



श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता
गुणत्रय विभाग योगः
Chapter 14
Volume 2

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः, प्रकृतिसंभवाः ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥ 14-5

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्, प्रकाशकं अनामयम् ।
सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति, ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ ॥ 14-6

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि, तृष्णा-आसङ्ग समुद्भवम् ।
तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय, कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् ॥ 14-7

तमः तु अज्ञानजं विद्धि, मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
प्रमाद- आलस्य- निद्राभिः तत् निबध्नाति भारत ॥ 14-8

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति, रजः कर्मणि भारत ।
ज्ञानं आवृत्य तु तमः, प्रमादे सञ्जयत्युत ॥ 14-9

Sri Krishna is now talking about गुणs - the three-fold qualities, known and unknown, which characterize this entire creation, including every person, every being and indeed everything that exists in this creation. भगवान् says:

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः, प्रकृतिसंभवाः ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥ 14-5

सत्त्वं रजः तमः इति गुणाः – The गुणs are three-fold. They are technically called Sattva, Rajas and Tamas

प्रकृति संभवाः meaning माया संभवाः – They are born of प्रकृति, the माया, which means the प्रकृति or the माया which is the immediate cause for this entire creation



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

manifests itself as the three fold गुणs. The गुणs are not the properties or the qualities or the attributes of माया. The very nature of माया is the threefold गुणs.

Thus, the three-fold गुणs constitute the immediate cause for this entire creation. My गुणs, your गुणs, and the गुणs of everybody, every being and everything in existence, are the manifold, ever-changing manifestations of माया – the inherent power of परमेश्वर. The totality of माया गुणs is three-fold in nature, technically called सत्त्व, रजस् and तमस्. What these words mean, भगवान् says that in the next verse. In this verse, भगवान् points out the प्रकृति or the माया is not independent of the three गुणs. The three गुणs themselves constitute the very nature of प्रकृति, the माया, which itself is dependent upon The क्षेत्रज्ञ – The आत्मा, The ब्रह्मन्, The परमेश्वर.

Further, just as by virtue of you being a human being, you are endowed with the ability to speak words. But whether you choose to speak, or what you choose to speak, is entirely at your will. Similarly, the प्रकृति, the माया, the three गुणs, are entirely at the will of The क्षेत्रज्ञ – The आत्मा - The ब्रह्मन्, The परमेश्वर. Further,

महाबाहो – O! Arjuna

निबध्नन्ति देहे देहिनं अव्ययम् – these three गुणs

निबध्नन्ति – they bind, whom? And to what?

देहिनं अव्ययम् – the indwelling changeless आत्मा देहे to the body. These three गुणs bind The आत्मा, The Self I, to one's शरीर, the body, says भगवान्.

We have already learnt that आत्मा is असंगः – The आत्मा ever remains free and unbound. That being so, how can गुणs, which depend entirely on आत्मा for their very existence, bind आत्मा? In fact, the गुणs do not, and cannot bind आत्मा. But, for a person who has not yet gained आत्मज्ञानं – Self-knowledge, the गुणs appear as if they bind the person, The Self I, The आत्मा. Due to अविद्या – self-ignorance, a person considers one's देह – one's body, as oneself, and one's गुणs - one's personal qualities and attributes appear to bind the person - The Self I, indwelling in one's body.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Therefore, for Arjuna, who has not yet become a ज्ञानी, and also for all those like Arjuna, which means for most of us, भगवान् says:

गुणाः निबध्नन्ति देहे देहिनं अव्ययम् – the गुणs do indeed bind the person to the qualities, attributes and limitations of the body. Here, निबध्नन्ति really means निबध्नन्ति इव – the गुणs of the person appear as if they bind the person who indwells in the body as जीव. In other words, because of अविद्या – Self-ignorance, you feel you are not a totally free person. You are bound by your own गुणs. You are limited by your own personal qualities and attributes. This being the case with most people, भगवान् now proceeds to tell the nature of these गुणs, and how they bind the person. First, भगवान् talks about सत्त्व गुण.

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्, प्रकाशकं अनामयम् ।
सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति, ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ ॥

14-6

अनघ – O! Sinless Arjuna

गुणs as such cannot be seen. Only their effects manifest themselves in the daily life of a person.

तत्र – Among the three गुणs, the सत्त्व गुण has the following characteristics, namely निर्मलत्वात् – it, by itself, is totally free from any kind of impurity

प्रकाशकं – it gives one the capacity for gaining clear knowledge

अनामयम् – it is free from any form of affliction or obstruction, which means it enables one to see whatever there is, with no confusion. In other words, it gives one a clear vision of life and its purpose.

Because of these three characteristics, namely निर्मलं, प्रकाशकं and अनामयम्, the सत्त्व गुण accounts for सुखं and ज्ञानं. सुखं is a sense of peace, comfort, cheerfulness or happiness, for the time being, and ज्ञानं is the ability to gain knowledge, any knowledge, suited to one's own mind and बुद्धि.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

सत्त्व गुण is the most desirable of all गुणs, because it is मोक्ष साधनं – it is able to reflect pure consciousness very clearly, and hence it takes one closer to Self-knowledge and Self-recognition. Still, सत्त्व गुण is also a bondage. How?

सुख सङ्गेन बध्नाति – It binds by giving the person the experience of सुख, by which one takes oneself to be a सुखी, and the person feels "I am happy". "I am happy" is vastly different from realizing and recognizing oneself, that "My true nature is Happiness itself". That "I am happy" is a transient experience. Just like any other experience, it comes and goes.

As भगवान् said in the last chapter (13-6) सुख is a क्षेत्र धर्म – it is just an attribute of one's mind and बुद्धि. When that experience of सुख is superimposed upon क्षेत्रज्ञ – The आत्मा – The Self I, it gives rise to the conclusion that "I am happy". Such happiness is always connected to an object. If one's happiness is object-based, then that happiness is based only on अविद्या – Self-ignorance, and hence it is a bondage, and an obstruction for gaining आत्मज्ञानं – Self-knowledge. Any kind of exclusive objective knowledge is also a bondage, because, no matter how much such knowledge you have, you also know that you are still limited in your knowledge. That limitation is a bondage.

Thus, through सुख संग and ज्ञान संग – associations with transient सुखं and limited ज्ञानं, the सत्त्व गुण binds a person, it makes the person bound to one's limitations, and consequently, the vision of the unlimited self, The आत्मा, is obstructed. So much about सत्त्व गुण.

Now, भगवान् talks about रजस् गुण.

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि, तृष्णा आसङ्ग समुद्भवम् ।
तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय, कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् ॥

14-7

कौन्तेय – O! Arjuna

विद्धि – this is how you should understand the nature of रजस् गुण



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

रजः रागात्मकं – The nature of रजस् गुण is राग – intense love or hatred for something. Just as a fast dye colors a cloth, राग colors the अन्तःकरण – the mind and बुद्धि of a person very strongly. Thus राग is a passionate mental disposition, compelling the person into some kind of action. Now, where from such passion comes?

तृष्णा आसङ्ग समुद्भवम् – The रजस् गुण is naturally and inevitably born of तृष्णा, and आसङ्ग. तृष्णा means an intense desire, a craving for objects - known or unknown, which have not yet been achieved, and आसङ्ग means an intense attachment for objects, which have already been achieved.

Thus रजस् गुण is the cause for तृष्णा and आसङ्ग – craving for objects you do not have, and attachment for objects you already have. Because of such तृष्णा and आसङ्ग, one is compulsively pushed into actions of various kinds, good and bad.

कर्म संगेन – By association with कर्मs - actions propelled by रजस् गुण तत् देहिनं निबध्नाति – the रजस् गुण binds the person. It makes the person bound to कर्म, thus obstructing the person from the vision of आत्मज्ञानं – Self-knowledge.

We may note here that with reference to सत्त्व गुण, भगवान् uses the word बध्नाति – it binds. With reference to रजस् गुण, भगवान् uses the word निबध्नाति – it binds fast. The bondage is far stronger. Why? Because रजस् गुण pushes the person into कर्मs – पुण्य कर्म and पाप कर्म – good and bad actions, which result in a never ending cycle of birth and death.

Even though The आत्मा – The Self I, is free from doership and enjoyership, if one superimposes रजस् गुण on The आत्मा, one experiences a strong sense of bondage to कर्मs, propelled by one's cravings and attachments of various kinds.

Next, भगवान् talks about तमस् गुण.

तमः तु अज्ञानजं विद्धि , मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।

प्रमाद- आलस्य- निद्राभिः तत् निबध्नाति भारत ॥

14-8



भारत – O! Arjuna

तमः तु विद्धि – on the other hand, this is how you should understand तमस् गुण.

अज्ञानं – the तमस् गुण is born of simple ignorance, meaning ordinary ignorance. Indeed, all the three गुणs arise from अविद्या – ignorance of आत्मा. This is not the meaning here. Here, अज्ञानं is not आत्म अज्ञानं – ignorance of आत्मा. The अज्ञानं here is आवरण अज्ञानं – the simple ignorance which covers any knowledge. It is the same kind of ignorance one deals with in every day life with respect to any knowledge.

What does such ignorance do?

मोहनं – means मोह करं, अविवेक करं. It creates delusion, born of confusion. When तमस् गुण predominates, the person is not able to use one's own natural intellect, and because of that inability, there is मोहनं – delusion.

सर्वदेहिनाम् – That delusion applies to every being, endowed with a body vehicle. The manifestations of such तमस् गुण are:

प्रमाद- आलस्य- निद्राभिः

प्रमाद means धर्म, अधर्म, अविवेक and कार्य- अकार्य विषय असामर्थ्यम् – lack of knowledge as to what is proper and what is improper, and what to do and what not to do, in any particular situation, which means lack of discriminative knowledge. Thus तमस् गुण is opposed to सत्त्व गुण.

आलस्य means प्रवृत्ति असामर्थ्यम् – laziness and indifference. Even when one knows what is to be done, and what is not to be done in a particular situation, the तमस् गुण makes one too lazy and too indifferent to do anything, to put the efforts necessary to accomplish anything in life. Thus तमस् गुण inhibits रजस् गुण also.

निद्रा indicates sleepiness or inertness, a state of mind and बुद्धि predominantly possessed by तमस् गुण is also called निद्रा – all discriminative and active faculties of the body are in a state of sleepiness. प्रमाद निद्रा and आलस्य निद्रा indicate the sluggishness or the sleepiness and active faculties of the body.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

प्रमादआलस्य निद्राभिः – By these three manifestations of तमस् गुण, namely lack of discriminating knowledge, laziness and /or indifference, and inability of the body elements to perceive and act promptly

तत् निबध्नाति – the तमस् गुण binds the person strongly, obstructing the mind and बुद्धि of the person from gaining आत्मज्ञानं – Self-knowledge.

Now, summarizing the bondage characteristics of all the three गुणs, भगवान् says:

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति, रजः कर्मणि भारत ।

ज्ञानं आवृत्य तु तमः, प्रमादे सञ्जयति उत ॥

14-9

Here सञ्जयति means संश्लेषयति – binds (a person) as a natural consequence (of Self-ignorance). Thus, as a natural consequence of one's Self ignorance

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति – the सत्त्व गुण binds a person by impelling the person in the pursuit of सुख – transient pleasure

रजः कर्मणि सञ्जयति – the रजस् गुण binds a person by impelling the person to the pursuit of कर्मs - desire propelled actions of various kinds, good and bad.

तु – on the other hand

ज्ञानं आवृत्य – covering, enveloping with darkness the knowledge faculties, the discriminating faculties of one's mind and बुद्धि.

तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयति – the तमस् गुण binds a person in the state of प्रमाद – to a life of laziness and indifference.

उत – Indeed, that is the case when one has no आत्मज्ञानं – Self-knowledge

Thus all three गुणs bind a person, by their own products which obstruct one's mind and बुद्धि from Self-recognition, recognition of one's own स्वरूप – one's own true identity.

We must also understand that तमस् गुण accounts for sleep and inertness as well.

Therefore, तमस् गुण is not all bad. A certain amount of sleep is necessary for everybody, and there are countless inert states of matter in this creation, each serving a



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

useful purpose. Therefore, तमस् गुण has its own rightful place in the eternal order of existence.

Further, every person is a mixture of all the three गुणs, in different proportions and gradations. These proportions and gradations are ever subject to change, and they do change continuously throughout one's life. Even for the same person, each गुण may manifest itself predominantly at different times. Such predominance of one गुण relative to the others may be occasional, or may be natural to the अन्तः करण – the mind and बुद्धि of the person.

In any case, no one is endowed with only one गुण. Even a person for whom तमस् गुण is predominant, has knowledge of some kind, and therefore enjoys the manifestations of सत्त्व गुण now and then. Likewise, even a person for whom सत्त्व गुण is predominant, may occasionally act in a stupid manner under the momentary dominance of तमस् गुण.

There are, however, some natural sequential orders, natural sequential gradations, with respect to the integrated manifestations of these three गुणs in a person at any given time, arising from the relative disposition and the relative magnitude of each of these three गुणs in any of the above natural sequential orders.

Sri Krishna talks about the natural sequential orders of the three गुणs (गुणविभाग) in the next verse, which we will see next time.