

Bhikshu Gita

The Bhikshu-Gita is contained in chapter 5 of Skandha XII of Srimad Bhagavata.

Sri Suka said:

1. In this Bhagavata is described again and again the worshipful Sri Hari, the soul and substance of all that exists – Sri Hari from whose creative will Brahma originated and from whose destructive urge Rudra arose.

The Brahman is ontologically prior to everything. It is, therefore, to be regarded as the origin of everything. The Vedanta Aphorisms define the Brahman as that to which the birth, maintenance and destruction of the world have to be attributed. The Brahman is, therefore, considered the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer of the world.

The Brahman, being the Supreme Being, permeating and pervading everything in the world is the Supreme Consciousness. It is also considered the Supreme Spirit or the Atman. By its very nature of all-encompassing and all-pervading phenomenon, the Supreme Spirit or Atman is considered the innermost attribute or constituent of the individual spirits or atmans. The Supreme Being becomes the Atman of all the atmans - the Universal Spirit residing in all individual spirits. The Supreme Spirit inwardizes into the individual spirits.

2. Oh King! Abandon the feeling that you are going to die – a feeling that befits only animals. For, the real 'you' are not, like the body, a previously non-existent thing now come into being.

A homo-sapien is a three-in-one being. He is physical, non-physical and metaphysical. What he truly is, is not physical or non-physical, but is metaphysical. That is why one is said not one's body or one's mind or senses. One is the atman, the spirit.

The subtle body (lingasarira) of an individual consists of the inner instrument, the senses and the subtle elements. It is considered the same as the Jiva (soul) except the atman. It is the subtle body without the gross body that is given by the parents. What transmigrates on the death of an individual is the same subtle body.

The reflection of consciousness within itself is known as puryastaka. It is also known as the subtle body – lingasarira. As long as the puryastaka functions, the body lives. When it ceases to function, the gross-body dies. When the body dies, the subtle body chooses another, suited to fulfill the hidden vasanas.

It is generally believed that on death, the soul transmigrates to the spirit world, and the body and the mind are dropped in the physical world. In fact, even the body and the mind are not dropped. The body changes form. The dense part of the body is dropped and perishes. The subtle form of the body forming part of the soul transmigrates along with the subtle mind. This mind is not to be confused with the brain. What transmigrates is the one-energy mass - the subtle body with the subtle mind. Death does not attach to the real self of an individual.

3. The real 'you' did not descend like a son from a father, or like a tree from a seed, generated by a being that is itself originated. You are, on the other hand, like the

fire, which, though seen in association with wood, is not its product and is entirely different from it.

For a seeker, the 'I' consciousness is atman. The atman is self-conscious. The self-conscious atman is the spirit within, ontologically. It seeks realization of itself, meaning to be real with it. It is self-realization. It is an experience for the spirit or the self. It is Being-ness what it seeks.

The 'I' consciousness is the pure being, eternal existence, free from ignorance and thought illusion. The physical body is only an instrument associated with it. If the seeker stays as the 'I', his being alone, without thought, the 'I' thought for him will disappear. The illusion will vanish for him forever.

The real Self is the infinite 'I'. The infinite 'I' is eternal. It is perfection. It is without a beginning or an end.

When the 'I' (ego) merges into the 'I' (Existence-Consciousness – sat-cit), what arises is the infinite 'I'. This is the true 'I' Consciousness – the Atman.

4. In the dream, one can experience one's own decapitation. Physical death in the waking state is on par with it. The Atman, which is not one with the body, but only its witness, is not affected by death. It is un-originated and deathless.

All cognition involves some kind of memory or recollection. All cognitions are acts of consciousness directed towards particular sets of objects. There is what the psychologists call logical memory. There is intuition. The forms of memory and intuition become possible only when the atman is latently self-conscious. To cognize an object, the atman is to direct the mind towards it through the relevant sense. The intent to direct the mind presupposes consciousness. It is a result of the atman voluntarily directing its consciousness through an idea generated in contact with the mind.

Potential self-consciousness, when interpreted as latent self-consciousness, is comparable to the state of deep sleep. When one gets up from deep sleep into a waking or dreaming state, the atman regains consciousness of the waking or the dream world, as the case may be. It may, therefore, be said that mind and consciousness naturally belong to the atman.

In addition to consciousness directed towards mind, senses and objects, and towards one's own past experiences in the re-cognition of cognitions, there is also self-consciousness, consciousness of one's existence in all acts of self-affirmation. The peculiar nature of self-consciousness is without dimensions, fathomless.

The atman is in the nature of the witness consciousness (saksi-caitanya) which witnesses that it is knowing, cognizing, experiencing urges, emotions, etc.

Within the individual's mind, there is the distinction between the witness and the witnessed consciousness. This is similar to one's experience of trying to shake off the identity of the waking I with the dream I and absolve oneself from, and be unaffected by the actions of the dream I, when one comes out of the dream.

The atman is eternal, and unaffected by the gross-body. It does not, therefore, die nor is it born.

5. When a pot is destroyed, the sky enclosed by it becomes one with the universal, un-particularized sky. So also, when the body perishes through jnana, the Jiva becomes one with the Brahman.

As long as a pot is intact, it contains the space within its enclosure and gives an illusion that it contains the sky to that extent. When the pot is broken, the space within is no longer seen in illusion. It remains where it is, unlimited.

The human body is like a pot. The life principle within is like the limited space. The Self is reflected as individual soul (atman) within. When the gross-body perishes on death, the individual atman merges into the Self which is eternal and unattached.

6. It is mind that creates all the adjuncts limiting the Atman like the bodies - subtle and physical, qualities and karma. And Maya, the Lord's power, is what brings this mind into being, and because of the mind, man has this entanglement in the cycle of birth and death.

Everything in the world is dependent upon the mind, upon one's mental attitude. On examination, the mind itself appears to be unreal. But we are bewitched by it. With mind controlling our activity, we seem to be running after mirage.

The mind flits in all directions all the time and is unable to find happiness anywhere. Like the lion in a cage, the mind is ever restless, having lost its freedom. It is never happy with its present state.

The mind alone is the cause of all objects in the world. The world exists because of the mind-stuff. The mind vainly seeks to find happiness in the objects of this world. When the mind is transcended, the world vanishes, dissolves into its source.

Creation of the mind is but agitation in Infinite Consciousness. And the world exists in the mind. It seems to exist because of imperfect vision, imperfect understanding.

It is the mind that creates the body by mere thoughts, just as the potter makes a pot out of clay. It creates new bodies and brings about the destruction of what exists, and all this is by mere wish. Within mind exist the faculties of delusion or hallucination, dreaming and irrational thought. It creates the appearance of the body within itself. But in ignorance, one sees the physical body in gross physical vision as different from and independent of the mind.

Every embodied being has a two-fold body. One is the mental body which is restless and which acts quickly and achieves results. The second is the physical body, which does really nothing. When the mind confidently engages in self-effort, it is then beyond the reach of sorrow. Whenever it strives, it surely finds the fruition of its striving. On the other hand, the physical body is only physical matter. Yet the mind deems it as its own. The mind experiences only what it contemplates. If the mind turns towards the Truth, it abandons its identification with the body and attains the supreme state, overcoming the state of samsara – the cycle of birth and death. Hence one is to endeavour with the mind to make the mind take to the pure path.

7. A light is a light as long as there is mutual relationship through contact between oil, its receptacle, the wick and the flame. The trans-migratory existence of the Jiva is a situation arising from the combination of several factors. Being a modification of sattva, rajas and tamas, the constituents of Prakrti, samsara is a state of constant flux.

Mind is the individualized consciousness with its own manifold potentialities, even as spices have taste in them. That consciousness is the subtle or ethereal body. When it becomes gross, it appears to be a physical or material body. That individualized consciousness itself is known as the Jiva or the individual soul when the

potentialities are in an extremely subtle state. When the Jiva sheds its individuality, it shines as the Supreme Being.

Even as an error of the past can be rectified and turned into good action by self-effort today, the habits of the past and the corresponding impressions (samskaras) can be overcome by appropriate self-effort. However, the notion of the Jiva-hood can be overcome only by the attainment of liberation.

8. In this process of birth and death of the embodied being, the Atman is never born, and never dies too. Birth and death apply only to the body, the adjunct of the Atman in embodiment. The Atman on the other hand is the self-conscious Witness – beyond what is gross or subtle, the support of everything like the akasa, changeless, endless and incomparable.

For an aspirant, the 'I' consciousness is atman. The atman is self-conscious. All cognition involves some kind of memory or recollection. All cognitions are acts of consciousness directed towards particular sets of objects.

There is what the psychologists call logical memory. There is intuition. The forms of memory and intuition become possible only when the atman is latently self-conscious. To cognize an object, the atman is to direct the mind towards it through the relevant sense. The intent to direct the mind presupposes consciousness. It is a result of the atman voluntarily directing its consciousness through an idea generated in contact with the mind.

When the atman is in no way connected with the gross-body except that it is associated with it for manifestation, it takes the nature of the witness consciousness (saksi-caitanya) which witnesses that it is knowing, cognizing, experiencing urges, emotions, etc. This corresponds to the idea of Spinoza of the mind knowing both itself and matter. Husserl's idea of the witness is similar to this concept.

If the witness consciousness, that is, the 'I' consciousness, that is, the atman knows the existence aspect of an object and if the existence of the object is different and separate from the atman, how can the atman know the existence of the object? The witness consciousness witnesses and is, therefore, directed towards the experience it witnesses. It is directed outwards.

9. Oh noble one! In this way, through discriminative intelligence and constant contemplation on the Lord, grasp the truth of the Atman amidst Its adjuncts of body-mind complex.

There are three kinds of reality – the Supreme Spirit, the individual spirits and the material principle. There are three kinds of relationship – the relation of the Supreme Spirit to the individual spirits, the relations of the individual spirits to matter and the relation of matter to the Supreme Spirit. Each of the three terms is related to the other two. So each relationship has two directions.

A number of questions arise. For example, are all the relations of the same kind? Are they of the same kind in each of the directions? What is the nature of the differences, if the three relations are of different kinds? If each relation is different in each of its directions, what is the nature of the difference? What is the role of the Brahman as the Supreme Spirit in creation of the matter – the world?

One must practise discrimination to enquire the pros and cons of each issue and to choose the one that leads to God. For instance, "lust and greed" is impermanent.

God is the only Eternal Substance. What does a man get with money? Food, clothes and a dwelling place, and nothing more! One cannot realize God with its help. Therefore, money can never be the goal of life. Such is the process of discrimination. Discrimination is the path of reasoning – vichara.

Discrimination leads to the right views or understanding of the nature of the world, the right resolve to follow the truths, the right speech constituting truthfulness, the right action including non-injury, non-stealing, non-sensuality, non-lying and non-intoxication. These, in turn, lead to the right livelihood that does not involve the performing of prohibited actions as means of livelihood, the right endeavour to overcome the temptations of evil, the right mindfulness constantly placing one's ideal before oneself and the right concentration or meditation. When meditation becomes perfect, one attains realization – nirvana a state of absolute non-disturbance and liberation.

What is knowledge? It is to know one's own self, dissolving the mind in it. It is to know the pure Atman, which alone is our real nature.

Knowledge is discriminative understanding of WHAT IS. Sri Sathya Sai defines it thus: Advaita Darsanam Jnanam – Knowledge is realization of Non-dualism.

The means for developing it are the scripture, tapas, tradition, reasoning and experience. It consists in the understanding that the Brahman – the Supreme Spirit alone had been before the universe came into being, is what exists in the middle and will continue to be when the universe including Time dissolves itself into IT. The Brahman alone is the Reality and the Truth.

10. If this truth of the Atman is grasped, the serpent Takshaka will not consume you under the prompting of the sage's son. The causes that bring about death will not even touch you, who are one with the Lord and verily the Death of death itself.

When one 'dies', one does not die at all, but only shifts into awareness of the macrocosm where there is no 'time' or 'space', now and then, before and after. From a macro perspective, all the particles of everything merely look like the whole. This is to say that on 'death' one returns in consciousness to the macro reality which is but a micro reality of an even larger macro reality – and so on, and on, and on, for ever and ever, without end. This leads to the realization that life is all a matter of perspective.

Death in that instance is a glorious moment, a wonderful experience, as the soul returns to its natural form, its natural state. This leads to an awareness of a sense of total freedom, an awareness of Oneness that is sublime and blissful.

To learn how to die is to learn how to live. To learn how to live is to learn how to act not only in this life, but in the lives to come. To transform oneself truly and learn how to be reborn as a transformed being to help others is really to help the world in the most powerful way of all.

The actual point of death is when the most profound and beneficial inner experiences can come about. Through repeated acquaintance with the processes of death in meditation, an accomplished seeker can use his actual death to gain great spiritual realization. This is why experienced practitioners of Yoga engage in meditative practices as they pass away. An indication of their attainment is that often their bodies do not begin to decay until long after they are clinically dead.

Highly realized beings awaken in themselves a perception of Reality in a totally purified form, transparent to them in its entire limitless dimension. The experience of death is no surprise to them. In fact, they anticipate and invite it at the moment of their choice. They embrace it as an opportunity for liberation from the bonds of physical life.

11-12. When 'I am the Brahman, the Transcendent Effulgence', 'The Brahman, the Terminal State, am I' – are your firm convictions, who constantly practise this communion of the individual self with the universal undivided Self in a non-dual attitude, of what consequence is the Takshaka lolling his tongue and belching poison? For, everything – this Takshaka, his poison, your body, the whole manifested world, etc - will have no existence for you apart from the Brahman.

The aspirant initially feels that God alone is real and all else is illusory. Afterwards, he finds that it is God Himself that has become the universe, Maya and all living beings. The process of discrimination involves first negation and then affirmation. The aspirant attains Satchidananda by negating the universe and its living beings. But after the attainment of Satchidananda he finds that Satchidananda Itself has become the universe and the living beings. Every thing is Its manifestation. It is God alone that has become everything. The world by no means exists apart from Him.

“I' and 'Mine' – that is ignorance. 'Thou' and 'Thine' – that is knowledge” is the firm conviction of the aspirant.

Self-realization is realization of one's self in one's conscious being. One's self is one's atman. One's atman is seen to be a reflection of the Supreme Spirit or the Brahman. It is, of course, not an object of one's senses. It is not an object at all. It is also not the subject in the ordinary sense of the term. The subject of one's experience is oneself. But one is not the Supreme Spirit. As the Supreme Spirit cannot be experienced outside one's self, it has to be experienced within. This does not mean that this Spirit is something in one's mind like an idea or feeling.

The way to the Supreme Spirit is the very self of the individual, referring to itself as 'I'. As the Supreme Spirit is never an object, it has to be understood as an 'I' within one's 'I' as the witness (sakshi) of one's 'I' and as transcending it, though within it. It may be said that it is an 'I-AM' within one's 'I-am'. It may also be said that the Supreme Spirit's 'I AM' is deeper, higher, greater and more comprehensive than one's "I am". Spatial meanings have no relevance here.

13. Oh dear one! Whatever you have wanted to know about the working of Sri Hari - the Supreme Brahman, I have imparted to you, established in the Self. Is there any more question remaining to be answered?.