

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 124: Chapter 13, Verses 22-25

(September 16 – September 22, 2020)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान्गुणान् ।

puruṣhaḥ prakṛiti-stho hi bhukṅkte prakṛiti-jān guṇān

कारणं गुणसङ्गोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु ॥ १३-२२ ॥

kāraṇam guṇa-saṅgo 'sya sad-asad-yoni-janmasu

उपद्रष्टानुमन्ता च भर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः ।

upadraṣṭānumantā cha bhartā bhoktā maheśhvaraḥ

परमात्मेति चाप्युक्तो देहेऽस्मिन्पुरुषः परः ॥ १३-२३ ॥

paramātmēti chāpy ukto dehe 'smin puruṣhaḥ paraḥ

य एवं वेत्ति पुरुषं प्रकृतिं च गुणैः सह ।

ya evaṁ vetti puruṣham prakṛitiṁ cha guṇaiḥ saha

सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि न स भूयोऽभिजायते ॥ १३-२४ ॥

sarvathā vartamāno 'pi na sa bhūyo 'bhijāyate

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना ।

dhyānenātmani paśhyanti kechid ātmānam ātmanā

अन्ये साङ्ख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे ॥ १३-२५ ॥

anye sāṅkhyena yogena karma-yogena chāpare

TRANSLATION

- (22)** When the *puruṣha* (individual soul) seated in *prakṛiti* (the material energy) desires to enjoy the three *guṇas*, attachment to them becomes the cause of its birth in superior and inferior wombs.
- (23)** Within the body also resides the Supreme Lord. He is said to be the Witness, the Permitter, the Supporter, Transcendental Enjoyer, the ultimate Controller, and the *Paramātmā* (Supreme Soul).
- (24)** Those who understand the truth about Supreme Soul, the individual soul, material nature, and the interaction of the three modes of nature will not take birth here again. They will be liberated regardless of their present condition.
- (25)** Some try to perceive the Supreme Soul within their hearts through meditation, and others try to do so through the cultivation of knowledge, while still others strive to attain that realization by the path of action.

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Chapter 13

Verse 22:

The *atma* or immortal soul is compelled to accept unlimited varieties of physical bodies from all levels of creation. Sometimes as a demigod, sometimes as a human, sometimes as an animal, etc. These forms are neutrally awarded according to the *gunas* or three modes of goodness, passion and ignorance, which are acquired in strict accordance to one's *karma* or reactions from past actions. Taking birth, one launches into activities, pursuing good and evil, in order to satisfy and gratify one's desires and propensities. In accordance with the *karma*, which one is incessantly creating by innumerable actions, one is born into wombs of good and evil perpetually in material existence. That is why it is stated that attachment to the *gunas* is the cause of birth in good and evil wombs. Once born, one performs actions, and from the reactions to the actions, which result in Karma, one is forced to take birth again and again without cessation. This circumvolution never ends until by the aggregation of *sukṛiti* (good actions) or pious activities, one has the auspicious opportunity to attain the association of a devotee of the Supreme Lord Krishna. This alters the course of one's destiny and upgrades one's *karma*. Lord Krishna Himself confirms this in Chapter 7, Verse 19, stating "*bahoonaam janmanaam ante jnaanavaanmaam prapadyate*," meaning after many births a knowledgeable living entity gets association of a *mahatma* or great soul.

Verse 23:

Here, the Supreme Lord Krishna reveals the distinct difference between *Purusha* and *Atma*. *Purusha* is His manifestation as *paramatma* or the omnipresent and omniscient Supreme Soul which exists within the heart of all living beings, while *atma* is the localized, immortal soul within each entity. What then is the real nature of *Paramatma*? He describes it by the word *upadrashta* or impartial witness who monitors the different stages and transformations of the mind and body. He describes it as well by the word *anumanta* or the one who sanctions the activities performed by all *jivas* or embodied beings that lead to joy and grief in pursuing activities in material existence. He again describes it by the word *bharta* or the supporter because for a *jiva* to progress in material existence, the mind and body must be sustained and protected. Thus, by virtue of ruling, supporting and guiding the *jivas*, the *Purusha* is the *Maheshvarah* or the Supreme controller of the physical body, the senses and the mind of all *jivas*. Although *Paramatma* resides within the etheric heart of the physical body next to the *atma*, they are both purely spiritual, being distinct from the physical body and transcendent to material existence.

Verse 24:

Now Lord Krishna extols the glory of one who understands the reality of *prakriti* or the material substratum pervading physical existence, and the difference between the material and the spiritual, the *atma* or the localized, individual, immortal soul and *paramatma* the omniscient and omnipresent Supreme Soul present within every *jiva*. Understanding *prakriti* means knowing that the three *gunas* of goodness, passion and ignorance are the modifications of material nature which cause pleasure and pain in all *jivas* or embodied beings whether demigod, human or animal. When one has achieved realization of the *atma* one can realize the Supreme Lord as *paramatma*, and with unveiled realization all sins are destroyed, and one automatically attains *moksha* or liberation from *samsara* the perpetual cycle of birth and death. The *Chandogya Upanisad VIII.I* confirms this, beginning with “*harih sum atha*”, meaning “*In the cavity of the etheric heart, the atma and paramatma reside next to each other; one should surely understand that they are what is paramount to be realized*”.

Verse 25:

In this verse, Lord Krishna expounds different modes of spiritual practice to attain God. He explains that some, having become perfect in *yoga* or the science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the ultimate consciousness, directly perceive

Paramatma within the atma by meditation. *Dhyanenaatmani pashyanti* means personally perceiving the divine revelation of the supreme soul through meditation on the *atma* or the immortal soul. **Others who are novice in yoga develop their minds by jnana or knowledge and sankhyena or subtle discrimination between spirit and matter, soon perceive the atma as well.** **Still others,** who are unfit for the regiment of *jnana yoga* and those who are fit but prefer an easier method, **follow the path of karma yoga or the path of actions devoted to the Supreme Lord that embody devotion.** They too become established in *yoga* and eventually perceive the *atma* as well.