

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 13: Kṣetra-Kṣetrajña-Vibhāga-Yoga

1/3 (Ślōka 1-7), Sunday, 29 June 2025

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/Zlmb4Hp57bA>

Bhagavān explains the distinction between the Field and the Knower of the Field in Jñāna Yoga

The **13th** chapter of the Bhagavad-Gītā is known as the **Kṣetra-kṣetrajña Vibhāga Yoga - Yoga of Discrimination between the Field and the Knower of the Field**.

The first of the three-part interpretation session of the 13th chapter of Śrīmadbhagavadgītā started with prayers to Paramātmā Śrī Krishna followed by the lighting of the auspicious lamp.

Sadaśiva Samarambham Vyasa Shankaracharya Madhyamam

Asmad Acharya Paryantam Vande Guru Paramparam.

Originating with the all-pervasive Shiva, to Veda Vyasji, to my own Guru, I bow with reverence to the entire Guru Parampara (tradition of teachers).

Prayers were thus offered to śiva ji, Maharshi Veda Vyas Ji and Guru.

With the infinite blessings of our Guru, the Saints and our good Karma in this and previous life, we are blessed to have the opportunity to learn the Bhagavadgītā. In our Char-Dham Yatra of our pursuit to learn Gītā Ji, we are now in the ultimate level, that is Level - 4. Having reached this level, we are fairly confident of completing our endeavour to learn all the 18 chapters of Bhagavadgītā. This makes us eligible to learn and understand Chapter - 13, **Kṣetra-kṣetrajña Vibhāga Yoga - Yoga of Discrimination between the Field and the Knower of the Field**.

The 18 chapters of Bhagavadgītā are divided into three **satkas** or sections containing six chapters each.

- Chapters 1 to 6, focus on Karma and can be considered as **Karma Pradhana Satka**, that is Actions and Deeds.
- Chapters 7 to 12 focus on Bhakti and may be considered as **Upasana Pradhana Satka** and

related to Devotion and Worship.

- Chapters 13 to 18 focus on Jñāna (Gyan) that is **Jñāna Pradhana Satka**, related to Knowledge or Wisdom.

Jñāna Pradhana Satka starts from the thirteenth chapter, **Kṣetra-Kṣetrajña-Vibhāga-Yoga**.

In the authenticated version of Bhagavadgītā, we find that Chapter – 13 starts directly with Paramātmā speaking. In some versions of Bhagavadgītā, this chapter has one additional Shloka or verse that is not authenticated by the original manuscripts recovered nor by Gītā Press. Some scholars may have added a Shloka at the beginning where Arjuna asks a question to probably set context to the chapter.

We have seen Chapter – 12 starts with a question from Arjuna where he asks Paramātmā to clarify as to whom does HE consider to be more perfect in Yoga, between those who are steadfastly devoted on HIM in his Saguna form and those who worship the formless Nirguna form through devotion towards the divine power that is present everywhere, even though not visible to *ordinary* mortals.

***evam satata-yuktā ye bhaktās tvām paryupāsate
ye chāpy akṣharam avyaktaṁ teṣhām ke yoga-vittamāḥ***

Paramātmā then explains that for Arjuna and most of us, the better path to attain HIM is **Saguna Sakara Bhakti**, which is worship HIM as Deity with attributes (*Saguna*) and forms (*Sakara*). Examples being Paramātmā Śrī Ram, Śrī Krishna, Shiva and so forth. The reason Paramātmā prescribes this path is because this is easier to follow and leads to the same outcome as following other paths of devotion.

Even if a calculator is a more efficient way to count, children use their fingers to count because (1) they do not know how to use a calculator and (2) it is much easier to count on the finger.

Likewise, for common people like us who like the child learning to count, are just embarking on their spiritual journey, **Bhakti Yoga** is akin to counting on the finger and an easier path than the **Jñāna Yoga**, which Paramātmā says is a more difficult path to attain HIM.

In fact, in the fifth Shloka of the same chapter, Paramātmā says,

***kleśho 'dhikataras teṣhām avyaktāsakta-chetasām
avyaktā hi gatir duḥkham dehavadbhir avāpyate***

HE says that the path to realization of Paramātmā is full of problems for those who worship the formless Brahman. Worship of the unmanifest is exceedingly difficult for mortal beings like us.

HE has however, clarified earlier in the third Shloka of Chapter – 12 that those who follow **Jñāna Marg** (path) that is worship his unmanifested form, ***“ye tv akṣharam anirdeśhyam avyaktaṁ paryupāsate”***, also like those who follow other paths finally attain HIM. So, all paths be it Karma, Bhakti or Jñāna ultimately has the same destination, that is union with the Paramātmā.

In Chapter – 12, Paramātmā briefly touched upon Jñāna Yoga in the third, forth and fifth Shloka before delving deeper into Bhakti Yoga in the rest of the chapter. HE thus proceeds to discuss Jñāna Marg in greater depth in Chapter – 13. This is because, this Marg is very difficult and devoid of *Vatsalya* or the emotion of affection. A Jñāna Yogi is the Paramātmā HIMSELF, the epitome of *Jñāna* or knowledge. Those who understand the concept of *Kṣetra-Kṣetrajña* are *Jñāna Yogi*.

In this chapter, Paramātmā talks about this Yoga of Knowledge in detail.

13.1

śrībhagavānuvāca
idaṃ(m) śarīraṃ(ñ) kaunteya, kṣetramityabhidhīyate,
etadyo vetti taṃ(m) prāhuḥ(kh), kṣetrajña iti tadvidaḥ, 13.1

Śrī Bhagavān said:

This body Arjuna, is termed as the Field (kṣetra) and he knows it, is called the knower of the field (kṣetrajña) by the sages discerning the truth about both.

In this Shloka, Parameshwara introduces the concept of **Kṣetra** and **Kṣetrajña**.

HE says, our body is a Kṣetra (the field of activities), and the one who knows this body is called Kṣetrajña (the knower of the field).

In our common everyday language, *Kṣetra* means field; *Kṣetrajña* is the one specialised in that field, say Engineer, a Doctor, an Advaita Acharya.

In this chapter, the word *Kṣetra* refers to the body or *Śarīraṃ* and one who knows this concept well is the knower or the *Kṣetrajña*.

In the next shloka, Yogeshwar elaborates on the meaning of the word *Kṣetrajña*.

13.2

kṣetrajñaṃ(ñ) cāpi māṃ(m) viddhi, sarVākṣetreṣu bhārata,
kṣetrakṣetrajñayorjñānaṃ(m), yattajjñānaṃ(m) mataṃ(m) mama. 13.2

Know Myself to be the kṣetrajña (individual soul) in all the kṣetras (fields), Arjuna. And it is the knowledge of the field (kṣetra), and knower (kṣetrajña), (ie. of Matter with its evolutes and the Spirit) which I consider as true knowledge.

In this Shloka, *Kṣetrajña* refers to the knower of the field, while *Kṣetra* denotes the field itself.

The Kṣetra or the field encompasses ALL the individual fields of activity in the entire universe. The Kṣetrajña or the knower of the field is Paramātmā HIMSELF, perceiving the changes occurring within each of the field.

Bhagavān underscores that HE is the ultimate knower of all fields, implying His omnipresence extending universally to pervade all existence.

The latter part of the Shloka, ***kṣetra-kṣetrajñayor jñānam yat taj jñānam matam mama*** indicates that true knowledge, according to Bhagavān, encompasses the understanding of the separation between *Kṣetra* that is the field or the body and the *Kṣetrajña* that is the knower of the *Kṣetra* or field, who is actually Paramātmā HIMSELF.

Recollecting the seventh Shloka of Chapter – 15,

mamaivānśho jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥ-śaśhṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛiti-sthāni karṣhati

we have learnt that we, the embodied souls in this material world are nothing but HIS fragmentary parts. However, our mortal souls bound by *Prakṛiti* or material nature, are struggling with our emotions (attachment, rage, hatred and so forth) and senses including the mind. Such emotions ideally do

not belong to a *Jīvātmā* since *Jīvātmā* itself is part of the *Parāmātmā* and HE is *Nirvakara*, eternal and changeless. We should thus always try to control such emotions within us. It is not that we will not perform our worldly activities in our fields. We will definitely do that but will do that for *loka-sangraha*, while remaining unaffected within and being directed by the virtue and sin that we have acquired through our *Karma* and governed by the *Kṣetrajñā*, that is *Paramātmā*.

13.3

**tatkṣetraṃ(m) yacca yādṛkca, yadvikāri yataśca yat,
sa ca yo yatprabhāvaśca, tatsamāsenā me śṛṇu 13.3**

What that Field (*kṣetra*) is and what is its nature, what are its modifications, and from what causes what effects have arisen, and also who its knower (*kṣetrajña*) is, and what is His glory - hear all this from Me in brief.

Sri *Paramātmā* starts explaining *Jñāna Marg* from this Shloka.

HE addresses Arjuna, conveying his intention to explain in summary, the essence of the field and its nature, as well as the dynamics of change within it.

It is interesting to note that *Paramātmā* repeats that he would explain in *Sankshep* or *Samāsenā*, that is briefly in summary, as HE intends complete the discussion with Arjuna quickly as the battle is about to start. Hence it is said that the entire *Bhagavadgītā* was spoken within 45 minutes after which in the 73rd Shloka of Chapter - 18, Arjuna says,

**naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛitir labdhā, tvat-prasādān mayāchyuta
sthito 'smi gata-sandehaḥ, kariṣhye vachanaṁ tava**

He confirms to *Paramātmā* that his illusion has been dispelled and he is free from doubts. He will now act according to Śrī Krishna's advice.

Coming back to this Shloka, when *Paramātmā* says **yach cha yādṛik cha yad-vikāri yataśh cha yat** HE talks with reference to the *Kṣetra* - what is it; what is its nature; how change takes place in it and from what to what.

We have the *Karya-Karana Siddhanta* which explains how milk is the *Karana* - the origin or the cause; and Curd which is *Karya*, the effect and generated from the *Karana*. In this world, every *Karya* or Effect has a *Karana* or Cause. Ultimately, the ultimate **Karana** for every *Karya* in this universe, is the *Paramātmā*, the Supreme Being.

Paramātmā is the Supreme Cause of this world.

It is worthy to note that the effect of one cause can become the cause for another effect. In the earlier example, we say Milk is the cause and Curd is the effect. However, for buttermilk, the same Curd becomes the cause with the buttermilk becomes the effect. Hence, one object like the Curd, can have the qualities of both *Karya* and *Karana*; Effect and Cause.

13.4

ṛṣibhirbahudhā gītaṃ(ñ), chandobhirvividhaiḥ(ph) pṛthak, brahmasūtrapadaishchaiva, hetumadbhirvinishchitaiḥ 13.4

The truth, about the kṣetra and kṣetrajña, has been expounded by the seers in manifold ways; again it has been stated separately in different Vedic chants and also in the conclusive and reasoned texts of the Brahmasūtras.

Paramātmā says, the knowledge of *Kṣetra* (the field) and *Kṣetrajña* (the knower of the field) has been imparted by various sages through different Vedic hymns and is also thoroughly elucidated in the Upanishads, Vedas, Bhagavadgītā and even Brahmā Sūtra with logical reasoning and definitive proof.

The six schools of Hindu philosophy are:

- **Sāṃkhya**
- **Yoga**
- **Nyaya**
- **Vaisheshika**
- **Purva Mimamsa**
- **Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta**

The Brahmā Sūtra is the key and most important part of the Vedanta Philosophy for the Uttara Mimamsa part.

When one is addressed as Advaita Vedanta Acharya, it signifies, the person has studied

- the **Brahmā Sūtra** with its 4 chapters
- the **11 principal Upanishads** for which Adi Sankaracharya Ji has written commentaries, they being, **Aitareya, Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya, Isha, Katha, Kena, Mandukya, Mundaka, Prashna, Taittiriya**, and **Svetasvatara**.
- Bhagavadgītā with its 18 chapters.

These scriptures together are known as **Prasthan-trayee Grantha** (Books). It signifies, those who have studied these scriptures, are ready from the perspective of knowledge, to become **Vendantee**.

Brahmā Sūtra as described above is one of the foundational texts of the Vedanta. It is said to be composed by Maharshi Veda Vyāsa Ji.

There is another school of thought that attributes its composition to Rishi Bādarāyaṇa Ji, who is also called Vyāsa. It is noteworthy that Vyāsa was not actually a name, but a position, possibly held by many. Veda Vyāsa Ji's actual name is Krishna Dwaipayana Vyāsa. His work includes composition and categorization of all the Vedas and hence he is known as Veda Vyāsa.

It is believed by some that Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa and Veda Vyāsa are actually one and the same person.

Brahmā Sūtra's sloka **Brahmā Satyam, Jagat Mithya, Jīvo Brahmāiva naparah** is a core statement in support of the principle of Advaita Vedanta philosophy.

Vedanta has different schools of thoughts with different Acharyas viz. **Advaita Vedanta, Vishishtadvaita Vedanta, Shuddhadvaita Vedanta**, and **Dvaitadvaita**. There is also the concept of **Achinta Vedaved**. The Acharyas of Vedanta are Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarkacharya and Vallabhacharya. Each Acharya has written commentaries according to the various schools of Vedanta.

In this Shloka, when Paramātmā says, **Brahmā-Sūtra-padaish chaiva hetumadbhir vinishchitaiḥ**, HE

emphasizes that this *Sidhanta* or Principle has been revealed in the Brahmā Sūtra, with sound logic and conclusive evidence.

13.5

mahābhūtānyahaṅkāro, buddhiravyaktameva ca, indriyāṇi daśaikaṃ(ñ) ca, pañca cendriyagocarāḥ. 13.5

The five elements, the ego, the intellect, the unmanifest (Primordial Matter), the ten organs of perception and action, the mind and five objects of sense (sound, touch, colour, taste and smell).

In the third Shloka, there was a question as to what are the nature of the changes or modification to the **Kṣetra** or field. Paramātmā answers that question in this Shloka.

Bhagavān describes the field of activity or *Kṣetra* comprises of 24 elements. These elements are classified into various categories that make up the physical and subtle body, as well as the faculties of perception and interaction with the world.

The classification of the 24 elements are as follows:

- **Mahabhutas** - the five gross elements
- **Ahankārah** - the Ego
- **Buddhiḥ**—the Intellect
- **Avyaktam**— name for Prakṛiti, the primeval nature
- **Indriyāṇi** - sense organs, including **Jnanendriyas** - the instruments of perception, and **Karmendriyas** - the instruments of action

These elements together constitute the *Vikara* field of modification and experience of the *Kṣetra*.

13.6

icchā dveṣaḥ(s) sukhaṃ(n) duḥkhaṃ(m), saṅghātaścetanā dhṛtiḥ, etat kṣetraṃ(m) samāśena, savikāramudāhṛtam. 13.6

Also desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, the physical body consciousness (life-breath), firmness: these comprise the *kṣetra*, with its modifications, described briefly.

Bhagavān continues to describe the *Kṣetra* and includes the psychological and emotional aspects that influence human experience. HE says, the field encompasses not only the physical body and senses but also the mental and emotional states that arise within it:

- **Icchā** - Intense **Desire** for something.
- **Dveṣaḥ** - the **Aversion** or dislike or avoidance of something that comes when desire remains unfulfilled.
- **Sukham** - The state of **Happiness**, contentment or pleasure.
- **Duḥkham** - The state of **Misery**, suffering or distress.
- **Saṅghātaḥ** - The **Aggregate** combination of elements that form the physical body.
- **Chetanā** - The principle of **Consciousness**, **Pran-tattva** that animates the body and mind.

- **Dhṛitiḥ**: The **Fortitude** or strength of will or resolve to do something like completing our study of Bhagavadgītā.

These elements are considered modifications of the ‘field’ because they are changeable and subject to the influence of the three modes of material nature.

Our *Buddhiḥ* or intellect tells us to study before an exam while the *Manas* or mind tells us to watch the cricket match on TV though we know its wrong. The *Ahankāraḥ* gives is feeling of “ME”.

Thus, they are part of the human experience within the material world.

13.7

amānitvamadambhitvam, ahimsā kṣāntirājavam, ācāryopāsanam(m) śaucaṁ(m), sthairyamātmavinigrahaḥ. 13.7

Absence of pride, freedom from hypocrisy, non-violence, forgiveness, uprightness of speech and mind etc, devout service of the perceptor, internal and external purity, steadfastness of mind and control of body, mind and the senses.

Paramātmā continues to explain the characteristics of the *Kṣetra*.

- **Amānitvam**—humility as opposed to **mānitvam** or being proud of one’s capabilities or possessions. This is a very important quality and instead of showing pride one should use one’s capabilities or possessions in the service of others.
- **Adambhitvam**—Modesty, Unpretentiousness, freedom from hypocrisy as opposed to **dambha**, that is showing off, even if not in possession of an object like exhibiting a *gold-plated* chain and passing it off as real gold, while it does not really matter.
- **Ahimsā**—non-violence. This is an important characteristic to imbibe in all paths of Yogas. **Manasa, Vacha, Karmana Vacha, Karmana** is an important Sanskrit phrase that tells us not to hurt anyone through our speech, or our action and not think ill in our mind for anyone. It emphasizes the importance of aligning one's thoughts, words, and deeds for a life of righteousness.
- **Kṣhāntiḥ**—Forgiveness. It is not about letting go a fight with an enemy; it is about not fighting with an enemy because one has forgiven him and forgotten his misdeed. It is about cleansing the mind of unnecessary and detrimental thoughts so that good thoughts about the Paramātmā may fill it.
- **Ārjavam**—simplicity; righteousness; the ability to speak the truth. Example is a student truthfully telling his friends about his preparedness for an exam in contrast to lying in order to misinform the friend, lest he studies more and does better.
- **Āchārya-upāsanam**—service to the Guru, one’s elders, the aged. This quality is beautifully explained in the story of Totaka, a disciple of Adi Shankaracharya. Totaka (also known as Giri or Totakacharya), a disciple of Adi Shankaracharya Ji highlights the power of unwavering devotion and silent dedication. While not academically brilliant like his fellow students, Totaka was known for his selfless service to his Guru, performing tasks like washing clothes, cleaning the Ashram and so forth. One day, the other students started humiliating and ridiculing Totaka on his lack of education versus themselves, who were brilliant scholars writing hymns and commentaries. Adi Shankaracharya Ji seeing this asked Totaka to say something. Totaka was very nervous since he thought he may utter something which will lead to more ridicule from his fellow students. However, since it was his Guru’s directive, he started to say and what he

recited was a beautiful hymn in praise of Shankaracharya, composed spontaneously in Sanskrit.

***viditā khila śāstra sudhā jaladhe mahito paniṣat kathitār thanidhe
hṛdaye kalaye vimala vimalaṃ caraṇaṃ bhavaśaṅkara deśika me śaraṇaṃ***

It surprised everyone to witness his hidden poetic talent and profound understanding. This hymn is part of **Toṭakāṣṭakam**. Totakacharya is in fact considered to be one of the four key disciples of Adi Shankaracharya Ji, the others being Padmapada, Hastamalaka, and Sureshwara.

Āchārya-upāsanam thus leads one on the part of acquiring knowledge from the Guru, irrespective of one's intelligence. Acharya can be teachers in school or parents or grandparents.

- **Śhaucham**—cleanliness of body and mind. Maintaining hygienic habit and a positive, kind, and clear mind.
- **Sthairyam**—steadfastness to execute one's decision and meet one's target.
- **Ātma-vinigrahaḥ**—self-control is a key quality to imbibe the other qualities mentioned above. One needs to have self-control to not hurt others, forgive others or even maintain physical hygiene.

The session was followed by Harinam Sankirtan and a Questions and Answers session and concluded with prayer to the Bhagavān and rendition of Hanuman Chalisa.

Questions and Answers

Sundhari Ji

Q: How can one maintain the state of **Ātma-vinigrahaḥ** or self-control if someone else constantly provokes him into untoward situations?

A: We need to learn the mantra '**Om ignoraya namah**' and by ignoring, defeat their purpose to irritate you. There was once a saint who was coming back after bathing in river Ganga. There were a bunch of wicked boys on the way who threw dirt and mud onto the saint. The saint without saying anything or showing any anger walked back to the river, took a bath, and started walking back. The boys again threw dirt and mud on him and again he went back to Ganga Ji to take a dip. This continued for a number of times. A disciple who was watching the saint asked, why was he not retaliating on the boys' action. The saint smiled and answered, that irritating was the boys' nature, and being tolerant and ignoring their action was his nature. Since the boys were not willing to change their nature, why should he!

If the irritation crosses your tolerance level, then maybe react back once with dignity and conviction, not as a reaction but as a response. But definitely not more than once or twice.

G Sai Tanvi Ji

Q: Assuming, we follow every advice given by Bhagavān Śrī Krishna but eat non-vegetarian food. Does that affect the whole Sattvik mindset?

A: Indeed it does, since non-vegetarian food has high negative energy. Or one has to be like Swami Vivekananda, whose Sādhana was so intense that despite eating non-vegetarian food, his Sādhana was not diminished. But everyone cannot be Swami Vivekananda. While non-vegetarian food does not impact common people, it definitely impacts those who are trying to walk the path of spiritual progress. That's

where, **Ātma-vinigrahaḥ** or self-control comes into play.

Rajashree Srinath Ji

Q: Can we recite Bhagavadgita while walking, wearing slippers?

A: Ideally it is best not to wear footwear during chanting Vaidic mantras but Gītā Ji is like our mother and we can chant her Shlokas everywhere and all the time; even in the restroom.



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You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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