

Prasna Upanishad, Class 2

Greetings All,

Swamiji continued his talks on Prasna Upanishad.

Shloka # 1: Refreshing our memory on Shloka 1, he says, this Upanishad begins with an introduction of Guru and Shishyas. It is similar to other Upanishads. The six qualified students are named and described. The way they were qualified is as follows:

1. They were committed to worship of Saguna Brahma Upasana.
2. They have gone through Karma Kanda and Upasana Kanda. They have Sadhana Chatushtiya Sampathi. (From Tatvabodha they are: Vivekaha – discrimination, Vairaḡyam – dispassion, Mumukshutvam – desire and Shatka Sampattihi – discipline.)
3. They are established in Saguna Brahman.
4. They are Nishtaha or grounded. They are followers of Vaidic Margaha.

It takes some time to develop Shraddha in Vedanta. However, as one follows Karma Kanda and Upasana Kanda, by the time they reach Vedanta, the student develops strong Shraddha.

What is the purpose of their visit to the Guru?

They are seeking Param Brahman. They understand the limitations of Saguna Brahman. They are not satisfied with this knowledge.

Why was Pippiladaha chosen as the teacher?

He was Bhagwan Pippiladaha. Bhagwan is one who has knowledge of all Shastras. He also has superb communications skills.

How did they approach their teacher?

They approached with humility and respect to the teacher. Serving the teacher is not serving the person rather it is serving Shastram. Shastri puja is same as Shastram puja. They approached teacher with some offering as well. Swamiji says, usually fruits, nuts, fuel etc. are considered normal offerings. They approached the teacher as if he was the Lord in a temple.

What is their motive?

They wanted Pippiladaha to teach them everything. So they approached with respect and a proper attitude.

Shloka # 2:

Seeing them and their approach Pippiladaha knew their qualifications. He tells them: All of you must stay here for one year. Even after that there is no assurance that you will get an answer to your questions.

In ancient times teachers were hesitant to give answers. Teachers were not sure how casual the student was. Unless the student was sincere the teaching would not go in. Many tests were given to students. Also Teacher had to know if student was qualified or if they were lacking in any area such as intelligence, industry, shradha etc. The one-year was also important to develop rapport between teacher and student. Thus a loving relationship was developed.

Pippiladaha tells them "You should live in the ashram for a year. You should live a life of Tapas, Penance and Brahmacharya. Swamiji says comfort and knowledge do not go together. Brahmacharya meant giving up comfort while maintaining Shraddha. Sanyasa means detachment from everything.

Illustrating the concept of sanyasa, Swamiji narrated story of a student who was asked to leave the ashram suddenly in the middle of the night. The student did not know what to do. He

was lost as to why he was thrown out. He wandered around from village to village seeking food and shelter. After a few days the Teacher sent some students to call him back. The student asked the teacher why he was thrown out to begin with. The teacher told him that he saw the student was getting attached to the Ashram. He wanted the student to maintain his detachment even in Ashram. To teach him this lesson, he was thrown out.

Shloka # 3:

After one year of tapas and brahmacharya Pippiladaha allowed the students to raise their questions. The first one to go was Kabandhi Katyayana. They were called in reverse order as named in shloka #1.

Kabandhi asked: Bhagwan, from what source are all these living beings coming up or originating? Or, how did creation occur?

The teacher Pippiladaha answered by introducing Hiranyagarbha. He says, Ishwara created Hiranyagarbha also known as Brahma. Brahma in turn created the creation. Vishnu taught Brahma how to create. Kama is the force behind creation. Thus, after Brahma performed tapas on Ishwara, Lord gave him knowledge. Tapas here meant he was given the ability to visualize the previous Srishti or Creation. The creatures are created based upon their respective Karmas. Thus came the creation

Bagawat Geeta, Class 4

Greetings All,

Gita, Chapter # 1:

Swamiji started his talks on the Gita today. He says: Chapter

1 is an introduction to the Gita. It is a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. The main theme of Gita starts at Verse #11, chapter 2. Even Shankaracharya's commentaries start from this point. The introduction in chapter 1 however is very important. It serves two purposes.

First purpose is to present the basic human problem known as Samsara. This problem is a universal one irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion and sex. It is also a problem that occurs at any time in history. We also face similar problems as Arjuna did and future generations will also face the same. The presentation of Samsara Rogaha is the basis of chapter 1. The other 17 Chapters of Gita are dedicated to specifying remedies to this problem and is also called Moksha Shastraha. Unless we know the disease we cannot appreciate the remedy.

Second Purpose:

Is to introduce the Guru and Shishya whose whole dialogue is the Gita.

Discussing Samsara Varnanam, Swamiji says, the diagnosis of a disease can vary from doctor to doctor. Similarly, different scriptures have different diagnosis of this problem. Our scriptures diagnose that this Samsara disease is in reality three diseases. They are: Ragaha. Shokhaha and Mohaha.

Ragaha: is the emotional and psychological attachment we have. Love is glorified in our scriptures while attachment is not. Vedanta is for Love but not for Attachment.

Elaborating on Love versus Attachment, Swamiji says:

- Attachment is based on selfishness. What do I get out of this relationship? What the other person gets is not in our mind. This selfish dependence is Ragaha. Love is based upon Selflessness. Here, I am not only interested in what I get, but I am also interested in what the

other person gets.

- Attachment is always a form of Taking. Love is always a form of Giving.
- Attachment is always conditional. So long as it helps me, I stay in the relationship. Love is not based on condition. It is unconditional.
- Attachment comes from a weak mind. Love does not come from weakness; rather it comes out of strength.
- In attachment, intellect is clouded and violation of Dharma occurs. In Love, intellect is always clear, thus there cannot be any violation of Dharma.
- Love is freedom. Attachment is bondage.

Shokhaha:

Attachment leads to shokaha. When the attached person leaves there is sorrow. When the object of dependence goes away there is sorrow. Swamiji says, it is a psychological crutch,

The object of attachment (person, object etc.) is always impermanent. At any time I may lose them. How can one prepare for this situation is the question raised by Vedanta? The Psychological depression caused is due to loss of the attached person or thing. Preparation for this has to be done well ahead of time. This preparation should be done when you are still in good health and well situated. Be far sighted, advises Swamiji.

Mohaha:

Mohaha is delusion. When Ragaha and Shokaha are there it clouds the intellect. Clouded intellect takes decisions that are wrong ones. This will usually lead to Adhrama. We may think we are making the right decision, while we are in fact making wrong ones. This then leads to the Ragaha>Shokhaha>Mohaha cycle. This is the human suffering or Samsara. How to get psychological independence is the question of Mokshaha?

Context: The Mahabharata war is between Pandavas (dharmic) and

Kauravas (Adharmic). Pandavas wanted to avoid war. They tried Sama, Dana, and Bheda without success. As per our scriptures, Ahimsa is wrong. Ahimsa is a conditional value. So, as a last resort, they took to war. Scriptures allow Ahimsa under certain conditions. It is like a Doctor performing amputation of a limb when the medicine did not work. Similarly in society when Adhrama occurs, a Kshatriya may take to violence if non-violent methods did not work.

When both armies are face to face, Arjuna wants to survey the two armies. The people he sees in front are Bhishma and Drona, to both of whom Arjuna is attached. His thinking becomes clouded due to this attachment. After 13 years in exile and thinking about this he came to the conclusion that he had to fight a dharmic war. Once decided, a Kshatriya does not run from war or renounce and run away from his family. Arjuna sees his original Dharma Yudha now as an Adharma Yudha. Thus, Arjuna has Ragaha that is leading to Shokhaha and further leading to Mohaha. Arjuna realizes his dilemma and turns to Krishna for his guidance. Thus Arjuna realizes or discovers the problem.

Shloka # 1:

Kauravas army is larger with many great warriors on their side. Pandavas though weaker have Lord Krishna on their side. Drithrashtra, the blind parent of Kauravas, asks Sanjaya to describe the scene at war. His inward blindness is also a metaphor for attachment. Sanjaya is given a special power of being able to see what is beyond or tele-vision. Vyasa blessed Sanjaya with this power.

Shloka # 2:

Seeing the well organized and arranged (vyuham) army of Pandavas Duryodhana approached his Acharya, Drona, his Guru in warfare and addressed him as follows:

Shloka # 3:

Duryodhana says: O Acharya you may see the huge army of Pandavas. Drishtadyumna, son of Drupada, heads them. Your clever and cunning disciple has assembled this army and is trying to destroy me. Swamiji says Drishtadyumna was destined to kill Drona. Drona was also aware that Drishtadyumna would come after him. Nevertheless, so long as Drishtadyumna was a qualified student, Drona could not refuse him as a student.

Suggested Practice:

The difference between attachment and love is an important concept. We should all consider approaching all our relationships especially with our close ones more with Love rather than with attachment.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 3

Greetings All,

Swamiji continued with his discussion of the invocation prayer called Gitagyana Shloka. Madhusudhana Saraswathi wrote this Shloka. While this shloka was not originally a part of Gita, it is now accepted as one. The Gitagyana Shloka has nine verses. In these Shlokas we are offering namaskara to: Bharathi, Gita/ Saraswathi, Vyasa and Lord Krishna.

Expanding on the Shlokas related to Lord Krishna, Swamiji says:

Shloka # 3:

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This shola is a namaskara to Sri Krishna. Parijata is a mythical tree in heaven. If one stands under this tree and wishes for something, the tree grants that wish. It is also known as wish yielding tree. Here, Sri Krishna, is compared to the Parijatha tree. Any desire related to Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. he grants, to one who surrenders to him.

Sri Krishna, here is in the role of a charioteer to Arjuna. He does not consider his work as one without dignity. Preaching dignity of labor, Swamiji says Bhagwan did not feel inferior as a charioteer. Do your work with a good attitude and enthusiasm exhorts Swamiji.

Sri Krishna was the greatest Gyani, reflected in his Chin mudra, the mudra of gyanam. Chin mudra indicates Jivatma and Paramatma Aikyam. It is a threatening finger. This jeevatma is associated with the three fingers. They represent the three Gunas (Rajas, Tamas and Satva) and the three Sharirams (Karana, Sukshma and Sthula). All of them are associated with the perishable body. The thumb represents Paramatama. Only with the thumb can all other fingers function. So also Paramatma is the aadhara, or basis, for the whole creation. JIvatma should get freed from matter and join Paramatma.

The circle or Chakra of Sri Krishna does not have a begining or an end. When Jivatma merges with Paramatma it becomes Poorna Atma. This wisdom of immortality is presented in the Chin mudra. To this wonderful Lord I present my Namskara. Krishna, explained Swamiji, means one who attracts the devotee.

Sholka # 5:

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This sholka is again a Sri Krishna Namaskara describing his contribution to family, society and the world. Krishna as a son of Vasudeva was a member of the family. As one who destroyed asuras Kamsa and Chanura he was a protector of society. He taught Gita not only to Arjuna but also to posterity. In this role he was a Jagatguru to the world.

Shloka # 6:

शुभं कुरु ॥ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥
शुभं कुरु ॥ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥

शुभं कुरु ॥ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥
शुभं कुरु ॥ श्रीकृष्णाय नमः ॥

This sholka is again a Sri Krishna Namaskara. In this Sholka Kaivartakaha means boatman. Even in a tempestuous situation a skilled boatman can cross the river. Here Mahabharatha is compared to a treacherous river with many dangers. Pandavas need to cross this river. Human beings also face such treacherous situations in life.

Aartaha means one who is in distress. Pandavas were caught in the Aartaha and in this situation Sri Krishna was their savior.

Describing the dangers, Bhishma and Drona were like banks of the river determining its course. The river itself is compared to Jaydritha. Prince of Gandhara, Shakuni, is compared to the dangerous blue water lily; Shalya a relative of pandavas was on opposite side like a crocodile; Kripa Acharya, a great archer and teacher was there as an under current. Then, there was Karna like a turbulent wave and Ashwathama and others who were man-eating fish. Duryodhana was like a whirlpool. Pandavas crossed the river due to a skillful boatman named Krishna. Sri Krishna will also help you, if you surrender to him.

Shloka 8:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
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ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

This shloka is again a namaskara to Madhava or Lakhmi Pati. The greatest wealth (Lakshmi) is wisdom. Sri Krishna had the benefit of this support. Swamiji says, he (Krishna) can make a dumb person eloquent. He can make a lame person climb the mountains by his grace. Swamiji says the studies of 700 verses of Gita are the mountain that we can successfully scale if we surrender to Sri Krishna.

Shloka # 9:

This shloka again is a namskara to Sri Krishna. Krishna is one who is worshipped by Brahma, Varuna, Indira and Marutha. The chanters of the Sama and all Vedas invoke Sri Krishna. The six Angas of Vedas, secondary scriptures, all chant the Lord's name in Paatha, Krama and Ghana Paatha. **Paatha is to recite the mantras in a sentence straight. In Krama Paatha, the first word of the mantra is added to the second, the second to the third, the third to the fourth and so on, until the whole sentence of the mantras is completed. In Ghana Paatha one repeats the mantras in various ways back and forth and in different patterns.**

Swamiji says great Sanyasis, with a one pointed mind, see the lord in their own mind. Devotees see the lord outside. Even though he is described as a person, the Lord is not a person. The personal God has limitations of space and time. The real God is limitless and many people are not aware of him. Thus God has a limited form for devotees and a limitless one as well. To this all pervading God, I bow in namskara.

Ending the Gita Dhyanam, Swamiji prays, May God bless us in our study of this great scripture.

Discussion Summary, November 1, 2015

Swamiji as part of his closing remarks on Katho Upanishad reminded us of the essence of second chapter.

Valli 1, Mantras 1 to 3:

Yama discussed disciplines, one of them being control of senses. Sense organs are outward looking. It is not acquired. It is instinctive. So, we are fighting our own nature. It needs a lot discrimination and will power. Some rare people master sense organs. Suppression of our senses is a control from outside. Mastery is from the inner knowledge. If one does not have sense control we will be lost in the ephemeral world of Kama or mortality including going through the cycle of birth and re-birth. So understand and master the sense organs, says Swamiji.

Valli 1, Mantras 3 to 13 :

Here Yama answers questions about Atma Swarupam. Atma is Consciousness or Chaitanya. Consciousness is not part of the body.

- . It is an independent entity that pervades and enlivens the body.
- . It extends beyond the body and is all pervading.
- . Consciousness continues to exist even after fall of body. It is eternal. It is not bound by time.
- . The Consciousness principle is the reason we are conscious of everything

Even though it is all pervading and one, it manifests in

matter media in different ways. Why so? This is because of the quality of the medium. Thus electricity manifests itself in a fan as a mechanical motion while in a bulb as light.

The manifestation of consciousness occurs at three levels:

At the gross level:

1. Samashti Karana Prapancha or Total Causal Universe or Seed Form.
2. Samashti Sukshma Prapancha or the Subtle Consciousness or Hiranyagarbha and
3. Sthula Prapancha or total gross universe or Virat Chaitanya.

At the micro level:

1. Karana Shariram- Pragya Chaitanya
2. Sukshma Shariram – Saigasa Chaitanya
3. Sthula or Vishwa Chaitanya.

All six are different manifestations of Chaitanya in matter. It should be noted that micro and macro are only in matter. No such thing exists in Consciousness.

Consciousness is one but there is plurality in matter. Why?

Yama says there is no plurality in matter as well. It is same consciousness in matter as well. Consciousness with Nama and Rupa is matter.

Valli 1, Mantras 14 & 15:

Benefits of this vision:

One who sees Dvaita is born again and again. Where as one who sees Advaita becomes immortal.

Giving examples Swamiji says rainwater flowing down a mountain separately eventually gets absorbed in earth. While streams that flow down, if they merge, eventually flow down and merge into ocean. Similarly, when a wave sees itself as a wave it

is mortal. The same wave when it sees itself as water becomes immortal.

Valli 2, Mantras 1-7:

These seven mantras are dedicated to Atma Swarupa Varnanam.

Jivatma is at micro level.

Paramatma is at macro level

Atma is at individual's own level.

Atma alone makes every material being alive. Atma lends consciousness to Prana. Prana thus becomes sentient. Prana then lends Consciousness to physical body. Thus body borrows from Atma through Prana. If there were no consciousness the body would be dead. Every activity in every organ is an expression of Chaitanya.

Valli 2, Mantras 8-16:

In these mantras Atma is looked at from a micro angle. The Atma is not located in the body. Rather all bodies are located in Consciousness.

Giving an example: Space is within the hall. Space is outside the hall as well. Reality is that space is all pervading.

Being Sarva Aadharam, Atma is all pervading. Example: The fire principle pervades entire earth, as does the air principle. When fire permeates metals, it seems shaped like the metal. Reality is, fire is in all metals, and in between them as well, in a furnace. Fire is formless but has form when in contact with a medium or so it seems. It

is the same with Consciousness. Even though Consciousness is all pervading it is not affected by anything. Sunlight pervades everything but it is not touched by water, color, smell etc. So also Consciousness is not tainted in any way.

Since Consciousness is all pervading it is the only One, there is not another. Other philosophies like Samkhya say there are

many Atma's. They say, each body has an Atma. In Advaita, this One Atma appears as many. It manifests in a pluralistic world or as Jagat Karanam.

This Atma is Nityaha. Everything else is Anithyam. Clay is there before, during and after creation of the pot. It is the Pot that is subject to birth and death.

Atma is the cause or Karanam

Valli 3, Mantras 1-4: In these mantras Yama summarizes Atma Swarupa. Atma is alone the cause, the maker and material of the universe. Just like the spider is the intelligent cause of the web, Atma is the intelligent and material cause of the universe.

Valli 3, Mantras 5-13:

In these mantras the preparatory disciplines or the four Sadhanas are described:

1. Remembering the great human birth. Do not take it for granted. In this human birth alone gyana is possible. In Brahma loka also it is possible but it is a difficult place to get into.
2. Atma/ AnAtma Viveka. The "I" is a mixture of body, mind complex as well as Consciousness. "You" are the body and Consciousness. I is Tvampada.
3. Yoga Abhyasa or meditation to discipline the mind. The goal is to withdraw the mind or focus it in a field. This absorption is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi. It is also called Sadhana.
4. Shradha in the words of Guru and Scriptures. Give them the benefit of doubt. Listen with Shradha.

Valli 3, Mantras 14-18

In these mantras Gyana Phalam is discussed. They occur in three forms.

1. Sarva Granthi nashaha. All knots are removed. All ignorance and misconceptions are destroyed.
2. Sarwa Kama Nashaha. All desires, all binding desires, expecting fulfillment, are gone. Non-binding desires do not affect us any way. Thus we obtain Kama Moksha.
3. Brahma Praptihi. Oneness with Brahman is obtained. Dropping the notion of division between Atma and me. Yama says the result of these benefits is available here and now.
4. The phalam of Nachiketas ritual with Virat-upasana was discussed. This will result in Krama mukti. In Brahma Loka one is liberated.

Lastly, Upanishads say, who ever gained this knowledge will also get the benefit same as Nachiketas.

Thus Katho Upanishad was concluded.

Suggested Practice:

Consider going back through these notes or listen to Swamiji's talks, periodically, to reinforce the learning from this great Upanishad.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta 2: Dhyana Shloka

Continuing his introductory remarks for Bhagawat Gita Swamiji today discussed the invocation prayer called Gitagyana Shloka. Madhusudhana Saraswathi wrote this Shloka. Madhusuadana also wrote a commentary on the Gita called Bhagavad-gita-gudhartha-dipika.

The Gitagyana Shloka has nine verses. In these Shlokas we are offering namaskara to: Bharathi, Gita/ Saraswathi, Vyasa and Lord Krishna.

Expanding on the Gitagyana Shlokas, Swamiji discussed each shloka.

Shloka # 7:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
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ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

This Shloka is our namaskara to Bharatha. Mahabharata is a part of Itihasa or partly based on history. It is a mixture of fact and fiction. Itihasa means it happened in this manner. It deals with Bharatha Varsham. While Gita has 700 verses Mahabharata has 100,000 verses.

In Shloka 7, the prayer is that, may my study of Mahabharata help me transform and grow spiritually. The Mahabharata here is compared to a lotus flower due to its beauty, fragrance and honey. Swamiji says study of Mahabharata at home is good and acceptable. There is a superstition that Mahabharata should not be studied at home. He says this is not true.

While the lotus is born in a pond, Mahabharata was also born in the speech (pond) of Parasarya (son of Parasar), Vyasa. It is a pure lotus. Lotus is usually found in muddy water. This Lotus is very attractive because of its fragrance; the fragrance of Gita. More people know Gita than Mahabharata. The many small stories of Mahabharata are compared to the filaments of the Lotus. The Lotus flower is a full one. It is full of Hari Katha as well. It contains deep wisdom in many aspects such as religion, politics, philosophy and human relations. All are in Mahabharata. What is not found in Mahabharata is not found anywhere else. So, for all students, it is like honey. Noble people are the ones who have an open mind and reverence towards Mahabharata. They drink the honey of Mahabharata and specifically Gita repeatedly, day in and day out. This knowledge can destroy the problems of materialism of Kaliyuga that we face today.

Shloka # 1:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
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ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
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ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

This Shloka is our namaskara to Gita. The author addressing Saraswathi asks the Mother to nourish him at the right time with the right food. Mother Gita nourishes us with the knowledge of Karma Yoga, Upasana Yoga and Gyana Yoga in a teaching given to Arjuna, taught by Lord Narayana himself. It is a blessing to society even today. Vyasa, an Avatara of Vishnu, compiled it. He is most experienced among Rishi's. He has also has given us the Puranas. In the middle of Mahabharata is Shanthi Parva composed by Vyasa. It showers the knowledge of Advaita. Gita consists of 18 chapters and

700 verses.

Gita knowledge gives us moksha from Samsara. Samsara is all kinds of dissatisfactions that we experience including physical, emotional and intellectual. Moksha is satisfaction with myself. Gita gives us Mokshatvam. I meditate upon such a Gita.

Verse #4:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

Continuing, Swamiji says, Gita is not Krishna's philosophy. It is the teaching of Vedas from time immemorial. The last part of Vedas is Upanishad. Gita is the essence of Upanishad or Vedanta. Upanishad here is compared to a cow. Krishna is an expert cowherd. So he knows how to milk the Upanishadic Cow. To milk such a cow, you have to keep a calf in front. For the Upanishadic Cow, Arjuna is the calf. Out of milking this cow comes the Gita Amrita milk.

Verse # 2:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

This Shloka is our namaskara to Vyasa. Vyasa means divider and expander. Originally Vedas were one. Vyasa gave his four disciples the task of creating the four separate Vedas from the original one. He also expanded on Vedas through the Puranas. Vyasa's original name was also Krishna. Both were dark in complexion. He is also known as Krishna Dvaipayana (island born Krishna). He was an Acharya of great knowledge. His eyes were like Lotus petals. You have lit the lamp of wisdom with the oil of Mahabharatam stories,

says the devotee. So, to you, I offer my namaskaram.

With my good wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary, October 25, 2015

Greetings All,

Continuing his recap from last week of Mantra 13 in Part 2, Cantos 3, Swamiji reminded us that in this last and final section Yama is summarizing Brahma Vidya and enumerating some qualifications required for it, as well as, the benefits of this knowledge. With Verse # 13 the first two requirements of what is Brahma Vidya and qualifications

required for it have been completed. Faith in Brahman is required. Brahman is not available for objectification by the mind, senses or words. It is totally without attributes. Even Philosophers do not accept Nirguna Brahman. So Sraddha is very important until we absorb the teachings. This open mindedness is very important and is called

Shraddha. Now we are entering the description of the Phalam of obtaining Brahma Vidya.

Mantra # 14:

Phalam is freedom here and now. Freedom from what, asks Swamiji? It is not freedom from the physical body. It is the inner freedom from fear, anger, insecurity etc. all symptoms of Samsara. Above all it is freedom from Kama. Due to ignorance we identify with the body mind complex. Due to Ahamkara, ignorance expresses itself in life as something

wanting. Since, I cannot withstand limitation, there is always a struggle to remove this limitation. Thus, we experiment and have long struggles to obtain Purnatwam. Kama freedom is freedom from this struggle. I do not do anything for this completion. I do everything out of this completion. Samsara is the binding desire while non-binding desire is with completion. The binding desire goes away with Brahma Vidya.

All desires are located in the mind including desire for moksha or desire for desire less-ness. Even this goes away. Gyana recognizes I am That. Such a person is immortal, free from the cycle of births. Our next birth is decided in this life, at time of death, by our strongest desire. So he is beyond the cycle of life and deaths. It is the "I" who thought he is mortal, now thinks he is immortal. It is an intellectual journey, not a physical one. The notion of mortality is lost. He becomes one with Brahman, here and now. Moksha is even while we are alive. This is known as Jivan mukta.

Other philosophies believe moksha is obtained only after death or dropping this body.

Mantra # 15:

Here a different aspect of Phalam is presented. With Brahma Vidya the Hridaya Grantha (knots) are destroyed. Shankara says ignorance is the knot. Like a knot it becomes firm and hence difficult to remove.

A knot is that which joins two things. I, the Atma, am associated with body mind complex due to Abhimana. Thus a knot is formed. I think of myself as the body. Ahankara is the cause of the knot. Deha Abhimana is dropped due to this knowledge. So this mortal Jeeva notion now becomes immortal. Body is mortal but I am not mortal. The Abhimana in us is the Samsara. When somebody dies we do not feel anything. However, when it happens to somebody near, Abhimana comes in, including for my own body. The idea I am mortal is dropped. Yama now

concludes and says, this much is my teaching.

Mantra # 16:

In previous two mantras Yama taught the phalam of Brahma vidya. Now he talks about the second boon of Nachiketas called Nachiketa ritual (Karma with Upasana) that is conducted on Nachiketa Agni. Karma Upasana Samuchaya (combination); giving us an example of this, Swamiji says, when a mantra is chanted with a clear picture of it in mind, rather than blind chanting, it gives higher results. So, chanting the mantra is Karma. Chanting it with focus is Upasana. If one obtains Karma Moksha Mukthi, at death, he will go Brahma Loka via Sushumna Nadi. There, he will obtain Brahma Vidya. If one does Karma without Upasana, at death, he will be emerge from other Nadis and will be born again. Nadis are passages in our body. There are 101 Nadis and only one emerges at top of crown.

Mantra #17:

Yama once again discusses Jeevan Mukthi or Brahma Vidya Phalam.

Antar Atma is as though the size of a thumb. It is also called Purusha (pure vasathi) it dwells in and beyond the body. It is also the Atma. It is present in heart and mind of every one as Consciousness, as the witness of all thoughts and absence of all thoughts. It is within the Anatma Shariram. Brahma Vidya separates the Consciousness from the

body mind complex. This must be clearly understood. Atma Anatma Viveka must dawn within us. It is an intellectual process of understanding. This requires a very subtle intellect. You cannot physically separate from body, only intellectually. Swamiji gives example of the Munja grass from which, very carefully, its tender shoot is separated.

Viveka is required for this separation. Twam pada Viveka or Aikyam is required. One should know this consciousness as Brahman described in scriptures. Separate yourself from body

and thus identify with Brahman. This is Vedanta. This will give us Jivan Mukti. This concludes Yama Nachiketas Samvada.

Mantra 18:

Nachiketas obtained this knowledge from Yama. Yama also taught him Yoga Abhyasa. Having obtained wisdom he became one with Brahman. He became free from all impurities and free from mortality. Not only Nachiketas obtained Moksha, anyone who receives this wisdom in same manner also is freed and gets Moksha. Papam and Punyam both are impurities, per Vedas. Since there is no Karma there is no result as well.

Mantra # 19

This mantra concludes the Upanishad This mantra is a prayer to establish the teaching within us.

Suggested Practice:

When chanting mantras try to visualize the deity and focus. This will be a very powerful Sadhana.

With my good wishes,

Bhagawat Gita 1: Introduction

Greetings All,

This is my summary of the first class (October 1, 2915) of Bagawat Gita .

Swamiji introduced the Bhagawat Gita today. He says all human beings pursue goals in life. Some are long term and some are short term in nature. Goals also vary from individual to individual, from time to time, and from age to age. There are

infinite numbers of goals that differ by age, by time, and they also change with times. If analyzed, we will note that there are some goals common to all human beings. Even animals have goals but they are instinctive. Thus, these are three common goals:

1. Security, safety and survival related goals. Consequently food and shelter are important goals. Even animals have these goals although they are driven by instinct.
2. The desire to lead a peaceful life, comfortable with myself, is another goal. In search of this goal we go from Ashram to Ashram, says Swamiji.
3. The desire for happiness and fulfillment

Everybody is running after these three goals using different methods. Some think real estate will do it, some think surrounding themselves with people will do it and others think of gold, jobs and so on and on. All these are means of security. Different people seek peace also in different ways.

Swamiji says, our scriptures offer some comments and suggestions regarding these goals. Scriptures say:

1. All three basic needs are available within us.
2. They also say they are within "you" only.

Strangely, Swamiji says, scriptures are telling us that these goals are not available to us outside ourselves. By seeking them outside, the goals will evade you. It will be a misplaced search for something in a place it is not available. So, we should search where it is available. Why do we commit such mistakes asks Swamiji? Why struggle so much? Answering the question he says all these needs within us are hidden. It is hidden under layers of covering. To get to them we need to remove these layers through a process of "Discovery".

What are these layers? Swamiji says, per scriptures, there are three layers, from gross, subtle to subtlest. They are known as Malam (impurity), Vikshepa (extroverted-ness) and Aavaranam

(Ignorance).

Malam: It refers to mental problems. They are six fold in nature:

- 1 Kama – lust
- 2 Krodha – anger
- 3 Lobha – greed
- 4 Moha – delusory emotional attachment or temptation
- 5 Mada or ahankara – pride, hubris
- 6 matsarya – envy, jealousy

Vikshepaha: is mental restlessness, extroverted-ness and all that cause turbulence of mind also called Chanchalam.

Aavaranam: or ignorance that I am the source of all peace and security also called Ananda.

We need to remove the three layers by appropriate Sadhanas or following spiritual disciplines. Each discipline is called Yogaha. Yoga means the seeker unites with his destination. Three yoga's are recommended. They are:

Karma Yoga is for first layer of Malam.

Upasana Yoga is for the second layer of Vikshepa and

Gyana Yoga is for third layer of Agyana Nivritihi or removal of ignorance.

Karma Yoga is a life style consisting of proper action with proper attitude. It removes all Malam. Proper action is any action that reduces the six Malas. Proper attitude is a healthy attitude towards the proper actions and the results from such action. This attitude will help one grow through any aexperience including a very painful one. Mala Shudhi is also called Chitta Shudhi.

Upasana Yoga consists of forms of meditations. They help quiet one's restless and extrovert mind. It results in Vikshepa Nivritihi or a steady mind. It also called Chitta Nischalathvam.

Gyana Yoga is Enquiry into one's real nature. Do I need peace from outside? Am I ever secure? This self-enquiry and analysis is also called Atma Vichara.

Our scriptures guide us on how to practice these Yoga's. The scriptures are called Vedas. Veda means source of knowledge. Vedas are revelations by Lord himself through Rishis. Vedas are divided into four parts; they are:

1. Mantra Bhaga
2. Samhita Bhaga
3. Brahmana Bhag
4. Upanishad Bhaga.

Brahmana Bhaga deals with Karma Yoga and is also called Karma kadam

Aranyaka Bhaga deals with Upasana Kandam or Vikshepa.

Upanishat deals with Gyana Yoga and is called Gyana Kandam.

Mantra Bhaga or Suktam deals with prayers to Deities. Swamiji says,

Bhagawans grace is vey important in this quest and prayers help us with changing the direction of our mind towards spirituality.

Vedas are a huge literature and include Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvana Vedas. For many people Vedas are not accessible. So, God has given us a condensed version of all Vedas called Bhagawat Gita. It has 700 verses. It is Veda Sara. It is narrated as a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. Just a study of Gita will give us the direction we need for life.

This is what we will study next. We will start with Gita Gyana Shloka. While Shankara wrote a commentary on Gita so did Madhu Sudhana Saraswati. Madhu Sudhana Saraswati also wrote the Gita Gyana Shloka. This invocation prayer offers namaskras to Bharata, Gita/Saraswathi (knowledge), Vyasa (composer) and Lord Krishna (Jagat Guru) in nine verses. Swamiji says, we must start any endeavor with a prayer to ward off any

obstacles.

Note: During discussion it was suggested that we check out the site:

www.yogamalika.org It contains Swamiji's lectures on special occasions like New Years.

Discussion Summary, October 18, 2015

Continuing his recap from last week of Mantra 9 in Part 2, Cantos 3, Swamiji reminded us of the prerequisites for realization.

First, we need a human body and then we need to use it wisely towards the goal of realization.

Second, the real meaning of I must be clear to us. In the statement You are That the You does not mean body or mind but it should remind us of the formless Consciousness. Whenever Upanishad says You, it must instantly remind me of the Consciousness. I should always be in this state. Twampada Vichara is essential.

Third, The importance of a sharp, subtle, focused, undistracted and total intellect is essential. Such an intellect is qualified to receive this teaching. Brahman can be known only through intellect. It is the instrument. In some other context Upanishads say intellect is not the instrument to know Brahman. Clarifying this, Swamiji says the Upanishads are referring to an unprepared mind.

Shankaracharya says, a mind that can listen deeply and absorb

the teaching for a length of time is required. Only a proper understanding from a Guru following the Sampradya illumines the Brahman. The example of a mirror was cited. The mirror must be clean as also the your eyes. So also the qualified intellect combined with knowledge of Shastras will help us "own up to" our own immortality.

Mantra 10:

Swamiji says, in mantras 10 and 11, Yama discusses Yoga Abhyasa or the mental discipline called meditation. This yogic discipline developed by Patanjali, as per Astanga yoga, helps in preparing the mind in its focusing capacity. The culmination of meditation results in Samadhi or Nirvikapla Samadhi or absorption in a chosen field. The object of meditation in this yoga is on Chakras. Swamiji says, Vedanta Shastras do not advocate Chakra meditation. He says meditation is also considered Upana. Thus, here we choose any Devata as object of meditation to develop our Chitta Samadhanam, the focusing faculty.

Swamiji says meditation is not prescribed for Self Knowledge. It cannot provide self-knowledge. It provides Sadhana Chatushtaya Sampathi. Gyana alone can provides knowledge. Mystic experiences also do not have anything to do with knowledge, but it can be accepted. A person can be liberated only by purity, focus and Shastric knowledge.

Swamiji says, Samadhi Yoga is not for liberation; it is for developing deep listening skills. Yoga meditation can help us become absorbed in the Deity of meditation. It helps us focus. It helps us with Drishtaand Adrishta Phalam. In meditation, the five sense organs and mind remain without distraction. The intellect also does not think of anything other than the object of meditation. It maintains focus. It can be Savikalpa Samadhi (meditation with support of an object) or Nirvikalpa Samadhi (meditation without an object, which leads to knowledge of purusha or consciousness, the subtlest element.)

In Nirvikalpa Samadhi, will recedes. It is the highest goal of Yoga.

Mantra 11:

This state of absorption and destination is also called Yoga (the means and the end). The absorption is the end. In this state of Samadhi all sense organs are undistracted, rested and silent for a length of time. Initially focus will be difficult. One should focus his or her attention to avoid distraction. Swamiji says, with increasing sophistication we have lost this faculty. We are now trying to get it back. Meditation (or focus) is subject of arrival and departure. One has to train the mind, and then it will be ready for Vedanta Sravanam.

Swamiji says, often our listening skill is superficial and not very powerful. As such, our knowledge will also be just academic. After Vedanta Sravanam, remembering the teaching during meditation is also Nidhidhyasanam. Nidhidhyasana means to fully internalize and assimilate the teaching . This will make mind deep and with fullest impact of the teaching.

Mantra 12:

Now, Swamiji highlights another important preparation. He says we need to value Sraddha in Nirguna Brahman. Since Brahman cannot be seen, felt, or even logically understood, some think of it as Shunya. Shankara compared it to a man born to a barren woman. Even Philosophers do not accept Nirguna Brahman. Swamiji says, we have to go through the teachings of Shastras, and then we will understand. One cannot objectify Nirguna Brahman, because it is the very Subject. Describing the Nirguna Brahman, Swamiji says, words cannot convey it, Eyes cannot see it, and mind cannot grasp it. It cannot be grasped, as it is the Grasper. Only by understanding that "I am That", can a believer

understand it. So, Sradhda is very important.

Mantra 13:

When one believes, one accepts Brahman is there. As he progresses, he will realize from Brahman "Is" to "I am Brahman". Converting from Is to I AM is the journey.

Thus: Brahman Nasti>Brahman Asti>Brahman Asmi is the journey. Thus, from this journey Satya Bhava Aikyam occurs. So, Sraddha is important.

Suggested Practice:

Consider performing meditation for some time every day. Reflect on the Nirguna Brahman.

Discussion Summary, October 11, 2015

Continuing his recap from last week of Mantra 6 in Part 2, Cantos 3, Swamiji reminded us that we have to know Brahman as Aham Brahma Asmi. He reminded us that the human being present in Manusha loka provides the best opportunity for us to gain this knowledge. Animals, he says, have only a Bhoga Shariram and do everything by instinct. We are lucky to have this human birth and he recommends we make the best use of this birth to obtain this great knowledge. Discussing Atma /Anatma , unless we understand that the "I" is the witness principle or Sakshi Chaitanya, we are still in Samsara and as such finite.

Tat Tvam Asi is only possible when one separates himself from this body mind complex. Swamiji reminds us that the body and mind are subject to arrival and departure while the "I" is

constant and unchanging.

Mantra # 7:

Swamiji now presented another method of Atma / Anatma discrimination. He calls it the essence of Vedanta.

Refreshing our memory on the Pancha Koshas, Swamiji says we have to withdraw from each one of them. The Pancha Koshas are:

- 1) Annamaya kosha, "foodstuff" sheath (Anna),
- 2) Pranamaya kosha, "energy" sheath, (Prana /apana);
- 3) Manomaya kosha "mind-stuff" sheath (Manas),
- 4) Vijnanamaya kosha, "wisdom" sheath (*Vijnana*) and lastly
- 5) Anandamaya kosha, "bliss" sheath (*Ananda*)

This method sensitizes our mind, as it withdraws from gross to the subtle. Describing this process, Swamiji says, sense organs are controlled by the mind, which is subtler, stronger and more powerful. Superior to mind is the intellect, or Buddhi. Mind is the doubting faculty, while Buddhi is rationalizing capacity that removes doubts. Mind is given to emotion, Buddhi is not, and hence it is stronger. Thus, Buddhi is the Vijnanamaya Kosha. Describing adjectives we give ourselves such as: I am Tamilian> I am Indian> I am Asian> I am human> I am a Living Being (all beings)> and finally I am a "Being". Swamiji says we need to drop all adjectives. He says they all belong to Anatma. We have to realize I am a "Being". This is called Samashti Buddhi. Individual does not exist separate from Total. Micro does not exist separate from Macro.

Taking us to a different plane, Swamiji now says, "I am" Hiranyagarbha. Superior to Hiranyagarbha is the Avyakatam, the Total Karana Shariram. Karana Shariram is the state of blankness. In this blank state everything thing is in its

potential state. He says blankness is not “nothing” rather it is in the Potential state or a state of Singularity. Learn to identify with Avyaktam. I am Turiyaha, the final state, state of Samashti Karana Sharira.

How to reach this state is now described.

Mantra # 8:

When all sensory operations are suspended we experience blankness. This state is called Avyaktam. Subtler than this blankness is Atma or Consciousness. So, where do we find Atma? Swamiji says Atma cannot be objectified. The One who is aware, the awareness, of the blankness , the Experiencer, is the Atma. There is nothing other than “my” self declares Swamiji. The unobjectifiable “I” is the Atma while the Blankness is the Anandamaya Kosha.

He says Purusha is also the Atma.

So, what type of consciousness is this? He says, it “all pervading” consciousness. So, like the wave we have a choice to identify with the small wave or the eternal water. Once we identify with the all pervading Atma, we will be removed from all suffering.

I am Nirguna Chaitanyam without any Linga attributes. As long as I identify with body, I am mortal. This small I needs to know the immortal I. Once I know it, I will be relieved of all “notion of mortality”, as I do not identify with this body anymore. I can own up to my “natural” immortality. That is why, says Swamiji, Samsara is an intellectual problem.

Mantra # 9:

We have to use our human birth, our viveka shakthi. Atma / Anatma viveka should dawn on us.

Swamiji says for Viveka, a deep and complete mind is to be available for this teaching. A tremendous listening skill is

required. A special mind, deep and total is required. We normally do not listen totally. If we can do this, the mahavakya sravanam can penetrate this state. Do we have a mind that is absorbed in the teaching? In such a person, knowledge dawns. It is called sukshma buddhi. This buddhi is required as the subject matter is very subtle.

Physical organs cannot perceive Brahman. Eyes cannot see him. So, how is he to be known?

He can only be known through Guru's teachings of Shastra. This is the Shastra mirror. I should also have the proper eyes to see in the mirror. The inner eye, Buddhi, should be qualified for this teaching. The nature of this Buddhi is a prepared intellect, subtle, deep and total. Only such an intellect can know the Brahman. The intellect is in our heart says Swamiji. The right understanding, provided by a qualified Teacher, received by a qualified man, results in knowledge.

Suggested Practice

To obtain the full benefit of the teaching of a great teacher we all need to come to Vedanta class with a very focused mind. Do not let Samsara get in the way of this great knowledge.

Discussion Summary, October 4, 2015

Continuing his recap from last week of mantras 1 and 2 in Part 2, Cantos 3, Swamiji reminded us that this third and final section of Katho Upanishad deals with Atmavidya, Brahavidya Sadhanani and preparation for Brahavidya.

Describing the role of Brahman as the Creator, Swamiji says, Brahman is the keeper of law and order. Behind Brahman is Maya the female principle. Swamiji says Brahman and Ishwara are interchangeable. He also clarified that Brahman + Maya=Ishwara. He says we have to accept Brahman as the law. With law we need an enforcement agency. This enforcement principle is called Ishwara. Ishwara is like Vajra or the fear and threat principle. Human beings and Beings in general, have poor self-discipline. Fear enforces discipline, hence the use of word God fearing person. One who knows this truth will attain liberation.

Shloka # 3:

Here Yama explains why Brahman is feared. He says all Devatas of natural forces function as per law of the Earth, Prithvi Devta. Similarly for Sun, there is Surya Devata. Yama says Devatas are frightened of Ishwara. Fire, Sun, Vayu, Indira (rain), are all afraid of him, the invisible intelligence. Mrutyu (Yama) also runs to perform his work fearing this law. Swamiji says only Ishwara Aikyam can help us. Markandeya's embrace of Shiva lingam is an example. Here Markandeya was not embracing just the lingam, he was embracing the Shiva Aikyam.

Shloka # 4:

Now Yama explains the conditions required for Brahma Gyanam. First condition is, we should be human beings. The Shastra's say there are 85 lacs (8.5 million) of species, so chances of being human are fairly small. Swamiji says we should use our human birth properly. It is a boat for crossing over to God. It is a costly boat. It needs a lot of Punyam. We should remember that this boat will disappear. If one squanders this opportunity, he or she will be fit only for another birth, in another body and not necessarily in a human body. The birth may also be in any one of the 14 lokas created by the Lord.

Shloka #5:

Yama now discusses if the knowledge of Atman can be acquired in any other loka? He accepts it can be obtained in other lokas, however, he feels the human birth is the best of all. Describing different lokas he says:

1. In a human intellect one can gain knowledge like seeing one's face in a clear mirror.
2. In Pitra Loka also knowledge can be obtained. However, here, it will not be very clear. It will be more like a dream, as it moves very fast.
3. In Gandharva Loka, a world of music, dance, art and enjoyment, knowledge appears like the reflection of your face in water. Here also one can gain knowledge.
4. In Brahma Loka knowledge is very clear, like darkness and light. Here also knowledge can be obtained.

Swamiji says. Of the four, two are vague, while Brahma Loka is very difficult to obtain. To obtain Brahma Loka, one has to perform a lot of Upasana, including at the time of death.

Swamiji says getting human birth is difficult. And since we are already here, let us not postpone obtaining this knowledge.

Shloka # 6:

Giving us the method of reaching this knowledge, Swamiji says, Atma/AnAtma Viveka must be discriminated. The knowledge Aham Brahmasmi should dawn in us. While Aham refers to Sthula Sharira, Karna Sharira, Sukshma Sharira and Chaitanya, the Aham referred to here is only Chaitanya. Any other reference of Aham does not identify with Atman. Withdraw from Anatma to Atma , says Swamiji.

Swamiji says we should disown instruments of interaction. Sense organs are only temporary instruments, only for my use. Even without them, I continue to exist. Giving an example, Swamijij says we sometimes forget that spectacle is not part of us. Thus every instrument is an intimate object to subjects

and often considered a part of subject. During waking state all sense organs , including mind, “come out” and during sleep state, they all get resolved. However, through all this, “I” continue as witness. Whatever is incidental, such as sense organs, are subject to departure. Incidental stuff is not my Nature. They are separate from me. They are separately born and gone. Even when eyes are gone, “I” continue to exist as awareness and consciousness. Once this is understood, we can understand “ Aham Brahma Asmi”. I am the limitless one.

Such a person of fine intellect, a Viveki, gets the advantage of having no grief in life, says Swamiji. Grief comes with identification with body. This causes us to think we are mortals. The thought “ I am mortal” is however not comfortable to me. This is against my nature. When anything unnatural happens “I” reject it, naturally. It will go away when I do not identify with my mortal body. Body is mortal. “I” am immortal. This way, old age, separation etc. become more acceptable.

Suggested Practice:

In context of Shloka # 6 following thoughts of Anusuyaji comes to mind: Eliminate the small “I” in all aspects of life. Don’t think in terms of my wife, my son, and my house etc., where the “I” identification comes in. The eternal “ I” will automatically arise.