

Bagawat Geeta, Class 21

Greetings All,
Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Shloka # 30:

“This embodied self (dwelling) in the bodies of all, O Bharatha Prince ! is eternally indestructible. Therefore, you ought not to grieve for any being at all.”

Shloka # 31:

“Having regard to the law of your own life, you ought not to be perturbed. A Kshatriya cannot have a greater good than a righteous battle.”

Refreshing our memory of last class, including shlokas 30 and 31, Swamiji reminded us Sri Krishna wants to remove Arjuna's sorrow caused by attachment. He also wants Arjuna to fight the Dharma Yudha. He has tried convincing him using a philosophical approach, a dharmic approach and finally a Laukika approach as well. In philosophical approach he clarifies the Atma Anatma Viveka. Atma does not kill nor is it killed. Anatma means mortality of this body has to be accepted. Atma is immortal and Anatma is mortal. One who understands this is wise. So, Arjuna, accept this fact and there will be no sorrow.

Shloka # 32:

“An open gateway to heaven has, by a happy chance, offered itself to you, O Arjuna! For, fortunate Ksatriyas alone gain an occasion to wage a war like this.”

Sri Krishna says from a Dharmic point of view as well, Arjuna should fight. While scriptures do say Ahimsa is param dharma, it is a Samanya Dharma. There are, however, exceptions to this. In Aapaat Dharma, Asatyam (non truth) and Ahmisa are allowed. This happens with government rules also where there are exceptions. It happens with traffic rules where some

important people are exempted from normal traffic rules. Samanya Dharma or Upasarga has an opposite called Apa-Vada. In Apa- Vada, killing is allowed. Only after trying Sama, Dana and Bheda that Danda or violence is resorted to.

Ksahtriya means, one who protects against Adharma. If there is adharma one can try to convert adharmic people. If that does not work then their elimination is the only way. A Doctor tries to heal a limb, however, if it does not heal, he may have to amputate it to protect the rest of the body.

Arjuna, You are a Kshatriya, so you have to fight. Maintenance of law and order is not everybody's responsibility. Only some have this right. A Brahmin cannot punish. Punishment is the Sva-Dharma of a segment of society. A Kshatriya alone has the right to punish.

Consider your own Varna-dharma , Arjuna, you should not act like a Brahmin. A Kshatriya should take to violence in particular cases. Drona is a brahmana. He is not supposed to take to war. He has a right to teach but no right to fight.

So, Arjuna, if you do not fight it is wrong. Don't look at this war as a curse, but as a way to sacrifice your life for Dharma. Thus, the freedom fighters that went to jail were considered Tyagis. There is nothing greater than a Dharma Yudha for a Kshatriya, says Sri Krishna. You should look upon this as a great opportunity. Some communities have suicide squads that sacrifice their life for their country. Here also a Kshatriya should be ready to commit suicide; that is to sacrifice his life, he does not consider it a tragedy. Among the Rajput families, when their women sent off the Rajput princes for war, they did so without any tears. They did not want you to be alive when there is a cause. Rajput princes were sent off to war with blessings by their women.

This kind of opportunity for a great sacrifice for dharma has

come in your life. If you are going to sacrifice life for Dharma you will get the heaven called Vira swarga. This is the gate to this Svarga. It is an open door. Who gets such an opportunity? Only a fortunate and blessed Kshatriya gets called for such a noble cause.

Shloka # 33:

“on the other hand, if you refuse to fight this righteous war, sacrificing both the law of your life and renown, you will incur sin.”

Sri Krishna says you have to fight this war. Suppose Arjuna says I am not interested in the war for sake of Bhishma or Drona? If you do not fight the war you will get only hell. If a person renounces his duty, it is considered Papam.

Swamiji says there are two kinds of Papam.

1) Doing what should not be done, Nishidhakarana papam. Example is one should not drink liquor.

2) Not doing what should be done, called Vihitha akarana Papam. An example is not paying taxes that are owed by you.

If Arjuna does not fight, it is an act of omission, or Vihitha akarana or pratyavaya sin. Vihitha akarana is called pratyavaya papam. Arjuna, if you do not fight this dharmic war then you will be shirking your Sva-Dharma and you will get Papam. Papam means suffering in this life or next. So to avoid Naraka you should fight. If not, you will lose your name and fame.

With this the dharmic view is completed.

Shloka # 34:

“ All will recount your ever lasting infamy! For one honored, infamy is worse than death.”

Having given his philosophical and dharmic views now Sri Krishna addresses the Laukika drishti. Some people do not believe in punyam or papam, as they are adrishtam (invisible).

Punyam and papam is only known through Shastra Pramanam. If so, can I run away from this war?

Arjuna, you still have to fight, says Sri Krishna. You will lose your name, fame, and status in society, if you do not fight.

Swamiji says, in society everybody is worried about how other people perceive him or her. People are worried about social status, family's name, fame etc. So, Arjuna, your name and fame as the greatest warrior will be lost.

You decided to fight, and then, at the last minute you had weakness. People will talk of the Arjuna who ran away from battlefield. Maanam and Apamaanam are more important than life for many. Thus, there are students who commit suicide when they do not get a good rank in examination. So, Arjuna your Apamaanam should be considered. Human beings will spread the bad name. Having enjoyed fame, this ill fame will be worse than death.

Shloka # 35:

"Great heroes will deem that out of fear you withdrew from battle. You will fall in the esteem of those very heroes who have honored you (so far)."

How Apamaana will afflict Arjuna is now explained. Arjuna's reason for withdrawal is not clear. Society will not know his true intentions. This can only lead to spread of rumors. Citing example of journalists, Swamiji says, for sensationalism they contact people to get information and publish information, rumors, with a question mark. Public will not remember the question mark. Once a name is bad it is difficult to get it back. Then, one comes to know, that fame is hell.

Great warriors will say Arjuna withdrew out of fear. Even Karna will say this. Karna has been insulted very often as a Suta Putra and he is waiting for this opportunity. He will use

this opportunity to say Arjuna ran away because of Karna.

Shloka # 36:

“Your foes will hurl many unmentionable insults at you-foes bent on down grading your competence. What can be more painful than that?”

Sri Krishna continues with his description of Apamaana.

Arjuna, your enemies, Kauravas, will spread rumors against you that are difficult for me even to mention. They have the advantage, as they are the rulers of the state. They will belittle your skill in archery. What is more painful than Apamaana?

Giving example of the dialogue between Kaikeyi and Dasartha, in Ramayana, when Dasaratha refuses to give boon to Kaikeyi because he does not want to sacrifice Rama. Kaikeyi uses an argument that all your forefathers have kept their words. By not keeping your word you will sacrifice the name that you enjoy. You will bring a blot in the blotless family of Raghu vamsa. Fearing Apamaana, Dasaratha caved in. Example of Kamsa and Devaki was also cited. Similarly when Kamsa decides to kill Devaki when the asariri comes and tells that Devaki's 8th son will be his killer, Vasudeva uses many arguments but ultimately says your family has got wonderful name. Your name will go down as the killer of your own sister, out of a fear of a son to be born. Do you want such an apamaana. The moment the word apamaana is mentioned, Kamsa says: OK. I will try some other method. Manam, pride, is very important. Apamaanam, insult, is not bearable.

Shloka # 37:

“Getting slain, you will gain heaven; victorious, you will enjoy this world. Therefore, O son of Kunti! Stand up, determined to fight.”

If you do not want ill fame or naraka, then fight. If killed

you will get Vir-svarga. If you win, you will get back your kingdom you have wanted for the last 13 years. Either way you gain. So, Arjuna, get up. Having decided to fight this war, Arjuna, please get up. With this the third line of argument or Laukika Drsihthi is also concluded.

Adhyathmike. Dharmica and Laukika approaches have all been addressed. So, Arjuna, fight this war.

Now, Sri Krishna gives advise on how to fight. Swamji says duties are of two types.

- 1) Pleasant duty
- 2) Unpleasant duty.

That is why whenever there is a function; they will say that it is my pleasant duty to introduce the speaker, etc. The word pleasant duty makes it clear that there is another called unpleasant duty waiting. How to do the pleasant duty, everybody knows. The problem is with unpleasant duty. Therefore, how one should perform the unpleasant duty is subject of 38th verse:

Shloka # 38:

“Looking with an equal eye on pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, strive to fight; thus will you incur no sin.”

Sri Krishna concluded his first phase of teaching and is introducing his next phase of teaching. This is an introduction to Karma Yoga. Veda is divided into two portions, religion and philosophy. Religion is a way of life; Philosophy is the right view of life. The philosophy part is over, now the religion part is coming. Veda-antha is over; Veda-poorva is coming; jnana-kandam is over; karma-kandam is coming; Brahma sastra is over; dharma sastra is going to come.

If a person has to efficiently act in the world, most important characteristic is learning to be balanced in mind;

therefore, samatvam as karma yoga is being introduced in this sloka. It will be elaborated in the later verses.

With Best wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 20

Greetings All,

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Shloka: 29:

“One beholds It as a marvel. Similarly, another talks of it as a marvel. Yet another hears of It as a marvel. Even after hearing, none indeed knows It aright.”

Refreshing our memory of last class, Swamiji reminded us that all the verses from Shloka 12 onwards are about Sri Krishna talking about Atma Swaroopa. He describes how Atma is different from Anatma, the body, and mind and thought complex. Atma and Anatma are mixed physically, because of which there is confusion. Sri Krishna separates Atma, the Consciousness, from the body. Anatma is a pseudo “You” that can be used for many purposes. The knowledge of the real “I” is Atma Gyanam or Samkhya Yoga. Shlokas 29 and 30 are the conclusion of Atma Gyanam.

Sri Krishna has gone through all this to help Arjuna overcome his sorrow. Self-realization is the only way one can totally remove sorrow. Shokha Nivriti can only occur only through Atma Gyanam. This knowledge is also called Mahatmiyam.

This self-realization is the greatest wonder in the universe. What is the “wonder” asks Swamiji? Answering, he says, every

human being is looking for certain fundamental goals in life such as success in business, politics etc. Even though the goals are superficially different, underneath they are all the same. One desires fulfillment in life, a sense of security, and happiness. There are many types of insecurity. If you have less money, you feel insecure. If you have more money, you feel insecure about how to protect the money. So, these are the three basic goals every one has in life. Atma or Brahman represents all these goals. Atma represents fulfillment, security and happiness. Thus, we are all seeking Atma alone. This is the greatest wonder of this world. The greater wonder is that it, the Atma, is the very nature of the seeker. Atma is one's own intrinsic self. Every one is seeking himself or herself. We go all over the world seeking this knowledge, not knowing that it is within you. I am looking for myself, this is the greatest wonder. The greatest hiding place is our selves.

Describing the story of a rich man traveling on a long distance train, the man counts the money every morning. Sitting across him was a thief whose only goal was to get the money from him. The first three days the thief tried but could not retrieve the money. The last day, the fourth, he was desperate to know, so he told the rich man who he really was and wanted to know the secret of where he hid the money. The rich man said I hid it in a place you will never look for. I was hiding it every night under your pillow. Just as in this story we also do not look for fulfillment, security and happiness within ourselves.

I tried to get it from my toys, from the spouse, from the children, from the grand children; from all over the world, but I never tried one thing; I, and that is myself. So, Atma is the greatest secret because it is never searched for. So, when the teacher says you are what you are seeking, it comes as a shock. Never look for Atma; you will never come across it. You are the Atma. It is not a new substance being

revealed, however, it is a new status about myself revealed by Vedantha. "I" am the secure, happy and fulfilled "I".

Giving example of Karna, Swamiji says, when he meets Kunti, he becomes aware for the first time that he was a Kshatriya, the sixth Pandava. Until then he had an inferiority complex that he was a Suta Putra a non-Kshatriya. Once he learns he also is a Kshatriya his status changes. He drops the notion that he was not a Kshatriya. So also with Atman, it is a simple recognition of the Atman as a fact.

Aham Brahmasmi is recognition of the fact about myself. Now I know security, fulfillment and happiness etc. are my name. A notion is dropped. Self- Knowledge is the greatest wonder.

So one student; one seeker sees this fact as a great wonder; because he wonders, how I missed this fact all along. When we were children, we postponed our peace of mind for youth. All the children envy their parents who did not have much to do. They thought the parents were happiest people. They did not have to study or take exams. Now interview them. We had pocket money, and so many other things; and no worries; we now envy our childhood days.

Now we again postpone. Swamiji, I plan to take voluntary retirement; so that I can spend more time. Before retirement, he was attending three classes; now he is hardly able to make to even one class.

We are always postponing for security and it seems like a wild goose chase and it is receding. Is my direction of search the right one? Perhaps, I am searching in the wrong direction. And then we come to Vedanta and discover the right path.

Giving another example Swamiji says, a Brahmin went to bath in a pond. He lost his ring in the pond. He searched for some time and then decided to go to another pond to search for the ring. He felt the first pond was too crowded. Seeing him others also joined him in search. Until somebody asked him

where did he lose his ring? So also with us, the world is searching like sheep for the ring. One who listens to Vedanta sees it as a wonder.

Therefore, teacher (Guru) is a wonder; knower (Shishya) is a wonder, and a non-knower, the one who does not understand is the greatest wonder.

The block is our objectification tendency. I look for It outside as well as inside. Atma is neither outside, nor inside me; it is Me. There is no preposition connecting Atma and myself. And the knack to get it is difficult for some people. Once we get the knack, it is like a puzzle. But once you have seen the clue, it is the easiest thing.

Shloka # 30:

“This embodied self (dwelling) in the bodies of all, O Bharatha Prince ! is eternally indestructible. Therefore, you ought not to grieve for any being at all.”

Sri Krishna concludes Atma Gyanam in this shloka. Briefly it means: Body is mortal, subject to old age, disease and death. We cannot conquer these three. Once we are born, we should accept this reality. Unfortunately, we do not know when we will die. Therefore, please be ready to welcome death or mortality at anytime. Behind mortal body is the real “I”. Mortal body is superficial. The “I” behind it is the Dehi, the eternal “I”. Death will disturb the mind when it is in close quarters. Vedanta will make it tolerable. I will have to continue. Nothing shocks me. It is a manageable disturbance. So, Arjuna, accumulate this wisdom.

Ever indestructible, this Atma, is encased in the perishable body. It is the same with Bhishma and Drona. We accept mortality of others, but not our own or that of near ones. We should not grieve over death of any living being. Try to help them in their suffering but do not grieve over the death. It will not change the fact.

Shloka # 31:

“Having regard to the law of your own life, you ought not to be perturbed. A Kshatriya cannot have a greater good than a righteous battle.”

In Shloka # 30, Atma/ Anatma viveka was concluded as medicine for Arjuna's sorrow and his delusion whether to fight or not.

Sri Krishna says, misplaced Ahimsa is as bad as Himsa. Once non-violent methods are exhausted, a Kshatriya should be able to take to violence, as a last resort. For this to be accomplished Sri Krishna takes three approaches with Arjuna. The philosophical, Dharmic and Empirical or Laukika Drishthi.

With Shloka # 30 the philosophical approach is concluded. It is a difficult approach to grasp. It requires maturity or else it can be misinterpreted. Since Atma is Akartha and Abhoktha even a murderer can say his murder was justified based upon Vedanta. Real Vadanta is never against Dharma.

From Dharmic point of view the war is justified. Bhishma and Drona are to be killed because they are associated with an Adharmic group.

Slokas 31 through 33, the topic is Dharmic angle.

You may not understand Atma. However, as per your own Sva Dharma, that of a Kshatriya, you have to fight. This is as per Shastras.

Dharma is of two types: a) Samanya Dharma and b) Visesha Dharma.

Samanya Dharma is universal; it does not depend upon one's caste, creed, gender, etc. Yama and Niyama are part of

Samanya Dharma. The five Yamas are:

1. Ahimsā : Nonviolence, non-harming other living beings
2. Satya : truthfulness, non-falsehood

3. Asteya : non-stealing
4. Brahmacharya : chastity, marital fidelity or sexual restraint
5. Aparigraha : non-avarice, non-possessiveness

The five Niyamas are:

1. Śauca: purity, clearness of mind, speech and body
2. Santoṣa: contentment, acceptance of others and of one's circumstances as they are, optimism for self
3. Tapas: accepting and not causing pain
4. Svādhyāya: study of self and scriptures, self-reflection, introspection of self's thoughts, speeches and actions
5. Īśvarapraṇidhāna: contemplation of the Ishvara (God/Supreme Being, Brahman, True Self, Unchanging Reality)

Visesha Dharma: Varies from group to group, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishya, male, female, etc., depending on the duty of an individual on his designation in life. Thus, a Brahmin has no right to fight. It is a-dharmic. He can only report, he cannot fight.

For a Kshatriya, however, war is required. So, Arjuna, be aware of your social responsibility.

With Regards,
Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 19

Greetings All,
Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Shloka #24:

“This Self cannot be cut, burned, wetted or dried. Eternal, allpervasive, stable, immovable and ever lasting is It.”

Refreshing our memory of last class, Swamiji reminded us that Sri

Krishna wants to help Arjuna get out of his sorrow as well as help him stand up and fight the war. He teaches from three angles. They are Philosophical, Dharmic and Laukika approaches to life.

In philosophical approach he describes Atma Gyanam from Shloka 12 to 25. In the first few sholkas Sri Krishna pointed out that our real nature is Consciousness or Caitanya svarupam. Our physical, emotional and intellectual personalities are only incidental features. None of them is our real nature.

Discussing Atma he points out that Atma is Nityaha, Satyaha, Sarvagathaha, Apremeya, Akartha, Abhokktha and Nirvikaraha. Atma has no papam or punyam, hence it is also called Karma Phala Athithaha. Discussing Nirvikaraha, Swamiji says, descriptions such as, the highest state of consciousness or lowest state of consciousness means it is subject to change. Consciousness does not have such attributes. As such, it is only a state of mind. A Sattvic mind is highest, a Rajasic mind-very active, is in the middle, while a Tamasic mind is the lowest state of mind. Consciousness does not have different states of existence. So Sri Krishna concludes: Arjuna, you are the Atma, so are Bhishma and Drona. There is no question of any Atma killing or being killed.

Shloka #25:

“This Self is said to be unmanifest, imponderable and immutable. Knowing It to be such, you ought not to grieve for It.”

In Shloka 25 Sri Krishna concludes Atma Swaroopam by telling Arjuna that he should not grieve nor should he shed his duty.

Shloka 26:

“Even if you think the Self is perpetually born and perpetually dies, still, O hero, you ought not to grieve for It thus.”

From Shloka 26 onwards Sri Krishna is giving a hypothetical argument, in case Arjuna does not accept Vedanta's teaching. Swamiji says the student has to be convinced and he must accept; there is no question of imposing the teaching. Sri Krishna says: You may conclude that there is no such thing as an Atma as one cannot see it. You may think it is an imagination. There are other systems of thoughts that don't accept the concept of an eternal Atma. Some systems believe that Atma is in the body and that it changes from birth to birth. In effect, they believe in a perishable Atma. Another system called Charavaha , closer to modern science, asks for proof of mind, intellect and Atma. According to Charvaha philosophy, body alone is Atma. They do not believe in reincarnation. They believe “ I am the body”. They believe in the temporary body with a temporary Atma. If you believe in this, even then you cannot get out of your duty. If you are born and if you die even then death should not be a source of sorrow. You should not grieve.

Shloka: 27:

Death is indeed certain for one who is born; and for one who dies; birth, too, is certain. Therefore, as regards, this unavoidable sequence, you ought not to grieve.

Swamiji says this is an important sholka. Sri Krishna is giving some very practical advice.

Suppose, Arjuna, you are one of those who don't believe in the Atma, but believe you are the body. This body is born on a particular day and whatever is born will die one day.

Everything born will die one day. And from simple common sense experience you know that as well. Learn to assimilate this; whatever is born will have to die one day. Just because I close my eyes, the fact is not going to be different. You cannot make the world dark by closing the eyes.

And that anything born is subject to death is proved by three pramaṇas. Pratyakṣha pramaṇa tells me that from daily reading of the newspaper, in obituary column, somebody or the other is dying. Therefore, I know that there is no difference between the body of that person and this particular body that I have; or the body of my mother; or the body of my father; etc. All of them are Panca bhutatmas; and if one is dying; that means every one of these bodies also has to die. This is pratyakṣa pramaṇam.

Whatever has a beginning should have an end. Whatever is a product will have an end. Therefore, logic also tells me this body, Bhishma's body and everyone else as well, will have to die. This is inference or Anumanaha Pramana.

Scriptures say anything born out of Karma will die. Karma is like oil in a lamp. Once oil is depleted the flame dies out. Similarly the oil of Karma is getting depleted. Meditate on this fact. Assimilate this fact. We are aware of this law but when it comes to us or one's near us we forget the philosophy. Assimilation means applying it in life. This is wisdom.

In ancient stories, Rakshasas did Tapas. When asked for a boon they always asked for eternal life. Brahmaji could not grant them that. So, they accepted conditional immortality, such as I should not be killed at night or by weapons etc. Brahma granted the boon knowing that there is a loophole, if required. Then God takes an Avatara to finish the demon. In other religions death is the end. In Hinduism death is never an end of the individual. Which is why, in Hinduism, capital punishment is possible. You can still redeem yourself in the

next life.

Accept life and death as an intrinsic part of physical body. Resistance to this idea, a choice-less situation, is the one that causes grief. With Choice-less situations it is best to accept and surrender. This is a very important lesson of Gita. Accept with maturity, without complaints, and without anger.

If I am not prepared to accept, there is only way out, that is prepare yourselves. First assimilate this fact by meditating on it. By praying to God, increase your psychological immune system and inner power. Thus, strengthen the mind so that you can accept all choice-less situations.

In Life we have many choice-less situations. There are more choice-less one's than ones with choice. My parentage, my education, my family, children, etc. All these are given and are in the past. Accept the past. Whatever I try, I cannot change the past, and it is choice -less.

Present is also choice-less. It is already here. You are in the middle of it. You cannot alter it.

Regarding future, how much choice do we really have? We will grow old; death and subsequent separation are all given. A big part of future is also choice-less. A very small portion of life presents choices to us. Learn to accept choice-less situations.

In some cases, even our fate can be changed. On Nonmbu consider the power of Savithri or power of Markandeya to change fate. Swamiji says like for a disease some fates can be changed, some managed and some cannot be changed. Unfortunately, one cannot know fate. Even if there is a remedy it will take time and until then it is still a choice-less situation.

Therefore, it is important to have an attitude of accepting choice-less situations. So, do not grieve, Arjuna. If there is

a choice, Act. However, if it a choice-less situation, just accept it.

Shloka 28:

The beginning of beings is unmanifest, O Bhartha prince! Their middle state is manifest. Their end , too, is unmanifest. In these circumstances why lament?

Here Sri Krishna explains the phenomenon of birth and death. He says once we understand this phenomena their capacity to hurt us is reduced. Ignorance creates projections. Some one has said: Ignorance is the dark room in which all the negatives are developed. The negatives include: Kama, krodha, moha, and lobha.

Really speaking, there is no question of destruction of anything or creation of anything. Total destruction does not exist. Total creation cannot exist. Even according to science, by the law of the conservation of matter, "nothing is created and nothing is destroyed". Bhagavan cannot create even a milligram of matter.

Omnipotent is one who can make everything possible. Creation of matter is not possible, even by God. Then what is birth and death? It means changing from one phenomenon to another. Thus, Tomorrow is death of Today. Water converting to steam, means water dies and steam is born. What is the birth and growth of this body? Destruction of lot of idlis and dosais and sambar is the creation and growth of the body.

All our bodies existed before. But in what form? They existed in a potential form called Prakrithi or energy. Prakṛti means the most rudimentary form of matter which is not even energy.

Energy is at least there in four or five different forms. All of them put together come closest to a definition of Prakrithi. Prakrithi is also called Avyaktam or Maya or Shakthi. Therefore our bodies existed before, but in unmanifest form.

Therefore, everything is changing from one form to another; the previous condition is called un-manifest condition; the present condition is called the manifest condition.

All the physical bodies existed before creation in potential form as Prakrithi. In due course of time the un-manifest body becomes manifest body for a few years. Again all manifest bodies will have to go back to un-condition.

Un-manifest > manifest (birth)

Manifest > un-manifest (death).

What happens before life or after life is not known.
In between period is known and is called life.

Shloka #29:

One beholds It as a marvel. Similarly, another talks of it as a marvel. Yet another hears of It as a marvel. Even after hearing, none indeed knows It aright.

Sri Krishna now says: Even if you are not able to understand Atma, believe in it and accept it. I can understand it is a very subtle knowledge and needs a lot of preparation. Atma is a wonder. Atma Gyanam is an even greater wonder. Beyond mind and senses the teaching itself is a wonder. Even if you teach it will not be known. This is a secret teaching. We think Atma is some object of creation and then we try to create the concept. Then we meditate upon it and hope to see Atma. All the time, we should remember, Atma is not an object that is being talked about but it is the subject. Therefore looking for the Atma is the basic mistake we make.

The objectification of Atma is the big mistake people make. Whatever we see is not Atma. When we have negated everything and we see Shunyam then the teacher has to come in and tell us that Shunyam is also not the Atma.

With Regards,
Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 18

Greetings All,
Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

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.”

Refreshing our memory of last class, Swamiji reminded us that Sri Krishna is talking about the nature of the Self and shows how it is different from the body mind complex. Atma is eternal, Atma is reality, everything depends on Atma, and Atma is Sarvagathaha. Bodies are many, however the Atma behind them is actually one, all pervading and advaitham. Atma is Aprameya, not an object of experience. It is the experiencer. Repeating example of photograph, where while a camera is there, it is never in the picture. You cannot experience yourself, as you are Aprameya. Atma is Akartha and Abhokta, neither doer nor reaper of results. Atma is beyond Punyam, papam, sukham and dukham.

All these are a result of Karmaphalam. Atma is nirvikaraha, meaning free from all six modifications (existence, birth, growth, change, decay and death). Atma is intimately connected to body but whatever happens to body does not affect Atma. This is illustrated in the example of a movie shown on a screen. The actors and story in the movie do not affect the screen in any way shape or form.

Shloka 21:

“ How can a man, O Arjuna! Who knows It as the imperishable, the eternal, the unborn, the undecaying, cause anyone to be

slain? Whom can he slay?"

What is the goal of a spiritual seeker? It is Veda, says Swamiji. Veda here is a verb and does not mean scriptures, it means one who knows. He has to know Atma. The aim of the spiritual seeker is to know that Atma is indestructible, unborn and without decay. The knowing happens in two stages. First is separating the body and consciousness. Light is not an integral part of the hand, but it is a separate entity. Similarly, consciousness is not an integral part of body. Having differentiated this finding out which one of the two claims to be me? Body alone is "I am" is normally the claim. We are enamored with this body. So we have to disclaim the body and claim the consciousness as myself. Even understanding Atma/Anatma is possible but shifting to Atma is difficult. I have to go on telling myself that the body is a borrowed material. Even an iceberg is water, born out of water, floats on water until it dissolves in water.

This body belongs to matter. I am the consciousness. It will survive dissolution. Turning the eye from matter to consciousness or from Anatma to Atma is called Nididhyasanam. This shift, with practice, becomes natural. This is assimilated knowledge. What is its advantage? Before it, I would say Atma is Akartha and Abhoktha, now I am the Akartha and Abhoktha. Now I am Nityaha, all pervading. I am ever the Subject; I am free from all six modifications. Therefore a Gyani is Akartha. Action is direct or indirect in nature. Direct action is when I act; indirect action is when I instigate someone else to act. So when a person steals something; that is also crime. When a person engages someone to steal something, that person also has committed mistake. Both actions have Karmaphalam. In this state of a Gyani, there is neither direct nor indirect action. And to indicate this we have two Sanskrit words; direct-doer, I am called kartah, if I am an indirect-doer; I am called a Karayitah; Kartah and Karayitah.

Atma is neither Kartha nor Karayitaha. How can such Atma kill or instigate some one to kill, asks Sri Krishna.

Shloka 22:

“ Just as a man puts on fresh clothes after discarding worn out ones, so does the embodied Self , discarding worn out bodies, proceed to take new ones”

Sri Krishna is now talking about Punarjanmam and death and what happens at these two stages. Death and re-birth are like changing the clothes. Before death we existed. After we remove a dress we still remain as is. Change is only for the dress I still remain as is. Every time a living being is born, it is freshly dressed up. How long you remain in a dress differs. You discard the dress or the body after sometime. You discard worn out clothes when it cannot serve its purpose. Now you put on another new cloth and go out. This body is used for sometime and when it is useless, a Jiva discards the body. It considers it a burden. Jiva is invisible, when the body is gone. Swamiji says it is in a green room of Bhagawan where it puts on another dress. Jiva then comes out in another body for transactions. This is the punarapijananam and punarapi maranam cycle. You can look at the world from two perspectives. Swamiji reminded us of Sthula sharira, Sukshma sharira, Karana sharira and Atma from Tatva bodha. Of these four, the physical body, Sthula Sharira, alone perishes. The other three survive.

Thus:

Sukshma Shariram with mind continues.

Karana Shariram continues.

Atma continues.

The Sukshma Shariram, with mind, travels to another place to experience in another body. Non-perception is not non-existence. Swamiji is referring to the travel of Sukhma Sharira. The travel is as per law of Karma. If a lot of punyam has accrued one gets a good shariram. If punyam and papam are

in equal proportions one gets a manushya shariram.

Where does Atma Travel? Atma does not travel. It is all pervading. Atma just remains as is, while bodies keep changing. In a building the space does not change. If a building is erased and another one comes up the space still remains the same. Bodies appear and disappear. Atma remains.

Shloka 23:

“Weapons do not cut It, fire does not burn It, Neither does water wet It ; nor does the wind dry It”

Even though Atma is intimately associated with the body it is not affected by changes to body. The four of five elements except Akasha affects body.

Thus:

Prithvi-weapons can cut the body

Jalam drowns the body.

Fire burns the body.

Air dries the body.

But none of them can affect the Atma. Fire does not burn the Atma, water does not drown it, Wind does not dry it, and weapons cannot destroy it.

You are immortal. Your nature is immortal. “I” should not disappear. This is an inherent urge in us. I am mortal; we cannot accept this statement, because it is not natural. If it were natural we would have accepted it. What is unnatural, we reject. Example is the case of hip transplant where there are rejections by the body. Mortality everyone rejects. Everyone wants to live a day more. “I” am ever there. I am also all pervading. I am beyond time and space. Out of shape is an example. Our body changes with time. Time cannot change “me”. Lord Shiva is known as Sthanunathaha. I am motionless, Achalaha. Only a limited entity can move. The Atma is limitless and Sanatanaha, or ever fresh. Hence the same name for Hinduism. Purvabhaga related to Dharma, and

Uttarabhaga related to Brahman, both do not change. Ahimsa is a value from time immemorial. Satyam, Ahimsa etc. are all Sanatanaha. Brahman also does not change. Sanatana Dharma teaches changeless values.

All sciences change from time to time. Physics, Chemistry, medicine etc. change. What does not change? Dharma does not change. Vedas too cannot become obsolete.

Shloka #25:

“This Self is said to be unmanifest, imponderable and immutable. Knowing It to be such, you ought not to grieve for It.”

With this shloka Atma Swaroopam is concluded.

Avyaktha means not available to organs of perception. The five sense organs can perceive senses. Eyes can see color, nose can smell, tongue can taste, skin can touch etc. Atma is free from sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa and gandha. These five properties belong to matter. They belong to the pañca bhuthas the five elements. Akasha, Vayu, Agni, Jalam and Prithvi the five elements have the five properties. Atma is non-material, hence Avyaktha.

All our perceptions cannot perceive Atma. In meditation we can only experience blankness. Mind cannot however conceive of and think of Atma. What you think of in meditation is not Atma. Then what is Atma? The thinker is ātma. So it is never thought, but it is ever the thinker. Never the object. It is ever the subject. It is Aprameya.

Arjuna, you are Atma, I am Atma, Bhishma is Atma. You are not killing anyone. Do not grieve over any person. Nobody deserves grief. By grieving, the body will not come back. Atma will continue. Just do what you have to do. Do not grieve. If you understand this fact, why grieve? Grief is a delusion.

With Regards,
Ram Ramaswamy

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 (Karta) 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. Akarta 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 nityaḥ, 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

Bagawat Geeta, Class 16

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Swamiji starts off by refreshing our memory of last week's talks and specifically Shlokas 14 and 15. Sri Krishna wants to solve Arjuna's sorrow and wants him to fight the dharma adharma yudham. He teaches a philosophical approach consisting of Atma Anatma Viveka, a Dharmic approach consisting of Dharma and Adharma and lastly the worldly or Laukika approach. At any level you still have to fight, he tells Arjuna.

Shlokas 12 through 25 deal with philosophical approach. Here he discusses the real nature of Atma. Atma is an Akartha and an Abhoktha. Hence, you are not fighting nor are you a killer. Similarly neither Bhishma nor Drona are being killed. Giving example of a wave, when you look at a wave in the ocean, from the standpoint of the wave, it has got birth as well as death but if you see the essential nature of the wave, i.e. water, from the standpoint of water, it is neither born nor it gets destroyed. Giving another example, a desk has got a beginning and it has got an end. But once you learn to look at it as a wood, then even when the desk is destroyed, the wood continues to exist. Therefore, Arjuna, there is no killer and there is no killed. This is the philosophical angle and hence, Sri Krishna says Atma is eternal. Eternal means it was in the past, it is in the present, and it will be in future as well.

In Shloka 14 Sri Krishna says the Anatma is subject to change. Body mind complex cannot expect immortality. Swamiji says, once the Kaya Kalpam process was considered able to make the body immortal. The reality is, the authors of Kaya Kalpa themselves are dead.

In USA attempts are being made to preserve the dead body with the hope that one day science can bring the body back to life. He says, body has come from Pancha Bhuthas and has to go back to them. Therefore Anatma is ephemeral. So, Arjuna, change your attitude. Accept, that in Anatma everything has to go. For this, Titiksha or mental strength is required. Pray for sahana shakthi to accept arrivals and departures. Without Titiksha, Brahma Gyanam and Moksha are not possible. (Shloka # 15). Such a person is known as Dhiraha. Dhiraha does not mean courageous but discriminating one. One who knows what to accept and what not to accept. As somebody has said:

- Tab 1
- Tab 2
- Tab 3

Oh God, Give me the strength to change what can be changed.
Give me the strength to accept what cannot be changed.ab 2
content goes here.

Give me the wisdom to know the difference between what can be changed and what cannot be changed.

A Dhirhaha is not irritated by the changing world. Arrival is welcome and departure is not resisted. Such a person is Samaha. Such a person enjoys a mind for philosophical inquiry. An irritated mind cannot probe the truth regarding self.

When Sri Krishna says Saḥa, he means a tough mind, which has got a shock absorber. We have the option of filling all potholes on the road to make it smooth or we can fit the vehicle with a shock absorber. This may be a better approach, as it is difficult to fill all potholes on the road. So, a shock absorber in your mind is a better solution, as it will help manage one's reaction much better. With this, our anger intensity is less, as is its duration. Even in an evolved person anger does come, but he recovers from it very quickly. In a lower person the anger remains through out the day. In the lowest person (in evolution) anger remains till death.

Titiksha means ability to manage emotions.

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.”

Swamiji says this is one of the deepest Shlokas of the Gita. Atma is real. Anatma is unreal. Atma has independent existence. Anatma has borrowed existence. Every object has its own intrinsic nature or Swaroopam. It is its real nature, intrinsic nature, and true nature. And also every object can have certain nature which is borrowed from outside and that borrowed nature, we will call it Incidental nature. Thus there are two natures, intrinsic nature and incidental nature. In Sanskrit, Svabhavika dharma means one's own dharma and Agantuka dharma means one that is borrowed, or incidental nature.

Intrinsic nature is present all the time.
Incidental nature is present only temporarily.

Giving an example Swamiji says: A vessel is filled with water to make hot water. You light the fire. The vessel becomes hot. By contact, water also becomes hot. Vegetable in water also becomes hot.

Thus:

Fire is hot because it is fire.

Vegetable heat is incidental as it is borrowed from water.

Water's heat is incidental as it is borrowed from vessel.

Vessel's heat is incidental as it is borrowed from fire.

Fire is hot because of its intrinsic property. All others are incidental and subject to arrival and departure. Whatever is incidental is borrowed and is subject to loss.

Heat in fire is intrinsic and not subject to arrival and departure. Anything perishable is an impermanent thing and enjoys existence for a short time. This body also is

impermanent. Before birth, it did not exist, after death too body will not exist. Every impermanent thing enjoys existence for some time, but not before or after.

All these impermanent things are incidental. While intrinsic nature exists forever. Therefore, all impermanent things do not have existence as their own nature. They only have a "borrowed" existence. Like a "Make up" beauty, as long as "make up" lasts, it is there. This is called Mithya or Unreal. Whereas, whatever is permanent, enjoys an intrinsic nature. It is defined as Sathyam.

Example of lump of clay converted to a pot was given. Now, there is a Pot. Pot got destroyed. Pot enjoyed "borrowed" existence from Clay. Clay alone lends existence to Pot. Clay was there before pot, even during pot's existence and after pot broke as well.

Thus, Clay has an intrinsic nature or a permanent one. This is called Sathyam.

The pot has a borrowed existence and is hence called Mithya.

Vedanta is trying to understand Sathyam and Mithya. Thus, Atma is Sathyam Anatma is Mithya.

Swamiji says, my mind changes. Other peoples minds also change. As I love you, I may also un-love you.

Shloka # 17:

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

In Pot the clay is like the Atma. If pot is destroyed, Clay is not destroyed. Anatma can be and will be destroyed, while Atma will always be there. So, Arjuna, internalize this concept well. Bhishma and Drona are all Atma's whom you cannot destroy.

This Atma pervades this whole creation. Like space, Atma is

all pervading. So, how many Atma's can be there? There is only one Atma while there are many bodies. Just as there is one space with many houses within it. Each house has space enclosed in it. Houses are counted, but not the space within them. Anatma are many and counted, but Atma is everywhere but not counted. This is the basis for our namaskara. You are really worshiping Atma. Other religions do not understand this. Even an ant and a cow have "Atma".

Atma is Nithyaha. Atma is Satyaha. Atma is Sarvagathaha.

With Regards,
Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 15

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Swamiji starts off by refreshing our memory of last week's talks.

Arjuna expresses his helplessness and surrenders to Sri Krishna in grief and requests him to teach. He raises the question if it is correct to fight one's guru and kin.

Sri Krishna takes three approaches in answering Arjuna. The philosophical, the Ethical and the Worldly approach in teaching Arjuna.

In the philosophical approach he informs Arjuna that he is none other than the eternal Atma as are the others such as Bhishma and Drona. Everything is Atma. Atma is Chaitanya Swarupam. It is neither a karta nor a bhoktha. There is no one killing or being killed. When you are a pot, you think of the origin as a pot and destruction also of a pot.

However, when you shift your vision you realize it is the clay in the pot at all times. During the Pot's birth, life and death, the clay remains as is. It was clay at beginning and it continues to remain clay. So from the Pot's vision there is birth and death. From the Clay's vision there is no birth or death. In the ocean example, from standpoint of wave-vision, there is the birth of a wave and there is a death; but from the standpoint of water-vision, nothing is born and nothing is gone. Change the mind to understand that Atma alone is there. There is no birth or death. There is no punyam or papam. So, Arjuna, you do your duty. This is the philosophical approach. To understand this, one has to have a sharp intellect. This is the topic (philosophical) discussed from Shloka #12-25.

If one does not understand or grasp the philosophical approach, for some reason, then Sri Krishna points out a Dharmic approach or ethical approach, as well. For sake of Dharma, a Kshatriya must be ready to fight and give up life, if all other doors are closed. Therefore Arjuna you should fight. So from philosophical angle, you must fight and from an ethical angle also you should fight.

Offering yet another approach Sri Krishna says, Arjuna, you may not believe in ethics itself. You may not believe in Dharma or Adharma. But as long as you are in society, aren't you conscious of your self-esteem, your social status, and how the other people think of you?

You are bothered about your name and fame and from that angle also, or Laukika Dṛṣṭi, you have to fight this war. Otherwise, you will get a very bad name. You will lose your honor.

So, these are the three angles taken by Sri Krishna. We will first deal with the philosophical angle, from 12 to 25.

Sri Krishna defines Atma as Chaitanyam and it is different from the body and it pervades the body. It is not a product, part or property of the body. It is a separate entity.

Providing the hand analogy, when you are seeing the hand, you are seeing the two things, one is the hand, and another thing is the light. Light is on the hand, but it is not a property, part or a product of the hand. Atma is the conscious principle that makes the body sentient and alive. It is not bound by limitations of body. Again, giving example of light, it is not bound by the hand. Light pervades everywhere. Light continues even if hand is removed. However, now, when the hand is removed this light is not visible anymore. To see the light you need a hand or a manifesting medium. Only when hand is placed, you see the light. Thus Atma becomes Vyaktham. After death Atma becomes Avaykatham.

This first property property of Atma is called Nithyaha or it is eternal. It exists as a Vyaktha (visible) or Avyaktha (invisible).

The second property of Atma is Akartha and Abhoktha.

It does not perform any action. When the hand moves, it does so, because it is a limited entity, while light is all pervading. Motion is possible only for limited bodies such as hand, the earth etc. Can space move? Space travel is not space traveling but it is traveling in space. Space cannot travel, as it is all pervading.

Any action requires motion. Any motion is a limitation. Even thinking requires thought motion. Atma being limitless, it cannot perform any action, hence it is called an Akartha. So, it is also Abhoktha or free from the results of action.

Kartha alone reaps karmaphalam. The eater alone gets benefit from hunger Nivriti. Kartha Eva Bhoktha Bhavathi. Whatever are experiences in life is due to our karma phalam. Other people can only serve as a medium for our experiences. Any problem created anywhere in the world is experienced only because of you. Similarly, any struggle, any problem created

by anyone in the world, do not take it as their problem, it is my karma phalam, coming through those people. Because of what law does this occur? The law that states that Karta eva bhokta bhavathi. If atma is akarta, atma is abhokta. This is the second property of Atma. Atma is Nithya. Atma is akarta and abhokta.

Atma is Nirvikaraha. This is a third property of Atma. Whatever changes happens to hand, the light is not affected. Hand may get dirty, may get wounded but light is not affected. Body goes through modifications such as Childhood, Boyhood, Youth and Old age. However, Atma does not have these experiences.

The Atma cannot be seen. The Atma is the seer, the subject, not the object. Eyes cannot see itself. Thus, Atma is Aprameya, another definition of Atma. Seer cannot be seen. Experiencer cannot be experienced. Aprameya is the fourth definition of Atma.

Shloka # 12:

“Never at any time, have I been not; neither you nor these rulers of men. And never shall we all cease to be.”

In this shloka everything is in double negatives. Thus: You cannot say Atma was absent in the past. You cannot say Atma is absent in present. You cannot say Atma will not be there in future.

Swamiji noted that the Shloka does not address the present as Sri Krishna and Arjuna were already in the present.

Shloka # 13:

“Just as the embodied Self has, in the body, childhood, youth, and old age, so does it win another body. An intelligent man is not bewildered by it.”

What is birth and death? If I am eternal, then birth and death

are only changing the medium of interaction, the body. The body has to change, as it will be worn out. We are the medium and it goes through changes. In the body there are four stages of experience. Balyam, Kaumaram, Youwanam, and Jara (old age). While body goes through changes, my identity does not change. The "I" remains the same. As per biology, all our body cells change very few years. Our cells are continuously changing, we are just not aware of it. "I" still remain amidst all changes. If you extend this, you can change the useless body with another body. It is like demolishing an old building and building a new one. However, in all this, the space in the building does not change. It is forever.

Dhiraha: does not mean courageous. It means discriminating person. One who accepts body as a temporary medium? One who is not deluded? Therefore, Arjuna, in this war too, Bhishma shariram will go, however, Bhishma, the ātma will never go. Similarly with Droṇa shariram and Karṇa shariram. So why are you grieving?

Shloka # 14:

"O son of Kunti, contacts of senses with their objects cause cold and heat, pleasure and pain. These come and go-they are fleeting. O Bharatha Prince, endure them."

Just as you understand and accept the nature of Atma, so also, become aware of the nature of Anatma and accept it. The nature of a thing cannot be changed. Giving an example, Swamiji says: One man did not like Onion. He wanted to change the smell of onion. He put the onion in Camphor powder, musk, and saffron and in scented water. After all

that it still smelled like an onion. So also, nature of a thing cannot be changed. It is a waste of time trying to change nature. Rather one should change our attitude towards nature, that nature cannot be changed. This change in attitude is to "accept" the nature of the body. Most of our problems are due to not accepting the nature of things. While Nature

cannot be changed our attitude towards Nature can be changed. And in what way can we change the attitude? We can change our attitude to one of "acceptance". I accept the nature of the body. This is the upāsana.

So, when summer comes, we feel hot. Rather than accepting the glory of the sun, we complain about the heat. So, we should change our attitude towards the body, nature etc. Until I learn to accept nature, problems will be there. In fact, resistance leads to sorrow. Learn to live with the situation, rather than running away. This will increase your capacity to accept heat, cold, pain and pleasure. Life is a series of opposite experiences. Thus, if Manam (pride) comes, apamanam (insult) will come. If samyogaḥ takes place, there will be viyogaḥ. If there is growth, there will be decay. If there is gain, there will be loss. Life is a series of opposite experiences. This is the nature of Anatma. They are subject to arrival and departure. When they come, be mentally prepared to welcome them, when they depart, be mentally prepared to send them off. Thus, Atma is Anithya, impermanent. May you develop the endurance, both physical and mental, to bear this.

Shloka # 15:

"O hero, The man whom these do not agitate, who is the same in pain and pleasure, and who is wise, becomes fit indeed for immortality."

The faculty of endurance is called Titiksha. Titiksha is the quality where one does not get irritated immediately. When our endurance is less, we become irritated quickly. Not to react immediately, not to get irritated immediately, not to punish the other person immediately; because when the endurance is less, we get irritated very quickly.

Lack of endurance (patience)>causes Irritation>causes Anger>causes Himsa.

The lack of endurance is a modern problem.

Swamiji says the quality known as Titiksha is essential for Atmagyanam.

In olden times Gurus used to ask Shishyas to perform mundane and boring tasks such as tending the cows and cutting the firewood. If the student displayed patience, he was allowed to stay and learn. Therefore Sri Krishna says samdukkhasukham, One who is calm and tranquil, he alone is fit for this knowledge.

Suggested take away from this class:

1. Learn to practice Titiksha.
2. While body goes through changes, my identity does not change. The “I” remains the same. Try to be aware consciously of this never changing “I” within you.

With my good wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy

Baghawat Geeta, Class 14

Greetings All,

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Swamiji starts off by reminding us that Arjuna expresses his helplessness and surrenders to Sri Krishna and requests him to teach. Sri Krishna accepts Arjuna as a student and starts teaching him the Gita. The teaching begins from Shloka 11 of Chapter 2 and continues till Shloka 66 in chapter 18. Krishna is no more Parthasarthy. He has become Gita Acharya and Jagatguru.

Shloka # 11:

Sri Krishna says: You grieve for those who call for no grief; at the same time, you utter words of wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the dead nor for the living.

This verse expresses the essence of Gita. Briefly, Ignorance is the cause of all human problems and therefore Self Knowledge is the only solution for all human problems. It is Atma Agyanam versus Atma Gyanam that results in moksha. Brahma Vidya is Self-knowledge. Many topics are discussed in the Gita. They all, however, support Atma Vidya.

“Wise people do not grieve at all”, says Sri Krishna. A wise person is one who is an Atma Gyani. Arjuna is profusely grieving. Therefore, Arjuna is otherwise or ignorant. Through this shloka, Sri Krishna is informing the entire humanity that if you are grieving, then you are ignorant. If anybody is upset, without nimmadi (tamil for peace of mind), they are ignorant. The medicine for ignorance is Gyanam. If there is darkness in the room the only remedy is to bring in light. Can Karma or Action remove ignorance? No, says Swamiji. If that were the case abolish all colleges and just give work to all children. Meditation, Japa etc., also cannot remove ignorance. “therefore Arjuna, become a wise person. Wise men do not grieve for living or for the dead ones.” This goes for things as well. Giving an example, Swamiji says:

A man was travelling with his wife on train. She was very thirsty. She kept nagging him. Then, when a station came, he got her water. Later, She started nagging him again. Now she nagged him as to why she was thirsty to begin with.

Arjuna , you grieve for those who do not deserve grief such as Duryodhana (an adharmic person) at the same time you are speaking like a wise man about kulakshaya, kuladharma etc., and contradicting yourselves. You need Atmagyanam.

Shloka # 12:

Sri Krishna says: Never, at any time, have I been not; neither you nor these rulers of men. And never shall we all cease to be.

In the last verse Sri Krishna presented the condensed version of Gita Shashtra. In this shloka now, he expands on it. Krishna's immediate problem is to have Arjuna stand up and fight. Here Arjuna faces an incidental problem. It is only a short-term problem. It is not a universal problem. The deeper problem, however is, attachment and sorrow. They are eternal and universal problems. Krishna has to solve both these problems of Arjuna.

Sri Krishna takes a three-pronged approach to this.

1. Philosophical: you have to fight;
2. Ethical: You have to fight;
3. Worldly/ materialistic: you have to fight.

From whichever angle you look, you have to fight.

Philosophical approach is primary while ethical approach is alsomimportant. The worldly approach is not that important. Philosophical is important because Arjuna is a very learned person; he knows the dharma shastras. He knows ethics. His problem is his self-ignorance.

From verse 12-25 it is the philosophical approach describing the true nature of Arjuna, Bhishma and Drona or the Atma Tatvam. Then, Sri Krishna discusses the ethical approach. Here he convinces him that it is not ahimsa; it is more like giving capital punishment for a criminal. Lastly, he discusses the worldly approach exhorting Arjuna as to how to maintain his name and fame.

Swamiji now talking about Tatva Bodha, raises the question: Atma Kaha (Who is Atma?) Every individual is a conscious

individual. Every living being is a conscious being, i.e., consciousness is in the body mind complex. It is not found outside the body. The Mike, table, fan etc. are insentient or inert objects. There is, however, sentience in the body. What is consciousness? What makes it sentient? Consciousness is a formless and separate entity. It is comparable to light. This consciousness is not part of body, not a property of body, nor a product of body. It is a separate entity that pervades and enlivens the body. We take the example of Light; light is not part of the body, light is not a property of the body; light is not even a product of the body. On the other hand, light pervades my body and makes this body visible. When you are seeing the hand, you are seeing the two things, one is the hand, another thing is the light. It is on the hand, but it is not a Property, a part or a product.

While the Light is not a part or product of body nevertheless it makes the body visible. This separate consciousness is not bound by limitations of the body. The body does not limit the light pervading the body. Consciousness survives death. The space and time aspects of the body do not bind it.

When the hand is removed the light is not removed. It continues, however, it is invisible. As long as a body is alive consciousness is there, however, once the body dies, consciousness continues, only in an invisible form. Hence it is called Vyakta chaitanya, when it is visible, and Avyakta chaitanya when it is invisible. Thus, consciousness is always there.

Consciousness is called Atma while the body mind complex is called Anatma. Every individual is a mixture of Atma and Anatma. Now, I am able to read because here are two things, one is the book, and the other is the light pervading it. But generally, we take the light lightly. But remember not to take the light lightly because without light, you will not be able to see anything. Therefore, all of us are Atma plus Anatma.

Next lesson of Tatva Bodha is to shift our identification from the perishable Anatma to imperishable Atma. This method of thinking is called Drk Drsyā Viveka. When I say I am the body, I accept mortality. How many people can accept mortality? With this acceptance also comes old age and mortality. The other approach is to shift my identity to Atma. I do not change the body. You can love the body as an instrument of transaction, rather than loving the body as myself. Even if the instrument goes away, the “I” still remains.

Asatho Maa Sadgamaya. Tamso Maa Jyotirgamaya. Mr̥tyo Ma Amṛtam Gamaya.

(God! lead me from ignorance to knowledge. Lead me from mortality to immortality.)

Atma is already immortal. Anatma is mortal. We are shifting our identity from mortal to immortal. Scriptures are giving us the some methods to perform this shifting. One of the most powerful methods is:

“Whatever I am experiencing, I am not it “. Why? Because, whatever I am experiencing is an object, while I am the subject. Our Eye sees everything but it does not see itself. From that it is very clear, the eyes are ever the seer and never the seen. Therefore, the subject is always different from the object.

The world is an object of experience, arriving and departing. The body is something I experience only in waking state, not in sleep state and dream states. What about the mind? We experience it only in the waking state, and dream state but not in sleep state. There is no Raga or Dvesha in sleep state. “I” am the Experiencer of all the three states. This “I” is the Atma.

Features of the Atma:

1. "I " am ever the Subject (Experiencer) not the object of experiences (experienced). Example: a camera takes pictures but it is not in the picture. Do we need proof that a camera took the picture? No, without a camera there will be no picture. "I" am never in the picture but "I " am ever existent, and hence called Aprameya.
2. Atma is Nithyaha or it is eternal. It exists as a Vyaktha or Avyaktha.
3. Atma is Nirvikara. It is changeless. Even when the hand moves the light does not change. The light is all pervading. The light here is Prakasha, not the bulb.
4. Atma is Sarvagathaha. It is all pervading. It does not have spatial boundaries.
5. Atma is Akartha and Abhoktha. Atma does not perform any action nor does it reap any result. The hand may act; it can touch and in the act may get dirty. The light pervading the hand does not act nor is it affected. Example of hand touching a blade was given. If the hand touches a blade, it is karta, and for touching that, what is the phalam, the fingers are cut; thus hand is karta, hand is bhokta, but the light is neither karta, neither bhokta, it is karta and abhokta. Thus Aprameya; nityaha; nirvikaraḥ; sarvagataḥ, akarta and abhokta are Atma's attributes. The Atma, like the light, is changeless, the all pervading and the experiencer.

Therefore Arjuna, You are not killing Bhishma, the Atma and Drona, the Atma. They are not killed. Why are you worried about their death? You are also not a killer. Arjuna, the Atma, is an Akartha. So, why are you in anguish? This is the philosophical argument.

Swamiji says every criminal can present this argument to a court. So, now, Sri Krishna presents the ethical angle. Normally, Himsa is not right. Here, however, you are fighting for Dharmasansthapanam. From this angle you can go ahead with

the fight.

Atma is eternal. What does it mean?

Sri Krishna says the Eternal Atma was in the past, Atma is in the present and Atma will be in the future also. This is the essence of Shloka # 12.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Baghawat Geeta, Class 13

Greetings All,

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Swamiji starts off by reminding us that Vyasa now presents Arjuna as a seeker of moksha. The fundamental human problem characterized by Raga (Likes), Dvesha (Dislikes) and Moha (delusion) is also called Samsara. Due to attachment, when we lose a person or an object, it causes us Shoka. In this state of Shoka our mind loses its discriminating faculty and is called Moha. This is the situation faced by Arjuna in battlefield. While we try making adjustments to the external world to solve such an internal problem, it only acts as a palliative or a first aid rather than as a remedy. In such a situation the aggrieved person should discuss his helplessness in solving the problem, and this state of helplessness is called Karpanya bhava or Dainya bhava. While Arjuna has discovered his problem he has not yet arrived at the helpless stage, the second stage of problem solving.

Shloka #5:

Arjuna says: If I fight and kill my two Gurus, I will only remember how they struggled and died in battle. Every moment I will remember how I killed Bhishma and Drona. My other option is not to fight and retire to the forest, where I will have to live on alms.

Swamiji says Arjuna has to decide which course of action to take. He chooses Adharma. He feels he will be better off living in forest, on alms. For a Kshatriya and Grihastha, Bhiksha is not allowed. Giving up one's Sva-Dharma is also a sin. Here Arjuna is giving up his Kshatriya Dharma, by not fighting. Furthermore, by planning to retire to the forest and begging for alms, he is taking up somebody else's dharma, which is yet another papam. Swamiji says, Sri Krishna is still quiet, as Arjuna has not yet asked him for help.

Shloka # 6:

Arjuna says: I am in a big conflict because my own cousins are arraigned against me. By killing these people, we will not like to live in this world, as they are both kith and kin. We are not even sure if they will defeat us or we will defeat them. I am not objective enough to analyze the situation. So, I need your help. We do not know what to do? Victory over them or their victory over us, which to accept? In this, if I fight, it is dharma, a plus, however, Guru Vadham, is a minus point. Also, having to live in the forest and on alms is another minus point.

Shloka # 7:

Swamiji says human being is born ignorant. Ignorance is not a sin. We are "Self" ignorant as well. Perpetuation of ignorance is, however, a sin.

Arjuna says: My mind and intellect are incapacitated. It is not able to function. My intellect cannot discriminate. My intellect is afflicted by my misery. My confusion is with respect to dharma and adharma. Himsa is adharma. Killing one's

own people is adharma. Killing one's Guru is certainly adharma. On the other side, Kauravas are the embodiment of Adharma and we need to fight them. What is my dharma, Sri Krishna? Tell me what is good for me. I am your disciple. I come with an open mind. I am surrendering at your feet.

Swamiji says a wise person does not give advice unless the other person requests for it. So, here also, Sri Krishna was waiting for Arjuna to ask for his help. The word Prapanna means surrender. Falling at the feet, Sharanagathi, is one way of surrendering. In this process the other person becomes the Guru. If I have to become a teacher, I need at least one person to ask me to teach him or her. So, here Arjuna has become a disciple and Krishna the Guru. After surrendering also there are expectations. Mantra Upadesha cannot remove ignorance. In such instances, a teaching that distinguishes between the right versus wrong is required.

Swamiji say advice does not help. Advice is a short-term direction and person keeps coming back for advice every time he faces a problem. Teaching, however, is for the long term and teaches how to make decisions. Advice makes one dependent while teaching makes one independent. Swamiji gave example of giving a person a fish versus teaching him how to fish.

Shloka # 8:

Arjuna says: My grief is so intense that it dries up all my organs. My thinking faculty does not function. Can I do something to escape from this sorrow? I do not see any method to remove this sorrow other than your teaching. I may choose to fight, I may win, I may become a king and get an unrivalled kingdom, but I cannot remove my grief. (Swamiji says, money may buy food but it does not remove hunger.) Even If I became Indira, it will not solve my problem. Worldly accomplishments cannot solve my problem. So, he asks Sri Krishna to help. Swamiji says, at this stage, Arjuna has to go for a spiritual

goal and hence he needs a guru.

Shloka # 9:

Sanjaya now says: In this manner Arjuna surrendered to Sri Krishna saying, I am not going to fight nor am I going to run away from battle. I want to hear from you (Sri Krishna) and then decide.

Swamiji gave some definitions:

- Paramtapa: Destroyer of enemies.
- Gudakesha: means master of Tamoguna or Satva Guna Pradhana. Human mind swings from Rajasic (very active) to Tamasic (dullness), while the Satvic mind is in the middle as a non-extrovert, but wakeful mind.
- Govinda: Protector of the world, is the Shastric meaning. Another meaning is, Go means scriptures, and Vinda means one who has grasped the scriptures. To this Govinda Arjuna surrenders. Ha: Means everything has become quiet.

Shloka # 10:

Sanjaya continues:

Oh Dhrithirashtra, Lord Krishna accepted the offer of Arjuna and taught him the Gita Shashtra sitting between the two armies. The Gita Shashtra begins from Shloka 11 of Chapter 2 and continues till Shloka 66 in chapter 18.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Baghawat Geeta, Class 12

Greetings All,

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Before getting into details of Chapter 2, Swamiji refreshed our memory on the key concepts presented in chapter 1. He says the disease called Samsara plagues mankind. It is an internal and psychological disease. Raga (Likes), Dvesha (Dislikes) and Moha (delusion) characterize this Samsara disease. Often, not understanding the true problem we look to external factors as the root cause (s). Thus, a poor man thinks his poverty is the cause of his problem.

In another example, an unmarried person thinking of marriage to solve his problems sees that his friends with wives all still seem to have problems.

Giving yet another example of a man who while riding a bus heard a noise and thought it was a tire problem. When he asked others in the bus they said they did not hear a noise. He was not convinced. He asked the driver to stop the bus and check the tires. They found the tires were fine. Later the man went to an Ear Doctor and learned that he had a hearing problem that caused him to hear noises.

Similarly, all our problems are noises of Samsara (Kama, Krodha and Moha) and they are all internal as well. Performing an external adjustment will not work, says Swamiji.

Only a mature person, who has experienced the world, comes to know that the problem is within him. He, however, does not know how to solve it. This is known as Dainya Avastha or the helpless stage. Once he becomes aware of his helplessness he then goes to Sharanagathi or going to an external power to solve the problem. At this stage, Shranagathi, one has to accept and be humble enough to surrender to someone. After

Sharnagathi comes the stage of giving the solution and pursuit of spiritual knowledge. This is the Bhagavat Gita stage. So, the four stages of ones evolution are:

1. Discovery of the true problem of Samsara,
2. Reaching a state of helplessness in solving the problem,
3. Seeking the help and advice of some one, Sharanagathi and
4. The Solution to the Samsara problem

Of these four stages, while Arjuna has discovered his problem he has not yet arrived at the helpless stage. He, however, has doubts about his decision. Swamiji says a doubt is better than a wrong decision. At least here there is the possibility of help and a solution. In Chapter #1 Arjuna made a wrong decision. Now he progresses to the doubt stage.

Swamiji says it like progressing from: Tamas>Rajas> Satva.

Shloka # 1:

Arjuna has thrown down his bow and arrow. He has not yet asked Lord Krishna for help. Arjuna's attachment led to his blurred eyes that further obstructed his vision. This was the poignant condition of Arjuna, the Samsari, that Sri Krishna saw.

Kripa in this Shloka means attachment and not compassion. Also, Avishtam means overpowered. A man of compassion is also called a Swami while a man of attachment is called Kami.

Recognizing Arjuna's condition Sri Krishna decides to break the ice. He criticizes Arjuna with strong words so that he could motivate him to get up and fight.

Sri Krishna says, " From where did such a low thought (Kashamalam) come into you. You are known for courage. You have fought many battles before. You have defeated Shiva. How come you are crying in this battlefield at such a critical time of battle? Such dejection can never come to an Arya

(noble person). If you are a noble person, do your duty. If you do not do your duty it will give you papam in the next life. In this life, as well, you will live with ill-fame.”

Some Clarification:

Arya: Discussing the meaning of the word Arya used in this shloka, Swamiji says, it does not mean people who migrated to Iran to India, nor does it mean fair complexioned people. The Shastric meaning of Arya includes:

- It is the character that makes a person an Arya, not his birth.
- One who does what has to be done, pleasant or unpleasant. Duty is duty.
- One who is without likes or dislikes.
- One who will not do anything that should not be done.
- One who leads a life of discipline.

Shloka # 3:

Sri Krishna continues: “ Hey Arjuna, Kleivyam (unmanliness) does not suit you. You are known for your courage. How can you be frightened? Get away from this weak-heartedness that makes you a disgrace and get up.”

Param tapa means scorcher of enemies.

Here Sri Krishna does not teach Arjuna the Gita Gyanam yet. The reason is, Arjuna has not yet surrendered himself to Sri Krishna and as such is not yet ready to listen or receive his teaching. Hence, says Swamiji, it is foolish to give him advice. Sri Krishna knows Arjuna has not yet exhausted his emotions.

Here Swamiji counsels that one should only advise a person who wants it, values it and asks for it. Without asking no advise should be given.

Shloka # 3:

Now Arjuna says: "Oh Madhsudhana, how can I fight Bhishma and Drona who really deserve worship? They are my Gurus."

Shloka # 4:

If Arjuna decides not to fight he will have to go to the forest and live on bhiksha. This is considered a papam. As per Shastras, a Grihasta cannot live on Bhiksha. Only a Brahmachari or Vanaprastha can live on Bhiksha. A Grihasta has to give Bhiksha and not ask for it. Per Arjuna, killing Bhishma is also a papam. Thus, Arjuna has to choose between two papams. Both are bad choices. Here, normally, we humans, try to avoid making a decision. Arjuna, however, chooses to live on bhiksha.

Arjuna says: " If I fight and kill my two Gurus, I may get the kingdom, but Sri Krishna, will I be able to enjoy the pleasures of victory? I will only remember how they struggled and died in battle. Neither in this world or next will I enjoy life after seeing that. Therefore, I am not in favor of this war.

Suggested take away from this class:

Swamiji counsels that one should only advise a person who wants it, values it and asks for it. Without asking no advise should be given.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy