

Bagawat Geeta, Class 68

Chapter 4

Greetings All,

Continuing his teachings of Gita, Swami Paramarthananda summarized Chapter 4. This chapter is broadly classified into three areas:

1. Ishvara Avatara.
2. Gyana Karma Sanyasa, the central theme of the chapter.
3. Gyana Sadhana Phalani or means of knowledge and its benefits.

Ishvara Avatara: This is discussed in shlokas #1 through #15. Here Sri Krishna shows the difference between Avatara and Jiva. Superficially, while both appear to be same and both go through same life stages (birth, family etc) there are three main differences. They are:

1. Cause of Avatara (Karana),
2. Swaroopam, and
3. Purpose (Upadesha Lakshayam).

Cause: At the karana level, Jiva's janma is caused by ignorance; it is because of ignorance Jiva has got the ego; and it is because of the ego, he acquires punya papam, and it is because of punya papam, he is forced to take this body; therefore for the jiva, janma is a fall because he is helpless. So agyanam is the karanam.

For God, it is omniscience and compassion. Here, he descends to uplift human beings. One has fallen while other has descended. Hence for Ishvara, the word Avatara is used or Avatarati. Therefore, for Jiva Agyanam is the cause of his birth while for God it is his Karuna.

Swaroopam: Jiva comes about because of ignorance. It does not

know its higher nature. So it is known as Bandha Swaroopa. For Ishwara it is Leela. It is all a game. God does everything with a smile, even killing of a Rakshasa. So, he is known as Mukta Swaroopa. In case of Jiva his body is made of the five elements. Maya produces the five elements and they in turn produce the Jiva Sharira.

In case of Ishwara, Maya straightaway becomes a Sharira. There is no time gap. There is no waiting for nine months. Narasimha avatara is an example of this. So, Maya Shariram becomes God, while Jiva becomes a Bhautika Shariram.

Purpose: In case of Jiva it comes into being to exhaust its punya and papam's. They can be exhausted only through Sukha and Dukha. This requires a body. Even in dream we exhaust punya and papam through the dream body. My Punya and Papam determine the type of body I get. Even animals go through same process. The only difference is that they do not acquire new Karmas.

Ishvara 's avatara, however, is not for punya papa ksheyaha. The Lord is punya-papa atitaha because he does not have Agyanam. Lord is responsible for arrival and maintenance of creation. He is the srishti karta as well as stithi karta. Normally he does not get involved in human affairs. He has given us Dharma Shashtra's to follow. We are supposed to follow it. However, when we do not follow it, he is forced to take Avatar. One way he maintains Dharma is through directly removing the source of problems. Destruction of Rakshas is an example. Second way is to educate humanity to take more responsibility. Here, Sri Rama and Sri Krishna Avatara's come to mind. Rama taught by living. Ramayanam (Rama-Ayanam) means Rama's Dharma marga.

In Sri Krishna's case it is his teaching, not his life, that is the main focus. This is also known as Dharma Rakshanam. He tells Arjuna, through you, I have decided to revive the Vedic teaching. Therefore, revival of dharma, both by teaching and

destroying the adharmic people, is the purpose of avathara.

Thus, the cause is different; the nature is different and the purpose is also different.

Sri Krishna said as the Lord I taught the Veda in the beginning of the creation and again as Rama Avathara. I am now again teaching the same wisdom, through Krishna Shariram as well.

And having talked about avathara Sri Krishna concluded that discussion by making a great statement that “whoever knows the Lord completely” that person will get freedom. Here the emphasis is on “Knows the Lord completely”, because the Lord has got two natures. One is the higher and the other is the lower nature. The higher nature of the Lord is never subject to birth and death. “I am never born” he says.

It should be noted that Avatara is not discussed in any other chapter of Gita.

Gyana Karma Sanyasa: This is the central theme of chapter 4 and is discussed in shlokas 16-24. Here Sri Krishna points out that there are two types of Karma Sanyasas or renunciations.

1. One is becoming a monk giving up society and Karmas. He pursues a higher goal. It is an external renunciation. It is also considered as the fourth stage of life. It is a ritualistic stage.
2. By discovering detachment like the Lotus where the water does not wet the leaf. And how can one accomplish this? There is only one method of accomplishing this. You have to switch or change your understanding about yourselves. Self-knowledge has to be there and self-elevation has to be there as well. The body cannot avoid karma association. The mind too cannot avoid karma association. Both body and mind are integrally related to the world; therefore interactions are inevitable.

Therefore, you have to discover a different eye, which is higher than the body mind complex, which is called Atma Tatvam. Through Atma Tatvam, I will recognize the asangha and akasha tulya atma. Comparison to Akasha is made here, as Akasha is not polluted by anything. Similarly, I have

to perform self-enquiry and clearly understand I am not the body and I am not the mind.

The body-mind-complex is part of this creation, so, let its interactions continue. I, meanwhile, should be like the actor who identifies with the role he is playing on the stage and becomes a different person once he gets back to green room. He forgets his stage role identity. He recognizes that I am different from all these roles.

This requires Srvanam, Mananam and Nidhidhysanam. It is called internal renunciation or Gyana Karma Sanyasaha (renunciation of action through knowledge). You are performing action without any attachments. There is no ownership of the action. A man sells his house but remains in it. He, thus, becomes a trustee. He thinks the house belongs to God.

This objectivity removes impact of Life situation. I have flexibility to recover and live. Although he is fully involved in action he appears as if he is not at all involved. He appears detached. It is a difficult process to practice.

While describing the Gyani, Sri Krishna talks of Grihasta and Sanyasi Gyani's. Brahmarapanam is a householder or Grihasta Gyani. Therefore, liberation is not dependent on Ashrama but dependent on Wisdom.

One who takes Sanyasa should pursue Gyanam. Chinamayanandaji gave his teachings first then he asked persons to take Sanyasa. So, Gyanam is very important, not Ashrama.

All shlokas in this section are very important.

Gyana Sadhana Phalani: Shloka 26-42.

These shlokas describe the actions to be taken for obtaining knowledge. Twelve supporting Sadhanas are mentioned towards obtaining knowledge. Two additional Sadhanas are also described. So, the fourteen sadhanas are:

1. Daiva Yagna: Puja to God
2. Vishaya Bhoga Yagna: Every action of ours should be an offering to God, including food.
3. Gama Yagna: Mastery of our senses.
4. Kshama Yagna: Mastery of mind. You should control the mind and not the other way around.
5. Dravya Yagna: Practicing charity.
6. Tapo Yagna: Moderation in everything.
7. Yoga Yagna: Ashatanga Yoga.
8. Svadhyaya: Learning and chanting scriptures.
9. Gyan Yagna:
 1. Spiritual Self knowledge and
 2. Other disciplines that help us with knowledge.
10. Pranayama Yagna: Performed with devotion as a spiritual practice.
11. Ahara Niyama Yagna: Discipline in eating. This helps control our mind as well.
12. Guru Yagna: It is Guru Seva to one who can communicate the teachings of the shastras.
13. Sradha: Faith in scriptures and Guru. Asking questions to seek clarification. Keep in mind Guru and Shashtra do not have anything to lose.
14. Tatparaha: Commitment. Do not criticize scriptures. Develop conviction and follow through.

While all 14 are under Gyana Sadhanas, Gyanam is the most important one of them all. Only Gyanam can remove ignorance. Scripture is like a mirror that can show your true Self. It is a Shashtra darpanam. All other Sadhanas are optional. You can choose one or several of them to practice. Gyana Yagnam is not optional.

Sri Krishna also talked about the four Gyana Phalams.

They are:

1. Moha Nasha: Knowledge gives us power to face the future. I can face life, whatever comes.
2. Papa Nasha: All papams incurred upto the time of knowledge are all eliminated. All karmas are eliminated and Prarabhda Karmas are defanged.
3. Karma Nasha: Sarva karma nasha. This includes papa and punya karmas.
4. Jiva Ishwara Aikyam: He recognizes the essential One. Just as in the Ocean and the wave, the water is the essence so also he recognizes that God and I are one. Aham Brahma Asmi.

Sri Krishna then told Arjuna that he should follow Karma yoga and then follow up with Gyana Yoga and thus become free.

This concludes Chapter 4.

Take Away:

The root cause of human problems is Ahamkara or ego or the “ I am the doer” feeling. Here Gita offers us some methods to obtain the detachment from Ahamkara.

1. You have to switch or change your understanding about yourselves.
2. Therefore, you have to discover a different eye called Atma Tatvam through which to recognize the Atma.
3. Clearly understand that I am not this body and I am not this mind. This conviction has to be there.
4. Be like an actor on the stage. Perform your part immersed in it, all the while remembering you are not that part.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

