

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 119: Chapter 13, Verses 01-05

(August 12 – August 18, 2020)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

अथ त्रयोदशोऽध्यायः

ATHA TRAYODASHODHYAAYAH

अर्जुन उवाच ।

arjuna uvācha

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव क्षेत्रं क्षेत्रज्ञमेव च ।

prakṛitiṁ puruṣhaṁ chaiva kṣhetraṁ kṣhetra-jñam eva cha

एतद्वेदितुमिच्छामि ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं च केशव ॥ १३-१ ॥

etad veditum ichchhāmi jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ cha keśhava

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

śhrī-bhagavān uvācha

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।

idaṁ śharīraṁ kaunteya kṣhetraṁ ity abhidhīyate

एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ॥ १३-२ ॥

etad yo vetti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣhetra-jña iti tad-vidah

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ।

kṣhetra-jñaṁ chāpi māṁ viddhi sarva-kṣhetreṣhu bhārata

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तज्ज्ञानं मतं मम ॥ १३-३ ॥

kṣhetra-kṣhetrajñayor jñānaṁ yat taj jñānaṁ mataṁ mama

तत्क्षेत्रं यच्च यादृक् यद्विकारि यतश्च यत् ।

tat kṣhetraṁ yach cha yādṛik cha yad-vikāri yataśh cha yat

स च यो यत्प्रभावश्च तत्समासेन मे शृणु ॥ १३-४ ॥

sa cha yo yat-prabhāvaśh cha tat samāsenā me śhrīṇu

ऋषिभिर्बहुधा गीतं छन्दोभिर्विविधैः पृथक् ।

ṛishibhir bahudhā gītaṁ chhandobhir vividhaiḥ prithak

ब्रह्मसूत्रपदैश्चैव हेतुमद्भिर्विनिश्चितैः ॥ १३-५ ॥

brahma-sūtra-padaish chaiva hetumadbhir viniśhchitaiḥ

TRANSLATION

- (01) Arjun said, “O Keshava, I wish to understand what are *prakṛiti* and *puruṣha*, and what are *kṣhetra* and *kṣhetrajña*? I also wish to know what is true knowledge, and what is the goal of this knowledge?
- (02) The Supreme Divine Lord said: O Arjun, this body is termed as *kṣhetra* (the field of activities), and the one who knows this body is called *kṣhetrajña* (the knower of the field) by the sages who discern the truth about both.
- (03) O scion of Bharat, I am also the knower of all the individual fields of activity. The understanding of the body as the field of activities, and the soul and God as the knowers of the field, this I hold to be true knowledge.
- (04) Listen and I will explain to you what that field is and what its nature is. I will also explain how change takes place within it, from what it was created, who the knower of the field of activities is, and what his powers are.
- (05) Great sages have sung the truth about the field and the knower of the field in manifold ways. It has been stated in various Vedic hymns, and especially revealed in the Brahma Sūtra, with sound logic and conclusive evidence.

Chapter 13

Verses 01 + 02:

This chapter begins with Arjuna asking Lord Krishna to delineate to him (a) the relationship between *prakriti* or the material substratum pervading physical existence and the *Purusha* or the Supreme Consciousness pervading spiritual existence that is the source of all existence, (b) relationship between *kshetra*, the field of activity and *kshetrajna*, the knower of the field of activity, and (c) relationship between *true knowledge* and the goal of such knowledge. In answering Arjuna's questions, Lord Krishna implies that it is the lack of discrimination and discernment between the *prakriti* and *purusha* which causes delusion and binds the *atma* or eternal soul which is an infinitesimal spark of the *Purusha* within the etheric heart of the *jiva* or embodied being, keeping them in bondage locked by *samsara* or the perpetual cycle of transmigratory existence birth after birth, life after life. It is by the power of first *Purusha* and then *prakriti* that the Supreme Lord Krishna manifests all creation and they are distinctly different from each other. Lord Krishna describes the discriminative knowledge of matter and spirit along with the process of assisting His devotees transcend the ocean of *samsara* or the perpetual cycle of birth and death. Lord Krishna declared in chapter 12 verse 7 that He quickly delivers His unalloyed devotees from *samsara*. Although He has previously spoken of the physical body as the inferior part and the *atma* or eternal soul as the superior part as given in chapter 8, verse 5, He now describes the combined nature of both with the words *idam shariram* meaning the material body, which is constituted of the five elements, five senses, mind and false ego and is the source of enjoying material delights for *jivas* or embodied beings, who being bewildered by illusion think of themselves as male or female or as old and young, etc. thinking themselves to be the physical body oblivious that the *atma* is distinctly different and separate from the physical body they inhabit. This physical body is known as the *kshetra* or field which is the source of enjoying the harvest of pleasures and pain as the reactions to good and evil actions by the doer. Just as a well-planted field yields abundant results and a poorly planted field yields poor results. One who has realized that the *atma* is not the same and different from the *kshetra* is factually a *kshetra-jna* or the one who is a knower of truth. This is the conclusion of knowledgeable persons who are well versed in the spiritual truths of the Vedic scriptures. Although ordinary beings are under the misconception that they are the physical body, believing themselves to be male or female, young or old etc., and convinced that when their physical body feels happy, they are joyful and when their physical body feels unhappy, they are sad. The word *shariram* meaning the physical body denotes etymologically as that which decays. Still there are many in this world that are competent to discriminate between the two (i.e., body & soul) and this Lord Krishna emphasizes with the words *tat-vidah*

meaning persons endowed with knowledge of the absolute truth. So the conclusion is that although ordinary beings who are steeped in ignorance do not have the qualification to discriminate between the external physical body and the internal *atma*, the devotees of Lord Krishna have qualified themselves by hearing from the bonafide spiritual master and studying the Vedic scriptures to be able to discriminate between *kshetra* and *atma*.

Verse 03:

In this verse, Lord Krishna explains that He is, in fact, the *kshetrajna* or cognizant consciousness abiding within all *jivas* or embodied souls. The soul is the knower of only the individual field of its own body, so the soul's knowledge of the entire field is limited and incomplete, whereas God is the knower of the fields of all souls, being situated as the Supreme Soul in the heart of all living beings. Therefore, God's knowledge of each *kshetra* is perfect and complete. Thus, Lord Krishna makes a clear distinction between the three entities: The physical body, the soul, and the Supreme Soul. According to Lord Krishna's definition, True Knowledge is the clear understanding of the three entities, including the physical body, the self (*atma*, soul), the super self (*paramatma*, the Supreme Lord), as well as knowing the distinction amongst the three entities.

Verse 04:

In this verse, Lord Krishna says that He will now explain in brief the true nature of the *khshetra*, the field of activity, and the *kshetra-jna*, the knower of the field. The word *yadrikcha* refers to the substantial nature of *kshetra* concerning its use and function and its purpose. The word *yadvikari* refers to transformations and modifications along with its *yatas* or from whence it came, meaning its origin and how it was created and for whose use. The word *yat* refers to its attributes and qualities. He will explain the relationship the *kshetra* has with the *kshetra-jna* and the consciousness which is established in Him. Knowledge of the *kshetra* means what type of entity is embodied and what its qualities are, what modifications restricts it, and what is its means of evolving itself through the interrelationship of matter and spirit. And of the *kshetra-jna*, exactly what is *atma* or eternal soul, who is the knower of the *kshetra*, and what are its powers and potencies.

Verse 05:

While Lord Krishna will briefly explain the reality concerning the *kshetra* and *kshetrajna*, the need may still arise for further evidence in detail. Anticipating such queries, Lord Krishna confirms that the matter is variously described by holy *rishis* or sages such as Vasistha and Parashara, and is revealed in the Vedic scriptures in precise and concise ways. For example, in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, the verse II.I states: Verily is the Supreme Lord

the essence of food. The person consisting of food is the physical body of the *jiva* or embodied being, then the next is the breath followed by the mind. Further in verse II.IV it states: Verily after that within the mind which consists of intellect, there exists the *atma* or eternal soul which consists of consciousness. This is the nature of the *jiva*. These facts have been stated explicitly by Maharshi Vedavyasa in the *Rg, Yajur, Sama and Atharva Vedas* and conclusively proven in Vedanta Sutras. All the conclusions from the Vedic scriptures are harmonious and clear to the devotees and the pandits or scholars in the Vedic culture as well. **The Vedanta Sutras reveal the Brahman or spiritual substratum pervading all existence and the ultimate truth in an abbreviated form, yet it is more exact and profound. The Vedas reveal it in explicit detail and the Upanishads reveal its nature, attributes and glories very elaborately. An aphorism is defined as concise, precise, unequivocal, understandable, eternal and free from illusion.** The *Vedanta Sutras* are aphorisms on the investigation and knowledge of the *atma* or eternal soul and *the ultimate truth*.