

Baghawad Gita, Class 184:

Chapter 14, Verses 19 to 14

Shloka # 14. 9:

14.9 O scion of the Bharata dynasty, sattva attaches one to happiness, rajas to action, while tamas, covering up knowledge, leads to inadvertence als

Continuing his teachings

Swamiji said today,

in the last few classes, we saw that our higher nature known as the sakshi svarupam is ever

nirgunam and

therefore is free from the influence of the three gunas; but our vyavaharika nature,

our lower nature, which is called ahamkara is a mixture of the body-mind complex, as well as the

reflected consciousness. And till the ahamkara consists of the body-mind complex and till the body-mind

complex is born out of prakrti, the ahamkara can never escape from the three gunas. And

therefore, our body-mind complex is made up of three gunas and the

ahamkara which

consists of this body-mind complex is the necessarily made up of these three gunas, and therefore,

we can never escape from them. We have to live with this saguna ahamkara. And once we

are forced to live with this ahamkara, it is better that we understand the ahamkara well, so

that we know how to handle it properly.

Science

is able to handle the nature more and more only because science has been able

to know nature more and more. Knowledge gives the capacity for better handling.

And therefore Sri Krishna says: you have to understand your own ahamkara very well.

For that, you must know what type of ahamkara you have; which guna is dominant, which guna is in middle; the second place, and which guna is the

lowest; better you understand and you also know how these gunas influence

your vyavaharika life; both

material life, as well as the spiritual life.

And

therefore Sri Krishna started an enquiry into the three gunas which we

divided into 5 topics: the first topic being the definition of the three gunas where he

gave the definition that satva guna is Prakashatmakam

and rajo guna is ragatmakam; and tamo guna is mohanatmakam. By the

word Prakashatmakam means, a

mind that is pre-disposed to the pursuit of knowledge. A mind with more and

more knowing tendencies, a mind, which wants to use Gyanendriyas more, is

called a satvika mind.

Whereas

rajo guna is said to

the ragatmakam, which

is a personality that has doing tendency, it is a dynamic mind, which wants to

use the karmendriyas more

than the Gyanendriyas.

And

therefore, karma pre-disposition or karma tendency is rajo guna lakshanam; knowledge

tendency is satva guna
lakshanam.

And

tamo guna is defined as
mohanatmakam, which
means a personality, which is always in doubt; always
indecisive; always
procrastinating; always not sure what to do. A mind which is
in eternal
conflict, delusion and procrastination and if you try to help
them resolve the
conflict; not only you do not resolve their conflict they will
put conflict in
your mind too. So powerful is their moha. So this constant
vacillation tendency is the expression
of tamo guna, which we
called mohanatmakam. This is
the first topic, the definition.

Then

the second topic that we did was bandha prakara, how the three
gunas bind a person which we can easily infer, a calm mind has
always a knowing tendency; learning tendency; therefore,
naturally it is
addicted to any infrastructure which is conducive for
learning. It always loves
learning infrastructure, which means quietude, which means
seclusion, which means
silence, which means withdrawal, which means reduction of
relationships, because
relationships requires extroverted-ness. And therefore, a calm
mind is attached
to knowledge infrastructure whereas a rajasic mind hates
knowledge infrastructure of quietude,
withdrawal etc.

A rajasic mind craves for a karma infrastructure. It wants to

do something or the other; therefore it wants gadgets, it wants to go out, i.e. it wants an infrastructure in which karmendriyas can be active. And this is called bondage as it is addicted to such a set up and if such a set up is not available, that person feels like a fish out of water. He is unhappy and therefore, whether unhappiness is caused by silence, or whether unhappiness is caused by noise, unhappiness is unhappiness and Vedanta defines moksha as that state of mind, in which there is no unhappiness, be it in noise or in silence; it is not bound by either noise or silence. Therefore, sattva's attachment is with Gyana while Rajo Guna is attached to Karma and tamo guna binds with nidra and alasya. It does not even know what it wants and is still groping in darkness. It also does not want to decide. Tamo Guna is attached to vagueness, negligence and carelessness.

Shloka # 14.10:

**O scion of the Bharata dynasty, sattva
increases by subduing rajas and tamas, rajas by overpowering
sattva and tamas,
and tamas by dominating over sattva and rajas.**

The
third topic that Sri Krishna is going to deal with is the
lingam or the
indicatory signs of whether one is satvic, rajasic
or tamasic; but
before entering into this topic Sri Krishna is taking a small
diversion. The
10th verse is a diversionary verse.

It
is a deliberate diversion, as Sri Krishna considers it
important.
Here Sri Krishna says everything and every being is made up of
three gunas because
everything and being is born of prakrti. From an inert object

to the most
intelligent human being, every blessed thing in the creation
is the product of
prakrti and therefore everyone has all the three gunas.

But there is one difference and that difference is that even
though everything is made up of three gunas, the proportion is
not uniform. The proportion was uniform before the creation,
in pralaya state all three gunas were in equilibrium, but once
the creation started, there was no more equilibrium and in-
equilibrium sets in.

And
therefore in the case of an inert object, all three gunas are
present,
but tamoguna is dominant
hence the reason the object does not have a learning tendency;
which is why a
wall does not learn.

And
once you come to the plant kingdom, it has also has all three
gunas but it has
more rajas and satva than an inert object. But you will still
not see a plant
going to school or for a walk. So, the plant has more satva
and rajas than an
inert object but still only in limited amounts.

And
when we come to animals, we find satva and rajas are still
more dominant
relatively and their capacity to learn, and understand is more
than the plant.
They are also not stationary living being as animals move,
which means rajoguna is more.

And

once you come to the human being, satva and rajas are still more dominant and therefore human beings have schools and colleges; books and knowledge goes on increasing. Similarly, the number of activities undertaken by them are also many. Sri Krishna points out that all the human beings do not have the same proportion of gunas; among the human beings themselves, some of them have got more satva, some more rajas and some have more tamas, and therefore, their character varies.

And therefore, a satvic person is defined as one who has got the predominance of satva; it does not mean he does not have rajas and tamas, it only means satva is dominant and similarly in rajasic person, rajas is dominant, and in a tamasic person, tamas is dominant.

And this tamas can be so dominant that some people can be closer to animals and some people can be closer to plants; and some people can be closer to stones.

Then comes a very important question. If a person is Satvic, Rajasic or Tamasic, is it a fixed character or is it possible for us to change the character of a Person? Is it possible for a person to change the proportion of the gunas? If we cannot change the character of a person, we are doomed, because we are helpless; our future is already decided. Fortunately **scriptures point out that the character of a person can be transformed.** The rate of transformation will defer from individual to individual and the amount of transformation also will defer from individual to individual, but transformation

is possible. In fact, all spiritual sadhanas are meant to change the proportion only because every sadhana requires a particular guna as a dominant factor. And according to shastra most people are born with tamo guna predominant because as a baby we only eat and sleep.

To convert from tamo guna pradhana person to rajo guna pradhana person; the scriptures want us to be active in life; and that is why Veda begins not with Gyana kandam rather it begins with karma kandam. Your life has to start with karma or activity.

Vedas say, let your life start with selfish activity; you have any number of personal desires and Vedas say nothing wrong in fulfilling your personal desires And once a person has been selfishly active, Vedas say, and then gradually change the character of activity. If previously it was Rajas Tamas Satva (RTS) in composition then the composition should be changed to Rajas Satva and Tamas (RST).

So

when a person converts himself from RTS to RST, and the person's activity although self centered becomes more beneficial for more number of people.

So

one moves from sakama karma to nishkama karma.

Thereafter

Veda says, once mind becomes mature and a

time

should come when your rajasic tendency should be converted into satva guna.

Thus,

through activity what karma can give, upasana can never give. What upasana gives, karma can never give. And therefore karma yoga is a must, upasana is also a must; upasana will convert a person from RST to SRT.

Therefore, one goes from inactivity to selfish activity; and then to selfless activity; and then to enquiry. This is our gradual transformation. Inactivity to selfish activity to selfless activity to enquiry is our journey and in fact if you take the four ashramas, brahmacharya , grihastha, vanaprastha and sanyasa, all these four ashramas also represent the gradual transformation.

And then a person finally comes to enquiry. Even though predominantly knowledge, he does not have any regret, he has already contributed to society through karma yoga. If one Contributes and then withdraws, there will be no guilt. Without contribution if I withdraw, I will always have guilt. What have I done for the world? And therefore, contribute, withdraw, learn, know and be free. And therefore character can be changed and final character required is satva guna pradhana. To use the 4th chapter language, we all should become guna brahmana. From a guna shudra to guna vaishya, to guna kshatriya to guna brahmana.

Guna shudra is lazy, guna vaishya is selfishly active; guna kshatriya is self-lessly acting; guna brahmana is pursuing knowledge, withdrawn or contemplative.

Therefore, Arjuna you have to understand where you stand and you have to adopt the appropriate sadhana and finally come to self-knowledge. This analysis is required only to change our character, not to change others character. We are not here

to study and judge other people unless they are or they are under our care. Our primary concern is how to change our svabhava. We have to find out as to what is my Guna? Am I a guna shudra; am I a guna kshatriya, am I a guna brahmana, which guna is dominant in me, how to know? Sri Krishna says I will give you the clue to find out, which is the third topic, also known as guna lingaani, the indicator, to find out where I stand.

Shloka

14.11:

14.11 When the illumination that is knowledge radiates in this body through all the doors (of the senses), then one should know that sattva has increased greatly.

Sri

Krishna says through our five sense organs (eyes, nose etc) we gather the knowledge of the external world. When all the five sense organs are bright and alert and we have great absorbing capacity, then we are able to acquire knowledge faster because the absorbing capacity is more. Such a mind is always alert and can absorb knowledge fast. Such a mind indicates satva pradhana.

When

the sense organs are bright and therefore there is more knowledge acquisition; one can judge oneself to be a satvic person.

Shloka

14.12

**14.12 0 best of the Bharata dynasty, when
rajas becomes predominant, these come into being: avarice,
movement,
undertaking of actions, unrest and hankering.**

When

rajo guna is dominant,
lobha is present.

Lobha here means

inordinate greed to achieve worldly things; a super ambitious
person; of course

such people accomplish so many things in the society, in fact,
a country's

material progress is dependent on such people; we should be
very careful here,

we are not criticizing rajasic

people here, because if a nation has to progress, we require
lot of activity as

well. At least, Swami Vivekananda felt that our country
required more rajas

than satvam as he thought our people were tamasic.

Therefore activity is very important for material progress,
but the problem is, there should a limit and after some time a
person should gradually change to satva pradhana. So these
people are highly ambitious, even at an old age. They are
workaholic people, they have no time for nithya karma; they
have no time for japa, they have no time for puja, they have
no time for Gita; they have no time to question what is the
real goal of life. So therefore, they initiate many
activities, without bothering whether they can take care of
all of them.

Therefore

their mind is ever, a restless mind, an impatient mind; they
also expect the

same amount of speed from the people around them.

Generally

rajasic people

are impatient; they are highly irritable, they cannot stand other people as

such they become very unpopular; they are very high achieving people, but generally

people who are close by, they know the problem of working with them.

Anger

is at the tip of their nose. Though they

are great achievers, they are highly restless and short-tempered.

They have strong attachment to their accomplishments, and are highly egoistic. Dayananda Swami says, Self-made men are most dangerous type people. They keep telling everybody that as well; and if someone does not listen, they feel angry; this makes them subject to deep disappointments as well. Thus they are highly volatile. But on the positive side they are Great achievers.

Therefore

somebody has written about how rajasic people pray to God: Oh Lord! Give me Darshan right now! or else I will beat you.

Shloka 14.13:

14.13 O descendant of the Kuru dynasty, when

tamas predominates these surely [i.e. without exception.-M.S.] come into being:

non-discrimination and inactivity, inadvertence and delusion.

The

tamasic person does

not take part in living itself. Their Gyanendriyas and

karmendriyas are
dull. There is an absence of Satva and Rajas in them meaning
both Gunas are
overpowered by Tamas.

And
therefore, generally, he does not do anything. And if you
force him to do
things, you will have to go behind and make him to get it done
and if he does
independently invariably you will have to rectify it later.
You may conclude that
it is better to have done it yourself.

So
hallmarks of Tamo Guna are: Negligent attitude, Carelessness,
Procrastination,
delusion and indecision.

Shankaracharya answers as
to why we require inference; inference is required because
three gunas are not
pratyaksham or visibly
evident. Where pratyaksham
does not work, anumana has to be
made use of. If I cannot see the fire, I have to indirectly go
to the indicator
and through the smoke; I have to infer the fire, because the
fire is not seen.
Similarly which guna
is dominant in me, I cannot see with the physical eyes,
because gunas are not
visible. So, we have to look for clues, indicators, and the
indicators are the
details of the lingam and therefore judge yourself, find out
where you stand and
choose appropriate sadhana but never
develop a complex, **never compare yourselves**

with other people; be happy with what you are at present, and gradually progress.

Take Away:

Scriptures

point out that the character of
a person can be transformed.

In

trying to decipher your own gunas, never compare yourselves
with other people;

be happy with what you are at present, and gradually progress.

With Best

Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy