

## **Bhagavad Gita online Class 73 on 08 Feb 2020 by Swami Dayatmanada (Lecture delivered online from Bangalore, India)**

Shanti Patha:

ॐ वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम्  
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥ १ ॥

Vasudeva sutham devam, Kamsa Chanura mardanam,  
Devaki paramanandam, Krishnam vande jagat gurum

*I worship Lord Krishna, Who is the spiritual master of the universe, who is the son of Vasudeva, who is the Lord, who killed Kamsa and Chanura, and who is the bliss of Devaki.*

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो, दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दनः।  
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता, दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥  
Sarovopanishado gaavo, dogdha gopala nandanaha|  
parthovatsa: sudheerbhoktaa, dugdham gitamrutam mahat |

*All the Upanishads are likened to the cows. The milker is Krishna, the son of Gopala. Partha is likened to the calf, while the drinkers are the wise ones. The nectar of Gita is the milk.*

मूकं करोति वाचालं पङ्गुं लङ्घयते गिरिं ।  
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्द माधवम् ॥  
Mookam karoti vachalam pangum langhayate girim |  
Yat-krupa tamaham vande paramananda madhavam ॥

*I remember with devotion the divine grace of Krishna who can make the dumb speak and the lame cross high mountains. I extol that grace which flows from the Supreme Bliss manifestation of Madhava.*

We have been discussing the fourth chapter of the Bhagawad Gita, titled Gnana Yoga. The word Gnana denotes the true knowledge of who we really are. It is also called Atma-gnana or Ishwara-gnana.

Who are We, Really?

We, too, are nothing but God. The purpose of the fourth chapter is to give us the knowledge of converting our whole life into a sacrifice. This is the most important thing in our life. In the last few classes, we have discussed how the Lord has enumerated (in verses 25 to 30, as examples), twelve different types of sacrifices.

As mentioned earlier, as long as it is directed towards God, and is done with the intention of realizing God, any activity – whether it is breathing, lying down, sleeping, looking, or any other – can be converted into a sacrifice or yajna. Even apparent inactivity can be converted into one.

A brief recap of these yajnas is as given below:

- Worship of the gods, not for material gains in this world or the next, but to realize the Truth
- Knowledge sacrifice, or Brahma-yajna, which mean the person wants to obtain self-knowledge, with the ultimate objective of attaining the one Reality, which is I
- Controlling the senses
- Controlling the sense-objects
- Controlling the mind
- Material sacrifices
- Using the body, mind, intellect and every faculty in the service of God (by serving every being in this world) including non-living beings. The service towards non-living beings consists of desisting from harming or damaging them (e.g., avoiding polluting the rivers, the atmosphere, the mountains, or cutting down forests unnecessarily, and generally keeping the environment pure. As is now well-established, all the harmful activities that we have been indulging in, in the past few centuries are slowly but steadily bearing fruit, poisoning us. The holes in, and the general thinning of, the ozone layer, so necessary to filter out the harmful rays of the sun, are a case in point.
- The sacrifices that can be done through austerities, or tapo-yajnas. Any hardship, voluntarily undertaken with the exclusive aim of progressing in spiritual life – and thereby loving, reaching, and realizing God – is called tapo-yajna. Some beings (such as the rakshasas (demons) such as Bhasmasura, Narakasura etc.) practice austerities with the objective of getting even more involved in the world through power, domination, sense-enjoyments etc.
- The practicing of any or all of the eight steps of yoga – as detailed by Rishi Patanjali – is called yoga-yajna. That is also an appropriate means to reach our goal, which is God
- Swadhyaya-yajna. Swadhyaya has, as explained earlier, two meanings. The first is the study of the scriptures with the sole aim of realizing God, not to exhibit scholarship, nor to obtain name and fame, nor to improve intellectually or materially. The second meaning is studying one's own mind constantly, with the exclusive purpose of reaching God.
- Gnana-yajna, consisting of three steps or stages:
  - I belong to God,
  - God belongs to me, and
  - We belong to each other
- Pranayama, or controlling the breath, with the exclusive aim of controlling the mind, and dwelling constantly with the idea of Soham (I am He)
- Niyata-ahara, as practiced by some people, consisting of restricting the quantity of, or the variety in, one's food, totally disregarding its taste, and only ensuring that it is physically, mentally, morally and spiritually nourishing.

The Lord assures us that anyone who is sincerely practicing any one of these yajnas (or any others), will be purified through their practice, and will ultimately reach God without exception.

### What is the Essential Purpose of All these Practices?

All these practices have but one goal – to get the true Knowledge. What is that Knowledge? What is its glory, or its fruit? How can we attain that Knowledge? What do we gain by having it? How can we go about getting it? These and similar questions arise automatically in our minds.

Such a question naturally arises in Arjuna's mind (as the disciple), the Lord (as the Guru now; their earlier relationship was based on friendship), too. It is a common scriptural practice to present spiritual truths in the form of a dialogue (usually between the teacher and the disciple), the best examples being the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras etc. The Bhagawad Gita itself is a dialogue between Krishna (as the guru), and Arjuna (as the disciple), symbolising God as the supreme teacher and all spiritual aspirants as His disciples. When the pupil is ready, the teacher would also be ready to teach him – we should always bear that in mind.

In the 34<sup>th</sup> verse, the Lord, anticipating Arjuna's questions [about how to progress in spiritual life to obtain *gnana* (self-knowledge, or the Truth), its nature, and what one gets by obtaining it etc.] says:

**तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।  
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ 34॥**

*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśhnena sevayā  
upadekṣhyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

*Learn the Truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him with reverence and render service unto him. Such an enlightened Saint can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the Truth.*

### What is that Knowledge?

The knowledge which everyone is approaching in the pathways of different sacrifices, what is that knowledge? There is a general rule among us that the quest for something is based on us knowing that there is something worthy of achievement. Whenever we study a scripture, four questions come to our mind (called अनुबन्ध चतुष्टय, or the *four anubandhas*, in Sanskrit):

1. What is the goal?
2. What do I get by reaching the goal?
3. Who can lead me to the goal?
4. Who can obtain it for me, i.e., who is the person fit to help me reach the goal?

Just as a blind man can't help us paint, and a deaf man can't help us learn music, we need a qualified, and capable, guru to guide us to our goal. We need *adhikari* – the apt pupil, *vishaya* – the subject matter or theme, *prayojana* – the fruit or result, *sambandha* – the relationship, or connection, in order to reach our destination.

### How can that Knowledge be obtained?

The Lord says: Know that knowledge, obtain that knowledge, by prostration, by questioning, and by service, from the wise people – people who have realized the Truth. If an aspirant fulfils certain conditions, such wise people would be pleased with him or her, and the knowledge would flow from them to him automatically.

If a disciple is unfit (i.e., not ready to receive the Truth), even if he goes to a wise teacher, he won't be inspired. For example, imagine a person who is knowledgeable and wants to deliver a lecture on a subject, but the intended audience is completely disinterested. Would he feel enthusiastic to deliver the lecture? No. To impart any knowledge, an appropriate *adhikari* or *yogyata-purushas* (i.e., someone with the necessary aptitude) is needed.

When does a person get that knowledge?

If a person is ready to get that knowledge, does he get it immediately? No, because there is a proper procedure to follow. When we examine Sri Ramakrishna's life, we notice that he obtained everything by direct prayer to God, which was a dialogue between the Divine Mother, and Sri Ramakrishna.

Since we have no such direct link to the Divine, we have to approach Him through a guru, through prostrations. Prostrations can broadly be classified into six types:

- Ashtanga-pranama (अष्टाङ्ग, *eight parts*), or prostration with the eight limbs (parts of the body) fully resting on the floor, meaning that one's body, mind and speech (or, looking at it in another way, the *sthula-sarira* or the gross body, *sukshma sarira* or the subtle body, and *karana sarira* or the causal body, are all surrendered to the person or deity that one is prostrating to). Only then will the prostration be fully fit. Example: Water always flows from a high level to a lower one. Similarly, the guru, on his part, is always ready to bestow, and the wind of God's grace is always blowing. The question is whether we are ready to receive it, and how much of it can we receive, and after receiving that, how far can we put it to good use by unfurling our sails. The seven steps or stages in this process have been discussed in detail before, so a quick recap here would suffice:
  - I accept that I have a problem
  - I have no solution (myself)
  - I require someone's help (to resolve this)
  - I locate that person
  - I prostrate in front of that person and receive a remedy for my malady
  - I put it into practice
  - I enjoy the benefit of whatever I have received

It is worth noting that in the second chapter, the Lord never said anything to Arjuna until he had gone through the above seven steps. How do we know this? Because of Arjuna's use of the word *prapannam*, which denotes complete self-surrender. In Sri Ramakrishna's case, his disciples like Girish Chandra Ghosh (and every one, without exception, of his direct disciples) had surrendered themselves completely to him. Only Swami Vivekananda took slightly longer than the others, but in the end, he did,

too, as evidenced by his act of composing hymns saying *tvameva saranam, mama deenabandho* at least four times in that hymn.

- Shashthanga (षष्ठाङ्ग, *six parts*) – touching the ground with toes, knees, hands, chin, nose and temple.
- Panchanga (पञ्चाङ्ग, *five parts*) – touching the ground with knees, chest, chin, temple and forehead.
- Dandavat (दण्डवत्, *like a stick*) – bowing forehead down and touching the ground.
- Namaskara (नमस्कार, lit. *adoration*) – folded hands touching the forehead. This is another more common form of salutation and greeting expressed between people.<sup>[3][4]</sup>
- Abhinandana (अभिनन्दन, lit. *congratulations*) – bending forward with folded hands touching the chest.

When the guru becomes very pleased, the disciple needs to ask him *pariprashna* (appropriate questions).

#### A Real-Life Example of An Inappropriate Question

Once a devotee addressed Swami Dayatmanandaji when he was in a hurry to go away.

Devotee: "Swamiji, I have a small, simple question."

Swamiji: "All right, ask me – as long as it is a quick, simple question."

Devotee: "How do I attain Nirvikalpa Samadhi?"

Swamiji (humorously): "Please come some other time to ask this question. Right now, I want to enter into Sabhojana Samadhi (Samadhi with food!). In other words, I am quite hungry and need to eat right now."

Humour aside, such questions must necessarily be avoided. The disciple should be constantly aware of the purpose for which he is asking a question. Each question should be pertinent and to the point, with the disciple seeking the answer to that question only. Irrelevant questions must be totally avoided at all costs. Also, the disciple should have total faith in the ability of the guru to answer that question exactly and correctly.

#### How Should the Disciple Serve the Guru?

With all these conditions fulfilled, the disciple should approach the guru in all humility, and please him by serving him. In particular, it is crucial for a devotee or disciple to serve a sadhu who is his guest. In Sri Ramakrishna's own life, he used to visit many devotees' houses, and some of them, unaware of the importance of the tradition of serving the sadhu (especially as a guest), would not offer him anything to eat or drink! Thereupon, Sri Ramakrishna himself had to exhort them to offer him at least some water whenever he visited him! Ideally, the disciple should continue serving the guru in this manner until the guru is satisfied, and ready to impart spiritual knowledge.

The three conditions that the pupil must fulfil in this context are:

- Prostration to the guru, and being ready to receive what the guru is ready to give,
- Appropriate questions, so that the guru knows what the disciple is really seeking, and
- Pleasing the guru with *seva* (service), so that the guru is in a happy frame of mind to transmit spiritual knowledge

It should be borne in mind that no amount of *seva* or service is really going to get rid of the debt owed to the guru. However, the ideal guru only expects from the disciple what a mother would expect from her child, for whom she has cooked some food (all that the mother really expects, and would be pleased by, is that the child eats the cooked food happily, and asks for more!)

Who can be a real guru?

Thus the Master (the Divine Lord) must be pleased, through service to the guru or the teacher. But who can be a real guru? *Tattvadarshinaha gnaniha* (i.e., those who have directly experienced the Truth, or have become one with Brahman, according to the saying *brahmavit brahmaiva bhavati* – the knowers of Brahman become none other than Brahman themselves, and are called *gnanis* (knowers of the Self), or *vijnanis* (those who understand the spirit, not merely the letter, of the scriptures). The important qualifications are mentioned in our scriptures (Vivekachudamani, verse 33) for such gurus (called *sadgurus*), as listed below:

**Verse 33: The Qualifications of a Guru**

श्रोत्रियोऽवृजिनोऽकामहतो यो ब्रह्मवित्तमः ।  
ब्रह्मण्युपरतः शान्तो निरिन्धन इवानलः ।  
अहेतुकदयासिन्धुर्बन्धुरानमतां सताम् ॥ ३३॥

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1	<i>shrotriyah avrijinah akaama</i>	<i>i) One well-versed in scriptures, sinless and unsmitten</i>
2	<i>hatah yah brahmavittamah;</i>	<i>by desires; ii) who is a full knower of the Supreme,</i>
3	<i>brahmani uparatah shaantah</i>	<i>abiding peacefully in the Supreme,</i>
4	<i>nirindhanah iva analah;</i>	<i>like fire that is devoid of fuel; iii) who is an</i>
5	<i>ahetuka dayaa sindhuh</i>	<i>ocean of mercy needing no cause for its expression;</i>
6	<i>bandhuh aanamataam sataam.</i>	<i>and iv) is an intimate friend to the good and humble.</i>

- They must be shotrityas (श्रोत्रिय), i.e., knowers of the inner meaning of the scriptures

- Their life must be exemplary, and completely sinless, or *avrijjinah*, and
- They must be *akaama*, i.e., not be smitten by desires or motivation.

For example, Sri Ramakrishna led such a life, even though it wasn't really necessary for him to do so, as exemplified by the following: Whenever Sri Ramakrishna went to the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, after ascending the steps to the temple, he always took off his shoes as a sign of reverence for the Divine Mother (in some religious institutions, visitors are not required to take off their footwear when inside the premises, which may not be a good practice as it breeds indifference or a lack of respect for the sanctity of the place. Hindus make it a practice to leave their footwear outside temples, and kitchens, or when meeting people worthy of respect such as elderly people and sadhus, as a mark of respect towards them). Also, they must be *adhikarika purushas*. Even among the God-realized souls, only some are authorized by God, as such people have an appropriate body-mind, and the ability to communicate divine knowledge to the would-be spiritual aspirants. The others, although highly advanced in spiritual life and capable of teaching other spiritual aspirants, may have some residual unspiritual tendencies in their minds (and thus are not quite the same as realized souls). However, in order to be a spiritual teacher, one should not covet disciples, or be prompted by jealousy if his disciple tries to follow the teachings of other teachers as well. A case in point is that of Bhairavi Brahmani, though not without imperfections, was qualified to be the guru of Sri Ramakrishna himself, as she knew what Sri Ramakrishna needed to learn. The point here is that for a traveller in a very long path, a person who knows the next few steps forward is good enough to be a guide (i.e., after those steps are taken, a different person could guide the traveller about further steps, and so forth). As stated in the Bhagawad Gita (07:19):

**बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।  
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥ १९॥**

*bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate  
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ*

*After many births of spiritual practice, one who is endowed with knowledge surrenders unto me, knowing me to be all that is. Such a great soul is indeed very rare.*

In summary, if a spiritual aspirant is sincere in his efforts, and has prostrated to the guru, asked appropriate questions, and pleased the guru with his or her service, God will inevitably provide him an *appropriate* (i.e., ideal for him) spiritual guide in successive lives, until the Truth is realized

What is the Glory or Fruit of this Knowledge?

The Lord makes this abundantly clear in verse 35:

यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव ।  
येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥ 35॥

*yaj jñātvā na punar moham evaṁ yāsyasi pāṇḍava  
yena bhūtānyaśheṣheṇa drakṣhyasyātmanyatho mayi*

***Following this path and having achieved enlightenment from a Guru, O Pandava (Arjuna), you will no longer fall into delusion. In the light of that knowledge, you will see that all living beings are but parts of the Supreme, and are within me.***

The Lord says: *Having obtained this knowledge, you will never get deluded again like this, and you should see, by that knowledge, all beings first in yourself, and thereafter, in Me.*

The Difference Between Worldly and Spiritual Truths:

So this is the real fruit of this knowledge. Any other type of knowledge is called sublated knowledge, which means knowledge that is capable of being negated, denied, or removed, or substituted for by higher knowledge. For example, classical or Newtonian Mechanics has now been superceded by Einstein's relativistic mechanics. Any worldly knowledge is similarly subject being sublated because it is never perfect, and endless.

But there is one knowledge which is absolute, endless and complete in itself. As the Lord puts it:

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते  
पूर्णं पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*Om Puurnnam-Adah Puurnnam-Idam Puurnnaat-Purnnam-Udacyate  
Puurnnashya Puurnnam-Aadaaya Puurnnam-Eva-Avashissyate //  
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih //*

**Meaning:**

***Aum! That is Infinite, and this (universe) is also Infinite.  
The Infinite proceeds from the Infinite.  
Taking the Infinite out of the Infinite,  
It remains as Infinite alone.  
Aum! Peace! Peace! Peace!***

When a person has any worldly knowledge, there is a likelihood of his forgetting it during the sleeping state. He may not necessarily remember all of it even during the waking state. But when a person obtains the knowledge of the Self, then whether in the waking state,



dreaming-state or dreamless-sleeping state, he always stands aloof, as a mere witness to the states of the body-mind.

Any human being must undergo the above three states, which are changing, and therefore, any knowledge about the three states are also changing. Whichever state a person is in, a part of his *ahamkara* (self-consciousness or ego-consciousness) is identified with that state (i.e., I am the waker, I am the dreamer, I am the sleeper). But when he realizes that he is the *atman* (Self), not the body-mind (which is going through the waking state, dream state etc.). I am a constant, unchanging, incessant witness to all these three states, and in that situation, there is no such thing as forgetting any knowledge.

The point here is that when a person identifies himself with the mind, he is subject to remembering and forgetting, which are the characteristics of the mind. For the *atman* (pure-Consciousness), there is nothing to remember or forget, because it is the one infinite, eternal Truth.

#### The Nature of *Moha* (Delusion) and Obtaining Freedom From It:

So the Lord explains that having once obtained this knowledge, a person will never be subject to delusion, or the identification of ourselves with the body and its conditions. When we identify ourselves with the body, we will be troubled by bodily desires. When we identify with the mind, mental desires will arise in us (for example, if someone praises us, we feel elated, and when someone criticizes us, we feel depressed).

But when we identifies ourselves with the *atman*, there is no one to praise or blame us, because I am the ***Shuddham Apaap Viddham*** (pure and always away from sins).

*Moha* (delusion) always springs from ignorance, and *vishaada* or *shoka* (unhappiness) results from *moha*, which is mistaking the Untruth for the Truth, i.e., mistaking this world for Reality. Realizing this, one is freed from ignorance, and there is no more delusion, and therefore, no more unhappiness or misery.

After this experience, whenever we look at anything, we don't consider it different from ourselves, i.e., we say: *this is me, only with a name and form; there is no-one separate from me.*

#### Examples From Sri Ramakrishna's Life and Elsewhere:

- One day, Sri Ramakrishna, a God-realized saint, was smoking along with Swami Vivekananda (then Narendra, and an earnest seeker of God). Narendra, of course, knew far better than any of us how pure Sri Ramakrishna was, even in body. After taking a puff, Sri Ramakrishna offered the hubble-bubble to Narendra for smoking.

Narendra was taken aback, and exclaimed that he couldn't touch it, because after Narendra had had his puff, Sri Ramakrishna would smoke, which means the pipe that had been touched by Narendra's lips would again be touched by Sri Ramakrishna's. So Narendra hesitated to smoke from the same pipe.

But Sri Ramakrishna exclaimed: *Even now, so much ignorance? Is there any difference between you and me? I am you, and you are me!*

This statement should be taken not from the body or mind viewpoint, but that of the atman.

- Once Namadeva, the famous thirteenth-century saint from Maharashtra, went on a pilgrimage to Kashi. There is a tradition in India that whoever visits Kashi, must bring back some water from the Ganges there to bathe the Shiva linga at Rameshwaram, and whoever goes to Rameshwaram should bring some water from there to bathe the Shiva linga at Kashi. Accordingly, Namadeva got some Ganges water from Kashi and reached the Rameshwaram temple, and all that remained to be done was to bathe the Shiva linga there.

Lord Shiva, wanting to test him, assumed the form of a donkey dying of thirst just outside the temple. The pilgrims in Namadeva's group, despite seeing the donkey's suffering, looked away and hurried into the temple, intent on pouring the water on the stone linga. But Namadeva saw in the donkey a living, moving manifestation of Shiva, and over everyone's protests, gave the water to the donkey. As he fed the donkey, he was aware only that he was feeding Shiva Himself (*shivajnane jiva seva, i.e., those who serve the poor are verily worshipping Shiva or God*).

Thus, every living being is of course a *jiva*, but human beings come first in the priority list.

- Once, some adherants of *go-seva* (protecting and looking after cows) approached Swami Vivekananda, and wanted some contribution for their work. Swamiji replied that his first priority was to serve the living human beings, and if there was anything left after that, he would be happy to give it to them for *go-seva*. Whereupon, they protested, quoting the scriptural statement that cows are the mothers of us all (*go-maata*). To that, Swamiji humorously replied: *Who else, excepting a cow, can give birth to people with this level of intelligence!*

Of course, this statement should not be mistaken to imply that Swamiji was deriding cows, or the service performed to them, in any way. His real meaning was that among all creatures, human beings are the greatest, and therefore the highest priority should be given to them. Our first duty is to look after their welfare, and only then should we direct our attention to other creatures.

- In the great saint Pavhari Baba's life, a similar incident occurred. One day, a dog entered his hut, and finding a piece of *roti* (Indian bread), grabbed it in its mouth and was running away. Pavhari Baba saw this, took a pot of butter in his hand, and ran after the dog, exclaiming: *O Rama, that piece of roti is very hard! There is a likelihood that you would become be-danti (a humorous reference to the state of being toothless) if you attempt to eat that roti. Let me put some butter on it, so that you can enjoy it better!* Nor

was Pavhari Baba joking here – he really saw Rama in that animal! We would see it as a dog, but he saw it as a god (we are not dyslexic, so a bit hard to appreciate the joke here!)

- In yet another instance, also relating to Pavhari Baba, once a thief entered the saint's hut, and bundled together some utensils etc. preparatory to stealing them. Meanwhile, the saint woke up, seeing which, the thief ran away leaving the bundle behind. Pavhari Baba chased him, exclaiming: *O Lord, please pardon me for interrupting your work!* In other words, unlike us, the saint saw him, and the whole world, as God himself. So, to him, God in one form was providing, and then taking His own belongings in another form, just as in a family, various members would come and go, taking away different articles for consumption according to their needs. No one objects, because everything ultimately belongs to the whole family. A realized soul looks upon the whole world as a spiritual family, as explained in the mantram below, from the *Maha Upanishad*:

अयं निजः परो वेति गणना लघुचेतसाम् ।  
उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥

*This is mine, that is his, say the small minded,  
The wise believe that the entire world is a family.*

Also,

माता च पार्वती देवी पिता देवो महेश्वरः ।  
बान्धवाः शिवभक्ताश्च स्वदेशो भुवनत्रयम् ॥

My mother is Goddess Parvati, my father is the Supreme Lord Maheshwara (Shiva).  
My relatives are the devotees of Lord Shiva, wherever they are in the three worlds.

(Here, Shiva is the general name given to God, not just the Shiva-form of God.)

- Revered Holy Mother always looked upon everyone in this world as divine. Two of her most important commandments, which we must always remember, were:
  - You have a mother – I am your mother
  - You are my child – live like my child

These are the two commandments which we must put into practice every day, if we want to realize God.

Summarizing, if we prostrate before such God-realized souls, who are sinless, realized souls, and whose only motive is to help us, they will grant us this knowledge which they know to be the effective (because they themselves have experienced it). Then all our delusions born of ignorance would be destroyed, and we will never again forget who we are, and learn to look upon everything as Brahman itself.

Therefore, our Mahavakya teaches us that (a) everything is Pure Consciousness, (b) we, too, are none other than that Consciousness, (c) the guru explains: *tav tvam asi* (Thou Art That),

(d) the disciple, though self-effort, realizes *Aham Brahmasmi* (*I am Brahman*), and (e ) it should also extend to सर्व खल्विदं ब्रह्म (All this is Brahman).

This is the result of jnana – that we become *mukta-purusha* (मुक्त पुरुष, *liberated souls*).

### What is the Glory of This Attainment?

In the verse 36:

अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः ।  
सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव वृजिनं सन्तरिष्यसि ॥ 36॥

*api ched asi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpa-kṛit-tamaḥ  
sarvaṁ jñāna-plavenaiva vṛjinaṁ santariṣyasi*

*Even those who are considered the most immoral of all sinners can cross over this ocean of material existence by seating themselves in the boat of divine knowledge.*

### The Types of Sins and Which is the Worst?

So when a person realizes that he is the atman, he will cross over an ocean of sins upon the raft of this knowledge. How does this happen? An example may be given here:

Imagine you go to sleep, and dream. Suppose in that dream, you lied, killed and cheated people, or even nuked the entire world! At that moment – still within the dream – you realize that you are the worst of sinners (sins, and sinners are classified into three types: (a) *prakirna patakas*, or minor sinners – those who have done minor sins, or hurt only a few individuals (b) *upa patakas*, or medium sinners, those who have done subsidiary or secondary sins, or harmed a relatively larger number of people, and (c ) *maha patakas*, or grave sinners – those who have performed the gravest of sins, harming/killing/bringing misery to a very large number of people, such as by releasing agents of biological warfare. An example is the Coronavirus pandemic currently ravaging China and threatening to spread all over the world, about which numerous conspiracy theories prevail).

But there is another type of sin, which is the greatest of them all: प्रज्ञा अपराध (*pragya aparadha*, which not know who we are, being bereft of self-knowledge). In the Ishavasya Upanishad, verse 3:

असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसावृताः ।  
तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥ ३ ॥

*asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ |  
tāmste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ || 3 ||*

*Those births partake of the nature of the Asuras and are enveloped in blind darkness. After leaving the body they who kill their Atman attain them.*

The worst type of sin is to not to make an effort to know what we are. Every scripture reiterates again and again: The greatest grace of God is (a) a human birth, (b) the

opportunity to progress in spiritual life, and (c ) the appropriate favourable environment to progress, including the company of holy people, spiritual people, culminating in God-realization. As Shankaracharya puts it in Vivekachudamani, having obtained these three things, people just wastes their human lives – which is a great sin.

So, in the dream, having committed numerous grave sins, imagine you are feeling utterly miserable. Then, facing a terrible regret, you take refuge in a Sadguru, bowing down to him in great humility (etc.), and the guru, not finding any other means of teaching you quickly, gives a hard slap.

Immediately, you wake up.

What is the situation now? All your sins have disappeared, the entire sinful world is gone, and so has the redeeming Sadguru! The only feeling left in you is that you have committed no sin, and therefore need not regret anything.

In this dream, we are committing various acts – good and bad – and going through various experiences, pleasant and unpleasant, aspiring for enjoyment, trying to escape misery, and trying to reach higher worlds. All these are sinful actions, really. The moment we wake up, nobody and nothing exists except the Divine Lord, or the atman – pure, eternal, and infinite, whose essential nature is *sat-chit-ananda* (existence-knowledge-bliss). There is no mind to regret anything, and even if exists in some form, you know that it is all *leela* (play, or drama, of God or Divine Mother).

Once, the famous playwright Girish Chandra Ghosh was enacting a play he had written, in which a person beats another black and blue. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar happened to be a part of the audience. The acting was so realistic that at one point, Vidyasagar took off one of his sandals and threw it at Girish Chandra Ghosh, who caught it with great joy, bowed down, and declared: *This is the greatest reward I received in my whole life!* In other words, the cruelty portrayed was so perfectly written and presented, that Vidyasagar completely forgot that it wasn't real!

In the same manner, God's *leela* is so real that we forget that it is only make-believe. When we realize that the Divine Lord has taken the form of the script-writer, director, actors and actresses, audience, critics, everyone – the whole thing becomes a *leela*. Even an act of killing becomes divine play. As stated by the Lord in the Bhagawad Gita (2:19):

य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् ।  
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥ १९॥

*ya enaṁ vetti hantāraṁ yaśh chainaṁ manyate hatam  
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate*

***Neither of them is in knowledge—the one who thinks the soul can slay and the one who thinks the soul can be slain. For truly, the soul neither kills nor can it be killed.***

In our dreams, we may think we are killing someone, or being killed by someone, but upon waking up, we become both the killers and the killed. This is called *leela*.

### Is There A Sin, In Reality?

Swami Vivekananda says there is no sin, nor any sinner, in reality. There is ignorance, there are mistakes, but human nature is not sinful. What he meant was, we commit all sorts of mistakes due to ignorance. Also, we believe that we are doing various activities, and different things are being done to us by others – which is really ignorance. It is all like a play, as we will realize when we wake up from this story.

The Lord says that by obtaining this knowledge, you will know that

- you have not committed any sin, and each of us is the purest of persons (because no one else exists),
- you will cross over all the sins that you thought you have committed (but which you really haven't, because sin can only be committed to other people different from you, which is contrary to reality) when you wake up to the true knowledge, that you are the pure *atman*, that there is no sinner, no sin, and no committing of sins. That knowledge alone destroys all ignorance which produces the delusion that everything is real, and thus the three types of miseries (*ādhyātmika*, meaning those caused by the body and mind, *ādhibhautika*, referring to those inflicted by other living entities around us, and *ādhidaivika*, which mean originating from the demigods or the higher planes). But the knowledge that you are the one without a second, eternal, pure, free, Brahman alone, will set you free. Therefore, O Arjuna, try to obtain that knowledge through prostration, service, and appropriate questioning. This is the goal of life, and advaita knowledge. Obtaining this knowledge, whatever you do, it is only leela. Become a *bhavamukhi*, i.e., between nitya (eternal) and leela (temporal). You will enjoy as long as the body remains (i.e., as long as you live) and then remain as pure Brahman.

We will attempt to complete this (fourth) chapter in our next class.

### Shanti Patha:

ॐ वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम्  
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥ १ ॥

Vasudeva sutham devam, Kamsa Chanura mardanam,  
Devaki paramanandam, Krishnam vande jagat gurum

*I worship Lord Krishna, Who is the spiritual master of the universe, who is the son of Vasudeva, who is the Lord, who killed Kamsa and Chanura, and who is the bliss of Devaki.*

*May Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda bless us all with devotion and knowledge.*