

# On the term *doṣa* in the *Bhagavadgītā*, V, 19

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The *Bhagavadgītā* (BhG), V, 19 runs as follows:

- ① ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeśāṃ sām̐ye sthitaṃ manaḥ/  
nir-doṣaṃ hi samaṃ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ// (BhG, V, 19)

This verse is translated by Radhakrishnan as follows:

- ① Even here (on earth) the created (world) is overcome by those whose mind is established in equality. God is flawless and the same in all. Therefore are these (persons) established in God. <sup>(1)</sup>

Except Radhakrishnan's translating "brahman" as "God," his translation of this verse seems quite adequate. However, in this paper, I would like to reexamine the meaning of the term "doṣa" in the compound "nir-doṣa" stated in this verse. In other words, I would like to raise a question whether the term "doṣa" really means "flaw" or "defect."

It is easy to understand that Radhakrishnan's translation is based on the commentary by Śaṅkara, whose comment on the compound "nir-doṣa" in the verse is as follows:

- ② nir-doṣaṃ yady api doṣavatsu śvapākādiṣu mūḍhais taddoṣair doṣavad iva vibhāvyaṭe tathāpi taddoṣair asprṣṭam iti/ nir-doṣaṃ doṣavarjitaṃ <sup>(2)</sup>
- ③ The term "nir-doṣa" is to be understood as follows: although brahman is, when it is in the defective (doṣavat) outcastes and so on, considered by the bewildered people to be defective by their defects [ i.e. the defects of the outcastes on so on], it is [in reality] not touched by their defects [even when it is in the defective outcastes and so on]. Therefore, brahman is defectless (flawless, nir-doṣa) and free from defects.

In this comment by Śaṅkara, the meaning of the compound "nir-doṣa" is

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interpreted by him in connection with the message of the preceding verse (BhG,V,18), which reads as follows:

③ vidyāvinayasampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini/  
śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ// (BhG,V,18)

© Sages see the equal(sama) in a learned and good Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste(śvapāka).

The term “sama” in the compound “ sama-darśin” in this verse is interpreted by Śāṅkara as meaning “ekam avikriyaṃ brahma,”<sup>(3)</sup> i.e. “the single changeless brahman.” This interpretation seems valid because, in the following verse (①), brahman is stated to be equal (samaṃ brahma).

Thus it seems clear that Śāṅkara’s interpretation of the compound “nir-doṣa,” stated in Passage ②, is based on his understanding that “śvapāka,” etc. are “doṣa-vat,” i.e. defective or contaminated. In other words, his central idea seems that brahman is equal( sama), because it is not contaminated even when it is in the contaminated beings.

However, I am not convinced of the validity of the interpretation by Śāṅkara. It goes without saying that the term “doṣa” in the compound “nir-doṣa” in question is considered by Śāṅkara as well as other scholars<sup>(4)</sup> to be a derivative noun from the verbal root “ √duṣ,” which means “to be corrupted” or “to be wrong.” However, I would like to examine the possibility to consider the term “doṣa” in the compound “nir-doṣa” to be a derivative noun from the verbal root “ √dviṣ” meaning “to hate.”

In other words, I would like to consider the possibility to understand that the term “doṣa” in question means in reality “dveṣa” or “hatred.” It is well known that the Pali word “dosa” and the Buddhist Sanskrit word “doṣa” correspond to “dveṣa” as well as to “doṣa” in Sanskrit.<sup>(5)</sup> Then, is it not possible to consider that, in BhG,V,19(①) also, the “doṣa” means “dveṣa” ?

Needless to say, it must be admitted that the *Bhagavadgītā* is written neither in Pali nor in Buddhist Sanskrit. However, de La Vallée Poussin wrote that “La confusion de *dviṣ* et de *duṣ* est fréquente,”<sup>(6)</sup> when he commented on the passage of the *Prasannapadā* where the meaning of the word “dveṣa,” mentioned alongside with “rāga” and “moha,” is explained by the sentence “dūṣaṇaṃ doṣaḥ--- dūṣyate vānena cittam iti doṣaḥ.”<sup>(7)</sup> If, as he wrote above, the confusion of “dveṣa” with “doṣa” is

so frequent, does it not seem possible to consider the meaning of the term “doṣa” in the compound “nir-doṣa” to be in reality “dveṣa”(hatred) rather than “doṣa”(defect) ?

The impetus for me to obtain such an interpretation was given by the following verses in the fifth chapter, i.e. the chapter on Medicinal Herbs (Oṣadhī-parivarta) of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* ( Kern ed.[K]):

④ svareṇa caikena vadāmi dharmam bodhiṃ nidānam kariyāna nityam/  
samaṃ hi etad viṣamatva nāsti na kaści vidveṣu na rāgu vidyate/(V,21)  
anunīyatā mahya na kācid asti premā ca doṣaś ca na me kahimcit/  
samaṃ ca dharmam pravādāmi dehinām yathaikasattvasya tathā  
parasya/(V,22) [K,128,7-10]

④ I preach the dharma with the same(eka) voice, constantly for the purpose of enlightenment(bodhi). For this is equal(sama), and inequality(viṣamatva) does not exist. There is neither hatred(vidveṣa) nor affection(rāga).

There is for me no attachment. I have neither love(preman) nor hatred(doṣa, i.e. dveṣa) towards anyone. I preach the equal(sama) dharma to [all] creatures(dehin),<sup>(8)</sup> to the one as well as the other.

Considering the correspondance of the terms, it seems quite definite that these verses have been formed under the influence of the following half-verse of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

⑤ samo 'haṃ sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo 'sti na priyaḥ/(BhG,IX,29ab)

⑤ I am equal(sama) in all beings.

Anyone is neither hated(dveṣya) nor loved(priya) by me.

It can be assumed that the terms “sama” “na me” “vidveṣa” “doṣa” and “preman” in Passage ④ of the Oṣadhī-parivarta are borrowed from the words “sama” “na me” dveṣya” and “priya” in Passage ⑤ of the *Bhagavadgītā*. If the assumption is correct, does it not follow that the term “doṣa” in the compound “nir-doṣa” in Passage ① (BhG,V,19), like the word “doṣa” in Passage ④ of the Oṣadhī-parivarta, means “dveṣa,” because, in Passage ① as well as in Passages ⑤ ④, the meaning of the word “sama” seems to be explained as the negation of “doṣa”, i.e. “hatred.”

The word “doṣa” in Passage ④ of the Oṣadhī-parivarta can be interpreted as meaning not “defect” but “hatred,” because the “doṣa” is stated there in contraposition with “preman” just as “dveṣya” is contrasted with “priya” in Passage ⑤, and because

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Tibetan translation of the term “doṣa” in Passage ④ is “sdañ ba “(P, chu,56b4), which means “hatred.”<sup>(9)</sup>

Moreover, it seems necessary to understand accurately the central message of the *Bhagavadgītā*, i.e. the message of “sama” or “sāmya.” In almost all cases, the meaning of “sama” is explained in the *Bhagavadgītā* as the negation of duality, which is called either “dvandva”(BhG,II,45;IV,22;V,3;VII,27;VII,28;XV,5) or “dvaidha”(BhG,V,25).

For example, in the word “sama-duḥkha-sukha” used thrice in the *Bhagavadgītā* (BhG,II,15;XII,13;XIV,24), the duality negated by the idea of “sama” is expressed by the words “duḥkha”(pain) and “sukha”(pleasure). Likewise, in the half-verse “sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau “(BhG,II,38ab) the duality is expressed by the terms “sukha” “duḥkha,” “lābha”(gain) “alābha”(loss), and “jaya”(victory) “ajaya”(defeat). The following is the list of the duality negated by the idea of “sama” in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

	A	B	C
BhG,II,15	sukha	duḥkha	sama
BhG,II,38	sukha	duḥkha	sama
	lābha	alābha	
	jaya	ajaya	
BhG,II,48	siddhi	asiddhi	sama
BhG,II,50	sukṛta	duṣkṛta	
BhG,II,56	sukha	duḥkha	
BhG,II,57	śubha	aśubha	
	abhinandati	dveṣṭi	
BhG,II,64	rāga	dveṣa	
BhG,III,18	kṛta	akṛta	
BhG,III,34	rāga	dveṣa	
BhG,III,37	kāma	krodha	
BhG,IV,22	siddhi	asiddhi	sama
BhG,V,3	kānṅṣati	dveṣṭi	
BhG,V,15	sukṛta	pāpa	
BhG,V,20	priya	apriya	
	prahṛṣyet	udvijet	

BhG,V,23	kāma	krodha	
BhG,V,26	kāma	krodha	
BhG,VI,9	bandhu	dveṣya	sama
	mitra	ari	
	sādhu	pāpa	
BhG,VII,27	icchā	dveṣa	
BhG,IX,29	priya	dveṣya	sama
BhG,XII,13	sukha	duḥkha	sama
BhG,XII,17	hṛṣyati	dveṣṭi	
	kāṅkṣati	śocati	
	śubha	aśubha	
BhG,XII,18	mitra	śatru	sama
	māna	apamāna	
	uṣṇa	śīta	
	sukha	duḥkha	
BhG,XII,19	stuti	nindā	tulya
BhG,XIII,9	iṣṭa	aniṣṭa	sama
BhG,XIV,24	sukha	duḥkha	sama
	priya	apriya	tulya
	saṃstuti	nindā	tulya
BhG,XIV,25	māna	apamāna	tulya
	mitra	ari	tulya
BhG,XVIII,23	rāga	dveṣa	
BhG,XVIII,51	rāga	dveṣa	
BhG,XVIII,54	kāṅkṣati	śocati	sama

In this list, the duality negated by the idea of “sama” is shown by the contraposition of the terms A and the terms B. The terms A express, for the most part, that which is desired by ordinary people or their mental activity towards it, while terms B express that which is hated by ordinary people or their mental activity towards it. In case the word “sama” or “tulya” is used in relation to the terms A and B, it is shown in space C.

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In this list, the duality of most importance for understanding the meaning of term “*doṣa*” in BhG,V,19(①) seems to be the duality of “*rāga*” and “*dveṣa*”, or that of “*priya*” and “*dveṣya*”( or “*apriya*), because, in BhG,V,20, which is the verse following BhG,V,19, the duality of “*priya*” and “*apriya*” is negated as follows:

⑥ *na prahr̥ṣyet priyaṃ prāpya nodvijet prāpya cāpriyam/*

*sthirabuddhir asaṃmūḍho brahmaivid brahmaṇi sthitaḥ//* (BhG,V,20)

① One should not rejoice on obtaining what is loved(*priya*) nor feel aversion on obtaining what is not loved(*apriya*)

He, who is of immovable understanding and is unbewildered, knows brahman and is established in brahman.

In this verse, the word “*apriya*” can be regarded as a synonym with the term “*dveṣya*” employed in BhG,IX,29ab(⑤), because the term is there stated in contra-position with the word “*priya*.” Therefore, in BhG,V,19(①) also, it seems possible to consider that the duality of “*priya*” and “*dveṣya*” or of “*preman*”( or “*rāga*) and “*dveṣa*” is negated by the idea of “*sama*,” which is expressed there by the words “*sama*” and “*nir-doṣa*.” Thus, it seems adequate to consider that the term “*doṣa*” in the compound “*nir-doṣa*” in BhG,V,19 (①) means nothing other than “*dveṣa*” i.e. “*hatred*.”

It must be admitted that the above-stated interpretation has a serious defect, because, in BhG,V,19 (①), the word actually used is not “*nir-dveṣa*” but “*nir-doṣa*,” and also because, in the manuscripts, the reading “*nirdveṣaṃ*” is not found as a variant reading of “*nirdoṣaṃ*” in BhG,V,19 (①).<sup>(10)</sup>

However, if at least it is admitted that the idea of “*sama*” is stated in BhG,V,19 (①), what significance can be found in stating that brahman, which is equal(*sama*), is flawless(*nir-doṣa*) ? Rather, is it not appropriate to consider that the term “*doṣa*” means “*dveṣa*” and that the duality of “*dveṣa*” and “*rāga*”(or “*preman*”) is negated there by the compound “*nir-doṣa*” ? Moreover, the term “*doṣa*”(flaw) does not seem to be used in relation to the idea of “*sama*” in the *Bhagavadgītā* (I,38;I,43;II,7;XIII,8;XVIII,48).

Of course, it might be objected that even if the term “*doṣa*” in question means “*dveṣa*,” because the compound “*nir-doṣa*” negates only “*dveṣa*” without negating the counterpart, i.e. “*rāga*” or “*preman*,” it does not follow that the duality is negated by the compound “*nir-doṣa*.” However, it is to be noted that “*dveṣa*” seems to be the most important word to express the concept of duality in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

There are five examples of “dveṣa” in the list above. Moreover, we can add to them three examples of “dveṣṭi” and two examples of “dveṣya.” Although, in the list, there are six examples of “suḥkha” and “duḥkha,” no verbal expression etymologically related to “sukha” and “duḥkha” are found there. In this sense, it seems adequate to understand that “dveṣa” “dveṣya” and “dveṣṭi” are the most important words to express the concept of duality negated by the idea of “sama.”

For example, in BhG,XII,13, where the duality of “sukha” and “duḥkha” is negated by the compound “sama-duḥkha-sukha,” an excellent yogin is described as “adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām ,” which means “he who does not hate any creatures.” Although, in this verse, the yogin is not described as “apretā sarvabhūtānām”(“he who does not love any creatures), it seems that the duality of “dveṣṭi”(hater) and “pretr”(lover) is negated there by the idea of “sama.” Therefore, I think, it is possible to understand that the duality of “dveṣa” and “preman” is negated in BhG,V,19(1) by merely stating the word “nir-doṣa.”

In conclusion, I would like to interpret the term “doṣa” in the compound “nir-doṣa” stated in BhG,V,19 as meaning “dveṣa,” i.e. “hated.”

- (1) Radhakrishnan S, *The Bhagavadgītā*, London, 1949, p.182.
- (2) *Śrībhagavadgītā Śrīsāṅkarabhāṣyasametā*, Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series, 34,p.89,II.20-23.
- (3) do.,p.89,I.14.
- (4) The translations of “nir-doṣa” by other scholars are as follows: “makellos”(Garbe R., *Die Bhagavadgītā*, Leipzig,1905,p.94), “sündlos”( Deussen P., *Vier Philosophische Texte des Mahābhāratam*, Leipzig, 1922,p.57), “without fault”( Hill W.D.P., *The Bhagavadgītā*, Oxford U.P. 1928,p.115), “flawless”(Edgerton F., *The Bhagavadgītā*, Harvard Oriental Series,Vol.38,1944,p.57), “without flaws”( van Buitenen J.A.B., *The Bhagavadgītā in the Mahābhārata*, The University of Chicago Press,1981,p.93).
- (5) Cf. Rhys Davids T.W. & Stede W., *Pali English Dictionary*, Pali Text Society, London, 1921-1925,pp.331-332; Edgerton F., *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, Vol.II: Dictionary, Yale University Press, 1953,p.272.
- (6) de La Vallée Poussin, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās de Nāgārjuna*, Bibliotheca Buddhica,

- (8) On the term *doṣa* in the *Bhagavadgītā*, V, 19 (Matsumoto)  
 IV, St-Petersburg,1903-1913,p.457,n.2.
- (7) do.,p.457,II.4-5.
- (8) It is to be noted that the term “dehin” seems to have been introduced from Hindu literature into Buddhist texts, because “dehin,” which means “that which has body(deha)”, i.e. “ātman,” is a quite popular term in BhG(II,13,II,22;II,30,II,59;III, 40;XIV,5;XIV,7;XIV,20;XVII,2). The term is used also in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*(V-4;V-7).  
 In Buddhist texts, it is noteworthy that “dehin” is used in the verses of Yogācāra literature, such as the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*(VIII,v.13;IX,v.37;IX,v.52;XIII,v.22;XV,v. 2;XVI, v.58;XVI,v.63) and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*(I,v.18;I,v.27;I,v.74;I,v.104;I,v.111;II, v.31).
- (9) It is not easy to identify how the term “doṣa” is translated in Chinese translation. In Dharmarakṣa’s translation, it seems that the reading 未常增惟 (大正 9,84b8) is to be amended to 未嘗憎嫉 shown as a variant reading in footnote 22. If this amendment is correct, 憎嫉 can be considered to correspond to the term “doṣa” in question. In Kumārajīva’s translation, on the other hand, 限碍 (大正 9,20a14) seems to correspond to the term “doṣa” in question. If the assumption is correct, Kumārajīva does not seem to have been able to understand that the term “doṣa” in question really means “dveṣa.”
- (10) Cf. Belvalkar S.K., *The Bhīṣmaparvan, Being the Sixth Book of the Mahābhārata, the Great Epic of India*, Poona, 1947,p.136.

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