



THE CONCEPT OF SOUL IN SHRIMADBHAGAWAD GITA AND IN THE VIEW OF BRAHMA KUMARIS

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ABSTRACT

The main object of Gyan is to avert pain and sorrow and confer peace and happiness, but, before knowing anything else man should possess true knowledge about his own self. Am I the body or something apart from it, a conscient entity? Who Am I, where have I come from, where have I to go; what is this big game called 'world', who is the Creator of it and how am I related to Him and to fellow human beings? Without knowing the answer to these questions, man in his ignorance, does wrong actions as a result of which he suffers pain and peacelessness.

KEYWORDS

Soul, Gita, Brahma Kumaris

INTRODUCTION:

Observe that in the state of body-consciousness one senses the distinction between the male and the female this generates the sexual desire, due to awareness of the body one senses the difference between one's kith and kin and strangers and this leads to attachment; attachment leads to greed which, if not satisfied, causes anger. With acquisition of wealth one becomes aware of personal power and prestige and the respect and admiration, which he is able to draw from others, all of which give rise to arrogance. Thus, all the above mentioned vices and similar others, are born of one's body consciousness and lead to pain and suffering. To get peace and happiness one must be free from these vices. Freedom from vices can be achieved only when man not only recognizes and determines himself to be the soul as distinguished from the body, but also remains constantly soul-consciousness.

One of the main aims of God of the Gita is to stabilize man in his soul-conscious state, which indeed is his 'true image', as distinguished from the 'false image' engendered by awareness of one's body. It is the false identification of body-consciousness, which gives rise to one's sense of male and female, youth or aged, black and white, etc. Remaining conscious of the soul leads to the rise of the soul, while awareness of the wrong one creates doubt and fear.(1). Hence, while pointing out the difference between the two, God(Bhagwan) has repeatedly said: "Oh child, renounce body-consciousness and be stabilized in soul-consciousness, for, the soul-conscious person alone is the Yogi.(2).

The soul is eternal, indestructible and indivisible

With this aim in view, Bhagwan has repeatedly stressed: "Oh child, the soul and the matter are two eternal entities.(3). The body is made of matter(4) and is called the 'field'(Kshetra),(5) while the soul, the spiritual being, is the operator (Kshetragna) in it. Body is the town in which soul-'Purusha'-dwells.(6). This town has nine gates.(7). The soul can be discerned only through the 'eye of knowledge'(8) not by the physical eye, for the latter can see only material objects. The soul, on the other hand, being an immaterial, divine, invisible, unmanifest, subtlest and conscient entity, is the seer. The soul is neither born nor does it die. While the body inhabited by the soul is mortal, the soul is eternal, immortal and indestructible.(9). It can not be cut by weapons, nor dissolved by water, nor dried by air.(10). In other words, it is an entity free from the effect of operation of the natural elements.

The soul in its original form is essentially pure

The soul which is originally perfect in its purity, loses it gradually through body-consciousness; when it goes through several births and thus becomes vicious. Hence, Bhagwan has said that through contact with matter the soul becomes vicious.(11). This means that, in course of time, the soul loses the sense of its distinctness from the body and identifies itself with it. It becomes body-conscious and thinks in terms of father, son, mother, husband, wife etc., whereby the 'pure love'-its true, original attribute becomes perverted into 'sex', attachment, greed etc., in consequences whereof it suffers pain and sorrow.

The soul is a particle or point of light or a luminous star-like entity

The soul is unmanifest, invisible,(12) or a subtle point of light;* it is not 'all pervading'. It seems as if it pervades the whole body, but it is not so.

Just as the sun, from a fixed position in the sky illumines the whole world, so does the soul, centrally situated in the forehead between the eye-brows, animates the whole body.(13). That is why, God has said that the Yogi's consciousness is centred at that spot at the time of departing.(14). Thus, people who hold that there is a single soul which pervades the human body, in fact the whole world, are mistaken in their belief, for, souls are many each distinct and separate entity, eternal(15)(Nitya) and indestructible. Had they been like the water bubble that appears momentarily on the surface of the ocean to merge into it, they would not have been called 'unborn' and immortal, for these terms denote only such entities which neither emerge from nor merge into any other entity or, in other words, never lose their separate, distinct identity. The word 'absorb' or 'merge' used in the Gita in relation with the soul simply, be it noted here, refers to its 'unmanifest' or bodiless state.(16). Bhagwan has said in clear words: "Oh child, there was never a time when you, these kings and I were not there, nor will there ever be a time when these will cease to exist.(17). Evidently, this has been said to emphasize the distinct and separate identity of the souls. Further, it has also been said in the Gita that these souls come from the incorporeal soul-world(18) which has been variously named as Brahm Nirvan,(19) Brahm Bhuvan,(20) Brahm Lok,(21) Param Dham,(22) or Brahm Yoni.(23). Bhagwan has also said that while departing, the soul leaves the body through the eye, ear, etc.(24). There is thus no question of the soul pervading the whole body or the whole world. If it be said that the soul contracts while leaving the body, that will be contradiction in terms, for a pervasive entity cannot contract and thus leave a vacuum. In fact soul is a self-luminous dot or point of light and there is no empty space within the soul which is one whole, i.e. an irreducible, unbreakable and indivisible entity. It is from this view-point that the soul has been termed unchangeable.(25). It is not subject to the change of states that the body goes through from childhood, youth old age, death to destruction and merging into the natural elements. Again, its coming from the incorporeal world, going back to it, and its leaving the body with its ingrained tendencies as also its becoming manifest through the power of Yoga,(26) at the time of leaving body carrying its Sanskaras with it(27) all these great truths told by God go to prove that the soul is subtle like an atom, that is like a self-luminous dot which can neither contract nor expand.

The soul is separate from the Supreme Soul

'Shrimad Bhagwad Gita' the very name makes it clear that Bhagwan is distinct and separate from the souls. Bhagwan is the Supreme entity who imparts Gyan, whereas the souls are the entities from whose benefit the Gyan is given. Bhagwan establishes True Religion,(28) whereas the souls are prone to follow or violate it. Bhagwan teaches Yoga,(29) whereas the souls practice it or turn away from it or alternatively, do Bhakti'.

You will thus see that, there are many great versions of Bhagwan, which make it clear that the soul is a distinct and separate entity from the Supreme Soul. For example, it has been said in the Gita: "Oh child! There are two kinds of entities in the world, Kshar and Akshar. Among the Akshar persons (human souls), God is the Supreme Person.(30). Again and again, it has been said that Bhagwan is the Supreme Person (Param Purush)(31) among the human beings,(32) making it abundantly clear that there are many other souls among whom God has

been named the 'highest', 'most pre-eminent', the 'Supreme Purusha', i.e. person. All these terms have been used for the sake of comparison so as to distinguish the Supreme Soul from other human souls. To make it more explicit, Bhagwan has said that there is none higher i.e. more powerful than Me.(33) While human souls are subject to three fundamental gunas(qualities) of Sato, Rajo and Tamo.(34). I am above and beyond the operation of even these. Hence the soul that surrenders unto Me and remembers Me,(35)alone can easily overcome these. The Supreme Soul most ardently and fervently rises above and also directs: "Oh child, by seeking My refuge only, the human soul subjugates Maya, its lower nature.(36). Take My refuge and love Me alone"(37). It is thus crystal clear from all these godly versions that souls are many and Ghagwan is the Supreme and distinct from them.

At every step we find shlokas which leave one with not the least doubt that the soul and the Supreme Soul are two distinct entities, related to each other like son to father. For example, Bhagwan has said:-

- i. "What is action, non-action and bad action- I explain this. Human souls simply do not understand the secret law of action.(38).
- ii. The human soul acts goaded by ignorance.
- iii. The Supreme Soul is free from the taint of action,(39) that is to say, the human soul is clearly susceptible to it.(40).
- iv. The Supreme Soul is the Well-Wisher and the Benefactor of all and the Lord of the three worlds.(41).
- v. The Supreme Soul is the only real Refuge.(42).
- vi. The one who holds communion with Him, he alone experience the highest bliss.(43).
- vii. Those who remember God are the highest Yogis,(44) those who do not are the lowest among the human souls-demoniac and vice-ridden.(45)

Thus, the above stated godly versions, prove that He is the Ocean of Knowledge, the Universal Benefactor, the Supreme among all souls and the Lord of the three worlds, remains ever untouched; whereas the soul, due to ignorance of the law of action, is prone to vicious acts, susceptible to pain and pleasure and dependent for its benediction on the Supreme Soul. Does not this lead to the only conclusion that when, after descent, God teaches Yoga to the soul, it is uplifted, purified and divinized so as to be able to return to Paramdham, His eternal abode?(46).

Mind, Intellect and the Soul

Another point necessary to be known in the context of the soul is whether mind and intellect are distinct from the soul or they are simply the names of different capacities or faculties of the soul. Gita contains many versions to show that they represent the two inherent faculties of the soul itself. For example, it has been said at one place in the Gita that the soul has to be conquered through the soul, the same word 'soul' being used once for the 'mind' and again for the 'intellect'. Similarly, it has been said at another place that the soul has to be controlled and directed through the soul(47) which clearly means that the mind has to be subjugated through the intellect, the same word 'soul' being used once for the 'mind' and again for the intellect'. Similarly, it has been said at yet another place that the soul has to be controlled and directed through the soul(48) or, in other words, the mind has to be pacified through intellect or judgment. In reality, 'mind' is synonymous with the faculty of thinking, experiencing and desiring while the 'intellect' is another name for the faculty of knowing, believing, cognizing, remembering, judging, deciding and determining, etc. thus, we find that in the Gita also 'mind' and 'intellect' have been used in the same sense.(49). Now, desire, knowledge and experience are characteristics of the soul itself; it is the soul which desires for peace and happiness, as well as experiences these.(50). Similarly, just as Bhagwan, because of having full knowledge, has been called the Ocean of Knowledge, so also the soul can imbibe and acquire knowledge. That Gyan i.e. knowledge, understanding or cognition is what is called 'intellect'. Bhagwan has said in the Gita: "Oh child, fix thy mind on Me, hold thy intellect in communion with Me i.e. surrender thy intellect to Me.(51). Doubtless, Bhagwan does not speak about some physical entity known as the 'mind' or the 'intellect' which is to be fixed in or surrendered to Him, but of the soul's longing to keep in communion with or in constant remembrance of Him and to act upon only His supreme advice, without mixing with it one's own beliefs and convictions. This, indeed, is what is meant by stabilizing the mind in the Lord or surrendering one's intellect to Him.

It has been said in the Gita that beyond the physical organs is the mind and beyond the mind is the intellect and beyond intellect is the soul.(52).

Some people take it to mean that intellect and soul are two distinct and separate entities, apart from each other. In reality, however, it means that the physical senses are ruled by 'thought' which itself is controlled and directed by 'judgement' or 'Gyan' i.e. man's reason or intellect. When man fixes his mind through Gyan in remembrance of God, he experiences i.e. realizes the soul also. We know that before realization of the soul, one has to meditate i.e. soul-consciousness. It is this process which has been expressed by saying that beyond intellect is the soul or, in other words, the soul is more subtle than the intellect; meditation on or churning some point of Gyan leads to pin-pointed concentration on the soul i.e. soul-consciousness.

Gita also says that the mind is made of matter* and that mind intellect both are also the 'field' (Kshetra)(53) or the organs,(54) so to say. But this shloka carries a meaning, which is at variance with the other godly versions we have mentioned above. It appears, therefore, to be a subsequent interpolation. Alternatively, this may mean that the soul begins to think, decide and remember only after it comes from Brahmloka and enters the body-like 'field'; these two, being instruments of the soul's expression, might therefore, have named the organs of the soul. Obviously, they are, by no means, the physical organs in the sense the ear and nose are organs of the body. Being indistinct and inseparable from the soul or, rather, because they are the faculties of the soul itself, the word 'soul' has been used for them, as we have already indicated above. All the same, we wish to clarify this point further by an example.

'Gyan' has also been named the 'Third Eye' or the 'Divine Eye', although it is, by no means, a visible organ like the physical eye. If Gyan has been compared to the eye, it is because through this the soul sees and realizes the reality. Similarly, whenever mind is spoken of as a 'subtle organ' it should be considered as having been used synonymously, for, like the physical organs which are 'doors of knowledge' the mind also instrument for manifestation of the soul or in other words, it is also the means of study or knowledge. It would be a mistake, however, to regard it as something distinct from the soul. When the soul comes from Paramdham to this world, the mind, intellect and resolves (sanskars) which were merged in it, do emerge and it becomes aware first of its own existence before coming into contact with matter. This idea has been expressed in the words that matter first of all gave birth to the 'ego', i.e. the idea 'I am'. When one is aware of one's existence, then only does he realize the environment around him. It is this idea that has been given expression to in the words: 'from ego' emerged the intellect. And since it is after being equipped with intellect that he feels the desire or the urge to act, it was said that from the intellect came forth the mind. But this is just a way of saying. In reality, however, mind, intellect and ego represent the inherent faculties of the soul itself!

Anyway, now we know that the soul is distinct from the body and is an eternal, indestructible, conscient entity. We should practice establishing ourselves in soul-consciousness at all hours of the day, whether we are sitting, standing, eating, walking and talking, etc. knowing, as we do now, that the mind and intellect, far from being the creation of matter, are inherent powers of the conscient verity, the soul itself, we should purify our thoughts and divinize our intellect, because their purification is the purification of the soul itself. The person who purifies them is the one who is named 'Mahatma' and the person who corrupts them is called 'Papatma' because all acts good and bad desire and efforts and also right judgment and wrong judgments are related to and proceed from the soul itself.

CONCLUSION:

The soul is conscient being. Just as electricity when used through a bulb is called light when used to operate the machinery installed in a factory is called 'power', when employed in warming the eatables in the kitchen it is called 'heat', so also the 'mind', the 'intellect' and the 'ego' are the different names given to the soul in accordance with the functions it performs. Thus when it thinks it is called 'mind', when it judges it is called 'intellect' and when it asserts itself in the form 'I am', it is termed the 'ego'. We should, therefore, by establishing ourselves in God-consciousness, stabilize ourselves in soul-consciousness.

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