

Bhagavad Gita online class 66 on 02 November 2019

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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.

In our last class we have been discussing a serious charge which was brought on God Himself.

If God is the creator of this universe then why did He create such varied types in His creation - some He made very happy, some very unhappy, some less intelligent, some more intelligent, some very wealthy, some very poor, some enjoying life, some suffering etc.

The Lord is telling us that the whole universe has been created by 'Me' and in this universe naturally there will be differences among the created beings. These differences among human beings are absolutely due to the manifestation of what is called in Vedanta a guna- satvaguna, rajoguna and tamoguna.

An important point for us to take note of is that no guna by itself will ever function alone. All the three gunas will be functioning at the same time but in different proportion.

In accordance with the dominance and subservience of these gunas, mainly human beings have been divided into four classes: brahmana, shatriya, vaishya and sudra.

The modern people should not think that this is an affair by birth. Nobody is brahmana or shatriya or vaishya or sudra by birth, but rather everybody is an un-regenerated person by birth. But, through good environment, good coaching, good practice, good supervision, people manifest their samskaras - their habits which they have inherited from their past lives.

The Lord says "I have created this universe but I have also given them freedom. So that they can become responsible people through their experiences and so they can also either manifest or cover up their true possibilities because each soul is potentially divine. That is an absolute fact. Through our thoughts, through our speech, through our actions, we can either manifest our divinity more or we can also cover it.

Responsibility is meaningless without freedom. God says "I have given you some limited amount of freedom. You are directly responsible for 'what you are'. I am not responsible at all."

This is how we counter the charge that God is partial to some, impartial to some and more than partial to others.

That charge (Why did He create such varied types?) has been refuted.

Now, the next question comes.

The Lord is stating a wonderful fact "Even though in 'My presence' this whole world or Jagat is created, but really speaking I do not know anything about this world."

Few examples have been given, not in the Bhagavat Gita but elsewhere.

Examples of sun, light, fire & hurricane lantern:

In the presence of the sun, in the presence of light, in the presence of fire-many people can do the opposite things.

Shri Ramakrishna used to give the example of the hurricane lamp. In the light of the same hurricane lamp, someone is reading Bhagavatam and someone is forging a cheque. It is not the fault of the light.

"So, also without Me / the light / the knowledge - no activity is possible. Even though I only give them the light / knowledge, what they do with this knowledge or with this light is absolutely their responsibility". This beautiful concept is later on expounded into the elaborate 'Law of Karma'. Each one of us is different - based on how we utilise this freedom.

The Lord is categorically explaining to us. We are going to chant this verse 14.

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 4, Verse 14

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

na mām karmāṇi limpanti na me karma-phale spṛihā
iti mām yo 'bhijānāti karmabhir na sa badhyate

Actions do not defile Me nor do I long for its fruits. He who knows 'Me' and this secret thus is not bound by any activity.

There is a profound truth which has been expounded here. We are all bound, not by our actions, but by the way we perform these actions. Actions are not at fault. Actions can bind us and they can also liberate us. So when a person is utilising the light to read Bhagavatam then he is getting rid of his bondage slowly. But, when a person misuses the same light then he is forging a stronger bond on himself.

No action should ever be blamed. There is another good example of a sharp knife. There is a sharp knife. A butcher uses it to take away life. But, the same sharp knife is used by a surgeon to make a person free from some ailments, pains etc.

Therefore, activities are completely neutral. A person's future, his happiness or unhappiness, his liberation or bondage depends on his attitude and how he performs these activities,

This is a great secret brought out openly by the Lord - even though, I 'Myself' is telling that "I am the creator and without Me no creation is ever possible but at the same time - I do not create."

Superficially, this looks like a contradictory statement, but it is not.

Just as fire gives heat, some people can use that heat to cook and enjoy nice cooked food.

However, some people can use the same fire to burn other people's belongings and other people's hopes. These people can do a lot of destructive activities by the same fire.

Therefore, karma as such does not do anything to us but the result of any karma depends upon - how we do and deal with that karma. This is the secret of Karma-Yoga.

Karma-Yoga means - how to use any activity to make progress. Here, progress means only one thing, gradual manifestation of our own innate divinity.

This is the secret which the Lord is teaching as an ideal to all of us. Many great people in the past have understood this secret from the Lord and they have gone out of the bondage of this transmigratory existence.

The seekers of truth in ancient times worked in that spirit. Whatever, activities they did - even very ordinary activities like breathing, closing of eyelids, opening the eyelids, eating, sleeping, drinking, walking or anything which they did - was converted into a spiritual action.

This is being expounded in the 15th verse.

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 4, Verse 15

एवं ज्ञात्वा कृतं कर्म पूर्वैरपि मुमुक्षुभिः ।
कुरु कर्मैव तस्मात्त्वं पूर्वैः पूर्वतरं कृतम् ॥ 15॥

evaṁ jñātvā kṛtaṁ karma pūrvair api mumukṣhubhiḥ
kuru karmaiva tasmāttvaṁ pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraṁ kṛitam

Men of old, who sort liberation knew this and performed their activities in that spirit. Therefore, O Arjuna do also your work as the ancients did in the former times.

A beautiful example is being given here by the Lord "So Many people following 'My footsteps', performing karma-yoga, have attained liberation. Therefore, that is a proof that anybody who follows the same path (karma-yoga) can also become totally liberated."

Here, the Lord is telling us something very interesting.

- First, He is giving a proof - lest you may think that this is a new teaching of mine. There is no new teaching, it is the same old truth - ancient truth or Sanatana Satya. But, at different times people tend to forget it.
- Therefore, the Lord comes down out of compassion. The same truth which seems to be covered up by a lot of rubbish - He clears the rubbish, upholds the truth and once more propagates the right way of living which is called "The establishment of dharma".

Many people who have practiced it became free. What does it mean?

It means that they had become God. There is a beautiful statement in the Upanishads. ब्रह्मवित् ब्रह्मैव भवति **Brahmavit Brahmaev Bhavati** - whatever knowledge we have, we become that. This is a fact which we can experience every day of our lives.

This can be explained by the example of seeing a movie. When we go and watch a particular movie, if we identify ourselves with that movie then often we would try to behave according to the characters of that movie. This is a well-known fact, billions of people nowadays after watching movies, follow the fashion shown in the movie. They follow and imitate other people or so-called celebrities in the film.

These people are foolish people because they don't know that the people whom they are following - ultimately may become drug addicts or commit suicide or may be sent to jail. These models are not living an ideal life at all but only temporarily. It is called in America 'fifteen minutes of fame' and after that the whole universe forgets them.

There are people who have become completely liberated. How do we know that these people have become liberated?

We would know because liberation itself is the result of knowing that I am divine. But, other people cannot understand these liberated souls, unless these other people also have a similar experience. However we can infer their liberated or self-realised state through the characteristics that they have exhibited after realisation.

A simple example - here is a person, who is enjoying extraordinary good health, whereas everybody else around him is either sick or suffering in some way or other. It is very natural that people around him will say to him "You are our colleague; you are also living in the same place, but you seem to be very healthy. What is the secret of your good health?" This person tells them about - whatever, he is doing for his good health. He says to them that if you also do the same things then I can almost guarantee you that you will also become as healthy as me. Of course, it does not depend only upon good food etc but also depends on the purva-

janma-samsakaras and prarabdha. However, there is a great possibility that other people can also enjoy a similar health if they follow this man's advice.

What are the characteristics of such people?

I hope, you have not forgotten. The whole of the second chapter of the Bhagavat Gita at the end, describes the characteristics of a realised soul called Isthiti-prajna-lakshanas in great detail by the Lord Himself.

To summarise, four characteristics of a Self Realised Soul are:-

1st Characteristic is:- the realised soul is Sadanandamaya सदानन्दमया - always happy.

2nd Characteristic is:- he loves everybody without making the slightest differentiation.

3rd Characteristic is:- he treats everybody exactly in the same way without a least bit of partiality. Our audience perhaps can recollect - Holy Mother made a beautiful statement "For me, my son Amjad as well as my son Sharad are exactly one and the same." That is why we call Sharda Devi 'Holy Mother' because she is holy and if we are children of 'Holy Mother' then we must also be holy children. That is our ideal which we have to slowly attain.

4th Characteristic is:- They are prepared to give up their life for the sake of others. Actually that is not a correct statement - they do not give up their lives for anybody's sake but, if they are giving up their lives then they are giving up for their own sake because there is no other person for them. "There is no stranger my child. Everyone is your own, make the whole world your own." This is a great teaching of the Holy Mother.

So, the Lord is telling us that if anybody wants to be happy, wise and healthy then there is a way for them. That way has been clearly enunciated by 'Me' and 'I Myself' follow that way and not only 'Me' but millions have followed it in the past and some are following it now, many will follow it in the future and they will also attain liberation.

This is the essence of this 15th verse. Here, men of old - does not mean old men, it means men of ancient times who sought liberation, knew this path and did their work based upon the ancient path of spirituality.

Here, we can bring an illustration from Shri Ramakrishna's life. How long back that Shri Ramakrishna lived, Holy Mother lived; Swami Vivekananda lived; direct disciples lived? Hardly 100 years have passed and they are living proof that they have become liberated by treading the ancient path of spirituality. This means, they knew that "I am God Ahm Brahmasmi". So, how do we know that they knew "I am Brahman"? Again, by the four characteristics - they were ever happy; they loved everyone equally; they treated everyone exactly in the same way as themselves and they were ready to sacrifice anything for the welfare of other people.

When we see these four characteristics in any person then we know that either they are the liberated souls or they are far advanced in their spiritual life.

Then, there is also something very important.

Ok! life is nothing but activity. Birth is an activity; living is an activity; death is even a greater activity. What are we really talking about?

We have some knowledge about birth and have some amount of control on - how we can live. But, we are really helpless, because we do not know how to die.

A wise man had once declared that a man's greatness is known - by the way he dies. A great person always dies happily. Here, death really means no death. Death means, he is only giving up his old worn out dress which has been completely utilised. So, there is no more need for that dress any longer. In our case, when dress has become old then we have to acquire a new dress. In their case, dress has served its purpose and now, it is no more necessary because no dress can ever cover the infinite.

That is why God is called Digambara - Dig means the whole universe is the cover for them. In Jainism there are Swethambara & Digambara. (Digambara (/dɪˈɡʌmbərə/; "sky-clad") is one of the two major schools of Jainism, the other being Śvētāmbara (white-clad). The word Digambara (Sanskrit) is a combination of two words: dig (directions) and ambara (sky), referring to those whose garments are of the element that fills the four quarters of space. Digambara monks do not wear any clothes.

I hope you remember, there is a temple in South India which is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is called Chitambaram Temple. There is no image excepting a small light is there. The word Chitambaram is derived from 'chit' meaning pure consciousness, and 'ambaram' meaning 'sky'. It refers to the sky of consciousness, which is the ultimate aim we should attain according to the scriptures, we all have to become Chitambara and that means we do not need any dress.

What is this “dress” we are talking about?

This dress is our body and mind. In Vedantic language, they are called either three bodies or five koshas / pancha-kosha. These five koshas are our dresses. As we progress, we go on shedding the outer dresses and identifying ourselves gradually with inner and inner dress until the very innermost dress which is called anandamaya-kosha is totally given up and then we remain as the ever-existing absolute reality called Brahman.

Now, the next question comes - life is nothing but activity.

As I just now mentioned that every activity should make us wiser until death becomes the greatest sacrifice or yajna.

What is this yajna?

I borrowed this dress from God and I am giving back this dress exactly in the same pristine condition without making it impure to the Divine - Who has **loaned**

this dress to me for some time, because I do not need this dress anymore but somebody else might need that one.

So, this whole life is activity only and we must do such activity that the end justifies the beginning meaning that we have lived a very fruitful life. When we live a very fruitful life then we gradually get four fruits.

What are these four fruits?

These fruits are Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha and in that order. But the ultimate fruit is Moksha - when we become totally liberated.

**What is this activity? Are there any different types of activities?
If so, what is the difference?**

Usually, not only do we not have the right type of understanding about different types of activity but we misunderstand the right activity as wrong and the wrong activity as right. This is called Aviveka or indiscrimination. This Aviveka advances us more and more into this world of transmigration which is nothing but asat, achit and dukha which is the opposite of sat-chit & ananda.

The Lord is trying to expound this profound truth. This particular truth is very very relevant to all of us especially nowadays.

Why?

Because, this is an age where people are forgetting that they are individuals; they are family members and they are also members of larger society. They have duties towards society; there are duties towards the family and there are also duties towards their own personality or individuality. When we neglect a harmony among these three fields then people will become unhealthy and people will become in other words - mad.

Insanity is nothing but imbalance among these three types of life styles. We have to bring about a harmony. That type of activity which brings about this harmony is good and this is what every scripture of every religion is going to expound to us. Let us chant this 16th verse.

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 4, Verse 16

किं कर्म किमकर्मेति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिताः ।
तत्ते कर्म प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात् ॥ 16॥

kiṁ karma kim akarmeti kavayo 'pyatra mohitāḥ
tat te karma pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvā mokṣhyase 'śhubhāt

Even the wise are perplexed as to what is action and what is inaction. Therefore, I will tell you, what action is that you may know and be freed from evil.

In Vedantic terminology, the word 'evil' has only one meaning:

In normal day to day parlance, evil means that which will bring me discomfort, unhappiness, suffering either by conditions outside e.g. weather or other creatures or other people. However that is not considered by Vedanta as evil at all. In fact it is considered as the greatest blessing. No less than Holy Mother said that misery or suffering is a gift of God. We are not wise enough to understand that we progress towards the manifestation of our own divinity faster if we undergo suffering rather than when we are very happy.

In Vedantic parlance "evil" means - being born again and again in this transmigratory cycle and not making efforts or not striving to get out of it. That is called "evil".

There are two goals in our life according to the Vedas or Vedanta. One is Abhyudaya and another is Nishreasha.

Abhyudaya means all the happiness that we can squeeze in this world is called Abhyudaya including reaching Brahmaloka and enjoying the highest dualistic happiness for a very very long time. Life is a journey from a lower state of happiness to a higher state of happiness.

The happiness of Brahmaloka is not a higher state of happiness. The higher state of happiness is to know that "I am happiness".

Let us understand this distinction right now.

Whatever happiness we can derive from any external object including our body and mind or from any object which is "not from within ourselves".

"Not from within ourselves" means - not from Myself or not from the pure Atman. This happiness is called Dukha or the lower happiness. There are many variations in that.

But, Higher state of happiness or Brahmananda or the bliss of Brahman means - when I know that 'I am Brahman'. I don't have happiness but I become happiness.

Vedanta clearly distinguishes between having happiness and becoming happiness. Having happiness is like 'आया राम गया राम Aya Ram Gaya Ram'. Whatever comes it also goes away and whatever goes away, comes back again. This coming and going is called the Brahm-chakra or Cycle of transmigration. There is a profound truth in it and that truth is - if happiness, not only comes but goes away and whatever goes away, if it doesn't come back again then we will not know, what we are really doing. If we don't know what is heat then we would never know what is cold. Similarly, if we don't know what is unhappiness then we would never know what is happiness and if we don't know what is happiness then we would never know what is unhappiness.

We want to get out of that state of having happiness and would like to be able to say that we should not experience even a single millisecond without happiness. That state is possible only when we say that we do not want happiness but we want to become happiness and in reality our very nature is nothing but happiness. There is a beautiful word which is used for this state called 'Anandaswaroopa'.

- When we have existence that is a bondage. We don't want to have existence but we want to become existence.
- We don't want to have knowledge but we want to become knowledge.
- We don't want to have happiness but we want to become happiness.

We want to become sat; we want to become chit and we want to become anandaswaroopa. This is the highest goal called liberation or moksha or getting out of this transmigratory cycle etc.

So, for that we have to work out and do spiritual practice. First step is - we have to purify ourselves.

So the Lord is expounding this beautiful concept in 2 steps.

As a first step, He wants to tell us the types of action :-

- what is right action,
- what is wrong action and,
- what is inaction.

Action means that which we should do - and what we should do falls into only right action. But many people also do wrong actions, so the scriptures tell us what is right action, what is wrong action and what is inaction.

Inaction means not doing anything, so we have to understand these three divisions as a first step.

The second step is what attitude, with what bhavana we have to perform every action that we do.

Let me illustrate this with a small incident :-

There was an attendant of Holy Mother and sometimes he used to cook food, which was to be offered to Sri Ramakrishna. One day he cooked the food, part of that food is what we call lentils - dahl. After cooking was over, he could not remember whether he had added salt or not, but there was no time! He cannot taste it because, anything that we taste, he thinks cannot be offered to God. However, he took courage in both his hands and thought, "I need just to take a small bit", and he tasted it. He had not added any salt, so he added an appropriate amount and then that was offered to Sri Ramakrishna.

Everything went off very well, but he was feeling guilty conscience, that "did I offer to Thakur after tasting it myself? Have I done anything wrong?" Many times devotees have unnecessarily suffered.

After 2 days, when the thought was again and again troubling him, then Holy Mother said, "Baba – the dahl you prepared two days back is so nice - the taste is still lingering on my tongue!" This was to make him understand that Thakur really enjoyed that food that day.

So what is She telling? That if I enjoyed it, then Thakur also enjoyed it. 'You don't need to feel bad, because your purpose, your motivation is not to eat it, but to see that it will be acceptable to eat it.' With that motive, he had done that, so there is nothing to feel guilty about.

So these two steps define :-

- what type should be assiduously avoided?
- when we should never withdraw from activities.

Everything has its own proper direction and the scriptures give us this direction, but there are people, even wise people who don't know the secret of this. This has been hinted at in this 16th verse.

Even wise people are perplexed as to what is action and what is inaction!

Therefore I will tell you what action is, so that you may know and be free from evil.

As I mentioned, evil means only *bandana*, bondage, so we have to get rid of it. Incidentally, whether we know it or not, everybody is travelling only towards God. Consciously or unconsciously, we all want to travel only towards God. Just as a seed, wants to grows into its own nature, it cannot help itself.

So, we also are growing towards God. But we need to know how to grow properly, how to protect ourselves by using pesticides, how to reinforce our strengths by applying fertiliser and protecting ourselves from harm by fencing ourselves.

Any plant will grow beautifully when these three activities are observed :-

- first of all, fence around it,
- secondly give it proper food,
- lastly, protect it from anticipated diseases by applying pesticides.

The same thing also applies in our spiritual journey.

So the ultimate goal of everybody is only moksha, whether people know it or not. How do we know this?

Logically :-

- we want to be healthy,
- we want to live longer and longer,
- we want to acquire knowledge,
- we want to become wise, and then finally,
- we want to have uninterrupted happiness which is called *ananda*.

These desires can never be quenched by anybody in this world. So the Lord is proceeding that one has to know the secret of these three activities. What are these three?

- what is right action?
- what is wrong action? And,
- what is no action or inaction?

The 17th verse :-

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 4, Verse 16

कर्मणो ह्यपि बोद्धव्यं बोद्धव्यं च विकर्मणः ।
अकर्मणश्च बोद्धव्यं गहना कर्मणो गतिः ॥ 4.17॥

*karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyaṁ boddhavyaṁ cha vikarmaṇaḥ
akarmaṇaśh cha boddhavyaṁ gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*

For verily, one has to understand, what action really is, and likewise what is a forbidden action. Also what is the nature of inaction. Hard it is, to understand the way of action.

Nowadays, there is a misnomer, that we are all wise people; we know everything about the world. This is nothing but foolishness and arrogance.

The only way we have to know is from the scriptures.

Naturally the question comes, why do we need scriptures?

After all, we are intelligent people. How many schools, colleges, universities, people with PhDs, so many wise people, so much encyclopaedic knowledge is available – why do we need scriptures?

That is because there is a certain type of knowledge which is obtainable by the sense organs, and there are many people who are knowledgeable in it. For example, in the spheres of physics, chemistry, music, art etc and certainly we can learn this knowledge.

But there is a type of knowledge which answers :-

- ‘What is my real nature?
- Is there something called infinite and eternal?
- In other words, is there a God?
- Is it possible to realise God?
- Is it possible for me to get out of this limitation called Samsara, or worldly type of life?

This knowledge can never be got from any of the sense organs. So ultimately, if I am divine, that fact is a natural fact for us. We can't help but manifest our divinity. So, which ever activity hinders us from it, we have to be away from it. And which ever activity is going to help us move forward, we should know.

If we don't know the nature of our destiny, we will also not know which way to travel. Simplest example is, you don't go to a train station and say, give me a ticket. If you ask foolishly, naturally the question will be, ‘where do you want to go?’ Then

you will be advised that, 'you take this train, get down here and so on'. Nowadays, that is what cars invariably have – it is called Guru Parampara System, GPS!

Unless we know what is the final goal, we cannot really know what is right activity, what is wrong activity and what is no activity at all. But the point is, we have to have knowledge of all the three - not only right action or wrong action, but also the place of inaction. Inaction, that means not doing anything, but just do something, has its own place. If we do not have that, then the consequences are very regrettable and suffering will be our lot.

Nowadays, psychologists are doing lots of experimentation. That if a person, does not have adequate sleep, then he cannot function normally. Unfortunately, it looks like many people are deprived of sleep, called sleep deprivation. This is because the temptations of too many entertainment channels is reducing our ability to withdraw and give sufficient rest, both to our body as well as our mind.

So as a consequence, we have to suffer both in worldly wise, as well as spiritual wise also. Now, I will briefly tell you about how many types of activity our scriptures are going to expound to us.

If we study any one scripture properly, all these details come out so beautifully. Actions are divided into 5 categories :-

1. *nithya*
2. *naimittika*
3. *kamya*
4. *nishiddha*
5. *Prāyaścitta*

Every possible activity, every human activity, can be brought under these five categories.

1) Firstly *nithya* : everyday we have to do certain things.

Simple examples - we have to get up, wash ourselves, become clean, put on dress then invariably we have to pray to the Lord. There may be people who say, I don't believe in God, why should I pray? Even if you don't believe in God, prayer is very effective.

What is prayer? It is subconsciously directing ourselves to what would we like to become is a prayer. So when you are praying to God, whether God is listening to you or not is not the point! That you are listening, so that this is what I would like to have :-

- O Lord, make me self-controlled!
- Make me a good person.
- Make me a loving person!
- Make me a person who has discrimination!
- Make me do what is right. Help me not to pursue forbidden activities!
- Make me get out of laziness!

- But at the same time, give me that capacity when I need rest, so that I will be able to rest properly, which in other words is inaction.

So focussing on daily activities.

2) Occasionally, there will be not only be emergencies, special desires – this is called *naimittika*.

For example, observing special poojas, special fasting, and attending satsangs etc. Also, when special occasions come, attending them to make not only ourselves happy, but others also happy. These occur in the lives of every single human being - these are called occasional activities.

They are not to be done everyday. Simple funny example - when a festival comes occasionally, then we are very happy. But if you make it everyday, then it loses its charm. If you are permanently on a holiday, then you will long for activity.

But if you go on working hard and occasionally completely take yourself off, then it becomes a real holiday, becomes a holy day!

But the fact remains that human beings are so perverted....

Previously what has the Bible commanded? God worked for 6 days and took rest on the seventh day. So human beings also must work only for 6 days and take rest on the seventh day. So now that holy day, that 7th day, is called holy day, dedicated totally to God. Nowadays, we have become so wise, we have turned it into a holiday!

Instead of remembering God, we forget God through various entertaining diversions - that is called holiday!

- So, there is a place for right activity and,
- Knowledge about wrong activity so that we will not pursue it.
- There is a right place for taking rest and,
- There is also a right place for not taking rest.

So many rules and regulations will come.

So we discussed about daily obligatory duties, as well as occasional obligatory duties. For example, remember your forefathers, pray for them so that your prayers will help them. These prayers also remind us what fate has overtaken our ancestors is also going to take place in my own life sooner or later! Remembering the fact of death is also one of the most important activities. This is called *naimittika*.

3) Then *kamyā*.

Every person will have some emergency activity. Suppose a person has become sick, he has to take special medicine, he has to observe a special diet, he has to observe certain special things. Or, maybe he's not sick, but he has some unfulfilled desire. Remember, any unfulfilled desire, provided it is in the context of dharma, that is also a duty of the person.

This is called out in the Bhagavad Gita :-

धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ ॥ 7.11॥
dharmāviruddho bhūteṣhu kāmō 'smi bharatarṣhabha

O Arjuna, any desire that is not opposed, that will not stand as an obstruction to spiritual progress is legitimate desire.

For instance, some people may not have children, some people may pray for the welfare of their children, or for other people, or for their country. Occasionally, when disaster takes place, we all pray for the divine blessings for all those people who are suffering, do we not?

This is called *kāmya* and that is accepted that at a certain stage of life, it is good for our future evolution.

4) Then there is a 4th type of activity – this is called *nishiddha*.

Nishiddha means completely forbidden! If you observe the ten commandments that Moses stated :-

- do not dishonour
- do not bear false witness
- do not covet other people's things
- do not tell a lie etc

There are of course, also the ten commandments of Hinduism from the yoga sutras – the 5 *yamas* and 5 *niyamas* :-

Certain things have to be done, certain things must never be done, that is called *vidhi* [injunctions] and *nisheda* [prohibitions] :-

Five *Yamas* are:

- 1) *Ahimsa* (non-forming or non-violence in thought, word and deed)
- 2) *Satya* (truthfulness)
- 3) *Asteya* (non-stealing)
- 4) *Brahmacharya* (celibacy or 'right use of energy')
- 5) *Aparigraha* (non-greed or non-hoarding)

Five *Niyamas* are:

- 1) *Saucha* (cleanliness)
- 2) *Santosha* (contentment)
- 3) *Tapas* (discipline, austerity or burning enthusiasm)

4) Svadhyaya (study of the self and of the text)

5) Isvara Pranidhana (surrender to a higher being, or contemplation of a higher power)

If we wish to look after our welfare, we have to practice these two types.

But, man is a human being after all - it is his nature to err. To err is human. Therefore, many times, either inadvertently, or unconsciously, or through momentary forgetfulness, we do commit things we should never have done.

However, we feel a guilty conscience - so to remove that guilty conscience, certain activities are prescribed, which will help us to get rid of the guilty conscience.

Of course the essence of it is - if you have done something bad, then counter it with exactly the opposite good. So the mindset that we had before committing the wrong activity, to bring back that mood, whatever activities are prescribed by the scriptures is called *Prāyaścitta*.

To that bring back the mind to that state when you were innocent, you were pure, you were a very happy person.

So all activities have been classified in the Hindu scriptures into daily obligatory duties. It is said that if we do not do them, a special kind of sin will come this is 'pratyavaya papa'.

How should we understand this?

If we don't do something, then normally we don't get the result. But if somebody is not doing their duty...

For example,

A child says : "I have not done anything, is it right to punish me?"

School teacher innocently replies : "No, if you've not done anything, you will not be punished".

Child : "Thank you madam, I did not do my homework!"

Here, neglecting doing homework is an obligatory duty and if the child neglects this - whose loss is it? The teacher's or the student's loss?

So every human being, from birth to death, whatever the person does, all activities fall into these 5 types.

If we have knowledge of these things, then we can progress in life. Now, we need an implement, even to understand these five activities, to understand them properly.

To understand and observe them in a proper way, we need a wonderful faculty called discrimination. It is called in sanskrit *viveka* - this is the ability to discriminate.

Nowadays, a misnomer has come that *viveka* means - what is atma and what is anatma. But that is the last step! Before we can even contemplate, we have to climb 3 more steps, only then we are fit to get to that fourth step - what is real and what is unreal.

So what is the first step?

The first step is a discrimination between :-

- what can make me healthy?
- what can make me happy?
- what can make me unhealthy?
- what can make me unhappy?

Why did I bring the concept of health and happiness?

Because if you want to be happy, what is the first condition? You have to be physically and mentally healthy - discrimination! That means your activities - your food, your sleep, how much time you work, how much time you rest – in all of these there must be a proper discrimination. So the first question is :-

1. Do I want to be healthy? Do I want to be happy?

Ask yourself this question - yes or no? How much - 100%, 50%?

I only want to be 50% unhealthy! Is this a proper thing that we want to be 50%? If I am very sure that I want to be very healthy, I want to be very happy - we have climbed the first step.

Then what is the next step?

2. What activities will make me healthy and happy?

What activities hinder my being healthy, make me unhealthy and make me unhappy? Great discrimination is needed - what is Dharma and what is Adharma? What is punya and what is papa? What should be done and what should not be done? This is the second step of the discrimination.

Anybody you need that these two steps, they are completely unfit to be called human beings : as one of our wisdom sayings state, there is not much difference between a human being and an animal.

आहार-निद्रा-भय-मैथुनं च
समानमेतत्पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।

AhAra nidrA bhaya maithunam cha
samAnam etat pashubhirnarANAm |

Pashu means animal, nara means human being, but there is a crucial and vast difference. Man is possessed of one particular faculty, which is there even in animals, where it serves only a survival purpose. But human beings not only survive, they also want things in their future life too.

This is called *viveka buddhi* - the faculty of discriminating :-

- what is good - what is right - what is pure
 - what is not good - what is evil - what is unhealthy
- and what leads me to unhappiness.

So, firstly, we have to determine I want to be healthy and happy. Secondly, we have to know what activities can help me to be healthy and happy. We should also judiciously avoid what makes me unhealthy and unhappy.

Having achieved this, we come to the third step :-

3. What is temporary & what is permanent happiness & health?

Health means both physical as well as mental health. So that is the third discrimination – knowing what is temporary and permanent. This is what Sri Ramakrishna tells in His first chapter - that you must know that God alone is permanent, everything else in this world, however wonderful it is, even Brahmaloaka, is only temporary!

When a person has this discrimination, his focus very naturally, automatically, instinctively only goes to the permanent. Even a foolish fellow, if we were to put a question to him, “Do you want to be happy for one minute or do you want to be happy for your whole life?” Even a foolish fellow, even without blinking an eyelid, his instinctive answer would be, “I want to be happy forever”.

“Do you want to be healthy only for one minute or for all time?”

“I want to be healthy for all time!”

Both physically and more importantly mentally because, everything what we achieve or what we suffer, depends on the understanding which belongs to the mind. So this is third step - if we have fulfilled the third step, which is very good discrimination between what is permanent what is temporary then we enter into the fourth step :-

4. What is vastu and what is avastu?

[what is real and what is unreal?]

God alone is real, everything else is unreal. Do not mistake reality with what the third step says. In this world what is permanent and what is impermanent? Everything in this world is impermanent and God alone is permanent.

A very interesting analogy - how do we know that it is cold? Because we know what is heat! How do we know what is permanent? We don't know but we know what is impermanent. Therefore, logically speaking, if I know what is impermanent I also know what is permanent. So God alone is permanent.

If God is permanent, then the fourth step will be, ‘I must strive by giving up what is not real’. Up until the third step, every object in this world is real, but temporarily real. That is why vedanta gives a very special name for this - it is called *mithya*.

Mithya means what?

Not unreal, but temporarily real. For some time, it is real, after that, it is not real.

For example, you see a mirage, a beautiful cooling lake of water in the desert. So at that time, is it real or unreal? It is real! How do we know? Because it brings about a reaction in us - I want to go and take bath and drink the cooling water. But when we come to know it is a mirage, then the lake and its effect will also disappear. So :-

- in this world things are real but temporary
- in this world there is something which is real as well as permanent - that is called God.

So the fourth step will be - what is real and what is unreal. We know by now what is unreal and we know God alone is real. So naturally, automatically, what should be our goal of life? To slowly renounce what is unreal and cling to what is real, which is God.

This is the whole essence of Gita, Sri Ramakrishna has squeezed the entire Gita into one word, *tagi*. If you utter the word Gita very fast, then Gita becomes reversed which is *tagi*. *Tagi* means 'give up'. Give up what? Give up what is impermanent. Give up what is unreal.

In the third step, it is real but impermanent. In the 4th step, it is not even real.

Only when we go through these four steps, are we endowed with *viveka buddhi*. That is what the Lord is telling, that even wise people do not know what is to be done, what is to be avoided, and what should never be done...i.e. what is right action, what is wrong action and what is inaction. These beautiful divisions of activities into these three categories, we will briefly discuss in our next class, so that they will be helpful to our spiritual progress.

Vasudeva sutham devam kamsa Chanoora mardhanam,
Devaki paramanandam Krishnam vande Jagat Gurum.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् । देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

May Shri ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda bless us all with bhakti, jyana, viveka and vairajya.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

With kind regards

Mamta Misra & Hari Sundaresan

