

Baghawad Gita, Class 173: Chapter 13, Verses 15 to 17

Note: In this chapter the numbering of shlokas can be different depending upon Gita book you are reading. I am using Swamiji's numbering.

Shloka # 15:

**Shining through the functions of all the organs,
(yet) devoid of all the organs; unattached, and verily the
supporter of all;
without ality, and the perceiver of alities;**

Arjuna

in this 13th Chapter had asked Sri Krishna for clarification on the six technical terms used; they were: Kshetram, Kshetragna, Gyanam, Gneyam, Prakrti and Purushah. Sri Krishna is explaining them one by one. He has explained three of them beginning with Kshetram; now he is explaining the meaning of the fourth topic that is known as Gneyam. Gneyam means Param Brahman. Gneyam is used to convey the meaning that it is the ultimate truth knowing which one gets liberated. Such a Brahman is being explained in shlokas 15-19. Sri Krishna is revealing Brahman as pure existence. Existence and Consciousness are two words that have very different meanings. According to Vedanta, Existence is a unique thing and everything that describes Consciousness extends to Existence as well.

Consciousness is not a part, product, or property of matter.

Consciousness is an independent entity, which pervades and enlivens matter. Consciousness goes beyond the dimensions of matter or the body. Then, I said, consciousness survives even when the body is destroyed. And fifthly and finally I said that the surviving consciousness is not recognizable, not because it is not there, but because there is no body-medium for manifesting it. Just as if you do not see light in this point, not because light is absent here; but it is because there is no manifesting medium. The moment I keep the hand here, the light which was not manifest before, becomes manifest through the hand. Therefore hand is not producer of light, but hand is the medium, which manifests the light. Similarly, the surviving consciousness cannot be recognized because the manifesting medium is not there.

All

these five principles regarding the consciousness must be extended to the existence

principle also. Existence is with capital E, because according to Vedanta, existence

is the same as consciousness. And therefore all the five principles applicable

to consciousness will have to extend to existence as well.

What are the five

principles? If we enumerate the principles, assimilation will take lot of time.

The

five principles are:

1. Existence is not part, product or property of body or an object.
2. Existence is an independent entity. It is the ultimate substance that pervades the body, and makes the body existent. Existence pervades the body and makes the body

existent.

3. This existence extends beyond my body and is not limited by boundary of body. This existence, which pervades the body, extends beyond the periphery or the dimensions of the body; just as the light that falls on my body is not on my body alone, the light extends beyond my body; similarly, existence is not limited by the boundaries of the body.
4. This existence survives even after death of body. Just as the light that falls on the body will survive even if remove my hand. That is why in space travel, when they go beyond our atmosphere, you will have eternal darkness. There is no day night division at all. We are able to have day upon the earth because the earth has an atmosphere, which is capable of reflecting the sunlight; that is why we see the blue canopy. Blue canopy is nothing but sunlight's blue-color scattered by dust particle. It is dust particle, scattering the blue color of the sunlight. You go beyond the atmosphere where the dust particle is not there to reflect, what you will experience is eternal darkness. Even when you see the Sun, between the Sun and you, in space travel, there is no nothing, no atmosphere, only darkness. So Vedanta says the existence survives even after the fall of the body.
5. Surviving existence is not recognizable, as a manifesting media is not there.

That

existence consciousness is the Brahman and that Brahman, O Arjuna are you. Tat Tvam Asi.

So

you have to travel a lot. First you have to conceive a pure existence. Then appreciate it as pure consciousness. Then you should claim that the pure

existence consciousness
is I, myself. This is tat tvam asi. It is not an easy topic.
And therefore Sri Krishna
adopts a method, which is used in Vedanta. What is the method?
Say, I want to
show you or teach you what is the light. But I am not able to
show you the pure
light, because light without medium cannot be demonstrated.
So, what should I
do? I put my hand here. What do I want to teach? Not about
hand but about
light.

Therefore
I introduce my hand and ask what do you see? You will say only
hand. Then I
have to tell you that that it is not the hand alone, there is
something other
than the hand, and because of that alone you are able to see
the hand, etc; if
I say so for half an hour, you will say that there are two
things; hand and the
pervading light. There, afterwards, I have to tell you, please
focus your
attention on the light and forget the hand; So I introduce the
hand, through
the hand introduce the light, and thereafter quietly withdraw
the hand and then
I tell you that, in that place, where the hand was, there
continues the
formless light principle and what is that formless light
principle; it is that
because of which the hand is recognized. **So**
introduce the hand, introduce the light; remove the hand and
reveal the pure
light.

This method of

teaching is adhyaropa-apavada nyaya. Introducing the hand is called adhyaropa

and after revealing the light, removal of the hand is called apavada. In fact, this

we do all the time. Suppose I ask you, please get me some water, and then you went

and brought me a cup of water; and I get angry with you as guru; I have a privilege

to get angry. Therefore I tell: What did I ask? Water; I never asked you to bring

the cup. Why did you bring the cup? Then what will the Shishya think? I thought

Guru is sane; but he seems to have some problem. How can I bring water alone;

water requires a container to communicate/transfer. And therefore, for the sake

of communication/transaction/transference, we keep the container; so that

shishya brings water with the container, I also take the water with the

container, then when I drink, what do I do? The shishya knows, the guru knows, the cup is

only used for transferring the water; I take the water part and leave the

container. Similarly, pure existence can never be understood. So you introduce

an object and appreciate the object plus existence and having gathered the

knowledge of existence; what do you do, you remove the container and container

is the object, nama rupa. Mike IS;

Minus mike is, IS. Table IS. Minus table is what: IS.

Therefore, understand

existence with the world, adhyaropa; and then

retaining the existence, remove/dismiss the world, it is called apavada. And this

method Sri Krishna is using here. This existence is all the time appreciated by you through all the sense organs. The existence is manifest and is recognized through every sensory operation. Just as light is recognized, when I see the clip.

At the same time, the existence or Brahman is free from all the sense organs or objects. It means that sense organs are not the intrinsic nature of Brahman. Light is Illuminating the hand; and because of the hand, light is visible to us. But you know that the hand is not an intrinsic part of the light. Light is not the intrinsic part of the hand as well. If hand were intrinsic part of light, what will happen? Wherever light is there, there will be hand.

Thus

you appreciate existence through the mike, but mike is not intrinsic part of Brahman.

Thus you appreciate existence through the world but the world itself is not an intrinsic part of Brahman. Therefore Brahman is world-free and free from all the sense organs.

This existence Brahman accommodates and supports everything. It is sarvadharam. How do you know that; because of that alone, everything is existent. Every object enjoys existence only because of Brahman, just as gold alone lends existence to all ornaments. Brahman alone is sarvadharam.

Brahman is free from all the objects of the World; that means those objects are not innate part of Brahman. Asaktam means like akasha. Akasha supports everything but nothing is an intrinsic part of it. So everytime you take water with the glass, it is adhyaropa, and when you leave the glass after drinking the water, it is apavada.

Then Gunabhoktr means it is associated with all the properties; how do you know; because you say, every property IS. That IS represents association. Green color IS. ISness is associated with the property.

Now, the properties are not the intrinsic nature of Brahman. So the nearest example you can have is the screen and the movie. All the movie objects are associated with the screen, at the same time, screen is free from all those movie objects. If it is the movie Towering Inferno; the fire in the movie is associated with the screen, but the screen is not affected by the fire; that is why at the end of the movie, screen is still present; as far as screen is concerned, there is no fire; and suppose you see the movie Titanic; the ship sinking scene is throughout the movie, water you have seen on the screen; and at the end of every show, but you still have a dry screen. No, the wettest movie will not make the screen wet; the dry screen continues to be driest, even when you have water. Similarly, Brahman accommodates all, but from Brahman's standpoint, they are not there, intrinsically. So nirgunam. That Brahman is said to be nirgunam

Shloka # 16:

Existing outside and inside all beings; moving as well as non-moving, It is incomprehensible due to subtleness. So also, It is far away, and yet near.

So the existence consciousness Brahman is not only in the Body, but it is outside it as well. It is both within and without. Remember the example, light is upon the hand also, light is beyond the hand as well. Then the question will come; how come I see the light only on the hand; what answer will you say. That is because of reflecting medium; upon the hand, light is manifest light; in Sanskrit, it is vyaktha prakasha, beyond the hand, the light exists, but in what form; in unmanifest form; In Sanskrit, Avyaktha prakasha. Wherever

people are sitting, it is vyaktha prakasha. In this fan in vyatha prakasham, in that fan, vyaktha prakasham, in between the two fans, it is avyaktha prakasha. I am talking about the light, the prakasha is, but in what form; unmanifest, but if you put any object in between it will become vyaktham.

Similarly, the Upanishad says Consciousness is in this body; consciousness is in the other body. Between the two bodies too, consciousness IS. Similarly existence is here, there and in between as well. In fact, even when you say, nothing is; Nothing IS; there also you are talking about Is. You can never think of the absence of existence anywhere. Even when you talk about total blankness, what will you say, there is blankness; there also IS.

And because this concept is very subtle, instead of using the word sat, chit, etc. we use the word Rama, Krishna, Narayana etc. These we can conceive and appreciate because there is form. We do not question ourselves, if Narayana is with shanka, chakra, etc.

If Narayana has to be both inside and outside, he has to be formless existence alone. You can never think of an all-Pervading Narayana, unless you can think of pure existence. And, therefore, bahirantasca bhutanam. Bhutani means all living beings.

And
acaram carameva ca. It is
moving and it is non-moving. So it is moving and it is non-moving. How to
understand this? If it is moving, it cannot be nonmoving.

Both
are diagonally opposite. How do you say it is both? The answer is: It is really
non-moving; but it is seemingly moving when the medium moves and it is the

medium, which manifests. Let us take the example itself. The all-pervading light does not move at all. Light is all over the hall. It does not move. It cannot move as well. But what happens? When I keep the hand here, you are able to see the light here and imagine I am moving the hand; the visible light has come to this point now. Again I move to another place, the visible light has moved to that point. As the medium, the reflecting medium moves, it appears as though the light is also moving. This is an aberration; there is a seeming feeling of movement, exactly like when we are coming to Madras, after a vacation by train; what do you say: Madras has come. You are travelling by train; You have crossed Bassein Bridge and when the Madras station comes, you jump to the platform and say at last Madras has come. Does Madras come and go. It does not come. The arrival of the train, the movement of the train is falsely transferred to the place Madras. The movement of the earth is transferred to the Sun. Even in the newspaper you see, Sunrise 6.15, sunset 6.45, etc. You know the Sun never rises or sets. It is stationary.

What is happening? The attribute of one thing is transferred to the other. Similarly what do we do; the movement of the hand is falsely transferred to the light and therefore the light appears to be moving. You would have seen the Lighthouse

from the beach. I always thought that there are three lights; powerful lights are kept; spot light or something; thus we see three beams moving or rotating. I thought that there are 3 lights that are moving. But, I read in a book, and it says: three lights are not there; there is only light. And not only that, that one light too, does not move. So there is one non-moving light; but what is my experience. Ekam is becoming anekam; achalam is becoming chalam. So I read later that there is only one motionless powerful light in the middle and there is a device around the light; and that device has three holes; and that device is moving.

And therefore what do we do; the motion and the number belonging to the device we falsely transfer to the light. All these topics are very elaborately discussed in Vedanta. This is called dharma adhyasa. Property of one transferred to other. When we feel gloomy, we say today was a gloomy day. Day is the same. Something is bad with me, so I say the day is gloomy. Black day, etc. Day is neither black, nor white nor gloomy. Whatever I feel, I transfer and ascribe it to the day. Similarly the Upanishads say that the body travels; the mind travels, the jivarsis travel; but the consciousness, the Existence does not travel. But it seems to travel along with the medium. Therefore acharam means motionless and charam means seemingly moving, because of the transference of the property.

And durastham chantike ca tat; second line, last portion. That Brahman is far away. Durastham means far away. Then we will decide; we

have to start because it is far away and that too Vaikuntha,
so much distance
is there; And not only they say it is far away, they say, if
you take two steps
forward, Bhagavan will take
four steps towards you. All these they tell when they talk
about Bhakthi and we
also enjoy it. Five feet we take and Karunamurthy takes ten
feet and tears roll down
our eyes on the compassion of the Lord, etc. It is all OK, as
long as, you do
not use your Buddhi. If Bhagavan
has to come near me by travelling, that Bhagavan cannot be all
pervading. Daily we
would be saying also Ananthaya
Nama, Ananthaya Nama, etc. In one
place, one direction, we say that Bhagavan is all pervading;
and at the same time,
we thoughtlessly say that Bhagavan will take 10 steps when you
take two steps
towards him.

Therefore durastham, we have a wrong concept that Bhagavan is
far away and therefore Sri Krishna says that antike ca tat.
When you say Bhagavan is far away. how should you understand
it? Whenever anyone says that Bhagavan is in Vaikuntha, what
should you say is, Bhagavan is in vaikuntha also. Bhagavan is
in Kailasa also. That also means what: he is in vaikuntha
also, kailasam also, bhulokha also, Adayar also, Vidya Mandir
also, the lecture hall also; and he is also in the mat in
which I am sitting; which means that He is in your heart also.
So durastham cantike ca tat. Brahman is far and near; in short
Brahman is everywhere.

Shankaracharya gives another interpretation. For a wise
person, Brahman is nearest, because he knows that Brahman is
not away from me. For an ignorant person, Brahman is far away;

because he continues his search; going on and on and on. So for an ignorant person, it is far away. For a wise person, Brahman is nearest, nearest is not the word; He is one with me.

Then

comes the final question. If Brahman is everywhere, how come I do not recognize that Brahman?

Sri Krishna answers: Sukshmatvat; Even though Brahman is everywhere it is of the subtlest nature, which means that it is free from attributes; attributes alone help me recognize things. When an object produces a sound, I can recognize through the ears; if the object has got a touch, I can recognize through the skin. If it has got form or color, I can recognize through the eyes. Attribute alone helps me recognize.

And Brahman is sukshmam; meaning one without attributes; and therefore, avijneyam, extremely difficult to comprehend. Lesser the attributes, more incomprehensible a thing becomes; More the attributes; the easier to understand. And that is why when you take the pancha bhutani; akasha, vayu, agni, jalam, prithvi, you will find that prithivi, the earth is the grossest thing you can recognize, because it can be recognized through shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa and gandha. All the five are there; When you come to water, it has got only four attributes; shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa. Water does not have smell.

So, water is Smell-less. Only four attributes; therefore it can be recognized only through four sense organs. Agni has three attributes: shabda, sparsha, rupa. Agni does not have taste. If you have doubt, taste it. You do not have to taste Agni; taste over heated coffee. You cannot taste anything for an hour later. Agni has got three elements and three attributes can be recognized through the sense organs.

Vayu has become
still subtler. It has got only shabda
and sparsha. That is
sound and touch; no form. If you want to teach what is air to
a child, you will
have a tough time.

And
when you come to akasha, it does not have
rupa, rasa,
gandha, all these things; akasha is supposed
to have only shabda, means the
echoing capacity. And that is why akasha has only one property
and therefore
it is very difficult understand.

Even
now science does not know what is space. They are coming up
with various theories,
sometimes they had the theory of ether; sometimes that it is
emptiness,

Now
they say it is a positive thing; particle just comes out of
space that means it
is not an empty space. Space is a positive matter. Einstein
says: space is a
curved elastic matter. We are not able to conceive of it at
all. Because the
lesser the properties, the subtler the thing, and we say
Brahman is subtler
than even akasha.

Therefore
comprehending Brahman is going to be the toughest job. And,
therefore, Sri
Krishna says, if you do not understand, it is not your
mistake; it is the mistake

of Brahman. Why should Brahman come like that? Can't He have come and jump in front of us. The problem is with Brahman.! Sukshmatvat tat avijneyam.

It is difficult to comprehend. This is Gneyam.

Shloka # 17:

And the Knowable, though undivided, appears to be existing as divided in all beings, and It is the sustainer of all beings as also the devourer and originator.

So that Brahman is indivisible, like space which cannot be divided; that Brahman, the pure existence-consciousness, is vibhaktam; na vibhaktam; vibhaktam means division, it is indivisible. Therefore he says. avibhaktam, it is undivided and at the same time, bhutesu vibhaktham iva sthitham. It is seemingly divided. It is really undivided but it is seemingly divided, Why is it seemingly divided; Consciousness is all pervading, but we experience consciousness only where the body-medium is available. So therefore, 'here' consciousness can be recognized, in another living being consciousness can be recognized, but in between them the consciousness is not recognizable. Therefore what will be our conclusion; it will be, there is one consciousness here and there is another consciousness there; And therefore how many consciousness's are there; So many;

Therefore there is a seeming division, but the fact is consciousness is in between as well, in an unrecognizable form, but wherever body is, it is recognized. You can see the light; here one, there one, but in between there is no light. We therefore might commit a mistake that the light is also two. But what is the real understanding?

Divisions belong to the fingers but the division does not belong to the light. Here there is visible light; between the fingers, there is invisible light. Therefore, light is continuously there; in pockets visible; in pockets not visible.

And therefore, he says, it is seemingly divided. Again remember the lighthouse example. There is only one light; but it seems to be three lights.

And such a Brahman is Jagat Srishti laya karanam. Out of that pure Brahman alone, all names and forms of the universe have originated and they exist and they dissolve into that Brahman. Out of that Brahman alone all the nama rupa has come.

And that Brahman is Jagat Srishti Sthiti Laya Karanam. Everything dissolves into that Brahman. Brahman is sthiti karanam.

Take away:

So introduce the hand, introduce the light; remove the hand and reveal the pure light. This method of teaching is adhyaropa-apavada **nyaya**.

Thus you appreciate existence through the world but the world

itself is not an
intrinsic part of Brahman. Therefore Brahman is world-free and
free from all
the sense organs.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy