



भगवत् गीता

द्वितीयोऽध्यायः - सांख्य योगः

Chapter 2

Volume 5

अन्तवन्त इमेदेहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः । अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्मात् युध्यस्व भारत ॥	2-18
य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं, यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् । उभौ तौ न विजानितौ, नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥	2-19
न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचित् नायं भूत्वा अभविता वा न भूयः । अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥	2-20

Everywhere all around us, we see only objects and they all have only असत् existence, meaning transient existence - temporary existence. That of course we realize easily. What is however difficult for us to realize is the amazing fact discovered by our ऋषि forefathers, namely that all objects having transient existence - which include myself, yourself, and everything in this creation, including the creation itself - they all exist in inseparable extraordinary union with one distinct ever existent -All conscious, All-pervading Supreme Being. Our Upanishads call This by a variety of pointer words such as आत्मा, परमात्मा, ब्रह्मन्, परब्रह्मन्, ईश्वर, परमेश्वर, पुरुष, पुरुषोत्तम or simply ॐ, तत् or सत् or ॐ तत् सत्, etc, all these words indicating the SAME ONE Supreme Being.

Thus transient existence (असत्) and Eternal existence (सत्) are ever in Inseparable extraordinary union and, in fact, they (असत् अन्द सत्) while being distinct, are indeed essentially identical just as waves in the ocean and the ocean itself are identical. This Inseparable Extraordinary Union of transient existence and Eternal Existence is called प्रकृति पुरुष संयोग लक्षणं or क्षेत्र क्षेत्रज्ञ संयोग लक्षणं about which Sri Krishna talks in detail in Chapter 13.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Here Sri Krishna is only introducing the topic. Clear knowledge and full appreciation of the fundamental nature of this union of असत् and सत्, transient existence and Eternal आत्मा is Totality of Knowledge – पूर्ण ज्ञानं.

It is such पूर्ण ज्ञानं that makes life meaningful and enjoyable - that gives zest and joy to every day life - that enables one to order and re-order one's life, so that one becomes fit for gaining श्रेयस्-मोक्ष - total freedom from every kind of शोक, every kind of sorrow and distress, and strive for total fulfillment.

While it is relatively easy to understand and appreciate object knowledge - असत् knowledge, knowledge about आत्मा - The सत् Knowledge is not easy to comprehend and appreciate. Therefore भगवान् teaches here आत्मा ज्ञानं - knowledge about आत्मा. Since आत्मा cannot be defined by words and since words are our only effective means of communication, our Upanishads try to impart to us knowledge about आत्मा through a variety of word pointers

नित्यः, अनाशिः and अप्रमेयः are three such word pointers indicating the same आत्मा. We must understand clearly what these three words indicate. Now the words नित्य and नाश are commonly used in every day language, but as word pointers they mean more than what is commonly understood.

For example, नित्य means Eternal. Commonly, when we talk of eternity, we mean only relative eternity; thus relative to all of us the earth, the moon, the sun and the stars seem to be eternal, but such eternity is relative. Even the earth, the moon, the sun and the stars are subject to disappearance at the time of प्रलयः - Dissolution of the present cycle of creation.

आत्मा is not that kind of eternity. आत्मा is absolutely eternal - which means there can never be any time when आत्मा is not there. Such आत्मा is नित्यः - ever present, eternally existent. It is indeed difficult to comprehend that kind of eternity and it is even more difficult to comprehend that all of us are indeed inseparably in union with that absolute eternity - The आत्मा - The परमेश्वर.

Again, नाश means destruction and अनाशि means that which is not subject to destruction. There are generally two kinds of destruction. Something has disappeared and it is not available for perception any more, that is one kind of destruction. Another kind of destruction is a change in form beyond recognition of the original. Both these kinds of destruction are not there for आत्मा.



Therefore, in order to indicate that the **आत्मा** is not subject to change, it is not subject to disappearance, it is not relative eternity, and it is total absolute eternity, our Upanishads use both the words **नित्यः** and **अनाशि** to indicate **आत्मा**.

If that is the nature of **आत्मा**, if **आत्मा** is everywhere at all times, then why is it that we are not able to see **आत्मा**, just as we see any object? We are not able to see **आत्मा** as we see any object because **आत्मा** is not an object. It is **अप्रमेयः**. It is not an object of knowledge, like "pot knowledge" for example. **आत्मा** is **अप्रमेयः**. **अप्रमेयः** means what?

In this connection there are two Vedantic words which we must understand. They are **प्रमाण** and **प्रमेयः**. **प्रमाण** means a means of knowledge and **प्रमेयः** means the object of knowledge. Using my eyes I see a pot; here my eyes are my **प्रमाण** - means of knowledge and the pot is my **प्रमेयः** - the object of knowledge.

Usually Vedanta is called **शुद्ध प्रमाण** - using the sounds of words - as Means of Knowledge we gain the knowledge of **आत्मा**. On this basis, **आत्म ज्ञानं**, Knowledge of **आत्मा** should be considered as **प्रमेयः**.

But the same Vedanta says **आत्मा** is **अप्रमेयः** - **आत्मा** cannot be known by any **प्रमाण** - by any means of knowledge. If that is so, what for is Vedanta? The answer is: The knowledge of **आत्मा** is accomplished of its own accord, which means **आत्मा** is self-established, **आत्मा** is self effulgent, self shining, self revealing.

The **आत्मा** The Self - The "I" is not unknown to me, but I do not know myself well enough. The true nature of **आत्मा** is not clear to me. I know I exist. I do not need any **प्रमाण** - any means of knowledge to know that I exist. In fact, "I" is the only thing for whose existence I do not need a **प्रमाण** or proof. Therefore I do not need Vedanta to prove That I exist; but I do need Vedanta to remove from my mind and **बुद्धि** all misconceptions about myself. That is why Vedanta is called Upanishad, which means well ascertained Self-knowledge that removes ignorance about oneself.

One must clearly understand the difference between object knowledge like "pot knowledge" and Self Knowledge; the difference is that the existence of **आत्मा** is self established, whereas the existence of pot is to be established by some means of knowledge.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Only because आत्मा is there, I am able to see the pot, and I am able to gain knowledge about the pot. To see the pot, or to understand science or engineering, I do not require Self-Knowledge; I require only the Self and that Self is already there in myself. That Self, that आत्मा, is सर्वान्तर आत्मा. All pervading, ever existent आत्मा, because of which alone, everything else is possible. That आत्मा is beyond the reach of words, and also beyond the reach of mind. As we will see in the Taittiriya Upanishad,

यतो वाचो निर्वृतन्ते, अप्राप्य मनसा सह ॥

That आत्मा is beyond the reach of words because आत्मा has no attributes to express in words and at the same time, all attributes arise from that आत्मा alone. That आत्मा is unlike anything one knows, which can be described in words. That आत्मा is beyond the reach of mind because mind cannot project itself there; and at the same time, आत्मा is the source of all thoughts. Thus again, आत्मा is something unlike anything else.

That आत्मा is पूर्ण साक्षात् अपरोक्ष ब्रह्मन्. That आत्मा is साक्षात् ब्रह्मन् the self existent, self effulgent, self shining, self revealing Brahman itself. Further, That आत्मा is अपरोक्ष ब्रह्मन्, immediate Knowledge of ब्रह्मन्, अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं of ब्रह्मन्. That ब्रह्मन् is पूर्ण - All Inclusive - ONE without a second.

We must understand what अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं means. There are three kinds of knowledge. They are प्रत्यक्ष ज्ञानं, परोक्ष ज्ञानं. and अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं.

- प्रत्यक्ष ज्ञानं means direct knowledge or knowledge gained by direct perception of something which one can see, feel, hear, etc.
- परोक्ष ज्ञानं means indirect knowledge or inferential knowledge, knowledge of something not available for direct perception. "Because there is smoke, you infer that there is fire" - that is परोक्ष ज्ञानं.
- आत्मा is neither प्रत्यक्ष ज्ञानं nor परोक्ष ज्ञानं. आत्मा is neither such perceptible direct knowledge nor indirect knowledge. आत्मा is neither in front of me, nor away from me; आत्मा is Myself. It is अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं - Immediate knowledge.

The moment my ignorance about my true nature is gone, आत्मा ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge becomes evident immediately. Therefore आत्मा ज्ञानं is a अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

That आत्मा is नित्य अचिक्रिय आत्मा; That आत्मा is not bound by time, nor is it subject to any kind of change. It is That आत्मा that is indicated by the words नित्यः अविनाशि and अप्रमेयः. With this understanding of आत्मा or शरीरि, let us read again the last verse we saw the last time.

अन्तवन्त इमेदेहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः ।

अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्मात् युध्यस्व भारत ॥

2-18

Sri Krishna says

इमेदेहाः अन्तवन्तः - These physical bodies by their very nature have only असत् existence, Transient existence. Further,

इमेदेहाः शरीरिणः - These physical bodies are those of आत्मा, which means that these physical bodies and आत्मा are inseparably together and उक्ताः As already pointed out in our Upanishads आत्मा (or शरीरि) is नित्यः, अनाशी and अप्रमेयः. The आत्मा is eternal, never subject to destruction, and self-effulgent at all times.

तस्मात् - therefore

भारत - O! Arjuna,

युध्यस्व carry on this war - fight as you must; do not run away from the battle field, so says Sri Krishna.

Now, what is the logic here? What is the connection between the nature of आत्मा and the advice for Arjuna to carry on this war. When Krishna says

तस्मात् युध्यस्व Therefore carry on this war, what is the significance of "Therefore" here? We must reflect on this statement briefly.

भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā* is not a scripture which enjoins one to do something, or not to do something in terms of one's अर्थ काम *artha kāma* pursuits - in terms of one's pursuits of worldly success and desire prompted objectives. भगवत् गीता is a मोक्ष शास्त्र, which means it is a प्रमाण - Means of knowledge for one's pursuit of मोक्ष - total release from every kind of sorrow and distress arising from one's ignorance of the nature of आत्मा - The SELF - the Self of all selves, including one's own self - whose very nature is आनन्द - Absolute Happiness.

Arjuna is already in the battlefield, fully committed to fight. In the particular circumstance of his life this war activity has been left for him to do by the Law of Dharma. He cannot



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

run away from it and still expect to be happy. To carry on the fight, in the best way he could, is his only duty at this time.

सत् आत्मा by its very nature, cannot be destroyed by anyone. Similarly असत् देह - transient bodies, by their very nature, will fall by themselves, each in its own time, in accordance with its own destiny. When that happens, it is not because of any one else, other than one's own karma.

That being the nature of सत् आत्मा and असत् देह, nobody is really the destroyer, or the destroyed, in the cosmic scheme of Existence.

But, in this objective world of transient existence, all transactions are governed only by धर्म and अधर्म, what is proper and what is improper. For each one of us, our job in this world is only to follow धर्म - what is proper for us to do in our own circumstances.

For Arjuna, at this time of his life, his धर्म is only to carry on with his fight, in the war he is already in. Therefore the advice given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna, namely "युध्यस्व - carry on this war, and fight as you must". This advice is purely a statement in-keeping with the context, and nothing more than that.

In the last verse (2-18) Sri Krishna added the word उक्तः, meaning "all this knowledge about आत्मा, nature of existence etc. has already been told". Told by whom? Where? That can be told only by knowledgeable people who have carried out an incisive and discriminative enquiry on the subject of Existence - which means that our ऋषि forefathers have already discovered all this knowledge, and they are told in our Upanishads - so says Sri Krishna.

Now, what is it, that is told in our Upanishads? In the next two verses, Sri Krishna simply reminds Arjuna, two verses from कठोपनिषत्. First, let us read the कठोपनिषत् verses, and then see what Sri Krishna says.

In the कठोपनिषत्, Lord Yama is teaching Nachiketa on the nature of आत्मा. Lord Yama says:

न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चित्, नायं कुतश्चित् न बभूव कश्चित् ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो, न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

क 2 - 18

The discerning man, one who has insight and clear judgment, knows that he is not born, nor does he die; that he has not come into being from anything different from himself; nor has anything come into being from himself; the Self of man is unborn, eternal, unchanging and ever new; the SELF is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. Further,



हन्ता चेत् मन्यते हन्तुं, हतः चेत् मन्यते हतं ।

उभौ तौ न विजानीतो, नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

क 2-19

The word-meaning of this verse is: "If the one who kills, thinks that he is the killer, and the one who is being killed, thinks that he is being killed, both of them do not know, that The SELF neither kills, nor is killed".

These Upanishadic verses must be understood properly. There is no war or killing involved in कठोपनिषत्, but the subject of birth and death is always there.

हननं means any action causing death of the body. For a जीव - for any individual person, हननं is the worst action one can think of. By referring to हनन क्रिया - all क्रियाs - all actions are covered by this Upanishadic statement. Therefore what the above verse says is the following:

" If one looks upon आत्मा as the कर्ता of a कर्म - as the doer of an action, or, if one looks upon आत्मा as the object of an action, both of them do not know the nature of the आत्मा. Atma neither acts, nor can be acted upon". That is the meaning here.

Sri Krishna simply reminds Arjuna these teachings of कठोपनिषत्. Therefore, using almost the same words of the Upanishad, Sri Krishna says:

य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं, यश्चैनं मन्यते हतं ।

उभौ तौ न विजानीतो, नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

2 - 19

यः एनं (आत्मानं) वेत्ति हन्तारं - The one who looks upon Atma as the doer of the action of killing,

यः च एनं (आत्मानं) हतं मन्यते - The one who looks upon आत्मा as the object of हनन क्रिया - an action causing death,

उभौ तौ न विजानीतः - Both of them do not realize the nature of आत्मा, because, they mistake देह - the physical body as आत्मा - The SELF.

The कर्ता - the doer of any action, is only the देह इन्द्रिय मनो बुद्धि संगतः - The doer of any action is only this body with all its instruments of perception and action, including mind and बुद्धि. That doer is not आत्मा; that doer is असत् देह - the transient body.

"I" - The SELF - is आत्मा - It is सत् - Eternal Existence and It is ONE without a second.

The confusion about आत्मा arises due to lack of appreciation of the nature of आत्मा. It must be realized that:



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

अयं आत्मा न हन्ति न हन्यते - Atma is neither the कर्ता of a कर्म - doer of an action, nor It is the object of an action - which means,

आत्मा is अविक्रियः - Atma does not undergo any change,

आत्मा is अप्रमेयः - Atma is not available for perception as an object. Atma is not subject to any change, because, as the next verse says:

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचित् नायं भूत्वा अभविता वा न भूयः ।

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

न जायते - Atma does not have any जननं - any birth; consequently,

न म्रियते वा कदाचित् - Atma has no death either - at any time. Atma has no birth because,

अयं आत्मा न भूत्वा अभविता वा न भूयः - Atma is not ONE, having been, ceases to exist again - which means, there is neither prior non-existence, nor post non-existence for Atma - which simply means Atma has eternal existence.

Both prior non-existence and post non-existence are forms of knowledge. The presence of आत्मा is necessary to know what is non-existent. Prior non-existence of an object, and the birth of an object are both seen only by Atma - so is the case with respect to death also. Consequently,

आत्मा is अजः - Atma is not born;

आत्मा is नित्यः - Atma is Eternal;

आत्मा is शाश्वतः - Atma is unchanging

आत्मा is पुराणः - means पुरा अपि नवः - Atma is as new today as it was ever before. As It is now, It was there before, and in between, there has been no change whatsoever.

न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे - When the body is destroyed, आत्मा is not destroyed. Even though the body changes, the आत्मा in the body never changes. Atma is ever free from all forms of change. Such is the nature of Atma, as already pointed out in कठोपनिषत् - so says Sri Krishna.

In the next few verses, Sri Krishna continues his exposition on the Nature of आत्मा, which we will see next time.