

Focus the Mind on God

THE
BHAGAVAD GITA
CHAPTER 14
SUMMARY

THE THREE GUNAS
SATTVA (GOODNESS)
RAJAS (PASSION)
TAMAS (IGNORANCE)

LifebyGita

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1. Introduction



Welcome back to our Gita-gyan series! In this section, we are going to dive deep in the **Bhagavad Gita Chapter 14 Summary**. In the last chapter, we explored the divine knowledge (The Yoga of Distinguishing the Field and the Knower of the Field) revealed by Krishna to Arjuna. We learned about the eternal Self (Kshetrajna) and the field of action (Kshetra), the distinction between the two, and the path to liberation.

How do we navigate this field of action? What forces influence our choices and shape our lives? That's precisely what **Chapter 14**, titled **Guṇa Traya Vibhaga Yoga (The Yoga of the Three Gunas/Modes of Material Nature)**, delves into. So, get ready, as we unravel the fascinating concept of the three gunas and their impact on our journey!

2. The Three Gunas: Revealing the Play of Nature

This chapter unveils the three fundamental qualities, or gunas, that govern **material nature** (Prakriti):

- **Sattva (goodness):** Characterized by purity, knowledge, peace, and clarity. Think of it as the calm and collected state that allows for wise decisions. This can lead to a sense of well-being and a desire to maintain those positive experiences.

Verse 14.6:

“Out of the three qualities, goodness shines the brightest and brings peace of mind. O Sinless Arjuna, even this positive state can bind the soul by creating a desire for a sense of happiness and knowledge itself.”

The verse points out that even these positive experiences can lead to subtle attachment to the **fruits** of our actions (the happiness itself, the validation of knowledge gained, etc.).

Sattva and Attachment

Here's the breakdown:

- **Action (Karma):** We perform actions in the world (performing our duties, practicing meditation, etc.).
- **Desired Outcomes:** When we perform these actions with Sattva, we might experience positive results (inner peace, success, etc.) and develop a desire for those outcomes themselves.
- **Subtle Attachment:** This desire for the positive results can become a subtle attachment, where the focus shifts from the action itself to the desired outcome. This attachment can hinder true liberation because it creates a sense of dependence on external factors.

Example:

- **Action:** Practicing meditation with Sattva (goodness)
- **Desired Outcome:** Achieving inner peace
- **Subtle Attachment:** If we meditate solely to

achieve inner peace and become upset when peace is not immediate, this becomes a subtle attachment to the outcome.

The Ideal:

The ideal in the Bhagavad Gita is to perform actions with Sattva (goodness) while remaining detached from the outcome. This means focusing on the action itself and surrendering the results to God. By doing so, we cultivate inner peace and liberation regardless of external circumstances.

- **Rajas (passion):** Marked by activity, ambition, and attachment. It fuels our drive to achieve but can also lead to restlessness and competition.
- **Tamas (ignorance):** Characterized by lethargy, delusion, and inertia. It keeps us stuck in negativity and hinders growth.

These gunas are not static; they constantly influence each other, creating a dynamic interplay within us. The key is to understand their nature and strive to cultivate sattva, the mode of goodness, for a balanced and meaningful life.

2.1 Modern Day Relevance

Even today, we grapple with the influence of these gunas. When we find ourselves overwhelmed by work (rajas), lacking motivation (tamas), or struggling with self-doubt (tamas), understanding the gunas empowers us to identify the dominant influence and make conscious choices. By cultivating sattva through practices like meditation and mindfulness, we can navigate life's challenges with greater clarity and equanimity.

3. Cultivating Sattva: The Path to Balance

As we navigate the interplay of the gunas, the ultimate goal is to cultivate sattva, the mode of goodness. Here's why:

- **Clarity and Focus:** Sattva promotes clear thinking and emotional stability, allowing us to make wise decisions and navigate challenges with a calm mind.

Balance and Harmony: It fosters a sense of balance in our lives, encouraging us to engage in action without being consumed by ambition (rajas) or succumbing to lethargy (tamas).

- **Inner Peace and Contentment:** Sattva cultivates inner peace and contentment, allowing us to find joy in the present moment regardless of external circumstances.

So, how do we nurture sattva in our daily lives? Here are some practices:

- **Meditation:** Regular meditation helps quiet the mind, reduce rajas and tamas, and cultivate inner peace (sattva).
- **Mindfulness:** Practicing mindfulness allows us to become aware of our thoughts and emotions without judgment, promoting sattvic qualities like self-awareness and equanimity.
- **Healthy Habits:** Maintaining a healthy lifestyle with balanced diet, exercise, and adequate sleep promotes physical and mental well-being, supporting the cultivation of sattva.
- **Service to Others:** Engaging in selfless service to others fosters a sense of purpose and connection, diminishing the ego-driven tendencies associated with rajas and tamas.

By incorporating these practices, we can gradually shift our inner landscape towards sattva, enabling us to live more meaningful and fulfilling lives.

4. What is the key to escaping the influence of the gunas?

Krishna offers a solution to break free from the grip of the gunas (material qualities). He tells Arjuna to focus his mind on God. Since God is untouched by these qualities, anyone who connects with the divine rises above the material and reaches a spiritual level.

Arjuna, curious, asks about the traits of those who have transcended the gunas. Krishna explains their characteristics:

- **Unfazed by the World:** They remain calm and balanced even when they see the gunas influencing the world around them.
- **Seeing Through the Illusion:** They understand the effects of the gunas on people, objects, and situations.
- **God's Energy in Everything:** They recognize everything as a manifestation of God's energy and ultimately under his control.



- **Detached from Outcomes:** They aren't swayed by external circumstances. They remain steady in joy or sorrow, finding their center within themselves.

Key Meaning:

This passage emphasizes the power of devotion to God. By connecting with the divine, we can overcome the influence of the gunas, the material qualities that bind us to the world. This results in a state of inner peace and detachment from worldly desires and outcomes.

Bhagavad Gita Chapter 14 Summary

The Three Gunas

1. Sattva (Goodness)

Promotes clarity, peace, and well-being. But beware: Can lead to subtle attachment to desired outcomes.

2. Rajas (Passion)

Fuels ambition, drive, and activity. Downside: Can cause restlessness, competition, and anxiety.

3. Tamas (Ignorance)

Creates inertia, lethargy, and delusion. Leads to: Stagnation and negativity.

Breaking Free

Detachment from the gunas and Devotion to God are key to liberation.

Signs of Liberation

- Unfazed by the world's ups and downs.
- Sees God's energy everywhere.
- Remains centered in joy or sorrow.

Benefits

- Inner peace
- Overcoming material limitations
- Achieving a higher spiritual state

5. Conclusion: A Guide for Modern Life

Understanding the gunas is not just an ancient philosophical concept; it's a practical guide for navigating the complexities of modern life. By recognizing the influence of these forces within us, we can make conscious choices to cultivate sattva and achieve a greater sense of balance, peace, and well-being. Remember, the Bhagavad Gita is not a rigid rulebook, but a timeless roadmap that empowers us to navigate our personal journeys with greater clarity and purpose.



You can dive deep in the Bhagavad Gita Key Teachings for Modern Life by visiting lifebygita.com