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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता
गुणत्रय विभाग योगः
Chapter 14
Volume 2

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसंभवाः ।
sattvaṁ rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥ 14-5
nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinamavyayam ॥

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्, प्रकाशकं अनामयं ।
tatra sattvaṁ nirmalattvāt, prakāśakam anāmayam ।
सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञान सङ्गेन चानघ ॥ 14-6
sukhasaṅgena badhnāti jñāna saṅgena cānagha ॥

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णा-आसङ्ग समुद्भवम् ।
rajo rāgātmakam viddhi tṛṣṇā-āsaṅga samudbhavam ।
तन्नि बध्नाति कौन्तेय, कमसङ्गेन देहिनम् ॥ 14-7
tanni badhnāti kaunteya, kamasāṅgena dehinam ॥

तमः तु अज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
tamaḥ tu ajñānajaṁ viddhi mohanaṁ sarvadehinām ।
प्रमाद आलस्य निद्राभिः तत् निबध्नाति भारत ॥ 14-8
pramāda ālasya nidrābhiḥ tat nibadhnāti bhārata ॥

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति रजः कर्मणि भारत ।
sattvaṁ sukhe sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata ।
ज्ञानं आवृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयत्युत ॥ 14-9
jñānaṁ āvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayatyuta ॥



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Sri Krishna is now talking about गुणः *guṇas* - 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 *bhagavān* says:

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसंभवाः ।

sattvaṁ rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ ।

निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥ 14-5

nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinamavyayam ॥

सत्त्वं रजः तमः इति गुणाः *sattvaṁ rajah tamah iti guṇāḥ* – The गुणः *guṇas* are three-fold. They are technically called Sattva, Rajas and Tamas

प्रकृति संभवाः *prakṛti sambhavāḥ* meaning माया संभवाः *māyā sambhavāḥ* – They are born of प्रकृति *prakṛti*, the माया *māyā*, which means the प्रकृति *prakṛti* or the माया *māyā* which is the immediate cause for this entire creation manifests itself as the three fold गुणः *guṇas*. The गुणः *guṇas* are not the properties or the qualities or the attributes of माया *māyā*. The very nature of माया *māyā* is the threefold गुणः *guṇas*.

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

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 *prakṛti*, the माया *māyā*, the three गुणः *guṇas*, are



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entirely at the will of The क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣेत्रज्ञā* – The आत्मा *ātmā* - The ब्रह्मन् *brahman*,
The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*. Further,

महाबाहो *mahābāho* – O! Arjuna

निबध्नन्ति देहे देहिनं अव्ययम् *nibadhnanti dehe dehinam avyayam* – these three
गुणसु *guṇas*

निबध्नन्ति *nibadhnanti* – they bind, whom? And to what?

देहिनं अव्ययम् *dehinam avyayam* – the indwelling changeless आत्मा देहे *ātmā dehe*
to the body. These three गुणसु *guṇas* bind The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I, to
one's शरीर *śarīra*, the body, says भगवान् *bhagavān*.

We have already learnt that आत्मा *ātmā* is असंगः *asaṅgaḥ* – The आत्मा *ātmā* ever
remains free and unbound. That being so, how can गुणसु *guṇas*, which depend entirely
on आत्मा *ātmā* for their very existence, bind आत्मा *ātmā*? In fact, the गुणसु *guṇas* do
not, and cannot bind आत्मा *ātmā*. But, for a person who has not yet gained आत्मज्ञानं
ātma jñānaṁ – Self-knowledge, the गुणसु *guṇas* appear as if they bind the person,
The Self I, The आत्मा *ātmā*. Due to अविद्या *avidya* – self-ignorance, a person
considers one's देह *deha* – one's body, as oneself, and one's गुणसु *guṇas* - one's
personal qualities and attributes appear to bind the person - The Self I, indwelling in
one's body. Therefore, for Arjuna, who has not yet become a ज्ञानी *jñānī*, and also for
all those like Arjuna, which means for most of us, भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

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



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तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्, प्रकाशकं अनामयं ।

tatra sattvaṁ nirmalattvāt, prakāśakaṁ anāmayam ।

सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञान सङ्गेन चानघ ॥ 14-6

sukhasaṅgena badhnāti jñāna saṅgena cānagha ॥

अनघ *anagha* – O! Sinless Arjuna

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

तत्र *tatra* – Among the three गुणः *guṇas*, the सत्त्व गुण *satva guṇa* has the following characteristics, namely

निर्मलत्वात् *nirmalattvāt* – it, by itself, is totally free from any kind of impurity

प्रकाशकं *prakāśakaṁ* – it gives one the capacity for gaining clear knowledge

अनामयं *anāmayam* – 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 *nirmalam*, प्रकाशकं *prakāśakaṁ* and अनामयं *anāmayam*, the सत्त्व गुण *satva guṇa* accounts for सुखं *sukham* and ज्ञानं *jñānam*. सुखं *sukham* is a sense of peace, comfort, cheerfulness or happiness, for the time being, and ज्ञानं *jñānam* is the ability to gain knowledge, any knowledge, suited to one's own mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*.

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

सुख सङ्गेन बध्नाति *sukha saṅgena badhnāti* – It binds by giving the person the experience of सुख *sukha*, by which one takes oneself to be a सुखी *sukhī* 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.



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As भगवान् *bhagavān* said in the last chapter (13-6) सुख *sukha* is a क्षेत्र धर्म *kṣetra dharma* – it is just an attribute of one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*. When that experience of सुख *sukha* is superimposed upon क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā* – The आत्मा *ātmā* – 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 *avidya* – Self-ignorance, and hence it is a bondage, and an obstruction for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* – 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 *sukha saṅga* and ज्ञान संग *jñāna saṅga* – associations with transient सुखं *sukhaṁ* and limited ज्ञानं *jñānaṁ*, the सत्व गुण *satva guṇa* binds a person, it makes the person bound to one's limitations, and consequently, the vision of the unlimited self, The आत्मा *ātmā*, is obstructed. So much about सत्व गुण *satva guṇa*.

Now, भगवान् *bhagavān* talks about रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa*.

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णा-आसङ्ग समुद्भवम् ।
rajo rāgātmakam viddhi tṛṣṇā-āsaṅga samudbhavam ।
तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय, कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् ॥ 14-7
tannibadhnāti kaunteya, karmasaṅgena dehinam ॥

कौन्तेय *kaunteya* – O! Arjuna

विद्धि *viddhi* – this is how you should understand the nature of रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa*
रजः रागात्मकं *rajaḥ rāgātmakam* – The nature of रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* is राग *rāga* – intense love or hatred for something. Just as a fast dye colors a cloth, राग *rāga* colors the अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* – the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* of a person very strongly. Thus राग *rāga* is a passionate mental disposition, compelling the person into some kind of action. Now, where from such passion comes?

तृष्णा-आसङ्ग समुद्भवम् *tṛṣṇā-āsaṅga samudbhavam* – The रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* is naturally and inevitably born of तृष्णा *tṛṣṇā*, and आसङ्ग *āsaṅga*. तृष्णा *tṛṣṇā* means an intense desire, a craving for objects - known or unknown, which have



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not yet been achieved, and आसङ्ग *āsaṅga* means an intense attachment for objects, which have already been achieved.

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

कर्म सङ्गेन *karma saṅgena* – By association with कर्म's *karmas* - actions propelled by रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa*

तत् देहिनम् निबध्नाति *tat dehnam nibadhnāti* – the रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* binds the person. It makes the person bound to कर्म *karma*, thus obstructing the person from the vision of आत्मज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* – Self-knowledge.

We may note here that with reference to सत्त्व गुण *satva guṇa*, भगवान् *bhagavān* uses the word बध्नाति *badhnāti* – it binds. With reference to रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa*, भगवान् *bhagavān* uses the word निबध्नाति *nibadhnāti* – it binds fast. The bondage is far stronger. Why? Because रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* pushes the person into कर्म's *karmas* – पुण्य कर्म *puṇya karma* and पाप कर्म *pāpa karma* – good and bad actions, which result in a never ending cycle of birth and death.

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

Next, भगवान् *bhagavān* talks about तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*.

तमः तु अज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।

tamaḥ tu ajñānajaṁ viddhi mohanam sarva dehinām ।

प्रमाद आलस्य निद्राभिः तत् निबध्नाति भारत ॥ 14-8

pramāda ālasya nidrābhiḥ tat nibadhnāti bhārata ॥



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भारत *bhārata* – O! Arjuna

तमः तु विद्धि *tamaḥ tu viddhi* – on the other hand, this is how you should understand
तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*.

अज्ञानं *ajñānaṁ* – the तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* is born of simple ignorance, meaning ordinary ignorance. Indeed, all the three गुण *guṇas* arise from अविद्या *avidya* – ignorance of आत्मा *ātmā*. This is not the meaning here. Here, अज्ञानं *ajñānaṁ* is not आत्म अज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* – ignorance of आत्मा *ātmā*. The अज्ञानं *ajñānaṁ* here is आवरण अज्ञानं *āvaraṇa ajñānaṁ* – 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 *mohanaṁ* – means मोह करं *moha karaṁ*, अचिवेक करं *aviveka karaṁ*. It creates delusion, born of confusion. When तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* predominates, the person is not able to use one's own natural intellect, and because of that inability, there is मोहनं *mohanaṁ* – delusion.

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

प्रमाद आलस्य निद्राभिः *pramāda ālasya nidrābhiḥ*

प्रमाद *pramāda* means धर्म *dharma*, अधर्म *adharma*, अचिवेक *aviveka* and कार्य-
अकार्य विषय असामर्थ्यम् *kārya-akārya viṣaya asāmarthyam* – 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 *tamas guṇa* is opposed to सत्त्व गुण *satva guṇa*.

आलस्य *ālasya* means प्रवृत्ति असामर्थ्यम् *pravṛtti asāmarthyam* – 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 *tamas guṇa* makes one too lazy and too indifferent to do anything, to put the efforts necessary to accomplish anything in life. Thus तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* inhibits रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* also.



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

प्रमाद आलस्य निद्राभिः *pramāda ālasya nidrābhiḥ* – By these three manifestations of तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*, namely lack of discriminating knowledge, laziness and /or indifference, and inability of the body elements to perceive and act promptly तत् निबध्नाति *tat nibadhnāti* – the तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* binds the person strongly, obstructing the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* of the person from gaining आत्मज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* – Self-knowledge.

Now, summarizing the bondage characteristics of all the three गुणसु *guṇas*, भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति रजः कर्मणि भारत ।
sattvaṁ sukhe sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata ।
ज्ञानं आवृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयत्युत ॥ 14-9
jñānam āvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayatyuta ॥

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

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति *sattvaṁ sukhe sañjayati* – the सत्त्व गुण *satva guṇa* binds a person by impelling the person in the pursuit of सुख *sukha* – transient pleasure
रजः कर्मणि सञ्जयति *rajaḥ karmaṇi sañjayati* – the रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* binds a person by impelling the person to the pursuit of कर्मसु *karmas* - desire propelled actions of various kinds, good and bad.

तु *tu* – on the other hand

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



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तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयति *tamaḥ pramāde sañjayati* – the तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* binds a person in the state of प्रमाद *pramāda* – to a life of laziness and indifference.

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

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

We must also understand that तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* accounts for sleep and inertness as well. Therefore, तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* 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 useful purpose. Therefore, तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* has its own rightful place in the eternal order of existence.

Further, every person is a mixture of all the three गुण *guṇas*, 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 *guṇa* may manifest itself predominantly at different times. Such predominance of one गुण *guṇa* relative to the others may be occasional, or may be natural to the अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* – the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* of the person.

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

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

Sri Krishna talks about the natural sequential orders of the three गुण *guṇas* (गुण विभाग *guṇa vibhāga*) in the next verse, which we will see next time.