

Baghawad Gita, Class 175: Chapter 13, Verses 20 to 22

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 13.20:

Know both Nature and also the individual soul [Prakrti is sometimes translated as matter, and purusa as spirit.-Tr.] to be verily without beginning; know the modifications as also the alities(reality) as born of Nature.

With the 19th shloka of this chapter, Sri Krishna has completed four topics out of the 6 topics that Arjuna wanted to know. The four completed topics are Kshetram, Kshetragnya, Gyanam and Gneyam. And now from the shloka's 20-24, Sri Krishna is going to deal with the final two topics, namely, Purusha and Prakrti. And since these two topics are closely connected, Sri Krishna is dealing with them parallely or simultaneously. And for all practical purposes, we can understand the word Purusha as Brahman and we can understand Prakrti as Maya and therefore the discussion is regarding Brahman and Maya of the Upanishad. These two words, purusha and prakrti, are generally used in Sankhya philosophy but, sometimes, in Vedanta too, we use the word purusha and prakrti for Brahman and Maya.

And

Sri Krishna begins the discussion here saying:

Arjuna may you understand purusha and prakrti as the two basic principles, which are beginningless-principles. Anadi, means

without a beginning and it is in dual number which means purusha is also Anadi, prakrti is also Anadi. And this purusha prakrti mixture alone we call, Ishvara. **Prakrti plus purusha is equal to Ishvara.** Brahman plus Maya is equal to Ishvara. And Sri Krishna wants to point out that this Ishvara alone existed even before the origination of this universe. Since the universe has an origination; the world has a beginning, and since the Ishvara has no beginning, it is clear that even before the world originated, before the beginninged-world, there was the beginningless Ishvara, which means even before Srishti, Ishvara existed. And since Ishvara alone existed before Srishti, the Srishti must have come out of Ishvara only, because Ishvara alone was the beginningless principle. And this Ishvara consists purusha and prakrti and if you remember the 7th chapter, it was presented there as para prakrti and apara prakrti. The same idea you have to bring here.

Now,
from this shloka, we come to know that purusha and prakrti have got one common feature; that both are beginningless.

Anaditvam is one common feature; and the second common feature is that both of them together are the cause of the universe. Therefore purusha is also cause, prakrti is also cause, together they enjoy causal status; say exactly like the father and mother. Father by himself cannot be the cause of a child, mother by herself can never be the cause of a child, father and mother alone, together, enjoy the causal status.

And
these two principles have got some uncommon features as well. Common features are two, while uncommon features or differences are many and out of many differences, four differences are very important for our study, which I had

discussed in the 7th chapter as well; but we will refresh our memory on them.

What is the first difference between purusha and prakrti? Purusha is chetana tatvam; it is consciousness-principle; whereas prakrti or Maya is achetana tatvam, it is the basic matter principle. Even if you like to call it energy, I do not mind. That is why they are inter-convertible, whereas Consciousness is neither matter nor energy. **Consciousness is neither matter nor energy.** Thus Purusha is consciousness principle Prakrti is basic matter; or energy principle; this is the first difference.

The second difference is the purusha is nirvikara tatvam; consciousness principle is not subject to modification or change. It is ever, the changeless principle, time cannot influence consciousness. Time cannot touch consciousness. Consciousness is not within the field of time. In fact, some scientists themselves are saying this.

Whereas, prakrti or matter principle is subject to time and therefore subject to modification; in Sanskrit savikara tatvam. So chetana tatvam-achetana tatvam is the first difference; nirvikara tatvam-savikara-tatvam is the second difference. And because of the influence of time alone, matter is violently undergoing change, even becoming energy is a form of change; thus, matter becomes energy. In fact in an atomic explosion matter is converted into tremendous energy. And therefore, matter is subject to change to energy form; energy is subject to change into matter form; and within matter itself, it violently undergoes change; the sun is changing violently, the planets are changing and even the minutest atom is undergoing change. Therefore savikara tatvam. And the other one, nirvikara tatvam.

Then

the third important difference or uncommon feature is that

Purusha, the consciousness

principle, is free from all attributes. It is absolutely property-free.

Whether you enumerate the properties as satva rajas tamo guna, then we say, Consciousness is free from all these three; if you enumerate the properties as shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa and gandha; shabda means sound, sparsha, means touch, rupa means form, rasa means taste, gandha means smell; then consciousness is free from all these five properties.

And if you are a chemistry student, then we say consciousness is free from all types of physical and chemical properties. In short, consciousness is property-less and attributeless or in Sanskrit, Nirguna tatvam; whereas, matter is endowed with all the properties. So from one angle, we say matter has got three gunas; three means satva, rajas, tamo gunas, we say; Or from another angle we say, matter has five gunas, shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, gandha; or from chemistry angle, matter has got many physical and chemical properties. And therefore matter is simply attributed.

And then comes the fourth and final property for our discussion. You can have several but only four for our discussion. This is technical thing, which is not directly relevant, but for future questions, this will be required. And what is that difference; chetana or the consciousness-principle has got an independent existence and therefore it is said to be satya tatvam. The existence of consciousness is intrinsic, it is independent, it is unborrowed; That is why we say, it is satya tatvam; whereas the matter principle does not have an independent existence; the existence of matter depends upon the consciousness principle. Even to prove that you are all sitting in the class, I should be conscious of you, what I am not conscious, I cannot talk of its existence at all. And therefore the existence of a thing, a material thing, depends upon the consciousness principle and therefore matter enjoys or suffers an dependent existence. In Sanskrit we call it

mithya tatvam. Satyam and mithya. We will keep it aside, which we will deal later.

These are the four fundamental differences between Purusha and Prakrti. Such a purusha-prakrti mixture called God was there even before the origination of the world. And the most interesting thing is that when we say God alone existed before the creation, we cannot even answer the question, where was He located.

Where
was He located; even location of God we cannot talk about because, before
creation, even akasha was not
there.

Even
scientists point out that you cannot imagine space at the time of or before the
big bang. How they have reached Vedanta. They will say Vedanta has
borrowed from Science. But long before science came, this has
been said.
Therefore you cannot conceive of even akasha, before Srishti (akasha means space).

So when I talk about God before the origination of space, how can I talk about the location of God, because the concept of location requires space. Therefore do not ask where was He. And such an unlocatable God, who is a mixture of Purusha and Prakrti, was there before Srishti.

Similarly,
here also, the student asks, then what happened?

Of
the mixture of two, Purusha and Prakrti, nothing will happen to purusha tattvam,
because purusha tatvam is not

conditioned by time and therefore Purusha, the chetana tatvam, will remain the same. Before Srishti, during Srishti, after pralayam, all the time, chaitanyam is Nirvikaram.

If this Nirvikara purusha tatvam does not undergo any change, then all the changes must happen to only Prakrti tatvam, basic matter or energy principle. And therefore Sri Krishna says at the time of creation, Out of the prakrti tatvam evolves this universe. The matter evolves into the universe just as a seed evolves to become a sprout. Then as time goes, again it evolves into a plant and finally it evolves into a full fledged tree. Similarly, the universe also, from karana avastha to sukshma avastha to sthula avastha, this gradual evolution takes place and in this matter-evolution all the products are born out of the basic prakrti, otherwise called Maya. That is why we call the creation Mayikam.

And what are the materials born out of prakrti? Initially, the five basic elements are born; called the five bhuthani, akasha, vayu, agni, apah and prithvi; and later the five elements through varieties of permutation and combination, they mix together, they produce all the other things which we call bhauthika evolution. Bhutha evolution, then bhauthika evolution. Elements evolved, then Elementals evolved. And what are

the elementals? All the 14 lokas; then the mountains, the stars, the planets, and not only that, according to scriptures, our physical body is also evolved prakrti. What is the proof? How do you prove that? The proof is: first of all the physical body is matter; it consists of only chemicals. it consists of only elements; elements, one can take two meanings; the shastric meaning, akasha, vayu, agni, apaha, prithivi; and if you are chemistry student, elements can mean: Aluminium, antimony, barium, carbon, etc. so those elements. So all those elements alone have produced the body; body is nothing but a chemical bundle. That is why we call it biochemistry. And therefore body being matter, it is born out of prakrti. And the second and important proof is body is subject to modification.

So this expansion and contraction of the body proves that it cannot be purusha tatvam, because purusha tatvam is Nirvikaram, body is savikaram; therefore body has to be a product of prakrti only.

Then what about mind? The mind is also material in nature. And that is why the changes in the chemistry of the body change your mind also. Enzyme changes, hormonal changes, etc. can cause tremendous mood disorders. All these are possible, because the mind is also matter and it is influenced and changed by material. And not only that, that the mind is also subject to change, need anyone tell us to understand that? Mind is subject to violent changes, that mind is an evolved version of prakrti. So world is prakrti's evolute, body is prakrti's evolute or product, mind is also the product of prakrti.

Now if body is a product of prakrti, mind is also a product of prakrti, both of them must be achetana tatvam; because we have said prakrti is achetana tatvam.

If
prakrti is achetana tatvam,
body and mind, which are its products, they also must be
achetanam, achetanam means
insentient. But, mind seems to be sentient; not seems to be,
if doubt, pinch
and see yourselves; you know it is sentient. So for that, the
scriptures give
the answer that the body and mind are prakrti only but they
are such a fine
version of prakrti, like refined clay. Body is refined clay,
And sometime the brain
also is acting like a refined clay. So being a refined version
of matter, they
are able to manifest consciousness; but it is not their own
intrinsic
consciousness; it is only reflected or manifested
consciousness.

Like, if my cloth is bright now, visible to you now, light
from the cloth is hitting your Eyes; you are able to see and
when light comes from the cloth, it is not the cloth's own
light, rather it is the light reflected on the cloth. It is
not intrinsic but borrowed light.

Similarly,
body is prakrti with borrowed sentiency; mind is prakrti with
borrowed sentiency.
Therefore all these are the creation of prakrti.

And therefore Sri Krishna says; Arjuna note it that products
are
born out of prakrti. And not only all the objects are born out
of prakrti; the

various properties of these objects; every object has its own property. It has got a color, form, weight, and all these properties are born out of prakrti alone.

Because **the rule is that the properties of the cause will inhere in the effect also.** Thus, if Gold has certain combination of other elements; alloys, then the all the ornaments also will have the same proportion of the other elements. And that is why the children also will have the combination of properties or character borrowed from the parents.

And that is the world also has got satva rajas tamo guna, and the world also has got shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, gandha. And Shankaracharya points out that the even the properties, like raga dvesha etc. do not belong to the Purusha, they all belong to prakrti alone.

Shloka # 21:

13.21 With regard to the source of body and organs, Nature is said to be the cause. The soul is the cause so far as enjoyership of happiness and sorrow is concerned.

The first line is almost the repetition of the previous shloka. Everything in the creation is born out of prakrti, which includes the body, mind complex also. So karyam means the body. It is a technical meaning here; normally karyam means a product in general; but in this context, karyam means sthula shariram, the physical body. And similarly, the word karanam in this context means the mind or the subtle body in general.

In the creation of the physical and subtle bodies, not only the human beings, but all the living beings, in the origination of them Prakriti is the contributor that does a lot of work and is highly active; while Purusha is the laziest person; that is why, in home also, it so happens, reading only the newspapers. It has begun at the time of creation itself.

Because the original purusha does not do anything. In the creation of the body and mind, prakrti is the hetu.

And

there is another meaning as well.

In

the creation of the world, which can be divided into karanam and karyam, Prakriti

alone does all work. In the creation of the body mind complex too, prakrti alone does all work.

Now comes the basic question. If everything is a product of prakrti, where is this blessed Purusha!! Because, Ishvara is a mixture of two; of these two, one principle we find pervading everywhere, the pancha bhutas are prakrti and all the other combinations mountains, rivers, sun, and moon. In short the entire visible universe; experienced universe is prakrti; because everything I experience undergo a change; whether it is the minutest atom or the biggest galaxy. So, therefore, the experienced world is changing; and is therefore prakrti. Then what about the body; body is also experienced by me clearly, I am experiencing my body via pleasures pains hunger thirst etc; so, I am able to talk about. What I do not experience, I cannot talk about. And the physical body is also an experienced principle and Sri Krishna says that also is prakrti because it is subject to change. Therefore, experienced world is changing, hence prakrti. Experienced body is changing; therefore prakrti.

Then what about mind, mind is also experienced by me; In fact the mind is experienced by me alone; at least in the case of

the body, I am experiencing, and you are also experiencing, whereas, mind is experienced by me because I am aware of emotions, my calmness, my anger, my knowledge, my ignorance, and even blankness of the mind too. The mind is also experienced and it is subject to change and therefore that is also prakrti. So experienced world is prakrti, experienced body is prakrti, experienced mind is prakrti; if everything experienced is prakrti, where is this blessed purusha? He is not to be seen. Where is the Purusha hiding? Therefore we go on searching. Some people search outside. Whatever they search and find is an experienced, changing object; that is not going to be Purusha. Suppose I look within the physical body, I will see blood, marrow, etc; all within your experience of changing prakrti. If I look within the mind too I see varieties of emotions, all changing thoughts; outside also I experience prakrti, inside also I experience prakrti, everything experienced is prakrti; so, where is the blessed purusha?

Sri

Krishna says: Do not search for the purusha. because the purusha is The

Experiencer I; The basic subject of I, the basic conscious principle. Now there

is a big question. Is, I, the experiencer, am I, conscious or inert? An

experiencer has to be necessarily a conscious, sentient principle alone. Sri Krishna

says it is that experiencer, I, the subject witness of the world; the witness

of the body, the witness of the mind. How to look at that; do not ask; the moment

you see, it will become an object, and again it will be within body, mind, etc. **That, which is ever the subject of**

experience, and never the object of experience; that I am; the Purusha. Aham Brahma asmi.

Who

says this? Sri Krishna says this.

Purusha is not located anywhere as an object, the purusha, the chetana, nirvikara, nirguna, satya tatvam purusha, is I, the very subject, who is enclosed in the material body; who is enclosed in the material mind; the enclosure is prakrti and the enclosed consciousness is, I am Purusha.

And

therefore Sri Krishna says Purusha is bhokta; here bhokta means the witness the sakshi chaitanyam, the subject experiencer principle; The experiencer of what?

If purusha is the experiencer, he will be experiencer of what? What is there other than purusha?

Prakrti. Therefore he is the experiencer of prakrti. Prakrti means the body mind complex, and not only the body mind complex prakrti, sukhadukhanam, as well as all the conditions of the body mind complex. Like favourable healthy condition; as well as the unfavourable unhealthy condition; all of them belong to the object prakrti, raga, dvesha, kama, krodha, lobha, moha, all are properties of observed prakrti; None of them is the property of the observer purusha.

So this is a very important law in Vedanta. All the observed properties can belong to only observed objects; no observed property can belong to the observer subject. I will repeat. All the observed properties can belong to the observed object alone. The observed properties can never belong to the observer-subject. Therefore the observer is always property-free. Therefore I am the experiencer of properties but I am without those properties. And therefore Sri Krishna says in the created world, prakrti is available as an object and purusha is available as the subject and the subject purusha is never objectifiable.

And

remember, I have given you the examples before. The eyes can see everything in the world, but the eyes can never see themselves. Maximum, the eyes can see is its own reflection in the mirror; even the reflected eye is objectifiable but the original eye is never objectifiable, perceivable. What a tragedy.

You cannot see your eyes, with your own eyes. Suppose a person asks: If the eyes can never be seen, what is the proof that there are eyes. Even though, eyes are never seen, you do not require proof for the eyes because every sight of every object is the proof for the existence of the eye. Every perception pre-supposes the existence of the perceiver, even though the perceiver is never perceived. Every perception presupposed the perceiver. Even though camera is never photographed, every photograph is the proof for the existence of camera.

Therefore the subject does not require proof. Subject does not require proof; because the very search for proof presupposes the existence of the subject. The prover need not be proved. Prover does not require a prover. And therefore where is purusha? It is like the tenth man story. **Where is the purusha? I am the purusha.** What a terrible discovery. What a wonderful discovery.

Shloka # 22:

13.22 Since the soul is seated in Nature, therefore it experiences the alities born of Nature. Contact with the alities

is the cause of its births in good and evil wombs.

Originally,

before the creation evolves or the world evolves, the purusha was neither the subject, nor the prakrti was object; there was no subject-object transaction at all, before the creation evolved. Then when did the purusha get the subject status?

When

the universe evolved, naturally the body was also created, the mind also was created; and after the creation of the body and mind, the all-pervading purusha got enclosed within the body-mind-enclosure. Previously the enclosures were not there;

Therefore, this consciousness was an all-pervading unenclosed consciousness; but after the creation of body-mind, we have got an enclosed consciousness. Just as we have got a enclosed space after the creation of wall. Before the creation of the wall, space was there, but it was unenclosed space. Once the walls are created, it become enclosed. By building the wall, what are you the accomplishing? The open space is converted into enclosed space. And once it becomes enclosed space, it is called a house. What is the definition of house, not the walls; walls do not make a house; then what is a house; enclosed space is a house, and once it is enclosed, it becomes a useful and transactable thing. In the same way, previously it was unenclosed consciousness. **Now it is body mind enclosed consciousness; and that becomes the subject principle. And then the whole world become object.**

Therefore

consciousness becomes a subject, when it is enclosed. An open space becomes a

house when it is enclosed. Therefore, you never build a house; you only build the walls. What is a house, the enclosed space is a house, because that alone is lending you the place for transaction. Wall is not useful. All your movement, study, etc. is housed in the enclosed space. Thus, purusha becomes the subject and prakrti becomes object.

Take away:

Consciousness
is neither matter nor energy.

Prakrti
plus purusha is equal to Ishvara.

Body is prakrti with borrowed sentiency; mind is prakrti with borrowed sentiency. Therefore all these are the creation of prakrti.

That,
which is ever the subject of experience, and never the object of experience;
that I am; the Purusha.
Aham Brahma asmi.

Purusha is not located
anywhere as an object, the

purusha, the chetana, nirvikara, nirguna, satya tatvam
purusha, is I, the
very subject, who is enclosed in the material body; who is enclosed in the
material mind; the enclosure is prakrti and the enclosed consciousness is, I am
Purusha.

Purusha:

previously it was unenclosed consciousness. Now it is body
mind enclosed
consciousness; and that becomes the subject principle; and
then the whole world
becomes object.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy