

Bagawat Geeta, Class 17

Greetings All,

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Refreshing our memory of last class, Swamiji reminded us that Sri Krishna wants to persuade Arjuna to fight the war. He teaches him from three angles. The three angles are Philosophical, Ethical/Moral/Dharmic and finally from Laukika Drishthi. He shows Arjuna that when looked at from all three angles, he must still fight.

The first one, the philosophical argument, is about the nature of the individual. This is covered from Shlokas 12 through 25. Atma Anatma Viveka is discussed. The individual is not the body or mind, it is in fact the Atma. Nature of Atma is discussed. I am not this perishable body that is a temporary assemblage of the Pancha Bhutas or the mind.

If I am Atma, different from the body and mind, what is its nature?

Atma swaroopam is eternal. Body and mind will be destroyed. Atma is eternal. This is first lesson.

Shloka # 16:

“ The unreal comes not into being, the real never lapses into non-being. The truth about both these has been perceived by the seers of Reality.”

In verse 16, Atma is Satyaha. Everything depends on Atma. Clay alone is Satyam, pot is dependent on it, and hence it is Mithya. The existence and utility of the pot is not disputed. It is just not independent of the Clay. Without Atma, Anatama cannot exist. It is a borrowed existence. Remove the clay and the pot cannot enjoy existence anymore. Therefore Atma is Satyaha. This is the second lesson.

Only by holding onto reality or Satyaha one will be happy. Giving example of a chair made of cardboard, Swamiji says, you can show case such a chair but you cannot sit on it. If you sit, it will break. Anatma cannot provide lasting support and security. Lean on Atma never on Anatma.

Initially, when one does not understand this truth, one tends to lean on Bhagawan. Bhagawan is Atma. Moksha is relying on Atma. It does not mean hatred of Anatma. You can do everything with the cardboard chair except sit on it. Similarly, for lasting security depend on Atma.

In Shloka # 17:

“ on the contrary, know that to be imperishable by which all this is pervaded. None can destroy that which is immutable.”

Sri Krishna says Atma is all pervading and eternal. It is not bound by time or limited by space. Atma pervades everything. An all-pervading thing has to be formless, says, Swamiji. Anything limited is due to its boundary. The shape of the hall depends on its boundary. If walls are not there, it will not have a shape and the hall will be formless.

Atma is all pervading, formless and shapeless like space or Akasha. Swamiji says one important question that comes up often is, we would like to see Atma. He says we will not be able to see Atma. We can see an object because of its form. Atma however is formless. Just as we accept existence of space we should also accept existence of Atma, as it is invisible.

What happens to Atma when body is destroyed? What happens to space when the hall is destroyed? Space remains as is. The space, however, is useless. When body is there, it is useful for transactions. When body goes, Atma remains, but it cannot perform any transaction.

Shloka 18:

“ These bodies that perish are said to pertain to the eternal Self that is embodied-the eternal Self, that is imperishable and indeterminable. Therefore, fight, O scion of the Bharathas”.

Sri Krishna repeats the main ideas again, here. Atma is Nithyaha. Atma cannot be destroyed. It is intimately associated within the body as well. Just like the space within the hall, Atma pervades the Sharira.

Now, defining Anatma, all bodies are perishable. As Atma, I am immortal. As Anatma, I am mortal. So, gracefully accept the mortality of the body including of Bhishma, Drona and Sri Krishna's. Sri Krishna's death is Swargarohanam.

Discussing another concept, Prameya means object of knowledge. Atma is never an object of knowledge. You can never know Atma. It is like “ What is that that is ever existing but cannot be known?” Giving example of photograph, you can see everything in a photograph but the person who took the picture or the camera as well. You don't see both. Similarly, entire creation is like a photograph. One thing you will never see is the field of experience or the observer or experiencer. Hence Aprameya means ever the experiencer, never the experienced. Thus, Atma is ever the subject, never the object. You can never see your own eyes. Similarly, Consciousness can never be seen.

Therefore, Arjuna you are not killing Bhishma, Drona or anybody else. Atma is eternal. Atma is reality. Atma is all pervading. Atma is never an object, but it is ever the subject.

Shloka # 19: “Both he who takes It for the slayer and he who takes It to be slain know not (the truth); It neither slays nor is slain.”

Atma is further described. Atma is Akarta (no action) and Abhoktha (does not take part). Space has accommodated all of

us. But space is not involved in any of our actions. It does not participate. But without space nothing can exist. In sunlight many transactions occur. But light itself is not a participant. If you remove the light, the transaction cannot take place. So also, Atma's presence is required for all transactions. But without Atma nothing can occur. In example of cinema, the screen is not a participant in the movie, however, if the screen is removed, no movie can be shown.

Sri Krishna wants to convey the idea: Atma does not kill. Nor is Atma killed by anyone as well. Instead he says: Suppose a person says Atma is the killer (Karthā) or Atma is killed (bhoktha) that person is an ignorant person. Atma has not killed anyone. Space cannot destroy anyone. Nor can Atma be killed.

This is an important verse says Swamiji. Akartha is one free from all Karmas. So, there is no punya or papa for Atma. Also, since it does not die it also has no punarjanmam. So, why talk of karma? Sukshma Shariram travels from place to place. It has punarjanmam. However, for a gyani there is no Shradham or Tarpanam. He does not have punarjanmam. For him there is only a remembrance day.

Shloka #20:

"This Self is never born; It never dies either. Having been born, It never ceases to be, again. Unborn, eternal and everlasting, this ancient One is not slain when the body is slain."

This is another important verse. Highly philosophical. Until now, the verses were short, now they are longer. Essence of this shloka is Atma is free from all modifications or changes. Nirvikaraha means free from change. Change has been classified into six types: They are:

1. Asti, existence in seed form;
2. Jayate, taking birth;

3. Vardhate, growing
4. Vipariṇamate, metamorphosis or changing
5. Apakṣiyate, decaying that is old age; and
6. Vinasyati, meaning perishes.

Atma is free from all above changes. Atma is never born. Atma does not die at any time. It never comes into existence at a particular time. And therefore, ātma is given the name Ajah, meaning birth less. It is also called nityaḥa, meaning deathless. It is called Sasvataḥ meaning it is free from decay; it does not get old; It is called Puraṇaḥ, which means it does not grow. It is called Janma rahitaḥ or without birth.

The body goes out of shape because of certain diseases; in some diseases the body bloats, in certain diseases the body shrinks. Different diseases attack the body in different forms. So while the body is afflicted and tormented by diseases, the Atma does not go out of shape. Why Atma does not go out of shape? First, there should be a shape. Only if there is a shape, it can go out of shape. In the case of Atma, there is no question of creating a shape, no question of maintaining it and therefore there is no question of losing it also.

Recapping the seven main features of Atma, Sri Krishna says they are: nirvikaraha, Satyaha, Nithyaha, Aprameya, Sarvagathaha, Akarta and Abhokta.

With Regards,
Ram Ramaswamy