

## Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 164: Chapter 18, Verses 18-21

(June 23 – June 29, 2021)

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### ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

### TRANSLITERATION

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं परिज्ञाता त्रिविधा कर्मचोदना ।

*jñānam jñeyam pariñātā tri-vidhā karma-chodanā*

करणं कर्म कर्तेति त्रिविधः कर्मसंग्रहः ॥ १८-१८ ॥

*karaṇam karma karteti tri-vidhaḥ karma-saṅgrahaḥ*

ज्ञानं कर्म च कर्ताच त्रिधैव गुणभेदतः ।

*jñānam karma cha kartā cha tridhaiva guṇa-bhedataḥ*

प्रोच्यते गुणसङ्ख्याने यथावच्छृणु तान्यपि ॥ १८-१९ ॥

*prochyate guṇa-saṅkhyāne yathāvach chhṛiṇu tāny api*

सर्वभूतेषु येनैकं भावमव्ययमीक्षते ।

*sarva-bhūteṣhu yenaikam bhāvam avyayam īkṣhate*

अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम् ॥ १८-२० ॥

*avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣhu taj jñānam viddhi sāttvikam*

पृथक्त्वेन तु यज्ज्ञानं नानाभावान्पृथग्विधान् ।

*pṛithaktvena tu yaj jñānam nānā-bhāvān pṛithagvidhān*

वेत्ति सर्वेषु भूतेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि राजसम् ॥ १८-२१ ॥

*vetti sarveṣhu bhūteṣhu taj jñānam viddhi rājasam*

## TRANSLATION

- (18) Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the knower—these are the three factors that induce action. The instrument of action, the act itself, and the doer—these are the three constituents of action.**
- (19) Knowledge, action, and the doer are declared to be of three kinds in the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, distinguished according to the three modes of material nature. Listen, and I will explain their distinctions to you.**
- (20) Understand that knowledge to be in the mode of goodness by which a person sees one undivided imperishable reality within all diverse living beings.**
- (21) But that knowledge, by which one sees the manifold living entities in diverse bodies as individual and unconnected, is to be considered in the mode of passion**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/14zHoFrGPRdRCgdBrrPhryNqyKSgrGWrC/view?usp=sharing>

## Chapter 18

### Verse 18

In this verse, Lord Krishna reveals the threefold impulses that manifest action and the threefold agents that forms the basis of actions. He establishes the point that the *atma* or the immortal soul, which is of an exclusively spiritual nature without material qualities and attributes, has absolutely no connection with the cause, the basis and the fruits of actions, which are all by-products of the three *gunas* or modes of material nature. Knowledge is the cognizance to obtain a desired result. The knowable is the action or the effort that achieves the result. The knower is the one possessing such knowledge and the means to achieve it. For example, the awareness of the importance of winning a medal in the Olympics (*The Knowledge*) motivates a sportsman (*The Knower*) to practice for years (*The Knowable or the Action*). If one translates the word *chodana* to mean impetus, then these threefold impulses are the impetus by which all actions are enacted. If the word *chodana* is interpreted to mean scriptural injunctions, then the meaning would be that all injunctions in respect to actions are enacted dependent upon the threefold basis which is derived from the three *gunas*. In chapter two, verse 45, Lord Krishna has already stated that the Vedic scriptures proscribe subjects that are of the three *gunas*. So, it should be understood that the basis of actions are the instrument which is the best means for effecting knowledge, the action that achieves the goal, and the agent who performs the action. The words *karma sangraha* mean that which epitomizes action. In other words, the triad consisting of the

instrument, the action, and the agent form the basis of action. Knowledge, the knowable and the knower are the subsidiary factors which support the basis of action indirectly.

### **Verse 19**

In this verse, Lord Krishna says that the characteristics of the threefold factors of knowledge, the knowable and the knower are based on the three *gunas* or the modes of material nature. In the Sankhya philosophy of analytical reasoning, the knowledge, action and agent are of only three types according to the distinction of whether they are situated in *sattva guna*, the mode of goodness, *raja guna*, the mode of passion, or *tama guna*, the mode of ignorance. Previously, the various binding nature of the three *gunas* has been described. Chapter 14:6 explains how *sattva guna* captivates the *jiva* by attachment to happiness and knowledge, while 14:7 explains how *raja guna* binds the *jiva* by infatuation and covetousness, and 14:8 explains how *tama guna* enslaves the *jiva* by slothfulness and forgetfulness. Chapter 17: 4 explains that those in *sattva guna* worship the demigods who are in charge of universal maintenance such as Brahma or Shiva. Those in *raja guna* worship Durga, Kali, Yakshas, which are entities extremely lusty, as well as *rakshasas* who are blood drinking demons. While those in *tama guna* worship ghosts and spirits. Later, it has been declared that one should strive exclusively for *sattva guna*, discarding *raja* and *tama guna*. This verse emphasizes the fact that the action, its factors and rewards are related explicitly to the *gunas* as they are totally of a material nature arising from *prakriti*, the material substratum pervading physical existence, and thus have no connection to the *atma* or immortal soul which is of an exclusive spiritual nature.

### **Verse 20**

Here, Lord Krishna speaks of three types of knowledge determined by the three *gunas* or modes of material nature, beginning with *sattva guna* or the mode of goodness. The one who, while performing activities perceives the one undivided, immutable and imperishable nature in the form of the *atma* or immortal soul residing within all *jivas* or embodied beings simultaneously, such as demigods, humans, animals, spirits, etc., which are merely exhibiting unlimited varieagated forms according to species and genre, is one who is firmly situated in *sattva guna*.

### **Verse 21**

In this verse, Lord Krishna describes the nature of knowledge in *raja guna* or the mode of passion. The knowledge where one imagines all *jivas* or embodied beings as distinct, possessing different *atmas* or souls, diversely conditioned by pleasure and happiness and pain and suffering is situated in *raja guna*. The word *prithaktvena* means separate individuality, alluding to differences in appearance between *jivas* or embodied beings. The

words *naana-bhaavaan* refers to plurality of substance in falsely surmising that the *atma* varies in quality or quantity with the variance of the physical body inhabited by the *jiva*, or to wrongly conclude that the *atma* varies in size and potency according to the body it is in. This mentality is indicative of those situated in *raja guna*, the mode of passion and includes those desirous of receiving rewards for their actions.