

Three Gunas

In Chapters 14, 17 and 18 of Bagawat Geeta, Bagawan Krishna discusses the three gunas – Satvic, Rajasic and Tomasic. Swamiji has presented many aspects of these gunas in a chart form in his book on Bagawat Geeta. I prepared a chart based on Swamiji's chart and added other aspects of the gunas based on Swamiji's teaching. I presented these charts to Swamiji for his blessing and presenting them, with his permission, for your use.

Please click on the link below to access the chart.

Three Gunas

Ten Commandments of Hinduism

This is a special talk given by Swamiji on the new year day of 2000. This one hour special talk discusses the following:

- Ten commandments that should be followed by all seekers of moksha
- The practical ways of following these ten commandments

While many of us study vedanta, and are in the process of assimilating the knowledge, we struggle to apply this knowledge during our day to day lives. Swamiji gives some very specific guidance that will help us lead a better life.

Please click on the link below and listen the teachings of Swamiji.

Ten Commandments

Gurupurnima Lecture

The discussion was about Advaitam (Ad), Vasistadvaitam (Va) and Dvaitam (Dw)—majority of Hindus follow one of these Darśans.

The three Darśans do not have the same goal.

Jiva is atom according to Va and Dw. But Ad says it is Sarvagata.

Iswara Swarupa is Saguna according to Va and Dw. But Ad says it is Nirguna.

Jagat is different according to Va and Dw. But Ad says there is no Jagat at all

Bhanda —according to Va, I am dependant as Dasa eternally.

But Dw says Bondage is a misconception

Ad says it is a misconception I am a Dependent—I am a Swami—Soham

For our intellect we have to accept one path.

Ad does not look upon Va and Dw as opposed to it but as promoters—at the end Va and Dw is rejected.

All seekers are at the level of:

Mandha Adhikari— good student

Madhya Adhikari—better student

Uthama Adhikari—best student

Dw takes a student from Mandha to Madhya. Va takes a student from Madhya to Uthama.

Uthama will have intellect to appreciate teaching of Ad.

In short, Dw looks at Jiva and Jagat as two separate entities.

Va looks at Jiva as a small part of God and Jagat is different

Ad says Everything is Brahman— Aham Brahmasmi

Thanks

Ramanathan

Is Life Predetermined?

Many events of our life are out of our control and most of our life appears to be predetermined. It appears that we may be able to influence only a small portion of our life. Our birth is destined. Our death is destined. And most of our life appears destined. Then, is it correct to say that our life is destined and we can do nothing to change our destiny?

I had the privilege of meeting the Swami Paramarthananda in August 2016 and at that time I presented this question to him.

Before I present the answer from the Swamiji, some discussions regarding the laws of karma. Karmas can be classified, based on their occurrence, into three types:

1. **Sanjitha Karma:** Sanjitha karma is the sum total of all karma accumulated from our previous jenmas (lives). Sanjitha karmas will mature over many jenmas (births/lives).
2. **Agami Karma:** Agami Karmas are generated by our actions in this life. Some agami karma will mature in this life and some will become sanjitha karma for maturity in later lives.
3. **Prarabtha Karma:** Prarabtha karma is the karma maturing or fructifying in this life. Maturing karma could be either from this life or from previous lives.

Some of the laws of karma:

1. Some of the prarabtha karma are from this life and others are from previous lives. Maturity or fructifications of Karmas is not linear. This is similar to seeds of plants – some seeds sprout quickly while others take longer.
2. Karma includes both punyam (positive karmas) and pavam (negative karmas). Punyams are the result of our dharmic actions and pavams are the result of our adharmic actions.
3. While I do not control what has happened in my prior lives (sanjitha karma) or what is happening in this life (prarabtha karma), I can control how I react to my current situation (agami karma). A dharmic and purposeful life can increase punyam or decrease pavam.
4. All karmas – sanjitha, prarabtha and agami karmas- are the results of my actions in this life and previous lives. I did have control over any and all of my actions of my previous lives. I do have control over any and all of my actions in this life. I and I alone created all of my karmas. While my adharmic choices in the past have resulted in current unfavorable situations, I should make dharmic choices here and now. I can't change the choices I have made in the past, but I do have the free will to make the correct choices now.
5. When prarabtha karma for this life is exhausted, the body falls.
6. When sanjitha karma is exhausted, we get moksha or liberated.

Swamiji stated that some of the prarabtha karma are parapalam and some are dhurpalam, that is they are weak and controllable or strong and non controllable. However, we do not know which ones we can control and which ones we can not control. So we must always exercise our free will and make dharmic choices. We may also be able to reduce the impact of the controllable prarabtha karma by doing prayachitham

(remedial measures). Prayachithams are of two types:

1. Lowkika prayachitham: These are worldly activities we can perform. Example of a lowkika prayachitham is going to a doctor when getting ill.
2. Sasthrika prayachitham: These are the rituals mentioned in scriptures. If these rituals are performed as described in the scriptures, the impact of prarabtha karma can be reduced or eliminated.

When we face any adverse situation we should always do our dharmic duty and take proper prayachitham – either lowkika prayachitham or sasthrika prayachitham. For example, when one gets seriously ill, one should seek the treatment from a doctor. Refusing to follow medical advice and accepting the medical condition as our destiny is fatalism. Our scriptures do not allow fatalism and fatalism is fundamentally against the duties of a human being. Bagawan Krishna has emphasized this many times in Bagawat Geeta.

In conclusion, we always have free will and that free will gives us control over Agami Karma. A dharmic life can reduce agami karma phalam. We can also do some prayaschitham for prarabtha Karma to mitigate a negative phalam.

Notes:

- This post is based on my meeting with Swamiji in August 2016 as well many of his classes, specifically his classes in Tatva Bodha and his class number 148 – Chapter 10, Verse 33 of Bagawat Gita. I also recommend the readers to listen to those classes and get their own perspective (this post is from my perspective).
- I thank Ram Ramaswamy for framing this question in logical way. Many parts of this post are borrowed from his original question, which is reproduced below:

To exhaust Prarabhdha karma one gets rebirth. This is destiny. While living, one experiences prarabhdha karma phalam, this

too is destiny. Once Prarabhda Karma is exhausted for this lifetime, the body falls. This is also destiny.

Agami Karma's are new karmas generated by our actions in this lifetime. Some Agami Karma phalam will occur in this lifetime itself. Others will become Sanchitha Karma that will come back in a later life.

We do have some control on Agami Karma or so it appears. A purposeful life can reduce agami karma. We can also do some Prayaschitham for Prarabhda Karma as well to mitigate a negative phalam.

Looks like there is an only a small portion that we can influence. Most of our life appears destined. Our birth is destined. Our death is destined. Some parts of our life are also destined; we just do not know which part.

Is it then correct to say that based upon the part (Small) we do not control, our life is not destined? Even Ramana Maharishi told his mother: What has to happen will happen. What should not happen will not happen, however much we try. Is this not destiny?

Karanam and Karyam

Portion of Swamiji's lecture on Shivarthri:

In the first stage of Ishwara Aradhanam we defined Ishwara as shrithi-shruthi-laya kartha. We use the word jagat kartha but in the second stage, Ishwara jnanam, the language is slightly changed. Instead of the word "kartha" we use the word "karanam". Now we define God as the cause of the universe, the source of the universe, and origin of the universe. Even

modern scientists accept that the universe originated at a particular time which they study in cosmology where they talk about Big Bang etc. We need not go deeper but what I am saying is even the scientists talk about origination or evolution of the universe. Which means from non-origin state the origin state must come for from non-existent thing nothing can come. There is a fundamental cause that exists and this karanam is called Ishwara. And the entire universe is a product evolving or originating from that karanam. That is why Bhagavan is called karaneeshwara which is a famous temple.

Once you understand Ishwara as karanam (cause) and the world is the effect then we can analyse the nature of both Ishwara and the world. The scriptures help us understand that through many examples. Like gold as the karanam and ornaments as the karyam, as clay as the karanam and pots as the karyam, or iron as the karanam and various kinds of hardware as the karyam. Based on these examples given in the Upanishad we have to understand Ishwara. Studying the examples we can know the features of karanam and the important features of karyam. On this auspicious Shivaratri day I will recount four important features of both karanam and karyam that you are all aware as upanishadic students.

1. Gold the cause is ekam (one) and from that lump we have several ornaments. Therefore karanam ekam and karyam anakam. So how many Gods are there? God can only be ONE but HE can be invoked in several forms.
2. The second feature is Gold is the karanam and ornaments karyam. The ornaments cannot exist without gold as gold alone is the content of all the ornaments. Therefore we can conclude karanam is the CONTENT (saaram) for the entire universe which is the karyam. Now tell me where is God? In kailasam or Vaikuntam or etc. Since god is the very saaram, god has to be behind everything. God cannot have a particular location as God is behind all the products which are like different ornaments in

different names and forms. So god is saaram and world is asaaram (which is pit less and hollow).

3. The third important feature is “gold existed before the arrival of ornaments, during the existence of ornaments and after the melting of ornaments. Gold exists in the past, in the present, and the future but the ornaments have got a beginning. And anything with a beginning will also have an ending.” Therefore karanam in nityam and karyam is anityam. God is nityah and the world is fleeting.
4. The fourth feature is “gold, the karanam, by itself exists INDEPENDENTLY. It does not depend on the ornaments for its existence. Therefore swantantra tattvam whereas the ornaments, the products, does not exist independently and they all have borrowed existence. They do not have real existence. Whatever has independent existence is called Satyam and whatever is seemingly existent with borrowed existence, they are called asatyam. Ishwara ekah satyah while jagat is asatyah.

When we get Ishwara jnanam we understand these four features: ekah, saarah, nityam and satyam. God is one, hold or fit, eternal, and the only real one. And the world is nekah, asaarah, anityam and asatyam. By analysing further we discover another important practical message. The ornaments are very useful for beautifying our body. Ornaments are used for hands, legs, neck, tongue and even eye-brows (new and new fashions). Ornaments have got beauty, ornaments have got variety, ornaments have got novelty. But when you want financial security, security does it depend on ornaments or gold? When ornament is brought or sold people only look at the gold. The karyam gives beauty but what gives security? The karanam alone can give security. The world is beautiful, wonderful, it has variety. But whenever you want security, you have to hold on to only God. So if you want security, if you want peace you never depend upon anything in the world (whether they are

things, beings, or positions, or possessions for nothing is reliable). You have to hold on to Ishwara and Ishwara only. Initially Ishwara aradhanam and later Ishwara alambanam. If a sanyasi can renounce everything, from where does he get that courage? He does not want to depend on anything he is renouncing. Even after renouncing he has got self-confidence because he feels that his security is not the share market that is crashing every other day, not the bank money whose interest is coming down, not the people around me. I only depend on Ishwara as my alambanam. For me God is the truth beyond all forms and HE is the truth behind everything. The rationalist say God is no where while we Hindus say that the God is NOW HERE. God is there is the speck and also in the pillar. And if Ishwara is everywhere is ekah, saarah, nityam and satyam then that Ishwara must be in me also. This is the first stage of self-enquiry and then we come to the next higher state. It is very subtle and very abstract. And who is the ekah, saara, nitya, satyam Bhagavan residing in me? There are two things that are constantly there in every living being – chaitanyam (consciousness) and achatanam (matter). The body is continuously changing, the thoughts are continuously changing and what is the constant changeless factor? I am aware of all these changes and this chaitanyam is the nature of Bhagavan. The second factor is when I introduce myself as a body, male or young or old. I am old, I am young, I am handsome, I am a man etc. In all of them what is the constant factor? I AM. This is existence or satyam principle. Sat chit ananda is the Karanam Ishwara principle who is everywhere and who is in me also. And when I learn to identify with that core then I can say: aham brahma asmi. This makes my life purnam.

We start from Ishwara aradhanam and go to Ishwara jnanam and understand that Ishwara is in everything and understand that Ishwara is in me and then come to the conclusion that Ishwara is me. This is the journey of a Hindu and it is possible to achieve this purnatvam in one life itself. This teaching has been given in the Vedas and Vedas have been given by the Lord

Parameshwara and hence we are always indebted to Bhagavan. Sadasiva samarambham, shankaracharya madhyamam, asmad acharya paryantam vande Guru paramparam. On this auspicious Shivaratri day we do the aradhanam of Ishwara and we receive the knowledge of Ishwara and we have to discover this purnatvam which is the journey for all of us

2016 Sivaratri Message from Swamiji: Five Features of Bakthi

This is the recording of the special talk given by Swamiji for the Sivatri festival in 2016.

2016 Sivaratri Talk

Tolerance: Swamiji Talk for New Year 2016

Namaste:

This are my notes from New Year talk given by Swamiji on January 1, 2016:

You can listen to this talk [here](#).

The topic of this talk was six principles of tolerance.

Swamiji started the talk by pointing out that the topic of tolerance is in the news now a days and that both Tatva Bodha and Bagawat Geeta point out the need for tolerance. Tatva Bodha says one need thithiksha (mental shock absorbers) to withstand the ups and downs of life. Lord Krishna says in Chapter 2 of Bagawat Geeta that one need shama to withstand the up and downs of life.

Six principles of tolerance:

1. Non empowerment: Scriptures says the creation is full of pairs of opposites as per laws of karma. The creation is full of events like loss and gain and up and down. Swamiji says we classify all events as welcome and unwelcome. The first principle of tolerance is not to label any situation. By labeling an event we empower the world to hurt. Let all the pairs of worldly experiences happen, but do not label them as welcome or unwelcome. Be prepared to go through the results of karma without attaching a label of unwelcome. If one must attach a label, use the label "welcome" and accept all situations and experiences.
2. Empowering ourselves: Strengthening ourselves to withstand and move forward from any event. Worldly events are not the creation of Bahawan, but the results of karma. While creation includes both pavam and puniyam, the resources to handle the situation are also created within ourselves. Learn to rely on internal resources and not on external outside resources.
 - Arm ourselves with the ability to be strong
 - Understand and accept that there are resources within ourselves to withstand the ups and downs of life
 - Build up faith in ourselves with the realization that Lord resides in ourselves.
3. Non Magnification: Avoid dwelling upon unwelcome experiences and let it occupy our minds completely.

Whenever there is an “unwelcome” situation, our tendency is to dwell on and magnify that situation. This results in worry, anxiety and fear. Dwell upon the solution and do not to dwell upon and magnify the situation. Apply the first two principles above and assimilate the thought that all difficult experiences are not given out by Bagawan but are the results of karma and the world is only a medium. This does not mean that we don't take any action, but take any action, including deliberate inaction, but do not contaminate the action with hatred and vengeance. Cultivate tolerance at both “kartha” (doer) and ‘boktha” (experiencer) level.

4. Self Restraint: Avoidance of impulsive responses. Boktha becomes a kartha by following the first three principles. Impulsive actions prevents us from developing a long term solution. Boktha (the experiencer) gives the message; Kartha should filter the messages and take careful actions.
5. Objectivity: Avoid judgment based on incomplete data. Never judge a person in a hurry. No one should become a victim of prejudicial actions. Prejudicial actions and judgment only will result in accumulating more pavam. Before taking any action at others, stand in the position of others and determine if the proposed action is one that your would accept yourself.
6. Postpone violent measures: Whenever we face difficult situations, we face two options: one is aggressive and the other is peaceful. When we are faced with difficult situation, we prefer aggressive measures as they may appear to bring immediate results. Scriptures say that the peaceful measures must be tried first. Always remember ahimsa is an important virtue. Only after exhausting all ahimsa measures, more aggressive measures should be pursued.

Swamiji concluded that if we follow these six principles, then we will be able to handle and move on after any difficult

experience.

Our Meeting With Swamiji

Swami Paramarthananda: September 17, 2015 @ 6pm

Chennai, India

Narayanan took an appointment to meet Swamiji at his residence in Abhiramapuram. It was about 20 minutes visit. Being Ganesh/Pilayar Chaturthi day took some fruits, modak/kozakatai made in the morning and some from abhisekam done at Ganapathi agraharam on August 27.

After offering our namaskaramas, we had few minutes of casual talk introducing ourselves as his students from Chicago. Thanked him for his lectures. He took interest hearing about our classes and students, he said that he met few of us and blessed us to continue with spiritual studies in whatever format. We mentioned about 15-20 of us attending now, started by Dr. Janakiraman in June 2007. Some of us are continuing and many have joined and some had to leave due to changing situations. Swamiji showed interest knowing about our class format. We told him about our classes on Sundays in the morning at the time the temple opens. His comment was that it is good as other activities take over during the day. He liked the 10 min or so discussion part of our class and notes of lecture summary being prepared and shared among us.

We asked him how his classes are exactly 1-hour duration, how he prepares for it. He said he has been doing it for 30 years now and in the beginning it was not so, when he went longer, he could see that people lose interest and want to get away due to their commitments. So over the years this 1-hour class

has come to stay. The first 15 min recap is mainly because the 1 week gap between the classes puts people back into worldly daily chores and it is needed to bring all back to the topic/theme for continuity.

Then we asked what advice he has for us as we continue with the studies and with our personal life phase change. Very quickly within few seconds, his expression was like it is sincere purposeful forward-looking thoughts for us, he started his response: You all are in this spiritual path due to purva punyam, to continue with it follow/practice this: Swamiji referred to Gita Chapter 13, the 20 virtues. Review these constantly and try to practice it in daily activities. Then he referred to Gita Chapter 16 the asuri and daivika sampatti. Asuri does not mean demonic that we think of. These two are materialistic and spiritual paths that bring out these natures in us. Practice slowly getting away from the materialistic things of life. It may not be possible to be 100% non-materialistic, but getting away from it moves us more to the spiritual side. Then Swamiji mentioned about Gita Chapter 17 (he halted for a second to ask us how far we have read Gita and once we said we went through it at the start of these classes in June 2007, he continued) the 3 gunas discussed Sattvik, Rajas and Tamas for each aspect – worship, tapas, dAnam and food intake. Swamiji asked us to review these consistently and practice the qualities on a daily basis; it helps us to become more spiritual and move away from the materialistic. Swamji said that this is a kavacham that protects us. Swamiji then said to share with the class; the message/advice is for all of us in our class.

New Year Discourse by Swami Paramarthanada

New Year Discourse by Swami Paramarthanda