

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 13: Kṣetra-Kṣetrajña-Vibhāga-Yoga

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Paths to glean the difference between Prakṛti & Puruṣa

The thirteenth chapter of Srimad Bhagavadgītā is called **Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga yog - The yoga of discrimination between the Field and the Knower of the Field.**

This chapter explores the relationship between the physical body (the "field") and the soul or conscious principle within it (the "knower of the field").

The session began with the auspicious lighting of lamps followed by prayers. This was followed by salutations to Swami Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj and pranams to all Gītā students.

The past couple of weeks we have continued to learn and ponder on the most important yoga of knowledge - 'Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga yog.' With the divine blessings of Bhagavān, we are learning to recite the gita with the right pronunciation and we are trying to gain knowledge from this chapter.

The tag line of Geeta Parivar is '**gītā padein, padayein, aur jeevan mein layein.**' We have embarked on this journey and it is very important to understand the Gītā, to enable us to incorporate its principles in our daily living. This will help us in leading a life as prescribed by the Gītā, and will reflect in our way of living and thinking. To recapitulate, we had understood the following in the earlier sessions:

- **What is 'kshetra' and 'kshetrajna.'**
- **What constitutes the 'kshetra.'**
- **Who is a 'kshetrajna' and what are his qualities.**
- **What is 'jneya' - the Parama tattva.**
- **'Upadrashta'- the witness, 'anumanta' - Paramātmā, 'bharta' - sustainer, 'bhokta' - awareness, 'prakriti' - nature, and 'purusha' - self.**

**ya evaṃ(m) vetti puruṣaṃ(m), prakṛtiṃ(ñ) ca guṇaiḥ(s) saha,
sarvathā vartamāno'pi, na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate. 13.23**

He who thus knows the Puruṣa (Spirit) and Prakṛti (Nature) together with the Guṇas-even though performing his duties in everyway, is not born again.

The world that we live in is transient or temporary and is subject to constant changes. The only constant or unchanging is the 'jeevatma' - a part of Parama tattva. It is otherwise called awareness, and is indestructible. What would we like to choose between the two? Do we like to continue living in this temporary world or yearn for Parama tattva? Naturally, we want that which is permanent. We can delve deeper into 'Prakṛti' and 'Puruṣa.'

'Puruṣa' is Paramātmā tattva and exists in conjunction with 'Prakṛti' in this world. 'Puruṣa' is the same in all beings but appear different because of its association with 'Prakṛti.' Paramātmā is constant, pure, indestructible, and not under the control of 'Prakṛti.' A jnani is one who understands this truth without any doubt. Thus he merges with Paramātmā.

What are the qualities of 'prakṛiti'?

- **Karya - Cause, and**
- **Karan - Effect**

All actions are effected by the body.

'Prakṛti' acts mainly through the three gunas, Sattva, rajah, and tamo. It is subject to change, destruction, and inert. A jnani is one who understands clearly the difference between 'Prakṛti' and 'Puruṣa.' For eg, if one decides to make kichidi; one mixes the dal and rice. The difference between the two is well known to all who know to cook. Similarly, a jnani without a doubt knows the difference between 'Prakṛti' and 'Puruṣa.' A jnani on knowing this difference attains moksha and is freed from the cycle of birth and death.

13.24

**dhyānenātmani paśyanti, kecidātmānamātmanā,
anye sāṅkhyena yogena, karmayogena cāpare. 13.24**

Some by meditation behold the supreme Spirit in the heart with the help of their refined and sharp intellect; others realize it through the discipline of Knowledge, and still others, through the discipline of Action, i.e., Karmayoga.

There are many who merge with Paramātmā and attain moksha by gaining the ultimate knowledge, or Sāṅkhya yoga, or karma yoga. People live in this world by doing agriculture, business, or as an employee in an organisation. Similarly, one can search to attain the ultimate truth through 'Dhyana yoga' as seen in Chapter 6. Such individuals live away from society as a recluse and meditate by concentration of the mind. He delves within in search of pure knowledge. Thus he attains Paramātmā by seeing within the existence of the light of the atma.

Some follow the path of Sāṅkhya yoga - they are deep thinkers who try to understand the meaning of 'sat' - existence, and 'asat' - non-existence. They follow the four fold path called 'chatuṣṭayi' :

Sadhana Chatushtayi:

- **Discrimination (Viveka):** The ability to distinguish between reality/illusion, temporary/permanent, etc.
- **Detachment (Vairagya):** The ability to see beyond worldly attachments and desires.
- **'Shatsampati'** meaning **six treasures/virtues** that are considered essential for mental discipline, emotional stability, and spiritual progress. They are:

1. **Shama** (Tranquility/Peace of Mind): Maintaining a state of calm and contentment.
2. **Dama** (Control of the Senses): Exercising self-discipline and restraint over the senses.
3. **Uparati** (Withdrawal/Renunciation): Avoiding attachments to worldly desires and non-essential activities.
4. **Titiksha** (Forbearance/Tolerance): Enduring hardships and dualities with patience and fortitude.
5. **Shraddha** (Faith): Having unwavering belief in one's path and goals.
6. **Samadhana** (Concentration/Focus): Maintaining mental focus and stability during meditation and other practices. Eg. Dronacharya instructed Arjuna to kill a bird with its neck as a target. Arjuna's focus was such that he did not see anything other than the bird's neck. Such was his concentration. Similarly, a Sāṃkhya yogi upon reaching a certain level of focus has intense longing (Mumukshuva) only for Paramātmā.

1. **Longing for liberation (Mumukshuva):** A strong desire to achieve self-realization or freedom from suffering.

The third path is **karma yoga** - a '**sakama karma yogi**' as well as a karma yogi does the same - perform actions. The difference is the former expects results for his actions. Eg. Praying to Bhagavān for the welfare of children, etc. We perform pujas for fulfillment of our desires. A true karma yogi desires only to perform actions more than meditation or trying to discover the self. He feels instead of penance as a recluse, one should use the beautiful body in the service of the nation and the welfare of its people.

A karma yogi performs actions without expectation of results or fruits for his efforts. His actions are never for fulfillment of desires of the self but for society at large. His actions are continuous and selfless by offering the services at the lotus feet of Bhagavān 'Krishnarpanasthu'. This frees him from the bondage or repercussions of such actions. Hence there is no accumulation of sins and merits.

Thus by the above three means people attain the Parama tattva or moksha. What about people like us? We are unable to sit in meditation for hours continuously. We do not have that kind of intellect to be thinkers of Sāṃkhya yoga. Yes, we do perform karma yoga but are we doing it solely for the benefit and welfare of the nation and its people? We do expect results for our actions and the desires make us perform actions.

Then how can we attain Paramātmā?

13.25

**anye tvevamajānantaḥ(ś), śrutvānyebhya upāsate,
te'pi cātitarantyeva, mṛtyuṃ(m) śrutiparāyaṇāḥ. 13.25**

Other dull-witted persons, however, not knowing thus, worship even as they have heard from others

i.e., the knowers of truth; and even those who are thus devoted to what they have heard, are able to cross the ocean of mundane existence in the shape of death.

This is a great idea given by Bhagavān - '**shruti parayana**' - repeated chanting of shlokas, vedas, or other spiritual texts. By continuously listening to discourses of learned saints. We are all blessed to traverse the path of learning through the gīta. We should read atleast one chapter a day and listen to explanations by great saints. We should listen to Bhagavatha and Puranas. With our limited knowledge we are unable to attain the Paramātmā tattva - the universal truth. Neither can we follow the three paths enumerated above to the dot. So one option for us is to associate with Mahapurush or tattva jnani and learn from their teachings.

Thus 'shruti parayan' or chanting helps us to focus. Swami Ji advises us to atleast read one chapter of the gītā daily, if not all the eighteen. Attempting to read the puranas and vedas goes a long way in our pursuit of knowledge. This we can easily follow in our lives. Listening to the discourses of tatva jnani helps us. Sometimes, while listening to Swami Ji's discourse, we are unable to understand everything. He says it is okay, but what is important is to be there and listen.

Be it reading the Bhagavata or the gītā, the main thing to know is Paramātmā. Whether we understand the intricate meaning or not, to know who is Paramātmā and to pray to HIM by sitting and visualizing, helps us in being engrossed though for a short span of time. **To listen to 'shruti parayana' with devotion helps us to think of Paramātmā who will be there to take us during the last moments of our lives. It is believed that such individuals will also be freed from the cycle of birth and death.**

13.26

**yāvatsañjāyate kiñcit, sattvaṃ(m) sthāvarajaṅgamam,
kṣetrakṣetrajañśaṃyogāt, tadviddhi bharatarṣabha. 13.26**

Arjuna, whatsoever being, the moving or unmoving, is born, know it as emanated through the union of kṣetra (Matter) and the kṣetrajna (Spirit).

Whatever being is born, whether it is moving (**chara**) or stationary (**achara**) eg. trees, climbers, etc., know, O scion of Bharata dynasty (Arjuna), that it is through the combination of the **Ksetra** (body) and **Ksetrajna** (knower of the Field).

Therefore, all beings are born out of ' Prakṛti' and 'Puruṣa'. As we had read in the previous verses, we know that there are many types of 'ksetra' or bodies viz

- '**Jarayuj**' (born out of a womb) eg. **mammals**
- '**Andaj**' (born out of an egg) eg. **birds, fishes**
- '**svedaj**' (born out of sweat/sheds from the body) eg. **insects and microscopic organisms, and**
- '**udbhij**' (born out of the ground) eg. **trees and plants**

In all of the above, the tatva is 'purusha' ie. 'ksetrajna'. One has to understand this.

13.27

**ṣamaṃ(m) sarveṣu bhūteṣu, tiṣṭhantaṃ(m) parameśvaram
vinaśyatsvavinaśyantaṃ(m), yaḥ(ph) paśyati sa paśyati. 13.27**

He alone truly sees, who sees the supreme Lord as imperishable and abiding equally in all perishable beings, both animate and inanimate.

Who sees the Supreme dwelling alike in all bodies and never perishing when they perish, he sees indeed.

All beings are transient and the indestructible tattva in all is Paramātmā. A jnani alone can see the atma of all beings despite being encapsulated in different kinds of bodies. 'Vicara' is that which is changing and Paramātmā is '*nirvicara*' - the unchanging. In all beings, the Paramātmā tattva also called awareness or 'Puruṣa Tattva' is the same.

A jnani knows that the body is subject to death and destruction but the atma alone is indestructible. He only sees the Parama tattva in all beings. For eg. we all love jewellery and despite the high price would like to own them. When the design we like is beyond our budget to buy, the jeweller asks us to bring some old jewellery for exchange, thereby reducing the payment amount. The shopkeeper sees the jewellery from the gold (valuable metal) aspect; while the customer views the jewellery in terms of design and look. We consider that which is old as outdated while the jeweller sees the underlying material alone (gold) which is its ultimate value.

13.28

**ṣamaṃ(m) paśyanhi sarvatra, ṣamavasthitamīśvaram,
na hinastyātmanātmānaṃ(n), tato yāti parāṃ(ñ) gatim. 13.28**

For, by seeing the Supreme Lord equally present in all, he does not kill the Self by himself, and thereby attains the supreme state.

Beholding Paramātmā in all things equally, jnani's actions do not mar his spiritual life but lead him to the height of bliss. Such a jnani can never cause harm to himself as he knows that the Parama tattva is the same in all beings. It is rare to obtain the birth of a human and hence we should make the best use of our lives in knowing the Parama Tattva. We can make an attempt to understand, but will fructify only with HIS divine blessings. It is only the chosen ones who finally succeed. We should strive to know HIM.

Bhagavān described the four types of devotee in chapter seven who are close to HIM. They are:

1. **Arta** (distressed),
2. **Jijnasu** (inquisitive),
3. **Artharthi** (desiring wealth), and
4. **Jnani** (wise)

Artharthi desire only through Paramātmā and hence pray to HIM. His desires for wealth, children, family, position, power, etc are yearned only by seeking the divine intervention of Bhagavān.

Arta are those who are in deep trouble and seek Bhagavān to extricate themselves from their problems. Eg. Draupadi - She was disrobed in public and none present there came to her rescue including Bhīṣma Pitāmaha and her five husbands. So she sought the divine help of Śrī Krishna.

Jignasu are the inquisitive ones who have the spark in them and hence desire to seek Paramātmā.

A Jnani as we know sees the Parama tattva in all beings which is the underlying basis in all things living.

A human has to take several births in each stage of devotion as listed above, and finally one day each one becomes a jnani. Ofcourse, it is with divine grace. 'Prakṛti' is the cause of dualities like - love/hatred, happiness/sorrow, etc. as seen in chapter 14. We bear the sins and merits of our actions on account of the dualities acquired by us. The constant thought of Paramātmā in each of our births, help us ultimately to surrender to HIM and with his grace finally attain moksha.

To uplift ourselves in the spiritual plane, we should try to know the Parama tattva while in this human birth. No other beings are empowered to know Paramātmā. We have chosen the right path of listening, learning, and thinking of Paramātmā and hence should continue to do so.

13.29

**prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi, kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ,
yaḥ(ph) paśyati tathātmānam, akartāraṃ(m) sa paśyati. 13.29**

He who sees that all actions are performed in every way by nature (Prakṛti) and the Self as the non-doer, he alone verily sees.

He who understands that it is only the law of nature that brings action to fruition, and that the Self never acts, alone knows the Truth.

A Jnani alone understands that what ever happens is done only by 'Prakṛti' and the body is only an instrument for action. Just like the sky is permanent and the clouds float about, so is *Parama tattva* which is still in all beings while actions are driven by 'Prakṛti.'

We constantly have the feeling of moving when the train we are in is at a station and the train beside ours is moving. Similarly, the '*kshetrajna*' is still, while all actions of the '*ksetra*' are performed by 'Prakṛti.'

13.30

**yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvam, ekasthamanupaśyati,
tata eva ca vistāraṃ(m), brahma saṃpadyate tadā. 13.30**

The moment man perceives the diversified existence of beings as rooted in the one supreme Spirit, and the spreading forth of all beings from the same, that very moment he attains Brahma (who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified).

When one realizes that the state of diversity of living things is rooted in the One, and that their manifestation is also from That, then one becomes identified with Brahman. The gross and subtle body is found in all beings be it mammals, birds, insects, or trees. We consider the human life superior to all beings. All beings are found in Prakṛti and perform actions as per their karma. One who acquires the knowledge of Parama tattva attains brahman.

Consciousness is the hallmark of all beings movable and immovable. Upon death, the body or ksetra is of no value.'Prakṛti' works only in conjunction with awareness / consciousness. **One has to understand this. 'Prakṛti' cannot work alone and Paramātmā tattva cannot operate without 'Prakṛti.' They have a symbiotic relationship. It is only because of this, we know the 'kshetrajna' as 'upabhogta' - witness, 'bharta' - sustainer, 'bhogta' awareness though**

Paramātmā is independent of these.

All verses help us understand the difference between 'Prakṛti' and Paramātmā. Paramātmā is the awareness within all beings just like the electricity which is crucial to fire a laptop.

13.31

**anāditvānnirguṇatvāt, paramātmāyamavyayaḥ,
śarīrastho'pi kaunteya, na karoti na lipyate. 13.31**

Arjuna, being without beginning and without attributes, this indestructible supreme Spirit, though dwelling in the body, in fact does nothing, nor gets tainted.

The Supreme Spirit, O Prince Arjuna, is without beginning, without qualities, imperishable, and though it be within the body, yet It does not act, nor is It affected by action. It is eternal. The question of which came first - egg or hen can be argued without a firm answer. In actuality, both existed together. Similarly, 'Prakṛti' and parabrahman are eternal and it is only because of their conjunction the universe came into existence. The 'puruṣa' being eternal and because it is free of gunas is indestructible and therefore considered Paramātmā HIMSELF.

Eventhough the atma is present in the body, it neither acts nor bears the consequences of the actions. 'Prakṛti' encompasses the gunas and when 'Puruṣa' acts in conjunction with 'Prakṛti', it feels that it is also governed by the gunas; but is not so. Why are all these explained in detail? When we perform actions, we too should identify with the root form of 'Puruṣa' and not be affected by the consequences of our good actions. Even while performing actions we should not identify ourself with the feeling of "I am the doer."

Thus, 'Puruṣa' despite acting in conjunction with 'Prakṛti' is not attached to the actions. When a karma yogi performs actions he does not expect the fruits of labour for himself to enjoy.

13.32

**yathā sarvagataṃ(m) saukṣmyād, ākāśaṃ(n) nopalipyate,
sarvatrāvasthito dehe, tathātmā nopalipyate. 13.32**

As the all-pervading ether is not contaminated by reason of its subtlety, though permeating the body, the Self is not affected by the attributes of the body due to Its attributeless character.

As space, though present everywhere, remains by reason of its subtlety unaffected, so the Self, though present in all forms, retains its purity unalloyed.

The sky encompasses the clouds which results in rain, thunder and lightening arises from the sky, we throw a lot of colours up in the air while celebrating Holi festival, and burst fire crackers. Is the sky affected by all these? It is completely detached and remains the same. '**Ksetrajna**' is also the same. He is an instrument for actions and not affected by it.

13.33

**yathā prakāśayatyekāḥ(kh), kṛtsnaṃ(m) lokamimaṃ(m) raviḥ,
kṣetraṃ(ñ) kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnaṃ(m), prakāśayati bhārata. 13.33**

Arjuna, as the one sun illumines this entire universe, so the one Atmā (Spirit) illumines the whole

kṣetra (Field).

As the single sun illumines this whole world, similarly, O descendant of the Bharata dynasty, the Knower of the field illumines the whole field.

A '**Ksetrajna**' is within the '**ksetra**' and illumines from within and is the source of light. The sun is the source of all light in this world. All beings carry the Parama tattva and nothing happens without it.

13.34

**kṣetrakṣetrajñayorevam, antaraṃ(ñ) jñānacakṣuṣā,
bhūtaprakṛtimokṣaṃ(ñ) ca, ye viduryānti te param. 13.34**

Those who thus perceive with the eye of wisdom, the difference between the kṣetra and kṣetrajna, and the phenomenon of liberation from Prakṛti with her evolutes, reach the supreme eternal Spirit.

Those who thus discern with the eye of knowledge the difference between the body or the Field (Ksetra) and the knower of the body (Ksetrajna), and the means of deliverance from the manifested Prakṛti - they attain the Supreme.

It is only with the eye of knowledge one can discern the difference between '*ksetra*' and '*ksetrajna*.' Bhagavān said that one, while living in this world, should empower to know the difference between: 'Prakṛti' / 'Puruṣa; atma / anatma; inert/consciousness; '*ksetra*/'*ksetrajna*'. This is the message from this chapter.

The swan can differentiate and takes the milk leaving the water behind. Similarly, a jnani knows that 'ksetra' and 'ksetrajna' work in tandem in all beings, though they are completely different. We should also pray to Bhagavān to give us the wisdom to glean 'Prakṛti' and 'Puruṣa'; leading to moksha.

The session thus ends with '**Om Sri Krishnarpanasthu.**'

Question and Answer Session:

Rita Ji

Question: Verse 28, please explain.

Answer: A jnani does not cause harm to his atma.

Snehalata Ji

Question: Verse 27 3rd charan.

Answer: Prakṛiti is subject to destruction while parama tattva is indestructible.

Ruchika Ji

Question: Meaning of 'akarta.'

Answer: To have the feeling of 'I am not the doer'. I am just an instrument of action.

Iswar Ji

Question: Is there any proof of Paramātmā tattva.

Answer: There is no written proof. It is only to be experienced.

**om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyāṃ(m) yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde
kṣetrakṣetrajanvibhaga yoga nāma trayodaśo'dhyāyaḥ.**

Thus, in the Upanisad sung by the Lord, the Science of Brahma, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇā and Arjuna, ends the thirteenth chapter entitled "The Yoga of discrimination between the Field and the Knower of the Field."



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Thank you-For reading the summary

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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