

Baghawad Gita, Class 197:

Chapter 15 Summary

Continuing his teachings

Swamiji said, today

I will give you a summary of the fifteenth chapter of the Gita, which we completed in the last class. The 15th chapter, titled Purushottama yoga, is a very popular chapter. Many people learn it by-heart, because in

many places, people have to chant

it compulsorily to get food!! Therefore, many people learn it by-heart and some people learn it because it is one of the shortest

chapters, and therefore useful for regular parayanam and some people learn it because it is one of the most significant and complete chapters

of the Bhagavat Gita. This contains

all the important features of the Upanishads. The essence

of Upanishads is contained in this chapter and therefore this is a very significant

chapter. And for the convenience of

our summarization, I will divide the chapter into five portions and then

summarize each portion.

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The

first topic is samsara

varnanam, the

description of samsara

or transmigration.

□

The

second topic is moksha sadhanani, the

spiritual disciplines leading to liberation.

□
The
third topic is Brahman sarvamatkatvam,
Brahman being in the form of everything, Brahman as
everything.

□
Then
the fourth topic is Brahmanaha purushottamatvam,
Brahman being purushottama,

□
And
then the fifth and final topic is Brahma Gyana phalam; the
knowledge of such a
Brahman and the benefit of such knowledge.

These
are the five topics of this chapter. We will take one by one
and summarize each.

1. Samsara varnanam.

The
first topic is samsara
varnanam, which we
get in the first 2-1/2 verses. In this, Sri Krishna compares
the whole universe
to a huge Ashvatta tree, a
huge fig tree or peepal tree, because of the several common
features between
the tree and the universe. And Sri Krishna himself mentions
several common
features between the tree and the whole universe; but I do not
want to go to into
those details. I have enumerated several common features. And
among several
common features, there is one significant feature, we have to

note and

remember. And Sri Krishna has not mentioned that feature in the 15th chapter

but we have to borrow that from the Upanishads, because this comparison is not Sri

Krishna's own invention but it is borrowed from two Upanishads. One is Kathopanishad and other is Mundako Upanishad where this comparison is elaborately given.

There

is a Kathopanishad mantra, from which Sri Krishna has borrowed this imagery.

Also

the same comparison comes in Mundaka Upanishad as well.

In Kathopanishad, the tree is called Ashvatta vrksha, and in Mundakopanishad, it is called pippalam; Ashvatta and pippalam means the same. In the Mundakopanishad, all the living beings are compared to the birds, which are seated or perched on the samsara tree. If the whole universe is comparable to a tree, all the living beings are comparable to the birds, which are seated on different branches of the tree, higher, lower and middle branches. And not only we are the birds seated on the samsara tree, we are constantly consuming the fruits which comes in the samsara vrksha and therefore the jiva bird is eating the fruit which comes in the samsara tree. And those fruits produced by the samsara tree, are of two types, and one is called sukha phalam and another is called dukha phalam, the fruit of pleasure and the fruit of pain. One is tasty fruit; another is a bitter fruit. And therefore through this imagery, Sri Krishna points out that the universe is going to constantly give us pleasures and pain. Even as the tree produces tasty and bitter fruits, the world will constantly produce pleasures and pains and as birds, we the jivas, will also have to constantly experience pleasure and pain. Which means nobody can uniformly expect pleasures, nobody need worry about uniform pain as well; life will give you a mixture of

pleasure and pain. **And therefore pleasures and pains are like the two sides of one coin; you can never have one alone; just as a one-sided coin is impossible; mere pleasures also are impossible; mere pain also does not exist.**

And
therefore in life, we have only two options.

Welcome the pleasures and be ready to consume the attendant pains as well, are first option.

And
the second option is to reject all the pains but along with the pains, you have
reject or forego the worldly pleasures as well. Either accept both or reject
both.

The
idea of welcoming one alone and giving up the other is simply
is not
impossible.

So
accept both or reject both.

But
the problem is if we have to accept both or reject both options it requires tremendous
mental strength.

Because
when you are accepting both, you should have the mental strength to withstand
the pain. When you reject both; you should have the mental strength to give up
the worldly pleasures. Both require mental strength.

And the problem of human being is, he is weak in his mind. The

problem is not with the world; the problem of the human being is, he is weak in mind and therefore neither is he able to accept both nor is he able to reject both. Sometimes he feels like accepting everything, so that he can enjoy a wonderful life; and when the pains also come, then he says, Swamiji, I want to run, leaving everything. When he runs away to a quiet place, he cannot stay there for more than a week. That then becomes a miserable life; then he feels coming to the city and living with everything is wonderful. **When in Chennai, Rishikesh seems to be wonderful and while in Rishikesh, Chennai seems to be wonderful. Problem is neither with Rishikesh nor with Chennai, the problem is inside us.**

And

therefore samsara is because

of the mental weakness of the human being, because of which he is neither able

to accept both pleasures and pain, nor is he able to renounce both pleasure and

pain. Neither he is able to take to grihastha ashrama nor is he able to take to sanyasa ashrama. In

Grihasthshrama, sanyasa ashrama seems better,

and in sanyasa ashrama, grihastha

ashrama seems the

best.

The problem is not with the ashrama; the problem is inside us.

And therefore the solution is not changing the world, because the nature of the world is that it is a mixture of pleasure and pain. Therefore the solution is removing the weakness from the mind by gathering and collecting inner strength. Once I gather inner strength; I can choose any of the option; I will have the strength to give up both; or I will have the strength to accept both; I will be able to remain in Grihastha ashrama or I will be able to remain in Sanyasa ashrama; I will be able to remain in an active life or I will be able to remain in a secluded life. So secluded life is also not better;

active life is also not better; problem is neither with activity nor with seclusion; the problem is with the mind; and therefore freedom from samsara is freedom from mental weakness. Therefore moksha is transformation of the mind. Mind alone is the cause of bondage; mind alone is the cause of liberation.

The weak mind

is the cause of bondage; strong mind is the cause of liberation. So this idea

is indirectly conveyed through samsara varnanam, in the first two and half verses of this chapter.

2. Moksha sadhanani.

Then

comes the second topic from the second half of the third verse up to the 6th

verse. Verse No.3 to verse No.6, is the next topic. How do you make the mind strong?

What is the method of strengthening the mind, so that I can be in grihastha ashrama and enjoy

the pleasures of the family members and also the problems caused by

relationship. Every relationship has two sides. Either I can give up all relationships

and take sanyasa or enjoy all

relationships. Sri Krishna prescribes four fold disciplines to strengthen the mind.

Four sadhanas are

mentioned: They are:

1.Vairagyam.

2.

Sadgunaha;

3.

Sharanaagathihi and

4.

Atma vichara or Shastra vichara

What

do you mean by vairagyam?

Vairagyam is freedom from addiction. Freedom from addiction to tamasic

and rajasic pursuits of life. What do you mean by tamasic pursuits? Any

adharmic activity, unrighteous activity, improper activity, unethical activity or

pursuit is called tamasic pursuit; I have to give up all such addictions and

pursuits of improper nature. That is de-addiction No.1.

And the second de-addiction is from rajasic pursuits. And that is dharmic materialistic activities are called rajasic pursuits. I take to dharmic activities only but they are all materialistic in nature. They are called rajasic pursuit. The tamasic addiction will lead to spiritual downfall, rajasic addiction will lead to spiritual stagnation.

And therefore

reduction of the adharmic activities and the reduction of dharmic materialistic

activities is called vairagyam.

And how do you remove those two addictions; or at least reduce those two addictions. The method is forming a new addiction. You have to remove one thorn using another thorn.

Remove

addiction with addiction. **Tamasic and**

rajasic tendencies are balanced, or reduced by forming satvic

addictions; like attending Gita class; I have to make sure that you keep coming. So, therefore, satvic addiction

or good addiction will reduce tamasic and rajasic addiction.

Then

you will ask Swamiji how to handle satvic addiction. Let satvic addiction come first; why are you bothered about handling that now; we will see that when we face that problem.

We do have methods of handling satvic addictions also later and therefore, satsanga as well as Shastric study, etc. are satvic addictions, which will promote vairagyam.

Satsangatve, nissangatvam. This is Vairagyam.

The

second **sadhana is sadgunaha**. Developing vedanta friendly virtues. Developing virtues, which are conducive to Vedanta, conducive to

spiritual growth. We have already seen a big list in the 13th chapter, from the

8th verse up to the 12th verse, Amanitvam, adambitvam, etc. Sri Krishna reminds us of them in this chapter.

Thus

develop healthy virtues. Thus developing moral values is the second spiritual discipline.

Then

the third one is sharanagathi. What is sharanagathi? It is a very important spiritual discipline. It is developing a particular attitude in life.

What

is that attitude? Whatever choiceless situations, I face in life; whatever

helpless, choiceless situations I face in life, they are all specially sent by

the Lord for me, for the sake of my spiritual refinement and growth. It is a very

difficult attitude but we have to cultivate it. It will not come easily. You will only get angry with God whenever a choiceless situation comes, especially unfavourable choiceless situation. When any unfavourable choiceless situation comes, I cannot change the situation. Swamiji how to change the choiceless situation? I have said that it is choiceless; since **choiceless situations cannot be changed; work on changing your attitude. Intelligence is working to change what can be changed.**

Therefore in all choiceless and unfavourable situations, I have to work on 'my mind', because I can work only on my mind only. And what is the direction of the work? Changing the attitude. And what is the attitude? I require that situation for my improvement and the Lord has specially designed it and he has sent it to me. This is a very, very, difficult attitude. If you can develop that attitude, it is called sharanagathi. This is the third sadhana.

And sharanagathi includes, seeking Lord's help for the spiritual growth, so that I will convert the choiceless situations into a spiritual ladder. **Seeking Lord's help so that I will convert choiceless situations into a spiritual ladder or stepping-stone.**

This is called sharanagathi.

Vairagyam, sharanagathi and sadguna are all over.

Then the fourth one is shastra vichara or study of Vedantic scriptures for a length of time under the guidance of a competent acharya or guru. All these four will cumulatively contribute to the reinforcement of the strengthening of the mind, which will lead to moksha. Moksha means freedom from mental weakness.

Arjuna, the bravest warrior, was tormented by mental pain when a crisis arose. And how does this work with the four-fold sadhana's? That also Sri Krishna says the four-fold sadhana's will lead you to Brahma prapthi. It will take you to Brahman, which is the only source of strength in the creation. It will lead you to Brahman, which is the only source of strength in this universe.

And of course you should make a note, when we say that it will lead you to Brahman, do not imagine, Brahman is sitting in Mumbai, Calcutta or somewhere, and the sadhana will lead you to Brahman, which is your inner higher real nature. You will fall back to yourselves. This Brahma prapthi is called moksha.

And then Sri Krishna defines that Brahman also in an important verse #15.6.

It is a very important definition of Brahman based on the upanishadic mantra, occurring in Kathopanishad and Mundakopanishad. Sri Krishna points out that Brahman **is nothing but the pure consciousness, which is a formless and all pervading entity; which objectifies everything and which itself cannot be objectified by anyone.** It is an unobjectifiable-subject. That consciousness; that witness chaitanyam is Brahman; Satyam, Gyanam, Anantham Brahma.

3.
Brahmana sarvatmakatvam.

Now we will go to the third topic, from verse No.7 to 15 and in this Sri Krishna points out that Brahman alone appears or

manifests in the form of the world. There is no world other than Brahman. Brahman is the only substance. Consciousness is the only basic substance. There is no such thing called matter. And this Brahman, this consciousness alone with different names and forms appears as the material universe. Consciousness plus names and forms is equal to space. Consciousness plus name and form is equal to air. Consciousness plus name and form is fire, akasha, vayu, agni, apaha, prthvi and all the elemental products.

Are

you understanding? So if you think that there is a substance called ornament,

it is a delusion; there is no substance called ornament, the substance is only

gold; we are wrongly attributing substantiality to ornament.

We are wrongly

attributing substantiality to the furniture. Furnitures are not there; then

what is there; wood; This, the wooden headed fellow does not understand. Clay

headed fellow does not understand that the clay is the truth.

Wooden headed

does not understand that the wood is the truth. Similarly Vedanta says that

there is only one substance called Consciousness; the formless Consciousness

manifests as the formed materials of the creation. The intangible consciousness

manifests as the tangible material universe.

And

here also the whole world is nama

rupa, but in this

nama rupa also, there

are two varieties. One variety of nama rupa is that which manifests the

existence-nature of Brahman. But, that nama rupa, is not able to manifest the chit aspect and therefore that part of the creation exists but it is only inert in nature.

But there is another set of nama rupa, which is able to manifest, not only the existence, the sat nature, but also it is able to manifest the chit or consciousness nature as well. Like the physical body it manifests Brahman's existence as well as consciousness. Here Sat and Chit, both are visible outside. Thus, when you look at this mike it's existence you are able to appreciate; but consciousness, it is not able to manifest.

To give another example, let us say, you heat a piece of metal and a glass of water. The heat principle, the fire principle will pervade the metal, the fire principle will pervade the water as well, when it comes in contact with fire.

We know the fire has got two attributes; heat and light; it has got ushnatvam and prakashatvam; the fire pervades the metal also; the fire pervades the water also. But you find, interestingly, the metal, because of the contact with fire, borrows the heat from the fire. Therefore the metal becomes hot; if you have doubt, touch and see. And not only the metal borrows the heat, the metal

becomes bright as well,
shining, with a red-hot glow. Therefore metal manifests
ushnatvam and
prakashatvam of the
fire.

Whereas

water when it comes in contact with fire, it borrows only the
heat part of the fire,
water never becomes bright. It does not borrow the light. Both
are materials;
but one is capable of borrowing only one feature, the other is
capable of
borrowing two features.

Similarly, in the universe, some part will borrow the sat
amsha while another part borrows both the sat and the chit
amsha's. Thus, wherever sat and chit are there; it is called
sentient part of the universe, but wherever sat alone is
manifest, it is called insentient universe. **Thus Brahman is
manifest in the universe in the form of sat in some portions
and in the form of sat and chit in some; and when the chit is
manifest in some portion, it is called the jiva. while when
sat alone is manifest, it is called jagat.** Thus Brahman alone
is in the form of the insentient jagat; Brahman alone is also
in the form of sentient jiva as well. Thus Brahman is
everywhere.

And

Sri Krishna concludes that portion saying when Brahman is
manifest in this
whole creation, just as gold is manifest in all ornaments,
Brahman is also
manifest. If a person misses this Brahman, which is evident
everywhere, that
person must be a very gross and unrefined person. Like looking
at the ornaments
and missing the gold.

It is like looking at the electrical gadgets and missing the electricity. Similarly looking at all human beings, I miss the consciousness in everyone, My capacity to talk is an expression of the consciousness principle and your capacity to hear is an expression of consciousness principle; minus consciousness, I cannot talk and you cannot hear. And if a person misses this consciousness it is a problem. And for a person who has prepared the mind; Brahman is appreciated everywhere. So, this is the third topic: Brahman being chetana-achetana prapancha or sarvatmakatvam.

4.

Brahmana purushottamatvam.

Then

the 4th topic from the 16th to 18th verse is Brahmana purushottamatvam; Brahman being purushottama. And to convey this idea, Sri Krishna divides the whole universe into three parts; three components.

First

part is manifest matter; the material universe which is manifest; manifest meaning visible to the sense organs.

Second

part is unmanifest matter; that matter which is not sensorily perceptible or tangible. You can call it energy. We will use the word unmanifest matter.

Third

part: And then beyond these two matter and energy, there is the third part, which is the all-pervading consciousness principle, which is a distinct entity;

which alone, we called in Tatva bodha, the original consciousness or OC.

It

is not part of matter; it is not product of matter,

it

is not property of matter, but it is an independent entity.

The first one is

called kshara purusha, the second

one is called akshara purusha and the third

one is called uttama purusha.

And

Sri Krishna says, of these three factors, the third one; consciousness alone is

the greatest principle. It is the highest principle. The word uttama means the greatest.

Why

greatest? Because, matter cannot exist independent of consciousness; whereas,

consciousness can exist independent of matter. Consciousness alone lends

existence to the matter. Therefore, Kshara purusha and akshara purusha both are inferior. When I say

matter, it includes the reflected consciousness as well. Even if I do not say,

include it. RC is also included in Kshara purusha. And akshara purusha is also RC.

Just take it that, as matter is inferior, OC the original consciousness is uttamaha purusha. And this uttama purusha alone is reversed and called purushottama.

And

Sri Krishna says that uttama purusha or purushottama is My real and higher nature;

which was called in the 7th chapter, as Para prakrti. The
uttama purusha of the 15th
chapter is the para prakrithi of the 7th chapter. Therefore
Arjuna: real God is
formless consciousness and that God is not located in any one
place. That
formless, intangible consciousness, which is the real God, is
all pervading.
Thus all the forms attributed to God in the religious
scriptures are
temporarily given as a stepping-stone to go to the formless
god. From the form,
you go to the formless. Form is the steppingstone to the
formless one.

Every
person, in the beginning, is not capable of appreciating the
formless God. The attributeless
God, everybody cannot understand. For them you give a support
in the Rama form,
Krishna form, and that is why we have no quarrel with any form
that you choose
as a Ishta devatha; you
can choose any form, but form is only a steppingstone, the
destination is not
form. Destination is the formless. And when you reach the
destination,
formless-Vishnu is identical
with formless Shiva, who is identical with formless Krishna,
who is identical with
formless Rama. Why do you quarrel saying that I am Shaiva; I
am Vaishnava etc.
Religious quarrel is meaningless if religion is understood
properly. That is
why somebody said that we have enough religion for quarrel; we
do not have enough
religion to live harmoniously, because it is not understood.

Thus,
the formless purushottama
is the real Sri Krishna,

So
this is the purushottama topic. A
very important because of which the chapter is called
purushottama yoga.

5.
Brahma Gyanam.

Then
the last topic ends with verses, 19 and 20 and Sri Krishna
talks about Brahma
Gyanam.

O Arjuna, everyone has to attain this Brahma Gyanam to derive
mental strength, so that you can live a life of a grihastha or
you can live a life of sanyasi, without any burden. Therefore
Gyanam is the destination of all; and the benefit of this
Gyanam is that you will attain total fulfillment in life. You
will feel that the life has been a meaningful one. To make the
life meaningful, you have to attain this Gyanam. With this
Gyanam and phalam, the fifth and final topic of the 15th
chapter is over.

Thus
ends the fifteenth chapter named Purushottama Yoga in Srimad-
bhagavadgita which
is the essence of the Upanishads,
which deals with Brahman-knowledge as well as the preparatory
disciplines, and
which is in the form of a dialogue between Sri Krishna and
Arjuna.

Take Away:

And

therefore pleasures and pains are like the two sides of one coin; you can never have one alone; just as a one-sided coin is impossible; mere pleasures also are impossible; mere pain also does not exist.

When

in Chennai, Rishikesh seems to be wonderful; while in Rishikesh, Chennai seems to be wonderful. Problem is neither with Rishikesh nor with Chennai, the problem is inside us.

And

therefore the solution is not changing the world, because the nature of the world is that it is a mixture of pleasure and pain. Therefore the solution is removing the weakness from the mind by gathering and collecting inner strength

So

secluded life is also not better; active life is also not better; problem is neither with activity nor with seclusion; the problem is with the mind; and therefore freedom from samsara is freedom from mental weakness. Therefore moksha is transformation of the mind. Mind alone is the cause of bondage, mind alone is the cause of liberation.

The

weak mind is the cause of bondage; strong mind is the cause of liberation.

Reduction

of the adharmic activities and the reduction of dharmic materialistic

activities is called vairagyam.

Seeking Lord's help so that I will convert choiceless situations into a spiritual ladder or stepping-stone is called sharanagathi.

**With Best
Wishes,**

Ram Ramaswamy