

The good, the bad, the ugly

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Categories : [The description of becoming and unbecoming dispositions \(ch.16\)](#)

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The 16th chapter discourse is called the *Devasura Sampatti*. The disposition of *devas* or divine and of *asuras* (termed 'evil' in the Judeo- Christian tradition although the Hindu tradition doesn't recognize 'evil') is broadly what it is about. Why is Krishna talking about these qualities? In the 5th verse, he says that *daivim sampattim* or the divine (dispositions) are conducive for *moksha*, and *asuric* qualities are the ones that keep a person in bondage.

Daivi sampadvimokshaya nibandhayasuri mata ||

Ma suchah sampadam daivim abijato' si pandava ||16.5||

Spiritual wealth is considered (to be) for freedom, (the wealth) of an asura, for bondage. Pandava (Arjuna!) Do not grieve. You are born to spiritual wealth.

It is like an upward and downward spiral. In the upward spiral, a person is very clear and pure in intention, steadfast in whatever he does, functions out of courage, is willing to share, has an idea of God and relates with God, knows how to manage emotions, and does not want to hurt people. This is the ascending spiral and, naturally, this person is on the spiral of growth. Eventually, when the person is exposed to this knowledge— *vedic* wisdom—everything falls into place because the knowledge is in harmony with one's mental make-up. Such a person also has balance and personal competency as we discussed in the second chapter and, therefore, this knowledge flows through in his daily life.

It looks black-and-white, but, remember, these are human emotions and every human being can have one or more of these qualities from either category. For example, a person can be honest and arrogant at the same time.

If a person has more of *asuric sampattis*, he is full of insatiable desires, full of himself, and believes his way is the only way. These people have a million desires and will not have a worry- free life as they don't have *karma-yoga buddhi*. They have too many irons in the fire and their lives are never free from worry and care. And what is the highest goal that such a person has? They usually do not care for anybody or anything other than for themselves and their own enjoyment, and sensuous enjoyment is what matters to them – to eat, drink, and be merry. This person is on a downward spiral where he is actually regressing.

In the 12th verse, Krishna says that such people are bound by hundreds of desires, are given to lust and anger, and will adopt any means to achieve what they want. These people may be successful in life, but their lives are full of worries and cares. For example, a person who evades taxes will naturally get the jitters when he hears from the tax authorities. They will be worried in spite of hiring teams of auditors and tax-consultants to look after their accounts. Such people come to me to seek solace but not spiritual growth, and what solace can I really give such people? There is no solution to their problems until they adopt healthier attitudes. Often, they are too pig-headedly stubborn to change and are intoxicated by their power and riches, and they forget that all control is an illusion and all their power can vanish in an instant. Sometimes they can be very hypocritical also. Of course, some people or organizations can benefit from such people because they will practice some charity for the sake of being known as charitable people. These are the people, Krishna informs us, on a downward spiral. In simpler terms, these are a person's negative qualities.

Remember, these are all human emotions. Therefore, he presents them in black-and-white as good and evil. The good qualities Krishna mentions in this chapter of *Bhagavad Gita* are (verses 1,2,and 3): a sense of

courage in life, a sense of purity of intentions, commitment to knowledge, self-restraint, acknowledging *Ishvara* or God in their lives, living a life of *ahimsa*, truth, control over their anger, fortitude, not egoistic. There are many people who have these qualities. And the negative (verses 10,11 and 12) qualities are: arrogance, conceit, full of desire, haughty, proud of their wealth and the power they can wield, aggressive, controlling. It looks black-and-white, but, remember, these are human emotions and every human being can have one or more of these qualities from either category. For example, a person can be honest and arrogant at the same time. In listing these qualities, Krishna is trying to make you understand and recognize the kind of disposition that is conducive for *moksha* and the one that is not, and the need to deal with and take care of those not conducive for *moksha*. Remember, this is the 16th chapter, and so he is merely fine-tuning all our emotions etc., to enable us to decide what to do and what not to do.

Summing up this chapter, Krishna says, *kama krodhah lobhah* are gateways to hell. *Kama* is also known as *trishna* in Sanskrit, it means 'excessive longing'...this kind of person says, 'I can't do without these things'. *Lobha* is 'greed'. This person is a bottomless pit, whatever he has is not enough. When a person has these two qualities, *krodhah* (anger) is not very far away. This person has a short fuse, and when a person has these qualities, the doors of hell open up. When a person masters and overcomes these qualities, the doors of heaven open up.

Swamiji, the word *kama* is also used in the context of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha*— the four *purusharthas*, the four essential human pursuits. Can you please explain ?

In the context of *purushartha*, it is a need to feel emotionally fulfilled and desires are included in it. But when it is used as a longing which one finds impossible to live without, it is a negative, an *asuric* quality.

I am reminded of a nice Japanese story. A samurai warrior went to a Zen monk and asked him, 'Can you show me the way to heaven and hell?'

'You are an idiot', the Zen monk replied.

The samurai immediately drew his sword to avenge this insult.

The monk smiled and said, 'The doors of hell are open to you right now.'

The samurai understood and sheathed the sword.

'The doors of heaven are open to you now,' the monk declared.

So that's what Krishna is trying to highlight here.

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