



श्रीमद्भगवद् गीता
गुणत्रय विभाग योगः
Chapter 14
Volume 3

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Sri Krishna has been talking about the three माया गुणs, the सत्त्व, रजस् and तमस् गुणs, and their manifestations, and how a person with no आत्मज्ञानं – Self-knowledge gets bound by these गुणs in one's daily life. The स्वभाव of every person is a mixture of all these three गुणs to different ever-changing extents. There is, however, a natural sequence of combinations of these three गुणs, called गुण विभाग, with respect to the dominating power of each of these गुणs in their integrated manifestations at any given time. Indicating this natural sequential order, गुण विभाग, भगवान् says:



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रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः सत्त्वं रजस्तथा ॥

14-10

भारत – O! Arjuna, there is a four-fold order with respect to the natural sequence of combinations of these three गुणs in their integrated manifestations. This four-fold order - गुण विभाग, is as follows:

1. Predominantly सत्त्व गुण, associated with much less रजस् गुण, and far less तमस् गुण
2. Predominantly रजस् गुण, associated with much less सत्त्व गुण and far less तमस् गुण
3. Again, predominantly रजस् गुण, associated with much less तमस् गुण and far less सत्त्व गुण, and
4. Predominantly तमस् गुण, associated with much less रजस् गुण and far less सत्त्व गुण.

In the words of Sri Krishna, the four-fold sequential order, गुण विभाग is as follows:

1. रजः तमः च अभिभूय, सत्त्वं भवति
2. सत्त्वं तमः च अभिभूय, रजः भवति तथा Similarly
3. तमः सत्त्वं च अभिभूय रजः भवति and
4. रजः सत्त्वं च अभिभूय, तमः भवति

अभिभूय means dominating, overpowering. भवति means उद्भवति – rises above, manifests itself. Therefore रजः तमः च अभिभूय, सत्त्वं भवति means overpowering रजस् गुण and तमस् गुण, the सत्त्व गुण manifests itself naturally and dominantly, which means when the सत्त्व गुण predominates in a person, the distinguishing nature of सत्त्व गुण, namely विवेक ज्ञानं – discriminating knowledge, purity and clarity of thought, word and expression manifest themselves naturally and predominantly, while the characteristics of रजस् गुण, namely actions propelled by cravings and attachments for



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various objects and experiences, are held under strict control, and also the characteristics of तमस् गुण, namely mental and physical dispositions of ignorance, laziness and indifference, are held under even greater control by the overpowering nature of सत्व गुण in its integrated manifestations. Thus, this सत्व-रजस्-तमस् sequential combination is the first order गुण विभाग. The next order is

सत्त्वं तमः च अभिभूय, रजः भवति – Overpowering सत्व गुण and तमस् गुण, the रजस् गुण manifests itself naturally and dominantly, which means, when the रजस् गुण predominates in a person, the distinguishing characteristic of रजस् गुण, namely, overriding commitment to craving and attachment-propelled actions manifests itself naturally and dominantly while the characteristics of सत्व गुण and तमस् गुण are held under strict and even stricter control respectively, by the overpowering nature of रजस् गुण. Thus, this रजस्-सत्व-तमस् sequential combination is the second order गुण विभाग. The next order is

तमः सत्त्वं च अभिभूय रजः भवति – Overpowering तमस् गुण and सत्व गुण, the रजस् गुण manifests itself naturally and dominantly, which means when this रजस् गुण predominates in a person, the distinguishing characteristic of रजस् गुण, namely the overriding commitment to कर्म, propelled by cravings and attachments, manifests itself naturally and dominantly, while the characteristics of तमस् गुण and सत्व गुण are held under strict and even stricter controls respectively, by the overpowering nature of रजस् गुण. Thus this रजस्-तमस्-सत्व sequential combination is the third order गुण विभाग.

The important difference between the second order गुण विभाग and the third order गुण विभाग must be understood. In both orders, the रजस् गुण is predominant, but the integrated manifestations of the रजस् गुणs are vastly different because the relative positions, extents and consequent levels of freedom of expression of the associated सत्व and तमस् गुणs in each order. In the second order गुण विभाग, the सत्व गुण component is relatively far more than the तमस् गुण component, and the freedom of expression of the सत्व गुण component is also relatively far greater than that of the



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तमस् गुण component. On the other hand, in the third order गुण विभाग, the situation is reverse. The तमस् गुण component is relatively far more than the सत्व गुण component, and the freedom of expression of the तमस् गुण component is also relatively far greater than that of the सत्व गुण component.

Because of the above differences, the predominant रजस् गुण is modified so differently that the integrated manifestations of the second order and the third order गुण विभागs are vastly different. Now, about the fourth order.

रजः सत्त्वं च अभिभूय, तमः भवति – Overpowering the रजस् गुण and सत्व गुण, the तमस् गुण manifests itself naturally and dominantly, which means when the तमस् गुण predominates in a person, the distinguishing characteristics of तमस् गुण, namely ignorance, laziness and indifference manifest themselves naturally and dominantly, while the characteristics of रजस् गुण and सत्व गुण are held under strict and even stricter control respectively by the overpowering nature of तमस् गुण. Thus this तमस्-रजस्-सत्त्व sequential combination is the fourth order गुण विभाग.

The natural sequential four-order गुण विभाग described above is the basis for the four-fold कर्म विभाग – occupational divisions, in the Vedic society, about which Sri Krishna talks later in Chapter 18 (18-41 to 44, see also 4-13). Within the scope of this four-order गुण विभाग, there are infinite in-between variations, each with its own unique combination of गुणs, which naturally account for the infinite varieties of people and their occupations in human society. The स्वभाव of every one of us is a unique combination of the three गुणs at any given time. Every person is different from every other person only in terms of one's unique गुण combination, the predominance of a particular गुण in that combination, and the integrated manifestation of that गुण combination at any given time.

Now, how to know which गुण predominates in a person at any given time? भगवान् says:



सर्वद्वारेषु देहेऽस्मिन् प्रकाश उपजायते ।

ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्यात् विवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत ॥ 14-11

अस्मिन् देहे सर्वद्वारेषु यदा प्रकाशः उपजायते – When the light of knowledge emanates in this body from all the gates of knowledge, from all the available means of knowledge in this body

तदा विद्यात् – then, one may understand that

उत– indeed

सत्त्वं विवृद्धं (उद्भूतं) इति – the सत्त्व गुण has gained enough strength to manifest itself predominantly.

The gates of knowledge in one's body are the five ज्ञान इन्द्रियs, namely the ear, the skin, the eyes, the tongue and the nose, along with mind and the बुद्धि. When one's sense organs, mind and बुद्धि are alert and focused, and through their means, knowledge of some kind, any kind, shines forth, and brought into manifestation in one's awareness, then indeed, the सत्त्व गुण predominates in that person at that time, which simply means that the ability to gain knowledge of some kind, any kind, is the indication for the predominance of सत्त्व गुण in a person.

Similarly, about रजस् गुण, भगवान् says:

लोभः प्रवृत्तिः आरम्भः कर्मणाम् अशमः स्पृहा ।

रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतर्षभ ॥ 14-12

भरतर्षभ – O! Arjuna

लोभः – greediness, an intense desire or craving for something that legitimately belongs to someone else, and

कर्मणाम् प्रवृत्तिः – physical restlessness arising from an ever-expanding or unnecessary or uncalled for activities of various kinds, and

कर्मणाम् आरम्भः – a continuous urge to start new projects and new undertakings for accomplishing objectives propelled by desires and attachments of various kinds, and



कर्मणाम् अशमः – mental restlessness arising from desire propelled, objective oriented activities of all kinds, and also

स्पृहा – a craving, a longing for something or other at all times

रजसि विवृद्धे एतानि जायन्ते – all these arise and manifest themselves when रजस् गुण predominates.

Thus, greediness, physical and mental restlessness arising from object-oriented activities, propelled by desires and attachments of various kinds, a continuous urge to undertake new projects, and a craving or longing for something or other at all times, these are the indications of the predominance of रजस् गुण. These indications are common for both the second order and third order गुण विभागs, even though their explicit manifestations are very different for each of them. Further,

अप्रकाशो अप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च ।

तमसि एतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन ॥

14-13

कुरुनन्दन – O! Arjuna

अप्रकाशः, अप्रवृत्तिः, प्रमादः, मोहः – these are the indications when तमस् गुण predominates

अप्रकाशः – is lack of विवेक ज्ञानं – discriminating knowledge with respect to proper conduct and improper conduct in daily life

अप्रवृत्तिः – is general dullness or sluggishness in the activities of every kind

प्रमादः – is general laziness and indifference , and

मोहः – is mental delusion and confusion caused by one's inability to use one's natural intellect

तमसि विवृद्धे एतानि जायन्ते – all these are born, and they manifest themselves when तमस् गुण predominates.

Simple ignorance of what is right and what is wrong, and lack of विवेक बुद्धि, a general dullness in all activities, laziness and indifference and mental confusion arising from one's inability to use one's natural intellect - these are the indications of the predominance of तमस् गुण in a person.



Further, the effects of one's गुणs are not limited to one's present life. They continue to manifest themselves in one form or another, from one life to the next. Therefore, भगवान् says

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे तु प्रलयं याति देहभृत् ।
तदा उत्तमविदां लोकान् अमलान् प्रतिपद्यते ॥ 14-14

तु – Further

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे, देहभृत् याति – at the time when सत्त्व गुण is predominant, if the जीव (देहभृत्) leaves the body, which means, if the person dies when सत्त्व गुण is predominant

तदा – then

उत्तमविदां लोकान् अमलान् प्रतिपद्यते

प्रतिपद्यते – the जीव gains, the person gains

अमलान् लोकान् – the world free from impurities and experiences free from पाप, and that world is उत्तमविदां लोकान् – the worlds of those who are endowed with the highest level of awareness, in other words, the worlds of ज्ञानीs and योगीs.

Here we must realize that if only one's life has been predominantly one of सत्त्व गुण throughout one's life, then alone सत्त्व गुण will predominate at the time of death. Whatever one's thought life is throughout one's life, that is what it is going to be at the end. No one can suddenly gain सत्त्व गुण at the time of death.

If सत्त्व predominates at the time of one's death, the next birth for the person will be in अमलान् लोकान् meaning पाप रहित लोकान् – the worlds of experience free from पाप, and that is उत्तमविदां लोकान्, meaning उत्तमविदां समूहान् – the societies of wise people, ज्ञानीs and योगीs. That means, the person will be reborn in societies conducive to gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं– आत्मज्ञानं, and hence मोक्ष – absolute liberation, freedom and happiness.

That is also what भगवान् said earlier in Chapter 6.



प्राप्य पुण्यकृतां लोकान् उषित्वा शाश्वतीः समाः ।

शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे योगभ्रष्टोऽभिजायते ॥

6-41

अथवा योगिनामेव कुले भवति धीमताम् ।

6-42

The one for whom सत्व गुण is predominant, after having lived a long life of सुख and ज्ञानं, is again born in शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे – in a house where the family is both pure and wealthy, means materially prosperous. अथवा – or, the person is straight away reborn in a family of योगीs, who are, by their very nature, धीमताम् – means बुद्धिमतां – well informed and wise, committed to the pursuit of आत्मज्ञानं – Self-knowledge. On the other hand

रजसि प्रलयं गत्वा कर्मसङ्गिषु जायते ।

तथा प्रलीनः तमसि मूढयोनिषु जायते ॥

14-15

रजसि प्रलयं गत्वा – If रजस् गुण is predominant in a person at the time of death

कर्मसङ्गिषु जायते – the person is reborn among people committed to a life of कर्मs - actions propelled by the forces of राग and द्वेष – likes, dislikes, power, ambition, etc.

तथा – similarly

तमसि प्रलीनः – if तमस् गुण is predominant in a person at the time of death

मूढ योनिषु जायते – the person is reborn in families who are totally ignorant of even the very existence of Self-knowledge.

मूढ – here is with respect to आत्मज्ञानं – Self-knowledge.

From all that has been said so far, it should be clear that it is entirely within one's power to make one गुण predominant over the other two in one's life. Cultivating appropriate discipline and values, everyone can, and indeed, every one should, uplift oneself to the predominance of सत्व गुण – the first order गुण विभाग, which is the most helpful in uplifting oneself from the hold of all गुणs, including the सत्व गुण itself. Such total upliftment of oneself from the hold of all गुणs, is indeed gaining मोक्ष.

We will continue next time.