

Yoga Philosophy as part of Teacher training

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<http://www.yogirama.com/TTphilosophy.com>

Bhagavad Gita, Second Chapter, Sixteenth Shloka

The four Vedas embody the knowledge of the Vedic culture. Philosophical parts of the Vedas are known as Upanishads, of which there are many. Sage Vyasa in the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita renders a beautiful summary of that philosophy by way of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. The Gita has eighteen chapters. It is said that the essence of the Gita is in the second chapter and that the gist of this essence is expressed by the sixteenth shloka (verse). It states:

***nasato vidyate bhavah,
nabhavo vidyate satah
ubhayorapi drsto'ntah,
tvanayostattvadarsibhih***

***There is no existence of the unreal.
There is no non-existence of the real.
The truth of both these is indeed seen
By the seers of Reality.***

A deep understanding of this shloka is that nothing happens to the CONSCIOUSNESS because it is not limited by space-time measurement. Anything that can be objectified is not I-I. But habitually, the word 'I' is used to refer to this waking person experiencing this waking world. But I-I is not this waking person experiencing this waking world, any more than I am the dreaming person experiencing the dream world. I-I is the one Consciousness that is the basis for the apparent existence of all that is here. Knowledge of that fact frees a person from even the possibility of suffering. From the perspective of I-I, "I", you, him, her, it do not exist as separate from I-I.

When this deep understanding is lacking, a possibly useful exercise may be to learn the art of speaking without using or at least avoiding the words "I, me, you, we, us, he, she, they, one, etc." Do NOT feel pressured to do this. Apply this method of communication with willing partners only. Do not use it elsewhere in life unless it comes naturally and automatically. The intent here is to see that Atman (CONSCIOUSNESS) does not do anything nor does anything happen to Atman. It is also to see that the division between "I, you, etc.", is only valid within the illusion of creation that does not touch the Atman.

Caution: The traditional approach in therapy seems to be to repair the hurt to the ego, the individual self, so that it becomes sufficiently functional in the society. This is of course necessary for the hurt or traumatized ego. Ultimately, however, from the yogic perspective this feeds the problem because this ego is the root of the problem. Therefore, after having built up the ego, to complete the process it is necessary to understand the ego as the root cause of all psychological problems and thus put this ego into its rightful place, so that the **REAL SELF** surfaces. It is up to the individual to decide how far to go with this attempt to remove the false identity created by the unexamined ego.

Another aspect of traditional therapy is to teach the individual to accept responsibility as a

human being. As long as one functions in this world as a separate individual the correct understanding of ego is only superficial. In that situation it is not wise to use the partial understanding of the ego to escape from “worldly” responsibilities.

A primary driving force in a human being is the desire to love and to be loved. There are a few examples given below to help understand the way ego functions in this desire. Students are encouraged to come up with their own examples and responses to the examples given. This can then be discussed at a later date. However, most questions are based on an unclear idea of what “I” is and hence what **God** is. Do not view this as simply another philosophy BUT rather to see the TRUTH behind the words. Begin with the basic concept presented below and then see how deeply you wish to dive into it.

The basic concept is that in reality only Brahman (also called Atman, Consciousness – capital C, Self –capital S, I-I) is; not to be confused with *consciousness, self, “I.”* In unmanifest form this is referred to as Nirguna Brahman. This Nirguna Brahman includes an intrinsic latent quality called Maya. Maya is to Brahman as heat/light are to sun. When spontaneously active, this Maya makes Brahman appear as Ishvara (God). Ishvara manifest Himself into wide variety of what we call creation. All that is created is subject to illusion created by Maya; however, Ishvara is not subject to any illusion of Maya but indeed has complete control over Maya. Everything that is created is endowed with a level of intelligence; the more the intelligence the greater is the free will. This free will is at play when a human being DESIRES to increase what is pleasurable to the mind-body-sense complex (referred to as ego) and decrease what is not pleasurable. The capacity to desire is a blessing and hence not wrong. To fulfill a given desire action is needed. Ability to act is also a blessing. However, **ATTACHMENT TO A PARTICULAR RESULT ARISING OUT OF THIS ACTION IS THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM.**

Another way to understand the relation between Brahman-Ishvar-Individual is compare Brahmam to water, Ishvar to Ocean and self to wave. In that illustration see that nothing happens to water, nor does it do anything. Wave and the ocean are both really water.

Here is a short (4 page) essay by Swami Dayananda on Brahman, Ishwara, and Maya. Of course more could still be said. This came up when "maya dayananda" was googled!)

<http://www.discovervedanta.com/downloads/articles/brahman-and-maya.pdf>

<http://arshaavinash.in/> - This link has many related useful articles.

Example 1:

Not a good way to communicate: *You hurt me by what you said.*

Better to say: *I feel hurt by what you said.*

Still better: *I feel hurt when I hear you say these words.*

Better yet: *These words bring up hurt.*

Example 2:

From J. Krishnamurti. In discussing a subject, when a certain level of understanding is reached, to go a little deeper J.K. would not use the phrase “Now I think”. He would say “From there arises a question”

Example 3:

A superficial communication: I love you.

A little clearer: This situation brings up a feeling of love. One may not speak this way, but understands the situation in this manner.

From such clarity arises an understanding about the nature of love. It is not the possession of I or you. It is rather a universal energy into which the ego appears to fall. Love is reckless to the degree to which the ego is present. In the absence of the ego (I, you) there is an unspeakable recognition (awareness) of the immensity of universal love. That universal love is always present; it includes everyone and everything.

Example 4:

Inefficient communication: My knee hurts in Trikonasana.

This way of talking magnifies the challenge and turns it into a problem for the whole person.

Better statement: This knee has a difficulty in Trikonasana.

Some useful comments and questions by the students follow. These are ongoing. For this and latest revision of the article on philosophy as well as these comments please refer to www.yogirama.com/philosophy.html

Item 1:

“If I think of this method of communication I feel resistance, firstly, because it is completely unusual and strange for me to communicate in this way and secondly, because the reason for this method of communication is not completely clear to me.

From our last teacher trainings I have an idea of this approach. But I haven't really understood the complete theory behind it. And also the sixteenth shloka I haven't really understood.”

Response: When I say my knee hurts, am I clear that I am talking only about the knee and not about the state of I? Is the I any better or worse? Furthermore is this I being regarded as real instead of the I-I? (Refer to Item 5 below).

The understanding of the 16th sloka will grow by meditation, contemplation and prayer; this may require life long serious study with help of a qualified teacher.

Item 2:

“How often the need arises to defend or explain oneself in conversation with someone. Is it possible to completely do away with all defending and explaining?”

Response: Defending/explaining is necessary in life and is really not a problem; the problem is the associated attachment, pride, hurt, etc., that belong to the “I”. The more complete the understanding of “I” is the more completely it is possible do away with the ego's need to defend or explain. Find out what is stopping you from fully understanding what this I is. Then you can do all the defending and explaining WITHOUT THE ASSOCIATED ATTACHMENT.

Item 3:

“How often a statement is motivated by an image (often subtle) of “poor me.” This is a method that the ego uses to ensure its survival (and can be a subtle way of avoiding responsibility for one’s circumstances). Is it possible to completely do away with all statements which have their roots in an image of “poor me”?”

Response: Yes it is possible when one can see that it is an image and hence not real. What is not real does not need defense.

Item 4:

“This will become an interesting challenge. For me it is helpful to start with this change of language when I catch my inner dialogues, monologues, like “next I have to do...” and change it into “mind is thinking he has to” or “she is afraid” “her mind is afraid...” The statement “There is no existence of the unreal” conveys also that Ego does not really exist and therefore not using “I”, “you” etc. helps to get an understanding of this statement - that is how I understand this approach.”

Response: Understand that it is not just one more approach. It is the only approach. The dreamer calls the dream real while in the dream.

Item 5:

“I want to discuss how to state these without the use of “I”?”

- a) *I am not the mind.*
- b) *I am not the body.”*

Response: It would help to use Shri Ramana’s language. Use “I” for the ego and “I-I” for the Self. “I” is the mind-body-sense complex; “I-I” is the Self (Consciousness, Brahman, Atman).

Item 6:

“There will most probably be less, and slower talking in the workshop. Mind is structured by the logic of language. So it's worth trying to work with it. Why not use language as prop?”

Response: Language is a good prop that “I” needs and there is nothing wrong with that. The “I-I” does not have that need. So even as language is used do not forget the underlying reality of “I-I”.

We can go on with many more questions and examples. For now it suffices to see that in the practice of asana and pranayama what you can do is to be regarded as a blessing, not an achievement. Otherwise, pride will reinforce the ego and give it an importance that will interfere with Self Knowledge.

Stated differently, “I” may go on with the game of achieving something from the worldly point of view. The “I-I” must not be confused with this “I”. Then the “I-I” is seen as for ever free of need for desires.