

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 15: Puruṣottama-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/FuIWBjb2TfI>

**Those who surrender to the Supreme Divine attain HIM,
reside eternally in HIS Supreme Abode and thereby attain
liberation from the cycle of birth and death.**

Srimad Bhagavad Gītā - Chapter 15 - Puruṣhottam Yog - The Yog of the Supreme Divine Personality

The session begins with the prayer and lighting of the lamp.

It is by the grace of the Supreme Divine that a seeker has been bestowed with the blessing to listen to the Divine wisdom of the Gītā and to imbibe the same in daily lives. This might be due to the result of the past or previous good karmas, the blessings of one's ancestors or a Guru, or due to one's own virtuous deeds that one is able to lay hands on this divine scripture. The Srimad Bhagavad Gītā is the only scripture where the divine wisdom was imparted by the Supreme Divine HIMSELF on the battleground of Kurukshetra.

The Bhagavad Gītā provides profound insights and practical guidance for navigating the complexities of life. The Gītā emphasizes on the importance of self-realization and elevation in the path of spiritual journey. It describes the impermanence of the material world and recognizing the eternal nature of the soul. By seeking knowledge and introspecting on the nature of reality, one can transcend the cycle of birth and death and attain spiritual liberation. The teachings of the Gītā have transcended time and continue to hold relevance in current time by offering valuable lessons and principles that navigates one towards a more fulfilling and purposeful existence. The battlefield represents the disturbed inner state and Gītā helps one function from a serene state of consciousness. The Gītā has the solution to all the challenges that one can encounter at various stages of life. By practicing the teachings of the Gītā, one can overcome difficulty, self-doubt, and ultimately live a life of truth and purpose.

The 2nd of October marks the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi - The father of our nation. He followed the principles of the Gītā during his entire life and functioned from the elevated state of

consciousness. Hence, the entire nation responded to his call for freedom. Whenever he was gripped by challenges, he would lay down closing his eyes by holding the Gītā and upon waking up the next day, he would have an insight (the key to the solution) which enabled him to take firm decisions to overcome the challenges during freedom struggle.

Since it is the nine auspicious days of Navaratri that are ongoing, let's understand few aspects about the Navaratri. The three main sects of Hinduism are Shaktism, Vaishnavism and Shaivism as explained below:

1. Shaktism - This is the Śāktasampradāyaḥ where the Divine feminine energy is worshipped as Adishakti (the manifestations or personifications of the divine feminine energy) The most common forms of the Mahadevi or Adishakti worshipped in Shaktism include Maa Durga, Maa Kali, Maa Saraswati, Maha Lakshmi, Devi Parvati, etc. Shaktism views the Devi as the source, essence and substance of everything in creation. Devi is considered to be the cosmos itself – she is the embodiment of energy, matter and soul, the motivating force behind all action and existence in the material universe. The divine female as a powerful and compassionate creator, pervader and protector of the universe.

2. Vaishvanism - This is the Vaiṣṇavasampradāyaḥ. It is also called Vishnuism since it views Bhagavān Vishnu or Maha Vishnu as the Supreme Divine. It includes sub-sects like Krishnaism and Ramaism, which consider Shri Krishna and Shri Ram as the supreme beings respectively. In Vaiṣṇavasampradāyaḥ, the manifestations of Maha Vishnu are worshipped as prime dieties - say Varaha, Narasimha, Venkatesha, etc,

3. Shaivism - It is also known as Śaivasampradāyaḥ which considers Bhagavān Shiv as the supreme being and emphasize liberation from suffering, believing HE is ultimately responsible for creation, protection, and destruction. Bhagavān Shiv is often portrayed as representing an extremely diverse amalgam of qualities, from a fierce destroyer of evil to a compassionate deity to HIS devotees.

The three forms of the Supreme Divine personality namely - Adishakti, Bhagavān Vishnu and Bhagavān Shiv are considered to be eternal. From the eighteen Maha puranas compiled by the great sage Veda Vyasa, the following three Puranas solely resonate the Divine glories of Adishakti, Bhagavān Vishnu and Bhagavān Shiv. The Vishnu Purana is among the shorter Purana texts, with about 7,000 verses in extant versions. It primarily centers around the Hindu god Vishnu and his avatars such as Krishna.

The Shiva Purana is one of eighteen major texts of the Purana genre of Sanskrit texts in Hinduism, and part of the Shaivism literature corpus. It primarily revolves around Bhagavān Shiv and Devi Parvati (which asserts that it once consisted of 100,000 verses set out in twelve Samhitas or Books).The Srimad Devi Bhagavat Mahapurana, also known as Devi Purana, was composed into 12 chapters, containing 18000 verses by the great sage Veda Vyasa. The Divine Mother is described in all major sastras as the one beyond and above the trinities and all deities. What Srimad Bhagavat is to the Vaisnavas (the devotees of Maha Vishnu), the Devī Bhāgavatam is to the Saktas (the devotees of Adishakti).

Adi Shankaracharya, the acharya of Advaita Vedanta and who is primarily considered to have revived Hinduism during the 9th Century had propagated the Pañcāyatana form of worship, the simultaneous worship of five deities. The Smarthism (established by Adi Shankaracharya) emphasizes the Aradhana or upasana i.e., the domestic worship of five shrines with five deities, all treated as equal – Deity Ganesha, Bhagavān Shiv (or a manifestation - Say Shiv Linga or Hanuman Ji), Adishakti (or manifestation of any Devi - Say Maa Durga, Maa Parvati or Maa Saraswati), Maha Vishnu (or

manifestation of any personal form - say Bhagavān Śrī Ram, Bhagavān Śrī Krishna etc.) and Surya Dev - Smarthism

Like how Sundar Kand is the heart of Rama charitra Manas, Gītā is the pivotal part of Mahabharat, the Durga Saptashakti is an integral part of the Markhandeya Purana. The divine glories of the Devi went on to be called the Durga Saptshati in the North which is also known as the Devi Mahatmya in South India. Compiled and penned by Ved Vyasa (the author of the Mahabharata) the Durga Saptashati is found in the Markandeya Purana. Consisting of 13 chapters, the scripture recounts the Devi's tales of valor through 700 stanzas. The Durga Saptashati is read by those who seek for material desires and even those seeking for Devotion or Bhakti.

The auspicious days of Navaratri is celebrated during Chaitra masa which intersects with Rama Navami - the birth of Bhagavān Śrī Ram, and is also celebrated prior to Diwali (in the month of Ashvina) where the nine days of Navaratri which culminates into Dusshera on the 10th day.

The Devi Upasana or worship is done in the Sa-gun Sakaar form (personal form of the Devi) and also the Nir-gun Nirakaar (formless aspect of the Devi) Sa-gun Sakaar Bhakti of the Devi involves the worship of the nine forms (manifestations) of Maa Durga as listed below:

- **1. Shailaputri**
- **2. Brahmacharini**
- **3. Chandraghanta**
- **4. Kushmanda**
- **5. Skandamata**
- **6. Katyayani**
- **7. Kalaratri**
- **8. Mahagauri**
- **9. Siddhidhatri**

In the Sa-Gun Sakaar form of worship, the devotee worships and surrenders to the Nava-Durga or the nine forms of Maa Durga (Devi), in order to receive the the grace and the blessings of the Nava-Durga (say health, wealth, Divine protection, knowledge, wisdom, so on and so forth).

The Nir-Gun nirakaar worships the Daivi Shakti of the Devi (HER Divine strength).
As Tulsidas Ji says in the below couplet:

देवि पूजि पद कमल तुम्हारे। सुर नर मुनि सब होहि सुखारे॥

Oh Devi, the bestower of grace and boons (to the devotees)! O beloved wife of Shiva, the enemy of Tripura (symbolizing the triumph of good over evil)! By worshipping your lotus feet, deities, humans and sages are all bestowed with happiness.

Below are the few verses that glorify the Devi's Daivi Shakti:

**Yaa Devi Sarva-Bhutessu Vishnumaayeti Shabditaa |
Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namoh ||**

To that Devi Who in All Beings is Called Vishnumaya,
Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations again and again.

**Yaa Devi Sarva-Bhutessu Chetanety-Abhidhiyate |
Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namoh ||**

To that Devi Who in All Beings is Reflected as Consciousness,

Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations again and again.

**Yaa Devi Sarva-Bhutessu Buddhi-Ruupenna Samsthitaa |
Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namoh ||**

To that Devi Who in All Beings is Abiding in the Form of Intelligence,
Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations again and again.

**Yaa Devi Sarva-Bhutessu Shakti-Ruupenna Samsthitaa |
Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namoh ||**

To that Devi Who in All Beings is Abiding in the Form of Power,
Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations again and again.

**Yaa Devi Sarva-Bhutessu Shaanti-Ruupenna Samsthitaa |
Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namoh ||**

To that Devi Who in All Beings is Abiding in the Form of Peace,
Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations again and again.

**Yaa Devi Sarva-Bhutessu Shraddhaa-Ruupenna Samsthitaa |
Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namoh ||**

To that Devi Who in All Beings is Abiding in the Form of Faith,
Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations again and again.

**Yaa Devi Sarva-Bhutessu Lakshmii-Ruupenna Samsthitaa |
Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namoh ||**

To that Devi Who in All Beings is Abiding in the Form of Good Fortune,
Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations again and again.

**Yaa Devi Sarva-Bhutessu Maatr-Ruupenna Samsthitaa |
Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namoh ||**

To that Devi Who in All Beings is Abiding in the Form of Mother,
Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations again and again.

**Indriyaannaam-Adhissthaatrii Bhutaanaam Ca-Akhiessu |
Yaa Bhutessu Satatam Tasyai Vyaapti-Devyai Namoh ||**

(Salutations) To that Devi Who Governs the Faculty of Senses of Beings in All the Worlds,
Salutations to Her Who is the Devi Who Always Pervades all Beings.

**Citi-Ruupenna Yaa Krtsnam-Etad-Vyaapya Sthitaa Jagat |
Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namas-Tasyai Namoh ||**

(
Salutations to Her) Who in the Form of Consciousness Pervades This Universe and Abides in It,
Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations again and again.

Today is the third day of the Navaratri and the presiding Devi is Chandraghanta (the third navadurga aspect of the Devi). Maa Chandraghanta symbolizes bravery and strength. She is depicted as riding a tigress, signifying valor, with ten arms that hold various weapons including a trishul, sword, arrow, and gadha, as well as symbols of peace like a lotus flower and japa mala. Those seeking for material desires and those who seek to elevate to higher levels of consciousness on the path of spiritual journey offer their obeisance to the Devi to attain their material or spiritual goals.

Rama Krishna Paramahansa Ji (the Guru of Swamy Vivekananda) was a realized/enlightened being

and functioned from higher states of consciousness. However, his deity of worship was Maa Kaali. One of the seekers enquired from Rama Krishna Paramahansa Ji that although he was a realised soul, why does he still worship Maa Kaali, as the Sa-gun Sakaar Bhakti is for the unenlightened and the Nir-Gun Nirakaar Bhakti is practiced by those who have attained realization. Rama Krishna Paramahansa had transcended to the Nir-Gun Nirakaar stage form of devotion and the seeker was curious to know why he still worshipped Maa Kaali. Rama Krishna Paramahansa replied by saying that it is the mother who knows the true identity of the father and without the grace of the mother, one cannot attain the Supreme Divine who is seen as the father of all beings. Without the grace of the Devi, one cannot attain the supreme divine. This was practiced by Tulsidas ji as well, who would offer his obeisance to Maa Sita first in order to obtain the grace of Bhagavān Śrī Ram. It is a common practice to take the name of the Devi before the Devata (say Siya-Ram, Lakshmi-Narayan; Gauri-Shankar etc.).

Every action has a positive or a negative karmic reaction. However, during the Vishesh Kaal (auspicious times) the fruits of action (positive or negative karmic reactions) are received in multiple folds. Hence, the Sāadhanās, austerities, chanting, charity, seva, reading the scriptures like the Gītā etc, when done during the nine days of Navaratri yields the results (positive karmic reaction) in multiple folds when compared to normal days.

The tales of Devi symbolize the power or the triumph of good over evil. During the auspicious days of Navaratri, devotees recite the Durga Saptashati at their homes during the nine days of Navratri. Listening to the glories of the Devi, the devotee revels in the realization of HER omnipotence. On this note and by seeking the blessings of the Devi or Maa Durga, we now commence with Chapter 15 of the Srimad Bhagavad Gītā.

Before we begin, let's understand the significance of the Gītā with the below two shlokas from the Gītā Mahatmya .

गीता सुगीता कर्तव्य किमन्येः शास्त्रविश्लेयी । या स्वयं पदमनाभस्य मुख-पधाद्विनी स्रतता ॥

The Gītā encapsulates the divine wisdom from the scriptures. Hence, if one reads the Gītā and is unable to read the other scriptures, one still attains the ultimate goal of realization and is on the path to attain liberation. The Divine wisdom of the Gītā has been imparted and spoken by Bhagavān Vishnu or Padmanabha himself. Hence, its importance and significance cannot be expressed in words. The wisdom of Gītā is like a lighthouse, which lights the path of those in the sea of delusion. As they say - "Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle" and Gītā is that candlelight, by knowing which, one can overcome darkness or ignorance, elevate to higher states of consciousness, and also attain the ultimate goal of liberation (even if one does not read any other scriptures).

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

Bhagavān Śrī Krishna represents the milkman; all the Upanishads are referred to as the cows and the milk or the divine nectar milked from these cows (Upanishads) is the Gītā. The one who drinks this divine nectar it is Vatsa, or the calf and Arjuna represents the calf. The mother cow yields the milk when it sees the calf approaching it for milk. Hence, by using Arjuna as the medium, Bhagavān (who is the milkman) extracts the essence from all Upanishads and imparts the divine wisdom of the Gītā to the entire mankind. Hence, it is a blessing, or the Divine grace bestowed upon a seeker of Gītā to consume this divine nectar. Only the chosen ones are able to receive this Divine wisdom and walk on the path of the Gītā.

The Chapter 12 and the Chapter 15 contain the least number of shlokas which consists of 20 shlokas each. The shlokas of Chapter 12 are in Anushtup Chandas (verse-form) or meter. It calls for 8 syllables

in each quarter which makes the shloka length of 32 syllables. However, in Chapter 15, few shlokas are in Trushtup Chandas (verse-form) or meter that calls for 11 syllables in each quarter (which adds up to the shloka length of 44 syllables). Hence, Chapter 15 is slightly longer than Chapter 12.

This Chapter 15 is considered as a Shashtra and explains the Para-Brahmā Swarup of the Supreme Divine. Whether it is an auspicious occasion (say pooja, festive season, wedding or any sacred rituals) or during inauspicious moments (say someone is on a deathbed or final rites being performed for a deceased), the Chapter 15 is recited at all times. It is believed that if one reads or recites this Chapter of the Gītā, it is equivalent to reading the entire Srimad Bhagavad Gītā. In this chapter, Bhagavān explains the material world by comparing the same with an inverted sacred-fig tree. On the branches of this tree, the embodied souls move up and down from lifetime after lifetime. HE then explains how one can seek to attain the Supreme Divine. Towards the end of the Chapter, Bhagavān reveals HIS Supreme Divine Personality, who is the eternal source, sustainer, and regulator of the entire world, is called Purushottam. HE is transcendental to both imperishable and perishable beings. Hence, the Chapter is known as Purushottam Yog. We shall now begin with the shlokas of this chapter.

15.1

śrībhagavānuvāca ūrdhvamūlamadhaḥ(ś) śākham, aśvattham(m) prāhuravyayam, chandāṃsi yasya parṇāni, yastam(ṽ) veda sa vedavit.15.1

Srī Bhagavān said :He who knows the Pīpala tree (in the form of creation); which is said to be imperishable,with its roots in the Primeval being (God), whose branch is represented by Brahmā (the Creator), and whose leaves are the Vedas, is the knower of the purport of Vedas.

In this shloka, Bhagavān mentions about an inverted aśvatth tree (peepal tree or a sacred fig tree) with its roots facing above and branches facing downward. HE compares its leaves to the Vedic hymns, and one who knows the secret of this tree is the knower of the Vedas. Although the above explanation is hard to comprehend, the seeker must understand that comprehending the wisdom of the Gītā is a guided study. One needs to understand the meaning of each shloka under the guidance of a Guru or a Bonafide spiritual master or a learned scholar.

Bhagavān refers to aśvatth tree (peepal tree or a sacred fig tree) uses the term ūrdhvamūla which implies to roots facing upwards. Before we deep dive into this shloka, consider the example of a child studying in class 2. If the child is promoted to class 3, it means that the child has now elevated for the study of Class 3 syllabus. It does not imply that the child moved from Floor 2 to Floor 3. In the same manner, the term ūrdhvamūla used in this context is not restricted to the direction. It represents an elevated position or significance (with the roots face upwards).

Consider the example of Swamy Ram Tirtha. He was a saint and a well-known scholar of Advaita Vedanta. He completed his master's degree in mathematics from The Government College of Lahore. It was around 1902 where he travelled to the United States of America. During one of his journeys, when he was at the port to board the ship to the United States of America, he noticed a king or an emperor of Phalana who happened to board the same ship. The king's luxurious baggage and belongings were being checked in by his associates. One of the followers of Swamy Ram Tirtha informed him that the king was also travelling on the same ship. Swamy Ram Tirtha then denied boarding the ship (for which the king had checked-in) by citing that two kings cannot sail on the same ship. The followers could not understand the deep meaning behind his statement. Swamy Ji's luggage had already been checked in and the expenses of his ticket was borne by someone else. Swamy Ji

then boarded another ship (without luggage and cash, with just a ticket) and embarked on his journey to the United States. The details of his 14-day journey on the ship are unknown. However, towards the end of the journey, the captain of the ship noticed Swamy Ram Tirtha and realized that he was a learned sage by seeing the glow or Tej emanating from his face. The captain then asked Swamy Ram Tirtha if he had anyone receiving him in the United States of America. Swamy Ji replied by saying no and he asked if the captain would like to welcome him to his humble abode. The captain was delighted to welcome the sage to his humble abode and arranged for the stay of Swamy Ram Tirtha at his home. During the conversations, the captain realized that Swamy Ji was a learned mathematician as well.

When the captain's son asked for help to understand the definition of a straight line, the captain asked if Swamy Ji could explain it to his son. Swamy Ji then asked if he should respond with an answer that would help the child clear the exam or with the actual answer that has a deeper meaning. The captain was astonished as the straight line was known to be an endless one-dimensional figure that has no width. It is a combination of endless points joined on both sides of a point or in layman terms, a straight line connects two end points. Swamy Ji said that if the base of the line is on the ground (i.e., Earth which is round), then the line starts and ends at the same point and appears as a round from outer space. Hence, if the starting point and ending point are the same, it is the state of absolute zero. The captain was delighted with this answer and he informed the well-known mathematicians based out of USA. Swamy Ji proved this theory to learned scholars/mathematicians in USA (who were informed and invited by the captain) that everything culminated to the absolute zero, which in-turn is the Brahman or the absolute truth of this universe. Around the 7th day of his stay in the United States of America, Swamy Ji was invited for dinner with the then President of the United States of America, Mr. Roosevelt, who was impressed by Swamy Ji's knowledge and wisdom. This is the significance of knowledge and wisdom. Swamy Ji became a well-known scholar due to his knowledge and wisdom (on Vedanta and in Mathematics).

Bhagavān uses the analogy of an inverted sacred-fig tree to explain the manifestation of this universe. Consider the example of the human body. If one loses an arm or leg in an accident, or if one faces any ailments with any other body part (excluding the head/brain) one would still be able to lead a normal life. However, if one has severe head injuries or any damage to the brain (or a hypothetical scenario where the head is separated from the body), it would be fatal and one would succumb to the injury. It is the brain that supersedes the body parts and not vice versa. Hence, it is always advised to wear a helmet as head injuries can be fatal. It is to be observed here in this analogy that one would not be able to survive without the head region. It is the head region that is the root of the human body, although it is placed upwards. In the same manner, the roots of this aśvatth tree (peepal tree or a sacred fig tree) faces upwards and represents the entity of high significance. It symbolizes the supreme divine personality.



Now, let's try to understand the analogy of this inverted peepal or sacred fig tree in detail. The term aśvatth here refers to peepal tree and it also refers to an entity that is under a state of constant change. The entire universe or the cosmic creation and its entity is under the cycle of change (creation, sustenance and annihilation). The leaves of this peepal tree are extremely wavering (even with slightest breeze) and hence resonate the reality that Change is inevitable, and Change is constant. As they say **"There is nothing permanent except change"**. The entire cosmic creation in the material is subjected to change and changes every moment.

Once, Swamy Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj happened to visit a humble abode of a devotee. The devotee's child, around 5 years old, was holding an English newspaper and was absorbed deeply into it. Swamy Ji enquired from the child if he knew how to read the newspaper, and the child replied by saying a yes. Swamy Ji then asked the child to read the news aloud. The child started to read the alphabets aloud - i.e., 'T', 'I', 'M', 'E', 'S'; 'O', 'F'; 'I', 'N', 'D', 'I', 'A'. The child was unable to comprehend the letters into words and read out the words as Times of India.

In the same manner, for those who have no understanding about the Gītā perceive it as a book on which people place their hand to take an oath or vow. Some of them might be able to read out few shlokas but unable to explain the meaning. Some of them in L4 might be able to recite the shlokas and even explain the meaning, but unable to imbibe the wisdom in daily lives. Saints like Swamy Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj are situated in an elevated state of consciousness where they live the teachings of the Gītā every moment. Hence, understanding is the key to knowledge, there are many who know, but very few who understand and comprehend the true knowledge.

15.2

**adhaścordhvaṃ(m) prasṛtāstasya śākhā,
guṇappravṛddhā viṣayappravālāḥ,
adhaśca mūlānyanusantatāni,
karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke. 15.2**

Fed by the three Guṇas and having sense-objects for their tender leaves, the branches of the aforesaid tree (in the shape of different orders of creation) extend both upwards and downwards; and its roots which bind the soul according to its actions in the human body, are spread in all regions, higher as well as lower.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the manifestation of the entire creation with the analogy of the sacred fig tree. Let's try visualizing this tree. Bhagavān compares the material world to an upside-

down to an eternal *aśvatth* (sacred fig) tree. The Supreme Divine is the root of this tree. The roots face upwards (*ūrdhva-mūlam*) originating from the Supreme Divine; nourished and supported by HIM. Without the flow of consciousness (derived from the roots), the living entities would not be able to function.

The trunk and branches which are extending downwards (*adhaḥ-śhākhām*) encompass all the life-forms from different abodes of the material realm (devatas, humans, Flora and fauna). The position of the trunk just below the root (which is the Supreme Divine personality) represents Brahmā Dev, the creator of the entire material world. The trunk and branches which are extending downwards (*adhaḥśhākhām*) encompass all the life-forms from of the material realm, which are entangled in the cycle of birth and death. The upward branches represent the Devatas or Gandharvas who dwell in the celestial abodes (heavenly abodes), the middle region represents the human clan on planet Earth, the downward branches represent the Flora and fauna (species from the plant and animal kingdom). The nether regions or the hellish abodes are also represented downwards where the branches culminate.

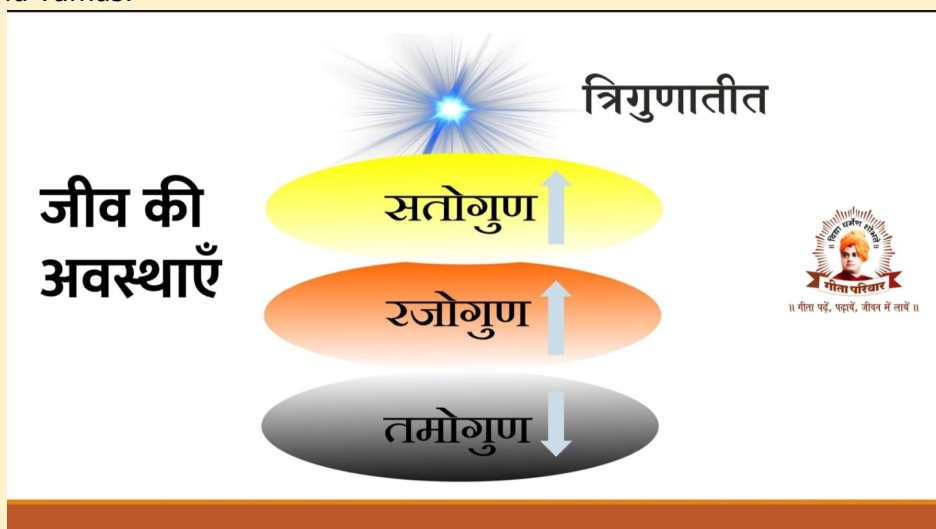
The branches of the tree extend upward and downward, nourished by the three *guṇas* - i.e., Sattva (mode of goodness), Rajas (mode of passion) and Tamas (mode of ignorance). Every entity that belongs to the entire cosmic creation constitutes the three Gunas. In modern science, an atom is considered as the basic building block of an element and it constitutes the Electron, proton, neutron which form the subatomic particles which build the atom. Like how every element drills down to the Proton, Electron and the Neutron, the three Gunas form the essence of every entity in the cosmic creation. The Pancha-Bhuta namely Earth, Water, Wind, Fire and Ether or Sky arise from the three Gunas. The celestial abodes [Satya-loka (Brahmā-loka), Tapa-loka, Jana-loka, Mahar-loka, Svar-loka (Svarga-loka) and Bhuvar-loka], planet Earth (Bhu-loka) and the nether regions or hellish abodes (Atala-loka, Vitala-loka, Sutala-loka, Talatala-loka, Mahatala-loka, Rasatala-loka and Patala-loka) all of them are under the influence of the three Gunas. Every entity that has come into existence into the material world is unique. The biometric data of every human (fingerprints, retina, DNA etc.), the personality and the basic nature or traits are all unique and are inherited from the three Gunas. There are approximately 8.7 million species on Earth, but only 1.2 million of these species have been scientifically described and cataloged. Of these 1.2 million described species, around 41,000 are considered threatened with extinction. All of them inherit their traits from the three Gunas.

The object of senses (i.e., sense of sight, taste, touch, sound and smell) form the tender buds of this inverted sacred-fig tree. The roots of the tree hang downward, causing the flow of karma in the human form. Below, its roots branch out causing (karmic) actions in the world of humans. The embodied souls wander up and down, from lifetime after lifetime, based on their karmic deeds. If one has performed virtuous deeds that emanate from Sattva Guna (mode of goodness), one moves upward to celestial abodes or even become a devata or gandharva, thereby dwelling in the celestial abodes. If the deeds were self-centered emanating from the mode of passion (Rajo Guna), one remains on planet earth and extremely unvirtuous deeds (emanating from Tamo Guna) could lead to the soul descending down to nether regions or to be re-born as a specie from plant or animal kingdom (vertebrate or invertebrate). In this way, the leaves of the *Aśvatth* tree nourish the material existence of the souls and perpetuate the continuous cycle of life and death and the embodied souls wander up and down, from lifetime after lifetime. The ***aśvatth*** (sacred fig) tree is called eternal as it is connected to the roots which is the Supreme Divine Personality.

Bhagavān also explains why the embodied souls wander up and down, from lifetime after lifetime, based on their karmic deeds. This is the result of the below three traits:

- **Ahamta** - I or ME
- **Mamata** - Mine
- **Vasama** - attachment

The root cause of all miseries in the material realm is attachment and expectation that arise out of attachment. The happiness or miseries experienced an embodied soul is due to the "ME" and "MINE" state of consciousness (self-centered consciousness) that is restricted to a limited self. The actions or karma that arise from this limited-self consciousness (i.e., ME or MINE consciousness) in the past lives and present life determine the fate of the soul in the next life - if the soul would attain celestial abodes, planet earth (as human), if the soul would be re-born as a specie in plant or animal kingdom or descend down to nether region. Hence, due to the karmic reactions accumulated for every action, the soul wanders up and down lifetime after lifetime. Some seekers have a misconception that attaining the celestial abode is liberation or Moksha. The seeker needs to understand here that one attains the celestial abodes due to positive karmic points and once this depletes, the soul is once again sent back to planet Earth. Liberation or Moksha is to breakthrough the cycle of birth and death, and this is attained by the one who has transcended the three Gunas or the modes of nature - i.e., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.



The leaves of this inverted sacred-fig tree are the fruitive activities defined in the Vedas or the Vedic mantras. The leaves of aśhvath (sacred fig) tree are compared to the Vedas. Like how one would not be able to count the leaves on a tree (considering it is vast), the knowledge of the Vedas is also considered to be vaster than the leaves of the tree. Bhagavān says that one who knows the secret of this tree is the knower of the Vedas.

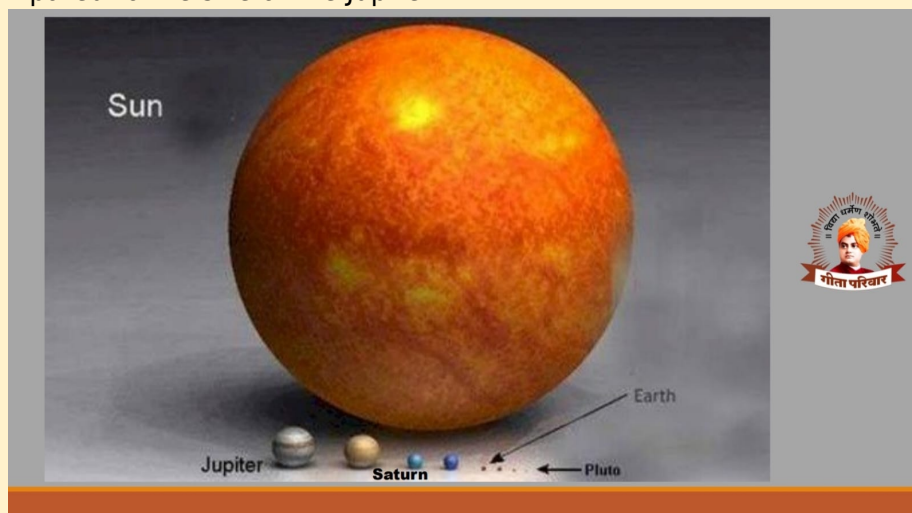
The above representation and manifestation of the entire material realm is beyond the capacity of the human mind. Let's understand the insignificant self (having a limited mind) with the example of space and stars.



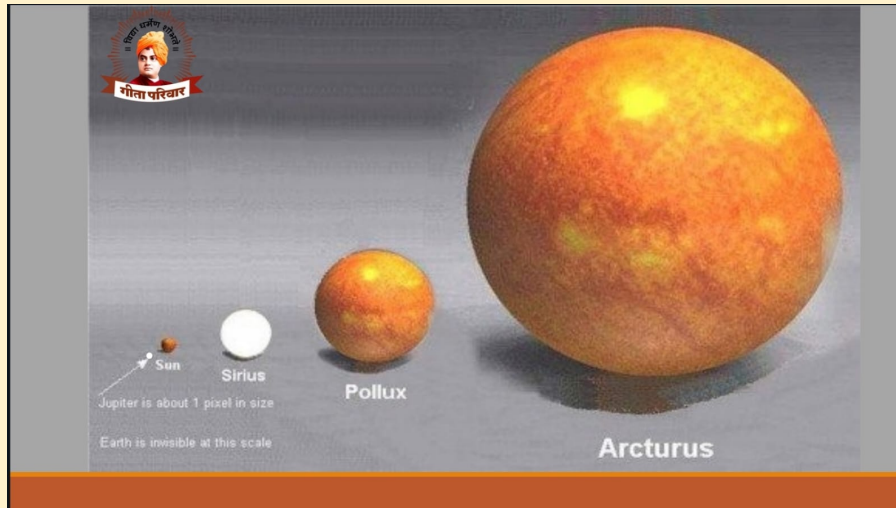
Consider the planet Earth as seen from outer space. It is only the continents the water proportion that might be visible and one's humble abode is like a spec of dust particle. The embodied soul does not even measure upto the size of an ant when the planet Earth is seen from outer space.

Now consider other planets in our solar system as seen from outer space - Mercury, Venus, Mars, Eris, Pluto and our moon. Earth is nearly 13,000 kilometers across. The smallest terrestrial planet, Mercury, has a diameter about 40 percent of that size. The Earth is larger than the three other rocky planets, Mercury, Mars and Venus and about four times the diameter of the Moon.

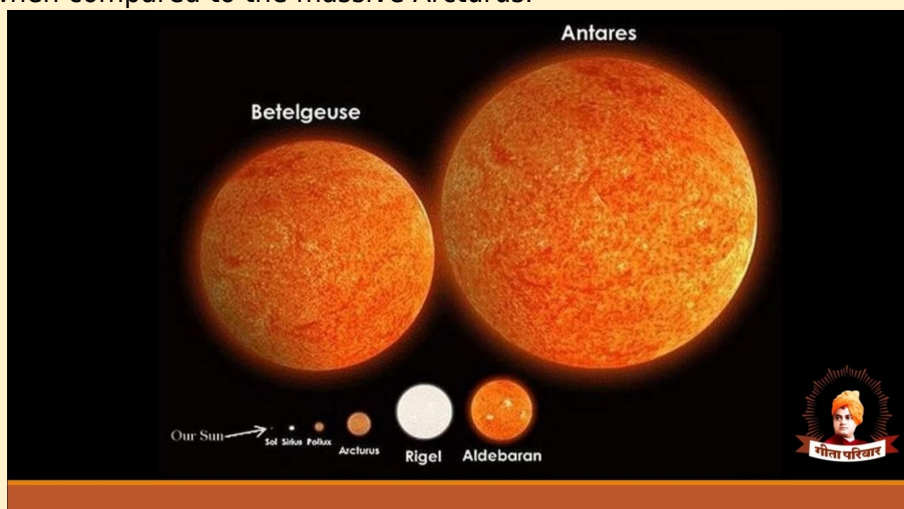
Now, consider the gas giant planets - i.e., Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. Gas giants like Jupiter are massive on a scale that is difficult to understand. As many as 1,300 Earths can fit inside the volume of Jupiter. According to the researches and evidence, around 1300 Earths could fit in the planet Jupiter. It is to be noted here that Jupiter is the largest planet on the earth whereas the Earth is the fifth largest planet. Saturn is about 75 thousand miles (120,000 km) in diameter and is almost ten times the diameter of Earth. About 764 Earths could fit inside Saturn. Uranus is the third largest planet in the Solar System. It has a diameter of 31,518.4 miles or 50,724 kilometers which is about four times the diameter of Earth. Uranus has a volume which is about 63 times the volume of Earth which means that 63 Earths can fit inside Uranus. Neptune has a diameter of 30,598.8 miles (49,244) kilometers. Its volume is 57.7 times the volume of Earth which means that 57 Earths could fit inside of Neptune with a little room left over. The embodied soul is not even equivalent to the spec of dirt particle when compared to the size of the Jupiter.



Let's explore even deeper. Consider example of the Sun. The Sun is about 109 times the diameter of Earth. The Sun weighs about 333,000 times as much as Earth. It is so large that about 1,300,000 planet Earths can fit inside of it. According to multiple studies, around 1,000 Jupiters (which e largest planet of our solar system) could fit into the Sun. Now, one can imagine the insignificant embodied soul when compared to the Sun.

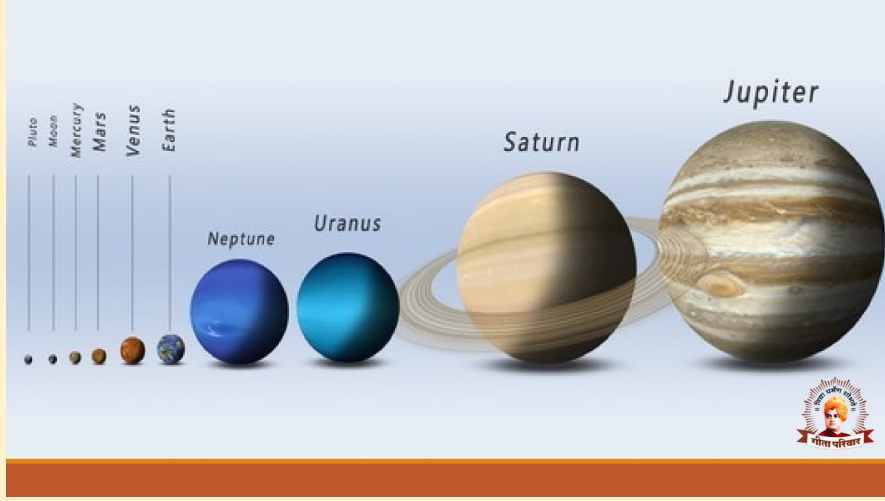


Let's now focus on the exo-planets and stars of our milkyway. Arcturus is a red giant star located only 36.7 light-years away. It's the 4th-brightest star in the sky and the brightest one in the northern half of the sky. Arcturus is, together with Vega and Sirius, one of the most luminous stars in the Sun's neighborhood. Arcturus' diameter is roughly 25 times greater than our sun. Planet Earth is like a spec of dust particle when compared to the massive Arcturus.



Moving even further towards the exo-planets, Betelgeuse and Antares are red supergiants. However, Betelgeuse is approximately 1000 times larger than the Sun, while Antares is about 700 times larger. Therefore, Betelgeuse is bigger than Antares. Arcturus is like the size of a pin-head when compared to Antares. The Sun is like a sand particle and Earth is nowhere to be seen when compared to the gigantic Antares.

This is specific to one galaxy. The Milky Way is an example of a spiral galaxy. It is estimated that there are between 200 billion (2×10^{11}) to 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe. Every Universe is pervaded by one Brahmā Dev and there are innumerable universes in this entire cosmic creation (each of them pervaded by a Brahmā Dev). One can imagine how insignificant the embodied soul is when compared to the entire cosmic creation.



15.3

**na rūpamasyeha tathopalabhyate,
nānto na cādirna ca sampratiṣṭhā,
aśvatthamenam(m) suvirūḍhamūlam,
asaṅgaśastreṇa dṛḍhena chittvā. 15.3**

The nature of this tree of creation, does not on mature thought, turn out what it is represented to be; for it has neither beginning nor end, nor even stability. Therefore cutting down this Pīpala tree, which is m

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains that this inverted sacred-fig tree or the does not exist in this world in reality. It was an analogy used by HIM to explain the entire creation of the material realm. The human mind is incapable of comprehending HIS cosmic creation. In the previous shloka, we saw that the Milky Way is an example of a spiral galaxy. It is estimated that there are between 200 billion (2×10^{11}) to 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe. There would be many more galaxies which are beyond the observable universe. The term Ananta or infinite is something which the human mind cannot imagine. There are stars which are at a distance of 28 billion light-years away from the Earth. By the time the light reaches planet earth, there is a possibility that the star would have diminished or ceased to exist (which has crossed the supernova stage in the life cycle of a star). The human mind can comprehend theories like the Big Bang which led to the creation of this universe. However, HIS cosmic creation transcends above and beyond the observable universe which is beyond the imagination of a human mind.

Bhagavān also gives glimpse of HIS spiritual realm. It transcends both space and time. There is no beginning or an end to HIS spiritual realm and it remains eternal. The one who reaches HIS divine abode never return again to the material realm.

However, the insignificant embodied soul is gripped by the influence of the material world (limited self-centric consciousness of ME or MINE) and is seeking for material happiness (which is temporary). The actions performed yield karmic merits (positive or negative). If the actions or Karma are unvirtuous, it causes the soul to descend downward and it is reborn in the lower species and nether regions. If the actions are pious or virtuous, the embodied soul accumulates pious merits which elevate the soul to ascend upward in the celestial abodes. But once these merits deplete, it is sent back to the lower forms, and this cycle continues. Now, one might wonder or contemplate that the embodied soul keeps moving upward or downward on this inverted sacred-fig tree (which is a

representation of the entire material realm) lifetime after lifetime and one is caught in the web of birth and death.

Bhagavān says that one can cut through this cycle or web of birth and death and reach HIS eternal abode. Upon attaining HIS divine abode, one is free from the web of life and death. Now, one might wonder how to attain this state of liberation. Bhagavān explains that the deep-rooted aśvatth tree must be cut down with a strong axe of detachment. Let's understand this with the below tale of Shukhdev Ji and King Janak. Before we begin, the seeker needs to understand that Janak is a Sampradaya. There are close to 72 kings who ruled Mithila with the Sampradaya named Janak. The King Janak referred to here is not the father of Devi Sita, but a king who belonged to the same lineage ruling Mithila during the age of Dwapar-Yug.

Shukdev Ji was son of sage Vyasa. He was a hermit, an elevated sage, who stayed in seclusion in forests (to keep distance from the whirlpool of Maya or the material world). He had performed severe austerities and had gained the wisdom of the Vedas and Vedanta. Once, he approached his father Ved Vyas Ji to seek the answers for few questions. Ved Vyas Ji noticed a sense of pride (I or ME) in his choice of words. Ved Vyas Ji advised his son to seek the answers from King Janak (who ruled the city of Mithila). Shukhdev Ji was taken aback and was astonished on how a king engrossed with worldly obligations could answer his queries. However, since it was instructed by his father Ved Vyas Ji, Shukhdev Ji embarked on a journey towards Mithila.

Upon reaching the city, he instructed one of the guards to inform the king that Shukhdev Ji is here to see him. He gave a lengthy monologue about his qualifications (say son of Ved Vyas, master of Vedas and Vedanta, the one who has attained Parama-Hansa state, so on and so forth). The guard informed the king by giving the monologue introduction of Shukhdev Ji. King Janak asked the guard to convey to Shukhdev Ji to wait until the King is ready to see him. The guard was astonished that his king is keeping a great sage waiting at the doorstep. However, bound by his duty, the guard informed Shukhdev Ji to wait until the king is free to see him. Shukhdev Ji was taken aback, as he expected the king would come down to see him right away with utmost hospitality. However, due to his father Ved Vyas Ji's instructions to seek the answers from King Janak, he waited for the king to receive him. The day passes and at the time of nightfall, Shukhdev Ji once again instructs the guard to inform the king that sage Shukhdev is here to see him. He again gives an elaborate monologue of his achievements as his introduction. When the guard informs the king, King Janak asks the guard to convey that he needs to wait until the king is free to see him. This process continues for a couple of days.

Shukhdev Ji now realizes that he as a student, a seeker who has reached the abode of King Janak to get the answers to his questions. He now rephrases his introduction which humbly resonated that he is a seeker, a student of King Janak, who is at his doorstep to seek for wisdom. When King Janak hears that Shukhdev, a student seeking for wisdom is here to see him, he rushes to receive the sage with utmost hospitality. The moral of this section of the tale is to remain humble. As they say - **"It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels."**

King Janak greeted Shukdev Ji and invited him into the hospitality chambers where he was served delicious food, given fine clothes to wear and treated like a royal guest. King Janak informed Shukhdev Ji that it was the day of celebration at Mithila where a pooja would be done to the Kula-Devi or the presiding Devi of their lineage. The King requested Shukhdev Ji to take the jar of oil and circumambulate the entire city, as it was their tradition for a Brahmin to do this ritual. The king said it would be a privilege to his kingdom if Shukhdev Ji could complete this ritual and tradition. He also informed Shukhdev Ji that even a drop of this oil shouldn't spill on the ground as it would be deemed unfit to be offered to the Kula-Devi.

Shukdev Ji circumambulated the city of Mithila with the heavy jar of oil (filled till the rim) and returned to the king's palace. King Janak enquired if he saw the entire city of Mithila decorated grandly with flowers, people gathered around and showering flowers on Shukhdev Ji's path and the whole city decorated and lit with light. Shukhdev Ji said **he was so involved and engrossed in ensuring that not a drop of oil spills on the ground, due to which, he was unable to observe the decorated city.**

King Janak then mentioned that Shukhdev Ji had gained the wisdom he was seeking for with his visit to the city of Mithila. King Janak mentioned that he is a king of the city and lives like a worldly person. He has many obligations, many responsibilities as a king, but in fact, He was not attached to all those things. He was just performing His duty. Shukhdev Ji understood that, even while performing the worldly duties, one can remain detached and attain liberation.

From this tale, one can draw inspiration from King Janak. the jar filled with oil can be compared to the Supreme Divine. When one is completely absorbed in the Supreme Divine, one remains untainted by the delusions of the material world. Hence, even by performing the prescribed duties and worldly obligations, one can attain liberation from the cycle of life and death. Bhagavān mentions in this shloka that those who seek refuge in HIM will be able to axe down this sacred-fig tree with detachment. Upon taking refuge in HIM, one will not return to this world again.

15.4

**tataḥ(ph) padaṃ(n) tatparimārgitavyaṃ(ṡ),
yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ,
tameva cādyam(m) puruṣam(m) prapadye,
yataḥ(ph) pravṛttiḥ(ph) prasṛtā purāṇī.15.4**

Thereafter a man should diligently seek for that supreme state, viz., God, having attained which they return no more to this world; and having fully resolved that he stands dedicated to the Primeval Being (God Nārāyaṇa) Himself, for whom the flow of this beginningless creation has progressed, he should dwell and meditate on Him.

In this shloka, Bhagavān continues to explain that the deluded souls are inclined towards gratification of the material desires and are stuck in a cycle of insatiable desires, as a result of which, they are only getting me further trapped in the samsara or the web of life and death. With detachment, one can cut through this vicious cycle by surrendering to the Supreme Divine. HE explains this further in the next shloka.

15.5

**nirmānamohā jitasāṅgadoṣā,
adhyātmanityā vinivṛttakāmāḥ,
dvandvairvimuktāḥ(s) sukhaduḥkhasaṅjñaiḥ(r),
gacchantyamūḍhāḥ(ph) padamavyayaṃ(n) tat. 15.5**

They who are free from pride and delusion, who have conquered the evil of attachment, and are constantly abiding in God, whose cravings have altogether ceased and who are completely immune to all pairs of opposites going by the names of pleasure and pain, and are undeluded, attain that supreme immortal state.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains the traits of those who have cut down the sacred-fig tree (delusions

of the material world) with the axe of detachment. Those who are free from vanity and delusion, who have overcome the evil of attachment, who dwell constantly on the self and on the Supreme Divine, who are free from the desire to enjoy the senses, and are beyond the dualities of life (pleasure and pain; victory and defeat; honor and dishonor; profit and loss; happiness and sadness, etc.), such liberated personalities attain HIS eternal Abode. To summarize in a nutshell, below are the traits of the one who attain HIS supreme Divine abode and attain liberation:

- One who is free from attachment
- One who has overcome delusion
- One who is constantly absorbed in the Supreme Divine
- One who is equitable towards the dualities of life
- One who is Free of desires

In the previous shlokas, we saw how insignificant the soul is when compared to the entire cosmic creation. However, the embodied soul is gripped by ignorance and pride for the material goals acquired and is overcome by a sense of proprietorship. This leads to a vicious cycle of never-ending desires to accumulate more and more. The soul does not realize that the happiness in this world is temporary, and the true or eternal happiness can be experienced when the soul reaches HIS divine abode. An embodied soul gripped by ignorance and pride will not be able to surrender to the Supreme Divine with pure devotion. However, HIS eternal abode is beyond the phenomenon of life and death and those who are absorbed in HIM with pure devotion are on the path to attain liberation.

15.6

**na tadbhāsayate sūryo, na śaśāṅko na pāvākaḥ,
yadgatvā na nivartante, taddhāma paRāmaṁ(m) mama. 15.6**

Neither the sun nor the moon nor fire can illumine that supreme self-effulgent state, attaining which they never return to this world; that is My supreme abode.

In this shloka, Bhagavān explains HIS divine Abode, which is self-luminous. No sun, moon or fire is required to light it up. In fact, it is due to HIS spiritual power that provides luminance to the Sun and the Moon in this world. As the material realm is created by Maya (material energy), it is full of dualities (pleasure and pain; victory and defeat; honor and dishonor; profit and loss; happiness and sadness, etc.). Whereas, the Divine realm is spiritual in nature and transcends the material energy. Hence, it is full of bliss, knowledge, luminance and is eternal. Bhagavān assures that those souls who attain HIM, reside eternally in HIS Supreme Abode. Such souls are free from the cycle of birth and death. HE explains this further in the forthcoming shlokas which would be discussed in the next session.

The session ends with the prayer and Hanuman Chalisa.

Questions and Answers

Vikas Ji

Q: How do we measure impact of our Karma? How do we determine if the goodness of the Karma is enough for us to achieve a certain goal? Also, which is considered to be the best loka.

A: That is impossible to determine. Do you know why you were born as a human being and not any other? If you collect enough **Punya** or good Karma to go to **Swargaloka**, that is where you will go. If someone has done so much **Paap** or bad Karma, that he is not eligible to be in **Manusyaloka** will be born in Triyaka Yoni as birds, insects or plants. Worst sinner will end up going to **Narakaloka**.

Best loka is our **Manushyaloka** as here, we are able to determine your fate through our Karma. Of the 84 Lakh **Yonis**, including **Devata Yoni**, this is the only **Yoni** that is capable of Karma. The rest are all Bhog or indulgence **Yoni**.

That's why it is said,

Bare Bhagya Manush Tan Pawa,

Sur Durlabh Sadgranthan Gawa.

Only a Human is capable of attaining Moksha or salvation through their Karma. Even Devatas can't do that. Gods and Goddess hanker to be Manushya in order to attain Moksha.

We must note that **Swargprapti**, while is a good thing to happen is not the ultimate goal as it is not **Mukti** or liberation. **Mukti** is when we get liberated from this endless cycle of birth and death. It is when we do not have to go through the process of **Punarapi Jananam, Punarapi Maranam; Punarapi Janani Jatara Shayanam** (Birth again, death again, sleeping in the womb of the mother again). It is when we are able to reach Bhagavān's abode to never return.

Nilima Sinha Ji

Q: What happens when I am not responsible for a bad Karma but I am suffering just because of I am present there. A case in example is what is happening in Kolkata. As a citizen of the State I am suffering the pain and sorrow of the ineffective government because I happen to live here. How can I get liberated from that?

A: Nothing is impacted if you don't attach your expectations and desires to it. It is your expectations on how the others should act that creates the sorrow in your mind. If you are totally unattached, you will never be impacted. The fact that you are living in such a situation is because of your past Karma. You need to do good Karma in this life, so that in the next one, you are born in a favorable place.

It is certain that if you are attached or have expectations, you have created a path to sorrow and pain.

Soni Ji

Q: After going through 84 Lakh **Yonis**, one is born as a Human being. Why does he still face sorrow and go through sufferings?

A: It is a wrong assumption that one must live through 84 Lakh **Paap Yonies or Bhogi Yonis** to be born in the **Manushya Yoni**, as a Human. It all depends on your Karma or actions. Good Karma may lead one to **Manusya Yoni** even in the next birth and once can be born again and again as a Human being. But yes, after being born in 84 Lakh **Yonis**, one will definitely be born in the **Manushya Yoni** on this earth.

It is not that he has lived through the consequences of all his Karma. He has completed his **Karmaphal** in the Animal **Yonis** but he still has to live through the outcomes of his Karma in the **Manusya Yoni**.

Anjana Baheti Ji

Q: How do I know the **uddeshya** or purpose of my birth?

A: There is only and only one primary purpose and that can be achieved only through the Karma **Yoni**. The purpose is to meditate on the Paramātmā and try to find answers to the questions 'Who am I' and 'Why am I born at all'. Understanding the answers to these two questions and attaining the ultimate goal is also known as **Moksha, Kaivalya, Bhagavad Prapti** ,

Paramātmā Prapti or Salvation. Liberation from the cycle of birth and death and achieving union with Paramātmā is the ultimate **goal of our lives**.



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You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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