

Bhagavad Gita online class on 05 & 19 October 2019

Shanti Patha

ओं वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूर मर्दनं,
देवकी परमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुं.
सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतमृतं महत्.
मूकं करोति वाचालं, पंगुं लघयते गिरिं,
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्दमाधवं.

We are discussing the fourth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita which is called "Sanyasa or Jnana Yoga".

- The important point we have to remember here is: First of all truth is the same and by definition truth is that which never changes.

Sri Krishna makes a statement "I have taught this to Manu several aeons back."

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् | विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् || C4 V1

imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ proktavān aham avyayam

vivasvān manave prāha manur ikṣhvākave 'bravīt

- Arjuna was surprised and said "How is it possible for you to teach? You are my contemporary but you claim that you have taught these truths several thousands of years back".

This is because the truth is the same and the truth is: God is and He alone is. God alone exists and God is an eternal truth.

- So, The Lord says "I have revealed this spiritual knowledge in different ages for the benefit of man."

How?

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत | अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् || 7||

dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata

abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmyaham

• Whenever unrighteousness prevails. I embody Myself as the Incarnation for the protection of the good and the destruction of the wicked. Man can attain salvation by contemplation on the life, deeds and teachings of the great incarnations.

• So, the first fact is that truth remains the same and it never changes. But, this truth has to be interpreted, validated and some new adjustments have to be made according to changed circumstances. That is the main function of an incarnation also called Avatara.

• Now, Shri Krishna is stating "I incarnate." What is the cause of this incarnation of God?

Whenever people are in delusion God incarnates. Delusion means to mistake the wrong for the right and the right for the wrong. Then God comes and clarifies the truth.

The purpose of an incarnation is, 'The establishment of Dharma or धर्म स्थापन.

How is the establishment of dharma or Dharma- sthapana done? Dharma- sthapana is done in some specific ways.

1. First, God has to incarnate purely as a human being because only a human being can inspire and can guide other human beings.

2. If we study the idea of Hindu incarnation then we find that we have a tortoise (Kurma-Avatara); we have a boar (Varaha-Avatara); we have a fish (Matsya-Avatara), we have a half man and half-lion (Nara-Simha Avatara) etc. But, we need to clearly understand that these are not animals but they are the different manifestations of certain qualities of conscious human beings; for animals can never be teachers of human beings.

3. Later on, God incarnates as human beings like Sri Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus etc.

4. The life of an incarnation becomes a great inspiration for us.

5. His teachings become the guidelines, and teach us how we have to behave in life.

And

6. When God incarnates, He doesn't take birth because of His past karma. He takes birth out of compassion; that is why we call His birth as 'Karana-Janma', to accomplish a divine Mission here. We are born because of our purva-janma karmas / past actions which is called 'Karma-Janma'.

We can never understand an incarnation of God: It is impossible for any human being, encased as it were in the body and mind and completely identified with the idea of body and mind, to understand anything higher than other embodied beings who are in the same situation.

So we can never understand an incarnation of God. If so how to understand an incarnation of God?

But, if we practice spiritual disciplines and when our mind becomes sufficiently purified then the grace of God descends upon us, only then we are able to understand, by his grace about, 'Who He is, how He is born? And, what things He accomplishes!' We also come to understand that :

God is divine.

God is infinite.

God is eternal.

God is pure consciousness.

God is pure existence &

God is pure bliss.

Delving into the divine mysteries

Then by implication and through logic, we come to understand that we also cannot be different from God. This is called delving into the divine mysteries.

When a person evolves in a spiritual way and doesn't identify with body & mind, he comes to know : 'I am the Atman', "अहम् ब्रह्मास्मि". This understanding comes only by the grace of God.

Again, he also understands that just as God is not body & mind but pure consciousness, pure existence and pure bliss - Sat-Chit-Ananda. And we are also divine because we are only manifestations of God. We are also Sat-Chit-Ananda.

The Supreme reality alone exists but with names and forms. When a person, through meditation on the divine incarnation, and not just by mere meditation but by practicing the teachings of the incarnation without any deviation, then, he also comes to have the knowledge that he, himself, is divine. Not only that all of divine, and there is nobody in this world, not even an inert thing which is not divine.

It means he sees everywhere the supreme reality alone exists but with names and forms.

Why?

Saguna-Brahman & Nirguna-Brahman

So long as we have got a body & a mind, whenever we experience the world through our limited minds then we can only look upon the world also as embodied.

But, if we can look upon ourselves as Atman then exactly in the same way, we understand that the whole universe is nothing but Saguna-Brahman, i.e., Brahman with names and forms.

When we are devoid of our body and mind consciousness, then this entire universe is seen as Nirguna-Brahman. That means there is no world, there is no Brahman; there is no me or you or anything but it is 'One unbroken, pure consciousness '.

This is the mystery of the divine incarnation and this is the usefulness of the divine incarnation. Anybody who meditates; who surrenders; who practices the teachings of the divine incarnation, will definitely understand 'Who He is' and becomes free.

Next.

How does an incarnation establish dharma? Shri Krishna says "I establish Dharma through the propagation and right understanding of what is dharma?"

I have given you three meanings of dharma in my earlier talks.

1. Each soul is potentially divine.

The first meaning of dharma: God reminds us that you are not a human being with a body and a mind trying to become spiritual. You are a divine being with a body, mind, and through spiritual practice you are trying to know your true nature.

"Who really are you?" Your real nature is spiritual but temporarily you think that you are the body-mind complex.

Just like a person, who in his dream, thinks that he is somewhere else doing something else, whereas all the time, he is lying in his bed and in his own place.

So, that is the first reminder: that you are not just a human being but you are potentially divine. 'Each soul is potentially divine.'

2. Manifestation of this divinity by controlling external & internal nature.

The second meaning of dharma, the Lord also tells us is this: "Self-knowledge must be the goal of your life". The goal of life is to know 'Who we really are and to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature external and internal.' That is the second meaning of dharma.

3. Thirdly, establishment of dharma through the establishment of Varna & Ashrama dharmas.

We are going to briefly discuss this subject in our talk.

What is the real meaning of varna or caste system? How does the Lord establish dharma through varna or caste system?

In the next few verses, The Lord categorically states that "I have created the four castes." The English word caste is called 'वर्ण' Varna in Sanskrit. Let us remind ourselves that this caste system is not because of our birth but because of our 'Guna & Karma, the qualities we have and the activities that we do.

What is meant by guna? There are three gunas - Satva, Rajas and Tamas.

1. Satvaguna: means purity or pure knowledge.
2. Rajoguna: means a bit of purity and a bit of impurity.
3. Tamoguna: means there is more impurity and a small amount of purity.

The four types of varnas or castes are based on the manifestation of these three gunas, and corresponding activities.

1. When a person is more endowed with more satvaguna then he is called a Brahmana.

2. Kshatriya or Warrior: When a person is endowed with a little less satvaguna he is called Kshatriya or the warrior.

3. Vaisya or Trader: When a person has much less satva, more of rajas and supported by tamas he is called vaisya or the trader.

4. Sudra: When there is more of tamas, ignorance, impurity, and intelligence then he is called a sudra.

This is how we need to understand the four castes.

Evolution according to Hinduism.

Life is a constant evolution, going forward to fulfil its teleological urge. What is meant by evolution? When we open our eyes we find that among human beings these three qualities or three gunas are manifesting in varying degrees. The caste system is based upon the manifestation of the three qualities, as discussed earlier, in varying degrees.

However low or impure or ignorant a person is everybody is potentially divine and in course of time will realise his or her true nature, and becomes liberated.

So the lord incarnates, not only for the brahmanas or the upper caste persons. As a matter of fact, people who are endowed with more satvaguna need less of God's help.

God's incarnation is for all people and to make them understand that they are also potentially divine. The Lord comes down as a human being, and helps them through His inspiration, through His guidance and slowly helps them transcend from tamas to rajas and from rajas to satvaguna. This is called evolution.

- The first part of this evolution is to get an appropriate physical body.

The second part of this evolution is to get a pure mind.

- So, the first evolution is biological, physical, external until every creature reaches a stage of human birth after which there would be no further biological evolution.

- After that there will be inner evolution. First there will be a moral evolution and after that there will be spiritual evolution.

This is how the divine Lord through the propagation of ideals 'Bhava-Jagat' establishes dharma. The Lord takes every human being wherever he is and shows the next step, whereby the person can evolve into a more satvika person: that means more healthy, more positive minded, more pure minded and more truthful person.

In other words, the Lords shows to everybody that how each person can become more satvika so that he can progress more in sat means truthfulness, chit means wisdom and ananda means bliss.

This is how the Divine Lord establishes dharma through varna or caste system.

The four stages or Ashramas of human life - Ashrama Dharma

We also have to take another point into consideration: it is the view that every stage of life is helpful for our mental and spiritual development.

As we all know, life is divided into 4 stages according to the mental and spiritual development.

Hinduism divides life into four stages.

1. The Brahmacharya-Ashrama: the learning stage is called Brahmacharya-Ashrama.
2. The Grihastha-Ashrama: the practicing stage is called Grihastha-Ashrama.
3. The Vanaprastha-Ashrama: the gradual withdrawal from the external and focusing more on the internal is called Vanaprastha-Ashrama.
4. The Sanyasa-Ashrama: Complete identity with our innate divinity is called Sanyasa-Ashrama.

This is called Ashrama-Dharma आश्रम धर्म.

I have already mentioned this to you that we all have to behave according to the stage of life we are in.

1. Brahmacharya-Ashrama: We are students throughout our life. But, there is a particular stage when we focus all our attention on learning about: What is truth? what is the goal of our life? And what are the pathways, and how to progress towards the goal of life? This is the student's dharma or student's duty.

2. Grihastha-Ashrama: In this stage, what we have learned in our student's life that we have to put into practice. We learn through ups and downs, through happiness and unhappiness and slowly we progress towards the manifestation of our inner divinity. That is called Grihastha-Ashrama. This is both a practising and, an evolving stage: a learning stage through happiness, unhappiness, tragedies, sufferings, accidents, disease, death etc.; and to understand that all these are not important, and 'I' am the witness, I am witnessing all these events, I am totally separate from them. I suffer because I identify myself with all these happenings.

Let us learn to experience everything as a witness. There is a way, how we can separate ourselves from these happenings even while experiencing all of them yet remain detached; this teaching is the entire essence of Bhagavad Gita.

As Shri Ramakrishna mentioned, and we all know his commentary on Gita, is to repeat the word 'Gita' several times in succession and the sound which comes out is 'Tyagi' or 'Tyaga'; which means 'be detached or be a witness'. To be a witness doesn't mean being indifferent and unsympathetic. But it only means that you experience everything as a witness as we all watch and enjoy a cinema or drama.

We enjoy the comic moments and tragic moments. We enjoy everything with tremendous joy because we know that it is a make believe, it is not true. That is the burden of a householder's life or grihastha- ashrama.

3. Vanaprastha Ashrama: Slowly when we progress, we learn our lessons and become more pure, then we feel like withdrawing ourselves from the external events. Slowly we increase our contemplation, meditation, thinking about God and move forward - that is the true meaning of Vanaprastha or life of inner contemplation.

4. Sanyasa-Ashrama: At this stage we are ready to be completely detached; then we can enter into the fourth stage called 'Sanyasa-Ashrama'. This means – withdrawing ourselves from the world and learning to depend upon God.

This is how, God comes to exemplify this Ashrama Dharma in his own life as an incarnation. This is how He establishes dharma.

We now move on to the next verse.

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् | मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः || 11||

ye yathā mām prapadyante tāns tathaiva bhajāmyaham

mama vartmānuvartante manuṣhyāḥ pārtha sarvaśhaḥ

Everybody is worshipping 'Me' (the Divine Lord) and in whatever way they worship 'Me' I also respond to them in the same way (Cha.4/V.11).

- The Lord also mentioned earlier that "Everybody is worshipping Me". Does this 'everybody' include even atheists? The answer is yes. How?

- Worldly experiences teach lessons to all of us, to everybody: it means, even people who are atheists and whom we label as worldly people. They are also worshipping Me only (the Divine Lord). How? Because these worldly experiences which are sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy are teaching lessons to everybody. When we are slow to learn from these experiences we suffer more. When we grow in wisdom we learn our lessons much faster. That is how, these worldly experiences are never un-spiritual but are stepping stages towards a more internal spiritual life.

- This world everybody naturally implies those who are Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, whatever be the religion, or whatever be the rituals they are performing-- all of them, without exception, are worshipping the one true God.

- Therefore, everybody is only worshipping 'Me' and in whatever way they worship 'Me' I also respond to them in the same way.

Here is a point worth noting: As I have mentioned, worldly people means those who want worldly things, and spiritual people means those who want only God. There doesn't seem to be any difference regarding what worldly people want or what spiritual people want. The difference is not in the goal but the difference is in the means.

- Worldly people think that worldly objects will give them infinite and eternal happiness.

Whereas, spiritual people know that every worldly object comes with three defects.

As we all know every worldly object comes with the three defects.

Three defects of worldly objects

a) It never completely satisfies.

b) It is always accompanied by its opposite.

c) It, in the end, creates bondage and it keeps us more and more in the net of Maya.

• Here is a fact which we need to keep in our minds always. No one is going to be bound forever. According to Hinduism everyone, saint or sinner will be liberated. We do not know any saint who has not been worldly, who has not gone through worldly life. A saint also must have gone through all these states of worldly life, through atheism, through scepticism, through experiencing both happiness and unhappiness et cetera.

So also a sinner. Every worldly person evolves into the next stage, after going through all types of life experiences. Then comes an enquiry to know if there is a higher way than the way one has been following all this time, and that is called 'Jijnasa' and we all start our spiritual life or self-help life with this enquiry.

Summary:

So, the Lord says "In whatever way, man worships Me, I respond to them in that very aspect and those who have worldly desires, mistakenly worship various deities, who are but different aspects of the same Divinity, God. But, in course of time all awaken to the fact that true worship consists in reflecting on the Divine in One-self and slowly moving towards that true 'Self' and ultimately everyone will realize that 'I and the Divine'.

Now we move on to the next verses.

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः । तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्तारमव्ययम् ॥ 13॥

chātur-varṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśhaḥ

tasya kartāram api mām viddhyakartāram avyayam

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा | इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते || 14||

na mām karmāṇi limpanti na me karma-phale sprīhā

iti mām yo 'bhijānāti karmabhir na sa badhyateC'

The Supreme Divine has created both the orders of nature and society but He is not affected by these actions (C4 / V14).

Now, the Lord is telling that "I, The Supreme Divine, have created both the orders of nature and society, but I am not the least affected by these actions because I have no attachment. Those who contemplate on Me as the great creator without having any attachment will also free themselves from attachments and gain liberation."

The Supreme God as 'The Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer':

For those, who are in the lower states of spiritual development, God is always looked upon as the creator, the maintainer and the destroyer. God who is the author of this creation et cetera is called 'Saguna Brahman'.

But there is the highest aspect of God, the impersonal aspect called 'Nirguna Brahman'. We cannot understand this highest aspect of God easily. So long as we are embodied, we can think of God only as another embodied but not a bound being. Embodied means having a form, a name and qualities.

Every object which we see in this world has been created. So also this world. There is a cause before its creation, there is something which sustains it and in the end every object will go back to its constituents elements.

That is why, we call God "The Creator, The Preserver and The Destroyer" of the universe. In Hindu pantheism we call Him 'Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva'.

So when we think of God in His aspect of creation as if 'He is doing activities like creation, preservation' et cetera. And since when we do something we become attached to the work we do. We have a desire and we translate that desire into action and then get attached to the results.

So the doubt that comes naturally is: does the Lord also has any desire? Does He also get attached? Does He also expect results?

Anticipating such a doubt the Lord is saying "I do activities like creation etc., but in reality I do not do anything.

Does this not appear as a contradictory statement? Just now, You are saying, 'that I am the creator; I am the sustainer and I am the destroyer. But, next moment you are telling that I have got nothing to do with any of this'!!

So how to understand such a paradoxical statement!

Here is a beautiful example through which we can understand this so called a contradiction.

1. Example of the Sun:

When the sun rises then every creature starts its activity in its light. If you ask the Sun "Are you the inspirer of these activities?" Then the Sun will say "I know nothing." Even though the sunlight makes everyone active but the Sun himself is not aware of it.

What are we talking about here?

The sun is just a witness and without him (Sun) no activity is possible. But, the Sun doesn't feel that "I am acting."

We can understand this statement better when we take another example from Shri Ramakrishna.

2. Example of a hurricane lamp:

There is a hurricane lantern and two people are doing two different activities. One person is studying Bhagavatam with great devotion and another person is forging a cheque. We can blame the light saying "why are you making these two persons do two different things." The Light will say "I do not know anything."

Similarly, the true answer to this question of creation, preservation and destruction is:-God is not doing it and also without Him these things cannot take place. Because He doesn't have the feeling of 'doer-ship'.

Vedanta categorically says that God is not the creator. We are the creators of our own worlds. Through our own past Samsakaras we take advantage of God's presence we create the entire universe.

So, then who is the creator of this world?

- For a child - God is the creator of this universe.

- For an advanced student – The Creator of this world is our own prarabdha karmas, past actions; each one of us create this world according to our own prarabdha Karmas.

Prarabdha karma means the results of what we did in the past, in our previous lives, and the results of our own past seem to overwhelm us. It looks as though, we are completely helpless, bound and struggling to find a way out. We wish to get out of this phenomenal world but we do not see any way out. Then an anguished prayer comes out of the bottom of our heart.

At that time the divine Lord seems to sense our distress. And He takes birth as an avatara.

And as we have mentioned earlier :-He tries to remind us what our nature is, what is the goal of life, and how we can regain our lost kingdom, our true nature.

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देवकी परमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुं.

May Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda bless us all.

Bhagavad Gita Class 65 On 19 November 2019

Shanti patha:

ओं वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूर मर्दनं,
देवकी परमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुं.
सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतमृतं महत्.
मूकं करोति वाचालं, पंगुं लङ्घयते गिरिं,
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्दमाधवं.

We are discussing the fourth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. We were discussing the phenomena of God descending into the human world as an Avatara.

We also discussed that the Lord, doesn't and is not born as a result of the actions of his past life because he is sarva tantra swatantara, absolutely free in

every way. So, as if he has taken birth. I also mentioned in my previous talks, this truth applies not only to the Divine Lord, but to all of us. We are also not human beings, we are really spiritual beings temporarily mistaking ourselves as human beings. We are trying to remember what our true nature is, through life after life, gradually evolving in our understanding and practice,

Then a day will come, we will progress and this process is called evolution and we will also realise our absolute identity with the Divinity and we, then, become completely free.

So the Lord has promised, whenever humankind needs Me, I am going to incarnate again and again.

My birth is mysterious, my deeds are mysterious, they appear as human but in fact they are divine mysteries and whoever understands the birth, the deeds etc. of the Divine Lord he also will be soon endowed with a divine mind, a sattvika mind, and he also will become free.

This is a fact the Lord is telling to all of us :-

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 4, Verse 9

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।

त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥4.9॥

janma karma cha me divyam evam yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna

O Arjuna, whoever really, as it is in fact, understands the mystery of my Divine birth, as well as Divine activities, once he gets this knowledge, he become separated from his identity with the body. He identifies himself with his true self, which is Atman, which is never born, never dies and never undergoes any change.

Man, then, understands that he is shuddha-buddha-mukta-svarupaha :-

- he is eternally free
- eternally pure,
- he is infinite and,
- that is his true Nature.

Such a person, as soon as that knowledge dawns, through the grace of God, through spiritual practice, the knowledge 'that I am not the body, I am not the

mind', such a person O Arjuna, he alone can understand My Divine mysteries. Hence, as soon as understands his own divine nature he becomes free from the trammels of this body and mind, becomes free from this terrible limitation called the Samsara.

A doubt may come now into Arjuna's mind that "Are there any examples of this?"

So, anticipating such a doubt in the enquirer's mind, the Divine Lord Krishna is himself answering,

"O Arjuna, it is not merely a few persons. There were many; there are many, and there would be many in future also.

Why, because each soul is longing to know itself and in the past, millions have attained liberation. Even now, there are many who are striving and they are at different stages of spiritual progress.

Now this statement may bring a doubt in our minds :-

"Is it only many, or will there be some who will be deprived of this Self-knowledge, and will be forever roaming about in this unending phenomenal life?"

The categorical answer the scriptures give us is that each soul is potentially divine and nobody will be left behind. The statement that many will attain liberation merely means that different persons are at different stages of spiritual progress. All will attain when the right time comes.

The whole world is the manifestation of God. Hence everybody, everything in this world will realise its divinity - this process is eternally going on and it will eternally be continuing.

Is there a process, a particular methodology by which one can attain to self-knowledge? Anticipating such a question the Lord is telling us:

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 4, Verse 10

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः |

बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः || 10||

vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhā man-mayā mām upāśhitāḥ

bahavo jñāna-tapasā pūtā mad-bhāvam āgatāḥ

O Arjuna, there are many people, they have attained their oneness with Me. They have attained My state by meditating upon Me and they have become identified because they have become pure.

Purity means detachment from everything else accepting one's own nature. That is the meaning of purity - the Lord is telling many have taken refuge in Me, many have taken recourse to Me and they have all become free.

The Lord is now telling us how this freedom can be obtained: there are spiritual aspirants who are completely devoid of attachment, fear and anger and they have become completely identified themselves with Myself.

Here, a beautiful psychological law is being re-enumerated. We have seen at the end of the 2nd chapter, how, by constantly dwelling upon a worldly object, a man goes down; and also how a man also can come up by the same process.

We have outlined these steps :-

- 1 The very first step is thinking of an unworthy, limited, worldly object :-
- 2 Man develops attachment which breeds :-
- 3 a desire to possess. And there would be obstacles, When this third step is thwarted, then he becomes :-
- 4 Angry (or frustrated). Anger :-
- 5 Deludes a man, then he :-
- 6 Loses all memory of what is right and what is wrong, and as a result he will do deeds which are unacceptable either by scriptures or by the society.
- 7 And that is how man really attains destruction.
- 8 But the same process, we also have discussed, can help us in attaining the Divine Lord. We should go on meditating upon the Divine Lord. In the beginning there may not be any love for God. There is a beautiful psychological law. We can understand this better with the illustration of an advertisement.

When for the first time an advertisement is seen we are most likely to ignore it. The second time, third time we might ignore it, but after some time the thought enters, 'yes maybe it is good'? After some time, we become established in fondness and think; 'yes', - this is a desirable object! Since this is a good object, I must acquire it.

This is a beautiful process, through which man can go down but it is also the same process by which we can also go up.

So, by thinking of the Divine Lord, constantly however bitter, however unhappy it might feel like at the beginning, we derive much happiness by thinking of the Lord.

By meditating on the Lord, our joy will only increase, it will never decrease. The fact is, when we try to practice spiritual discipline, most of us do it sometimes with joy, sometimes with reluctance and many times because of past habit. However, if we continue without giving it up, then a time will come when we develop attachment to the Lord, then devotion will come for the Lord, then joy will come; only at this stage real meditation will start.

So the lesson we have to learn is : we have to go on repeating the the name of God, try to remember God, unceasingly.

Pray unceasingly.

I think most of you are familiar with the beautiful book, "The Way of a Pilgrim", by a Russian monk : how through japa, keeping faith in the Guru's words and scriptures, a man had attained the highest liberation.

"The Way of a Pilgrim" was written by an unknown Russian saint as an autobiography".

The same process can help us.

The first thing we have to tackle, if we wish to progress in spiritual life, is that we should control anger. Anger indicates that we are frustrated, our desires are thwarted by somebody.

And the root cause of this anger is bhaya, fear. Fear stems from two causes:-

- Fear that we may lose what we have, and
- Fear that we may not get what we are expecting, and
- This fear comes only because of attachment.
- Attachment comes because we are dwelling on a subject for a long time.

A simple example is that we think we are human beings. We love our bodies, we love ourselves, all because for a long time we have been practicing this attachment to the body.

The funny thing is, according to our scriptures, we have had many, many births, and in each birth there is a new body; but we do not remember any of them. We had many, many births and therefore many, many bodies and many times our bodies have undergone old age, terrible disease, accidents, death etc. Because we forget, the tendency to love our bodies, to identify ourselves with our bodies becomes so firm that we came to think that we are this particular body.

Of course, the mind also will be there. Where there is a body, there is bound to be a mind.

So, also in this birth, we are attached to this new body. But we do not know that this is a new body : we think this is the only body!

Hence, we bestow the greatest love and attention, we serve the body day and night! In fact, wise people as well as scriptures declare : that this human body is given to us to realise our divinity.

So what is the Lord telling? What is the essence of this particular verse? Try to get rid of attachment, fear, and anger. Only then can we progress in spiritual life.

There are many people, they understood the psychology of bondage and they first of all stopped becoming angry, and then stopped becoming fearful.

To remove attachment, we have to divert our thinking towards a higher goal and the highest of these goals is none other than God Himself. There are people who are completely free from attachment, therefore from fear and therefore from anger. Thus their minds became free.

How have they done this? By constantly thinking of the Lord, day and night, without cessation.

Pray unceasingly, constantly, intensely, most lovingly, with the greatest faith in the scriptures, go on dwelling upon the Divine Lord. As a result of constant practice, in the past, many sages have attained me. And if you follow the same process you will also attained me.

When we refer to the life of Sri Ramakrishna, we can understand this fact so beautifully - many times when devotees are talking or singing, or the topic is about

Mother Kali, Sri Ramakrishna's mind becomes identified with Mother Kali. When devotees are thinking about Gopala or Krishna, Sri Ramakrishna's mind becomes identified with Krishna. When people are thinking or talking about Radha, He becomes identified with Radha. The thought of any type of divinity, any manifestation of divinity, any form, any name of God instantly used to throw Sri Ramakrishna's mind and He became One with that deity for the time being, as it were, so great was his power of concentration.

So these great pure souls, constantly dwelling upon the Lord, nearly become one with the Lord. Therefore, they take complete refuge in God :-

Then they feel "O Lord, I do not exist, only you exist! I am not real, only you are real!" This knowledge of the Self is called the Austerity of Knowledge.

There are many wrong notions about austerity. What is austerity? Real austerity is not doing something painful. For example, many people fast on Ekadasi. The purpose of the Ekadasi fasting is to divert all thought, towards the Divine. Without the thought of God fasting is of limited use only.

This is what the Divine Lord is telling to us now :-

बहवो ज्ञानतपसा [bahavo jñāna-tapasā]

Many people, through this austerity of knowledge, which is :-

- That God alone exists,
- There is no difference between me and God,
- I take refuge in that God,
- I have become one with that God.

As a result of that :- मद्भावमागताः [mad-bhāvam āgatāḥ]

They have become completely identified themselves with Me.

This beautiful fact or detail of the spiritual evolution, has been indicated to us by Sri Ramakrishna, in the form of a beautiful quotation.

I am referring to the incident when Rama asks Hanuman, "How do you look upon Me?" Then, Hanuman's categorical reply was :-

Here is this beautiful Sanskrit verse:-

देहबुद्ध्या तु दासोऽहं जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः। आत्मबुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहम् इति मे निश्चिता मतिः॥

“Deha Buddhya tu Dasoham Jiva Buddhya Tvadaamsakah | Atma Buddhya Tvamevaham iti me nishchita matih || ”

➤ “When I think of myself, I am the body, I am different from you, I am small, you are the Lord. I think of myself as your servant, this is my ‘servant’ feeling – the emotion of being a loving faithful servant.”

➤ “But when I consider myself as a small part of your consciousness, jiva buddhi, then I think you as the whole and I am a part of you.”

➤ “But through persistent spiritual practice, when I am able to totally identify myself with You, with the Atman, then, I know that there is absolutely no difference between You and me.”

This constant striving, to progress in spiritual life, keeping in mind, that beautiful goal : That my nature is divine at this moment I have forgotten my nature ... therefore I pray ... I worship ... I think of the Divine Lord ... and slowly I wish to progress.

Then a beautiful relationship with the Lord becomes established.

“Everyone is potentially divine and all should be able to discard attachments to the worldly objects and should be able to come to Me.”

But how is it, that most people are only dwelling on worldly objects, which only gives little amount of pleasure and bring much suffering?” Why can't they, why don't they, turn their attention towards the Divine Lord?”

The Lord is explaining this anticipated question that can arise in our minds. He says, “There are different types of people at different stages of evolution.”

In the Bhagavad Gita itself, the Divine Lord divides people into four categories. This is not about the caste system but about spiritual development. According to this statement all people can be divided into four categories.

They are :-

1 आर्तः ārta, people in distress

2 अर्थार्थी arthārthī, people who are not in distress but full of unfulfilled desires

3 जिज्ञासु jijñāsu, the Enquirer into the higher truths:

After a lot of experience through many, many lives, a little bit of awakening comes to many people. Then, by the Lord's Grace, they turn their mind towards the enquiry: - what is the reality? Is this world real? Or is there some other world? One starts reflecting:

'I know through my experience, this world has given me a lot of unhappiness. It certainly has given me a bit of happiness, but the proportion of unhappiness is too huge! I was running after these things and I experienced many things in my past births. Now, when I look back, I do understand and my wisdom has grown a little bit. I now I understand that there is a higher life. This worldly life cannot be the goal of life.

Then comes a spontaneous deep enquiry - is there any higher truth? Is there God? Is there any way to attain Him?

This enquiry is called Jijnasa. When a spiritual aspirant reaches this stage of enquiry God brings him the right teacher who tells him the essence of the scriptures and his own experiences. Then the disciple accepts the words of the Guru with tremendous faith and strives to practice spiritual disciplines which has been mentioned earlier :-

- get rid of attachment
- get rid of fear
- get rid of anger
- become pure
- take refuge at the feet of the Lord
- surrender Him and,
- try to become one with the Divine Lord.

When the spiritual practice goes on, in course of time, such a person will also attain the Lord.

Now comes the fourth and last stage of spiritual development

4 ज्ञानी jñānī

A jñānī is a person of true knowledge, he knows things as they are.

Thus the Lord is describing different stages of spiritual development.

Just now, we mentioned that the Lord divides all humans being into one of these four categories.

First of all, people in distress. We know very well, when we are suffering, our thoughts usually dwell on the suffering and do not turn to God. Our first thought would be: let me get out of this suffering for now, O Lord, please save me.

So when does a man really turn and pray to God?

Man at first tries to take advantage of all the means available to eliminate worldly unhappiness through worldly means and after trying for many lives, he comes to know that all these worldly means sometimes help but never help permanently, and never completely. Then alone his mind turns towards God.

So most people pray only for a temporary relief of the divine Lord. But, The divine Lord is telling something unique here. He is not condemning such people. These people who are in distress and are suffering, if only they turn towards Me, then they are also on their way to Me.; they are also considered great devotees of Me. We have many examples of devotees in distress such as Drupadi, Kaliya, the snake, Gajraj (the elephant devotee). So that's about people who are in distress.

The second category is Artharthi or people with unfulfilled desires. There are the other type of people who are not in any immediate danger or suffering but they have many unfulfilled desires. Their desires go on multiplying and never come to an end. These people desire many many things for the comfort of their bodies and minds, for their families, for their near and dears.

- Everyman has to go through these two stages and then only after many a birth, he looks back and realises that there doesn't seem to be no end to his desires.

Then comes the third category.

The third Category is called Jijnasu or an enquirer. Such a person thinks "How can I put an end to all these desires?" And "How can I attain an unceasing bliss, the absolute bliss or Ananda."

Such a person by God's grace, gets a teacher, sits near the feet of his teacher and listens to the teacher's teachings.

The teacher takes such a person through three specific steps. These three the late are Shravana, Manana and Nidhidhyasana.

Sitting at the feet of the teacher the disciple listens with faith for a long time. Then he sits and thinks deeply what he had learnt and gets rid of all the doubts that may arise until he is firmly

convinced that what the guru taught him from the scriptures is the absolute truth. He, then, earnestly takes to spiritual practice / sadhana and tries to realise the truth.

This fourth stage is called 'ज्ञानी Jnani'. At this stage the aspirant realises he's a true nature and becomes free.

These are the four types of devotees: Arta, Artharthi, Jijnasu, and Jnani.

The divine Lord has expounded about these four states. These four steps apply to all people irrespective of religion; whether they are Hindus or Christians, in the past or in the future. Every human being has to go through these four stages until he reaches perfection and attains liberation.

Let us now get rid of the wrong notion that there are some fortunate people, who were never in distress; they never had any desires and straight away they are born as spiritual beings and soon they attained liberation. This, clearly, is a wrong notion. It is not possible. We make this mistake because of our inability to see the past deeds of people. We only compare people by looking at the external events of their present lives.

- Every saint was a sinner in the past and every sinner will be a saint in the future. It is not true that some people are especially favoured by God or by luck, so they progress quickly.

As a matter of fact, everyone has to go through these four stages of Mahamaya and only then they become free.

People worship the divine Lord in myriad ways but there is only one God. So, the Lord is referring here that so many people worship me in myriad ways, infinite ways.

We can understand this - a Hindu, a Christian, a Buddhist, a Muslim and every religion describes God in different ways. If people have faith and they follow sincerely then actually all of them are worshipping not different Gods but only one being called God there is only one God.

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

मम वर्तमानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥ 11॥

ye yathā mām prapadyante tāns tathaiva bhajāmyaham
mama vartm

Meaning (of Verse 11): So, the Divine Lord is telling "Who so ever worships Me in whatever form, they are all following different paths and every path invariably brings such person only to Me."

As I have mentioned earlier that even thieves, murderers, cheaters, pick pockets, to whom society calls un-social elements, they also through their hard sufferings learn the lesson, turn towards goodness or dharma and ultimately come to this world only. So, no one is left out, no man goes to hell for ever. Everybody has to come to the Lord, not because the Lord desires but because this is our nature. Our nature is divinity and until we realise our divinity, there is no way of stopping our spiritual practice and spiritual progress.

The Lord is highlighting this particular point to us.

Now, the next verse is also telling.

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 4, Verse 12

काङ्क्षन्तः कर्मणां सिद्धिं यजन्त इह देवताः ।

क्षिप्रं हि मानुषे लोके सिद्धिर्भवति कर्मजा ॥ 12॥

kāṅkṣantaḥ karmaṇām siddhiṁ yajanta iha devatāḥ kṣhipraṁ hi mānuṣhe loka
siddhir bhavati karmajā

Meaning: Those who desire success in their works, worship the gods here, for quickly in this world of man alone, success comes from works.

Here a beautiful fact is being pointed out to us by the divine Lord. Those who desire quick results, quick success in their endeavours, they must be born as a human beings. Whatever man does on this earth, bears fruit very quickly either in this life or in the next life.

Is there any explanation that why only human life can yield the results of actions quickly?

According to Hinduism there are three worlds.

1. Human world or मनुष्यलोक, Manushyaloka: This human world which we know.
2. Heavenly world or स्वर्गलोक Swargloka: Then there is higher world called the heavenly world, where those who accumulate lot of merit, they go there to enjoy. and
3. Hell or नरकलोक Narkaloka: There is a lower world called hell or Narkaloka where people suffer intensely for the actions which they themselves have committed.

Effects of heavenly life on us:

Well, the simple explanation seems to be that those who are in heaven are distracted by too many tempting objects and their time available is also very less. In heaven the mind is very difficult to control. Whatever they do there is not done with focus therefore it takes a long time to get the results.

Effects of life in hell on us:

Similarly those who go down to the nether worlds. The dwellers in hell have to go through a lot of unimaginable suffering. As we all know whenever we have headache or stomach pains or illness then how difficult it is to free our minds from body consciousness and divert that mind towards God.

Not only are there physical ailments but there are also mental diseases, like worrying, expecting too much, unrealistic attitudes et cetera.

When the mind is enjoying so much all suffering so much it is almost impossible to focus on God.

Why is this human body considered the best instrument on this earth?

- As a human being, where there is neither too much of suffering nor too much of happiness, he is fortunately positioned in a favourable situation. Hence this human body is considered the best instrument on this earth.

- As I have mentioned earlier - either for yoga or bhoga, or roga, that means either for spirituality or worldly enjoyment or for suffering from diseases respectively, this human body is the only instrument available.

- That is why, Scriptures and wise people have pointed out again and again that 'Sariram adyam khalu dharma sadhanam' - this body is the best and only means and only instrument that can help us to achieve any progress in life.

The Lord is clearly pointing out that we are all fortunate to get this extraordinary human birth in this human world - where we can get so many spiritual people, spiritual company called satsanga and beautiful books to remind and inspire us (also many sufferings which again remind us of God).

- If we do not use or utilise this human birth to progress in spiritual life then really it is a very pitiable thing and we have to reap results of our own karma and have to suffer for a long time. That is why, the Lord is pointing out that we should be thankful that we have a human birth, we also have the desire for spiritual progress. And we also have the favourable conditions, the blessings of the great souls therefore go on striving and go on progressing in spiritual life.

O' Lord are you not the creator of this world?

Then comes the beautiful question and the question is this that " Are you not O' Lord the creator of this world?
The Lord replies "Yes I am."

So if you are God and everybody is your child but then why did you create so many beings in so many different ways - rich and poor, learned and ignorant, happy and unhappy, good and evil, dharmic and adharmic? Every human being can be slotted into a particular area.

Especially, the Lord is referring to a traditional system that was in existence called the Caste System.

According to Hinduism - there are four types of castes.

1. Lowest is called Sudra.
2. Higher than Sudras is called Vaishya,
3. Still higher than Vaishya is called Kshatriya.
4. Still higher than Kshatriyas is called Brahmana.

Surprisingly, Socrates also divides people into four categories.

1. The Wise people;
2. The Warriors;
3. The Traders and
4. Everybody else.

Because this is not something which we are just imagining but this is a fact. Even in the same family - we can get people who are very less evolved; some are higher evolved and some are very much evolved.

A very well-known example is in the Ramayana. There were three brothers.

- 1) Kumbhakarna
- 2) Ravanaasura
- 3) Vibhishana, and

In fact these three men represent three different qualities.

Kumbhakarna was like a child just eats and sleeps. He was overcome with tamoguna, the lowest of the qualities.

Ravanaasura was like any other human being and was full of desires. Fortunately or unfortunately he was endowed with tremendous strength, Intelligence and cleverness. He developed a terrible ambition to become the emperor of this world. He conquered many people and spoiled many women and at last he kidnapped Rama's wife Sita. This is a play of guna called rajoguna.

Vibhishana represents the quality of Sattva. This is the best of the qualities and takes man to God. All of us have to go through all the three gunas. But after much sufferings, we turn our minds from evil or what is unrighteous and start progressing towards God this is all because of development of a guna called sattva. Then he becomes like Vibhishana.

This is a natural, inevitable, unavoidable process of human evolution.

This world has come into being by the will of God. So, The Lord says " It is by My will." Why we should think that it is all done by His will?

So the Lord says that "The whole nature, the material out of which I have created this entire world is called 'My Maya / My prakriti'. The Lord combined with His power of delusion called Maya becomes the material cause; becomes the Intelligence cause and becomes the instrumental cause of this world.

Theory of cause and effect;

- Even logically also, we have to deduce, whenever we look at this world then we never find any effect without any cause. If there is a cause then it will turn out an effect, if there is an effect then there must be a cause.

- Before this entire universe was created there was nothing but suddenly we see this universe. So, what is the conclusion?

- This world is an effect and therefore it must have a cause.

- Since there is nobody else other than God before the world is created.

Hence God alone must be the material cause, and the intelligent, as well as the instrumental cause. This is what that has been said.

The Lord says "Though I am considered as the creator but I do not consider Myself as a doer. By My very presence, prakriti itself becomes active and creates."

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा | इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते || 14||

na mām karmāṇi limpanti na me karma-phale sprīhā

iti mām yo 'bhijānāti karmabhir na sa badhyateC'

But the Lord says "Though I am considered as the creator I do not Myself consider that I am a doer."

There is a law that whoever consider that he is a doer, he must reap the consequences. Since the Lord says "I do not think that I am creating."

Then who is creating?

The answer is, by My very presence prakriti itself becomes active and creates. It is a very difficult concept to understand. But, few examples can be given.

Examples of fire, magnet and sun:

1. Fire: When we have to cook food then we use fire to cook food, without this fire cooking is not possible. But, if we ask the fire that "Did you cook the vegetables?" The fire will say "I don't know anything. It is my nature to produce heat. This heat does whatever it is supposed to do, whenever a thing comes near it." We human beings,

take up some vegetables etc. and light up the fire. This fire just burns, it never says that "I have cooked therefore, you should be grateful to me."

2. Magnet: Similarly, when there is a magnet and some iron fillings nearby then they are naturally attracted but without the conscious effort of the magnet.

3. Sun: Similarly, when the sun rises early in the morning, by its very light and energy all the activities of all creatures start but the Sun says " I don't know anything about the activities. If people are taking advantage of my light then it is their responsibility."

Conclusion: Be just an instrument

This is a beautiful idea, being an instrument of this creation without feeling that I am the 'doer', therefore, I am not the enjoyer of my doing. This is a beautiful idea which we should be able to practice in our spiritual life.

Summary of what we discussed so far:

- Every human being is different. This difference is due to the varying degree of development of the three qualities called satva, rajas, and tamas.
- Where ever we are; whatever we are, where ever we are born, that is the best time and place to start so that we can progress towards the Lord by slowly ascending from the lower guna to the next guna and then to the next higher guna. That is to say from tamas to rajas, from rajas to satva and then go beyond all these three gunas.
- The Lord has no partiality. He does not really create like a potter creates a pot. His mere presence lends this process of creation but actual creation takes place according to the development of the samsakaras - habits of thinking, feeling, willing and desiring etc. of the human beings which have been accumulated through many past lives.
- Therefore, the charge that any society has created castes or any particular person is responsible for the castes is completely irrational and that doesn't really stand.

Important point:

The point we need to understand that we are here, we do not need to think too much, excepting that I am in this situation now and how can I progress in my spiritual life in future.

That is what, the divine Lord is going to give certain indications and these indications in fact have been given already in the second chapter and also in the third chapter but He is reminding us briefly how these indications can help us to progress towards the divine Lord.

We will discuss verse 14 onwards in our next class.

Vasudeva sutam devam kamsa Chanoora mardanam, Devaki paramanandam
Krishnam vande Jagat Gurum.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कं सचाणूरमदर्नम् । देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

May Shri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda bless us all with bhakti, jnana, viveka and vairagya.

Om Shantih Shantih Shantih

With kind regards

Mamta Misra & Hari Sundaresan.