

# Srimad Bhagavad Gita

Chapter 14  
Gunatraya Vibhaaga Yogah:  
Yoga of the Division of the three Gunas

Transliterated Sanskrit Text

Free Translation

&

Brief Explanation

By

T.N.Sethumadhavan

Published  
In  
Esamskriti.com  
&  
Medhajournal.com

Nagpur

September 2010

[tnsethumadhavan@gmail.com](mailto:tnsethumadhavan@gmail.com)

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 14  
Gunatraya Vibhaaga Yogah:  
Yoga of the Division of the three Gunas  
**T.N.Sethumadhavan**

Preamble

This Chapter explains why the same Spirit when expressed through matter manifests itself in different ways. Although the same water is poured in different bottles, it will look different not because of the water but because of the color of the glass out of which the bottles were made. Similarly, the one Eternal Principle expresses itself differently in various matter equipments as different individuals even though the elements constituting matter are the same. This is due to *Gunas* born of *Prakriti*.

Gunas indicate not the properties of a material but the attitude with which the mind functions. These attitudes are three in number viz. *Sattva* - Unactivity, *Rajas* - Activity and *Tamas* - Inactivity. These three qualities influence the mind and intellect of every individual in different proportions at different times. Although all these three Gunas are always present in everybody their proportions differ from individual to individual. It is these diversities that differentiate one person from the other in character, conduct and behavior etc.

The three Gunas – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – together constitute every human being. *Sattva* is stainless, pure and brilliant. When this predominates over the other two Gunas, a person's wisdom shines in his expression. *Rajas* is of the nature of passion which creates a craving for what you do not have and attachment to what you possess. When this Guna dominates over the other two, the person develops greed, becomes involved in endless activity and suffers from mental unrest. *Tamas* arises out of ignorance which manifests as delusion, inertia and heedlessness. *Sattva* binds people through attachment to knowledge, and happiness. *Rajas* binds through attachment to action. *Tamas* binds through heedlessness, indolence and sleep.

This Chapter helps us to find out for ourselves the powerful tendencies that rule our minds (influences of Gunas) and take remedial measures wherever called for. A seeker who recognizes the influences under which he is forced to function at different times can take timely steps to arrest the wrong impulses, unethical urges and animal tendencies in order to keep himself fully under self-control and equanimous in all situations in life. The discussion is concluded with a description of the person who has risen above the Gunas and realized God. As this Chapter is entirely dealing with the nature and working of the Gunas as also the methods to give up all connections with them, it is entitled as "Yoga of the Division of the three Gunas".

In the previous Chapter the Lord stated that the attachment to the three Gunas alone was responsible for one's repeated birth in good and evil wombs (13.22). This statement will raise questions about diverse characteristics of the Gunas, how they bind the Jivatma to the body, the result of such attachment, the means of ridding oneself of the three Gunas

and the marks and conduct of the soul who has given up such attachments. Krishna personifying Brahman elucidates all these points. The Chapter concludes with a detailed exposition on the most important philosophic concept of the embodied transcending the Gunas and becoming Brahman.

Bhagawan Sri Krishna assures that a seeker can reach that exalted state through unswerving yoga of devotion to Him, thereby crossing the Gunas and reaching the Abode of the immortal, immutable Brahman. This is the state of eternal righteousness, absolute bliss.

## The Text

THE HIGHEST KNOWLEDGE

**sri bhagavaan uvaacha  
param bhooyah pravakshyaami jnaanaanaam jnaanamuttamam  
yajjnaatwaa munayah sarve paraam siddhimito gataah // 14.1 //**

*Sri Bhagavan said*

*I will again expound that Supreme Knowledge, the most exalted of all forms of knowledge, and by knowing which all the sages have attained the Supreme Perfection after passing from this world.*

The subject matter of this chapter is that supreme knowledge which is above all other knowledge. It deals with the behavior of man and the different influences that play on his subtle body in life. It is the highest knowledge in as much as without a correct understanding of this theme, self observation and analysis as also timely self-correction will be impossible on the spiritual path.

Having known which all the Munis have attained the highest perfection: On understanding this knowledge and learning about the real goal of life, men of reflection and contemplation have reached perfection. Reaching perfection indicates that with the aid of the exhaustive knowledge about the Gunas, men can foresee the obstacles and dangers on the way of spiritual attainment and prepare themselves to face them effectively.

After passing from this world: This does not mean that perfection can be attained only after this life or only after death. It means that perfection can be gained here and now only after shedding our egocentric misconceptions of life. Through right reflection and true understanding our false values of life end and in the newly found wisdom a better quality of life can be lived. Perfection out of imperfection all around is achieved through constant contemplation.

**idam jnaanam upaashritya mama saadharmyamaagataah  
sargepi nopajaayante pralaye na vyathanti cha // 14.2 //**

*They who, having taken refuge in this knowledge, have attained to My Being are neither born at the time of creation nor are they disturbed at the time of dissolution.*

Sri Krishna says that he who has correctly understood the significance of this Chapter can reach the state of Perfection i.e. 'Attain My Being'. Perfection is a state of awakening to a different level of Consciousness. When we go to sleep we become one with the sleeper leaving aside the waking personality. Similarly, on realizing the Self we cross over the body, mind and intellect and become one with the Spiritual Nature.

The sorrows and joys of one plane of consciousness do not extend to another plane. A seeker who could control his mind and reach beyond the ordinary realms of consciousness through meditation cannot come back to his previous state of sorrows and joys when he used to identify himself with the body, the matter. An individual ego when it rises above its own conditions rediscovers itself to be the Omnipotent Reality which knows no creation and dissolution. Thus such a saved soul achieves the *samana dharmata* or similarity of the quality and not the *svarupata* or identity of the Supreme Lord.

Let us awake into that heaven of freedom from all agitations and imperfections, where the mind is free by realizing the divine in our outer consciousness with the help of the knowledge of the Gunas,

**mama yonirmahadbrahma tasmin garbham dadhaamyaham  
sambhavah sarvabhootaanaam tato bhavati bhaarata // 14.3 //**

*My womb is the great Brahman (prakriti); in that I place the seed; from there, O Bharata, is the birth of all beings.*

The Field and the knower of the Field are the two aspects of Prakriti, Matter. Both of them function on the substratum, the Absolute. When the Supreme functions in the Field He becomes the enjoyer of the Field and therefore the Knower of the field. When detached from the Field, He becomes Pure Absolute Consciousness.

The Lord is the Father and the Mother of the universe. Matter and Spirit are His two aspects which are inherent in Him. As the Father or the Supreme Soul He casts the seed; as the Mother or nature, or matter or prakriti, He receives the seed. From the embryo thus formed, which is termed as *Hiranyagarbha*, are produced all created beings.

This verse affirms that all existence is a manifestation of the Divine. He is the cosmic seed. With reference to this world, He becomes Hiranyagarbha, the cosmic egg. The world is the play of the Infinite on the Finite. It is the development of the form on the non-being. The forms of all things which arise out of the abysmal void are derived from God. They are the seeds He casts into non-being.

**sarvayonishu kaunteya moortayah sambhavanti yaah  
taasaam brahma mahadyoniraham beejapradah pitaa // 14.4 //**

*Whatever forms are produced, O Kaunteya, in any womb, the Great Brahman is their womb, I the seed giving father.*

In all wombs: In the whole Universe every second innumerable births are taking place. Birth of a new organism is the expression of Spirit through a given matter envelopment. Viewed thus, every matter particle is the womb which when dynamised by the Light of Consciousness becomes a potential living being. Thus every expression of life is matter combined with Spirit. Hence Sri Krishna, the Supreme Consciousness, says that He is the Father of the entire Universe. A Field in itself has no existence without the Knower of the Field vitalizing it. Body, mind and intellect are mere inert matter till Consciousness enlivens them.

GOODNESS, PASSION, AND DULLNESS

**Sattvam rajastama iti Gunaah prakritisambhavaah  
nibadhnanti mahaabaaho dehe dehinamavyayam // 14.5 //**

*The three modes (Gunas) purity, passion and dullness born of nature (Prakriti) bind fast in the body, O Mighty-Armed, the imperishable dweller in the body (the embodied soul).*

The main theme of the Chapter starts now wherein Sri Krishna explains what the Gunas are and how they bind the Spirit within matter to create individualized Ego sense in us. Sattva has the characteristic of effulgence. It is harmony, goodness or purity. Rajas is passion or activity. Tamas is inertia or dullness. These three qualities indicate the triple mentality which produces attachment in the individual Self, delude It and bind It down to the worldly life.

Just as childhood, youth and old age are found in the same body these three Gunas are found in the same mind. The individual Self gets identified with the body and the three qualities and thereby it feels the changes in the body as Its own changes. It becomes subject to sorrows and joys of the body till it realizes its identity with the Supreme Self. This delusion is on account of the influence of the Gunas. When the soul identifies itself with the modes of nature, it forgets its own reality and uses the mind, life and body for the egoistic satisfaction.

Gunas are not merely qualities but they are the primary constituents of nature. They are the base for all substances. They are the three different influences under which every human mind expresses itself in a variety of ways at different moments of changing environments.

If water in a vessel is stirred, the sun reflected in that water also appears to be agitated. So too, the pure Supreme Self appears to be bound by the three qualities of Nature through superimposition. In reality the Self is ever free and untainted and beyond them.

The Gunas depend for their existence on the Knower of the Field whom they bind very fast. The knowledge of Gunas is therefore necessary to come out of their clutches. These three Gunas are always present in all human beings and none is free from them. However, they are not always constant; every time any one of them will be predominant.

One should analyze all phenomena in terms of these three modes of nature and know their characteristics. One should stand as a witness of these qualities but must not identify with

them. Rising above these Gunas one should become Gunatita and attain supreme peace, immortality and eternal bliss.

NATURE OF SATTVA, RAJAS & TAMAS AND THE WAY THEY BIND

**tatra Sattvam nirmalatwaat prakaashakam anaamayam  
sukhasangena badhnaati jnaanasangena chaanagha // 14.6 //**

*Of these, Sattva, the luminous, free from evil and because of its unblemishness, binds, O Sinless One, by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge.*

Gunas cannot be defined directly without explaining their symptoms and processes. In the following verses a description of the mind under the influence of each of the three Gunas is given by describing the type of emotions, thoughts and behavior that emanate from the mind-intellect equipment.

Luminous, free from evil and unblemished:

Under the influence of Sattva, it being pure and hence luminous and without any blemish, the mind is steady and will constantly reflect on the Self. Though Sattva is thus the most Divine mental attitude, still it binds us and limits our spiritual nature.

It binds us by attachment to happiness and knowledge:

When the mind is cleansed from all its agitations and evil thoughts the seeker achieves greater inward peace, happiness, better understanding and intellectual comprehension.

Sattva does not rid us of the ego-sense. It also causes desire though for noble objects. The Self which is free from all attachments is here attached to happiness and knowledge. Happiness and knowledge are attributes of mind, which is form of matter. They belong to the category of the object and pertain to the *kshetra*. The Self which is of the nature of freedom and totally unattached, becomes bound by identification with matter. This is how sattva binds a soul to the world.

**rajo raagaatmakam viddhi trishnaasangasangamudbhavam  
tannibadhnaati kaunteya karmasangasangena dehinam // 14.7 //**

*Know Rajas to be of the nature of passion, giving rise to thirst and attachment; it binds fast, O Kaunteya, the embodied one by attachment to action.*

Now the characteristics of Rajas are described. When the influences of Rajo Guna predominate, the mind gets full of passions. Passion denotes urges, desires, emotions and feelings. These fall under two categories viz. desires and attachments which are said to be the very sources of passion.

Passion gives rise to thirst and attachment: Thirst means insatiable desire. A human personality longs for the satisfaction of any desire that grows in him. Satisfaction of one

kind of desire leads to attachment to the object desired. Desire is the mental relationship towards the objects that have not been possessed and attachment is the mental dependence on the objects so acquired.

Bind by attachment to action: When the Rajas predominates innumerable desires originate for things not acquired and deepest attachment sets in for things already possessed.

To fulfill the demands made by these two, one should necessarily undertake endless actions earning, spending, saving, procuring, protecting and thirsting for more all the time. Goaded by anxiety to possess more and to prevent from losing what he already has he has to act in many spheres. Thus he enters into a whirlpool of successes and failures arising out of his own actions.

Actions emanate from passions and passions arise out of desires and attachments all of which are the symptoms of the predominance of Rajo Guna on the mind. If Sattva Guna binds one with anxieties for happiness and peace, wisdom and knowledge, Rajo Guna binds him to inexhaustible actions. Thus though the Self is not acting, Rajas makes him act with the idea that 'I am the doer'.

**tamastwajnaanajam viddhi mohanam sarvadehinaam  
pramaadaalasyanidraabhis tannibadhnaati bhaarata // 14.8 //**

*And know Tamas to be born of ignorance, deluding all embodied beings, it binds fast, O Bharata, by mis-comprehension, indolence and sleep.*

Now the discussion is about Tamas.

Born out of ignorance: Under the influence of Tamo Guna a man's discriminatory capacity gets blunted and he gets deluded. The Lord says that Tamas in a human personality binds us to a lower nature with endless mis-comprehensions about the goal of life. In such a stupefied state one lives in indolence heedless of the higher purposes in life. Such a person practically lives in sleep; he has neither any goal in life nor any nobility in action.

So far the symptoms observable in the mind when it is influenced by these three Gunas have been described. They not only bring about different degrees of responses in an individual but also bind the Eternal Self to feel and act as if It were limited and conditioned by the matter envelopments.

**Sattvam sukhe sanjayati rajah karmani bhaarata  
jnaanamaavritya tu tamah pramaade sanjayatyuta // 14.9 //**

*Sattva attaches to happiness and Rajas to action, O Bharata, while Tamas, verily, shrouding knowledge attaches to mis-comprehension.*

The ideas of previous 3 verses are summarized and repeated here. Sattva makes us attached to the inward happiness arising from life fully lived. Rajas makes one passionate, thirsty of desires and deep attachments in fulfilling of which one perforce has to undertake endless

actions. Tamas conceals right judgment and knowledge of the Self in us. It results in indiscrimination and creates attachment to wrong comprehensions.

HOW THE GUNAS FUNCTION?

**rajastamashchaabhibhooya Sattvam bhavati bhaarata  
rajah Sattvam tamaishchaiva tamah Sattvam rajastathaa // 14.10 //**

*O Bharata, Sattva arises predominating over Rajas and Tamas ; likewise Rajas (prevails) overpowering Sattva and Tamas ; so Tamas (prevails) over Sattva and Rajas.*

The question whether these three Gunas act on the mind all at a time or each separately at different points of time is answered here. The Lord says that these Gunas act at different times - each one of them becoming powerful at any one point of time. At a given time human personality works under the influence of one predominant Guna when the other two Gunas get subdued but not totally absent.

Thus when Sattva predominates over Rajas and Tamas it produces on the mind its own nature of happiness and knowledge ; when Rajas predominates over the other two it produces passions, desires, attachments and actions. When Tamas is prominent over Sattva and Rajas it shrouds discrimination and makes the mind unaware of its nobler duties.

**sarvadwareshu dehesmin prakaasha upajaayate  
jnaanam yadaa tadaa vidyaadvivridham Sattvamityuta // 14.11 //**

*When through every gate (sense organs) in this body, the light of intelligence shines, then it may be known that Sattva is predominant.*

In this and next two verses the symptoms are explained by understanding which their sources i.e. Gunas can be known. The sense organs through which the body receives the stimuli from the external world are termed the gates of the body. Through these gates the light of awareness illumines the objects of the world like power of vision from the eyes, power of hearing for the ears etc. Each beam of light emanating from each gate illumines one aspect of the world outside.

When there is

- unruffled peace of mind,
- inner harmony,
- perfect serenity and tranquility,
- clarity of vision and
- penetrative insight

then we should understand that Sattva predominates.

When Sattva predominates ears refuse to hear improper sounds, eyes will not see undesirable sights, tongue avoids anything not proper and mind is not attracted towards sensual objects. If there is increase of Sattva there is increase of knowledge.

**lobhah pravrittir aarambhah karmanaamashamah sprihaa  
rajasyetaani jayante vivridhe bharatarshabha // 14.12 //**

*Greed, activity, the undertaking of actions, restlessness, longing - these arise when Rajas is predominant, O Best of the Bharatas.*

Sri Krishna enumerates the important qualities of the mind when Rajas dominates it.

- Greed - desire to appropriate the property of another.
- Activity - all activities motivated by selfish desires.
- Restlessness - lack of enjoyment and quietitude.

These three are interconnected and one succeeds the other in their impact. Greed leads to selfish activity, activity leads to unrest over the results of such activities. When one is completely subjugated by Rajas he feels inexhaustible longing for objects.

**Aprakaasho'pravrittishcha pramaado moha eva cha  
tamasyetaani jayante vivridhe kurunandana // 14.13 //**

*Darkness, inertness, mis-comprehension and delusion - these arise when Tamas is predominant, O Descendent of Kuru.*

The symptoms when Tamas predominates are given now.

- Darkness - a condition in which intellect is not capable of arriving at any decision.
- Inertness - sense of incapacity to undertake any endeavor and lack of enthusiasm to achieve anything in the world.
- Mis-comprehension - Incapacity to respond to good or bad and miscalculation of one's relationship with others around. Delusion - when such a person fails to understand the outside world he is always deluded.

EFFECTS OF GUNAS

**yadaa sattwe pravridhe tu pralayam yaati dehabrit  
tadottamavidaam lokaan amalaan pratipadyate // 14.14 //**

*If the embodied one meets death when Sattva is predominant then he attains to the spotless worlds of the knowers of the Highest.*

Sri Krishna now gives an idea as to the direction in which the mental equipment of the dead one would reach soon after death. There is always a continuity of thought in this life. Today's thoughts are an extension of yesterday's thinking and the thoughts of tomorrow will be conditioned by today's thinking. On the same analogy the type of thoughts entertained during one's life time will determine the type of thoughts that will follow after death also. So if the Sattva Guna is dominant at the time of death one attains the highest realm of abundant joy.

**rajasi pralayam gatwaa karmasangishu jaayate  
tathaa praleenastamasi moodha yonishu jaayate // 14.15 //**

*Meeting death in Rajas, he is born among those attached to action; dying in Tamas, he is born in the womb of the senseless.*

If the mind is under the influence of Rajas at the time it leaves the body, it takes the embodiment among those who are attached to action. It means that the mind will seek an appropriate field to exhaust the existing tendencies or vasanas at the time of death. Similarly, when one dies when Tamas is dominant one reaches the realm of irrational beings such as animal or vegetable kingdom.

**karmanah sukritasyaahuh saattwikam nirmalam phalam  
rajasastu phalam duhkham ajnaanam tamasah phalam // 14.16 //**

*The fruit of good action, they say, is Sattvic and pure ; verily the fruit of Rajas is pain and ignorance is the fruit of Tamas.*

In this verse The Lord summarizes what He told in the previous verses. The results obtained by living in the three Gunas are given here.

- Sattva : If one lives a quiet and good life of service, devotion, of love and kindness, of mercy and compassion, it indicates the Sattvic nature of his mind. He achieves inward purity.
- Rajas: Leading a life full of desires and continuous actions to satisfy them always results in sorrows and pain.
- Tamas: Dullness in actions, lack of discriminating capacity and absence of understanding leading to ignorance is the fruit of Tamas.

**Sattvaat sanjaayate jnaanam rajaso lobha eva cha  
pramaadamohau tamaso bhavato'jnaanameva cha // 14.17 //**

*From Sattva arises wisdom, from Rajas greed, mis-conception and delusion and from Tamas ignorance arise.*

When Sattva is predominant the intellect is enlightened and knowledge awakened. Rajas creates insatiable cravings, makes one to ignore the feelings of others and breeds selfish acquisitiveness. Tamas brings forth incapacity to perceive rightly the world outside and eliminates the power to right judgment.

**oordhwam gacchanti Sattvasthaa madhye tishthanti raajasaah  
jaghanyaGunavrittisthaa adho gacchanti taamasaah // 14.18 //**

*Those who are abiding in Sattva go upwards, the Rajasic dwell in the middle and the Tamasic abiding in the function of the lowest Gunas go downwards.*

- Go upwards: Those who are living a pure life of discrimination, clear thinking, right judgment and self-discipline cultivate more and more Sattva qualities in themselves. When the mind is thus quiet it evolves to a higher level.
- Dwell in the middle: Those of Rajasic nature, with all their desires and agitations, ambitions and achievements again and again manifest as human beings till they acquire the required purity.
- Go downwards: Those of Tamasic nature that are full of misconceptions and deluded in their own lust and passions devolve themselves into the lower natures.

This verse repeats the ideas expressed in the verse which explained the continuity of existence even after death. It is made clear that all the three Gunas bind man to attachment; including Sattva which binds us to knowledge and happiness. Then when will man become free from the contacts of the pluralistic world to attain Godhood ?

So far we were told the nature of the Gunas the symptoms from which the predominant Guna could be identified, their reactions on our life and how they affect our future etc. It was also told that we get the predominant Guna from our past which influences the present which in turn determines the future. All these are the causes for the bondage arising out of the Self in us getting identified with the matter vestures surrounding it.

There can be release from these bondages only when we transcend all the Gunas. The three Gunas may be in different proportions present in each one of us but the true release comes not only when all the Gunas are transcended but also when we are established in the Spiritual Experience. This process of escaping ourselves from the subjective shackles on our psychological and intellectual nature is called Liberation or Moksha.

In the subsequent verses the path of liberation is described and the Moksha gained from the right judgment of the world outside is explained.

TRANSCENDING ALL THE GUNAS, A *GUNATITA*

**naanyam gunebhyah kartaaram yadaa drashtaanupashyati  
gunebhyashcha param vetti madbhaavam so'dhigacchati // 14.19 //**

*When the seer beholds no agent other than the Gunas and knows that which is higher than the Gunas, he attains to My Being.*

The Spirit identifying itself with the mind-intellect equipment gets conditioned by the three Gunas. To stand apart from the mind, without our identification with it, is the freedom from our thought entanglement.

- When the seer beholds: The art of disentangling ourselves from our own thought process within is the very art of meditation. A meditator would experience subjectively the state of Pure Knowledge undisturbed by the thoughts. The word

`behold' does not mean that God can be seen in the physical sense. God is not an object of our perception or feeling or thought. He is the `subject' that perceives, feels and thinks through us. Hence the word `behold' indicates that the subjective experience will be total beyond any doubt.

- No agent other than the Gunas: The experiencer realizes that he is not only the Infinite but also the Gunas, which transform themselves into the bodies, senses and sense objects and which in all their modifications constitute the agent in all actions.
- Knows that which is higher than the Gunas: The mind cannot function on its own accord since it is inert. The Consciousness that functions through the mind is the Principle other than the mind. The Consciousness reflecting on the mind is the `agent', the individualized ego (Jiva) in us. He who has understood that what is reflected is something other than the mind and therefore something higher than the Gunas is the one who crossed over all the limitations.
- He attains to My Being: An individual who has thus transcended his own mind and intellect and discovered himself to be that which is behind his mental delusion that man of wisdom becomes the Self - `Attains to My Being'.

**Gunaanetaanateetya treen dehee dehasamudbhavaan  
janmamrityurjaraadukhair vimukto'mritamashnute // 14.20 //**

*The embodied one having gone beyond these three Gunas, out of which the body is evolved, is freed from birth, death, decay and pain and attains to immortality.*

When we identify with Gunas we suffer the sorrows of life and when we transcend this we are free from sorrows because finitude, agitations, change are not in the Perfect Self.

Having gone beyond Gunas which comprise body: The three Gunas are the expressions of ignorance which constitute the causal body. We experience the pure causal body in deep sleep and this is nothing other than Gunas.

They emerge out from the causal body to express themselves first as subtle body, as thoughts and feelings and again as gross body to express themselves in actions. Each body (plant or animal or man) is the instrument available for the subtle body to express through. The nature and qualities of the subtle body are determined by the causal body comprising Gunas. Thus those who have gone beyond the Gunas are no more under the tragedies of the subtle and causal bodies.

The embodied one is freed from birth, death, decay and pain: Birth, growth, decay, disease and death are the qualities of the matter and they are common to all everywhere. These are the sorrows of the matter and not that of Consciousness which illumines them. One who has realized himself to be the Awareness goes beyond all the sorrows. As the sun illumines all, good and bad, Consciousness in us illumines the various changes in the

matter envelopments. But these changes are not that of Spirit and therefore one who has realized oneself to be the Spirit goes beyond all these struggles.

Attains immortality: The man of realization not only experiences absence of sorrow but lives in perfection. In sleep we forget our sorrows and pain. Sleep is a temporary relief against the worldly sorrows. But the Bliss experienced at the time of realization of the Self is not temporary cessation of tragedies of matter but a positive re-awakening of our Changeless, Infinite nature. Hence it is said that one experiences the state of immortality even in living in this body embodiment.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GUNATITA

**arjuna uvaacha**

**kairlingaistreenGunaanetaan ateeto bhavati prabho**

**kimaachaarah katham chaitaamstreen Gunaanativartate // 14.21 //**

*Arjuna said*

*What are the marks of him who has crossed over the three Gunas O, Lord? What is his conduct and how does he go beyond these three Gunas ?*

Arjuna asks here three specific questions.

- What are the marks by which a man who has gone beyond the influences of these three Gunas can be recognized?
- In that state of perfection what would be his relationship with the world outside and his behavior among those who are still under the influence of three Gunas ?
- How does such a man of perfection conquer his inner confusions and entanglements and attains his spiritual glory?

The characteristics of perfection in whatever way it may be reached, are more or less the same as those of the Sthitaprajna (2.55..), of the Bhaktiman, devotee (12.13..).

**sri bhagavaan uvaacha**

**prakaasham cha pravrittim cha mohameva cha paandava**

**na dweshti sampravrittaani na nivrittaani kangkshati // 14.22 //**

*Sri Bhagavan said*

*He who does not hate the appearance of light (the effect of Sattva), activity (the effect of Rajas) and delusion (the effect of Tamas) in his own mind, O Pandava, nor longs for them when absent,*

This answers Arjuna's first question.

The man of right understanding does not hate the effects of the three Gunas when they are clearly present in his inner life; nor does he long after these when they are absent.

Equanimity in all circumstances is his hallmark and inner peace independent of all environments is his strength.

Light, activity and illusion when present: These are the effects of the respective causes viz. Light - Sattva, Activity - Rajas and Illusion - Tamas. The presence or absence of these influences does not make any difference to him because he has risen above all of them. Such a man who has crossed over the mind and intellect equipment lives in the Infinite joy of the Self. He conquers the pure world of awareness and attains the state of Godhood.

Just as we pull out a thorn by a thorn, so renouncing worldly things, we must renounce renunciation. By means of Sattva we overcome Rajas and Tamas and then we get beyond Sattva itself.

**udaaseenavadaaseeno Gunairyo na vichaalyate  
Gunaa vartanta ityeva yo'vatishtathi nengate // 14.23 //**

*He who is seated like one unconcerned, unperturbed by the Gunas, who stands apart, without wavering, knowing that it is only the Gunas that act.*

Verses 23, 24 and 25 answer Arjuna's second question

They describe the one who has risen above all the Gunas. The real test of a perfect one is not in a secluded forest but in actual day to day life where he is faced with all sorts of temptations because the true nature of a man comes out only in adversities.

In all experiences in the world-good or bad- a man of steady wisdom will be as if he were unconcerned since he knows that all this is due to play of the mind and intellect. He is not agitated by anything that is happening around him. He understands that the changes in him are due to changes of the Gunas and the world outside changes according to one's own mental conditions. He is thus fully aware of the reasons behind the changes in himself and the world around him.

In order to watch the play of Gunas in himself he should be an observer of them from something beyond the Gunas. So if he is established in Pure Spiritual Nature he will be able to observe the play of Gunas in him and surrounding him. As the observer is not affected by the thing he is observing, so too, the man of wisdom when observing the play of Gunas in himself does not get disturbed from his equanimity and ever remains in his own Divine Nature. He sees the mutations of nature but is not entangled in them. The Gunas are lifted up into pure illumination, divine activity and perfect calm.

**samadhkhasukhah swasthah samaloshtaashmakaanah  
tulyapriyaapriyo dheeras tulyanindaatma samstutih // 14.24 //**

*Alike in pleasure and pain, w,ho dwells in the Self, to whom a clod of earth, stone and gold are alike, to whom the pleasant and the unpleasant are alike, firm, the same in censure and praise.*

The equanimity and balanced personality of a Perfect Man in the midst of all situations in life is explained.

- Self-abiding: He lives in a world of his own. His mind does not react to the worldly situations.
- Alike in pairs of opposites: Pleasure and pain are the reactions of the mind and intellect to the things of the world. For the one who does not look at the world through the colored glasses of his mind every situation in life is alike.
- Earth, stone and gold: All possessions either full of value or completely valueless will have the same response. What is of value to an egocentric man is charmless to an Awakened Man.
- Pleasant and unpleasant: What is considered as dear and not dear i.e. things which are loved and things which are hated do not create any different reactions in a man of wisdom.
- Censure and praise: He is unconcerned about blame or praise. They leave no reactions in him.

These are the main conditions of life in which the ordinary man finds sorrow or joy. Pleasure and pain, good and bad possessions, agreeable and disagreeable experiences, joys and sorrows, praise and censure are the conditions of life which disturb the equanimity in man. A man of Wisdom is neutral to the influences of all these situations.

**maanaapamaanayostulyastulyo mitraaripakshayoh  
sarvaarambhaparityaagee Gunaateetah sa uchyate // 14.25 //**

*The same in honor and dishonor, the same to friend and foe, abandoning all undertakings he is said to have crossed beyond the Gunas.*

- In honor and dishonor: One of the clear signs of perfection is equanimity in honor and dishonor. Honor and dishonor are the evaluations of the intellect that change from time to time and place to place. To the one who has crossed over the ordinary plane of egoism and vanity, roses and thorns are the same.
- Friend and foe: There is neither a friend nor an enemy to a man of wisdom. To him who has realized the oneness of the Spirit all others are not separate but they are also in him.

Abandoning every enterprise: Desire motivated activity undertaken for one's own benefit is enterprise. Ego and egocentric desires are motivating forces behind all enterprises. The man of tranquility is not affected by ego and egocentric desires. There are no ego motivated activities for him and hence he is said to give up all initiative of action. These three verses lay down a rule of conduct for the seekers of Moksha.

HOW ONE IS FIT TO BECOME BRAHMAN?

**maam cha yo'vyabhichaarena bhaktiyogena sevate  
sa Gunaan samateetyai'taan brahmabhooyaaya kalpate // 14.26 //**

*And he who serves Me with unswerving devotion, he, going beyond the Gunas, is fit for becoming Brahman.*

This answers Arjuna's third question

To contemplate steadily upon the Infinite Nature of the Self is to become the Self and thus end our mortal Egoism. Such a steady contemplation cannot be maintained always effectively. We are not capable of maintaining our mind in meditation all the time. Therefore Sri Krishna advises a practical method of maintaining a thought for a longer period of time through a process of dedicated service. If all the work is undertaken in a spirit of dedication and service, then work becomes worship.

This is an instance where Gita expects not only devotion to The Lord but that devotion should also be given to every day life's activities and their contacts with the others around. Such a practice of dedicated service and God-awareness stills the agitations of the mind and prepares it for intensive meditation.

Such a seeker is fit to become Brahman just as if a dreamer wants to realize the waker he becomes a waker.

**brhmano hi pratishthaaham amritasya avyayasya cha  
shaashwatasya cha dharmasya sukhasyaikaantikasya cha // 14.27 //**

*For, I am the abode of Brahman, the Immortal and the Immutable, of everlasting Dharma and of Absolute Bliss.*

Sri Krishna indicates in the last verse of this Chapter the nature of the state of God-consciousness; when a devotee enters this state he himself becomes the Brahman.

The Lord declares Himself as the ground of that imperishable Brahman indicating that the latter is not different from Him, who is the God, possessed of attributes and that He is not different from Brahman.

By realizing Brahman, man becomes immortal i.e., freed from the cycle of birth and death. By referring to Himself as the ground of immortality, the Lord shows that He is

none other than that immortality and that attaining immortality means realizing the Lord Himself.

By declaring Himself to be the ground of eternal virtue, *shaashwatasya dharmasya*, He conveys that the reward for practicing these virtues is nothing other than the Lord Himself.

By speaking of Himself as the ground of that Bliss, the Lord shows that such everlasting supreme bliss is the same as Himself and nothing else than Him. Hence attainment of that Bliss is the same as realizing the Lord.

**om tat sat iti srimadbhagavadgeetaasu upanishatsu brahma vidyaayaam  
yogashaastre sri krishnaarjuna samvaade Gunatraya vibhaaga yogo naama  
chaturdasho'dhyaayah ||**

Thus in the Upanishads of the glorious Bhagavad Gita, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, ends the fourteenth discourse entitled The Yoga of the Division of the Three Gunas

## Concepts and Issues

Sri Krishna explains the Para-Jnana or the highest knowledge by attaining which the sages got perfection. Creation proceeds as a result of the placing of the seed by The Lord in the nature, the Mahat Prakriti. He is the father of all beings and the nature is the mother.

This Prakriti gives rise to three Gunas – Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattva is pure and bright, produces pleasure and knowledge and binds the soul through them. Rajas is of the nature of passion, produces desire and attachment and binds the embodied soul through action. Tamas, born out of ignorance, deludes the beings through inactivity and negligence.

Sattva creates attachment to happiness and knowledge; Rajas for actions and Tamas for incomprehension. These three Gunas are always acting on one another. The rise of Sattva can be inferred by the rise of knowledge, Rajas by the rise of greed and activity and Tamas by delusion.

Death when Sattva is predominant takes one to higher realms. When Rajas and Tamas are dominant at the time of death one attains rebirth in human bodies and sub-human bodies. Any one who realizes that it is the Gunas that act and that the Self is not touched by them attains the Supreme..

Arjuna desires to know the characteristics of such a person who has transcended the Gunas. Sri Krishna replies that one who is unaffected by the effects of the three Gunas like knowledge, action or delusion, is the one who is beyond the Gunas.

Such an enlightened soul is indifferent to the activities of the Gunas. He is equanimous in sorrow and joy, looks upon a clod of earth, a stone and gold equally, is unmoved by the pleasant and the unpleasant or by the praise or blame. He is the same to the enemies and friends. He abandons all undertakings of selfish nature. He serves The Lord with undeviating love. Such an individual is a Gunatita and becomes fit to attain Brahman.

### Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

Sri Krishna teaches the essential character of the three Gunas and how to get over from their clutches. He also explains that through undivided love to The Lord, meditation or selfless work one can transcend the Gunas and reach Supreme Consciousness and ultimately become one with that Brahman.

### Points to Ponder

1. What are the effects of the influence of the three Gunas?
2. What is the nature of attachment developed because of the three Gunas?
3. What is meant by transcending the Gunas?
4. What are the characteristics of a Gunatita?
5. What is meant by 'becoming one with Him'?

**Next time we shall take up Chapter 15**

*HARIH OM*