

CHAPTER 14

|| THE THREE QUALITIES ||

O Master, glory to you! You are the greatest among all gods, the morning sun that gives light in the form of intelligence and the dawn of happiness. You are the resting place of all, the one who brings about the experience of the idea, 'I am myself the Supreme *Brahman*' and the ocean in which the waves rock all the worlds. Glory to you, O friend of the poor, you are the eternal sea of compassion and the Lord of the bride, in the form of *Brahmic* lore. To those from whom you hide yourself, you show this worldly appearance and to those to whom you disclose yourself, you make it appear that you are all. The magician performs magic by deluding the vision of others. But your sport is so wonderful that you make them forget themselves (1-5). You impart self-knowledge to some, but bring others under the sway of *Maya*; such is your skill, I bow to you. It is you, who have given sweetness to the water and forgiveness to the earth. It is because of your power of splendour, that the sun and the moon, which are mere shells, illumine the three worlds. It is because of your Divine power that the wind blows and the sky plays the game of hide and seek. All this is your limitless *Maya*, and knowledge too, secures its vision from you. Enough of this, because, even the *Vedas* suffer fatigue, while describing you (6-10). The *Vedas* proceed with their description, so long as they do not get a glimpse of you, but on realising you, both the *Vedas* and we come on the common plane of muteness. When the world is in deluge, drops of water do not count and even the big rivers cannot be spotted out. When the sun rises on the horizon, even the moon looks lusterless like the glow-worm. In the same way, both the *Vedas* and we are reduced to the same level, when we are pitted against you. How can I describe you, before whom the notion of duality disappears and both, the most inarticulate (*para*) and the articulate speech (*vaikhary*) become mute. It is therefore proper that I should stop praising you and prostrate myself at your feet (11-15).

Therefore, I bow to you, O Master, in whatever form you may be. Please be my financier, to make this my business of composition fruitful and release the capital in the form of your grace. Then pour this capital into the bag of my intellect and bestow upon me the gift of versification of knowledge. Then I shall labour with love and adorn the ears of the saints with beautiful earrings, in the form of discriminating knowledge. O my Master, I wish to discover the hidden treasure in the form of the import of the *Gita* and so I beg you, to put in my eyes, collyrium in the form of your affection (so that I can see the treasure). Kindly shed on me, your pure light from the solar disc, in the form of your compassion (16-20). O merciful Master, please act like the spring and make the beautiful creeper in the form of my intellect, fruitful with poetry. Kindly pour on me, your generous and kind glance, so that the *Ganga* in the form of my intellect will become overfull with the import of the *Gita*. O refuge of the universe, just as the moon makes the full moon night lovely, so let your grace be the source of inspiration to me. At the sight of this moon, the sea of my knowledge will swell into full tide and make the channels of my poetic genius, overflow with the nine sentiments.

Hearing these words, the Master was thoroughly pleased and said, "By way of praising Me, you are unnecessarily promoting the sense of duality (21-25). Leave this praise alone and take up seriously the subject of knowledge. Explain it well and do not allow the interest of the hearers to flag." (On this *Shri Jnanadeva* said:) O Lord, I was only waiting for you to say 'proceed with your discourse'. The *Doob grass* is naturally evergreen and now it has received the *ambrosial* shower. Since I have received the grace of my *Guru*, I shall now give a detailed and eloquent exposition of the meaning of each and every word in the *Gita*. This exposition will remove all the lingering doubts in the minds of the hearers and whet their appetite to hear more and more (26-30). I seek the favour of my preceptor, so that sweet and sound words will come out of my mouth.

In the last chapter, Lord Krishna had told Arjuna that the universe takes birth from the union of the Self and the *prakriti* and the Self becomes involved in worldly life, because of his association with her qualities (*gunas*). As the Self comes under the sway of *prakriti*, he has to experience pleasure and pain, and when he goes beyond the qualities, he attains salvation. How the unattached Self becomes attached to the *prakriti*, how and in what manner the Self is united with the *prakriti*, how he comes to experience pleasure and pain (31-35), how many are the qualities and of what nature, how the qualities lead to bondage and what are the characteristics of a person who transcends the qualities - all these matters are described in the fourteenth chapter. Now hear the opinion held by the Lord of the universe, who resides in *Vaikuntha*. The Lord said, O Arjuna, gather all your hearing faculties together and comprehend this knowledge. I had earlier explained this knowledge to you in many ways, but I find that you have not been able to grasp it yet (36-40).

The blessed Lord said,

1. *I shall again proclaim the wisdom, the highest of all knowledges, knowing which all the sages have attained liberation from here.*

Now, I shall tell you again the meaning of the word highest (*para*), which is applied to the spiritual knowledge, by the scriptures. The other knowledges, do not take us beyond worldly existence and heaven and so the word 'highest' has been used to indicate that the knowledge of the Self is 'beyond' them. I call this knowledge of the Self as highest, because this knowledge is like fire and the other knowledges mere straw before it. Those knowledges, which esteem only worldly life and heaven, which value only works such as sacrificial rites, which entertain the notion of duality, appear like dreams before this knowledge of the Self. Just as the whirlwind gets dissolved in the sky (41-45) or the moon and other stars lose their splendour with the rising of the sun, or deluge obliterates all distinction between small and great rivers, so all other knowledges are dissolved with the dawn of Self-knowledge. It is for this reason, O Arjuna, we call the latter the 'highest' knowledge. O son of *Pandu*, that pristine state which is within us, from time immemorial, known as complete deliverance, is attained only through this knowledge. With the realisation of this knowledge, the thoughtful persons do not allow worldly existence to raise its head. By withdrawing the mind from the sense-objects, they become tranquil and do not come under the sway of the body, even though possessed of the body (46-50). Then, they cross over the hedge of the body and come up to the same level as Myself, with an equable mind.

2. *Having taken refuge in this wisdom, they have reached My likeness; so they are not reborn at the time of creation, nor do they suffer at the time of dissolution.*

For, O Arjuna, they have become eternal like Me and have attained perfection. They too become like Me limitless, blissful and established in Truth. Then there remains no distinction between them and Me. They become like Me, of the same magnitude and nature. Just as with the destruction of the jar, the space within the jar merges with the *akasha*, or the wick flames lit up from a lamp, when mingled, give the same light as the original lamp (51-55), with the elimination of the notion of duality, such distinctions as 'I' and 'you' vanish and they all enjoy company of one another. Therefore, when the time for the creation of the world arrives, they do not have rebirth. So when they are not bound by the body while alive, how can they meet with death at the time of dissolution? O winner of wealth, those, who, pursuing this knowledge, have become one with Me, have transcended the cycle of births and deaths. In this manner, the Lord praised this knowledge of the Self in order to create a liking for it, in the mind of Partha (56-60). At that time, Arjuna had reached such a state, that he was all ears and attentive to what the Lord was telling. He was trying to understand with rapt attention the Lord's discourse, which could not be encompassed by the sky. Then the Lord said, "I have in you, O Arjuna, a listener equal for My discourse. So My eloquence has found a suitable mate in your knowledge. Now I shall tell you how though single, I am bound in the fetters of the body, by the hunter in the form of the three qualities and how I create this world in association with the *prakriti* (61-65). Because of My union with *prakriti*, beings are produced from My seed and so the *prakriti* is known as the Field."

3. *Prakriti is My womb, wherein I place the seed. From that, O Bharata, ensues the birth of all beings.*

Since this *prakriti* is the resting place of the Great Principle (*mahat*) and others, she is known as *mahad-brahman*. O Arjuna, since all modifications take place because of her, she is called the *mahad-brahman*. The advocates of the doctrine of the unmanifest, call it Unmanifest, the *Sankhyas* call it *prakriti* and O the best among the wise, the *Vedantists* name it *Maya*. But why say more? What is known as ignorance is this (66-70), O winner of wealth. Ignorance is that by reason of which, we forget our essential nature. A special feature of this ignorance is, that it is not discernible when we think of our essential nature, just as when we take up the lamp, darkness vanishes, or just as cream is dissolved in the milk when it is heated and stirred up, but appears when it is only heated. Ignorance is like deep sleep, which is not the wakeful state nor dream nor *samadhi*, just as the sky becomes quiet, when the wind stops (71-75). As one cannot determine whether what one sees yonder, is a pillar or a person, so one cannot say anything definite, what the Self is, or whether it is something different. When there is neither day nor night but a period of twilight known as the evening, so ignorance is neither knowledge nor its opposite, but some state which is intermediate between the two. When the Self is covered by ignorance, it is called the embodied Self, giver or the knower of the Field (*kshetrajna*). That it does not know its essential nature and promotes ignorance, is the special feature of the knower of the Field (76-80). You should grasp firmly this union between the Self and the *Maya*, because this union is the natural trait of the Self. It is because of his union with *prakriti* that the Self forgets his pristine nature and assumes a different form. This is in the same way as the pauper, becomes deluded and raves, 'behold the king is coming' referring to himself, or a person who has just recovered from a swoon says, 'I had been to the heaven'. Thus when a person's vision strays away from the essential nature of the Self, whatever he perceives is the world, which is created from Myself. A person, although single,

becomes deluded by a dream and sees himself in diverse forms. This is what happens to the embodied Self, when he forgets his essential nature (81-85).

I shall elucidate this proposition to you in another way, by which you would experience it. This *avidya* (ignorance) is My consort, and she is ever young, beginningless and of indescribable qualities. She has no definite form, her sphere of activity is immense and she remains close to the ignorant and away from the wise. She is wide-awake, while I am asleep and she conceives by virtue of her union with the Supreme Self. And in the womb of this elemental nature, grows the foetus of eightfold modification (86-90). From her union with the Self, is born the Great Principle and from the latter, the mind. From the tender feeling (*mamata*) arises egoism and from egoism the five gross elements. As the sense organs and their objects are intimately associated with the gross elements, they are also generated along with them. When the passions flare up with the backing of the three qualities, they immediately give rise to inchoate cravings. Just as the seed, coming into contact with water sprouts (91-95), so when the *Maya* is united with Me, she bears diverse shoots in the form of the universe. O prince among the wise, hear now, how this embryo takes different forms. From this embryo arise four different orders, according as they are born from the egg (*andaja*) from the sweat (*svedaja*), from sprouts (*udbhija*) and the womb (*jaraja*). That which is formed chiefly from the combination of the sky and wind is known as *andaja*. That which contains chiefly a combination of water and fire with *rajas* and *tamas* qualities, is called *svedaja* (96-100). That which consists predominantly of water and earth, combined with the inferior quality *tamas*, is called the *udbhija*. And that order, which consists of the five senses of knowledge and five senses of action, combined with mind and intellect, is known as *jaraja*. Thus the *Maya* has given birth to a queer child, of which these four orders form its hands and feet, the eight-fold *prakriti* its head, activity is its protruding belly, renunciation its straight back, the eight orders of deities the body above the waist, the blissful heaven its neck, the mortal world its trunk and the nether world, the body below the waist (101-105). The expansion of the three worlds is the buxom health of the child and the eighty-four lakhs of species are the joints of its bodily frame. When this child began to grow, the *Maya* adorned its different limbs, in the form of many bodies with ever-new ornaments and suckled it with her milk in the form of infatuation. She has decked its fingers, in the form of the different worlds with rings.

After giving birth to this single child consisting of the animate and inanimate universe, this beautiful and captivating *Maya* felt very proud of herself (106-110). God *Brahma*, God *Vishnu* and God *Shiva* are respectively the morning, the noon and the evening to this child. After laying out this play of the universe, the child (feeling fatigued) goes to sleep on the bed of the world-dissolution and wakes up at the dawn of the epoch, through false knowledge. In this way, the child grows and takes strides in the form of the recurring succession of epochs, in the house of ignorance. This child, with volition as its friend and egoism as its playmate, meets its death only through real knowledge. Now I shall stop this elaborate discussion and tell you simply that this *Maya* gave birth to this universe, only with the aid of My power (111-115).

4. *Whatever forms are born in all wombs, O son of Kunti, of them the prakriti is the womb and I the father, who plants the seed.*

For this reason, O Arjuna, I am the father and the *Maya* the mother of this universe, which

is our offspring. Now do not consider these bodies as distinct, because the mind, intellect, the senses and the elements are all the same. Are there not different organs in one and the same body? So this variegated world has sprung from a single entity. Just as a tree, produced from a single seed, has different kinds of branches, some long, some short and some crooked, such is the relationship between the universe and Myself. Just as an earthen pot is the child of clay and cloth the grand-child of cotton (116-120), or the innumerable waves are the offsprings of the sea, the universe stands in the same relationship with Me. Just as the fire and flames are the same, so the universe and Myself, are one and the same. It is, therefore a mistake to conceive of a relationship between us. If as a result of the creation of this world, my form is suppressed there, what is it that displays itself in the form of the world? Is a ruby lost in its own lustre? If ornaments are made of gold, do they lose their quality of being gold? Does a lotus lose its quality as a lotus, when it blooms? O Arjuna, do the organs conceal the form of the body or do they constitute its very form (121-125)? If the *jowar* (kind of grain) plant grows and produces ears of corn, should we say that it has exhausted itself or multiplied itself? It is, therefore, not possible for you to view Me apart from the world, because I am this entire universe. Please keep this thought firmly fixed in your mind. Whatever different forms of bodies I have assumed, know that it is because I am bound in them by the fetters of qualities. Just as when a person wakes up from sleep, he says that I had died in a dream (126-130), or a patient suffering from jaundice, sees all things around him as yellow, or as one sees in the sunlight the sun screened by the clouds or as a person is frightened of his own shadow, thinking that it is a different person that he sees, in the same way, I have become many in different bodies, through bondage which you should try to understand. This bondage does not last on the attainment of My knowledge, but through ignorance we become our own fetters (131-135). Therefore, O Arjuna, do hear about what this bondage is and by what *gunas*, one considers himself bound. I shall tell you now, how many are these *gunas*, what are their properties, what is their nature and their names, and also from whom they have sprung.

5. *Sattva, rajas and tamas are qualities born of prakriti; they bind fast, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), the immutable Self to the body.*

Sattva, rajas and *tamas* are the names of these three *gunas* and they are born of *prakriti*. Of these three *gunas*, *sattva* is the best, *rajas* is of middling quality and *tamas* is inferior. All these three qualities, are seen in every mental state. Just as the same body undergoes childhood, youth and old age (136-140), or when gold is mixed with an alloy, its weight increases with a consequent loss of purity, or one falls into deep sleep through sloth, so the mental state which is caused by *tamas* besides *sattva* and *rajas*, grows strong through ignorance. Such are the *gunas* and I shall tell you now, how these *gunas* bind the Self. The Self becomes embodied by reason of his body-consciousness, at an inauspicious time (141-145). From birth till death, he identifies himself with his body and ascribes its properties to himself. As soon as the fish swallows the bait, the angler winds his line.

6. *Of these sattva being pure is luminous and wholesome; it binds him by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge, O sinless one.*

In this way, the hunter *sattva* gathers the embodied Self, like a deer in his snares of pleasure and knowledge. Then the latter waxes eloquent with his knowledge, kicks about in the pride

of his learning and so becomes parted from the bliss of Self, which is his own. He becomes thoroughly pleased, if he is honoured as a learned person, is elated with a trifling gain and boasts that he is easily satisfied (146-150). He says, 'there is no one as happy as myself, I am so lucky'. And the eight *sattvic* sentiments surge up in his mind. The matter does not stop here, because another bond gets at him. He becomes possessed by the goblin, in the form of self-conceit of his erudition. He does not feel sorry in the least for the loss of knowledge, that he is knowledge himself. On the contrary, he becomes puffed up by being immersed in sensuous pleasures. Just as a king dreams that he has become a beggar and thinks himself to be the lord of heaven, if he gets some more alms. So the Self, which is beyond body, imagines himself because of his mundane knowledge that he possesses a body (151-155). He becomes an expert in active worldly life, proficient in sacrificial lore and his knowledge reaches the sky. He boasts, that no one is as learned as himself, so much so, that his mind has become like the sky, harboring the moon of sagacity. This, quality of the *sattva* ties fetters, in the form of happiness and knowledge and drags the helpless person like a bull. Now I shall tell you how the embodied self is bound by the quality of *rajas*.

7. *Know that rajas is of the nature of passion, born of desire and attachment; it binds fast a person, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), through attachment to action.*

It is called *rajas* as it amuses the embodied Self and keeps his desire for sensuous pleasures ever fresh (156-160). Even if it gets a little access to the mind, it makes him run after sense-objects and then the embodied Self rides on the wind of passion. Then just as sacrificial fire blazes forth, when fed with ghee, and burns all things great and small, so his desire becomes inordinate and even painful things seem pleasurable to him. Then even if he acquires the wealth of the God of heaven, he considers it too little. In this way, when his passion grows strong, he is not satisfied even if the *Meru* Mountain falls in his hands and he craves for bigger things. He is willing to sacrifice his life even for a two-penny coin and feels happy if he secures even a blade of grass (161-165). He feels anxious as to how he will fare when all his wealth is exhausted and expands his business with great zeal. He begins to worry as to what he will live on in heaven, and so he undertakes sacrifices, observes vows after vows, builds wells, tanks etc. and performs only rites which bear fruit. Just as the wind blows continuously, without respite in the last month of summer, he labours hard, day and night in his business. The movements of fish or the side-glances of a beautiful maiden are fickle and the lightening is more fickle than them. But all these three are not fit to hold a candle to the *rajas* quality (166-170). One leaps into the fire of activity with great haste, in the hope of securing sensuous enjoyments in this world or heaven. Thus the embodied Self, even though separate from the body, is bound by the fetters of desires and becomes involved in various business deals. In this way, he is bound by the strong fetters of the *rajas* quality. Now I shall tell you, the characteristics of the *tamas* quality.

8. *But know that tamas born of ignorance deludes all persons; it binds them, O descendent of Bharata, by inattention, sloth and sleep.*

That which, O Partha, is known as the *tamas* quality, which acts like a veil and dims the vision of common-sense and is like a cloudy sky of the night of infatuation. It grows with ignorance and deludes the universe and makes it dance round its fingers (171-175). It has thoughtlessness

as its great *mantra* (mystic formula), it is a decanter filled with the wine of ignorance, or a bewitching weapon, which infatuates all beings, By such devices, it ties up those who regard their body as the Self. When it begins to grow up in all created things, it leaves no scope for others to grow. It blunts the organs, deludes the mind and gives shelter to sloth. It makes the body slack, and one loses all enthusiasm for work and yawns every now and then (176-180). Such a person cannot see even when his eyes are open and gets up, responding to a call, thinking that he heard some one. Just as a slab falls on one side and does not turn the other way, so when he goes to sleep contracting his body, he does not turn over. He does not feel like getting up, even if the earth sinks or the heaven falls. When he feels sleepy, he does not recollect what is proper or improper; but only likes to remain in a reclining position. He raises his hand to the forehead or sits with his head on the knees (181-185). He is so fond of sleep, that he scorns heavenly bliss before it. He has no other vice except that he wishes to live as long as god *Brahma* and pass it in slumber. If he trips down while walking, he goes to sleep on the road, and when he is sleepy, he refuses even a drink of nectar offered to him. If he is forced to work on occasions, he becomes blind with rage. He does not know how to behave, with whom to talk and what, and does not pause to think whether a thing will become available or not (186-190). Just as a moth jumps into fire, foolishly thinking that it will put out its flame with its wings, so he ventures to do something, which he ought not to do. In short, he likes to do stupid, careless mistakes. Thus the *tamas* quality ties up the pure self, with a triple bond of sleep, sloth and heedlessness.

Just as the fire, while burning a piece of wood, appears to take its shape, or the sky takes the form of an earthen pot or a lake full of water has the reflection of the moon, so the embodied Self is bound by the fetters of the *gunas* and imagines through ignorance, that he possesses their properties (191-195).

9. *Sattva makes one attached to happiness, and rajas to action, O Bharata; but obscuring knowledge, tamas makes one attached to negligence.*
10. *By suppressing rajas and tamas, sattva prevails, O Bharata; rajas (prevails) by suppressing sattva and tamas, and tamas (prevails) by suppressing sattva and rajas.*

Just as the bile, after suppressing phlegm and wind, increases in the body and makes it heated or the cold sets in after the hot and the rainy seasons are over, or the mind falls into the state of deep slumber for a while, when the states of waking and dream disappear, in the same way, when the *sattva* increases, overpowering *rajas* and *tamas*, a person says, 'I am so happy'. Similarly when *tamas* becomes strong, overpowering the qualities of *sattva* and *rajas*, the embodied Self is prone to commit blunders (196-200). In the same way, when *rajas* overpowers and exceeds the *sattva* and *tamas* qualities, then this Lord of the body, feels that nothing is more desirable than action. Thus I have described to you the characteristics of the three qualities. Now listen carefully to the symptoms of the growth of these qualities.

11. *When in all the gates of the body, the light of knowledge shines forth, then one should know that sattva has increased.*
12. *Greed, activity, enterprise, restlessness and craving, these arise when rajas is on the increase, O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna).*

13. *Dullness and inaction as also negligence and delusion, these arise when tamas increases, O Joy of the Kurus (Arjuna).*
14. *If a person meets his death when sattva prevails, then he attains the spotless worlds of those who know the highest (entities).*
15. *Meeting his death in rajas, he is born among those attached to work, and the one absorbed in tamas is born in the dull species.*

When the *sattva* increases in the body, overpowering *rajas* and *tamas*, then the following are the characteristics of the embodied Self. Just as in the spring the lotus blooms and spreads its fragrance all around, so the light of his knowledge spreads outside, overflowing the interior (201-205). The discrimination remains watchful in all the sense organs and even the hands and feet acquire vision. Just as the swan decides which is milk and which is water, so the senses themselves decide what is proper and what is improper and sense-restraint becomes their servant. The ears avoid hearing what they ought not to hear, the eyes avoid seeing what they ought not to see, their tongue avoids speaking what ought not to be uttered. Just as darkness flees from light, so prohibited actions dare not stand before the senses (206-210). His intellect delves into all lores, as the river is flooded in the rainy season. Just as the light of the full moon floods the whole sky, so all knowledge spreads in his mind. All his desires wane, his predilection for activity ebbs and his mind abhors sensuous pleasures. If death intervenes when his *sattva* is on the increase he takes birth in an excellent body, as though a person has got a bumper harvest and has received as guests his forefathers on the festive occasion of their death anniversary (*shraddha*) day (211-215). If there be great riches in the house with generosity and courage of mind to match, would not such a person receive plaudits in this world and attain to heaven? If such a person who has a pure and spotless conduct, with his *sattva* on the increase dies, what would be his destination? If such a person leaves his body, the best seat of sensuous enjoyments, being endowed with the *sattva*, he becomes *sattva* incarnate and takes his next birth among men of knowledge. O archer, if a crowned king goes to the forest, does he suffer any want there (216-220)? O Arjuna, if the lamp is taken to another hamlet, it continues to be a lamp there and so when the *sattva* of a person becomes pure, his knowledge increases and his intellect floats on that knowledge. Then thinking over the order in which the world has sprung from the Great Principle, he becomes merged in the Self, along with his thought. When the *sattva* increases, he takes birth and assumes the best body in the family of those, who have got an access to the Self which is the thirty-seventh principle in *Vedanta* (13.5-6) or the twenty-fifth principle of the *Sankhayas* or the fourth which transcends the *gunas* (221-225).

In the same way, when the *rajas* increases, overpowering *sattva* and *tamas*, he runs riot in the terrain of the body, by his actions. Then he is possessed of the following characteristics. Just as when the whirlwind gathers all things from the earth and whirls them high in the sky, so he allows a free hand to the senses, to indulge in sensual pleasures. He does not think it against the scriptures to cast a lustful eye on another's wife and so his senses indulge freely in sensual enjoyments, as sheep graze wherever they want. His greed becomes so inordinate, that only things escape his clutches, which are beyond his reach (226-230). And he does not flinch from undertaking any business. He develops an extraordinary fancy to build a temple

or perform a horse sacrifice. He undertakes huge works, like establishing townships or constructing reservoirs or planting forests. But even then, his desires for happiness in this or the next work remain unfulfilled. His desires become so inordinate and intolerable, that even the sea accepts defeat or the burning power of the fire proves mild before it (231-235). His hopes and expectations gallop ahead of the mind and his desire remains unsatisfied, even if he traverses the whole world. Such signs make it known that his *rajas* quality is on the increase, and if he dies in this state, he enters a new human body and becomes endowed with the same characteristics. Does a beggar become a king, if he sits in a palace with all means of enjoyment at his beck and call? If a bull goes in a marriage procession of a rich person, he does not get anything better than *jowar-stalks* to eat (236-240). He therefore, finds himself after death in the company of men who are engrossed in worldly affairs day and night, without a moment's rest. In short, if a person dies after being drowned in the deep waters in the form of *rajas* i.e. tendencies, he takes birth in the family of a person, engrossed in actions.

When the *tamas* quality overpowers the *sattva* and *rajas*, and increases in a person, he displays the following characteristics. His mental state is like that of the sky on the dark night of the new moon day, when there is neither the sun nor moon to light it (241-245). His mind then becomes listless and dull, and he loses all interest in discriminating knowledge. The intellect loses its tenderness to such an extent, that it surpasses a stone in hardness and it appears as if he has lost memory. His body is full of thoughtless arrogance in and out and all his transactions are utterly foolish. The immoral actions which ought to prick his conscience (literally senses) come to an end only with his death. He takes great pleasure in doing wicked things, as an owl sees only at night (246-250). He has an extraordinary passion to do prohibited actions and his senses also run after them. He becomes intoxicated without being drunk, raves without being in delirium of high fever and becomes infatuated without love like a madman. He loses control over his mind, but this is not the state of *samadhi*, deep contemplation, because his mind has become hysterical on account of delusion. In short, these signs appear when the *tamas* quality waxes strong with all its paraphernalia. If he dies at this time, he takes his birth endowed with *tamas* (251-255). If a mustard seed is sown and grows into a plant after losing its form, what will it produce except mustard? Even though the fire becomes extinguished after lighting a lamp, whatever the lamp touches, catches fire. In the same way, whoever leaves his body carrying with him a bundle of desires imbued with *tamas*, his new birth also takes a form dominated by *tamas*. In short, if death comes when the *tamas* waxes strong, he is reborn as an animal, a bird, a tree or an insect.

16. *The fruit of a good action, they say, is good and spotless. But the fruit of rajas is pain, and ignorance is the fruit of tamas.*

For this reason it is stated in the *Vedas*, that whatever is produced by the *sattva* quality is a virtuous action (256-260). Therefore the unique fruits of happiness and knowledge are gained through pure *sattva* quality. All actions, which result from *rajas*, are pleasant to look at, like the *vrindavan (colocynth)* fruits, but they are full of pain. Just as the fruit of the *neem* tree looks fine, but has a bitter taste as that of poison, such is the fruit of *rajas*-ridden action. As poisonous roots produce only poisonous plants, so actions arising from *tamas*, yield fruits in the form of ignorance.

17. *From sattva arises knowledge, from rajas only greed and from tamas arise negligence, delusion and ignorance.*

Therefore, O Arjuna, the *sattva* is the cause of knowledge, as the sun is the cause of the day (261-265). Similarly, greed is caused by the *rajas* quality, as the forgetfulness of his non-dual nature causes the Supreme Self to be embodied. O wise Arjuna, the *tamas* quality gives rise to the three faults of delusion, ignorance and heedlessness. I have taught you separately the distinctive characteristics of these three qualities, so that you can discern them clearly like the *avala* fruit (*emblic myrobalam*), kept on an open palm. Out of the three, *rajas*, and *tamas* lead to a man's fall, while the *sattva* alone conduces to knowledge. It is for this reason, that some practise the *sattvic* states from their very birth, just as some prefer the fourth kind of devotion (accompanied by knowledge of the Self), to the other three kinds of devotion and follow it (266-270).

18. *Abiding in sattva they go upwards, those in rajas remain in the middle; and downward go those in tamas, abiding in the functions of the lowest quality.*

Those who follow the *sattvic* way with a happy mood, dwell in heaven after leaving the body. Similarly those who live and die following the *rajas* way, are born as human beings. There they have to eat in the same plate (in the form of the body), hotchpotch rice of mixed pulses and spices consisting of pleasure and pain and they cannot avoid death. Likewise, those who grow in the *tamas* quality, get a warrant of going to hell after death. Thus I have explained to you the three qualities along with their characteristic functions, under the superintendence of the Self (271-275). The Self, without undergoing any change, imitates the functions of the three *gunas*, which are its adjuncts. In a dream one becomes a king and wins a victory over or suffers defeat from an advancing army of his enemy, but in reality he has become all that himself. In the same way, the heaven, earth and the nether world are modifications of the *gunas*. In reality, if one sees what is beyond the *gunas*, one realises that all these modifications are essentially of the nature of the Self.

19. *When the seer perceives no agent other than the qualities and knows that which is higher than the qualities, he attains to My nature.*

Enough of this elaborate discussion. Bear in mind that there is naught except the Supreme Self. Now I shall tell you what I had narrated to you earlier. Know that all these three qualities assume the form of the body, acting under the authority of the Supreme Self (276-280). Just as the fire assumes the form of the firewood, which it burns or the earth and water are seen in the form of a tree, or milk when coagulated takes the form of curds, or sweetness appears in the form of the sugar-cane, so these three qualities assume the form of body along with the mind and lead to bondage. But, O archer, it is a marvel that this wide net of the *gunas* do not come in the way of liberation. These three *gunas* push the body to and fro according to their functions, but they do not cause any obstruction in your transcending them (281-285).

Now I shall tell you the nature of deliverance, as you are like a bee on the lotus, in the form of knowledge. I have already told you the ultimate truth that the conscious Self though abiding in the qualities, is devoid of qualities, and I am repeating it here. This, O Partha, one realises

only when one attains the knowledge of the Self. Just as one realises on waking up, that the dream was false, or one standing on the bank of a river, sees one's many reflections in the ripples of water, or an actor plays different roles with great skill but is not deceived thereby, so the embodied Self does not regard himself as possessed of *gunas*, but knows that he is their mere witness (286-290). Just as the sky does not change in the three seasons, so the Self, though united with the three *gunas*, remains in his self-existent nature, which is beyond them. But he always retains his original nature throughout, and when he realises this, he says 'I am not the agent of actions, but their mere witness and it is the *gunas* which determine and control all activity'. All actions result from the modifications of the three *gunas*; so they are all the products of *gunas*. I am related to the *gunas* in the same way, as the spring is to the beauty of the woods (291-295). Though with the sunrise the stars become dim, the sunstone sparkles, the lotuses bloom or the darkness is dispelled, the sun is not the cause of them. In the same way, although actions take place under My authority, I am not their agent, though I dwell in the body. The *gunas* become perceptible, as I display them and I support their power. I am that which remains behind, after their extinction. In this way, he who has attained this knowledge, has transcended the *gunas* and become *gunatita*.

20. *After transcending the three qualities, which are the cause of the body, the embodied Self enjoys immortality, freed from the miseries of birth, death and old age.*

Then he comes to realise unerringly, that *Brahman* is devoid of qualities. Now this knowledge has impressed its stamp on his mind (296-300). Just as, O Arjuna, the rivers join the sea, or the parrot leaves the tube and sits on the branch of a tree, free from delusion. So one who has transcended *gunas*, realises that he himself is *Brahman*. O wise Arjuna, he who was snoring loudly in slumber in the form of ignorance, is awakened now, to his essential nature. Since the mirror of delusion has dropped from his hand, he cannot now see his reflection in it. As with the stoppage of the wind, the waves become one with the sea, so with the loss of body-consciousness, the embodied Self becomes one with the Supreme Self (301-305). When this happens, he who has transcended the *gunas*, becomes united with Me. Just as the clouds become dissolved in the sky at the end of the rainy season, so after becoming one with Me, he does not get into the clutches of the *gunas*, although he is very much in the body. Just as a lamp kept in the glass-house spreads its light outside without obstruction, or the submarine fire does not get extinguished by the seawater, so his knowledge remains unaffected, even if the *gunas* come and go. He remains unconcerned in his body, as the moon remains in the sky, after being reflected in the mirror. These three *gunas* bring to bear their influence on the body and make it perform actions of diverse kinds, but he does not even look at them (306-310). He is so engrossed in his inner Self, that he is not conscious of the activities of his body. If a serpent casts away its slough and enters the nether region, who is there to take care of the discarded slough? The same is the case here. Just as the fragrance which has left the lotus, enters the sky and does not return to the lotus, so with the loss of body consciousness, he recognises his essential nature and is conscious of nothing else. Therefore the six qualities of body such as birth, old age and death remain in the body itself and do not affect the man of knowledge (311-315). When an earthen pot breaks into pieces, the space enclosed therein, merges automatically in the infinite space. In the same way, when the consciousness of the body goes, he becomes mindful of his innate nature and then what else could remain but

the Self? I call such a person who has attained to the knowledge of Self, as *gunatita* (i.e. one who has transcended the *gunas*). As the thunder of the cloud delights the peacock, so this speech of Lord Krishna, made Partha very happy.

Arjuna said:

21. *By what marks, O Lord is one (known) who has transcended the three gunas? How does he conduct himself and how does he overcome these three qualities?*

Then the heroic Arjuna said to Lord Krishna joyfully: What, O Lord, are the characteristics of a person, who has realised the Self (316-320)? How does one who has transcended the *gunas* behave and how does he go beyond the *gunas*? O Lord, you are the home of kindness, please explain all this to me. Now listen to the reply given by Shri Krishna, who is the Lord of the six virtues. He said: I am surprised at your question. If any conduct is ascribed to him, then his description as *gunatita* will prove inappropriate. One who has transcended the *gunas* is not subject to them. Even if he moves amidst them, he does not come under their clutches. But if your doubt is how to know whether such a person, who is always associated with the *gunas* is under their subjection or not (321-325), then you are welcome to ask about it. I shall tell you the distinguishing marks of such a person.

The blessed Lord said:

22. *(When) illumination, activity and delusion, O son of Pandu (Arjuna), are at work, he does not hate them nor does he crave for them when they cease.*

When the *rajas* quality waxes strong and the body produces sprouts of actions, and he is drawn into the worldly life, then he is not puffed up with the pride that he alone is the doer of the action, because of his riches or feels sorry, that he is not able to finish the work because of his poverty. When the *sattva* quality increases and knowledge spreads in all senses, he does not rejoice at his erudition, nor does he feel bad when the *tamas* increases and he is permeated by delusion (326-330). When he is under the influence of delusion, he does not wish for knowledge, nor does he give up work at the time of knowledge and become unhappy because of it. Just as the sun is not concerned with whether it is morning, noon or evening, so he does not pay any attention to the *gunas*. Is it possible that a person so enlightened will need some other knowledge? Does the sea require the rain to make it full? In the same way, how will he have the egoistic feeling that he is the doer of actions? Do the Himalayas shiver with cold because of snow? Tell me, can the summer however severe, scorch the fire? So will he lose his knowledge when he comes under the sway of delusion (331-335)?

23. *He who remains like one disinterested and is not moved by the gunas, and who, knowing that the gunas act, remains aloof and does not waver,*

Since he considers the *gunas* and their functions, as his own Self, he is not separated from them. He remains in the body in a disinterested spirit, just as a traveller breaks his journey on the way and stays in a rest-house. Just as the battle-ground is indifferent to the conqueror or the conquered, so he neither conquers the *gunas* nor is he overcome by them. Nor does he come under the sway of *gunas* and perform actions or get them performed through them. He remains as indifferent to events around him, like the *prana* in the body or a guest, who

has come to the house or the pole at a meeting place. O Arjuna, just as the *Meru* mountain does not deflect when assailed by the waves of the mirage, so he is not perturbed, by the movements of the *gunas* (336-340). Is the sky ever moved by wind or has the darkness ever swallowed the sun?

Just as a person wide-awake does not dream, so an enlightened person is not bound by the *gunas*. Without coming under the influence of the *gunas*, he sees their play as from a distance, like a spectator who sees the play of puppets. When his *sattvic* tendencies remain engaged in good actions, his *rajasic* tendencies in sensuous enjoyments and his *tamasic* tendencies in delusion, he knows that all these actions of the *gunas* take place under the power of his Self. The sun is a mere witness to all worldly affairs (341-345). The moon, because of whom, the sea gets its tides, the moonstone oozes and the white lilies bloom, remains inactive. The sky remains steady, even when the wind blows violently or remains lulled. In the same way, he does not become agitated, even if the *gunas* create a bustle. O Arjuna, in this way, I have told you the characteristics of a person who has transcended the *gunas*. Now I shall tell you what his conduct is like.

24. *And who remains self-poised, same in happiness and sorrow and same to a lump of clay, stone and gold, who remains firm and same to pleasant and unpleasant things and to censure and praise,*

O Arjuna, just as there is nothing except yarn in the cloth, so when he becomes one with Me, he sees nothing but Me in all the things, animate and inanimate. Just as God gives the same salvation to his devotees and enemies, so he treats equally pleasure and pain when they come his way, like the scales which are well balanced (346-350). He remains in the body like fish in water and experiences pleasure and pain. Now he has given up body-consciousness and become one with the Self. When the seed is sown in the ground, it grows and produces grain or the rattling noise of the river subsides, when it joins the sea. In the same way, when a person has become one with the Self, he is not affected by pleasure and pain, even though he remains in the body. Just as the day and night are the same to a pole, so pleasure and pain are the same to the Self in the body (351-355). Just as a man in sound sleep feels the contact with a serpent, as very much like the touch of the nymph *Urvashi*, so a person immersed in his essential nature treats equally, pleasure and pain which come to his share. So dung and gold seem alike to him and a jewel and a stone make no difference to him. Even if heaven visits him or the tiger assails him, his Self-hood is not disturbed. Just as a dead person does not become alive, or a roasted seed does not grow, so his equanimity is not disturbed. Whether he is praised as god *Brahma* or blamed as a base person, he remains unaffected like a mass of ashes, which can neither burn nor become extinguished (356-360). Praise or slander does not cause any pleasure or displeasure in him, in the same way, as there is neither darkness nor a lighted lamp in the Sun's abode.

25. *And who is the same in honour and dishonour, who is equable to a friend or a foe, and who has relinquished all undertakings, he is said to be one who has transcended the gunas.*

Even if he is worshipped as god or thrashed as a thief or is crowned as king with plenty of oxen and elephants, or is seated near friends or enemies, it is all the same to him. Just as the sun does not know day and night, or the sky remains unaffected in all the seasons, so his mind is not affected by adverse events. There is one more thing about him. He is never

seen taking part in worldly affairs (361-365), he does not start any work, his activity has come to a stop and the fruits of his actions have got burnt in the fire of knowledge. He does not brood over the sensuous pleasures in this or the next world and enjoys whatever fate brings him. He does not rejoice when he is happy nor does he become dejected with misery, as though he is a stone. So also his mind does not reject or accept anything. Know that he alone, has transcended the *gunas*, who conducts himself, in this manner. Now I shall tell you, what method one should follow to become a *gunatita* (366-370).

26. *And he who serves Me exclusively with Yoga of devotion, goes beyond these qualities and qualifies to become Brahman.*

He who is exclusively devoted to Me, can burn the *gunas*. I must now tell you what I am, how one should become devoted to Me and what are the characteristics of exclusive devotion. Just as a gem and its splendour, water and its liquidity, the sky and space, sugar and its sweetness are not different, or fire and its flame are the same or the petals make the lotus or the branches and fruits mean the tree (371-375), or just as cold and the vast sheets of snow constitutes the Himalaya mountains or coagulated milk becomes the curds, so what is known as the universe is Myself. It is not necessary to feel the phases of the moon to see them, or *ghee* remains the same in its frozen state, or the gold bangle remains gold even without melting it, or cloth, even without being torn, is yarn, or the earthen pot is clay without being broken into pieces, so it is not necessary to sublimate the phenomenal world to know Me, but to know Me along with it (376-380). If this devotion is offered to Me, by making a distinction between Myself and the universe, it becomes wanton. So know Me by an unswerving mind that I am not distinct from the universe, O Partha. As a speck of gold affixed to a gold ornament does not become distinct from it, so think yourself to be not different from the universe. Just as the rays of the sun have the same splendour and are not distinct from it, so let this notion of unity be fixed in your mind. Just as there is no difference between the earth particles and earth or the snow particles and the Himalayas, so see the universe as abiding in Me (381-385). Even the smallest wave is not different from the sea; so the Self is not distinct from God. If one attains this blissful state of vision of one's identity with God, it is the highest form of devotion. This vision is the quintessence of knowledge and Yoga. Just as the mutual relation between the sea and the cloud has a continuous flow, so his mental attitude remains the same. Just as there is no joint connecting the mouth of the well with the sky, similar is his oneness with the Supreme Self (386-390).

Just as the Sun's splendour remains the same from his disc upto the reflection, the idea that I am *Brahman* carries on the top and disappears when the mind identifies itself with the Supreme Self. Just as a piece of salt dissolves in the sea, or the fire becomes extinguished after the grass is burnt, so in the absence of a notion of distinction, knowledge also ceases to exist. The false notion that the devotee is on this shore and I am on the yonder shore (of the sea of existence) disappears and what remains is the eternal union between us (391-395). Then all talk about the conquest of *gunas* ceases, because the *gunas* also cease, when both of us unite in close embrace. In short, O discerning Arjuna, this is what is known as the *Brahmic* state. He who worships Me with devotion, alone attains to it. I would add that the *Brahmic* state weds my devotee, who is endowed with the above-mentioned characteristics. Just as the flowing water of the Ganga has no other destination but the sea, so whoever serves Me, with the vision

of knowledge, becomes a great devotee (literally a jewel in the diadem of the *Brahmic* state) (396-400). This *Brahmic* state is also known as the *sayujya mukti* (i.e. absorption of the Self in the Supreme Self or the fourth aim of human existence). My worship is the ladder by which you can reach Me. But do not think that I am different from the means of attaining Me. Do not entertain the idea that you are distinct from *Brahman*.

27. *For I am the embodiment of Brahman, immortal and immutable, and of the perennial Law and of absolute bliss.*

O son of *Pandu*, *Brahman* is my name and I am addressed by this word. Just as the moon is not different from its disc, so, O discerning Arjuna, there is no difference between *Brahman* and Me (401-405). This *Brahman* is eternal, immutable and vivid; it is righteousness incarnate and the giver of unique and unlimited bliss. I am the ultimate entity determined by the (*Vedanta*) doctrine, in which the knowledge becomes dissolved after fulfilling its function.

Thus spoke to heroic Arjuna, the Supreme Self, who is the friend of dedicated devotees. Then *Dhritarashtra* said to *Sanjaya*, "Why are you telling me all this without being asked? On this occasion, remove my anxiety by giving me the glad news of my son's victory. Give up all this worthless talk (406-410)." Hearing this *Sanjaya* was amazed and said to himself, "Alas! see the pranks of fate. The king is only feeling concerned about the war. May the Lord have mercy on him and destroy his malady of infatuation by giving him a dose of discriminating knowledge." When *Sanjaya* was thinking like this, he remembered the conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, and his mind was flooded with joy. He will, therefore, tell with great enthusiasm what the Lord said further. *Jnanadeva*, the disciple of *Nivrutti* says, "I shall impress upon your mind the substance of his talk, please give me your attention (410-415)."

