to righteousness and knowledge connects them to a sense of happiness and fulfillment. However, it is important to recognize that even though Sattva guna is considered the most favorable quality, it can still bind us. The attachment can be to happiness or to knowledge itself. For example, someone who is constantly studying may develop a strong attachment to knowledge, making it a binding force that they cannot live without.

#### 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.

Rajasik is the quality of attachment and passion. Rajasik persons are passionate and are full of energy to keep themselves busy with some action or the other, like children who can never sit still and are agile all the time. This quality is described as being in action and is also the source of longing and attachment exhibited passionately. For example if someone experiences an outage in internet connection they start playing offline games, or start searching on google or take the laptop or do any work to keep themselves engaged. They cannot sit idle at any point of time and look for some avenues to be engaged like reading, cooking, cleaning and so on. They are bound to action because of their constant desires and unending wants (**Tṛṣṇāsaṅgasamudbhavam**).

In contrast to the Rajasik, the Sattvik people are engaged in chanting, worshipping and actions pertaining to what is good and what is needed not just what is desired. Such persons' desires are only to gain knowledge and they are immersed in the spiritual path.

#### 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.

Quality of a Tamasik person arises from ajnana/ ignorance (**Tamastvajñānajaṃ viddhi**), and is of an inert and ignorant state (**mohanaṃ sarvadehinām**).

In 2nd Chapter Bhagavan explained the cause and effect of anger borne out of a deluded mind in this verse:

**krodhād bhavati sammohaḥ sammohāt smṛiti-vibhramah,  
smṛiti-bhranśhād buddhi-nāśho buddhi-nāśhāt praṇaśhyati (2.63)**

*Anger leads to clouding of judgement, which results in bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, the intellect gets destroyed; and when the intellect is destroyed, one is ruined.*

A person's anger is borne out of ignorance which hides the right path and results in forgetting everything, thus affecting the mind negatively. When the mind gets clouded a person loses control of actions and may not even observe who is in front while speaking in anger and may utter words which should not be said. Later the realisation comes that the actions were wrong but it may be too late to alter the past.



**Eg:** Everyone knows smoking is not good, still some people continue with the habit knowingly. When Tamo guna increases it leads to wrong decisions.

Furthermore, a tamasik person displays the following qualities:

- **Pramādā-** State of idleness
- **Alasya-** lazy and lethargic
- **Nidrābhiḥ-** bound by sleep

Such a state of a Tamasik leads to unwanted thoughts, or not doing anything totally, or over indulgence in sleeping and daydreaming. Daydreaming cannot be termed as a constructive measure for introspection as it is mere idleness. Sleeping for more than 8 or 10 hours will not bring freshness, but lethargy.

These tendencies are generated in a person due to the karma done in the previous lives. However, we can control these tendencies by changing our food habits and becoming more aware of our choices throughout the day. Whenever one has to choose something, it is useful to check whether it is in the category of **Shreya** or **Preya**.

- **Shreya:** something that is good
- **Preya:** some thing that one likes

We must always choose what is good and not what we love. With this approach, slowly one will be able to increase Sattvic guna and reduce the rajasik and tamo gunas.

## 14.9

**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.

Śrī Paramātmā is summarising what HE has explained about three modes of nature:

- Sattva guna, the nature of purity attaches us to happiness
- Rajo guna binds us with action
- Tamo guna veils or clouds the real and creates the unreal.

Śrī Paramātmā says tamo guna first covers the knowledge and then it attaches us to the *Pramada*, to make mistakes.

***Sattva binds one to material happiness; rajas conditions the soul toward actions; and tamas clouds wisdom and binds one to delusion.***

The session closed with a two-minute sankeertana, and the floor was opened for Questions and answers.

## Questions and Answers

**Siddhi Joshi ji**

**Q:** How can we know which activities of ours are sattvic, rajasic or tamasic?

**A:** Any activity that is towards materialistic fruits like wealth, status etc, is rajasic. Activities like puja, Sādhana, meditation, etc done for spiritual progress is sattvic. Laziness, procrastination and inactivity is tamasic.



## **Sangita ji**

**Q:** We believe that Paramātmā is everywhere, but in the 9th shloka, HE says that HE is not anywhere. Please clarify.

**A:** Here, Paramātmā is referring to HIS nirakara swaroop, the unmanifest form, which cannot be found anywhere. When HE talks about the sakaar swaroop, HE affirms that HE is present everywhere.

## **Sejalben Dhimmar ji**

**Q:** How can we enrich our soul with sattvic gunas?

**A:** First, choose sattvic food; next, be alert at all times. Keep reminding yourself to always choose the right action that takes you towards sattvic guna.



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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.

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### **Jai Shri Krishna!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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