



श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता
क्षेत्र-क्षेत्रज्ञ विभाग योगः

Chapter 13

Volume 3

श्री भगवानुवाच

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय, क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।

एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः, क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ॥ 13-1

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि, सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ।

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोजनार्ण, यत् तत् ज्ञानं मतं मम ॥ 13-2

Briefly recalling what we saw last time in the first two verses of this chapter, which we just heard, Sri Krishna unfolds the extraordinary relationship that exists between क्षेत्र and क्षेत्रज्ञ – between शरीर – one's own physical body and the आत्मा – the Self "I" in oneself. Calling Arjuna's attention, Sri Krishna says:

कौन्तेय – O! Arjuna, please listen

इदं शरीरं, क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते – This physical body, one's own physical body, must be understood as क्षेत्र – as an object of one's knowledge, and not as ONESELF itself, not as subject "I" itself, not as आत्मा – The Self in oneself.

एतत् यःवेत्ति तं प्राहुः, क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तत् विदः – The one who knows this fact, That Knower, that subject I, The Self in oneself, That आत्मा I, is called क्षेत्रज्ञ by people who recognize the distinction between शरीर and The आत्मा – one's own physical body (the object) and The Self "I" (the subject) in one's own physical body respectively. Identifying That क्षेत्रज्ञ, The आत्मा "I", भगवान् says

क्षेत्रज्ञं मां विद्धि – Please learn to understand and recognize (विद्धि) That क्षेत्रज्ञ – That Self I in one's own physical body is Myself – The परमेश्वर. Not only that



सर्वक्षेत्रेषु क्षेत्रज्ञं मां विद्धि – Please learn to understand and recognize that The क्षेत्रज्ञ, The आत्मा – The Self "I" in my शरीर – in my body, in your body, in all bodies, is Myself, the परमेश्वर Itself. Thus, in effect, Sri Krishna says that I am not what I recognize myself as my body-self, but I am, in fact, परमेश्वर Itself.

I recognize myself every day that I am only a संसारि, never absolutely free from the ups and downs of worldly life, but भगवान् says that I am, in fact, परमेश्वर Itself, who is ever absolutely free from the ups and downs of worldly life. How is that possible? How can I understand Sri Krishna's statement that I am in fact परमेश्वर Itself, absolutely free from all the transient experience of worldly life? That is the question with which we left ourselves last time to think about.

When one thinks about this question, repeatedly, it turns out that this question is not, after all, a profound one. In fact, the answer to this question is evident from common experiences from daily life. For example, I may mistake a rope to be a snake. Immediately my mind superimposes on the rope all the attributes of the snake, and that gives rise to all kinds of fears and mental agitations. Such fears and mental agitations are real, in the sense, they last as long as my ignorance of rope-knowledge lasts. Once I realize that rope is only a rope, and not a snake, my ignorance of rope-knowledge disappears, and along with that, all the fears and mental agitations created by that ignorance also disappear. That is common experience.

Similarly, in the darkness of the night, I may mistake a pillar to be a ghost, and experience all the associated fears and mental agitations, as long as my ignorance of pillar knowledge lasts. Once the place is lighted, I see the pillar as it is, and my ignorance of pillar knowledge goes away. Along with that, all the fears and mental agitations created by that ignorance also disappear. This is also common experience. One can cite any number of such examples to show that mistaken identity, born of ignorance can make one superimpose the attributes of a mistaken one on the real one, resulting in an infinite variety of transient experiences of worldly life.

Therefore, if by ignorance, one superimposes the attributes of one object on another object, such superimposition has the capacity both to conceal and to create - conceal the true identity of the other object, and also create varied pleasant and unpleasant experiences in oneself. That is common knowledge.

Ignorance is not a new phenomenon. We deal with it every day. Everybody is ignorant of many things - that is also common knowledge. There seems nothing extraordinary about such ignorance. Being so, all such ignorance of worldly matters can be designated as ordinary ignorance. But there is something extraordinary about the fact that most people



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do not know, that one can be ignorant of one's own self. Such ignorance is called Self-ignorance.

Self-ignorance is ignorance about the true nature of one's own self, and all forms of ordinary ignorance are only partial derivatives of Self-ignorance. The manifestations of Self-ignorance are infinite in scope and ever subject to change, and hence, the consequences of Self-ignorance are extraordinarily great. Vedanta calls such Self-ignorance as अविद्या or अज्ञानं, which may be understood as the "original ignorance", to distinguish it from ordinary ignorance, which is concerned only with ignorance of some form of object knowledge.

In the language of Vedanta, विद्या, ब्रह्मविद्या, ज्ञानं, ब्रह्मज्ञानं, आत्मज्ञानं, ईश्वर ज्ञानं, all these words indicate Self knowledge - knowledge about the true nature of one's own self - The Self "I" in oneself. On the other hand, the words अविद्या and अज्ञानं indicate that which is not Self-knowledge, which means that which is Self-ignorance.

It is because of अविद्या or अज्ञानं – Self-ignorance, one habitually superimposes the attributes of one's शरीर – one's physical body on oneself, on the Self "I" in oneself. Such superimposition has the power to conceal the true identity of oneself, and also create worldly experiences of various kinds with which one readily identifies oneself without any enquiry. Therefore, it is important for us to understand clearly the nature of one's शरीर – one's physical body, and the relationship between अविद्या – Self-ignorance, and one's शरीर – physical body. Every individual person, like every one of us here, is a unique combination of शरीर and आत्मा – the body and The Self. We have already heard about आत्मा – The Self, extensively in all the earlier chapters of भगवत् गीता, and also in all the Upanishads – ईश, केन, कठ and तैत्तिरीय, which we have seen already. As we may recall briefly, the आत्मा – The Self is

सत् चित् आनन्द स्वरूप ब्रह्मन्, सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूत आशय स्थित परमेश्वर Itself. That आत्मा is ever-existent, all-conscious, ever-conscious, pure awareness, all-inclusive and all-pervading, the ultimate cause and ultimate abode of all that exist in this creation, and being so, That आत्मा - The Self, already exists in the hearts of all beings as परमेश्वर Itself, recognizable by every person by one's own विवेक बुद्धि, even though आत्मा is formless. More about आत्मा we will see as we go along.



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Now about शरीर – one's physical body, which is unique to every individual person. One's शरीर is a product of माया – the inherent power of परमेश्वर, manifesting itself as the three गुणs - personal attributes, namely सत्व, रजस् and तमस् गुणs. Sri Krishna talks about these गुणs in detail in the next chapter. Briefly, सत्व गुण manifests itself as one's ability to gain knowledge, any knowledge, both objective knowledge and self-knowledge. रजस् गुण manifests itself as one's ability to act, and तमस् गुण manifests itself as one's ability to be ignorant, inert or insensitive.

What we call शरीर – the physical body, is itself three-fold in nature, which means it is the integrated manifestation of three bodies in one. These three bodies are:

स्थूल शरीर – the gross physical body, which is perceptible both externally and internally

सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body, which is imperceptible, and it fills the स्थूल शरीर entirely, and

कारण शरीर – the causal body, which is the cause for both the सूक्ष्म शरीर and स्थूल शरीर. The कारण शरीर is also imperceptible.

The स्थूल शरीर – this perceptible gross physical body, is constituted of the पञ्चमहाभूतs, the five great elements – आकाश, वायु, अग्नि, आपः and पृथ्वी, after they have undergone पञ्चीकरण – the process of grossification through mutual interactions. By itself, the स्थूल शरीर – the gross physical body is inert, and it is just a shell, a housing for the occupation of the imperceptible सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body, which fills up the entire housing.

The सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body is also constituted of the five great elements, before the process of grossification, and hence it is imperceptible. Thus the subtle body exists everywhere in one's gross physical body as an assemblage of differentiated organs, including

- the 5 ज्ञानेन्द्रियs - organs of perception
- the 5 कर्मेन्द्रियs - organs of action



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- the 5 प्राणs - powers of physiological functions of प्राण, अपान, उदान, समान and व्यान (the 5 digestive powers) and
- मनः and बुद्धि – mind and the faculty of decision.

The ज्ञानेन्द्रियs and कर्मेन्द्रियs in the सूक्ष्म शरीर – the organs of perception and action in the subtle body are not the gross ones seen externally in the स्थूल शरीर – in the perceptible physical body, but they are their imperceptible counterparts in the सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body.

Thus, this entire gross physical body - the स्थूल शरीर, is totally in keeping with the subtle body inside, in all details. It is this subtle body - the सूक्ष्म शरीर, reflecting the power of आत्मा already in itself, gives life to the gross physical body, activates it and operates it for doing कर्मs of various kinds to exhaust all of one's प्रारब्ध कर्मफलs - all of one's already fructified fruits of past कर्मs, through worldly experiences of various kinds such as pleasure, pain, success, failure, etc.

On exhausting all of one's प्रारब्ध कर्मफलs, the function of the present subtle body is over, and hence it naturally leaves the gross physical body. It is then we say that the body is dead, Please note that only the gross physical body is dead. The subtle body is not dead. On leaving the gross physical body, the subtle body then assumes different gross physical bodies, one after the other, from time to time, each time in a form and name totally in accordance with यथा कर्म, यथा श्रुतं, says कठोपनिषत् (कठ 5-7), each time in accordance with one's own past कर्मs, cultivated knowledge and mental disposition, resulting in successive births and deaths for the gross physical body, again and again.

Now about कारण शरीर, Itself existing in an undifferentiated imperceptible form, the कारण शरीर – the causal body is the cause for both the सूक्ष्म शरीर and स्थूल शरीर – the subtle imperceptible body and the gross perceptible body.

This causal body, this कारण शरीर, is indeed अविद्या or अज्ञानं – Self-ignorance. Since only the one who is capable of gaining knowledge can be ignorant, the स्थूल



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शरीर – the gross perceptible body cannot be ignorant. Only the सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle imperceptible body can be ignorant.

अविद्या – Self-ignorance is not precisely definable. It is a condition of the सूक्ष्म शरीर – subtle body, in which the तमस् aspect of माया गुण – the ignorance aspect of माया गुण prevails in its original state; we may recall this तमस् as the original तमस्, just to distinguish it from all the other forms of ignorance derived from it, which means that Self-ignorance is not mere object ignorance. It is ignorance of the Self "I".

As pointed out earlier, तमस् – ignorance has the power both to conceal and to create. This original तमस् – अविद्या has the power to conceal आत्मा – The Self "I", from the organs of perception in the सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body. It also has the power to create a formidable obstruction for the बुद्धि in the सूक्ष्म शरीर to recognize आत्मा – The Self "I".

Thus, we understand that अविद्या – Self-ignorance is the स्वरूप of कारण शरीर. It is the very nature of the causal body. अविद्या exists in an undifferentiated form in the differentiated components of the अन्तःकरण – inner organs of perception of सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body, and consequently, अविद्या has the power to sustain अहंकार – the notion of ego, the notion that "I am the कर्ता, भोक्ता – the doer, the enjoyer, etc." in the mind and बुद्धि of the सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body, which in turn gives rise to कर्मs and कर्मफलs, and the associated experiences of सुख-दुःख – pleasure, pain, sorrow, distress, etc., leading to repeated births involving different सूक्ष्म शरीरs and स्थूल शरीरs - subtle bodies and gross bodies. That is how अविद्या – Self-ignorance is related to one's शरीर – one's physical body.

Having identified कारण शरीर – the causal body as अविद्या – Self-ignorance, we can now say that every individual person, indeed every individual living being, is a जीव made up of a particular combination of स्थूल शरीर, सूक्ष्म शरीर, अविद्या and आत्मा in the increasing order of subtlety in manifestation, where आत्मा alone is सत्यं –



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Absolute reality, never subject to change, and the other three are only मिथ्याs - transient realities ever subject to change. That is the लक्षण – the distinguishing mark of every individual जीव. With reference to any particular person as जीव, let us be clear that since जीव includes आत्मा, which is सत्यं, ever existent, the जीव is also ever existent, which means there is no death for जीव. When the स्थूल शरीर – the gross physical body dies, the जीव does not die. The जीव continues to exist as an unmanifest individual जीव made up of सूक्ष्म शरीर, अविद्या and आत्मा, until such time it is ready to re-manifest itself in another स्थूल शरीर appropriate to its pre-cultivated गुणs, knowledge and mental disposition.

Further, since there is only one आत्मा, The आत्मा in any one individual जीव is also The आत्मा in all other individual जीवs, manifest or unmanifest, and That आत्मा is also The आत्मा of परमेश्वर Itself.

Therefore, with respect to all individual जीवs, we must understand that the आत्मा in the जीव - The जीवात्मा is परमात्मा, The परमेश्वर Itself, which is exactly what the महावाक्य of गीतोपनिषत् says, namely क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि, सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत.

Again, मोक्ष - liberation is only for the जीव. Liberation for the जीव means the सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body in the जीव being able to recognize itself as आत्मा, as परमेश्वर. Itself. How is such recognition possible? It is possible because, that which stands between सूक्ष्म शरीर and आत्मा, is only अविद्या – Self-ignorance. When अविद्या is removed, आत्मा becomes प्रत्यक्ष ज्ञानं – अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं– direct and immediate knowledge for the बुद्धि in the अन्तः करण – in the inner instruments of perception of the सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body, and the जीव now naturally recognizes Itself as आत्मा, as परमेश्वर Itself.

Thus, when अविद्या – self-ignorance disappears, जीव- ब्रह्म ऐक्यं - the ONENESS of जीव and आत्मा, जीव and ब्रह्मन्, जीव and परमेश्वर, becomes evident, spontaneously,



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even while the body is alive and active, and such a जीव now becomes a ज्ञानी – an enlightened person existing as the very embodiment of परमेश्वर.

For such a ज्ञानी, in time, when all the प्रारब्धकर्मs are exhausted, the स्थूल शरीर – the gross physical body naturally falls, and since there are no more कर्मs to be done, or कर्मफलs to be experienced, the सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body also disappears, and since अविद्या – Self-ignorance has already disappeared, the ज्ञानी, as a जीव, now spontaneously becomes one with आत्मा - the all-pervading Self Itself, the परमेश्वर Itself. Such a जीवात्मा is परमात्मा – The Immortal परमेश्वर itself.

That is how it is possible for any person to uplift oneself, and recognize one's inherent Immortality and gain total liberation from all transient realities of worldly life through gaining आत्मज्ञानं – Self-knowledge, by transcending अविद्या – Self-ignorance.

How one can transcend अविद्या – Self-ignorance is indeed the subject matter of the entire भगवत् गीता and all the Upanishads.

We will talk some more about अविद्या next time.