

## Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 131: Chapter 14, Verses 07-10

(November 4 – November 10, 2020)

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### ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

### TRANSLITERATION

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम् ।

*rajo rāgātmakam viddhi tṛṣṇā-saṅgasamudbhavam*

तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् ॥ १४-७ ॥

*tan nibadhnāti kaunteya karma-saṅgena dehinam*

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।

*tamas tv ajñāna-jam viddhi mohanam sarva-dehinām*

प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति भारत ॥ १४-८ ॥

*pramādālasya-nidrābhis tan nibadhnāti bhārata*

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति रजः कर्मणि भारत ।

*sattvam sukhe sañjayati rajah karmaṇi bhārata*

ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयत्युत ॥ १४-९ ॥

*jñānam āvṛitya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayaty uta*

रजस्तमश्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति भारत ।

*rajas tamaśh chābhibhūya sattvam bhavati bhārata*

रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः सत्त्वं रजस्तथा ॥ १४-१० ॥

*rajah sattvam tamaśh chaiva tamaḥ sattvam rajas tathā*

## TRANSLATION

- (07) O Arjun, *rajo guṇa* is of the nature of passion. It arises from worldly desires and affections. It binds the soul through attachment to fruitive actions.
- (08) O Arjun, *tamo guṇa*, which is born of ignorance, is the cause of illusion for the embodied souls. It deludes all living beings through negligence, laziness, and sleep.
- (09) *Sattva*, the mode of goodness, binds one to material happiness; *rajas*, the mode of passion, conditions the soul toward actions; and *tamas*, the mode of ignorance, clouds wisdom and binds one to delusion.
- (10) Sometimes goodness (*sattva*) prevails over passion (*rajas*) and ignorance (*tamas*), O scion of Bharat. Sometimes passion (*rajas*) dominates goodness (*sattva*) and ignorance (*tamas*), and at other times ignorance (*tamas*) overcomes goodness (*sattva*) and passion (*rajas*).

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## Chapter 14

### Verse 07:

Here, Lord Krishna explains *rajas guna* or the mode of passion and describes how it binds the *jiva* or embodied being to material existence. The passion gives the impetus to perform activities for the desire of sense gratification and identifying in the mind such sense objects to be enjoyed by the senses, such as seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. Desire is the hankering for the acquisition of objects to be yet acquired, whereas attachment is the obsession for objects that have already been acquired. By instigating and increasing the propensity to continuously perform actions *rajas* binds the *jiva* or embodied being tightly in *samsara*, the perpetual cycle of birth and death, in order to satisfy desires and attachment to the lure of perceived and unperceived results for such actions. Thus, *rajas* is known to be the root cause of lust, sensual desires and attachment.

### Verse 08:

Lord Krishna now defines *tamas guna* or the mode of ignorance. The word *tamas* means darkness and is typified by nescience and inertia. It is subject to the greatest *mohanam* or delusion that imagines a permanent and pleasant experience in a temporary and unpleasant existence. Those humans that look upon themselves as being only their physical body, are all hopelessly situated in *ajnana* or absence of knowledge which is the antithesis of *jnana* or

wisdom. *Jnana* is the accurate, precise understanding, whereas *ajnana* is the inaccurate, perverted understanding. The inaccurate, perverted understanding binds the *jiva* or embodied being through *pramada* or madness which includes listlessness (or inability to focus having a fragmented attention span) and bewilderment, *alasya* or indolence which includes sluggishness and laziness and *nidrabhihi* or sleep which includes inebriation. Sleep is the cessation of bodily organs arising from mental and physical exhaustion. All of these are permanently situated in *tamas guna*, and by invoking ignorance, tightly bind the *jiva*.

### **Verse 09:**

Here, Lord Krishna describes the functional characteristics of the three *gunas*, including *sattva* or goodness, *rajas* or passion and *tamas* or nescience/ignorance. The main quality of *sattva* is its ability to confer blessedness. *The quality of sattva impels the mind to be attracted to happiness.* Although there may be situations of pain and discomfort, the overall tendency of the mind is to seek knowledge and experience joy. *The main characteristic of rajas is that it impels vigorous activity for the desire of sense gratification. The dominant factor in tamas is that it obscures intelligence, giving a distorted delusion or perverted view of reality* which results in the tendency to perform unnatural activities. *Tamas* quality often leads one to neglect the teachings of great liberated beings or by acting contrary to these teachings because such teachings differ from one's personal understanding. *The three gunas are the natural effects of prakriti or the material substratum pervading physical existence and constitute the qualities of all matter which manifests into physical bodies both gross and subtle.* How they each give rise to consequences so radically different and conflicting with each other is answered in the next verse.

### **Verse 10:**

Lord Krishna now confirms the fact that the three *gunas* or modes of *sattva* or goodness, *rajas* or passion and *tamas* or ignorance are the three qualities *that exist within all jivas or embodied beings throughout the material existence.* But one of the three *gunas* predominates over the other two due to the stringent law of *karma* or the reactions to the actions performed in the previous lifetime. For example, when *sattva guna* is dominant, it overpowers the effects of *rajas* and *tamas* and in this way *sattva* binds the *jiva* or embodied being exclusively to its effects of happiness and pursuit of knowledge. When *rajas guna* is dominant, it overpowers *sattva* and *tamas* and binds the *jiva* to its effects of desire and activity, and when *tamas guna* is dominant, it overpowers *sattva* and *rajas* and binds the *jiva* by its effects of inertia and indolence.