

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 14: Guṇatraya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/z7do2G5H8wQ>

Our predominant guna in this lifetime lays the foundation for our next (re)birth

Chapter 14 of Bhagavad Gītā is **Guṇatraya Vibhāga Yoga (The Yoga of the Division of the Three Guṇas)**

The session commenced with the auspicious act of dīpa prajvālana (lighting of the sacred lamp) and the invocation prayer:

*pārthāya pratibodhitām bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayam
vyāsenā grathitām purāṇa-muninā madhye mahābhārata |
advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm
amba tvām anusandadhāmi bhagavad-gīte bhava-dveṣiṇīm ||*

This material world is pervaded by the divine energy of Bhagavān. From the body, mind, and intellect to the vast cosmos—all emerge from HIS material energy (Prakṛti), which operates through three powerful modes or Guṇas: Sattva (goodness), Rajas (passion), and Tamas (ignorance).

Since the body, mind, and intellect are material in nature, they too are imbued with these three Guṇas. The unique combination and dominance of these Guṇas in different proportions give shape to a person's character and tendencies.

In the last session, we reflected on how these Guṇas influence daily life:

- **Sattva** leads towards knowledge, bliss, and peace.
- **Rajas** propels toward desires, attachments, and restless actions.
- **Tamas** drags into delusion, laziness, and inertia.

The Guṇas **bind the soul to material existence**, and so it becomes crucial to understand their nature and mechanism.

In Chapter 3, Bhagavān emphasizes that:

nobody can remain without action for even a moment:

***na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt |
kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛti-jair guṇaiḥ || 3 - 5 ||***

The three Guṇas born of **Prakṛti** compel every embodied being to act, even unwillingly.

Later, in Chapter 18, Bhagavān reaffirms that complete renunciation of all action is impossible. True renunciation lies in **giving up attachment to the fruits of action**, not in abandoning action itself:

***na hi deha-bhṛtā śakyam tyaktuṃ karmāṇy aśeṣataḥ |
yas tu karma-phala-tyāgī sa tyāgīty abhidhiyate || 18 - 11 ||***

Thus, the focus should be on performing **seva** (selfless service) without desire for personal gain.

Though Sattva is the purest of the three, it too binds the soul by creating attachment to happiness and knowledge.

Rajas, as Bhagavān says in Chapter 14:

***rajo rāgātmakam viddhi tṛṣṇā-saṅga-samudbhavam |
tan nibadhnāti kaunteya karma-saṅgena dehinam || 14 - 7 ||***

- **Rajas** is born of longing and attachment.
- It binds the soul through the compulsion to act, fueled by desires for outcomes.

Not all action is **Rājasika**. Selfless action (**Nishkāma Karma**), performed without expectation of rewards, aligns with Sattva and higher Yogas.

Members of noble organizations who work tirelessly with a spirit of **seva bhāva**, without personal motives, are practicing **Sāttvika Karma**, not **Rājasika Karma**.

In Chapter 3, Arjuna, deeply troubled, asks:

***arjuna uvāca
atha kena prayukto'yaṁ pāpaṁ caratī pūruṣaḥ |
anicchann api vārṣṇeya balād iva niyojitaḥ || 3 - 36 ||***

"O Vārṣṇeya (Krishna), what is it that compels a person to commit sin, even against his will?"

***śrī bhagavān uvāca-
kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ |
mahāśano mahā-pāpmā viddhy enam iha vairiṇam || 3 - 37 ||***

"It is desire (**kāma**) and anger (**krodha**), born of Rajo-guṇa, that drive people to sinful acts. They are the great devourers and the greatest enemies."

Desire leads to **craving**, and unfulfilled cravings lead to **anger**. Both bind the soul deeper into **Samsāra**.

Bhagavān explains Tamas thus:

Born from **ignorance (ajñāna)**.

Causes **delusion, negligence (pramāda), laziness (ālasyam)**, and **sleep (nidrā)**.

A tamasic mind becomes dull, unable to distinguish right from wrong.

This ignorance (**moha**) gripped even Arjuna on the battlefield, making him forget his duty (**kartavya**):

arjuna uvāca-

kathaṃ bhīṣmam ahaṃ saṅkhye droṇaṃ ca madhusūdana |
iṣubhiḥ pratiyotsyāmi pūjārḥāv arisūdana || 2 - 4 ||

He asked how he could fight revered elders like Bhīṣma and Droṇa.

Overwhelmed by attachment to his kin, Arjuna argued:

svajanaṃ hi kathaṃ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma mādharma || 1 - 36 ||
"How can we be happy after killing our own people, O Mādhava?"

In response, Bhagavān teaches the truth of the imperishable soul:

ya enaṃ vetti hantāraṃ yaś cainaṃ manyate hatam |
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṃ hanti na hanyate || 2 - 19 ||

"Both he who thinks the soul kills and he who thinks it is killed are ignorant; the soul neither kills nor can it be killed."

He then reminds Arjuna:

mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva nimitta-mātraṃ bhava savya-sācin || 11 - 33 ||
"These warriors are already slain by ME. O Arjuna, you are merely an instrument."

Bhagavān also beautifully describes the soul's indestructibility:

nainaṃ chindanti śastrāṇi nainaṃ dahati pāvakaḥ |
na cainaṃ kledayanty āpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ || 2 - 23 ||

"Weapons cannot cut it, fire cannot burn it, water cannot moisten it, and wind cannot dry it."

The negative traits of Tamas—**negligence (pramāda)**, **laziness (ālasyam)**, and **sleep (nidrā)**—can be transcended through the practices of **Yoga**, **Prāṇāyāma**, and **Bhakti**.

By cultivating Sattva, the mind becomes pure and luminous.

Regular practice of disciplines like **Ashtāṅga Yoga** helps reduce Tamas and infuses the mind with clarity, courage, and devotion.

Ultimately, the goal is not merely to increase Sattva but to **transcend all three Guṇas**.

When a person rises above the fluctuations of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, treating happiness and sorrow alike, and remains unwavering in devotion to Bhagavān, he attains the state of **Guṇātīta** — free from all bondage.

Thus, through sustained efforts, pure actions, and steady devotion, the soul breaks the chains of Guṇas and shines forth in its divine glory.

***sattvaṃ sukhe sañjayati, rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata,
jñānamāvṛtya tu tamaḥ, pramāde sañjayatyuta. 14.9***

The three guṇas — sattva, rajas, and tamas — are distinctly separate in their characteristics. Sattva-guṇa elevates one towards material happiness, rajo-guṇa propels one towards action, and tamo-guṇa clouds wisdom, binding one to delusion.

Though sattva-guṇa undoubtedly grants happiness, over time, the soul becomes bound to the material world, as everything appears pleasant and alluring — much like being tempted with chocolates. In the mode of goodness, the miseries of material existence are certainly reduced.

On the other hand, rajo-guṇa instigates constant action. From action springs desire, and from desire arises further action, thus entangling one in a vicious cycle.

Engaging in work that fosters serenity and calmness of mind is always beneficial. Practices like Yoga and Prāṇāyāma, though rājasika in performance, ultimately lead to the rise of greater goodness and therefore should be diligently followed. It is often observed that people wake up early for road trips or activities of personal interest, but struggle to rise early for Yoga and Prāṇāyāma. Complaints of poor sleep are common, largely due to a mind clouded by thoughts arising from multiple desires. As desires multiply, so do thoughts. Regular practice of Meditation, Yoga, and Prāṇāyāma undoubtedly improves sleep quality, with visible results within six months.

In contrast, tamo-guṇa veils knowledge and obstructs the intellect of living beings. Incapable of discerning right from wrong, human beings often commit mistakes. Desires for enjoyment manifest in dubious forms and push one towards wrongful actions.

14.10

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

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

The three **guṇas** are interchangeable.

The entire universe — all the fourteen **lokas**, including **pṛthvī-loka**, **svarga-loka**, and **pātāla-loka** — are composed of **prakṛti** and therefore inherently possess the three **guṇas**. The individual nature constantly oscillates among these **guṇas**. No one is entirely **sāttvika**, **rājasika**, or **tāmasika**; the **guṇas** vary in proportion.

Sometimes **sattva** (goodness) prevails over **rajas** (passion) and **tamas** (ignorance) within a person. At other times, **rajas** dominates over **sattva** and **tamas**. Similarly, there are occasions when **tamas** overtakes **sattva** and **rajas**. The ratio continually shifts depending on one's actions.

When **sattva-guṇa** is predominant, a person becomes more spiritual and tends to remain happy. When **rajo-guṇa** is on the rise, the individual becomes action-oriented, increasingly desirous, and passionate about material pursuits. When **tamo-guṇa** rises, one tends to become complacent, lethargic, and gradually useless. The predominance of a particular **guṇa** in a person depends on their habits and actions. With good habits, **sattva** naturally ascends.

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.

It has been understood that when **rajo-guṇa** and **tamo-guṇa** are subdued, **sattva-guṇa** becomes predominant. The next step is to discern how one can recognize the state of elevated **sattva-guṇa**. What are the indicators?

There are nine openings in the human body, known as **navadvāra** — two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, the rectum, and the genitals.

When all the gates of the body are illuminated with knowledge, it signifies the dominance of **sattva-guṇa**. In this context, two words appear — **jñāna** and **prakāśa**.

Jñāna refers to knowledge. Once knowledge adorns the mind and intellect, the **jīvātma** is illuminated (**prakāśa**), and one experiences a blissful state. Knowledge is indeed the light. Another name for Bhagavān is **Sat-Cit-Ānanda**, which signifies truth and bliss.

As **sattva-guṇa** rises, the **antaḥkaraṇa**, comprising **mana**, **buddhi**, and **citta** — becomes filled with knowledge. Knowledge, whether termed **jñāna** or **vidyā**, is always welcome and beneficial. Students, when their minds are calm, study better and prepare more effectively for examinations. Conversely, an overly playful mind hinders concentration and focus.

Food habits also serve as an indicator of a **sāttvika** mind. When the craving for delicious and tasty food subsides, it can be inferred that **sattva-guṇa*** is on the rise. This elevation of **sattva-guṇa** comes through deliberate effort. Therefore, it is essential to retain these habits and ensure they do not slip away.

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.

Here, **lobhaḥ** means greed, **pravṛttiḥ** signifies activity, and **aśamaḥ** denotes restlessness.

When greed (**lobhaḥ**) overpowers the mind, it indicates that **rajo-guṇa** is on the rise. Greed, craving for worldly gain, passion, and restlessness culminate in excessive action.

These are the clear symptoms of **rājasic pravṛtti**.

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.

Here, **aprakāśaḥ** means lack of knowledge, **apravṛttiḥ** signifies inertia, and **vivṛddhe** refers to when something dominates.

When **tamo-guṇa** rises, knowledge (**jñāna**) diminishes. Once knowledge is eroded, one loses the ability to discern between right and wrong. Consequently, either wrongful actions or complete inaction set in. When such habits slip into one's nature, it becomes difficult to return to the earlier **rājasic** or **sāttvic** ways. Therefore, one must be extremely vigilant in guarding against falling into the trap of **tāmasic** tendencies.

14.14

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

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

Those who die with the predominance of **sattva-guṇa** attain the heavenly abodes.

A similar teaching was given by Bhagavān earlier in Chapter 8:

**anta-kāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram |
yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvaṃ yāti nāsty atra saṃśayaḥ || 8 - 5 ||**

*"Those who relinquish the body while remembering Īśvara at the time of death (**anta-kāle**) attain Him without any doubt."*

It is one's state of consciousness and the object of absorption at the time of death that determines the next birth. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will further explain this principle in the following verse.

According to the scriptures, there are fourteen distinct **lokas**, categorized into seven upper and seven lower realms. **Loka** refers to a world or realm of existence.

Seven Upper Lokas (**ūrdhva-lokas**):

- **bhū-loka**: The earth, our present world.
- **bhuvar-loka**: The immediate outer space, a realm of celestial beings and travel.
- **svarga-loka**: The heaven, the realm of gods and goddesses, often associated with Indra.
- **mahar-loka**: The abode of **ṛṣis** (sages) and enlightened beings.
- **jana-loka**: The realm of the sons of Brahmā, the creator.
- **tapo-loka**: The realm of beings engaged in deep austerities, resistant to fire.
- **satya-loka (brahma-loka)**: The highest realm, home of Brahmā, embodying ultimate truth and righteousness.

Seven Lower Lokas (**adho-lokas**):

- **atala**: The first lower realm, associated with material pleasures and seduction.
- **vitāla**: The second lower realm, known for its abundance of gold and wealth.

- **sutala**: The third lower realm, ruled by the demon Bali and protected by the avatāra Vāmana.
- **talātala**: The fourth lower realm, abode of the master architect Māyā.
- **mahatala**: The fifth lower realm, inhabited by hooded serpents.
- **rasātala**: The sixth lower realm, dwelling place of **daityas** and **asuras**.
- **pātāla (nāga-loka)**: The seventh and lowest realm, ruled by Vāsuki and inhabited by **nāgas** (serpent beings).

14.15

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

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

Human beings generally perform numerous **karmas**, remaining most of the time in the mode of action. There are individuals who do not even find time to eat properly, being extremely passionate about their karma or actions. Such people, when they die, with the predominance of **rajo-guṇa** upon them, are born among those who are driven by work.

On the other hand, those who die in the mode of ignorance, with **tamo-guṇa** being predominant, may take birth either as animals or insects.

The term **mūḍha-yoniṣu** refers to birth in the animal kingdom.

14.16

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

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

sukṛtasya āhuḥ means pure, and **nirmala phala** also signifies pure results.

Rajasah tu phalam duḥkham means that the result of actions performed under the influence of **rajo-guṇa** is sorrow.

Ajñānaṃ tamaśaḥ phalam indicates that the result of actions influenced by **tamo-guṇa** is darkness.

Thus, **sāttvic** individuals attain pure results, **rājasic** individuals face sorrowful results, and **tāmasic** individuals encounter darkness.

14.17

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

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

Jñāna (wisdom) arises from **sattva** (goodness), and **lobha** (greed) undoubtedly arises from **rajas** (passion). Likewise, **pramāda** (obstinate error), **moha** (delusion), and **ajñāna** (ignorance) arise from **tamas** (ignorance).

Jñāna signifies enlightenment. **Sattva-guṇa** gives rise to wisdom, which is a form of light. This **jñāna** empowers one to distinguish between right and wrong. **Rajo-guṇa** inflames the senses, driving the mind more towards sense pleasures. **Tamo-guṇa** clouds the mind with inertia and negligence.

14.18

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

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

We know that Śrī Kṛṣṇa explained the destiny that awaits a dying person, depending on the predominant **guṇa** at that time. In the following verse, He describes the different destinies of those dying who are already established in the three modes of nature.

Those who are established in the mode of goodness (**sattva**) rise upwards, while those in the mode of passion (**rajas**) stay in the middle, and those in the mode of ignorance (**tamas**) go downward.

- **Urdhvaṃ gacchanti sattvastha** – Those who engage in good deeds, perform charity, practice self-control, fast, and have the **sattva-guṇa** predominant in them, leading a righteous life, ascend to higher celestial abodes at the time of death.
- **Madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ** – Those who are attached to desires and actions, with **rajo-guṇa** predominating in them, but still follow the ordinances of the Scriptures, obtain a middle abode. They do not escape the cycle of life and death, so they are reborn on earth as human beings.
- **Jaghanyaguṇa-vṛttistha adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ** – Those who are established in the mode of ignorance (**tamo-guṇa**), degrade themselves and descend to the netherworlds. They fail to perform their **kartavya-karma** (duties), commit evil acts, and harbor negative thoughts about others. Such individuals are reborn in lower forms and in lower regions like **pātāla-loka**. They endure great suffering in these infernal realms.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains that the soul's reincarnation in the next birth is determined by the predominant guṇa at the time of death. If a person thinks of Bhagavān in his last moments, he will reach Bhagavān. However, if the person has evil thoughts or is driven by restlessness and passion, he will attain the lower abodes.

14.19

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

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

Śrī Kṛṣṇa now explains the meaning of transcending them and the result. He reveals the truth and the mechanism.

When a person understands and perceives no doer other than the three **guṇas**, and knows **Me** to be transcendental to these three **guṇas**, they attain **Me**.

Here, the **Paramātmā** (Supreme Soul) elucidates the truth. He states that there is no other doer of all actions except the three **guṇas**. They are responsible for every action of ours. He justifies Arjuna's role in fighting the war by explaining that the fight is not between individuals but between bodies and **guṇas**. Thus, He urges Arjuna to respond to the war, emphasizing that Arjuna is merely fulfilling his duty by fighting against the **guṇas** of the opposing side, not against Bhīṣma Pitāmaha or Dronācārya as individuals. In other words, He is conveying the sense of detachment one needs to develop.

The self or soul is a mere observer, not connected to the three **guṇas**, nor tainted or contaminated by them. **Paramātmā** emphasizes that only the three **guṇas** dictate all our actions in this life. They are the sole doers. When we understand this, only then can we transcend the three **guṇas** and progress in our spiritual journey.

guṇebhyaśca paraṃ(m) vetti, madbhāvaṃ(m) so'dhigacchati – When the seeker (**sādhaka**) realizes that he is established in the illuminator by which the three **guṇas** are illuminated, he attains the Supreme Divine. The discerning seeker realizes that only the three **guṇas** propel all our actions and deeds and seeks to detach himself from them. He ascends to a state of **yogarūḍha**. He completely attaches his mind to **Paramātmā**, thereby transcending the three **guṇas**. It is only then that he attains the Supreme Divine.

14.20

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

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

guṇānetānatītya trīn, dehī dehasamudbhavān — Although the **ātman** has no intrinsic connection with the body, it is referred to as **dehī**, the indweller within the body. The body itself is an evolution of the three **guṇas** or modes of nature. Attachment to these **guṇas** becomes the cause for birth in either auspicious or inauspicious wombs.

When a **sāttvika** individual rises above the three **guṇas**, he perceives himself as distinct from them, recognising that it is only the modes that undergo modification, not the self. The self remains untouched even by **prakṛti**. Therefore, Śrī Krishna explains that **prakṛti** no longer binds such a being.

janmamṛtyujarāduḥkhaiḥ(r), vimukto'mṛtamaśnute — The self, having transcended the three **guṇas**, becomes free from the cycle of birth, death, old age, and suffering, and attains immortality.

Remaining merely **sāttvika** is not sufficient, for even **sattva-guṇa** binds, albeit with golden chains.

The goal is to transcend all bondage and escape the prison of material existence. One who transcends the three **guṇas** realises the truth and is no longer reborn in this world, attaining a superior state.

14.21

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

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

Having heard the truth from **Paramātmā**, Arjuna's curiosity is stirred. He inquires: How does a person who is **triguṇātīta** appear? What are his characteristics? What is his conduct? How does he transcend the three **guṇas**? He poses all these questions in this verse.

Arjuna wishes to know whether those who have transcended the three **guṇas** appear different from ordinary people. How can such an individual be identified? What are the symptoms that characterise him?

- **Kim ācāraḥ** — What are his daily activities? How does he behave?
- **Katham caitāṃs trīnguṇān ativartate** — How does such a being transcend the **sattva**, **rajas**, and **tamas guṇas**?

14.22

śrībhagavānuvāca
prakāśam(ñ) ca pravṛttiṃ(ñ) ca, mohameva ca pāṇḍava,
na dveṣṭi sampravṛttāni, na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati. 14.22

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

Śrī Krishna, smiling and patiently, begins to answer Arjuna's queries. Out of His deep affection for Arjuna, and knowing his ability to assimilate the highest knowledge, He chooses Arjuna as the recipient of the teachings of the **Bhagavad Gītā**.

Yogeśvara now explains the characteristics of a **triguṇātīta**.

Those persons who have transcended the three **guṇas** neither hate illumination (**sattva**), activity (**rajas**), or delusion (**tamas**) when they arise, nor do they long for them when they subside.

- **Prakāśam ca pravṛttiṃ ca moham eva ca pāṇḍava** — Śrī Krishna explains to Arjuna that **prakāśa** or illumination represents **sattva-guṇa**, **pravṛtti** represents **rajo-guṇa**, and **moha** represents **tamo-guṇa**.

Purity of the mind and senses is called **prakāśa**. Illumination is the power that enables the mind to think and the intellect to judge. Enlightened souls strive for human welfare selflessly, performing their **kartavya-karma** to the best of their ability while recognising their limitations and understanding that **Paramātmā** is the Ultimate.

- **Pravṛttiṃ**— This tendency attaches a person to greed, unrest, craving, and activity driven by selfish motives — all characteristics of **rajo-guṇa**. However, one who has transcended the three **guṇas** is free from desire and selfish activity; his actions become flawless.

A **tamo-guṇī** person lives in delusion, but even in such conditions, the transcended one realises that it is merely a modification of the **guṇas** and not of the self. Such a person is now called a **triguṇātīta**.

- **Na dveṣṭi saṃpravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati** — A **triguṇātīta** remains indifferent to all situations. He neither feels attachment nor aversion towards good or bad tendencies. The propensities may change, but the self remains untainted and unchanged.

14.23

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

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

He, who like one unconcerned, is unmoved and undeterred by the modes of nature, and remains firmly established in the self, stays apathetic and unwavering, knowing that it is only the three **guṇas** that act and change.

Paramātmā elucidates that such a person remains steadfast and stable in every situation, whether favourable or unfavourable, and maintains impartiality and neutrality towards all occurrences around him. He is firm in the conviction that it is only the three **guṇas** responsible for all transformations, and thus, he does not react.

He believes there is no existence apart from the Supreme Divine and remains firmly established in the self. No external situation can disturb him.

This is the state of **udāsīnavadāsīno**.

- **guṇairyo na vicālyate** — He remains untainted by the three modes — **sattva** (goodness), **rajas** (passion), or **tamas** (ignorance). He perceives only **Bhagavān**.
- **guṇā vartanta ityeva, yo'vatiṣṭhati neṅgate** — His mind remains fixed and unwavering in the understanding that all actions are merely the play of the three **guṇas**, not the actions of the imperishable soul. The soul remains ever pure.

Just as many diseases like corona infection, allergies, and other problems may affect the body, yet he remains unperturbed, knowing that it is only the body and mind that are influenced by the **guṇas**, not the self.

He has transcended the modes of nature; hence, nothing can affect him. The **jīvātmā** remains intact, pure, undaunted, and untainted.

14.24

**ṣamaduḥkhasukhaḥ(s) svasthaḥ(s), ṣamaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ,
tulyapriyāpriyo dhīraḥ(s), tulyanindātmasaṁstutiḥ. 14.24**

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

Śrī Krishna continues to explain the conduct of a person who has transcended the three **guṇas** in the following two verses.

He who regards both pleasure and pain alike, who is firmly established in the self, who looks upon a clod of earth, a stone, and a piece of gold with equal vision, and who remains unaffected by blame or praise, is considered steadfast.

A person who has gone beyond the three **guṇas** can discriminate between the real and the unreal, and remains rooted in the self. He is neither elated by happiness nor depressed by sorrow. He remains stable and stoic.

- **Svasthaḥ** — He remains centred within himself, totally engrossed in the self.
- **Samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ** — He regards a lump of clay, a stone, and a piece of gold with the same value. He neither aspires for more gold nor discards the stone as worthless. He exhibits neither attachment nor aversion towards anything.
- **Tulyapriyāpriyo dhīraḥ tulyanindātmasaṁstutiḥ** — He accepts both praise and blame with the same sense of neutrality and impartiality. He remains indifferent to the fruits of his actions, neither craving praise nor becoming angered by blame. His attitude is marked by equanimity.

14.25

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

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

The person who regards honour and dishonour equally, who remains the same towards friends and enemies, and who performs all actions without any expectation, is said to have transcended the three **guṇas**.

Here, **Paramātmā** explains that a person who perceives both honour and dishonour with equanimity remains unaffected by either. He understands that these experiences pertain only to the body and mind, and not to the self, and thus maintains an equal vision in all circumstances.

He does not distinguish between a friend and a foe, treating both alike with impartiality.

Śrī Krishna has outlined four pairs of opposites: pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, pleasant and unpleasant, and praise and blame. In all these circumstances, such a person remains unchanged and neutral.

- **Sarvārambhaparityāgī** — One who is completely detached from the fruits of actions, performing duties as per the need of the situation, devoid of ego, greed, desire, or attachment,

is called a **guṇātīta**. Such a person is said to have transcended the three **guṇas**.

14.26

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

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

Now, Bhagavān elucidates how a person can transcend the three **guṇas**.

He who worships Me with pure and unwavering devotion rises above the three **guṇas** and becomes eligible to attain **Brahman**.

Mere knowledge of the self and its detachment from the body is not sufficient. With the help of pure and exclusive devotion, or **bhakti**, the mind must be fixed on the Supreme Divine. Only then does the mind become **nirguṇa**, untouched and untainted by the three **guṇas**. That person becomes **saguṇa**.

One who offers pure and exclusive devotion to **Paramātmā**, completely surrenders to Him, and seeks refuge in Him, transcends the modes of nature and becomes **triguṇātīta**.

He then becomes eligible to attain the Supreme Element, or **Brahman**. Thus, the Absolute is attained through the discipline of devotion. Such a person does not consciously strive to transcend the three **guṇas**; they are naturally transcended by him.

14.27

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

For, I am the substratum of the imperishable Brahma, of immortality, of the eternal Dharma and of unending immutable bliss.

How does a devotee who worships Śrī Kṛṣṇa become eligible to attain Brahman? Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers this question.

I am the Abode of Brahman, the Immortal and the Imperishable, of Eternal Dharma and Supreme Bliss.

Paramātmā explains that He is the base or Abode of Brahman. He is the home of the Supreme Element called Brahman. He also describes Himself as being Immortal —

- **amṛtasyāvyayasya ca** — imperishable and never destroyed.
- **śāśvatasya ca dharmasya** — He is the embodiment of Eternal *Dharma* or righteousness, the guardian of everlasting *Dharma*.
- **sukhasyaikāntikasya ca** — He is Supreme Bliss, Eternal and Infinite.

By worshipping Him with exclusive devotion and complete surrender, one attains everlasting happiness, peace, self-realization, and liberation from the bondage of the three **guṇas** — **sattva**, **rajas**, and **tamas** — thus attaining higher celestial abodes and Supreme Bliss.

Questions and Answers

Jagadish Ji

Q: How can we know which guna is predominant in ourselves?

A: The choices we make at every moment determines our predominant guna. If we choose those actions that are sreyas for us, it is sattvic guna predominance; if we choose preyas actions over sreyas, it is rajasic or tamasic guna predominance. We can analyse every choice we make and know our predominant guna.

Divya Ji

Q: How can we help an alcoholic (tamasic activity) person who is in denial, and is content with his life style?

A: If the concerned person is our family member, it is our responsibility to help him out. If he is in denial mode, we can pray to God to show him the right path. If the person is not our family member, it is not our responsibility even if he is our friend. We can only suggest the good things, and leave the rest to them.

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



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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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