

## Brief summary for Tuesday 25th January (4.5 - 4.6 session)

We must thank all our teachers for their contribution to what has been written below. These are things we have learned and heard from other gracious souls whose teachings are expressed in our own words/understanding.

If you missed part 43, [check out the notes here.](#)

You can find [all the previous notes here.](#)

This week we heard the start of Krishna's response to Arjuna's question from last week: how could Krishna have instructed Vivasvan in ancient times?

These verses from 4.5 to 4.15 are seed verses where we will learn more about the nature of Bhagavan, Krishna, the personality of Godhead. First we learn that Krishna is God, something we haven't so far from Himself. We learn He is omniscient and eternal. We learn why an omniscient and eternal person will appear in this world which is temporary and full of ignorance. We learn about the nature of material consciousness that inhibits one to learn about God even if He appears before us. We learn that by properly understanding what He is talking about, we can gain liberation. We also learn that although there is one God, there are many paths. The nature of one's approach or path will lead Krishna to reciprocate accordingly (so we find many religions). We will also learn how he reciprocates with even those who don't approach Him.

In 4.5 Krishna points out to Arjuna that although both of them have passed through many births, Krishna, due to His position as the supreme controller, can remember all those births, whereas living beings of finite consciousness cannot. Krishna uses the names Arjuna and Parantapa here.

Arjuna as we have previously discussed means pure. But the meaning being used here is tree (like the Arjuna trees we find in Damodara-lila). Krishna considers Arjuna's question to show he is covered with ignorance like a tree (in this case Krishna's arrangement of course). Arjuna is representing the illusioned jivas who are ignorant of the nature and background of their own birth, what to speak of others. So Krishna is saying, "Arjuna, you are ignorant like a tree, covered by the idea that you're the body and then acting as if you are."

This leads to the other name used: Parantapa. As we have seen previously, Parantapa means slayer of enemies. We heard in the last verses this name in regards to Arjuna's qualifications to hear the teaching (slaying or controlling the enemies of the mind and senses). Here though there are some other meanings intended.

Krishna is indicating that Arjuna is deluded and that his knowledge is covered. **Tapa** means to give pain to and **param** means the enemies. A warrior sees duality when there are no enemies actually. Arjuna is seeing in terms of illusory differences and thinks he has enemies to destroy and friends to protect, identifying as a warrior in this life.

In referring to Arjuna by these names here, Krishna is speaking about the nature of material existence, and specifically the two-fold nature of the maya-sakti. Maya is said to give an initial covering to the soul, covering the soul with ignorance, and also has a distorting influence, leading the soul's subsequent thoughts and actions to lead to a distorted reality.

Material nature is based on ignorance of what you are (avidya) and when we are in ignorance, we tend to act inappropriately. Just like if we are very intoxicated we can become ignorant of who we are and act inappropriately. Sometimes it is described as the hurling and covering influence of the maya sakti.

This covering can cause us to act in a way as if we have friends and enemies when there are no friends and enemies. Material existence is “I like him, I don't like him,” but someone with enlightened consciousness, who understands Krishna, has no enemies. They see negative people as agents of their bad karma, something they are owed, helping them pay that debt and become freed of the burden.

Krishna is using the names to preface what He is saying to point out that if you want to understand me beyond theory, you have to become free from ignorance, and the types of activities that result from ignorance. Stop doing those things and cultivate knowledge and by doing so we will stop acting in that way. When ignorance is uprooted then all stages of karma are eradicated. Working out one's karma means coming to knowledge (remember this chapter is about knowledge). Karma doesn't just go away because we create new karma according to our actions. If we have knowledge then we will see people and situations not just on the surface, but what their potential is.

We are in a predicament of the ignorance of identifying ourselves with the material body and the activities we pursue in pursuit of ourselves which are ultimately in vain. I want to be happy but no wonder you are not, you are identified with something that you are not. You are consciousness, and we are looking for the joy that is inherent in our nature as consciousness in a place it can't be found, in matter.

The power of maya to delude us is amazing. Our mind and senses say, "do that" and the intelligence says, "that's not a good idea." Yet we do it anyway. Then we say, "never doing that again." How long until we do it again? This is how bad our predicament is. We don't have real life and movement of our own, we are being moved by our previous karma. Paying the debt for things we wanted and no longer want. So we want to have a way to become free from the debt.

If we are addicted to drugs and want to give up, the first step is to understand, “I have a problem”. Some people think religion or spiritual life

is a crutch that comes from a weak position. "if you need it.". But actually it is a strong position. Everyone has the experience of wanting to do something but being unable to do it. The frustrations of material life and succumbing to actions we didn't want to do. It is a strong position to realise, yes, I need help. Taking shelter of someone like Krishna, we become strong being in such a position. So Arjuna has helped us out here asking these questions.

There is another meaning of Parantapa: one who gives to others. Arjuna has asked an appropriate question so the world can benefit from hearing Krishna speak about Himself and enlighten us. So we are eternally indebted to Arjuna for opening this door to hear about Krishna's omniscience and eternality.

This chapter is about knowledge and omniscience is the first quality brought out, showing the difference between ourselves and God. Omniscience means all knowing, and especially to know the heart of everyone. It is one of the various qualities of Krishna given by Srila Rupa Goswami in the text Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu (summarized as Nectar of Devotion) where 64 qualities of Krishna are given.

We share many qualities with God. If anything most resembles God in this world it is us as we are consciousness and God is also consciousness (and more). Things (matter) in this world only have as much joy as we put ourselves into them. Other people's possessions don't generally give us joy for example. It is this enduring consciousness that is primary, even though we are sometimes covered and taken over by the material energy.

In one sense we turn matter on as we invest our consciousness into it, but we also get taken over by it. We can think of someone switching on the television themselves but being taken over by it (and becoming a couch potato). We are in a similar predicament, subject to being influenced and overwhelmed by material nature, but it can never really extinguish us (even though it may seem that way) as at our root, like Krishna, we are an enduring being (something Krishna has explained).

Although we share some qualities (up to a certain degree) with God (like eternality), Srila Rupa Goswami points out in his list of 64 qualities of Krishna that the jiva does not share all of these qualities, only 50 of them. One of the qualities we don't share is omniscience so in this verse we are hearing about the difference between ourselves and God. There is a likeness, and so we can get close to Him, but there is also a difference which is being brought out here.

Sometimes there can be a misunderstanding that a pure liberated devotee has omniscience also, but this is not the case according to the sastra and Srila Rupa Goswami. The enlightened pure devotee has an essential knowing in that they know what to do given they only act out of love. They know everything they need to know. In love you know what to do. But they do not share omniscience in the way Krishna has it and so Krishna is making this point here of the difference.

Krishna has descended and manifested many different names, forms and pastimes. Krishna is saying to Arjuna that by His supreme potency, He remembers every appearance He has manifested, including when He instructed Vivasvan. He appears as various avatars and Arjuna also appears as His companion. Arjuna's knowledge can be covered though as he is a jiva, an individual soul or atomic conscious particle, so Arjuna does not remember them.

Conditioned souls are born into temporary outer casings, material bodies. Krishna's body is pure spirit so there is no difference between his physical form and Himself. We forget previous lives because except for some exceptions, memories die with the body.

4.6 is interesting as we learn something more about the nature of Krishna's "birth". Previously Krishna said we have passed through many births but now He is saying He is birthless. Naturally questions will arise. How can someone imperishable have repeated births? How can someone transcendent to all dualities such as virtue and sin be embodied like an

individual atma or soul? Krishna will expand on this esoteric topic about Avatar and explain the tattva (or reality) of His birth.

We have discussed before how **Ava** means to come down and **Tara** means to cross. To cross from up to down. Krishna says He is imperishable and is not full of ignorance that is the nature of the material world. He comes here perfectly with all powers such as omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence by yogamaya or His divine internal potency.

The question may have come up that it is not so remarkable that Krishna appears in many other forms. As we know, the jiva is also actually without birth, only changes bodies when the current body is destroyed. Krishna previously taught all souls are unborn. So Krishna explains that His body, form or nature is indestructible or imperishable (avyaya atma) to distinguish Himself.

The jiva takes birth because of their relationship with the body, even though it is temporary, which produces ignorance (as we have discussed). The jiva is pushed into a new body according to the results of their activities, their papa (sin) and punya (piety). But Krishna's appearance is not under the control of karma, the force carrying one into a future life. His body remains the same and so it is not possible to compare the birth of the jiva, who takes birth in different species as a result of piety and sin, with the Lord who is the lord of all living entities (Bhutanam isvarah). He is the controller of the destiny (karma) of all living beings, even when taking birth as if He was an ordinary living being.

Krishna's form and descent are not tinged with material qualities; He descends in a spiritual form only under the influence of His primary shakti (internal energy). His svarupa is sac-cid-ananda (eternal existence, cognisance and bliss) and has no tinge of the gunas (modes of nature) that make up bodies of matter.

A nice example sometimes used regarding Krishna's appearance in the world is the sun. The sun appears to take birth by rising and disappears by

setting. But the sun is always fixed in its position actually. Similarly the Lord is seen in many lands and at different times just like the sun, expanding in countless forms while remaining one. He speaks in ways that can be heard in that time and circumstance. Atma-maya means mercy (a term we will explore more shortly) and so He appears by His own influence as an act of mercy. Krishna is appearing in this world out of something outside of ignorance (which keeps us appearing in this world).

Before looking more at the nature of Krishna's internal energy which brings Him to the world, it is worth summarizing the differences between Krishna and the conditioned living entity brought out by these verses.

### **Krishna:**

- Is eternal and remembers past, present and future
- Remembers all births because His body does not change or deteriorate
- Appears by His own will
- Body is transcendental
- No difference between body and self

## Conditioned Living entity:

- Eternal but forgets
- Forgets because body changes and deteriorates
- Forced to appear by karma
- Body is material
- The soul acquires an external body (gross and subtle)

A very important term in verse 4.6 is **atma-maya**. We have discussed how it refers to the Lord's mercy. More specifically it is talking about His internal energy. Krishna says He doesn't come in touch with the material world but comes by His atma-maya, also known as the svarupa sakti or yoga-maya. Birth takes place under the jurisdiction of the material energy, whereas Krishna's birth doesn't so He points out He is birthless here.

Atma means self so Krishna is speaking about that maya coming from Himself, the yoga-maya, which covers and reveals His svarups or forms. We have previously discussed how there are three principal energies of Krishna: Maya-sakti (external energy), jiva-sakti (marginal energy), and the svarupa sakti (internal energy). Krishna will explain these in more detail in the Gita but worth discussing a little here.



Actually God has innumerable saktis, meaning power or potency. But they are generally categorised in these three categories. Everything has some inherent potency or power. It is needed to be known. The potency of taste in food lets us know it, the potency of luminosity in light lets us know it, etc.

As persons we have power and when we exercise it then we express ourselves. We are known more by our power than our person and the more we know of their power, the more we know of them. In a crude way, if I see a picture of an actor or world leader, it might just look like a regular guy to me, but if I know the power of such a person then I will know so much more.

The mystics who know Krishna well speak of His saktis or His potencies. We have discussed the nature of the maya sakti earlier, which causes avidya (ignorance) through the deluding potency. Matter moves under the direction of the maya sakti and this manifests the world. Matter is fascinating in itself when we study how it acts and moves, the possibilities it contains. It's quite mystical and being a sakti of God, it means consciousness is in the background of matter. But in and of itself it is extraordinary, ask any scientist.

In this verse, Krishna is introducing another power for the first time. He says He can't be controlled by matter although He seems to appear within it. However, He makes His appearance by his atma-maya, His primary sakti, by which the affairs of the avatars are carried out. The fact an imperishable, eternal, omniscient entity appears in a world of ignorance and temporality is being explained here (as will His purpose in upcoming verses). Material nature is extraordinary, has the power to delude as we discussed earlier, so what to speak of His atma-maya or internal potency which governs His own movement. What must be the nature of this internal sakti that governs the nature of Krishna and that He allows Himself to come under the influence of.

By the atma-maya, Krishna makes His appearance, as do His associates (here Arjuna is being deluded for the purpose of speaking Bhagavad-Gita

as we know). Srila Prabhupada sometimes gave the example of a governor coming into the prison. He is also behind bars but there is a difference between him and the prisoners, he has the key.

Krishna coming here is a lila for Him. He also moves in the world. The more we move in this world, the more we sink (due to exploiting things to meet our perceived needs as we identify with the body, and the senses and mind demand things). But Krishna is celebrating His fullness and so His dancing overflows into this world and He comes by that internal power or potency. Krishna is saying she brings Him here and as she is manifesting in the lives of devotees, Krishna feels drawn to bring His lila to them.

Krishna moves in this world by the force of the svarupa sakti, not karma, as He is always in control of the maya sakti (external energy). The svarupa sakti is of his own nature and so He can't speak about Himself without talking about the svarupa sakti (or atma-maya as she is referred to here). Just as we can't separate the moon from it's shine, the svarupa sakti reveals Krishna. Whereas the influence of the secondary sakti, maya-sakti, is deluding, the influence of the primary sakti is enlightening.

The yogamaya sakti is inconceivable, can't be understood by reasoning, but we should at least understand that Krishna is not bound by any rules governing the mundane plane. Whereas we, being atomic, can be overpowered by Bhagavan's deluding potency and have to accept a subtle and gross body according to the impressions created by our previous actions, Krishna is beyond all material laws and is completely pure even when manifesting in the material world. He transforms material phenomena into spiritual existence by His own sweet will.

The internal energy governs Krishna's lilas and so there is a strong emphasis by our school on the divine shakti. Whereas many traditions teach about the supremacy of God, we teach what brings God pleasure, His internal potency.

For Krishna to come to the world, there has to be devotees here. Devotees like Arjuna attract Krishna. Krishna has explained that His descent here is independent. There is no power from this side that can attract Krishna, so it must be coming from the other side. No amount of physical or mental or intellectual power can attract Krishna, it is nothing to Him. The power to attract Krishna comes from Krishna Himself and comes through the parampara who distribute it. We make an effort to draw out that kind of descent, investing in the bank of service to be able to serve more. Krishna is controlled by Bhakti. He is under the control of Radha and only comes here because there is some Bhakti here. He never leaves Her company. So we want to be attached to that shakti too: the Bhakti shakti.

Next time we will learn more about when and why Krishna chooses to appear in this world of birth and death, even though He is birthless and imperishable. He explains in verses 4.7 - 4.8, our reading for next time.