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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

पञ्चदशोऽध्यायः - पुरुषोत्तम योगः

pañca daśo'dhyāyaḥ - puruṣottama yogaḥ

Chapter 15

Volume 3

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधः शाखं अश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययं ।

ūrdhvamūlamadhaḥ śākhaṁ aśvatthaṁ prāhuravyayaṁ ।

छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥ 15-1

chandānsi yasya parṇāni yastaṁ veda sa vedavit ॥

अधश्चोर्ध्वम् प्रसृतास्तस्य शाखाः गुणप्रवृद्धा विषय प्रवालाः ।

adhaścordhvam prasṛtāstasya śākhāḥ guṇa pravṛddha viṣaya pravālāḥ ।

अधश्च मूलान्यनुसंततानि कर्मानुबन्धीनि मनुष्य लोके ॥ 15-2

adhaśca mūlānyanusantatāni karmānubandhīni manuṣya loke ॥

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते नान्तो न चादिर्न च संप्रतिष्ठा ।

na rūpamasyeha tathopalabhyate nānto na cādirna ca sampratiṣṭhā ।

अश्वत्थ मेनं सुविरूढ मूलं असङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढैर्न चित्वा ॥ 15-3

aśvattha menaṁ suvirūḍha mūlaṁ asaṅgaśastrena dṛḍhain chitvā ॥

ततः पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।

tataḥ padaṁ tatparimārgitavyaṁ yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ ।

तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ॥ 15-4

tameva cādyam puruṣam prapadye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇi ॥

In the first two verses, Sri Krishna calls attention to the well-known संसार वृक्ष कल्पना *saṁsāra vṛkṣa kalpanā* - the imagery of an अश्वत्थ *aśvattha* tree, compared to the state of existence of this मनुष्य लोक *manuṣya loka* - this world of human beings in this creation.

Following this imagery, one sees this संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa* - the अश्वत्थ *aśvattha* tree in the imagery:

- as a perennial flow of existence , seemingly indestructible



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

- it has its primary root above, which is imperceptible
- it has its branches below, which are available for perception
- the Vedas are its leaves, giving it continued protection and sustenance
- it has innumerable branches, some of them growing downwards and some of them growing upwards, all of them in different locations in the tree, in different forms and in different directions
- all these branches are nourished by their own natural saps
- so nourished, from the nodular buds in these branches, new branches and leaves continuously sprout forth, and come into existence
- aside from its imperceptible primary root above, it also has secondary roots, hanging down from its branches, growing downward. These secondary roots entrench themselves into the earth naturally, and further strengthen the entire tree, thus contributing to its continued and ever-changing existence.

Such is the nature of this entire संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa*, the imagery अश्वत्थ *aśvattha* tree. So is the nature of this संसार *saṁsāra* - this ever changing world of human beings in this creation. This संसार *saṁsāra*, as it is, is a manifestation of माया - the inherent infinite power of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* - the सत् चित् आनन्द स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् *sat cit ānanda svarūpa brahman*. Since माया *māyā* owes its very existence to ब्रह्मन् *brahman* the root cause, the primary cause for this creation is ब्रह्मन् *brahman* which is imperceptible, and beyond one's comprehension.

The products of माया *māyā* are all objects seen in this creation, and they are available for perception. The Vedas, which provide the knowledge of means and ends, protect and sustain this creation. In this creation, different beings are born with different उपाधिस *upādhis*, different शरीरस *śarīras* - different body vehicles, some in the celestial kingdom, and some in this human kingdom, including animals, plants, etc. All उपाधिस *upādhis*, all शरीरस *śarīras* are nourished by their own गुणस *guṇas*, the सत्त्व रजस् तमस् गुणस *satva rajas tamas guṇas*.

There is no doer in any being in this creation, other than one's own गुणस *guṇas*. The sense objects and sense experiences of all beings in this creation give rise to a variety of desires and actions, which in turn continuously give rise to the birth of new beings, with new उपाधिस *upādhis*, with new गुणस *guṇas*, all of which keep this creation going perpetually. Aside from ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, which is the primary cause for this creation, the beings in this creation themselves generate innumerable secondary causes for themselves, giving rise to a never-ending succession of desires and actions.



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4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

These secondary causes are the different वासनाs *vāsanās* - the lingering impressions left behind by one's past experiences in the form of one's likes and dislikes, born of one's own कर्मफलs *karma phalas*. These वासनाs *vāsanās*, as secondary causes, give rise to various पुण्य कर्मs *puṇya karmas* and पाप कर्मs *pāpa karmas*, all of which are binding in nature. They bind the people to their own कर्मs *karmas* strongly. Such वासनाs *vāsanās* extend to all aspects of human life. Being so, they continuously create new कर्मs *karmas* and new bondages. Thus this never-ending cycle of वासनाs *vāsanās*, कर्मs *karmas*, bondages, keeps this ever-changing संसार *saṁsāra* going perpetually. Such is the nature of this संसार *saṁsāra* - the world of human beings in this creation. That is how the अश्वत्थ वृक्ष कल्पना *aśvattha vṛkṣa kalpanā* - the अश्वत्थ *aśvattha* tree imagery unfolds the nature of this संसार *saṁsāra* in this creation.

If that is indeed the nature of this संसार *saṁsāra*, it would appear as if this संसार *saṁsāra* is so strongly rooted in existence that those who are already within this संसार *saṁsāra* are locked into it for ever. If so, how can any human being uplift oneself from the hold of this संसार *saṁsāra* and gain मोक्ष *mokṣa* - Absolute Freedom and happiness? Such a question naturally arises in the mind of any interested person, for which भगवान् *bhagavān* answers by saying:

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते नान्तो न चादिर्न च संप्रतिष्ठा ।

na rūpamasyeha tathopalabhyate nānto na cādirna ca sampratiṣṭhā ।

अश्वत्थ मेनं सुविरूढ मूलं असङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढैर्न छित्वा ॥ 15-3

aśvattha menam suvirūḍha mūlaṁ asaṅga śastrena dṛḍhain chatvā ॥

ततः पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।

tataḥ padam tatparimārgitavyam yasmangatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ ।

तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ॥ 15-4

tameva cādyam puruṣam prapadye yataḥ pravṛtṭiḥ prasṛtā purāṇi ॥

भगवान् *bhagavān* says:

Do not be carried away by this elaborate description of this संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa*, and through it the संसार *saṁsāra* - this world of human beings. This description is only



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4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

with reference to what you see. All that you see in this मनुष्य लोक *manuṣya loka* - world of human beings, is मिथ्या *mithyā* - products of माया *māyā*. All that you see in this world are only transient appearances. In reality

न रूपमस्येह तयोपलभ्यते *na rūpamasyeha tathopalabhyate* - इह अस्य रूपं तथा न उपलभ्यते *iha asya rūpaṁ tathā na upalabhyate* - The form of this संसार *saṁsāra* - this world of human beings as described here, is not available, is not obtainable as a perceptible entity, because it is like mirage water. You may describe it in many ways in terms of time, space, color, beauty, magnitude, etc., but when you go near, to touch it, it is not available, it has disappeared. So is the nature of this संसार *saṁsāra*.

Thus, this संसार *saṁsāra* - this world of human beings, is दृष्ट नष्ट स्वभावः *dr̥ṣṭa naṣṭa svabhāvaḥ* - even as you are seeing it, it is disappearing. What you see at one moment is not there the next moment. What you see is only a succession of appearances and disappearances. This succession is so swift that it is impossible to define where one impression ends and the next one begins.

नान्तो न चादिर्न च संप्रतिष्ठा *nānto na cādirna ca saṁpratiṣṭhā* - न अन्तः न च आदिः न च संप्रतिष्ठा *na antaḥ na ca saṁpratiṣṭhā* - With reference to any appearance in this creation, it has no end (न अन्तः *na antaḥ*), no beginning (न च आदिः *na caḥ ādiḥ*) and no stability whatsoever (न च संप्रतिष्ठा *na ca saṁpratiṣṭhā*). It is an appearance ever in transit, with no tangible form whatsoever. About that kind of appearance, we may recall what भगवान् *bhagavān* said earlier in Chapter 2.

ना सतो विध्यते भावो, ना भावो विध्यते सतः *nā sato vidhyate bhāvo, nā bhāvo vidhyate sataḥ* (2-16)

असतः भावः न विध्यते *asataḥ bhāvaḥ na vidhyate* - For non-existence, there is no real existence, no independent existence at any time. What was non-existent in the past, and will be non-existent in the future, is really non-existent in the present also, even though it has an appearance of existence. Consequently, a transient existence has no independent existence at any time, and that is the nature of संसार *saṁsār* - the world we live in. On the other hand,

सतः अभावः न विध्यते *sataḥ abhāvaḥ na vidhyate* - for real existence, there is never non-existence. It is eternal, and never subject to change. That is indeed the nature



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, pointed out earlier as ऊर्ध्वमूलम् *ūrdhvamūlam*, so says Sri Krishna.

Even though this संसार *saṁsār* has no real existence from the point of view of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, it is very much in existence for all ordinary human beings like ourselves, because we are already in it, as part of it, and affected by it every day of our life. When that is the case, what can one do to uplift oneself from the hold of this संसार *saṁsāra* – this world of transient existence?

The answer is: First, one must clearly understand and recognize that the nature of this संसार *saṁsār* is दृष्ट नष्ट स्वभावः *dṛṣṭa naṣṭa svabhāvaḥ*. That means that one must clearly understand and recognize that this संसार *saṁsār* has absolutely no existence independent of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, and what one sees in this entire संसार *saṁsāra* is only a succession of appearances and disappearances superimposed on ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, by one's own ignorance on the nature of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*.

One must also realize and recognize that one's every day experiences of सुख-दुःख *sukha-duḥkha* – happiness and unhappiness etc., in this world is entirely due to one's association and identification with the transient appearances of this संसार *saṁsāra*. Therefore, to uplift oneself from the hold of संसार *saṁsāra*, one must totally dissociate oneself from one's association and identification with this संसार *saṁsāra*, as भगवान् *bhagavān* said earlier in Chapter 6.

तं विध्यात् दुःखसंयोग वियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् (6-23)
taṁ vidhyāt duḥkha saṁyogaṁ viyogaṁ yoga saṁjñitam

Dissociation from association with संसार *saṁsār* is ध्यानयोग *dhyāna yoga* – identification with one's स्वरूप *svarūp*. The आत्मा *ātmā*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar* already in oneself. Such dissociation is possible only through विवेक बुद्धि *viveka buddhi*, leading to आत्मज्ञानं *ātmajñānam* – Self-knowledge. Therefore, भगवान् *bhagavān* says

अश्वत्थ मेनं सुविरूढ मूलं असङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन चित्वा ॥
aśvattha menaṁ suvirūḍha mūlaṁ asaṅga śastrena dṛḍhaina chitvā ॥
ततः पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।
tataḥ padaṁ tatparimārgitavyaṁ yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ ।



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

एनं सुविरूढ मूलं अश्वत्थं छित्वा *enam suvirūḍha mūlaṁ aśvattham chitvā* - After cutting this अश्वत्थ *aśvattha* tree whose roots are deeply entrenched. How do you cut this tree?

दृढेन असङ्ग शस्त्रेण *dr̥dhena asaṅga śāstreṇa* - by the weapon of steadfast, unwavering detachment, dispassion

ततः *tatah* - then

तत् पदं *tat padaṁ* - That End, the nature of That Destination, which destination?

यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः *yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ* - reaching which, those who have already gone into it, do not return again, the nature of That Destination

परिमार्गितव्यं *parimārgitavyaṁ* - must be properly enquired into, again and again, says भगवान् *bhagavān*.

Let us try to understand what is said here. First, cut this well-rooted, deeply entrenched अश्वत्थ *aśvattha* tree like संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa*, by the weapon of undistracted, unwavering detachment, and then, enquire properly into the nature of That Destination, reaching which, those who have already gone into it, do not return again to संसार *saṁsāra*. That is the means available for every human being to uplift oneself from the hold of the bondages with this संसार *saṁsāra* - this world of transient experiences.

एनं अश्वत्थं छित्वा *enam aśvattham chitvā* - Cutting this अश्वत्थ *aśvattha* tree like संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa*, which means dissociating yourself from all associations, from all bondages of संसार विषय *saṁsāra viṣayas* - worldly experiences such as कर्म *karma*, कर्मफल *karma phala*, सुख *sukha*, दुःख *duḥkha* possessions, relationships of all kinds, etc., dissociating yourself from all of them. Such dissociations are not easy, because

सुविरूढ मूलं *suvirūḍha mūlaṁ* - these worldly bondages are very strongly rooted, and deeply and widely held, not only by one's initial स्वभाव गुण *svabhava guṇas*, but also by the later-born वासना *vāsanā* - likes and dislikes of all kinds, being generated by oneself every day during one's very life. Therefore, in order to cut these worldly bondages along with their माया *māyā* and वासना *vāsanās* roots, one needs an appropriate weapon and that weapon is

दृढ असङ्ग शस्त्रम् *dr̥dha asaṅga śāstram* - the weapon of strong detachment, the weapon of दृढ विवेक वैराग्यं *dr̥dha viveka vairāgyaṁ*, the weapon of steadfast,



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4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

undistracted and undisturbed dispassion towards everything that is मिथ्या *mithyā*, everything that is only transient in nature.

This dispassion is not born of disappointments and its frustrations in life. It is born of knowledge, understanding and total commitment, arising from repeated appreciation of the inherent incapability of worldly matters to give you any lasting peace and happiness in life. Therefore, what is needed is an enlightened commitment to the pursuit of नित्यवस्तु *nitya vastu* - that which is सत्यं *satyaṁ*, that which is ऊर्ध्वमूलम् *ūrdhvamūlam* - the ultimate Truth behind all this kaleidoscopic scenery of this world, ever in transit, which we see and experience every day.

This commitment to the pursuit of सत्यं *satyaṁ* has to be दृढं *dr̥ḍham* - strong enough and sharp enough to cut this strong and deep-rooted संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa* - all worldly bondages. How do you make this commitment strong and sharp enough for the job? Only by अभ्यास योग *abhyāsa yoga* - repeated practice based on निश्चय ज्ञानं *niścaya jñānam* - definite and convinced knowledge about what you really need to do to achieve the goal, The Destination to be reached. What exactly should one do then? भगवान् *bhagavāna* says:

ततः पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।

tataḥ padaṁ tatparimārgitavyaṁ yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ ।

ततः *tataḥ* - Then, after cutting this संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa* totally, after completely dissociating oneself from all worldly bondages, then

तत् पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं *tat padaṁ tat parimārgitavyaṁ*

तत् पदं *tat padaṁ* - That Goal, the nature of That Destination, That सत्यं *satyaṁ* - That Ultimate Truth, That वैष्णवं परमं पदं *vaiṣṇavaṁ paramaṁ padaṁ* - that abode of the all-pervading परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, That ऊर्ध्वमूलम् *ūrdhvamūlam*, That ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, परिमार्गितव्यं *parimārgitavyaṁ* should be enquired into properly, seeking clear recognition of That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* through incisive enquiry. The Destination about which one needs to enquire is तत् पदं *tat padaṁ* - That ब्रह्मन् *brahman*

यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः *yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ* - reaching which those who have already gone into it never return back to this संसार *saṁsāra*, which means, there is no rebirth for them. As भगवान् *bhagavān* said earlier:



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

आब्रह्म भुवनात् लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।
ābrahma bhuvanāt lokāḥ punarāvartino'rjuna ।
मां उपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विध्यते ॥ 8-16
mām upetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidhyate ॥

Reaching any world, including ब्रह्म लोक *brahma loka*, one is subject to return to this संसार *saṁsāra*. Only by reaching that ऊर्ध्वमूलम् *ūrdhvamūlam* Itself, That परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, only by gaining identity with ब्रह्मन् *brahman* Itself, there is no rebirth. It is तत् पदं *tat padam* - That Destination about which one should enquire into properly. "Properly" means what? As भगवान् *bhagavān* said earlier

तत् विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया । 4-34
tat viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā ।

The mode of enquiry is three-fold:

प्रणिपातनं *praṇipātanam*, परिप्रश्नं *paripraśnam* and सेवनं *sevanam*
प्रणिपातनं *praṇipātanam* is diligent study of Upanishad teachings with humility, dedication and unqualified श्रद्धा *śraddha*
परिप्रश्नं *paripraśnam* is reflecting on the content of the Upanishad teachings through repeated questioning of one's own understanding, and
सेवनं *sevanam* is doing every कर्म *karma* as ईश्वर कैङ्कर्य कर्म *īśvara kainkarya karma* - service to परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, with कर्म योग बुद्धि *karma yoga buddhi* and अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति *ananya īśvar bhakti*.

That is how one must commit oneself to the enquiry on तत् पदं *tat padam*, ब्रह्म पदं *brahma padam*, ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahma jñānam*, ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānam*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* Self-knowledge. Now, through such enquiry what happens?

तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी *tameva cādyam puruṣam pr apadhye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī* - through such enquiry one comes to recognize आद्यं पुरुषं *ādyam puruṣam*, That पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa puruṣa*, that सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyam jñānam anantam brahma* which is आद्यं *ādyam*, which has been there even before creation



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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

यतः *yataḥ* - from which पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa puruṣa*
पुराणी प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृताः *purāṇī pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā* - this ancient, beginningless संसार
वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa*, this entire ever changing creation is born as a perennial flow of
ever-changing existence.

That means, That पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa puruṣa* is ऊर्ध्वमूलम् *ūrdhvamūlam*, The पर
ब्रह्मन् *para brahman*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, which is both the efficient cause as
well as the material cause for this entire creation. Consequently, that पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa*
puruṣa is indeed what is indicated by the word तत् पदं *tat padam* - The Ultimate
Goal, The Ultimate Destination to be reached. This creation itself being an effect, and
since the cause is already in the effect, this enquiry unfolds That पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa*
puruṣa, तत् पदं *tat padam* - The Ultimate Destination to be reached, is already within
every being in this creation. It is already within oneself. In the wake of this knowledge,
the enquirer on तत् पदं *tat padam* recognizes that पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa puruṣa* as सोऽहं
अस्मि *so'haṁ asmi*

That पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa puruṣa* I am
That पर ब्रह्मन् *para brahman* I am
That ऊर्ध्वमूलम् *ūrdhvamūlam* I am

In the wake of such recognition, the enquirer of तत् पदं *tat padam* declares with joy
and ecstasy
तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी *tameva cādyam puruṣam*
prapadye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī - I surrender all that is transient in Me to
that ever existent पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa puruṣa*, The पर ब्रह्मन् *brahman* from whom all this
entire ever changing creation has come into existence.

When one surrenders completely all that is transient in oneself to that पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa*
puruṣa, which means when one completely dissociates oneself from all the bondages
with this संसार *saṁsāra*, and one finds oneself in identity with परमेश्वर *parameśvar*
Itself, already in oneself. Thus one recognizes The Self in oneself, the प्रत्यग आत्मा
pratyaga ātmā - the innermost Self in oneself, as पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa puruṣa*, as तत्
पदं *tat padam*, as ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself.



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Thus, as a result of तत् पदं परिमार्गितव्यं *tat padam parimārgitavyam* - incisive enquiry on तत् पदं *tat padam*, one recognizes that The Ultimate Destination to be reached, so that one is never born again in this संसार *saṁsāra*, That तत् पदं *tat padam*, That वैष्णवं परमं पदं *vaiṣṇavam paramam padam* is The Self Itself in oneself, free from all associations, with all bondages in this संसार *saṁsāra* - in this ever changing world of transient experiences.

That is the message of the संसार वृक्ष कल्पना *saṁsāra vṛkṣa kalpanā* on the nature of जीव *jīva*, जगत् *jagat* and परमेश्वर *parameśvar* unfolded in the first four verses of this chapter.

We will continue next time.