

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

# **BHAGAVAD GEETA – 14**

*The Threefold  
Qualities of Nature*

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***“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”***

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**TEXT**

**28.14**

Reflections by  
**SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA**



## **Sandeepany's Vedanta Course**

**List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:**

<b>Text No.</b>	<b>TITLE OF TEXT</b>	<b>Text No.</b>	<b>TITLE OF TEXT</b>
1	<i>Sadhana Panchakam</i>	24	<i>Hanuman Chalisa</i>
2	<i>Tattwa Bodha</i>	25	<i>Vakya Vritti</i>
3	<i>Atma Bodha</i>	26	<i>Advaita Makaranda</i>
4	<i>Bhaja Govindam</i>	27	<i>Kaivalya Upanishad</i>
5	<i>Manisha Panchakam</i>	<b>28.14</b>	<b><i>Bhagavad Geeta (Discourse 14 )</i></b>
6	<i>Forgive Me</i>	29	<i>Mundaka Upanishad</i>
7	<i>Upadesha Sara</i>	30	<i>Amritabindu Upanishad</i>
8	<i>Prashna Upanishad</i>	31	<i>Mukunda Mala (Bhakti Text)</i>
9	<i>Dhanyashtakam</i>	32	<i>Tapovan Shatkam</i>
10	<i>Bodha Sara</i>	33	<i>The Mahavakyas, Panchadasi 5</i>
11	<i>Viveka Choodamani</i>	34	<i>Aitareya Upanishad</i>
12	<i>Jnana Sara</i>	35	<i>Narada Bhakti Sutras</i>
13	<i>Drig-Drishya Viveka</i>	36	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>
14	<i>"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6</i>	37	<i>Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)</i>
15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
16	<i>"Bhoomaiva Sukham" Chand Up 7</i>	39	<i>Aparoksha Anubhuti (Meditation)</i>
17	<i>Manah Shodhanam</i>	40	<i>108 Names of Pujya Gurudev</i>
18	<i>"Nataka Deepa" – Panchadasi 10</i>	41	<i>Mandukya Upanishad</i>
19	<i>Isavasya Upanishad</i>	42	<i>Dakshinamurty Ashtakam</i>
20	<i>Katha Upanishad</i>	43	<i>Shad Darshanaah</i>
21	<i>"Sara Sangrah" – Yoga Vasishtha</i>	44	<i>Brahma Sootras</i>
22	<i>Vedanta Sara</i>	45	<i>Jivanmuktananda Lahari</i>
23	<i>Mahabharata + Geeta Dhyanam</i>	46	<i>Chinmaya Pledge</i>

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This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

**– The Author, February 2019, Shivaratri Day**

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text  
**28.14**



गुणत्रयविभागयोगः

## THE BHAGAVAD GEETA – 14

*“The Threefold Qualities of Nature”*

*Sri Veda Vyasaji*

### Reflections

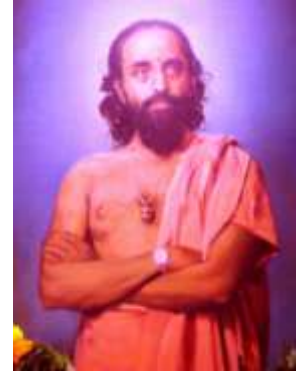
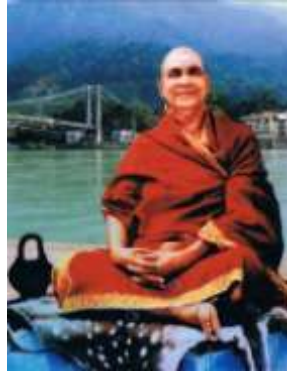
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*Adi Shankaracharya*

*Swami Sivananda*

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## **Personal Dedication**

### **1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan**

*who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;*

### **2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj**

*the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;*

### **3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)**

*for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;*

### **4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji**

*my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.*

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# ***BHAGAVAD GEETA – 14***

***“The Threefold Qualities of Nature”***

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# ॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

अथ चतुर्दशोऽध्यायः

गुणत्रयविभागयोगः

## THE BHAGAVAD GEETA

Discourse – 14 (27 Verses)

“The GUNAS – the Three Modes”

### INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS CHAPTER IS LINKED very closely to the previous Chapter. The partnership between the Field and the Knower of the Field is re-capped with the purpose of showing the cause of creation, and showing the immanence of the Spirit in Creation, not its independence as believed by the Sankhyan school.

Prakriti, the Mother of creation, is responsible for all modifications and Gunas or qualities displayed by beings. This was just mentioned in verse 13.20, and very briefly the function of the Gunas was given in verse 13.22. This Chapter follows up with the further details of how the Gunas operate in man. How they arise, what are their characteristics, how they influence our future births – all these are explained here.

In particular, this Chapter describes how one may transcend the Gunas. The need for this was mentioned in 13.22 where it was stated that the play of the Gunas binds one to this world of Samsara. Liberation has to include the process of transcending the Gunas.

The three main topics discussed in this Chapter are:

- i) The contributions of Purusha and Prakriti to creation. (3-4)
- ii) The Characteristics and functioning of the Gunas in man. (5-18)
- iii) How to transcend the Gunas, and thereby realize our Self beyond them. (19-27)

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**BHAGAVAD GEETA – 14**  
**“The Threefold Qualities of Nature”**

**CONTENTS**

---

	<b>Introduction to Chapter 14</b>	<b>1</b>	
	<b>14.1 KNOWLEDGE, PRAKRITI &amp; PURUSHA</b>	<b>(Verses 1 – 4)</b>	<b>04</b>
Verse 1:	<i>Further Expansion on the Knowledge</i>	4	
Verse 2:	<i>Fruit of the Knowledge</i>	5	
Verse 3:	<i>The Conception of Creation</i>	5	
Verse 4:	<i>Responsibilities of the Cosmic Parents</i>	6	
	<b>14.2 BINDING POWER OF GUNAS</b>	<b>(Verses 5 – 9)</b>	<b>08</b>
Verse 5:	<i>The Three Gunas of Prakriti – An Overview</i>	8	
Verse 6:	<i>The Sattwa Guna</i>	9	
Verse 7:	<i>The Rajas Guna</i>	9	
Verse 8:	<i>The Tamas Guna</i>	10	
Verse 9:	<i>The Binding Characteristics – A Summary</i>	10	
	<b>14.3 THE PREDOMINANT GUNA</b>	<b>(Verses 10 – 13)</b>	<b>12</b>
Verse 10:	<i>How Each Guna Predominates the Others</i>	12	
Verse 11:	<i>When Sattwa Predominates</i>	13	
Verse 12:	<i>When Rajas Predominates</i>	13	
Verse 13:	<i>When Tamas Predominates</i>	13	
	<b>14.4 THE FRUIT OF EACH GUNA</b>	<b>(Verses 14 – 18)</b>	<b>15</b>
Verse 14:	<i>Long-Term Fruit of Sattwa</i>	15	
Verse 15:	<i>Long-Term Fruit of Rajas &amp; Tamas</i>	15	
Verse 16:	<i>Short-Term <u>External</u> Fruits of Gunas</i>	16	
Verse 17:	<i>Short-Term <u>Internal</u> Fruits of Gunas</i>	16	
Verse 18:	<i>Short-Term <u>Evolutionary</u> Fruits of Gunas</i>	17	
	<b>14.5 TRANSCENDING THE GUNAS</b>	<b>(Verses 19 – 27)</b>	<b>19</b>
Verse 19:	<i>Seeing Gunas as the Agent of Action</i>	19	
Verse 20:	<i>The Attainment After Transcending Gunas</i>	20	
Verse 21:	<i>The Signs of a Gunateetah</i>	21	
Verse 22:	<i>The Gunateetah Defined</i>	21	

Verse 23:	<i>Indifference Towards the Gunas</i>	22
v 24 & 25:	<i>Balance &amp; Equipoise</i>	24
Verse 26:	<i>The Phala of Being a Gunateeta</i>	25
Verse 27:	<i>Entering the Abode of Brahman</i>	26

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***Radha & Krishna***

## 14.1 KNOWLEDGE, PRAKRITI & PURUSHA

(Verses 1-4, 4 No.)

**S**RI KRISHNA STARTS THIS Chapter with another instalment of Knowledge. It is a valuable aspect concerning how Prakriti functions in man through the Gunas or qualities of Nature. Knowledge about them will certainly give Arjuna greater understanding of the play of the Gunas in man and how they bind us to the world.

The Lord's intention is quite clear: "Arjuna, until you tell Me you are liberated, I shall not leave you!" This is why Sri Krishna is known as the greatest Teacher of mankind. He does not let go of His disciples.

The last verse of Chapter 13 spoke of liberation from Prakriti and Her evolutes. Prakriti is Maya, and is the line that demarcates the Self from the not-Self. The knowledge of the Gunas given here expands on the statement made to Arjuna in 13.20, that "the qualities are born of Prakriti."

### Verse 1: *Further Expansion on the Knowledge*

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

परं भूयः प्रवक्ष्यामि ज्ञानानां ज्ञानमुत्तमम् ।

यज्ज्ञात्वा मुनयः सर्वे परां सिद्धिमितो गताः

॥ १४-१॥

śrībhagavānuvāca |

param bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānāṃ jñānamuttamam |

yajjñātvā munayaḥ sarvā parāṃ siddhimitō gatāḥ

|| 14-1||

	<i>Shree Bhagavaan uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>Param bhooyah pravakshyaami,</i>	<i>I shall speak again of the <b>supreme</b></i>
2	<i>jnaanaanaam jnaanam uttamam;</i>	<i><b>knowledge</b>, the best of all knowledges;</i>
3	<i>yat jnaatvaa munayah sarve,</i>	<i>by realizing which all the <u>contemplatives</u></i>
4	<i>paraam siddhim itah gataah.</i>	<i>have reached the <u>highest perfection</u> from here.</i>

**1-2** It is spoken of as the "best of all knowledges" for two reasons: Firstly, it is the *Shrotriya Abhimukhi Karana*, "that which aims to draw Arjuna's attention". Arjuna has already been an attentive listener all along. Nevertheless, his interest has to be maintained. Perhaps the intellectual slant of the subject from the last Chapter onwards may get too heavy for the novice aspirant.

**3-4** Secondly, the knowledge leads us to the ultimate state of union with the Supreme Brahman, the very core of our being. There is nothing higher than that to be attained by man.

There are also two reasons for the Lord to impart this knowledge: i) it will help Arjuna to understand the Sadhana that is needed on this quest; and ii) it will help him to see

clearly how he became deluded at the very outset of the battle. The root of his delusion will be explained through knowledge of the Gunas.

**Verse 2:** *Fruit of the Knowledge*

इदं ज्ञानमुपाश्रित्य मम साधर्म्यमागताः ।  
सर्गेऽपि नोपजायन्ते प्रलये न व्यथन्ति च ॥ १४-२॥  
idam jñānamupāśritya mama sādharmaṃyamaḡatāḥ |  
sargē:'pi nōpajāyante pralayē na vyathanti ca ॥ 14-2॥

1	<i>Idam jnaanam upaashritya,</i>	<i>Taking refuge in this knowledge,</i>
2	<i>mama saadharmyam aagataah;</i>	<i>those who partake of My essential nature,</i>
3	<i>sarge api na upajaayante,</i>	<i>are neither born at the time of creation,</i>
4	<i>pralaye na vyathanti cha.</i>	<i>nor do they suffer pain during dissolution.</i>

**1** Sri Krishna would like to see a commitment from Arjuna to realize the Truth. Arjuna's *Upashritya* or "taking refuge" in the knowledge is a vital part of this commitment.

'*Idam*' is that which is going to be explained in this Chapter, the knowledge of the three Gunas. The purpose of this knowledge is to help Arjuna to see the need to destroy the ego-centre within him.

**2 Saadharmyam:** This is a word that is open to many shades of meaning, but it refers to the Lord's essential nature being imbibed more and more by the seeker. As the Lord's nature is infinite, one of the key aspects of His nature is *Abheda Buddhi*, to see no differences at all; to attain the Non-dual vision. Lord Krishna is guiding Arjuna towards this attainment. The Non-dual state is the very opposite of the the nature of the Jeeva or the nature of the Ego. His vision gets more and more universal with each passing day.

**3-4** Birth and death are not chance events, but pre-determined by our Karma. In order to work off the Karma we have accumulated, we take birth, with the hope that before we die, a large chunk of that Karma is worked out. Since saints have no remaining Karma, they are not compelled to take birth, but may choose to do so to help other seekers.

**Verse 3:** *The Conception of Creation*

मम योनिर्महद् ब्रह्म तस्मिन्गर्भं दधाम्यहम् ।  
सम्भवः सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत ॥ १४-३॥  
mama yōnirmahad brahma tasmīngarbhaṃ dadhāmyaham |  
sambhavaḥ sarvabhūtānām tatō bhavati bhārata ॥ 14-3॥

1	<i>Mama yonih mahat brahma,</i>	<i>My womb is the Great Unmanifest.</i>
2	<i>tasmin garbham dadhaami aham;</i>	<i>In Her womb I place the seed.</i>
3	<i>sambhavah sarva-bhootaanaam,</i>	<i>The creation of all beings is made possible</i>
4	<i>tatah bhavati bhaarata.</i>	<i>as a result of that, O Bharata.</i>

**1-2 Mahat Brahma:** Mahat, from the point of view of Brahman, is *Prakriti* or Maya, the Womb of Creation. Earlier in Chapter 13 we referred to Mahat as Hiranyagarbha, the Consciousness associated with the subtle body. That is from our point of view. To us Hiranyagarbha stands as the Womb of Creation. Hiranyagarbha is the Total Mind.

There is a fine technical difference between these two viewpoints. In the chain of cause and effect given in Chapter 13, Prakriti or Pradhān is at the head. She has no cause but is the cause of everything else in creation. She falls in the *Prakriti* category. Hiranyagarbha falls in the *Prakriti/Vikriti* category, since it has a cause before it (Prakriti) and also has effects after it (the whole of Creation).

### The Simile of “Womb of Creation”

**3-4** The words *Yonih* and *Garbham* are purely similes for the Creation process. They compare creation to the biological process by which man is created. In the case at hand, the Light of Consciousness (Brahman) impregnates Prakriti. “I”, the Purusha (Brahman or Lord Krishna in this case), place My Light as the seed of Creation into Prakriti, and thereby become the *Nimitta Karana* (efficient cause). Prakriti becomes the *Upadana Karana* (material cause) of all Creation. In the simile, this represents the moment of conception.

Prakriti soon becomes pregnant. The swollen womb of Prakriti may then be called Hiranyagarbha, from which the five subtle elements first emerge. In this way, the simile can be reconciled with both the viewpoints presented above. This particular simile is found to be very useful in this sense, as it is itself a miniature version of the great Creation Process, and therefore gains its acceptance in scripture.

#### Verse 4:                      *Responsibilities of the Cosmic Parents*

सर्वयोनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तयः सम्भवन्ति याः ।

तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीजप्रदः पिता

॥ १४-४॥

sarvayōniṣu kauntēya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ |

tāsāṁ brahma mahadyōnirahaṁ bījapradāḥ pitā

|| 14-4||

1	<i>Sarva-yonishu kaunteya,</i>	<i>O son of Kunti, in all these wombs,</i>
2	<i>moortayah sam-bhavanti yaah;</i>	<i>whatever forms are produced,</i>
3	<i>taasaam brahma mahat yonih,</i>	<i>of them the Great Unmanifest is the Womb,</i>
4	<i>aham beeja-pradah pitaa.</i>	<i>and I am the seed-giving Father.</i>

The simile is now rubber-stamped by the Lord Himself. Verses 3 and 4 summarise the essence of the teaching given in Chapter 13, especially the aspect on the Partnership between Prakriti and Purusha.

**1-4 Beeja:** “seed”. The *seed* in the simile is not to be mistaken for semen; that would make it a gross confusion of the simile. When the original Cosmic event of conception is scaled down to the individual level, the seed actually represents the “reflection of the same Cosmic Light”, and becomes the individual soul or **Jeeva**. The Jeeva is the transmigrating soul that returns to earth for further evolution birth after birth. It comes together with the same old subtle body, puts on the garb of a new gross body, and continues its evolution

through the experiences it encounters in life. Evolution continues from where it left in the last birth. This is the spiritual purpose of **Rebirth**.

In Vedanta, Matter and Spirit, although spoken of here as though they were different, are really not two separate things as it is regarded in the Sankhya philosophy. Matter is pervaded by Spirit. Matter is superimposed upon Spirit, and so it cannot exist without Spirit.

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## 14.2 BINDING POWER OF GUNAS

(Verses 5-9, 5 No.)

**F**ROM THIS POINT begins the main topic of this Chapter – a discussion of the Gunas of Nature and their functions and characteristics.

Gunās is a name given to the three qualities which make up Maya and from which the whole manifested world is built. As already mentioned in Chapter 13, it is the basic building block of Creation. Acharyaji emphasized that it was not a category on its own, not something that we possessed, not a particular object, not something which could be compared to another thing, but the essence of all manifestations, both gross and subtle.

### Verse 5                      *The Three Gunas of Prakriti – An Overview*

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः ।

निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम्

॥ १४-५॥

sattvaṁ rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ |

nibadhnanti mahābāhō dēhē dēhinamavyayam

|| 14-5||

1	<i>Sattvam rajah tamah iti,</i>	<i>Purity, passion and inertia – these three</i>
2	<i>gunaah prakriti sambhavaah;</i>	<i>qualities (Gunas), born of Prakriti,</i>
3	<i>nibadhnanti mahaabaaho,</i>	<i>O Mighty-armed, bind fast</i>
4	<i>dehe dehinam avyayam.</i>	<i>the indestructible embodied Being to the body.</i>

Creation has subtle and gross components. Subtle is that which is not perceived by the senses; gross is that which is so perceived.

### Threefold Division in Creation

**1-2** There is a threefold division in Creation that is due to the presence of the Gunas.

i) Sattwa Guna: Of the subtle, that which is related to '**knowing**' is made up from the Sattwa Guna, such as Antahkarana (mind, intellect, etc), and all the five organs of knowledge. It is the Sattwic portion of the five subtle elements which produces the Antahkarana.

ii) Rajas Guna: Of the subtle, that which is related to '**acting**' is made up from the Rajas Guna, such as the Pranas and the five organs of action. It is the Rajasic portion of the five subtle elements that produce the Prana which is responsible for motion.

iii) Tamas Guna: The gross body, which is related to '**deluding**', is made up entirely of the Tamas Guna, the five gross elements. It will be remembered from *Tattwa Bodha* (Text 2) that only the Tamasic portion of the five subtle elements is used to produce the five gross elements, through a process called **Pancheekarana** (Grossification). Thus the physical world, the gross creation, is predominantly Tamas.

The gross objects are inert, they are incapable of reflecting Consciousness.

### **“Embodied Creation” – Living Beings**

Only objects having a subtle body, i.e. intellect and mind, are capable of reflecting Consciousness. These ‘objects’ are the living beings in Creation. All living beings draw to themselves a gross body that encases their subtle body. The reflection of Consciousness gives them their apparent sentiency. The sentiency belongs to Consciousness.

Sentiency may appear to be an advantage over objects that are inert. However, there is another aspect to reflected Consciousness which is not an advantage. It is this:

**3-4** Inert, gross creation, because it cannot reflect Consciousness, is also free of all Ego-sense. The mountains, rivers, oceans, stones, etc, do not have a sense of ego in them.

The opposite is the case for sentient creatures. The subtle creation which reflects Consciousness, acquires a sense of ego-consciousness due to that very fact. The ego-consciousness is nothing but the sense of individuality. It exists in all living creatures.

**Nibadhnanti:** “binds fast”. It is this ego-consciousness that binds fast the embodied Jeeva to the world of objects around it; more correctly, it binds the creatures to their own body. The main function performed by the three Gunas is to bind the soul to this world. It does so in three different ways, each one related to a particular Guna:

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### **Verse 6:**                      ***The Sattwa Guna***

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम् ।

सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ

॥ १४-६॥

tatra sattvaṃ nirmalatvātprakāśakamanāmayam |

sukhasaṅgēna badhnāti jñānasaṅgēna cānagha

॥ 14-6॥

1	<i>Tatra sattvam nirmalatvaat,</i>	<i>Of these, Sattwa, due to its stainlessness,</i>
2	<i>prakaashakam anaamayam;</i>	<i>is luminous and healthy (harmless).</i>
3	<i>sukha-sangena badhnaati,</i>	<i>It binds by attachment to happiness</i>
4	<i>jnaana-sangena cha anagha.</i>	<i>and attachment to knowledge, O sinless one.</i>

### **Verse 7:**                      ***The Rajas Guna***

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम् ।

तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम्

॥ १४-७॥

rajō rāgātmakam viddhi tṛṣṇāsaṅgasamudbhavam |

tannibadhnāti kauntēya karmasaṅgēna dēhinam

॥ 14-7॥

5	<i>Rajah raagaatmakam viddhih,</i>	<i>Know Rajas to be of the nature of passion,</i>
6	<i>trishnaa-sanga samuddhavam;</i>	<i>born of hankering and attachment.</i>
7	<i>tat nibadhnati kaunteya,</i>	<i>O son of Kunti, it firmly binds that</i>
8	<i>karma-sangena dehinam.</i>	<i>embodied being through attachment to action.</i>

**Verse 8: The Tamas Guna**

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।

प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति भारत

॥ १४-८॥

tamastvajñānajaṃ viddhi mōhanam sarvadēhinām |

pramādālasyanidrābhistannibadhnāti bhārata

॥ 14-8॥

9	<i>Tamah tu ajnaana-jam viddhi,</i>	<i>But know Tamas to be born of ignorance,</i>
10	<i>mohanam sarva dehinaam;</i>	<i>which deludes all embodied beings.</i>
11	<i>pramaada-aalasya-nidraabhih,</i>	<i>Through inadvertence, laziness and sleep,</i>
12	<i>tat nibadhnati bhaarata.</i>	<i>Tamas binds, O scion of the Bharata dynasty.</i>

The above three verses are summarized in the following table:

	<b>GUNA</b>	<b>ITS NATURE (Lakshana)</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTICS (Gunas)</b>	<b>HOW IT BINDS (Bandha Prakara)</b>
1	<b>SATTWA</b>	<b>Nirmalam</b> <i>Stainlessness</i>	<b>Prakaashakam</b> ( <i>luminous</i> ) <b>Anaamayam</b> ( <i>healthy</i> )	<b>Sukha-Sangena</b> <i>(by happiness)</i> <b>Jnana-Sangena</b> <i>(by knowledge)</i>
2	<b>RAJAS</b>	<b>Raagaatmakam</b> <i>Nature of Passion</i>	<b>Trishnaa</b> ( <i>desire</i> ) <b>Sanga</b> ( <i>attachment</i> )	<b>Karma-Sangena</b> <i>(by activity)</i>
3	<b>TAMAS</b>	<b>Ajnaanajam</b> <i>Born of Ignorance</i>	<b>Mohanam</b> ( <i>delusion</i> ) <b>Aviveka</b> ( <i>no discrimin'n</i> )	<b>Pramaada</b> ( <i>inadvertence</i> ) <b>Aalasya</b> ( <i>laziness</i> ) <b>Nidraa</b> ( <i>sleep</i> )

**GUNAS – THEIR NATURE, CHARACTERISTICS & HOW THEY BIND**

The following are two important points of opposition that are to be well-noted:

i) **Sattwa Opposed to Tamas:** The Sattwic characteristic of Prakashakam (luminosity) is an antidote to the Tamasic characteristics of Mohanam and Aviveka.

ii) **Sattwa Opposed to Rajas:** The Sattwic characteristic of Anaamayam (that which puts an end to sorrow) is an antidote to the Rajasic characteristics of Trishnaa and Sanga.

**Verse 9: The Binding Characteristics – A Summary**

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति रजः कर्मणि भारत ।

ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयत्युत

॥ १४-९॥

sattvaṃ sukhē sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata |

jñānamāvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramādē sañjayatyuta

॥ 14-9॥

1	<i>Sattwam sukhe sanjayati,</i>	<i>Sattwa attaches one to <u>happiness</u>,</i>
2	<i>rajah karmani bhaarata;</i>	<i>Rajas (attaches one) to <u>activity</u>, O Bharata,</i>
3	<i>jnaanam aavriya tu tamah,</i>	<i>but Tamas, by enshrouding one's knowledge,</i>
4	<i>pramaade sanjayati uta.</i>	<i>attaches him to <u>inadvertence</u>.</i>

This verse summarises the binding characteristics for the sake of emphasis.

**Verse 6:** In *Sattwa*, one is naturally happy; there is serenity, peace, quietude. Even if there is cause for great sorrow, a man in Sattwa will not grieve but remain calm.

The story of Thomas Edison illustrates this point: His factory was being gutted by fire. He was calm. He called for his wife to come and admire the fire!

**Verse 7:** In *Rajas*, there is selfish activity to fulfil desires. The activity binds the individual through desire and attachment. These are the components of the binbondageding. The zeal for the fruit of the actions is the driving force. Desire for pleasure and joy is the root emotion. The mind, soaked in desire, plunges neck-deep into activity.

**Verse 8:** In *Tamas*, the being is deluded. The cloud of delusion disables the intellect from discriminating. Heedlessness is lack of attention to what is happening. There is no presence of mind. One has to tell the person several times before he acts. Laziness is not doing what we should do at the time. It is procrastination, postponement, hesitation to act. Slothfulness and forgetfulness are other characteristics of Tamas.

**Verse 9:** All three Gunas are **addictive**, and therefore they all bind. Addictiveness always binds. Whether the chain is made of steel (Tamas), of thorns (Rajas) or of gold (Sattwa), it will bind a person.

Tamas is the strongest chain, Rajas the middling, and Sattwa the lightest chain.

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***A Rare Painting of Mother Lakshmi  
with Lord Ganesha and Mother Saraswati***

## 14.3 THE PREDOMINANT GUNA

(Verses 10-13, 4 No.)

**H**OW DO WE KNOW which Guna is working through us? Is it the same Guna at all times? If not, then when does a Guna arise in us and what determines its predominance?

This section answers these questions.

A fisherman (Tamas) was lazily fishing all day. A businessman (Rajas), passing by asked him why he was wasting his time like that. He need not remain idle waiting for a fish to come; he could get a boat and go further into the water where there are more fish. Why, he could even get a fishing trawler, go out into the sea, and using nets he could catch more fish; then he could buy a few more trawlers, employ more people and expand his business, make more money, and finally he could retire as a rich man and enjoy the fruits of his hard work in his old age. The fisherman smiled at the businessman, cast his line and said, “Why should I do all that work? I am already enjoying that now!”

### **Verse 10:**                      *How Each Guna Predominates the Others*

रजस्तमश्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति भारत ।

रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः सत्त्वं रजस्तथा                      ॥ १४-१०॥

*rajastamaścābhibhūya sattvaṁ bhavati bhārata |*

*rajaḥ sattvaṁ tamaścaiva tamaḥ sattvaṁ rajastathā                      || 14-10||*

1	<i>Rajasa tamah cha abhibhooya,</i>	<i>Having overpowered Rajas and Tamas,</i>
2	<i>sattwa bhavati bhaarata;</i>	<i>now Sattwa prevails;</i>
3	<i>rajah sattwam tamah cha eva,</i>	<i>now Rajas, overpowering Sattwa and Tamas;</i>
4	<i>tamah sattwam rajah tathaa.</i>	<i>now Tamas, overpowering Sattwa and Rajas.</i>

**1-4** Even though all three Gunas are present in a person, one quality comes up to the surface as the dominant one at any particular time, and dictates the state of affairs in a person’s mind. There is a constant battle going on among the Gunas inside us as to which will “rule the roost”. A person’s natural inclination plays a big role in determining the victor.

In each person there is a Guna which wins more victories than the other two. That is the predominant characteristic which defines the person’s character. But even in the worst sinner, a streak of Sattwa could arise at times; and in the best among men, a streak of Tamas could arise and ruin his reputation.

The effect a Guna has when it predominates depends on how alert we are to notice it coming, and take action to encourage it or just let it harmlessly pass by.

One writer suggested that the Gunas arose “by luck”! That, fortunately, never happens in life. The laws of Karma, attraction and repulsion are too powerful to allow Lady Luck to survive in matters of this importance. The predominance of a Guna is determined by

one's *inherent tendencies*, each of which may require different Gunas to predominate at different times.

**Verse 11: When Sattwa Predominates**

सर्वद्वारेषु देहेऽस्मिन्प्रकाश उपजायते ।  
 ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्याद्विवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत ॥ १४-११॥  
 sarvadvārēṣu dēhē:'sminprakāśa upajāyatē |  
 jñānaṁ yadā tadā vidyādvivṛddhaṁ sattvamityuta ॥ 14-11॥

1	<i>Sarva-dvareshu dehe asmin,</i>	Through all the <u>doorways</u> in this body,
2	<i>prakaasha upajaayate;</i>	when there radiates <b>light</b>
3	<i>jnaanam yadaa tadaa vidyaat,</i>	and <b>intelligence</b> , then one should know
4	<i>vividdham sattvam iti uta.</i>	that <b>Sattwa</b> is indeed predominant.

**Verse 12: When Rajas Predominates**

लोभः प्रवृत्तिरारम्भः कर्मणामशमः स्पृहा ।  
 रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतर्षभ ॥ १४-१२॥  
 lōbhaḥ pravṛttirārambhaḥ karmaṇāmaśamaḥ sprhā |  
 rajasyētāni jāyantē vivṛddhē bharatarṣabha ॥ 14-12॥

5	<i>Lobha pravrittih aarambhah,</i>	<b>Avarice</b> , activity, undertaking of new
6	<i>karmanaam ashamah sprihaa;</i>	<u>projects</u> , <b>restlessness</b> and <u>hankering</u> –
7	<i>rajah etaani jaayante,</i>	when these come into being, know that <b>Rajas</b>
8	<i>vividdhe bharatarshabha.</i>	is predominant, O best among the Bharatas.

**Verse 13: When Tamas Predominates**

अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च ।  
 तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन ॥ १४-१३॥  
 aprakāśō:'pravṛttiśca pramādō mōha ēva ca |  
 tamasyētāni jāyantē vivṛddhē kurunandana ॥ 14-13॥

9	<i>Aprakaasha apravrittih cha,</i>	<u>Non-discrimination</u> and <b>inertness</b> ,
10	<i>pramaadah mohah eva cha;</i>	<u>heedlessness</u> and <b>delusion</b> –
11	<i>tamasi etaani jaayante,</i>	when these come into being, know <b>Tamas</b>
12	<i>vividdhe kuru-nandana.</i>	is predominant, O descendent of the Kurus.

## SUMMARY

**Sattwa:** *light, knowledge or intelligence.* 1-4 The Sattwic person throbs with awareness, is full and alive, receives knowledge quickly, is fully in the present, and is intensely aware, with all senses 100% attentive.

**Rajas:** *Avarice, restlessness.* 5-8 One launches into new activities before old ones are completed. Hankering is dominant. These indicate that Rajas is the Boss for the moment, i.e. Rajas is “ruling the fort”.

**Tamas:** *Darkness, inertness, heedlessness and delusion.* 9-12 These qualities, the ‘Deities’ of ignorance, indicate a total dullard. He is unmoved by present circumstances, refuses to act even under the greatest of calamities, and constantly misunderstands, e.g., mistaking a friend for a foe.

These are meant to help us to discover where we stand in our own progress; they are not intended for us to judge others!

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## 14.4 THE FRUIT OF EACH GUNA

(Verses 14-18, 5 No.)

**E**ACH GUNA CARRIES with it a certain fruit or 'reward'. This section deals with the fruits obtained due to the presence of each Guna. Two types of fruits are dealt with:

i) **Long-Term Fruit:** This is the overall result of the Guna that sums up our whole life-time. It determines our next birth. (Verses 14-15).

ii) **Short-Term Fruit:** This is the momentary, day-to-day result of a Guna that determines our behaviour at a particular time. (Verses 16-18). The cases discussed are external result, internal result and the evolutionary result.

Acharyaji said we should take note of such detailed knowledge about human nature as found in the Bhagavad Geeta. The *Geeta* contains the essentials of the science of human psychology. This Chapter would rate very high on the coverage it gives on human psychology. It is in an unbiased study, not dependent on any culture, based purely on scientific observations of human nature by the Rishis.

### Verse 14: *Long-Term Fruit of Sattwa*

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे तु प्रलयं याति देहभृत् ।

तदोत्तमविदां लोकानमलान्प्रतिपद्यते

॥ १४-१४॥

yadā sattvē pravṛddhē tu pralayam yāti dēhabhṛt |

tadōttamavidām lōkānamalānpratipadyatē

॥ 14-14॥

1	<i>Yadaa sattwe pravriddhe tu,</i>	<i>When indeed <b>Sattwa</b> is exclusively predominant</i>
2	<i>pralayam yaati dehabhrit;</i>	<i>at the <u>time of death</u> of the embodied being,</i>
3	<i>tadaa uttama-vidaam lokaan,</i>	<i>then the <u>highest-known</u> worlds,</i>
4	<i>amalaan pratipadyate.</i>	<i>taintless and stainless, are attained by him.</i>

### Verse 15: *Long-Term Fruit of Rajas & Tamas*

रजसि प्रलयं गत्वा कर्मसङ्गिषु जायते ।

तथा प्रलीनस्तमसि मूढयोनिषु जायते

॥ १४-१५॥

rajasi pralayam gatvā karmasaṅgiṣu jāyatē |

tathā pralīnastamasi mūḍhayōniṣu jāyatē

॥ 14-15॥

5	<i>Rajasi pralayam gatvaa,</i>	<i>When ones departs with <b>Rajas</b> predominant,</i>
6	<i>karma-sangishu jaayate;</i>	<i>he is born among people attached to activity.</i>
7	<i>tathaa praleenah tamasi,</i>	<i>Similarly, dying when <b>Tamas</b> predominates,</i>
8	<i>moodha-yonishu jaayate.</i>	<i>he takes birth among those who are most deluded.</i>

**Sattwa: 1-4** When one dies with Sattwa as the predominant quality throughout one's life, then one obtains a higher world such as the various heavens from Pitru-loka to Brahma-loka. This verse has to be tied with what Chapter 8 says about the *Yoga-Brashta*; the reward could be a good, favourable home for rapid spiritual growth.

**Rajas: 5-6** When one dies with Rajas as the predominant quality throughout one's life, then he is born again among people who are attached to Karma. Implied in this is that the person will be governed by Trishna and Asanga (desire and attachment) in his next life, but at least he will be born as a human being. Thus the opportunity is still there for further progress.

**Tamas: 7-8** When one dies with Tamas as the predominant quality throughout one's life, one gets reborn in a *Moodha Yoni*, i.e. among creatures who are very poor in their ability to comprehend. A human birth is not guaranteed. Beasts, birds and animals are the more likely wombs he takes up as they require very little comprehension.

The Guna that predominates at the time of one's death is not determined by chance, but by one's own most dominant nature. Hence, it is not something one can plan for at the moment of death; it can only be planned for throughout one's life.

Chapter 8 discusses this subject in much greater detail. Here, the question is discussed only from the point of view of the Gunas prevailing in one's life.

**Verse 16:** *Short-Term External Fruits of Gunas*

कर्मणः सुकृतस्याहुः सात्त्विकं निर्मलं फलम् ।  
 रजसस्तु फलं दुःखमज्ञानं तमसः फलम् ॥ १४-१६॥  
 karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasyāhuḥ sāttvikam nirmalam phalam |  
 rajasastu phalam duḥkhamajñānam tamaśaḥ phalam ॥ 14-16॥

1	<i>Karmanah sukritasya aahuh,</i>	<i>Of Sattwic actions, they say</i>
2	<i>saatwikam nirmalam phalam;</i>	<i>the fruit is <u>benevolence</u> and <u>purity</u>;</i>
3	<i>rajasah tu phalam duhkham,</i>	<i>the fruit of <b>Rajas</b> is indeed <u>pain</u>;</i>
4	<i>ajnaanam tamasah phalam.</i>	<i>and the fruit of <b>Tamas</b> is <u>ignorance</u>.</i>

**Verse 17:** *Short-Term Internal Fruits of Gunas*

सत्त्वात्सञ्जायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च ।  
 प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥ १४-१७॥  
 sattvātsañjāyatē jñānam rajasō lōbha ēva ca |  
 pramādamōhau tamasō bhavatō:'jñānamēva ca ॥ 14-17॥

5	<i>Sattvaat sanjaayate jnaanam,</i>	<i>From Sattwa is born <u>knowledge</u>;</i>
6	<i>rajasah lobha eva cha;</i>	<i>and from <b>Rajas</b> verily is <u>avarice</u> born;</i>
7	<i>pramaada-mohau tamasah,</i>	<i>from <b>Tamas</b> are born <u>inadvertence</u> and <u>delusion</u>,</i>
8	<i>bhavatah ajnaanam eva cha.</i>	<i>as also <u>ignorance</u>, to be sure.</i>

**Verse 18:** *Short-Term Evolutionary Fruits of Gunas*

ऊर्ध्वं गच्छन्ति सत्त्वस्था मध्ये तिष्ठन्ति राजसाः ।

जघन्यगुणवृत्तिस्था अधो गच्छन्ति तामसाः

॥ १४-१८॥

ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattvasthā madhyē tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ |

jaghanyaguṇavṛttisthā adhō gacchanti tāmasāḥ

|| 14-18||

9	<i>Oordhwam gacchhanti sattvasthaa,</i>	<i>Those abiding in <b>Sattwa</b> go <u>higher up</u>;</i>
10	<i>madhye tishthanti raajasaah;</i>	<i>those in <b>Rajas</b> stay in the <u>middle</u>;</i>
11	<i>jagnya-guna-vrittisthaah,</i>	<i>abiding in the function of the lowest Guna,</i>
12	<i>adhō gacchhanti taamasaah.</i>	<i>those in <b>Tamas</b> go further <u>down</u>.</i>

All three Gunas are *needed*. Every person needs Tamas in order to have a good sleep! Rajas is needed by everyone to perform their ordinary actions to sustain themselves.

All three impulses are present in everyone. The above verses teach us to beware of Rajasic and Tamasic impulses. We have to be alert to recognize them when they surface, and take intelligent steps to see that they do not overrun our mind.

SHORT-TERM FRUITS				
GUNA		EXTERNAL Verse 16	INTERNAL Verse 17	EVOLUTIONARY Verse 18
1	SATTWA	<i>Benevolence &amp; Purity</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>	↑ <i>Rises Higher Up</i>
2	RAJAS	<i>Pain, Sorrow</i>	<i>Avarice, Greed</i>	↔ <i>Stays in the middle</i>
3	TAMAS	<i>Ignorance</i>	<i>Inadvertence, Delusion</i>	↓ <i>Falls Further Down</i>

**FRUITS OF DIFFERENT GUNAS**

**Paapa & Punya:**

**Sattwa:** Sattwic actions always bring about Punya. They produce happiness, are self-fulfilling, peaceful, worthy and meaningful.

**Rajas:** Rajas produces mixed fruit – Punya and Paapa. However, even the Punya is such that it ultimately ends in producing sorrow as it is hosted by ignorance, not knowledge.

**Tamas:** Tamas produces Paapa, since it is hosted by Adharma, Ajnaana and Moha. Such people do not have the intelligence to see the sorrow in their life. They mistake sorrow for joy. They have no capacity to recognize joy and sorrow.

There are ways in which these impulses can be diverted or dissipated into harmless channels, so that no spiritual harm is done by them. Because of delusion, Tamasic people have great difficulty in identifying these impulses. They are very contented in their misery.

Sattwa may appear as Rajas to them and *vice versa*. Most often their own Tamas appears to them as Sattwa, and the Sattwa of others appears as Tamas!

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## 14.5 TRANSCENDING THE GUNAS

(Verses 19-27, 9 No.)

**W**HEN A TV SET IS working, we do not even think about the dots which the picture is made of. When something goes faulty with the picture, only then are we interested in fixing the problem by looking at the dots. It is then that we realise that there are only three colours of dots – red, blue and green – that make up the multitude of colours in a TV picture. We then go into the electronics more carefully to see which colour dot is malfunctioning and thereby track down the error.

In the same way, when our life is malfunctioning, and we want to fix it, then we have to look at the three Gunas that make up the “picture” of our life, and fix them as best as we can. To fix the Gunas is the whole object of any Sadhana we choose to do for spiritual growth. That is the significance of this chapter, and especially this section of it.

This section deals with the process of transcending the three Gunas. In theory that sounds a very straightforward proposition, but in practice the process requires us to scrutinise every department of our life. The process is nothing short of the comprehensive Sadhana that is to be done in order to achieve the highest goal. “Transcending the Gunas” is simply another way of looking at the vast subject of Sadhana through the microscope that sees everything minutely in the form of the Gunas.

### **Verse 19:** *Seeing Gunas As the Agent of Action*

नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टानुपश्यति ।  
गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति ॥ १४-१९॥

nānyam guṇēbhyaḥ kartāraṁ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati |  
guṇēbhyaśca param̄ vētti madbhāvaṁ sō:'dhigacchati ॥ 14-19॥

1	<i>Na anyam gunebhyah kartaaram,</i>	<i>“Other than the <b>Gunas</b> there is no agent” –</i>
2	<i>yadaa drashtaa anupashyati;</i>	<i>when this is <u>clearly seen</u> by the seeker, then</i>
3	<i>gunebhyah cha parama vetti,</i>	<i>he <u>realises</u> Him who is higher than the Gunas,</i>
4	<i>mad-bhaavam sah adhi-gacchati.</i>	<i>and finally <u>attains</u> to My Being.</i>

In a nutshell, this verse states the overall purpose of studying the Gunas as we have done in the introduction above. The Sadhana to achieve this is given in the remainder of the chapter. The Sadhya or goal or the end point to be reached is always to be borne in mind.

**1-2 Yadaa:** “when”. This word presupposes certain conditions for the aspirant concerned. One has to be a Viveki so that he can differentiate between the Kshetra and the Kshetrajna. Secondly, he has to be a person who has received knowledge from a qualified Guru. Only then will he be able to see beyond the Gunas and behold the Supreme Being.



4 Finally, The Lord takes Arjuna to the limit of curiosity by saying that one becomes immortal as well in the bargain! Naturally, if such is the enormity of the fruit, then it has to be anticipated that the effort to attain this state of transcending the Gunas must be equally enormous to deserve such a fruit. This is what arouses Arjuna to ask his question . . .

**Verse 21:**                      *The Signs of a Gunateetah*

अर्जुन उवाच ।  
 कैलिङ्गैस्त्रीन्गुणानेतानतीतो भवति प्रभो ।  
 किमाचारः कथं चैतांस्त्रीन्गुणानतिवर्तते                      ॥ १४-२१॥

arjuna uvāca |  
 kairiṅgaistrīṅguṇānētānatītō bhavati prabhō |  
 kimācārah katham cha itānstrīṅguṇānavartatē                      ॥ 14-21॥

	<i>Arjuna uvaacha:</i>	<i>Arjuna said:</i>
1	<i>Kaih lingaih treen gunaan etaan,</i>	<i>These three Gunas – by what signs may we</i>
2	<i>ateetah bhavati prabho;</i>	<i>know him who has crossed them, O Lord?</i>
3	<i>kim aacharah katham cha etaan,</i>	<i>What is his conduct? And how are these</i>
4	<i>treen gunaan ativartate.</i>	<i>three Gunas transcended by him?</i>

Arjuna’s bewilderment is expressed in this verse. The Teacher in Sri Krishna has succeeded in making his student an attentive and thirsty listener, wanting to know how this seemingly impossible feat may be accomplished.

**1-2** Arjuna’s questions are very similar to the questions he posed on the Sthitaprajna in Chapter 2, verse 54. He wants to know the external signs of a person who has transcended the Gunas, for he has never seen such a specimen before, and can’t imagine anyone who can live as though he were ‘bodiless’!

**3-4** Naturally, the conduct of such a person would be the first thing that Arjuna is bound to question. It is not very different from wanting to know how the Sthitaprajna sits, walks and talks, except that this person has to do so without a body!

If such a one does happen to exist, then Arjuna would like to know how he could also be one of them. That is all to the credit of Sri Krishna’s brilliant teaching skill of the previous verse.

**MARKS OF A “GUNATEETAH”**

**Verse 22:**                      *The Gunateetah’s Signature*

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।  
 प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव ।  
 न द्वेष्टि सम्प्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति                      ॥ १४-२२॥

śrībhagavān uvāca |  
 prakāśam ca pravṛttiṃ ca mōhamēva ca pāṇḍava |  
 na dvēṣṭi sampravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati

|| 14-22||

	<i>Shree Bhagavaan uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>Prakaasham cha pravrittim cha,</i>	<i>illumination (Sattwa) and activity (Rajas) and</i>
2	<i>moham eva cha paandava;</i>	<i>even delusion (Tamas) – O Pandava,</i>
3	<i>na dveshti sam-pra-vrittaani,</i>	<i>when they appear, he hates them not;</i>
4	<i>na ni-vrittaani kaankshati.</i>	<i>when they disappear, he longs for them not.</i>

**1-2** Sri Krishna uses the primary characteristics of the Gunas instead of the names of the Gunas themselves, thereby giving more importance to the qualities they represent than to their mere names.

**3** All three of them have the effect of binding the soul. Knowing that, one would expect the **Trigunateeta** to flee from all of them. But he does nothing of the kind. He in fact remains as a neutral observer of all them, facing them and not escaping from them. The Lord brings out this attitude in all the verses of His reply.

The lesson to learn is that transcending the Gunas does not mean escaping from life. That would teach us nothing. The true saint faces all that life throws at him with equanimity. Therein lies his greatness.

**4** It is the same when there is the absence of any Guna; he does not miss them by longing for them to return to him. This attitude also requires equanimity and characterizes the relationship that he has developed with the Gunas.

**Verse 23: Indifferent Towards the Gunas**

उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते ।

गुणा वर्तन्त इत्येवं योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते

|| १४-२३||

udāśīnavadāśīnō guṇairyo na vicālyatē |

guṇā vartanta ityēvaṃ yō:'vatiṣṭhati nēṅgatē

|| 14-23||

1	<i>udaaseenavat aaseenah,</i>	<i>Seated like one who is unconcerned,</i>
2	<i>gunaih yah na vichaalyate;</i>	<i>he is not distracted by the Gunas;</i>
3	<i>gunaah vartante iti eva,</i>	<i>he knows that the qualities alone act;</i>
4	<i>yah avatishthati na ingate.</i>	<i>he remains centred in his Self, unmoved by them.</i>

**1 Udaaseenavat:** “like one who is indifferent”; the overall attitude of the aspirant towards the Gunas may be described in Acharyaji’s words: “Give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and unto God what belongs to God.” That is, be indifferent to the Gunas. We see this as the general trend in all the following verses on the Gunateeta.

Being indifferent means remaining as a witness only. One cannot take sides when one is a witness. He neither sides with Sattwa, nor hates Tamas. He just takes in the scene without passing any judgement on anyone.

## THE GUNATEETAH

**Sah Gunaateetah:** These words from verse 25 have to be added to each verse from 22 to 24 They mean “Such is the one who has transcended the three Gunas.

The Gunas are seen as simply passing through his Upadhis, but not through ‘him’. This is a key point to grasp. There is a detachment in the Siddha, the perfected sage, by which he remains aloof from all that goes on through his Upadhis. The real Self is his new identity. He no longer sees himself as the ego-driven “I”, but has gone beyond that narrow identity to a more universal identity called the ‘Self’. This is the implication of transcending the Gunas.

Acharyaji gave an example: A picture is projected onto a screen in a movie. The dark patches on the screen are as unreal as the bright patches. There is no difference in their ‘unreality’. The enlightened Gunateeta has the same attitude towards the Gunas and all the charm that they weave around him. He simply looks past them and sees his Beloved Lord in the background.

The Trigunateeta does not waste his time trying to avoid Tamas and build up Sattwa, however much may have been written about their undesirability or desirability respectively. He simply ignores the mind itself as a play of the Gunas. Thought itself is a creation of the Gunas. Taking his mind completely beyond the reach of the Gunas, he discovers there his ‘place of safety’ from their onslaughts.

In this regard, Acharyaji said, “Correcting the mind is like straightening a dog’s tail! The best is to simply witness its play under all conditions.”

Even a realized saint may have to deal with Rajas and Tamas. Sometimes he, too, may slip as an elephant slips, however firm-footed it may be. A Jnani does not break out into regret when that happens. He observes it neutrally from the ‘beyond’, and is comfortable with those slips. He is carefree, unattached to people’s praise and censure. It is very hard for the ignorant world to make a true assessment of a Jnani. Their yardstick is simply not long enough to measure his depth!



**2** While the Gunas act as they are programmed to act according to their nature, the aspirant allows them to pass by without being distracted by them. Suppose the active Guna prompts him to act against Dharma; he does not co-operate with it, but just watches it go by. If it prompts him to do something beneficial, he will co-operate with it yet still remain as an observer of what is being done.

Why does he behave this way?

**3** It is because he understands that everything is being done by the Gunas, not by him. He does not carry the ego of “doership” for the act being done.

**4** In this manner, he is able to remain “Self-centred”, not “self-centred”, and untouched by the actions performed. This, indeed, is the spirit of Karma Yoga and nothing short of it or more than it. It is Vyavasaayaatmika Buddhi in practice, i.e. single-minded dedication to God.

Acharyaji gave the example of little babies who act in this manner, albeit it is out of no understanding. Mothers may scold them but they will not be concerned. A few minutes later they will be smiling again. They simply respond as per the Guna that prevails in them.

However, unlike babies, the Gunateeta continually chooses Dharma over Adharma. His indifference does not permit him to act unrighteously. He is always on guard against the wrong choice in his action.

[**Avatishthati**: A small note for Samskrit perfectionists is given in the Bhashya: This should read 'Avatishthate' (Atmane Pada as per Panini's grammar). However, it passes in the *Geeta* under the exemption or Vedic licence given to compositions prior to Panini. Such usage is called Arsha Prayoga.]

**Na Ingate**: This was also used in VI.19 to describe the steady, unswerving flame kept in a windless place. Its use here draws the reader's mind to the same simile which is perfectly applicable in this case also. Instances like this reveal the great skill of Sri Veda Vyasaji as a meticulous composer who attended to every detail.

The following two verses go together:

**Verse 24 & 25:**

**Balance & Equipoise**

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ।

तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः

॥ १४-२४॥

samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samalōṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ |

tulyapriyāpriyō dhīrastulyanindātmāsamtutih

॥ 14-24॥

1	<i>Sama-duhkha-sukhaḥ swasthaḥ,</i>	<i>Centred in his Self, i) alike in pleasure and pain;</i>
2	<i>sama-loshṭa-ashma-kaanchanaḥ;</i>	<i>ii) alike towards a clod, a stone or gold;</i>
3	<i>tulya-priya-apriyah dheerah,</i>	<i>iii) firmly alike towards the dear and not-dear;</i>
4	<i>tulya-nindaa-aatma-samstutih.</i>	<i>iv) just as alike whether censured or praised;</i>

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते

॥ १४-२५॥

mānāpamānayōstulyastulyō mitrāripakṣayōḥ |

sarvārambhaparityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyatē

॥ 14-25॥

5	<i>Maana-apamaanayoh tulyah,</i>	<i>v) alike in honour and dishonour;</i>
6	<i>tulyah mitra-ari-pakshayoh;</i>	<i>vi) alike towards a friend or a foe;</i>
7	<i>sarva-aarambha-parityaagee,</i>	<i>vii) abandoning all (restless) undertakings –</i>
8	<b><i>gunateetaḥ sah uchyate.</i></b>	<b><i>such a one is said to have transcended the Gunas.</i></b>

These two verses further substantiate the underlying attitude of the Gunateetaḥ – that of being a neutral, indifferent observer. Here, the equal vision aspect comes through prominently. The essential message of all the seven cases cited in these verses is: “Be balanced and poised at all times. Let nothing affect your calm equipoise.”

**1-7** The seven quoted cases are all attempted “intellectual measurements” that we are fond of making in life. They arise from our ego-sense. We measure things according to how our ego likes or dislikes them. That is an assessment based on falsity. A Jnani does not see things from the ego’s standpoint, and so he is not tempted to pass any judgements towards these happenings.

**2** *Loshta-Ashma-Kaanchana*: “clod, stone or gold”. The three items are carefully chosen – there is one from each Guna, representing Tamas, Rajas and Sattwa respectively. A special point is that this reflects the common items of the period when it was written. The same phrase today, would probably read, according to Acharyaji, as “shoe, spectacles or earrings!”

**3-4** Whether a person considers the Jnani to be dear to him or not; whether he censures or praises the Jnani; in both cases the Jnani always considers that person as being a human being to be unconditionally loved and praised. This is not to say that the Jnani is unmindful of the value of gold, or a dear friend, or an insult, etc. It is just that his response to them is not determined by his ego. He responds, but from a selfless standpoint.

**5-6** The same remarks apply when the person shows honour or dishonour to the sage; or whether he considers the sage as a friend or a foe. To the Jnani he is worthy of honour and always a friend unconditionally.

**7** In the context of equilibrium in action, Acharyaji made a poignant remark:

***“Action is the signature of desire; desire is the signature of Ignorance. A desire-prompted action is doubly signed by Ignorance!”***

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**Verse 26:**                      *The Phala of Being a Gunateetah*

मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।  
स गुणान्समतीत्यैतान्ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते                      ॥ १४-२६॥  
mām ca yō:'vyabhicārēṇa bhaktiyōgēna sēvatē |  
sa guṇānsamatītyaitānbrahmabhūyāya kalpatē                      ॥ 14-26॥

1	<i>Maam cha yah avyabhichaarena,</i>	<i>And he who, with unswerving</i>
2	<i>bhakti yogena sevate;</i>	<i>devotion, serves Me;</i>
3	<i>sah gunaan samateetya etaan,</i>	<i>who thus transcends these Gunas,</i>
4	<i>brahma-bhooyaaya kalpate.</i>	<i>he is worthy of becoming <b>Brahman</b>.</i>

**God Alone is the Goal of a Gunateetah**

**1-2** This is the basic Sadhana to achieve what was stated in theory in the first verse (19) of this section. Service of the Lord and devotion unto Him have not been mentioned in any of the above verses. Thus one may wonder why they have suddenly been included with the qualifications of a Gunateetah to make him “fit to become Brahman”.

We have to keep in mind that one’s effort to become a Gunateetah would be solely due to the desire to attain the Divine state. Nothing else would motivate one to transcend the Gunas. No other motive would enable him to succeed in becoming a Gunateetah.



### Description of the Lord:

The Lord describes His Divine Nature in relation to five aspects in which He is seen:

<u>Pratishthaa:</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>The Abode;</u>	<u>The Subject.</u>
a) <b>Brahmanah:</b>	<u>1</u>	the Supreme Reality;	<u>Saadhya</u> (the Goal).
b) <b>Amritasya:</b>	<u>2a</u>	Immortality;	<u>Moksha</u> (liberation).
c) <b>Avyayasya:</b>	<u>2b</u>	the Immutable;	<u>Ashreya</u> (the support).
d) <b>Dharmasya:</b>	<u>3</u>	the Lord of righteousness;	<u>Sadhana</u> (the right means).
e) <b>Sukhasya:</b>	<u>4</u>	I am unending Bliss;	<u>Phala</u> (the fruit of Sadhana).

a) **Brahmanah:** The Goal of spiritual endeavour is to realise the Supreme Reality. This is the case in the Eastern religions. It is not seen that way in the West and the Middle East. The aim of every seeker is to recognise himself as that Reality. That is his essential nature.

b) **Amritasya:** Immortality is the direct result of attaining the Reality. It is our limitations that cause our bondage. Immortality is the very antithesis of those limitations, and hence represents our liberation from bondage to worldly existence. It is actually liberation from our own narrow individual existence or Ego-sense. The liberation represents the changeover from individuality to universality.

c) **Avyayasya:** Immutability or changelessness is another key aspect of Reality. Reality, by definition, cannot be something that changes. It has to be constant, else it cannot be Reality. That is how Reality is seen in the Eastern religions. This characteristic of Reality gives it the role of being the support of all that is created. It is the one changeless factor in an endlessly changing creation.

d) **Dharmasya:** The way to attain Reality is summed up by Dharma. It is the way of Righteousness. None can succeed on this Path unless he is rooted in righteousness. The whole edifice of morality is founded on the principle of righteousness. Non-injury, truthfulness, self-control, non-stealing and contentment are the pillars of Dharma. They form the basics of the path prescribed by the Vedas, and by Sri Krishna in the Geeta.

e) **Sukhasya:** Absolute Bliss is Sukha. This is the fruit attained by those who attain the Goal of life, namely Brahman. Bliss is one of the three fundamental aspects of Brahman's nature. The other two are Existence and Consciousness. If one of these three is mentioned, the other two are taken for granted as being included. The triple nature of Reality cannot be separated.

### The Universality of Vedic Culture

From the above brief summary of the spiritual Path, we see that the Lord is not defined in a parochial manner for a particular community, or for a particular sect, race or country. This is the most universal definition of God and the means to attain Him. God is the Supreme Abode, Immortal, Immutable, the Lord of Righteousness, and All-Bliss. These five characteristics are totally universal, and appeal to as well as apply to all mankind.

This universality has been the hallmark of Vedic spirituality and culture, and adherents of that culture exist to this day, upholding the same standard, and working tirelessly towards the universal harmony and brotherhood of mankind.

It is this wide definition of the Supreme Being that makes the Vedic texts, of which the *Bhagavad Geeta* is fully representative, so appealing to people throughout the world.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु  
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे  
गुणत्रयविभागयोगो नाम चतुर्दशोऽध्यायः ॥ १४ ॥

ōṃ tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu  
brahmavidyāyām yōgaśāstrē śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvādē  
guṇatrayavibhāgayōgō nāma caturdaśō:'dhyāyaḥ ॥ 14॥

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Om Tat Sat!

END OF DISCOURSE 14

“THE YOGA OF THE THREEFOLD QUALITIES OF NATURE”

