

## **Brief summary for Tuesday 28th March (Chapter 7 Overview and 7.1 summary 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 94, [check out the notes here.](#)

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

The seventh chapter is titled knowledge of the Absolute. It is also sometimes titled Yoga of Knowledge and Realization, or Jnana-Vijnana-yoga. Knowledge of relative and absolute conceptions of the Supreme. Yoga through realisation of transcendental knowledge.

Chapter Seven is interesting because in earlier chapters, Arjuna often encouraged Krishna to speak by asking a question. At the beginning of this chapter, Krishna spontaneously explains how to attain the constant remembrance of Him that He described in the final verse of Chapter Six. Krishna had described there how the remembrance of Krishna characterizes one as the topmost yogi, and remembrance of Krishna is the essence of the process of purification. So Krishna speaks about it without being prompted by Arjuna.

The middle six chapters represent the theology of the Gita, the bhakti yoga section or the yoga of devotion. We will hear about the object of that love, the glories and greatness of the Supreme. We will hear how bhakti is the only means to accomplish the ultimate goal of communion with the Supreme.

Chapter Seven in particular discusses God as the object of devotion, God's sakti or energy or powers, Krishna being God Himself, different ways to see

Him in material creation, and different types of devotion: devotion mixed with karma, mixed with jnana, as well as pure unconditional loving devotion. Different ways or motivations that people engage in worship of Him. He will also describe the types of persons who don't worship Him and why that is. In this chapter, Krishna wants to confirm He is the highest reality and ultimate attainment, possessing eternal divine attributes such as omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence and establish Himself as the sole recipient worthy of devotion. He also wants to establish that the devotee worshipping out of love is the most rare but the most elevated and unaffected by illusion or death.

We have already heard about jnana and astanga yoga which can lead to liberation, but depend upon niskama karma yoga which first purifies the heart. Bhakti can give the same thing and actually is mixed with those other paths to give ultimate liberation. It is stated in many places in the scriptures that without bhakti, those two processes are insignificant. Generally though, for the purpose of liberation, bhakti is treated as a subordinate element in those practices.

There are so many paths in the Gita in one sense, but actually only one path is recommended: bhakti. Other paths are discussed to indirectly shed light on bhakti's glory.

There are different types of liberation and the path to becoming an associate of the Lord with prema or selfless love is independent of these other processes, and it can give all the benefits described as a side effect or secondary thought if that desire somehow lingers in someone.

There is a nice verse in the 11th Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam (11.20.32-33) that confirms this:

**"Everything that can be achieved by fruitive activities, penance, knowledge, detachment, mystic yoga, charity, religious duties and all other means of perfecting life is easily achieved by My devotee through loving service unto Me. If somehow or other My devotee**

**desires promotion to heaven, liberation, or residence in My abode, he easily achieves such benedictions."**

Bhakti alone is most powerful and so we need to understand something of who we are performing bhakti for. This Chapter Seven serves in that regard, describing the various opulences of Krishna, the supreme object of worship. Studying these things leads one to the firm understanding and realisation that Krishna alone is the ultimate limit of the Supreme Absolute Reality and there is no Absolute Reality other than Him. Therefore, He can help free us from the bondage of the deluding material energy.

We don't just want religion without philosophy as that is sentiment. We need to use our intelligence also. Krishna will give philosophical truths to instil confidence and conviction in the process of bhakti-yoga. We want pure devotion so we study these middle six chapters to understand what is pure devotion. We are fortunate if we have made this our ideal, if we have some sraddha or faith in that.

To really do that though, we have to understand something of the theology. Who is God? In the first 6 chapters, Krishna has been discussing Brahman and Paramatma, and identified Himself with these two features of the Absolute. Here in these 6 chapters He is speaking about Bhagavan aspect of the Divine, the Godhead. He is that Bhagavan and this kind of knowledge is very important.

Krishna is Svayam Bhagavan or the fountainhead of all other aspects of the divine. There is a verse in the Srimad Bhagavatam we have often quoted that declares this: *Krsnas tu Bhagavan Svayam*. Srila Jiva Goswami has said that this verse is the key to understanding the whole of Srimad Bhagavatam. It is known as the paribhasa sutra.

In spiritual books or even chapters it is often seen that one of the first verses presents the whole book's or chapter's very essence. This verse is called the paribhasa sutra. Although usually appearing only once, it is the king ruling over all other verses. It presents the sole purpose, conclusion and final message of the book ruling over and taking precedence over all

the other ideas or teachings appearing in the book or chapter. Srila Jiva Goswami in Krishna Sandarbha points out that the paribhasa-sutra explains the proper method for understanding a book. The key sloka or verse. It is what the book is about and the message it wants to convey. So Krishna is the original supreme personality of Godhead, the source of all avatars. If we want to love God, we have to know who God is. The more developed the conception of God, the more potential there is for loving exchange. This is the idea of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, we come to Krishna ultimately who is Akhila-rasamrita Murti, the very form of all loving emotional exchanges.

So in Chapter Seven, Krishna is speaking about Himself and His ontological position. Know me completely means Bhagavan. If we know the source of everything, then we can truly engage in lila or emotional play with Him. It is emphasized over and over by our teachers that we must really understand Krishna as Supreme to pass through this point and eventually forget He is God like His closest associates.

So we will start our study of these middle 6 chapters by invoking a beautiful prayer by Keshava Kashmiri of the Kumara Sampradaya.

**"I humbly bow down to the Supreme Lord Krishna, the ultimate controller of all creation, who is only accessible through bhakti or loving devotion which is the highest of the highest, who by His causeless mercy is also the bestower of such bhakti to whom He chooses and who dispels the darkness of ignorance known as maya or the delusion of illusion."**

And a nice prayer by Srila Vishvanatha Cakravarti Thakura:

**"When will I take shelter of the feet of Mahaprabhu, which are a sweet ocean of mercy, made of eternal bliss? Then somehow or other, I will attain the nectar of prema through the path of bhakti, which shuns liberation."**

As we saw at the end of the 6th Chapter, Krishna said one who always thinks of Him in devotion is the best. He said they concentrate on Him in full faith. They are the best among those engaged in perfecting the science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the ultimate consciousness. Arjuna will naturally wonder how one does that. Faith in a person requires some knowledge of them. So in verse 7.1 Krishna follows on from what He has said to let Arjuna know He will tell him how to be that topmost yogi and fix his mind on Him.

Krishna, the Lord of Sri, said: O Partha, listen. Hear from me how with mind attached to me, practicing yoga and taking refuge in me, you can know me completely without doubt. Know Me in full free from all doubt.

Krishna didn't wait for a question to open up. The last chapter ended on a particular emotional pitch that has taken Krishna to what He wants to give further emphasis to. That which is so dear to Him, the yoga of devotion. He is naturally enthused to be speaking directly about devotion, by which He can be known completely. Krishna is emotionally charged. Bhakti is the best way to know Me, to get my attention. Loving me is the best way to know me.

The natural question is how does one go about that? We have heard about the individual spiritual self's likeness to Brahman and how Brahman is a feature of the Absolute. Consciousness is the basis of existence, basis of reality. Consciousness is that which cannot be denied as the act of denial requires consciousness. I can deny so many material manifestations as not being real as ultimately they cease to be, including the body. But that which is dismissing everything, that cannot be dismissed. That is consciousness. Reality exists and this is what we call the Brahman feature of the Absolute. We also heard about Paramatma. To be cognisant of this existence, that is Paramatma. God is universal soul, residing in the soul of every other soul. He manifests the world. That feature of the Absolute that functions in relation to the world of our experience, manifesting it, maintaining it, drawing it back inside Himself in endless cycles. Paramatma witnesses the activities of every individual, awarding the fruits of good and bad karma, so

He is the world Oversoul or Supersoul, cognisant of everything at all times. Krishna has indicated in the first 6 chapters that He is Brahman and Paramatma, but now we will see Him be more direct about it. Now Krishna will discuss the Bhagavan feature of the Absolute, the personal, lovable aspect of Godhead. Brahman is existence, with Paramatma, cognisance is also there, and as Bhagavan, a cognisant existence plays. This play known as lila is the inner life of the Absolute, which overflows into the world of our experience from time to time. To know this feature amounts to knowing Him completely. This also includes knowledge of his shaktis or energies.

So this chapter starts with Sri Bhagavan. Srila Prabhupada generally liked to render this as the blessed Lord. Why is the Lord blessed? Who can bless the Lord or make the Lord blessed? This is Sri. Without Sri there is no Bhagavan. There may be God. Brahman is God and so is Paramatma. But as we know, Brahman is His effulgence or aura.

Bhagavan Himself is complete in 6 opulences (strength, fame, wealth, knowledge, beauty, renunciation). These opulences attract us to others. He who possesses these 6 opulences in full is God. Such a person is most attractive, irresistible.

At this point in the Gita, we have come to discuss Bhagavan directly and so it is appropriate to start with Sri Bhagavan Uvaca as Krishna will speak more on His shaktis as well as Himself. The blessed Lord or another meaning of Sri Bhagavan is the Lord of innumerable shaktis.

To know the Absolute completely means to know Bhagavan, the last word in the faces of the Absolute. This means Brahman with shakti. If you know a person's shakti, you know that person. Shakti or energy is that by which a person does something, accomplishes tasks. We know something about someone by what they do with their energy in the world. This person writes books for example. So we can know something of them by reading their book as the book is their shakti. By someone's shakti, we know a person completely. We may know something, like a person looks like this, has this

colour hair, but to know a person completely means shakti. Shakti is the person in one sense. The Lord and His shaktis are one and different at the same time (Acintya bheda abheda). When Brahman has shakti, that means Bhagavan. To know God completely means to know Brahman along with Brahman's shaktis and the name of this face of the Absolute is Bhagavan. Bhagavan's primary or internal potency or shakti was referred to as atma-maya in the fourth chapter, and the bhakti shakti is part of this internal potency.

The first glory of bhakti was also shown in early chapters, her post liberated status. Her influence is required for liberation and what makes jnana yoga liberating is the influence of bhakti. Now we come to bhakti proper. By the time we get to the middle of this chapter, we learn the second glory of Bhakti to some extent. She is independent, by being spiritual or of the svarupa shakti, the internal potency, and so she can do whatever she wants. She can give herself to anyone. So she gives herself even to people who aren't qualified for niskama karma yoga. We are such people of course, so we can take up the practice of bhakti humbly: Sravanam, kirtananam, Visnoh smaranam, and so on. So this verse starts with Sri, the feminine shakti of the Lord.

In Chapter 7, Krishna reveals this knowledge of His opulences and Godhood. There is a famous Upanisadic statement: tat tvam asi. It is usually rendered as "you are that" but it can also be translated as "you are his." This rendering is more accurate in it indicates a union between self and God in love, where both continue to exist individually, yet are united in purpose.

Knowledge of the self (tvam or you) was revealed in the first 6 chapters and spoken of primarily. What you are, the soul being different from the body, etc.

The middle 6 chapters reveal knowledge of that which the self is to be united in love with (tat or his). Bhagavan. He whom we are to have a dynamic union in love. There is union and difference in transcendence. You

and I become We. I live in your heart and you live in my heart. It allows some differences while there is some unity. We have transcended illusory differences.

We are of the nature of Bhagavan. Bhagavan never associates directly with the maya shakti or external energy, there is too much dissimilarity between the two. But we have similarity in that we are of the nature of consciousness. In this sense, You are that.

It is extraordinary knowledge to know there is variety in transcendence. Sri Bhagavan, that makes your head spin. We can't conceive of it, it is acintya, but we can know about it by scripture. Vedanta 101 is that you are that light. You are God. If anything in this world is similar to God, it is us. We endure, we are eternal. But this is only the beginning. You are His. There is a unity, but a dynamic one.

This is a theme that follows right through to chapter 11. The opulence of God or Godliness of God. The power and glory of God which can create a distance between us, but also fuels a genuine life of devotion. As that matures, the devotion itself suppresses the Godhood making it possible to have an intimate relationship with Him as two equal friends or a lover and the beloved.

If I knew someone was God, I would say "Oh my God" and wouldn't get too close. In the beginning the knowledge separates us, but as it separates us it also fuels the devotion. As that devotion matures, it becomes so powerful that it causes the infinite to come so close to the finite soul that His Godhood is suppressed and the Krishna conception of God comes. This is Krishna playing the flute, cowherding, peacock feather crown and so on. It is a high conception of God. The ordinary appearance speaks of the highest feature of divinity. If you want to play all day, you have to have power. In the 7th, 9th and 11th chapter, Krishna will speak about how He is in everything in this world. In the 11th He actually shows that universal form (visvarupa) to Arjuna to show everything is inside of Him. This is all the opulence of God. But if you follow that, what happens? It brings out the



devotion of Arjuna and reveals the supreme reality of the two handed flute playing Krishna.

Bhagavan enters our world of experience for no other purpose than to play. Divinity manifests for different purposes in different ways, to show different sides of Himself. Krishna means God in love. He enters the world performing lila, and this speaking of the Bhagavad-Gita is an example of it. This 45 minute conversation He had with His friend Arjuna on the middle of the battlefield is a very profound, and extraordinary play. The Bhagavan feature of the Absolute is the most important feature in this sense, that if we want to engage in a loving relationship with God, this feature facilitates that the most. By knowing this feature, Krishna is saying in this verse, you can know me completely.

What is that knowing? Knowing is a feature inherent in love. Complete knowing. When one loves, one knows what to do. To know Him means to love Him, and when one knows or loves God, one knows everything they need to know.

Krishna characterises this knowing further in this verse as freeing one from doubt (*asamśayaṁ*). Love is really the end of knowing, a kind of knowing that is automatic. The heart's knowing. Doubt amounts to critical thinking. Questioning, doubting, this is the function of the intellect. Otherwise doubt in general is a function of the mind, which when overridden, allows us to move freely. If we override the repression of a mind driven life, a life driven by the dictates of the mind (as we heard in earlier chapters), then we can move freely.

Above the mind is the intellect. Intellect driven movement suggests surety, yet when we follow its lead, it amounts to proceeding with caution. It is not the movement of the heart. Here Krishna speaks of the homeland of the heart.

An intellect driven life is better than a mind driven life. The mind is wedded to the senses, if it feels good then do it. The intellect will say, hmmm, is that

good for you? The heart lets one move freely without doubt, knowing what to do.

So Krishna uses the words *asakta-manah*, which means an extremely attached mental disposition. Utilising this attachment, a person takes complete shelter of the Supreme Lord understanding that Krishna is the ultimate controller, ultimate protector and ultimate refuge of all living entities. Understanding this reality fully leads one to be free from doubt without any reservation. There is no doubt about whether one should serve Krishna, but the questions that come are how one can serve Him best in any given circumstance.

Krishna wants to call us to move to the happy land beyond the mind and the intellect, free of all doubt. And how does the soul reach this plane? One begins by hearing. *Tat śṛṇu*, try to hear, Krishna says. This is the beginning, just hear this knowledge. Krishna in this verse now wants to get Arjuna's attention as He is going to take the discussion to a higher level. Verses 1-3 glorify the knowledge contained in this chapter.

Krishna says, listen attentively, pay close attention to My words imparting knowledge to you, by which you will understand me fully. With mind fixed on me, hear what I am going to say.

This verse is an introductory verse invoked for getting Arjuna's attention and securing the attention of the audience. It is like me saying, "this point is very important so you should pay attention, this moment is very important." Krishna glorifies this knowledge so that Arjuna might pay attention as we are going to another level now and things are getting complicated. Sometimes when we share Krishna consciousness in the Western world, it is relatively easy to take people from the basic material conception to the basic idea of spiritual life. What is the illusory nature of the world, names and forms, how we create duality in the mind by the medium of the senses, creating likes and dislikes, happys and sads, goods and bads. People can follow along and it makes sense.

Then suddenly we have to put a spin on the whole thing and take it to Krishna, otherwise we feel unsatisfied as we want to share with them what bhakti and Gaudiya Vaishnavism is really all about. We see people may think it is interesting or charming, but they may wonder is that exactly what he is talking about, or have their own interpretation of what is meant. It is not bad, they will get some benefit from that, so we shouldn't be afraid to talk about Krishna. Prabhupada gave the Krishna Book before he gave the Gita.

Arjuna has to pay attention as the conversation is going to another level, to Bhagavan.

Krishna also says with mind attached to me. This is referring to asakti, the stage after ruci. It is the last stage of sadhana bhakti, or the practice of bhakti. When we are successful in this, then we enter into the fruit or goal of our practice, bhava bhakti.

Devotional yoga has three developmental stages: devotion in practice (sadhana-bhakti), devotion in ecstasy (bhava-bhakti), and devotion in love (prema-bhakti). Krishna is speaking of devotion in practice, but specifically the final stage, asakti or spiritual attachment.

The trick is to have the mind attached to Krishna and so many things have to be cleared for that. We have to become humble, and our practice will become steady or nishtha as our humility deepens. Then no taste for anything else and only taste for Krishna will come. Then in asakti, or full attachment to Krishna, there is no doubt at all. At this stage, due to intense attachment, one's spiritual identity is glimpsed as one enters devotion in ecstasy, taking refuge in Krishna alone.

If in yoga practice, you take shelter of Me, with mind attached to Me, you will come to know me completely, without any doubt. So hear about these things from Me Krishna is saying. Acquire knowledge by the descending process or descending path of knowledge. We do this all the time actually, accept information that we cannot always directly perceive by our senses, but have trust in the person giving it. Accepting something higher opens up

new opportunities to experience truth directly. We may speculate about reality and the nature of existence, but better to hear from the Absolute Himself.

Hearing from Krishna or about Him develops the full faith described in verse 6.47. It is essential to fix one's full consciousness upon Him and understand universal realities. Krishna tells Arjuna, "just hear" because knowledge of Him is beyond the three modes of nature and is inaccessible through ordinary means. Srila Prabhupada quotes lovely verses from the Bhagavatam (1.2.17-21) that explain this point that bhakti begins when we hear about Krishna.

**"To hear about Krishna from Vedic literatures, or to hear from Him directly through the Bhagavad-gita, is itself righteous activity. And for one who hears about Krishna, Lord Krishna, who is dwelling in everyone's heart, acts as a best-wishing friend and purifies the devotee who constantly engages in hearing of Him. In this way, a devotee naturally develops his dormant transcendental knowledge. As he hears more about Krishna from the Bhagavatam and from the devotees, he becomes fixed in the devotional service of the Lord. By development of devotional service one becomes freed from the modes of passion and ignorance, and thus material lusts and avarice are diminished. When these impurities are wiped away, the candidate remains steady in his position of pure goodness, becomes enlivened by devotional service and understands the science of God perfectly. Thus bhakti-yoga severs the hard knot of material affection and enables one to come at once to the stage of asamsayam-samagram, understanding of the Supreme Absolute Truth Personality of Godhead." (Bhag. 1.2.17-21)**

**Therefore only by hearing from Krishna or from His devotee in Krishna consciousness can one understand the science of Krishna."**

The more we hear, more realisation will come by which the heart will be satisfied and doubt removed. There is nice verse in the Srimad Bhagavatam (11.2.42) that describes this:

**"Devotion, direct experience of the Supreme Lord, and detachment from other things—these three occur simultaneously for one who has taken shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in the same way that pleasure, nourishment and relief from hunger come simultaneously and increasingly, with each bite, for a person engaged in eating."**

When we eat just a handful of food, we may not attain full satisfaction or nourishment as we do when we have a full meal. This tends to be the case in earlier stages of bhakti when we are still cleaning the mirror of the heart through our practice and hearing. We may have some realisation in the initial stages of course. But by taking a lot of food, one is satisfied and nourished, and so Krishna says that when you have attained the stage of deep attachment to me (mayy asakta mana), then you will know me without doubt. You will realise Me in reality. Of course, we will get signals along the way before that, otherwise we wouldn't be hearing the Gita together as we are.

Next time we will hear Krishna tell Arjuna what kind of knowledge He will speak about in these middle six chapters, as well as the rarity of this knowledge in verses 7.2-7.3.