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श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

अष्टादशोऽध्यायः - मोक्षसंन्यासयोगः

aṣṭadaśo 'dhyāyaḥ - mokṣa saṁnyāsa yogaḥ

Chapter 18

Volume 9

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।

na tadast i pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ ।

सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात् त्रिभिर्गुणैः ॥ 18 - 40

sattvaṁ prakṛtijairmuktaṁ yadebhiḥ syāt tribhirguṇaiḥ ॥

ब्राह्मण क्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परंतप ।

brāhmaṇa kṣatriyaviśāṁ śūdrāṇāṁ ca parmtapa ।

कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभाव प्रभवैर्गुणैः ॥ 18 - 41

karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāva prabhavairguṇaiḥ ॥

शमो दमः तपः शौचं क्षान्तिः आर्जवमेव च ।

śamo damaḥ tapaḥ śaucam kṣāntiḥ ājavameva ca ।

ज्ञानं विज्ञानं आस्तिक्यं ब्रह्मकर्म स्वभावजं ॥ 18 - 42

jñānam vijñānam āstikyaṁ brahmakarma svabhāvajaṁ ॥

शौर्यम् तेजो धृतिः दाक्ष्यं युद्धे चाप्यपलायनं ।

śauryam tejo dhṛtaḥ dākṣyam yuddhe cāpyapalāyanam ।

दानं ईश्वरभावश्च क्षात्रं कर्म स्वभावजं ॥ 18 - 43

dānam īśvarbhāvaśca kṣātram karma svabhāvajaṁ ॥

कृषि गौरक्ष्यवाणिज्यं वैश्य कर्म स्वभावजं ।

kṛṣi gaurakṣyavāṇijyam vaiśya karma svabhāvajaṁ ।

परिचर्यात्मकं कर्म शूद्रस्यापि स्वभावजं ॥ 18 - 44

paricaryātmakam karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajaṁ ॥

As we have seen already in Chapter 14, the very nature of माया māyā - the inherent infinite power of परमेश्वर parameśvar, is the three-fold गुणs guṇas, namely the सत्त्व



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sattva, रजस् *rajas* and तमस् *gunas tamas gunas*. While every कर्म *karma* is governed by the compositions of one's गुण *gunas*, the गुण *gunas* themselves cannot be seen. Only their manifestations in one's कर्म *karma* can be seen.

Sri Krishna has been talking extensively about the manifestations of the three गुण *gunas* in various aspects of कर्म *karma* including श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, आहार *āhār*, यज्ञ *yajña*, तपस् *tapas*, दानं *dānam*, त्याग *tyāga*, ज्ञानं *jñānam*, कर्म *karma*, कर्ता *kartā*, बुद्धि *buddhi* and सुखं *sukham*.

All this is definite and clear knowledge on the manifestations of गुण *guṇa* in one's कर्म *karmas*. With this knowledge, one can recognize the texture, the quality of one's own गुण *guṇa* at any particular time, and one can understand oneself better, and do whatever needs to be done to uplift oneself to the predominance of सत्त्वगुण *sattva guṇa* in one's अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*. That is the purpose of all this discussion on गुण *guṇa* and कर्म *karma*. Bringing this discussion to a close, भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।

na tadasti pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ ।

सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात् त्रिभिर्गुणैः ॥ 18 – 40

sattvaṁ prakṛtijairmuktaṁ yadebhiḥ syāt tribhirguṇaiḥ ॥

यत् सत्त्वं स्यात् *yat sattvaṁ syāt* - Whatever is existent, or simply, whatever exists

पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः *pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ* - either on this earth or in the celestial world of देव *devas*, the अधिष्ठान देवता *adhiṣṭhāna devatās* - the celestial world of presiding deities like इन्द्र *indra*, वायु *vāyu*, चरुण *varuṇa*, अग्नि *agni*, etc., which means, whatever exists in this entire world of beings in this entire creation

एभिः प्रकृतिजैः त्रिभिः गुणैः मुक्तं *ebhiḥ prakṛtijaiḥ tribhiḥ guṇaiḥ muktaṁ* - that which is free from the hold of these three गुण *gunas* born of प्रकृति *prakṛti*, the माया *māyā*, the inherent infinite power of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*



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तत् न अस्ति *tat na asti* - it is not there

That means, there is nothing in this creation which is free from the hold of the three गुणs *guṇas* and these three गुणs *guṇas* always manifest themselves in every action of every being.

Therefore, by recognizing these three गुणs *guṇas* in one's own actions, one understands the composition of one's own गुण *guṇa* at any given time, and that knowledge gives an opportunity for every person to help oneself in uplifting oneself from तमस् *tamas* and रजस् *rajas*, which are obstructions to one's spiritual progress, and, in cultivating सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa* component in oneself, which is मोक्षसाधनं *mokṣa sādhanam* - the means helpful for gaining मोक्ष *mokṣa* - Total Fulfillment in life.

Thus concluding this discussion on how the three गुणs *guṇas* manifest themselves in one's कर्मs *karmas*, Sri Krishna now moves on to the next and the final topic of गीतोपदेश *gītopadeśa*, namely the following: If everyone is under the hold of one's गुणs *guṇas*, and if every कर्म *karma* is only a manifestation of one's गुणs *guṇas*, how can one gain freedom from कर्म *karma*, and gain मोक्ष *mokṣa*?

One is born with गुणs *guṇas*, and there is nothing one can do about it. One does कर्म *karma* naturally, from the very moment of one's birth. One does not see any गुण *guṇa*. One can only do कर्म *karma*, and one cannot remain without doing कर्म *karma* even for a moment. Even as a जीवनहेतु *jīvanahetu* - as a means of maintaining oneself while living, one has to do some कर्म *karma* in the society in which one lives. When that is the case, how can one be doing कर्म *karma* all the time, and at the same time gain freedom from कर्म *karma* itself, to gain मोक्ष *mokṣa*?

The answer to this question is the topic of discussion in the next 26 extraordinary verses. Even though the answer to this question should be evident from all that भगवान् *bhagavān* has said already up till now, still this question keeps coming in one's mind again and again in one form or another. Therefore, in this concluding section of गीतोपदेश *gītopadeśa*, भगवान् *bhagavān* tells again, the means for gaining freedom from कर्म *karma*, by properly utilizing the कर्म *karma* itself for gaining that freedom, and ultimately, the means for gaining मोक्ष *mokṣa* itself. This



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concluding section of गीतोपदेश *gītōpadeśa* is all-important in भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā*. Therefore, let us try to understand the message here properly, clearly and completely.

भगवान् *bhagavān* opens the topic by calling attention to the कर्म *karmas* people naturally do as a matter of social duty in the society that prevailed at that time, in the times of Arjuna, which, as we all know, is over 5000 years ago. Referring to that society, भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

ब्राह्मण क्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परंतप ।

brāhmaṇa kṣatriyaviśāṃ śūdrāṇāṃ ca parṁtapa ।

कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभाव प्रभवैर्गुणैः ॥ 18 – 41

karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāva prabhavairguṇaiḥ ॥

Here भगवान् *bhagavān* is talking about वर्ण धर्म *varṇa dharmas* - the कर्म *karmas* of the four-fold duty based occupational groups of people, constituting the entire Vedic society that existed in India at the time of Arjuna under the names ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇas*, क्षत्रिय *kṣatriyas*, वैश्य *vaiśyas*, and शूद्र *śūdrās*.

At this point it must be made absolutely clear that we are not talking here about the present-day erroneous and self-destructive notions about the so-called caste divisions in our society. Our object here is only to understand clearly and properly what the Gita says about वर्ण धर्म *varṇa dharmas* - natural occupational duties of ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇas*, क्षत्रिय *kṣatriyas*, वैश्य *vaiśyas*, and शूद्र *śūdrās* in the entire Vedic society, and how they help both the individual and the society as a whole, to progress both materially as well as spiritually. Therefore, let us set aside, for the time being, our own individual opinions on वर्ण धर्म *varṇa dharmas* in Vedic society, and listen to what Sri Krishna says on the subject. भगवान् *bhagavān* tells here:

परंतप *parṁtapa* - O! Arjuna

ब्राह्मण क्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च कर्माणि *brāhmaṇa kṣatriyaviśāṃ śūdrāṇāṃ ca karmāṇi* - the कर्म *karmas* to be done, the duties to be performed by the ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇas*, क्षत्रिय *kṣatriyas*, वैश्य *vaiśyas*, and शूद्र *śūdrās* in the society



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प्रविभक्तानि *pravibhaktāni* - are mutually and distinctly divided among individuals, for the welfare of both the individual as well as the society as a whole, without creating conflicts and confusion in the society.

How are they divided? Not arbitrarily, not forcefully, not based on parentage, please understand this, not based on parentage, but by

स्वभाव प्रभवैः गुणैः *svabhāva prabhavaiḥ guṇaiḥ* - by one's own स्वभाव गुण *svabhāva guṇas* - by the peculiar composite texture, quality of one's own natural गुण *guṇa* combinations - सत्त्व-रजस्-तमस् *sattva-rajas-tamas* गुण *guṇa* combinations, स्वभाव गुण *svabhāva guṇas* at any given time, which means

- if you naturally have the स्वभाव *svabhāva* fit for ब्राह्मण कर्म *brāhmaṇa karma*, you do ब्राह्मण कर्म *brāhmaṇa karma*. Likewise
- if you naturally have the स्वभाव *svabhāva* fit for क्षत्रिय कर्म *kṣatriya karma*, you do क्षत्रिय कर्म *kṣatriya karma*
- if you naturally have the स्वभाव *svabhāva* fit for वैश्य कर्म *vaiśya karma*, you do वैश्य कर्म *vaiśya karma*; and
- if you naturally have the स्वभाव *svabhāva* fit for शूद्रा कर्म *śūdrā karma*, you do शूद्रा कर्म *śūdrā karma*.

That is वर्ण धर्म *varṇa dharma*. Now, who created वर्ण धर्म *varṇa dharma*? भगवान् *bhagavān* says in Chapter 4

चातुर्वर्ण्यम् मया शृष्टं गुणकर्म विभागशः
cāturvarṇyam mayā śṛṣṭam guṇakarma vibhāgaśaḥ

The four वर्ण *varṇas* - the four duty based occupational groups of people called ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇas*, क्षत्रिय *kṣatriyas*, वैश्य *vaiśyas*, and शूद्र *śūdrās* in the society were created by Me, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, based on गुण विभाग *guṇa vibhāga* and कर्म विभाग *karma vibhāga* - the natural differences in the गुण *guṇas* of the individuals, and also the natural differences in the various कर्म *karmas* to be done in the society for the continued welfare and progress of both the individual and the society as a whole.



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When Sri Krishna says that "the four वर्णसु varṇas in human society were created by Me - The परमेश्वर parameśvar", it means that the existence of the four वर्णसु varṇas in human society is the Eternal ORDER natural to human society. Whether or not one recognizes, understands, and appreciates this natural order, this order does exist in every human society, because it is the very Law of Nature. Now, what is this Law of Nature with respect to गुण विभाग guṇa vibhāga - differences in the गुण guṇa of the individuals, and कर्म विभाग karma vibhāga - differences in the various कर्मसु karmas to be done in the society?

In Chapter 14, Sri Krishna talked about गुण विभाग guṇa vibhāga - the four-fold order with respect to the combinations of सत्त्व sattva, रजस् rajas, and तमस् गुणसु tamas guṇas, which occur naturally in the disposition of अन्तःकरण antaḥ karaṇa - mind and बुद्धि buddhi of human beings. As we may recall, this four-fold गुण विभाग guṇa vibhāga is:

रजस्तमश्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति भारत ।

rajastamaścābhibhūya sattvaṁ bhavati bhārata ।

रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः सत्त्वं रजस्थता ॥

14-10

rajaḥ sattvaṁ tamaścaiva tamaḥ sattvaṁ rajasthatā ॥

The four-fold order in गुण विभाग guṇa vibhāga is the following:

The first order is the सत्त्व-रजस्-तमस् sattva-rajastamas sequential combination, which means the predominance of सत्त्व गुण sattva guṇa, primarily associated with रजस् गुण rajas guṇa, and very little associated with तमस् गुण tamas guṇa. This order of गुण विभाग guṇa vibhāga is the most appropriate for ब्राह्मण कर्म brāhmaṇa karma in society.

The second order is the रजस्-सत्त्व-तमस् rajas-sattva-tamas sequential combination, which means the predominance of रजस् गुण rajas guṇa, primarily associated with सत्त्व गुण sattva guṇa and very little associated with तमस् गुण tamas guṇa. This order of गुण विभाग guṇa vibhāga is most appropriate for क्षत्रिय कर्म kṣatriya karma in society.



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The third order is the रजस्-तमस्-सत्त्व *rajas-tamas-sattva* sequential combination, which means the predominance of रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* but primarily associated with तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa* and very little associated with सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa*. This order of गुण विभाग *guṇa vibhāga* is most appropriate for वैश्य कर्म *vaiśya karma* in society; and finally

The fourth order is the तमस्-रजस्-सत्त्व *tamas-rajas-sattva* sequential combination, which means the pre-dominance of तमस् गुण *tamas guṇa*, primarily associated with रजस् गुण *rajas guṇa* and very little associated with सत्त्व गुण *sattva guṇa*. This order of गुण विभाग *guṇa vabhāga* is most appropriate for शूद्रा कर्म *śūdrā karma* in society.

This four-fold order of गुण विभाग *guṇa vibhāga*, the four-fold order of sequential combinations of the three गुण s *guṇas* is both natural and universal. It has no particular name, because, by itself, it is not visible for recognition. Sri Krishna talks about कर्म विभाग *karma vibhāga* - the four-fold distinctions in वर्ण कर्म s *varṇa karmas* in society in the next few verses, which we will see shortly. Before that, we must understand how one gets the गुण *guṇa* - the particular combination of the three गुण s *guṇas* that one has at any given time.

In our present verse, भगवान् *bhagavān* says that one gets one's गुण *guṇa* from one's स्वभाव *svabhāva*

स्वभाव प्रभवैः गुणैः *svabhāva prabhavaiḥ guṇaiḥ* (18 - 41)

स्वभाव *svabhāva* means what? How does one get one's स्वभाव *svabhāva*? स्वभाव *svabhāva* is one's innate nature, born of one's संस्कार s *saṁskāras*, which are the accumulated impressions left behind by all of one's past कर्म s *karmas*, including all of one's past education and cultivated training of the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, both in one's पूर्व जन्म s *pūrva janmas* - past lives, and also in one's present life.

Every कर्म *karma* one does, either in thought, word or deed, even when it is all over, leaves behind some impressions, lingering impressions. These impressions are constantly getting accumulated and integrated with one's अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, of one's सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* - the subtle body, in the



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form of one's composite गुण *guṇa*. Thus, one's गुण *guṇa* has its origin in one's स्वभाव *svabhāva* - one's पूर्व संस्कारs *pūrva saṁskāras* - accumulated impressions left behind by one's past कर्मs *karmas*.

Therefore, the पूर्व संस्कारs *pūrva saṁskāras* of the person, at the time of death, naturally determines the गुण *guṇa* of the person, and consequently, the time, place and circumstances of one's next birth. As a result, even at birth, the अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* of a human being is already a developed one, in terms of one's स्वभाव गुण *svabhāva guṇa*, and this स्वभाव गुण *svabhāva guṇa* manifests itself as one's spontaneous tendencies with respect to every कर्म *karma* the person does, subsequently throughout one's life.

Thus every कर्म *karma* of an individual person becomes the natural expression of one's स्वभाव गुण *svabhāva guṇa* - गुण *guṇa* born of one's स्वभाव *svabhāva*, or one's पूर्व संस्कारs *pūrva saṁskāras*, which means, one's स्वभाव गुण *svabhāva guṇa* uniquely determines one's कर्म *karma*, and this natural connection between one's स्वभाव गुण *svabhāva guṇa* and कर्म *karma* is the basis of वर्ण धर्म *varṇa dharma* - the mandated duties of individuals in Vedic society.

By taking full advantage of the natural connection between one's स्वभाव गुणs *svabhāva guṇas* and कर्म *karma*, both the individual and the society as a whole can realize the highest potential of human existence. That is the power of वर्ण धर्म *varṇa dharma* in Vedic society.

It is important to understand here that one's parentage is NOT the cause for one's वर्ण *varṇa* - one's occupation in society. One's parentage is the result of one's पूर्व संस्कारs *pūrva saṁskāras*, one's स्वभाव गुणs *svabhāva guṇas* born of one's कर्मs *karmas* in one's past lives.

In the Vedic society, the वर्ण धर्मs *varṇa dharmas*, the social duties arising from one's parentage simply provides every individual a unique opportunity to play one's rightful role in society, making full use of one's in-born nature, without competing with others for one's living needs, and without confusing oneself with respect to the ultimate destination in life, which is the same for every person.



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The वर्ण धर्म *varṇa dharmas* - the social duties arising from one's parentage are never an impediment to one's spiritual progress. In fact, they are an invaluable asset, and an extraordinary help in one's spiritual progress.

If for any reason, one rejects one's वर्ण धर्म *varṇa dharmas* - one's occupational duties arising from one's parentage that is also a manifestation of one's ever-evolving गुण *guṇa*, which will certainly have its own natural consequences for one's future.

Having pointed out that the natural division of social duties in the four occupational groups in the Vedic society arises from the स्वभाव *svabhāva* generated गुण *guṇas* of the individuals involved, Sri Krishna now talks about the manifestations of such गुण *guṇas* in each of the four groups involved, occupational groups involved.

Talking about ब्राह्मण कर्म *brāhmaṇa karma*, भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

शमो दमः तपः शौचं क्षान्तिः आर्जवमेव च ।

śamo damaḥ tapaḥ śaucam kṣāntiḥ ārjavameva ca ।

ज्ञानं विज्ञानं अस्तिक्यं ब्रह्मकर्म स्वभावजं ॥ 18 – 42

jñānam vijñānam āstikyaṁ brahmakarma svabhāvajam ॥

As we have already seen these words before,

शमः *śamah* - means मनो निग्रहं *mano nigrahaṁ* - control and mastery over one's mind, one's ways of thinking

दमः *damaḥ* - means बाह्य इन्द्रिय निग्रहं *bāhya indriya nigrahaṁ* - control and mastery over all of one's external organs of perception and action

तपः *tapaḥ* - means personal discipline at all levels, as भगवान् *bhagavān* said earlier, शरीर तपस् *śārīra tapas*, वाक् तपस् *vāk tapas*, and मानस तपस् *mānasa tapas* - discipline at the body level, speech level and at the mind level

शौचं *śaucam* - purity inside and outside - cleanliness of mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, and also cleanliness of one's body and surroundings

क्षान्तिः *kṣāntiḥ* - forgiveness, accommodation and forbearance

आर्जवं *ārjavam* - straightforwardness in thought, word and deed at all times



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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

वाङ् मे मनसि प्रतिष्ठिता मनोमे वाचि प्रतिष्ठितं *vāṅ me manasi pratiṣṭhitā manome vāci prtiṣṭhitam*

Let there be complete identity between what I speak and what I think. Let there be complete accord between what I do and what I think. Let there always be proper alignment, clarity and focus in all of my thoughts, words and actions - That is being **आर्जवं *ārjavam*** - straightforwardness in thought, word and deed at all times.

ज्ञानं *jñānam* - total commitment to the pursuit of Knowledge - both objective knowledge and Upanishad knowledge

विज्ञानं *vijñanam*, **विशेष ज्ञानं *viśeṣa jñānam*** - total commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and service at the highest possible level, through spiritual striving rooted in **सत्यं *satyam***, **धर्मम् *dharmam***, **तपस् *tapas***, **ब्रह्मचर्यम् *brahmacaryam***, **सम्यक् आत्मविचारं *samyaka ātmavicāram*** and **सम्यक् ज्ञानं *samyak jñānam*** (see **मुण्ड *muṇḍaka***. 3 - 1 - 5 and 6)

आस्तिक्यं *āstikyam* - continued cultivation of **आस्तिक्य बुद्धि *āstikya buddhi***, meaning continued efforts leading to the recognition of **परमेश्वर ज्ञानं *parameśvar jñānam***, **ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वम् ज्ञानं *īśāvāsyam idam sarvam jñānam***, **वासुदेवः सर्वम् इति ज्ञानं *vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti jñānam***, **ब्रह्म एव इदं विश्वं ज्ञानं *brahma eva idam viśvam jñānam*** - recognition of Vedas and the Upanishads as the valid means of knowledge about **जीव *jīva***, **जगत *jagat*** and **ईश्वर *īśvara***; and

श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in understanding and appreciation of the Vedic commands, as the commands of **परमेश्वर *parameśvar*** itself, as the commands of The Pure Consciousness already in oneself.

ब्रह्मकर्म स्वभावजं *brahmakarma svabhāvajam* - all these are **ब्राह्मण कर्म *brāhmaṇa karmas*** - **कर्म *karmas*** natural to the **स्वभाव *svabhāva*** of **ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇas*** in the Vedic society.

We will talk about **ब्राह्मण कर्म *brāhmaṇa karmas*** and the other **वर्ण *varṇas*** in detail next time.