

## Hamsa Gita

The Hamsa-Gita is contained in slokas 22 to 54 of chapter 4 of Skandha VI of Srimad Bhagavata.

Sri Suka said:

1. He (Daksha) extolled the worshipful Lord, who is not perceived by the senses, with a hymn known as Hamsaguhya, which pleased the Lord very much; I shall transmit it to you.

The Prajapati Daksha said:

2. Salutations to the Supreme Being whose experience is Truth abiding, who is the sustainer of both Maya and the Jiva, whose glorious presence is not felt by people with intelligence overpowered by longing for material fulfillments, who transcends all the ordinary means of knowledge but is intuited as Self-effulgent Consciousness.

What is 'Truth'? Truth is experience of the Reality in one's consciousness. 'I have nothing to do with sorrow, with actions, with delusion or desire. I am at peace, free from sorrow. I am the Brahman' – such is the Truth. 'I am free from all defects; I am the All; I do not seek anything nor do I abandon anything; I am the Brahman' – such is the Truth. 'I am consciousness; I am the Brahman' – such is the Truth. 'I am the entire space; I am the Brahman' – such is the Truth. 'I am the consciousness in which all

things are strung and through whose power all beings engage themselves in all their activities; I am the essence of all things' – such is the Truth. 'All things exist in the Brahman; all things flow from IT; all things are the Brahman; IT is omnipresent; IT is the One Self; IT is the Truth'- such is the Truth.

“Even as the taste of the juice of sugarcane cultivated in a hundred fields is uniform and the same, so the consciousness indwelling all beings is the same – that consciousness I am. I am that conscious energy (cit-sakti) which is larger than the universe and yet subtler than the minutest sub-atomic particle and, therefore, invisible. I am the consciousness that exists everywhere like butter in milk, and whose very nature is experiencing. That consciousness is the reality that bestows the individual

characteristic on each and every substance of the universe. It is continuous and homogenous in waking, dreaming, deep-sleep and the transcendental state of consciousness. It is devoid of desire and ego-sense, and is indivisible”. Established in the realization of this Truth, the great sages have lived forever in peace and equanimity.

The Truth which is omnipresent and which is pure consciousness devoid of objectivity is referred to variously as Consciousness, Self, The Brahman, Existence,

Truth,  
Reality, Order and also Pure-knowledge. IT is pure and in Its light all beings know their own self.

The enquiry of Non-dualism is ontology of the Spirit. Sankara, the greatest exponent of the Non-dualism of the Vedanta introduces the concept of Maya, synonymous with

Prakrti as the instrument that creates, sustains and dissolves the world of forms and names. Maya is indescribable. It is neither existent, nor non-existent, nor both. It is not existent, for the Brahman alone is the existent (sat). It is not non-existent, for it is responsible for the appearance of the world. It cannot be both existent and non-existent as such a statement is self-contradictory. It is thus neither real, nor unreal; it is Mithya. But it is not a non-entity or a figment of imagination like the son of a barren woman. In the example of a rope mistaken for a snake, the rope is the ground on which the illusion of snake is super-imposed. When right knowledge dawns, the illusion disappears. The relation between the rope and the snake is neither that of identity nor of difference, nor of both. It is unique and known as non-difference (tadatmya). Similarly, the Brahman is the ground, the substratum on which the world appears through Its potency - Maya. When right knowledge dawns, the real nature of the world is realized as Maya disappears.

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.

3. Just as the object of a sense, though in intimate contact with that sense, does not perceive that sense as the sense perceives the object, even so the Supreme Being, the friend and lover of the Jiva, is present with the Jiva in the same body, but the Jiva knows Him not, the universal witness, and His love. To that Supreme Being, my salutations!

Perception (pratyaksa) is direct knowledge of objects through senses and mind. It is external and internal. The senses come into contact with the objects, mind with the senses and the 'I' consciousness with mind. Knowledge arises as consciousness, when mind and the 'I' consciousness or atman come into contact. Internal objects like

pains and pleasures are known by mind coming directly into contact with them without the aid of senses. Mind directly conveys them to the 'I' consciousness. This concept

of perception excludes the theory of correspondence.

What cannot come into contact with the senses is not considered an object of sense perception. An individual is no other than the Jiva in Consciousness. How does the Jiva perceive the objects outside? On account of the notion of 'I am', consciousness abides as Jiva in the body. When its senses descend upon similar bodies outside itself, there is contact between the two and there is a desire to know and to become one with them. When there is this contact, the object is reflected within itself and the Jiva perceives this reflection, though it believes that the reflection is outside. The Jiva knows only this reflection, which means it knows itself. This contact is the cause of the perception of the external objects. If the consciousness within is tranquil and placid, the whole perceived world is tranquil and placid. If the consciousness within is agitated, the perceived world is no different.

The Brahman is undifferentiated. The entire creation is like a stage on which all the potencies of consciousness dance to the tune of time. The foremost among them is known as order - the natural order of things and sequences. It is this potency that ordains that each thing from the blade of grass to the creator Brahma should have a characteristic. This natural order is what causes the world-appearance. The Supreme Being is the witness consciousness of this cosmic dance - world-appearance. IT is not different from the cosmic natural order and the happenings. The witness consciousness relating to the Brahman is the Cosmic Mind, which is the attribute itself. The idea of the witness consciousness is closely related to the ideas of being and becoming. This is to say that without something the same running through the different instants and moments of becoming, becoming cannot be becoming. The self-conscious beings are aware of the process of becoming so far as they are concerned.

4. The physical body, pranas (vital energy), mind, gross elements and subtle elements, being aspects of Prakrti, are not naturally conscious of themselves or of the senses which grasp them or of the presiding deities. But the Jiva who makes them all externally conscious is aware of them all and their source, the gunas of Prakrti. Still the Jiva is not aware of the knower of all, the Ultimate Knower who is the support of the Jiva himself. May I offer my words of praise to that Supreme Being!

A Jiva is generally considered an individual who is not conscious of his true nature being part of the Supreme Being. Ontologically, the Jiva is no different from the Brahman.

Jiva is not a particle emerging from the Brahman or a piece cut out of the Brahman to be ultimately united with It, because the Brahman is all-pervading like Akasa with no form or parts. As the chaitanya part of the so called Jiva is nothing but the Brahman,

it is declared Jivo Brahmaiva narah. This is in short the philosophy of Advaita taught by the Upanisads and expounded by Sri Sankaracharya.

‘Once it is known that Consciousness (the Brahman) is One, All-pervading, Supreme Being, Peerless and Eternal, there can be no second Consciousness called Jiva, independent and different from the Brahman. Jiva is nothing other than Antahkarana which is translucent and is the purest (nirmala) of all the non-sentient objects (acetana padarthas) being capable of reflecting and radiating of cicchakti of the Brahman with which it is constantly connected and, therefore, is never without chaitanya. There is no question of Jiva moving from place to place (one life to another). It is only the Antahkarana with all its constant associates like the subtle body, sense organs, etc which moves and migrates from place to place (life to life) and from one world to the other. It receives the chaitanya from the all-pervading Brahman wherever it goes. This point may be explained with the help of an example, apart from the well known examples of Ghatakasa (the sky delimited by pots) and Jala-Surya (reflection of Sun in water).

Every living being requires Prana (related to inhaling of oxygen). But it does not carry it wherever it goes, but finds it at every place it visits, lives on it and continues to be a Prani. Similar is the case with Antahkarana which draws cicchakti from the All-pervading Consciousness and itself appears as Cetana. The main difference is that the Prana is not all-pervading like the Brahman’, in the words of P. Sriramachandrudu.

5. Salutations to Thee, who shines in Thy pristine state with a mind that has attained to extreme purity by the subsidence of all perception and memory, and the consequent arresting of the mental modifications that objectify names and forms or take shape as external objects!

The Brahman is considered the Supreme Deity. It is not one among many. Everything in the world has its being in the Brahman. It is concrete in the sense that IT IS and asserts itself in the form ‘I-AM’. We only know that IT IS. It cannot be a person, as the word is generally understood. IT IS, and yet indeterminate, beyond speech and concept.

The homogenous mass of cosmic consciousness does not give rise to anything other than what it is its essence. Consciousness never becomes unconsciousness.

Even if there is modification, that, too, is consciousness. Hence, whatever there may be, wherever and in whatever form – all is the Brahman. Everything exists forever in the potential state in the mass of homogenous consciousness.

6. Though Thou art covered by Thy powers manifesting as the various categories, mahatattva, ahamkara, manas, and the five tanmatras, wise men separate and grasp Thee through discriminative intelligence as existing in the heart, just as the celestial fire lodged in the sacrificial fuel is ignited and brought into manifestation through the fifteen sacred mantras.

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 universe.

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.

7. Thou art the transcendent Spirit ever steeped in eternal bliss, negating the diversities of relative existence produced by Maya. But being the possessor of the innate power Maya that baffles all definitions, Thou art also all manifested beings having names and forms. May that Sri Hari be propitious unto me!

The Brahman or the Self alone is the reality in all beings as clay is the real substance in thousands of pots. As wind and its movement are not different, Consciousness and its internal movement (energy) that causes all these manifestations are not different. The Brahman is neuter, unknown and unknowable. To be objectified, the Brahman covers Itself with a veil of Maya (Prakrti), becomes the source of the universe and so brings forth the creation.

The Cosmic Being has two bodies, the superior body that is Pure Consciousness and the other that is the cosmos. All activity that takes place in the cosmos originates in

the Pure Consciousness. As a result, the cosmos is seen to be real. The Cosmic Being exists in its Pure Consciousness as a sage exists in his atman in his meditation.

The Brahman – the highest Being is the Absolute, Transcendental Self. The three distinctions - Being (Existence), Reality and Truth become one in the Absolute Reality. It not only satisfies the criterion of non- contradiction, but also is non-contradictable. It meets the highest criterion of logic, even at the level of transcendental dialectic.

The one eternal immutable Truth is the Spirit or the Brahman. Without the Spirit, the pragmatic truth of a self-creating universe would have no origin or foundation. The truths of universal existence are two-fold. One relates to the truths of the Spirit that are themselves eternal and immutable. The other relates to the play of the consciousness with the said eternal truths of the Spirit. The constant self-creation which we call birth finds in the universal existence the perfect evolution of all that it held in its own nature. All our births are the births of this Spirit embodying individual spirit (atman) and self. TO BE is the object of our existence.

8. Whatever is described by words and understood by the intellect, and whatever is grasped by the senses and imagined by the mind is not Thy pristine nature. They are all the expressions of Thy power Maya with its three gunas, from whose work of creation, preservation and dissolution Thy being is indirectly cognized.

The word Maya does not mean absence of order. It is not magic. It is indicated by the use of the word 'pramana' for the means of cognition. Pramana means the instrument

for measuring. Prameya, a derivative of pramana, means that which is measurable or measured. Generally it is considered as the object of cognition. A significant point is

that measuring is not possible without determinateness in the measured. Every object has its own structure and determinateness at the cosmological level. But at the ontological level, all is one. At this level, determinateness is transcended.

It is significant that the three words – pramana, prameya and Maya are derived etymologically from the same verbal root ma. The world of cosmology is what is measured and is called Maya (Prakrti) and also the product of Maya. The Supreme Being – Atman - the Brahman is beyond thought, speech and the means of cognition and cannot, therefore, be measured. If what cannot be measured is the Being, what can be measured is Maya. It is important to note that what is not 'Being' is not Non-being.

The above analysis shows that the idea of Maya means that the world is an ordered



whole according to measure. The question arises as to what is the being of the objects obtained by this measure. The Supreme Being (paramarthasatta) is not an object obtained through this measure. It is basically that which does the measuring and lies behind the act of measuring.

9. Whatever that is manifest as high and low, as objects, instruments, agents, actions, etc, Thou didst exist before them transcending them as the unitary non-dual Brahman, the Cause of all causes.

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 world-appearance is said to have the Absolute Brahman as its cause, in the same way as the sky (space) is the cause of the growth of the tree, for the sky does not obstruct its growth. In fact, the Brahman is not an active causative factor.

The Brahman has no initial cause. IT is, therefore, uncreated (anadikarana). IT has no precedent state. IT is not a product. Nothing changes to be the Brahman, nor does IT change to anything else. IT does not undergo modification. The Becoming that arises out of IT takes place without affecting Its very nature (vivartakarana). Vivarta means change without being affected by change. The Brahman is changeless.

10. Salutations to Thee with countless attributes, whose inscrutable Power causes self-forgetfulness and delusion in those controversialists to whom that Power forms the topic of argument and counter-argument!

An aspirant reasons about the Brahman as long as he has not realized IT. One cannot have this knowledge so long as there is the slightest trace of worldliness. The aspirant is to keep his mind aloof from the objects of sight, hearing, touch and other things of a worldly nature. As long as an aspirant is conscious of his body, he is conscious of duality. It is when he tries to describe what he sees, he finds duality. He is to give up his identification with worldly things, discriminating 'not this, not this'. Only thus does he realize the Brahman as his own inner consciousness.

The aspirant believes that the acts of creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe and all its living beings are the manifestations of Sakti, the Divine Power.

By

reasoning, he will realize that all these are as illusory as a dream in the sense that they are transient. The Brahman alone is the Reality. All else is unreal. Even this very

Sakti is unsubstantial, like a dream.

Though the aspirant reasons continuously, he cannot go beyond the stage of Sakti unless he is established in samadhi. Even when he says that he is meditating, he is in the realm of Sakti, within Its power. The aspirant ultimately realizes that the Brahman and Sakti are identical. If he accepts the one, he must accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. It is like the sun with its rays. Thus, the aspirant cannot think of the Brahman without Sakti or of Sakti without the Brahman. One cannot think of the Absolute without the Relative, or of the Relative without the Absolute. When he gets into samadhi, thus discriminating, what he realizes is the Brahman, beyond mind and speech.

The aspirant gives up his identification with worldly things, discriminating 'not this, not this'. Only then can he realize the Brahman. It is like reaching the roof of a house by

leaving the steps behind, one by one. But the realized who is more intimately acquainted with the Brahman realizes that which is realized intuitively as the Brahman is then found to have become the universe and all its living things. The realized sees that the Reality, which is nirguna, without attributes, is also Saguna, with attributes.

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.

11. Viewing Thee as their common ground, the Yoga (the school of ascetic practice) and the Sankhya (the school of knowledge) claim absolute truth for their respective views, but speak of Thee in divided and contradictory ways – the one positively as Personal Being with all auspicious attributes and a form, and the other negatively, denying all these and describing Thee as 'not this, not this'. Thou art that Transcendent and Infinite Being, favourable to both these views alike. (What are called contradictions cease to be so in Thee, the Infinite Being who art both the Personal Deity and the Impersonal Absolute).



The Brihadaranyaka Upanisad states that the Brahman has two aspects – murta (with form) and amurta (formless). The Puranas accept both the aspects, but concentrated

particularly on the murta aspect as it is more significant for a devotee. The amurta aspect is the Non-dual Absolute and the murta aspect is the Sakti or the manifesting power of the amurta aspect in the absence of which the amurta aspect is indistinguishable from sunya. In the same way, if the murta aspect alone is accepted without the amurta aspect with the Infinite and the Absolute Being as its complement, the murta aspect will only become a limited aspect indistinguishable from an exalted man.

The Puranas in general and Bhagavata in particular accept the Supreme Being as both Murta and Amurta with a greater stress on the murta aspect and call Him the Bhagawan. The Bhagawan here is Param-purusa, the Supreme Person, but not an individual. He has an Archetytal Form which is a potential multi-form that can take any

form in which He is invoked. An anthropomorphic garb is put on Him, as man could think of Him only in terms of the highest that he could conceive of and that He is, in himself, in an idealized state of existence. So the Puranas depict the divine majesty of the Bhagawan through symbolic and supra-human descriptions that account for many

unearthly and unusual features. When the details of these descriptions are taken together as a whole, with a receptivity born of devotion, they make a tremendous impact of divine consciousness on the mind of man.

12. May that Infinite Being, the worshipful-Lord, who transcends name and form, but manifests Himself in many forms of suddha-sattva and under countless names as Deities and Incarnations, and performs various sportive actions for blessing the devotees, be propitious unto me!

Mythological epics refer to Divine Incarnations. They represent the actual descent of the Brahman in various mundane forms into the world, when evil prevails and good is

about to be destroyed. The Immanent dwells in all souls and accompanies them in life and death. It is the Brahman residing in the spirit (atman) of man like lightning in a

cloud. The Incarnate as worshiped is the idol of God in various forms acceptable to devotees.

The Saguna Brahman is meant for the devotees. In other words, a devotee believes that God has attributes and reveals Himself to the devotee as a Person assuming the

form he believes in. It is He who listens to the prayers of the devotee. The prayers are directed to Him alone.

A devotee, therefore, accepts Divine Incarnation in human form for worship. It provides an object of meditation and prayer resulting in mahabhava and prema.

God's play on earth as an Incarnation is the manifestation of the glory of the Chit-sakti, the Divine power. That which is the Brahman is also Rama, Krishna and Siva. The special manifestations of the Absolute are the Incarnations – the known and the knowable. God becomes the Incarnations in different ages to show us the way to become perfect.

As long as I-consciousness exists, God reveals Himself as a Person to a devotee.

13. May He, the Lord of all, who, like the air that takes the smell of whatever it is in contact with, assumes the forms of Deities as conceived by even various crude cults according to the tendencies of the votaries, be propitious to me and grant my prayers.

Ideal stimulations of the Cosmic Mind without any reference to history can become psychic verities of very great potency. Such verities are the deities worshipped by the

Hindus like Vishnu, Siva, Sakti, etc. They never had location in earthly space and time except as images used in worship. They are the manifestations of the Supreme Being as Spiritual Verities before which what we call material objects are mere shadows.

The deities so worshipped are conceived of the gunas of sattva, rajas and tamas either in their pristine purity or in combination of two and more in different proportions. The

deities conceived by people of crude cults will be predominantly of the guna of tamas, with a combination of the guna of rajas. The deities take the forms in which they are

conceived by their votaries and answer their prayers accordingly.

Sri Suka said:

14. Hymned in this way at the holy lake of Aghamarshana, the worshipful Lord, who loves His devotees, appeared before Daksha who extolled Him with deep faith and fervour.

15-18. He appeared seated on the shoulders of Garuda. He had eight powerful arms, sporting His discus, conch, sword, shield, arrow, bow, cord and mace. Blue like a rain

cloud, clad in yellow cloth, serene in expression, and luminous with srivatsa mark

and the kaustubha jewel, He appeared, framed in a wreath of wild flowers and leaves. He

was adorned with a great crown, bracelets, gleaming ear ornaments, girdle, rings, anklets, and armllets. Assuming a form impressive enough to dumbfound the three worlds of which He was the Lord, He appeared surrounded by sages and attendants like Narada, Nanda and other celestials.

The above is the description of the divine majesty of Bhagawan in a symbolic and supra-human way that account for many unearthly and unusual features. When the details of these descriptions are taken together as a whole, with a receptivity born of devotion, they make a tremendous impact of divine consciousness on the mind of man.

19. At the sight of this rare and wonderful form, followed by the hymning choir of siddhas, charanas and gandharvas, the Prajapati Daksha was awestruck.

20. With the mind overflowing with joy, he made full prostration to the Lord, falling before him like a stick. For a while he was not able to speak anything, as his mind was like a lake filled with the water of mountain-torrents flowing into it.

21. The Lord Hari, who knows the heart of all, now said as follows to that saluting Prajapatis desirous of progeny:

Sri Bhagawan said:

22. Oh son of Prachetasas! Oh noble one! You have become perfect by your austerity. For, your intense faith and devotion to Me has generated supreme love of Me in you.

23. Oh protector of men! I am much pleased with your austere practices, because they are meant for the good of the world. It is My wish that prosperity attends on all beings.

24. Brahma, Bhava, Manus and you Prajapatis are all expressions of My power for working towards the prosperity and advancement of all beings.

25. Oh learned one! My heart is tapas consisting in the practice of inward concentration. My body is vidya consisting in the repetition of the sacred mantras in the proper way with all their auxiliaries. My form is kriya, the performance of the daily and occasional rites. The sacrificial rites (kratus) are my limbs. Dharma consisting in the apurva or the efficiency-potential of sacrifice is my mind. And the Devas receiving sacrificial offerings are my vital energy (prana).

The power or energy of the Infinite Consciousness, ever in motion, is the reality of all creation related to space and time. That power is also known as Mahasatta – the great existence, Mahaciti – the great intelligence, Mahasakti – the great power, Mahadrsti – the great vision, Mahakriya – the great doer or doing, Mahabhava – the great becoming and Mahaspanda – the great vibration. It is this power that endows everything with its characteristic quality. The Infinite Consciousness alone appears as one thing in one place and another in another place. There is no division between that Consciousness and Its power, as there is no division between the water and the waves, and the body and the limbs. That power or energy is not different from or independent of the Brahman.

26. At first I alone was, Pure Consciousness, transcending relations, devoid of within and without, and un-manifest. Nothing else there was. It was as if everything were in slumber. Ontologically All That Exists is Infinite Consciousness.

27. When in Me, the immeasurable and of infinite attributes, My Power Maya brought out My cosmic body (the Brahmanda), simultaneously Brahma, the original being and self-born one, also came into existence.

The pure Infinite Consciousness appears to become whatever forms It takes whenever It manifests Itself. The mountains, the forests, the earth, the celestial bodies in the cosmos are all but Infinite Consciousness. When the Infinite Consciousness in the form of life-breath enters into bodies and begins to vibrate various parts, it is said that those bodies are living. It is a small part of the Infinite Consciousness that becomes the intelligence in these bodies. This intelligence, entering into these bodies, brings into being the different organs like the eyes.

It is this intelligence, which is part of the Infinite Consciousness that fancies itself differently in different objects. When it fancies itself to be a rock, a tree, a bird, an animal, a human being, etc, it becomes so. The Infinite Consciousness is present everywhere and permeates equally; there is no distinction between the sentient and the insentient, and between the intelligent and the inert. The differences in the objective world are only due to the intelligence identifying itself as different substances. The same Infinite Consciousness is known by different names in these different substances.

28. Though the first of divinities, and though fortified by My prowess, Brahma still felt weak when he started the work of creation.

29. Afterwards that Divinity, as instructed by Me, performed tapas (inward

concentration) of an intense nature. Becoming all-powerful by such tapas, he first brought out you, the nine Prajapatis, into existence to aid in the work of creation.

30. As you are anxious to have progeny, you may accept this woman Asikni, daughter of another Prajapati Panchajana as your wife.

31. By following the law of co-habitation with her, who is also desirous of the same, you will be bringing forth numerous progeny.

32. The generations that are to come after you will all consort with women prompted by My Maya, and offer Me service. Sri Suka said:

33. Saying so, even as Daksha was looking on, Sri Hari, the worshipful Lord and protector of the worlds, disappeared like a phenomenon perceived in a dream