Gita Class # Feb 29

1. Do all human beings have a common goal in life, above all? If so, what is it?

***Yes, all of us want unconditional happiness.

This reveals the presence of God and the cosmic order. Because we have a common purpose, it means it is not up to us. We do not create the over-arching purpose individually, because that would indicate dissonance and lack of order. It shows the creation is ‘tops down’ and not ‘bottoms up’ like an ocean and not like a house made up of bricks.

It is like a creator of a business, where the prevailing culture is woven in not drummed up. I experienced this when I joined HP, where the motto was profits, ethically.***
2. If there is such a common goal, the why is everyone/most unable to reach it?

***This is so because the very reason for us to be born is due to ignorance of the real source of happiness. We are all born with the error that happiness lies in things and situations that I have yet to gain, when in fact it is already gained, just not cognized.***
3. About Vedanta:
a) Is it part of Vedas? Or separate from it?

***It is part of Vedas. Vedas is made up of 3 segments: one emphasizing physical activities (कर्म), the second emphasizing mental activities/prayers (उपासना), and the third emphasizing knowledge of the whole (ज्ञानं)

Because there are many ways to act or pray, but only one way to know, therefore the first two segments are voluminous, but Vedantic passages are relatively short***

b) Is there something that is special/unique about Vedanta that distinguishes it from all other spiritual disciplines and schools of thought? If so, what is it?

***Each one of us is already unconditionally happy, the nature of fullness, infinity. We just don’t know it. This discovery can and must be made as living beings on this earth right now, not later.***
c) Is Bhagavad Gita the same as Vedanta?

***Yes, it is sometime called the 5th Veda***
d) Is Bhagavad Gita part of Vedas?

***No, it was composed on the basis of the Vedas, which are never created. The Vedas are perennial, indestructible, the very essence of cosmic knowledge/wisdom, so not ascribed to human beings. They are called Sruti, which means ‘as it is heard’.

Whereas Bhagavad Gita is created at specific time by human authorship, but it is just as highly regarded (can even be called the Bible of Hindus) as the Vedas, because it essentially reflects the essence of the Vedas very accurately and completely. It is part of smriti, which means ‘one that is remembered’***
4. If the essence of Vedanta can be summarized in one sentence, what would that be?

***Since each of us are basically unlimited, immortal, but due to self ignorance take ourselves to be limited, mortal, thus by removing this veil of ignorance we can recognize our innate freedom and happiness.***
5. Nature of search

a) How is it possible that sometime I already have something in my possession, and yet I try to find it? Give an example

***I can have my car keys in an inner pocket, which I can fail to feel, and so I keep looking for it elsewhere. Or I can have my glasses propped up on my head, and try to find it outside.***
b) Even more importantly, how is it that I can be wrong about what I am? Give an example

***I can fail to count myself as the missing person, and keep looking for the ‘10th person’ elsewhere. In this case, I am very much aware of who I am, but fail to recognize that I am indeed the person whose perceived absence is causing me sorrow.

In the same way, I am very aware of myself as a human being, characterized by my body, mind, age, gender etc., but I fail to cognize my intrinsic immortality.***
6. The tools to achieve:

a) All human beings are given two fundamental tools to achieve/gain: the power to do and the power to know

***More accurately*, *all beings are given the power to act (क्रिया शक्ति) and the power to know (ज्ञान शक्ति); human beings are given a third power, the power to desire (इच्छा शक्ति), which serves to propel the other two. But the first two are more fundamental.***
b) In our daily lives, we constantly employ the two tools to manipulate/juggle achievements and gains. Are any of these gains permanent? Do they give me immortality?

***The two powers can be utilized in one of two ways: either to gain what I do not have (अप्राप्तस्य प्राप्ति), or to ‘gain’ what is already gained (प्राप्तस्य प्राप्ति).

It turns out that I deploy the two powers given to me only in pursuit of the first type of gain, which is to gain temporary happiness, but all within the confines of mortality. This is deluded thinking (मोह), much like a child gaining joy in playing with a balloon (which may pop any minute).***
7. In the vision of Vedanta, how would the same two tools be positioned for achieving / gaining immortality?

***I don’t understand that the same two powers can be deployed to gain what I already have. There is a famous story in the shastras: a young farmer was struggling to make a living. Once he was told by a friend of his diseased father that his father once confided that he has buried a treasure within his property. He meant to leave instructions for his son but died before he had a chance to do so. So by being told this, the farmer son just has to conduct purposeful digging. The treasure was his, but did not know it. Some effort is required, but the results are unbelievably good****.*

a) Can doing (karma) something achieve immortality? If not, why not?

***Karma is an event within time; it is necessarily finite. No matter how great the karma, trying to gain infinity is impossible. You are either infinity, or if not, cannot reach it. The results will also be within time, not result in timelessness.***
b) Can knowledge help me achieve immortality? If so, how?

***If I am infinity, which is the same as unconditional freedom, then I just have to know how is it that I don’t know it, and what knowing it really means. And it turns out that I am infinity; both Vedas assure us and also our own personal experience – that we never give up trying to be free, and also we are given a taste of it as deep sleep.***
c) Can karma help in the process? How?

***Karma can help in preparing myself to understand this subtle truth***
8. What is the key to gaining knowledge -any knowledge, worldly or spiritual?

***Eligibility.
Every knowledge, from the knowledge of simple arithmetic all the way to quantum mechanics, requires appropriate mind, discipline and a step-by-step build-up of preparedness. As an example, for advanced physics, I need language, math, calculus, elementary physics and chemistry, particle physics, and the finally quantum physics.***
9. Is experience the same as knowledge? If not, give an example

***Experience can be with knowledge or without knowledge. Experience does not change with knowledge. It is just that knowledge gives the experience new perspective****.****The sunrise is a common experience. Even after I know that the sun does not ‘rise’, it still feels that it rises.

Similarly, to a person who has awakened to his/her true self, until the fall of the body – completion of karmas that have already started – the experience of the duality may still be there, but it is accompanied by the wonderful understanding “Amazing that the appearance of the world outside of me is false but still appears to be real’.***
10. Out of all requirements that Vedanta recommends, why is discrimination (viveka) the key?

***While the ability to think through issues, called vicara, such as which party to vote for, is important, ultimately the ability to distinguish between two choices, called viveka, not multiple choices, is the hall mark of a mature, well prepared mind. Above all this ability is the one we require to gain unconditional freedom.***
a) How is viveka key to knowing the truth?

***This is so because truth, the very nature of our innate self, which is already unconditionally free is mixed up with a false sense of conditionality and mortality. To be able to distinguish between the perceived and the reality gives us the ultimate freedom that we all desire.***
b) Give as many examples to illustrate a)

*(From Class #5, August 17, 2019)****1. Between role and actor
2. Between movie and life outside a movie
3. Between a person and his/her reflection
4. Between gold-centric thinking and ornament-centric thinking
5. Between dream and waking state
6. Between sun rising and not ‘rising’
7. Between rope and a false snake
8. Between love and attachment
9. Between karma and karma yoga
10. Between I and the not I***