

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 14: Guṇatrāya-Vibhāga-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/K2UcO100vA4>

## The Effect of Gunas on Life and Destiny.

### Chapter 14 of Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā: Guṇa-trāya-vibhāga-yoga — The Yoga of Understanding the Three Modes of Material Nature

The session begins with the sacred invocation:

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।  
गुरुः साक्षात् परं ब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः ॥

The Guru is Brahmā (the creator), Viṣṇu (the sustainer), and Maheśvara (the destroyer). The Guru is verily the Supreme Absolute Reality itself. I bow to that revered Guru.

कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने ।  
प्रणतः क्लेशनाशाय गोविंदाय नमो नमः ॥

Salutations again and again to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva, the Supreme Lord, who removes the suffering of those who surrender to Him.

रत्नाकराधौतपदां हिमालयकिरीटिनीम् ।  
ब्रह्मराजर्षिरत्नाढ्यां वन्दे भारतमातरम् ॥

I bow to Mother India, whose feet are washed by the oceans, whose crown is the Himalayas, and who is adorned by the jewels of sages and kings.

ॐ पार्थाय प्रतिबोधितां भगवता नारायणेन स्वयं  
व्यासेन ग्रथितां पुराणमुनिना मध्ये महाभारतम् ।  
अद्वैतामृतवर्षिणीं भगवतीमष्टादशाध्यायिनीम्  
अम्ब त्वामनुसन्दधामि भगवद्गीते भवद्वेषिणीम् ॥

I meditate upon the divine Mother, the Bhagavad Gītā, which was spoken by Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa Himself

to Arjuna, compiled by the sage Vyāsa within the Mahābhārata; the one that showers the nectar of non-dual wisdom and destroys the cycle of worldly existence.

The 14th chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, known as Guṇatraya Vibhāga Yoga, elaborates on the three fundamental qualities, sattva, rajas, and tamas, that govern human nature and bind the jīvātmā to worldly existence. Having already studied chapters 9, 12, 15, and 16, which guide the seeker toward staying close to Bhagavān and ultimately attaining liberation, this chapter deepens that understanding by revealing the inner mechanics of bondage.

In the earlier portion of this chapter, Bhagavān declares that HE is about to impart the highest and outstanding knowledge available in this world:

**परं भूयः प्रवक्ष्यामि ज्ञानानां ज्ञानमुत्तमम्।**

HE reiterates essential truths, much like two close companions revisiting important points in a conversation, or like a person repeatedly recalling key items from a shopping list to ensure nothing is forgotten. Through this repetition, Bhagavān ensures that Arjuna grasps the essence of the teaching, the core wisdom necessary for liberation.

Bhagavān explains that the entire human experience revolves around the three guṇas, which bind the individual soul. Sattva guṇa binds through attachment to knowledge and happiness. While it is the purest of the three, even an excess of sattva can become a subtle bondage if one becomes attached to the joy and clarity it provides. Rajo guṇa binds through constant engagement in action (karma) and desire-driven activity, leading to restlessness and attachment to outcomes. Tamo guṇa, on the other hand, binds through ignorance, inertia, and laziness, pulling the individual toward delusion and inaction.

A profound question arises: while living within this body, is it the guṇas that bind the individual, or does the individual bind himself to the guṇas? To illustrate this, a simple yet insightful story is shared. There was once a merchant who would tie his elephants with a very thin rope. A passerby, surprised at this, asked why the elephants did not simply break free and escape. The merchant explained that he had trained them from infancy, tying them with similar ropes when they were young and weak. Over time, the elephants developed a mental conditioning, they believed they could not break the rope. Even after growing strong, they never attempted to free themselves.

In the same way, individuals often feel that they are helplessly bound by the guṇas, believing that liberation is beyond their reach. However, the real bondage lies not in the guṇas themselves, but in the conditioning of the mind. It is the mind that accepts limitation and refuses to challenge it. Freedom is indeed possible, and there are countless examples of those who have transcended the guṇas.

Arjuna himself stands as a shining example. One of HIS names is Guḍākeśa, which means “the conqueror of sleep.” Through intense discipline and austerity, HE attained such mastery over HIS senses that HE could remain awake for extended periods, even months, without losing clarity, focus, or precision. Ordinarily, even a single night of inadequate sleep dulls the senses and weakens the intellect. Yet Arjuna, through HIS spiritual strength and unwavering practice, maintained complete control over HIS faculties, never losing HIS sharpness or HIS aim in archery.

This illustrates that mastery over the guṇas is not merely theoretical but entirely achievable. Through awareness, discipline, and alignment with Paramātmā, one can rise above these inherent tendencies and move steadily toward liberation.

## **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.

### **The Ever-Changing Play of the Three Guṇas and Their Subtle Bondage**

There are three guṇas, sattva, rajas, and tamas, but at any given moment, only one tends to be predominant, while the others remain in the background. Over time, this dominance keeps shifting. For instance, upon receiving a message about a vivecana (spiritual discourse), when there arises an immediate inclination to attend it with the intention of understanding the meanings of the śloka, and even a resolve to memorise them, that reflects the predominance of sattva guṇa. There is clarity, enthusiasm for knowledge, and a noble intention. However, this state may not remain constant; the mind can change later.

If the vivecana continues for an extended duration, a sense of boredom may arise. This indicates the onset of tamo guṇa, which pulls the mind toward inertia and disengagement. Alternatively, rajo guṇa may take over. In such a case, one may continue listening to the discourse but simultaneously engage in other activities such as folding clothes or cooking. This reflects the restless nature of rajas, which constantly seeks activity and does not allow the mind to remain still. Thus, at different times, different guṇas rise to prominence and influence behaviour.

When sattva guṇa is dominant, a person experiences inner happiness and contentment regardless of external circumstances. Such a person tends to perceive goodness in all situations and naturally acts for the welfare of others. As described in the 12th chapter:

**सर्वभूतहिते रताः।**

Those established in devotion (bhaktas) often have a predominance of sattva guṇa. They engage in actions for the well-being of others, trusting that Bhagavān will take care of them and their needs. There is a deep sense of surrender and faith, reflected in the sentiment:

**“हमारे साथ श्री रघुनाथ तो किस बात की चिंता!”**

This attitude brings peace and fearlessness.

On occasions such as Akṣaya Tṛtīyā, which is especially significant for performing dāna (charity), this principle becomes very evident. When one gives to others, the joy reflected on the recipient's face naturally brings happiness to the giver as well. Any act of selfless giving or service generates inner satisfaction. Similarly, those engaged in the service of the Gītā (sevīs) dedicate valuable time and effort for the benefit of others, society, community, and nation. This dedication brings them deep contentment and joy, as they are contributing to a greater good.

However, even sattva guṇa, despite being pure and elevating, can still bind. Just as a chain, whether made of gold, silver, or iron, remains a chain and continues to bind, attachment to goodness, knowledge, or even service can also become a subtle bondage. The desire to continue doing more and more good work can itself become an attachment.

A person in whom rajo guṇa is predominant is constantly driven by the urge to achieve. Such an individual is always setting goals and striving toward them. Once one goal is accomplished, another immediately arises in the mind, and effort is directed toward achieving it. This cycle continues endlessly. There is a constant state of activity (karmātmaka pravṛtti), with the person always engaged in some form of work or pursuit. Restlessness and ambition define this state.

Tamo guṇa, on the other hand, binds by covering or concealing. It hides clarity, much like a blanket used to cover a burning object or dirt thrown over something to suppress it. In simple terms, tamas obscures the understanding of what is right and what is wrong, both at a personal and societal level. This clarity is essential for guiding one's actions appropriately, but tamo guṇa veils this knowledge.

As a result, a person influenced by tamas tends to avoid duties and responsibilities. For example, if a student has an assignment to submit, the appropriate action would be to begin working on it promptly. However, under the influence of tamo guṇa, there is a tendency to procrastinate, postponing the task until the last moment. When tamas becomes excessive, the individual may completely neglect duties and instead engage in meaningless or unproductive activities.

In this way, each of the three guṇas binds the individual in its own manner, sattva through attachment to happiness and knowledge, rajas through constant action and desire, and tamas through ignorance and inertia. Understanding their nature is the first step toward gradually transcending their influence.

#### 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 Rising and Falling of the Guṇas - Cultivating Sattva for Inner Growth**

In this śloka, the dynamic nature of the three guṇas, sattva, rajas, and tamas, is clearly understood. At any given moment, when one guṇa becomes predominant, the other two naturally recede to a comparatively lower state. If sattva guṇa is dominant, then rajo guṇa and tamo guṇa remain subdued. Similarly, when rajo guṇa rises to prominence, sattva and tamas diminish, and when tamo guṇa prevails, the other two are reduced in influence. This interplay is constantly fluctuating; the mind and personality are continuously shaped by whichever guṇa is most active at that time. However, it is important to recognise that at any one point, only one guṇa truly leads, while the others remain secondary.

Understanding this shifting dominance provides valuable insight into one's own thoughts, actions, and tendencies. It also highlights the importance of conscious effort in directing one's inner state. A seeker should mindfully invest time and energy in nurturing and increasing sattva guṇa, as it leads to clarity, harmony, and spiritual progress. At the same time, one should remain vigilant so that rajo guṇa, with its restlessness and endless activity, and tamo guṇa, with its inertia and ignorance, do not overpower the mind.

By gradually strengthening sattva, the individual creates a foundation for higher understanding and ultimately prepares to transcend all three guṇas, moving closer to Paramātmā and the state of liberation.

#### 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.

## **The Expression of Sattva Through the Nine Doors of the Body**

This śloka explains that when sattva guṇa becomes predominant within an individual, its influence is experienced through all the nine doors (nava-dvāra) of the body, the senses and faculties through which one interacts with the world. In such a state, the entire perception of life becomes refined and elevated. The individual naturally develops the tendency to see the positive aspect in every situation and consciously avoids entertaining negative thoughts.

A sāttvika person is inherently inclined toward that which uplifts and purifies. There arises a natural attraction toward listening to noble and enriching topics, stories, discourses, and teachings that support spiritual growth (sādhana). In today's context, there is an abundance of content available across various platforms, offering all kinds of knowledge. However, a person established in sattva guṇa exercises discernment and chooses only that which contributes positively to inner development.

There are numerous vivecanas delivered by revered teachers and Svāmījis, listening to which brings a sense of enrichment, inner bliss, and peace. Such experiences are not accidental but are a direct reflection of the predominance of sattva in the mind. When the mind is sāttvika, these elevated experiences become continuous, and the individual remains naturally aligned with purity, clarity, and spiritual joy.

### **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.

### **The Restlessness of Rajo Guṇa - The Endless Cycle of Desire and Dissatisfaction**

In this śloka, Bhagavān elaborates on the nature of rajo guṇa, highlighting its defining characteristic, lobha (greed). This greed is not merely about material possessions, but reflects a deeper inner tendency of always wanting more, never feeling content with what one already has. There is a constant craving for improvement, achievement, and accumulation, without any sense of fulfillment.

For example, consider a student who has just completed studies and secured a job. After working for a few months, that individual begins to seek a better opportunity, using the initial experience as a stepping stone. After spending a year or two in the next role and gaining further experience, again there arises a desire to move to a higher position. This cycle continues, each new achievement becomes a platform for the next pursuit. Despite progress and success, dissatisfaction persists. The individual remains focused primarily on personal advancement, rarely pausing to consider the welfare of others. This reflects the predominance of rajo guṇa, where one is constantly driven by self-centered goals and an unending sense of incompleteness.

In contrast, consider a Gītā sevī who dedicates valuable time and effort for the benefit of others, for society and the nation, without expecting monetary gain. Such a person derives a deeper sense of satisfaction and contentment, even in the absence of material rewards. The joy experienced here is of a different nature, arising from selflessness and contribution rather than personal gain.

A person dominated by rajo guṇa continues striving to achieve materialistic goals, but true satisfaction remains elusive. The mind remains restless, constantly attached to outcomes and future ambitions. No matter how much is achieved, there is always a sense that something more is needed. This continuous striving and attachment prevent the experience of inner peace. Thus, rajo guṇa binds

the individual through desire, activity, and the perpetual cycle of dissatisfaction.

### 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.

### **Tamo Guṇa - The Veil of Ignorance, Inertia, and Delusion**

This śloka describing tamo guṇa stands in sharp contrast to the earlier śloka on sattva guṇa. While sattva represents illumination, clarity, and knowledge, tamas signifies ignorance, inertia, and laziness. A person influenced by rajo guṇa may remain actively engaged in various pursuits and, in that process, may even accomplish some positive actions. However, a person dominated by tamo guṇa often shows a complete lack of initiative, displaying unwillingness to act or exert effort of any kind.

Boredom itself is one manifestation of tamo guṇa. When there is no meaningful engagement, the mind begins to drift aimlessly, scrolling through reels, repeatedly checking messages, or seeking distraction merely to pass time. Even the absence of external stimuli, such as electricity preventing television viewing, can trigger restlessness in the form of boredom. These are clear signs of the predominance of tamas.

Another important aspect of tamo guṇa is the avoidance of one's duties. The individual may remain occupied with various activities, yet neglect what truly needs to be done. For instance, there may be situations where responsibilities at home are overlooked, such as not preparing proper meals and instead opting for convenience, like ordering food or giving children packaged items rather than nourishing meals. This reflects not merely a practical choice but a deeper tendency to avoid effort and responsibility.

In contrast, even those deeply engaged in Gītā parivār activities, despite having demanding schedules, often ensure that their family responsibilities are fulfilled. They manage their duties with care, cooking, nurturing, and supporting their household, while also contributing to sevā and bhakti. This reflects a balanced life. Ideally, one should strive to maintain harmony between family, career, sevā, and devotion, giving each its due importance. When such balance is lacking and responsibilities are neglected in favor of trivial or avoidant activities, it indicates the growing influence of tamo guṇa.

Engaging in meaningless activities, such as endlessly scrolling through content without purpose, is another expression of tamas, where time is simply passed without any constructive outcome. A deeper dimension of tamo guṇa is moha (delusion), which acts like a curtain, obscuring one's understanding of duty and righteousness. Under its influence, a person fails to perceive what is right and drifts into a life of confusion and delusion.

These teachings are meant for introspection. By observing one's own tendencies, one can recognise which guṇa is predominant and gradually work toward transformation. In the subsequent verses, Bhagavān explains the destinies that await individuals dominated by each of these guṇas after the fall of the body, further emphasizing the importance of transcending their influence.

### 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.

### **The Fruit of Sattva at the Time of Departure - A Higher Journey of the Soul**

This śloka explains that if a person is established in sattva guṇa at the time of death, then when the soul departs from the body, it attains an uttama loka—a higher realm of existence. Such a birth may take place in elevated planes like heavenly regions (svarga), or in the yoni of devatās, or even in a noble human family that is deeply rooted in dharma, where pūjā, pāṭha, and discussions on the śāstras are a natural part of life.

Being born in such an environment itself is a great blessing. For instance, being part of a spiritually inclined community such as the Gītā Parivār, where one regularly listens to vivecanas by revered teachers and receives guidance from evolved souls, is also indicative of a sāttvika life. Such an environment nurtures purity of thought and supports inner growth. Individuals with sāttvika tendencies naturally move toward a purer nature and higher states of consciousness.

It is also understood that the moment of death is predetermined at the time of birth, even though it remains unknown to the individual. However, the circumstances of one's next birth are shaped by the karma performed in the present life.

An analogy to understand this: A wealthy businessman thought he would spend the latter part of his life and was focused on building his business. Out of nowhere, one day, he passed away, and as his mind was constantly preoccupied with his wealth, his last thoughts were also about it. Since the exact time of death is uncertain, one cannot postpone sāttvika karma with the intention of practising it later in life. Death may come at any moment.

Therefore, it becomes essential that all actions throughout life are performed with sāttvika bhāva. One should consistently strive to live a life of purity, righteousness, and awareness, ensuring that every action contributes toward spiritual elevation. This continuous effort prepares the individual for a higher journey beyond this life, aligning one closer to Paramātmā.

### **14.15**

## **rajasi pralayaṃ(ñ) gatvā, karmasañgiṣu jāyate, tathā pralinastamasi, 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.

### **The Destiny Shaped by Guṇas at the Time of Death - The Importance of Lifelong Sāttvika Living**

This śloka explains the consequences that follow when a person departs from the body under the influence of rajo guṇa or tamo guṇa. When an individual, at the time of death, is dominated by rajo guṇa, the next birth takes place in a family that is materialistically inclined. In such an environment, life revolves around activity, ambition, and achievement. The individual remains constantly engaged in work, striving to fulfill goals and expectations, both personal and familial. There is continuous motion and effort, but often without deeper inner fulfillment, as the nature of rajas keeps the mind outwardly driven and restless.

On the other hand, if a person departs while under the dominance of tamo guṇa, the soul takes birth in a state of existence lacking discrimination, clarity, and self-control. In such a condition, there is an absence of the capacity to think, reflect, or make conscious choices. For example, if a human being feels hungry and possesses two rotis, yet encounters someone starving and on the verge of collapse, there arises the ability to empathize and share. However, beings born in a mudha yoni do not possess such discernment or restraint; they act purely on instinct without higher understanding.

This is why attaining a human birth is considered an immense blessing. In the human form, there exists the unique capacity to exercise control over one's karma, to discriminate between right and wrong, and to consciously shape one's life. Other forms of existence, even those of devatās or rākṣasas, do not offer the same degree of freedom in action and evolution. As Goswami Tulsidas beautifully expresses:

**“बड़े भाग्य मानुष तन पायो।”**

This human life is attained through great fortune. It provides the opportunity to think, to gain knowledge, to evolve spiritually, and to uplift oneself. Being born in Bhārat, within a culture rich in spiritual traditions and scriptural wisdom, further enhances this opportunity. Exposure to śāstras and guidance from noble sources should not be taken lightly but utilised fully for inner growth.

One should therefore cultivate a broad and thoughtful perspective of life, rather than adopting a narrow outlook that revolves merely around enjoyment, “eat, drink, and be merry.” This life itself is a result of past karma, and the way it is lived will determine future births. Every thought and action contributes to shaping one's destiny.

An important subtlety is also highlighted: if a person has performed negative actions throughout life but develops sātṭvika thoughts at the time of death, the next birth may be in a noble or spiritually elevated family. However, such a person may struggle to live up to the dignity or values of that family. Conversely, a person who has lived a life of sātṭvika karma but experiences tāmasika thoughts at the final moment may be born into less favourable circumstances. Yet, due to the strength of prior sattva, such individuals often rise above their conditions and bring honour and upliftment to their surroundings.

Since the exact moment of death remains unknown, it is neither wise nor practical to postpone righteous living. One should continuously engage in sātṭvika karma throughout life. By doing so, one ensures not only a higher state at the time of departure but also a favourable environment in future births, one that supports further spiritual growth and ultimately leads toward liberation and union with Paramātmā.

#### **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 Sātṭvika 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.

#### **The Inescapable Fruits of Karma and the Influence of the Guṇas**

In this śloka, Bhagavān explains the principle of the fruits of action (karma-phala). Every action performed by an individual inevitably leads to a corresponding result. While the Bhagavad Gītā teaches that one should not be attached to the fruits of action and should instead focus on performing

one's duty, it also makes it clear that the results of those actions cannot be avoided. No one, not even Bhagavān, interferes with this law. Whether the results are pleasant or painful, they must be experienced by the individual who has performed the actions.

A beautiful illustration of this principle is seen in the life of Dhruva. Through intense tapasya, HE pleased Bhagavān and sought a permanent place in HIS divine abode. Bhagavān granted HIS wish, assuring HIM of an eternal position in the universe. However, before attaining that state, HE was required to experience the results of HIS accumulated karma. Having performed sāttvika karma throughout HIS life, HE was sent back to HIS kingdom, where HE was crowned king and ruled for a long period. Only after exhausting the fruits of HIS previous actions did HE attain liberation and HIS eternal place. This demonstrates that the law of karma is absolute and universal.

An important aspect of this teaching is that each action bears its own fruit independently. Good actions do not cancel out bad actions, nor do bad actions negate the results of good ones. Every karma must be accounted for separately, and its result must be experienced accordingly.

When one is predominantly influenced by sattva guṇa, the fruits are uplifting and purifying. Such a person naturally receives opportunities to spread goodness, engage in sevā, impart knowledge, and guide others on the path of bhakti. These opportunities arise effortlessly, as a reflection of the purity cultivated within.

On the other hand, the root of rajo guṇa is duḥkha (sorrow or dissatisfaction). A rājasic person is never content with what is already possessed and constantly strives for more. This endless desire leads to restlessness and inner dissatisfaction. Even if such a person acquires great wealth or success, the absence of contentment or meaningful relationships can still result in unhappiness. Thus, the very nature of rajas leads to duḥkha.

Actions performed under the influence of tamo guṇa lead to ajñāna (ignorance). These actions arise from laziness, delusion, and lack of clarity, and their results further deepen ignorance and delusion. Instead of elevating the individual, they bind the soul more firmly in darkness and confusion.

Through this teaching, Bhagavān highlights the importance of understanding not only actions but also the underlying guṇa that drives them. By consciously cultivating sattva and performing karma without attachment, one gradually purifies the mind and progresses toward liberation, while remaining aware that the fruits of all actions must be experienced in due course.

## 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.

### **A Concise Summary of the Three Guṇas and Their Effects**

In this śloka, Bhagavān provides a clear and succinct summary of the nature and outcomes of all three guṇas. HE explains that sattva guṇa leads to the rise of wisdom (jñāna). When sattva is predominant, the mind becomes pure, clear, and capable of understanding truth. There is inner light, discernment, and a natural inclination toward higher knowledge and righteous living.

In contrast, rajo guṇa gives rise to lobha (greed). Under its influence, the individual is driven by

desire, ambition, and the constant urge to acquire more. This leads to restlessness and attachment, where satisfaction remains elusive despite continuous effort and achievement.

Tamo guṇa, on the other hand, results in ajñāna (ignorance), along with laziness, inertia, and an unwillingness to perform one's duties. It clouds understanding, weakens resolve, and pulls the individual toward inaction and delusion.

Thus, through this śloka, Bhagavān encapsulates the essential effects of the three guṇas, sattva elevates through knowledge, rajas binds through desire and greed, and tamas degrades through ignorance and neglect of responsibility.

#### 14.18

### **ūrdhvaṃ(ñ) gacchanti sattvsthā, 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.

In this śloka, Bhagavān explains the differing paths that individuals follow based on the predominance of the three guṇas, and how these influence the overall direction of life.

Those established in sattva guṇa experience a gradual upliftment in their lives. Their thoughts, actions, and tendencies become increasingly refined, guiding them toward higher states of understanding and more elevated roles in life. There is a natural progression toward purity, wisdom, and inner growth.

Individuals dominated by rajo guṇa remain in an intermediate state. They neither rise to the higher sāttvika level nor fall into the lower tāmasika state. Their lives are characterised by constant activity, ambition, and pursuit of goals. While there is movement and effort, it does not necessarily lead to true elevation, as the mind remains entangled in desires and outcomes.

Those influenced by tamo guṇa, however, tend to move downward. Their journey becomes one of decline, often described as a spiral, where ignorance, inertia, and delusion lead to further degradation. Instead of growth, there is a gradual distancing from clarity and purpose.

Bhagavān also reveals that HE resides within every being as the indwelling presence in the soul. The intrinsic nature of the soul is to seek upliftment and happiness. This is why every individual, regardless of background or inclination, strives for happiness in life. However, the understanding of happiness varies, some may seek it in worldly pleasures, while others look for it in spiritual pursuits such as studying the Bhagavad Gītā. Ultimately, true and lasting happiness is attained only through union with Bhagavān.

Therefore, the path forward requires conscious effort. One should strive to rise from tamo guṇa to rajo guṇa by reducing inertia and increasing activity. From there, through further refinement, one should progress from rajas to sattva, cultivating purity, clarity, and balance. This transformation is not instantaneous but a continuous process that demands consistent effort, awareness, and discipline at every stage. Through this gradual elevation, one moves closer to Paramātmā and the ultimate goal of liberation.

#### 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.

**Beyond the Three Guṇas - The Beginning of Guṇātīta**

So far, the discussion has focused on progressing step by step, from tamo guṇa to rajo guṇa, and from rajas to sattva guṇa. This gradual refinement is essential for inner growth. However, Bhagavān makes it clear that even sattva guṇa, though pure and elevating, is still a form of bondage. It may be compared to a golden chain, more refined than iron, yet still a chain that binds.

Therefore, the ultimate goal is not merely to become sātītika, but to transcend all three guṇas. True freedom lies in going beyond sattva, rajas, and tamas, and realising one's unity with Paramātmā. As long as one remains within the influence of the guṇas, there is still limitation and attachment at some level.

From the next śloka onward, Bhagavān begins to describe the state of being guṇātīta, one who has risen above the three guṇas. Such a person is no longer bound by their effects, remains steady amidst their fluctuations, and abides in a state of inner freedom and equanimity.

Thus, while the journey begins with purifying oneself and increasing sattva, it ultimately culminates in transcending all guṇas and merging with HIM.

**14.20**

**guṇānetānātītya 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.

**The State of Guṇātīta - Freedom Beyond All Bondage**

Since all three guṇas, including sattva guṇa, are binding in nature, they must ultimately be transcended in order to attain true liberation. One who rises above their influence is known as a guṇātīta, a person who is no longer affected by the fluctuations of the guṇas, nor bound by the cycle of birth and death. Such an individual is untouched by sorrow, agitation, or depression, and begins to experience a state akin to amṛta, inner immortality, peace, and bliss.

This does not mean that the physical body of such a person does not undergo death. Rather, it means that the transition from one state to another is effortless and free from fear or attachment. The guṇātīta has elevated consciousness to such a level that the natural processes of birth and death no longer create disturbance. The identification with the body weakens, and the awareness remains established in the higher truth.

The lives of great saints beautifully reflect this state. Figures such as Sant Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram Maharaj, and Ramakrishna Paramahansa led deeply sacred lives dedicated to the service of Bhagavān from an early stage. Their lives exemplify the qualities of a guṇātīta.

No matter the circumstances, regardless of the body they inhabited, the environment they lived in, or the struggles they faced, they never deviated from their path. Their lives remained firmly rooted in bhakti, spiritual awareness, and the sharing of knowledge. This unwavering steadiness, combined with

detachment from the binding influence of the guṇas, is the hallmark of one who has truly transcended them and lives in constant connection with Paramātmā.

## 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?

### **Arjuna's Inquiry into the Nature of the Guṇātīta**

At this stage, Arjuna turns to Bhagavān with a deeper and very practical question. Having understood that one must ultimately transcend the three guṇas, HE now seeks to know the nature of such a person who has gone beyond them.

Arjuna asks what the characteristics of a guṇātīta are, how such an individual can be recognised. HE wishes to understand how such a person conducts oneself, how HE behaves in different situations, and what distinguishes HIS way of living from others. The inquiry also extends to everyday aspects of life, what HIS routine might be like, what kind of habits HE follows, including food and lifestyle.

Through this question, Arjuna is not merely seeking theoretical knowledge but a practical guide. By understanding the external expressions and inner qualities of a guṇātīta, a seeker gains clarity on what to observe, reflect upon, and gradually imbibe in one's own life.

In response, Bhagavān begins to describe the qualities of one who has transcended the guṇas, providing a roadmap for seekers to recognise and move toward that elevated state of being.

## 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.

### **The Mastery of the Guṇas - The Nature of a Guṇātīta**

In response to Arjuna's question, Bhagavān explains the characteristics of a person who has transcended the three guṇas. Such an individual remains established in awareness and is not overpowered by the changing states of sattva, rajas, or tamas. HE understands their nature and therefore does not become attached to them.

When qualities such as illumination (prakāśa), activity (pravṛtti), or even delusion (moha) arise, the guṇātīta neither resists nor clings to them. HE does not excessively rejoice when sattva brings clarity and knowledge, nor does HE become disturbed when rajas creates restlessness or when tamas brings dullness. There is a state of inner steadiness and neutrality.

The essential difference lies in mastery. In ordinary individuals, the guṇas dominate and control

thoughts, emotions, and actions. However, in the case of a guṇātīta, the situation is reversed, the individual remains in control, observing the play of the guṇas without becoming bound by them. HE lives with awareness, allowing the guṇas to function as part of nature, while remaining inwardly free.

Thus, a guṇātīta is not someone in whom the guṇas have disappeared, but one who has risen above their influence. HE neither identifies with them nor is driven by them, and therefore lives in a state of freedom, balance, and connection with Paramātmā.

## 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.

#### **The Equanimity of a Guṇātīta - Established in the Self**

In continuation, Bhagavān explains that such a guṇātīta person becomes completely neutral to the effects of the guṇas. HE attains a state of perfect equilibrium, where the constant rise and fall of sattva, rajas, and tamas no longer create disturbance within. There is an inner balance that remains steady, irrespective of external circumstances.

Such an individual abides in Ātma-chintana, a deep contemplation and awareness of the Self. HE is established in HIS own true nature and does not get affected by the changing events of the world. Whether situations are favourable or unfavourable, whether there is praise or criticism, success or failure, HIS inner state remains undisturbed.

This does not mean withdrawal from life, but rather a higher state of awareness within it. The guṇātīta continues to act, yet remains unattached, witnessing everything with clarity and calmness. Rooted in the Self, HE rises above external fluctuations and lives in a state of inner peace and stability, ever connected with Paramātmā.

## 14.24

### **ṣamaduḥkhasukhaḥ(s) svasthaḥ(s), ṣamaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ, tulyapriyāpriyo dhīraḥ(s), tulyanindātmasaṃstutiḥ. 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.

#### **Equal Vision of the Guṇātīta - Seeing the One in All**

Bhagavān further explains that a guṇātīta person develops a vision of complete equality. For such an individual, distinctions lose their binding significance, mud, stone, and gold are all seen as the same. This does not mean a lack of practical understanding, but rather a deeper realisation that all objects are expressions of the same underlying reality.

Such a person perceives everything through tattva (principle). Just as water, water vapour, and ice appear different in form yet are essentially the same substance, similarly, the guṇātīta understands that all diversity in the world is only superficial. At the core, everything is pervaded by Paramātmā. This vision removes attachment and aversion, as the person no longer gets caught in external differences.

Because of this understanding, such an individual remains unaffected by changing circumstances. Whether facing favourable or unfavourable situations, praise (stuti) or criticism (nindā), honour or dishonour, everything is received with the same calm disposition. There is no inner disturbance, as the mind remains established in the truth that all experiences are transient expressions of the same divine reality.

Thus, the guṇātīta lives with samatva (equanimity), seeing Bhagavān everywhere and in everything, and remaining steady amidst all dualities of life.

## 14.25

### **mānāpamānayostulyaḥ(s), tulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ, 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.

#### **Seeing the Same Tattva in Friend and Foe - The Vision of Jñāna**

Bhagavān further explains that a guṇātīta person sees both friend and foe with an equal vision, recognising that the same divine tattva of Bhagavān exists in all beings. The external differences in behaviour, nature, or actions do not alter the fundamental truth that Paramātmā pervades everyone equally.

A well-known example of this understanding is seen in the conduct of Rama during the time of the war with Ravana. After Rāvaṇa was defeated, Vibhishana hesitated to perform his last rites, considering him a pāpī. At that moment, Śrī Rāma instructed him to see Rāvaṇa as HIS own brother and perform the last rites. Through this guidance, Vibhīṣaṇa understood that, at the level of tattva, all are ultimately one, and thus he carried out the rites.

However, this vision of equality does not imply that behaviour toward everyone must be identical in a practical sense. Dharma requires that one respond appropriately according to the situation and the role of the other person. Yet, internally, the guṇātīta remains free from hatred, attachment, or bias.

Such a person sees through the jñāna cakṣu, the eyes of knowledge, and perceives the same essence in all. Friend and enemy, honour and insult, gain and loss are all viewed with equanimity. This inner equality, combined with appropriate outward conduct, reflects the maturity and wisdom of one who has truly transcended the guṇas.

## 14.26

### **māṃ(ñ) ca yo'vyabhicāreṇa, bhaktiyogena sevate, sa guṇāṅśamatīyaitān, 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.

#### **Cultivating Equal Vision Through Bhakti and Guru Sevā**

This principle teaches that one who has higher understanding begins to see both friend and enemy with the same inner vision, just as gold and mud are seen as essentially alike. However, Bhagavān also indicates that such a state is not easily attained, nor does it arise overnight. It requires gradual inner refinement and sustained effort.

A practical and accessible way to move toward this state is through bhakti. Often, when one sits in front of Bhagavān, there is a tendency to ask for something, happiness, success, or the fulfillment of desires. While this is natural, there are moments when one should simply sit in HIS presence without asking for anything. Spending time in gratitude, silently thanking HIM for all that has been received, deepens the connection with Paramātmā. This quiet appreciation nurtures devotion and brings the mind closer to HIM.

The Bhagavad Gītā places great emphasis on two essential principles, bhakti and guru sevā. Through consistent devotion and selfless service to the Guru, the mind gradually becomes purified and steady. Over time, this leads to a transformation in one's vision, making it possible to perceive equality in all and move toward the state of a guṇātīta.

With sincere and continuous practice, this inner change is inevitable, drawing the individual closer to Paramātmā and the ultimate goal of liberation.

## 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.

#### **The Indwelling Presence of Bhagavān - The Path Within**

Bhagavān reveals that HE alone is the very foundation of all existence and the source of unending happiness. Although it is understood that HE resides within every being, the tendency of the mind is to search for HIM outside, in the external world. This outward search continues due to ignorance and lack of proper understanding.

Bhagavān reminds that HE is ever-present within. There is no need to wander in search of HIM elsewhere. What is required is a shift in perspective, a turning inward. By cultivating a positive outlook toward life and directing attention within, one begins to recognise HIS presence. Through steadfast bhakti, the mind gradually becomes purified. As the layers of superficial dust, misconceptions, delusion, and ignorance, are removed, clarity dawns, and the truth of HIS presence is revealed.

Thus, the journey is not about reaching somewhere outside, but about uncovering what already exists within. With consistent devotion, sincerity, and right understanding, the seeker begins to experience this inner connection with Paramātmā.

With this understanding, there arises a heartfelt prayer that all sādhakas receive the blessings of their revered Guru, continue to walk diligently on the path of the Bhagavad Gītā, and, at the earliest possible stage in their journey, attain the state of being guṇātīta.

#### **Oṃ Śrī Kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu**

All these teachings are offered at the lotus feet of Bhagavān.

### **QUESTION AND ANSWER**

#### **Kailashchandra bhaiya**

**Q: You said that a person's thoughts at the time of death decide what he will be born as.**

**But at times the person is unwell, sometimes may not be conscious either, so how can he remember Bhagavān at that time?**

**Ans:** Bhagavān assures that if a person remains engaged in HIS bhakti throughout life, then at the final moment, when the soul prepares to depart, HE Himself takes the responsibility of reminding that devotee to remember HIM and take HIS name. This is a profound assurance, it shows that sincere devotion is never lost, and Bhagavān personally safeguards the spiritual journey of such a bhakta.

**Satya Narayan bhaiya**

**Q: Had organised a meet for garden lovers to tell them about organic gardening in their balconies & terraces, about 35-40 people came & gained knowledge, but some complained that they were not informed personally. Can it be considered a Sattvik deed?**

**Ans:** Yes, of course, it was a Sattvik deed, and you should not feel bad about those who are blaming you for not informing personally, as that is not possible. We all have our duties in life & can devote just a part of our time to these activities done for others.

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



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