

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 134: Chapter 14, Verses 19-21

(November 25 – December 1, 2020)

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TRANSLITERATION

नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टुमिच्छति ।

*nānyam guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṁ yadā
draṣṭānupaśhyati*

गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति ॥ १४-१९ ॥

*guṇebhyaśh cha param vetti mad-bhāvaṁ
so 'dhigachchhati*

गुणानेतानतीत्य त्रीन्देही देहसमुद्भवान् ।

*guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī deha-
samudbhavān*

जन्ममृत्युजरादुःखैर्विमुक्तोऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ १४-२० ॥

*janma-mṛityu-jarā-duḥkhair vimukto
'mṛitam aśhnute*

अर्जुन उवाच ।

arjuna uvācha

कैलिङ्गैस्त्रीन्गुणानेतानतीतो भवति प्रभो ।

*kair liṅgais trīn guṇān etān atīto bhavati
prabho*

किमाचारः कथं चैतांस्त्रीन्गुणानतिवर्तते ॥ १४-२१ ॥

*kim āchāraḥ katham chaitāns trīn guṇān
ativartate*

TRANSLATION

- (19)** When wise people see that in all works there are no agents of action other than the three *guṇas*, and they know me to be transcendental to these *guṇas*, they attain my divine nature.
- (20)** By transcending the three modes of material nature associated with the body, one becomes free from birth, death, disease, old age, and misery, and attains immortality.
- (21)** Arjun inquired: What are the characteristics of those who have gone beyond the three *guṇas*, O Lord? How do they act? How do they go beyond the bondage of the *guṇas*?

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UEG322C_yb9kf6xgMrkJ-w2WWc6dh3E7/view?usp=sharing

Chapter 14

Verse 19:

After having explained to Arjuna that the many manifestations of the mundane worlds are due to the conjunction of the three *gunas* or the three modes of material nature, which arise from *prakriti* or the material substratum pervading physical existence, Lord Krishna here emphasizes how *moksha* or the liberation from material existence can come from careful discernment of them. One should realize the fact that the *gunas* transform themselves into the body, mind, and intellect, and that they actually perform all one's actions, whereas *atma* or the immortal soul is different from and far beyond the *gunas* and is actually the monitor, the witness of all thoughts and actions. If we attach our mind to any personality or object within the realm of the three *gunas*, it results in increasing their corresponding effect on our mind and intellect. However, if we attach our mind to the divine realm, it transcends the *gunas* and becomes divine. Those who understand this phenomenon, start loosening their relationship with worldly objects, but instead, start focusing on strengthening their relationship with God through *bhakti* or devotion. This enables them to transcend the three *gunas* and attain the divine nature of God, and would eventually attain the Supreme Lord.

Verse 20:

The three *gunas* or modes of material nature arise from *prakriti* or the material substratum pervading physical existence from which the physical body manifests. The consequences of being attached to the *gunas* are “*Janma Mrityu Jara Dukhaih*”, meaning birth, death, old age and misery. The *Vedas* prescribe several codes of conduct, rituals, and duties for human beings to lift themselves up from *Tamas* (mode of ignorance) and *Rajas* (mode of passion) *gunas* to *Sattva guna* (mode of goodness). However, even reaching the *Sattva guna* status is not enough since one is still in material bondage. Our ultimate goal lies even beyond reaching the *Sattva* mode. When the *jiva* or the embodied being transcends all *gunas*, it realizes the *atma* or the immortal soul, which is of the nature of infinity and eternity. Such a being attains *moksha* and is liberated from *samsara* or the perpetual cycle of birth, death, old age and miseries associated with the material existence. At the time one achieves *atma-tattva* or soul realization, one assumes a spiritual body that is immortal.

Verse 21:

After hearing from Lord Krishna that one can attain immortality by transcending the three *gunas* or modes of material nature, Arjuna gets excited and many questions arose in his mind. In order to understand this subject thoroughly, Arjuna asks the Lord three questions: (1) What are the characteristics of those who have transcended the three *gunas*? (2) How do such a great beings conduct themselves? (3) How are they able to transcend the *gunas* and achieve immortality? Arjuna humbly requests Lord Krishna to reveal them to him.