

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 14: Guṇatrāya-Vibhāga-Yoga

2/3 (Ślōka 8-13), Saturday, 09 November 2024

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/TMvJEzEN3nM>

Karma and Gunas: Ways to Manifest the Path of Spiritual Wisdom

The 14th Chapter of Bhagavatgītā is Guṇatrāya-Vibhāga-Yoga - The Yoga of Classification of the Three Gunas.

The session commenced with the Auspicious lighting of the traditional lamp and with the prayers to the Gurus and Bhagavān.

In this chapter Bhagavān explained the three Gunas - Sāttvika, Rājasika, Tāmasika Guṇas in detail. When Sattva, Raja and Tama (Noble, attached and negative tendencies) respectively are present in equal quantity, the nature remains unmanifested. The variation in the above tendencies result in various kinds of characters we see around.

The Sāttvika, Rājasika, Tāmasika Guṇas can be seen and experienced at 11 different places. For example if the neighbour is making Rajasic food, this does not mean that she is of a Rajasic nature. We should not interpret others but we should contemplate our own selves taking care of which tendency of karma we have.

The word Guna or tendency has multiple meanings. One of the meaning of Guna is to tie like a rope. The Gunas tie our soul (Jīvātmā) with the body binding us with the kind of action we do.

निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥14.5॥

These modes bind the eternal soul to the perishable body.

Sattvika Guna also binds the soul by creating attachment for a sense of happiness and knowledge.

सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति, ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ ॥14.6॥

Doing good work gives happiness - this is Sattvic happiness.

In the beginning the seeker should work on this kind of happiness but in later stages he should quit

desire for such happiness as well. **We must try to attain the Trigunatītā stage wherein, one is beyond the influence of the three Gunas.**

In Chapter 18 of Bhagavadgītā, Bhagavān has classified happiness into - Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic, wherein the eternal soul is bound by gold, silver and iron chains respectively. We have seen that even Sattvic happiness attaches us to the world. None the less we should motivate ourselves to lead a sattvic life as in our worldly and spiritual pursuits, sattvic actions help us to succeed. Bhagavān has given us a pot of poison in one hand and a pot of nectar in the other. HE has given us the choice of choosing either. The right choice and right decision determines the nature of our lives. By choosing the nectar, one portrays Sattvic nature and by choosing the poison one shows Tamasic tendencies. However, rajasic tendency is also necessary as it the connecting link between sattvik and Tamasik tendencies. Seekers embarking on the spiritual path should be little rajasic. Gradually they must learn to uplift themselves towards Sattvik tendency.

To evaluate our character, eleven key points have been identified. Observing our reactions in various situations allows us to assess our mental state.

Here is a list of the eleven main points:

1. Behaviour:

A noble behaviour is sattvik, when one behaves with too much attachment he is rajasik and one with a negative behaviour is said to be tamasik.

2. Speech:

Verse 17.15 of the Bhagavad Gītā says speech should be Truthful, Pleasant, and Beneficial.

सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।

Speaking truthfully, pleasantly, and beneficially is challenging for a person dominated by tamasic or rajasic qualities. This kind of speech is natural only to a saintly person or one who has embraced the pure and harmonious sattvic quality in life. We may often face the dilemma of how to speak the truth in all circumstances, as truth can sometimes seem harsh and not always beneficial. However, a person with a sattvic mind has a heightened discernment that enables them to differentiate between right and wrong, and such a person is able to choose the correct words and behaviour for every occasion.

A Rajasic person has less control over his speech. This is because he does more action and hence speaks more. We should only speak upto 25% and listen upto 75%. While speaking our speech should be able to communicate more.

गागर में सागर समाना

like **"filling an ocean in a cup."** This is the hallmark of an excellent speaker.

Whereas Tamasic person due to his excessive ignorance and carelessness does not know what is true or untrue. He does not know how to speak. Such individuals may say things without any sense of propriety. Statements made in intense anger usually fall into the tamasic category as anger leads to destruction of our wisdom.

Verse 63 of chapter 2 of Bhagavadgītā reiterates

क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥ 63॥

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

By understanding these categories, we can better analyse and refine our own speech and behaviour, ensuring they align more closely with sattvic qualities.

3. Food:

In the 17th Chapter Bhagavān explained the choice of food of the Sattvik natured.

आयुः सत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धनाः, रस्याः,
स्निग्धाः, स्थिराः, हृद्याः, आहाराः, सात्त्विकप्रियाः॥17. 8॥

Persons in the mode of goodness prefer foods that promote life span, and increase virtue, strength, health, happiness, and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, succulent, nourishing, and naturally tasteful.

HE further explained the food of the Rajasik as

कटुम्ललवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।
आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥ 17.9॥

Foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, very hot, pungent, dry, and full of chillies, are dear to persons in the mode of passion. Such foods produce pain, grief, and disease. Plate of food according to Ayurveda should have all the tastes but the proportion should be less.

The Tamasik prefer foods that are overcooked, stale, putrid, polluted, and impure.

यातयामम्, गतरसम्, पूति, पर्युषितम्, च, यत्,
उच्छिष्टम्, अपि, च अमेध्यम्, भोजनम्, तामसप्रियम्॥17.10॥

Such foods should be avoided and not consumed at all.

4. Dress:

Our choice of clothing depends on the location, purpose, time, and appropriateness for the occasion. Whether the event is a celebration, a visit to a temple or other sacred place, a solemn gathering, or a joyous occasion, it is essential to dress suitably for each distinct context. However, some people disregard these guidelines and turn them into points of contention, showcasing tamasic tendencies.

For instance, if we receive the sad news of someone's passing, wearing flashy clothes would be inappropriate. Similarly, what attire is suitable for a sattvic place like a temple? Common sense can guide us in understanding what's appropriate. A person who selects clothing based on place, time, and circumstance is considered sattvic. In contrast, those who cannot do so are deemed rajasic, as they tend to be more stubborn and attached to their preferences, often insisting on wearing certain types of attire regardless of the context. Tamasic individuals, on the other hand, may fail to understand or recognise the difference in clothing appropriateness altogether.

5. Place to live:

From a psychological perspective, it is well-established that working in a clean, organised environment promotes greater success. On the other hand, a disordered space makes it harder to concentrate. This is why our scriptures provide extensive guidance on selecting a suitable, pure place

for meditation. Choosing a proper seat and wearing clean clothes are essential; otherwise, various smells or distractions can interfere with focus. Scriptures even specify that the meditation space should be free from flies and mosquitoes, as maintaining concentration is crucial. While these factors may not be as important for a fully realised practitioner who can meditate in any condition, even a single mosquito can disturb a beginner's focus.

For this reason, meditation halls are usually simple, with minimal decoration. Similarly, the homes of sattvic individuals are often simple and free of clutter. In contrast, rajasic people's homes are filled with attractive objects. A tamasic individual's home, however, is often unclean and disorganised. Thus, scriptures place a strong emphasis on cleanliness, as where there is no cleanliness, there is no presence of Goddess Lakshmi. Tamasic people often struggle to attain wealth, respect, or fame due to the disorderly nature of their environment.

6. Financial Investment :

Sattvic people invest money in charity, whereas rajasic people invest money to increase it and tamasic people gamble with money.

7.Duty:

Sattvic people do their duty selflessly and with sheer devotion. Rajasic people pay more attention to what others are doing and compare with others work. Tamasic people are totally ignorant of their duty.

8. Nature:

Sattvic people have angelic qualities, Rajasic people may feel jealous or have a flickering mind. Tamasic people are lazy, procrastinating the work for the next day.

9. Interest:

Type of our interest determines our nature. Whether we like to attend Gītā class, go to the club or love to sleep all the time determine whether we are sattvic, rajasic or tamasic respectively.

10. Desire:

The kinds of objects and substances we crave, the places we desire to visit, and the things we wish to do are all based on our inherent qualities or gunas.

11. Company:

The type of company which one keeps determines his very nature. In Ramcharitmanas it is said:

बिनु सत्संग विवेक ना होइ।

It means without *satsang* or spiritual company, wisdom cannot be awakened. In Geeta Parivar, twelve thousand volunteers are offering their services. Talking to them reveals that they did not join just to learn the recitation of the Bhagavad Gītā, but also to benefit from connecting with virtuous people. Anyone who joins Geeta Parivar is naturally inclined toward sattvic qualities and is progressing on the path of sattva / purity.

By taking care of these 11 qualities we can slowly elevate to sattvic nature.

**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.

Here Bhagavān said to Arjuna that all those who pride over their physical attributes are of tamasic nature. This beastly nature traps the soul in raw pleasures, laziness and sleep.

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.

sattvam-mode of goodness

sukhe sañjayati- happiness binds

rajaḥ- mode of passion

karmaṇi-actions

jñānamāvr̥tya- clouds to wisdom

tamaḥ- darkness

pramāde- delusion

sañjayatyuta- binds.

Bhagavān said that Sattva nature overcomes us with happiness. Rajoguna pushes one to gain pleasures from the deeds. It creates desires, and we become attached to those desires, striving to fulfill them.

Tamas clouds wisdom and causes vanity & arrogance.

Just as clouds veil the sun, hiding it for a moment, this illustrates the state of those unable to distinguish between truth and untruth. The sun always shines in the sky, and our eyes can perceive it, but under the cover of ignorance, we fail to discern right from wrong. In a Tamasik person, delusion and laziness grow, and in this way, Tamoguna takes control of them. To avoid this, some seekers prefer to stay among others, as solitude often increases laziness, making it harder to focus on any activity. However, a time comes when they begin to experience supreme bliss in solitude.

एकान्ते सुखमास्पताम्।

Find joy in solitude.

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 it is said that all the three tendencies prevail in all the persons all the time.

Then how can one judge which Guna dominates?

At all times one guna is dominant and the other two are suppressed. Sattvaguna can overcome and suppress Rajas (activity) and Tamas to emerge dominant. The prevailing quality within our **antahkaran** (inner being) directs our tendencies. When Sattva predominates over Rajas and Tamas, a person engages in actions aligned with purity, resulting in beneficial outcomes.

Similarly, when Tamas or Rajas suppress the other two qualities, they gain dominance, shaping our behaviours accordingly.

We should aim for the predominance of Sattva from morning till night, and our actions should align in that direction. What we do does not solely reflect our qualities; rather, the intention behind our actions is a more accurate measure. For example, if we worship God with true devotion and love, Sattva guna expands. However, if we rush through worship, quickly chanting verses or hastily counting prayer beads, we invite Rajas, which often leaves us feeling unsettled throughout the day due to the increase in restlessness associated with it.

When we perform our prayers incompletely or leave mantras unfinished, we may experience unwanted fears, wondering if we have somehow displeased HIM. But Bhagavān is compassionate and does not punish anyone. We determine our own path to freedom or downfall. For instance, if we learned only half of an eight-verse recitation due to laziness, we increase Tamas within us and must face its consequences.

14.11

**sarvadvāreṣu dehe'smin, prakāśa upajāyate,
jñānaṃ(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.

When there is a surge of the light of knowledge in our body, mind and sensory organs, it marks the predominance of Sattva.

Many a times without any specific reason, an immense sense of happiness and a calm and doubt-free mind is experienced, leading to a day filled with a pleasant feeling. Such experiences result from the growth of Sattva guna.

In this verse, "light" refers to knowledge. In the light of knowledge, all doubts dissolve, and we gain the ability to make correct decisions about what is appropriate or inappropriate for ourselves. Walking on the path of Sattva guna naturally reveals the way to increasing wisdom.

Many of us have also noticed that sometimes, while contemplating something, a brilliant thought or insight suddenly arises in the mind. This is possible due to the radiance of Sattva guna.

Swami Ramsukhdas said if we feel that we are able to put our mind in meditation, concentrate, read Gītā and other scriptures, then we must understand that we are on the right path. However, we must not allow pride to overcome us. Instead we must engage ourselves more in good deeds so that the mind remains focussed and does not go astray.

In the 47th shloka of Chapter 2 of Bhagavadgītā it is said: We have right to do action but do not have right to the fruits of action.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ 47 ॥

You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction.

In chapter 12 Bhagavān said to detach from the fruits of action.

सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं

Śrī Bhagavān advised that an act is Sattvaguni if performed without expectations of fruits or consequences of that action.

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्यज्ञो विधिदृष्टो य इज्यते।

By doing this, the growth of knowledge will occur, impurities will be removed, the disturbances of the mind will be destroyed, and along with all of this, attachment and aversion will also be eradicated. As a result, the individual will continue to progress steadily on the path of spiritual advancement.

14.12

**lobhaḥ(ph) pravṛttirārambhaḥ(kh), karmaṇāmaśamaḥ(s) sprhā,
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.

lobhaḥ- greed

pravṛtti -activity

ārambhaḥ- beginning

karmaṇāma- for frutiv actions

sprhā- cravings

When the influence of Rajas increases, it leads to greed, inclination towards activities, the beginning of actions, restlessness, and desire.

Greed (lobhaḥ) refers to the desire for more of something we already possess in sufficient quantity.

For example, after obtaining fifty thousand rupees, the desire for one lakh arises; after one lakh, the desire for one and a half lakh, and so on. It is important to distinguish that when a businessman makes profits it is not considered greed. Greed occurs when one makes extra efforts to acquire something they do not need.

Inclination (pravṛtti) refers to actions or activities. When we desire something, the actions taken to obtain it are called inclinations or efforts.

Chinmayananda ji explains this process as a sequence: first greed for a particular object arises, followed by the inclination to act and pursue it.

Beginning (ārambhaḥ) refers to initiating new endeavours for personal gain, worldly pleasures, wealth, or fame.

In the Gītā, actions done for others welfare are never prohibited, but actions done for one's own prestige, growth, or things one does not need, are prohibited.

In Chapter 12, Bhagavān said one needs to be:

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी।

One who renounces the initiation of actions for personal gain.

Restlessness (aśamaḥ) is the result of Rajasic tendencies.

People with Rajasic nature often experience a lack of peace, a constant disturbance in their minds, and feel unsettled. This arises when desires are unfulfilled.

Desire (Sprhā) means to excessively worry about oneself and one's needs.

A yogi should not worry about oneself. He should leave/ offer the things to Bhagavān. However, in household life, it is appropriate to think about oneself, but excessive concern or worry is known as **sprhā**, and it should be avoided. Worrying about what will happen five to ten years from now is unnecessary.

For this reason, when Arjuna spoke of renouncing everything, Bhagavān advised:

कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते।

Karma Yoga is superior.

By practicing Karma Yoga, and gradually eliminating greed, inclinations, and desire, one can then move toward renunciation.

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.

aprakāśo - nescience

pramādo- to do that action the one we should not do

moha- delusion

tamas- mode of ignorance

In life, when Tamas, the quality of ignorance or inertia increases, darkness spreads, and the distinction between right and wrong becomes unclear.

Apathy (apravṛtti) is the inclination to do nothing, a sense of inactivity.

It is the desire to receive what one needs without making any effort. These are signs of negligence or laziness.

Negligence (pramādo) refers to failing to do what should be done or doing what shouldn't be done.

For example, in the morning, one should engage in activities like exercise, prayer, study, and self-reflection. If instead, one sleeps through that time, it's negligence.

In our scriptures, it is advised to wake up early during **Brahma Muhurta** (the early hours of the morning), because this time is considered the most beneficial for the body and mind. If one misses this time, waking up by five or six is acceptable, as the atmosphere during this period is conducive to health and mental clarity.

Going against the laws of nature leads to negative consequences, such as deteriorating health and disturbed mental states. **Tamasic tendencies** are evident in those who act out of sync with nature's principles.

Maya (Delusion) refers to the inability to see the truth clearly.

This was exemplified in the story of Dhritarashtra in the Mahabharata. It was due to delusion that Dhritarashtra could not see the evils of Duryodhana. Had he corrected him in childhood, the war of Kurukshetra may have not taken place.

Similarly, Arjuna was initially paralysed by his attachment to his family members and hesitated to fight the battle. Sri Krishna had to reveal the truth to him in the eleventh chapter of the Gītā, showing him that the death of his relatives had already been predestined by time (*Kaal*), and he was merely an instrument in the divine plan. Later overcoming his attachment Arjuna had told Bhagavān that he was freed of all doubts and was ready to obey HIS instructions.

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥ 73॥

Arjuna said: O Infallible One, by Your grace my illusion has been dispelled, and I am situated in knowledge. I am now free from doubts, and I shall act according to Your instructions.

Recognising the signs of Rajoguna and Tamoguna helps a person act more consciously. If one understands that Rajoguna is causing agitation, one can take steps to reduce it by cultivating more Sattvik qualities.

For example, uprooting a small plant can be easily done with two fingers. As the plant grows into a large tree, it requires much more effort to remove, and eventually, it may need to be cut down with an axe. In the same way, if we try to control the Rajoguna early in life, we may succeed. However, by the time these tendencies grow strong (like a large tree), they are much harder to manage.

Bhagavadgītā teaches us to recognise such tendencies early in life, which helps us gain control over them, leading to spiritual growth and well-being.

In Chapter 14 of the Bhagavad Gītā, Bhagavān encourages us to recognise and work on these tendencies, thereby achieving victory over our lower instincts and ensuring our ultimate welfare.

Question - Answers:

Saroj didi

Question: Why do we cover our head while we pray?

Answer: There is no particular reason for it. It is a part of our tradition. As norms set by our culture we should follow it.

D.P Pandey ji:

Question: Before killing of warriors by Arjuna, Bhagavān said they were already dead. How?

Answer: HE clearly explained in the Gītā that time (*Kala*) governs the destruction of all beings. This

means that death is an inevitable truth, and every living being will eventually die according to time. HE told Arjuna that he is not the killer; but is merely an instrument (nimitta), and his duty was to perform his responsibility in the war.

Rekha ji

Question: How should one control anger?

Answer: When in anger start reading the Gītā in reverse order. Along with giving Sattvic benefits, it will distract the mind from anger.

Vinay ji

Question: Many times we do not feel like doing work and procrastinate it. How to overcome this habit?

Answer: This happens with almost everyone. We must first discipline ourselves by following our scriptures and then should delegate time for each activity and follow the schedule.



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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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